LOCH AVON

THE

CAIRNGORM MOUNTAINS

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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

MDCCCLXIV

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THE

CAIRNGORM MOUNTAINS.

"I had a dream that was not all a dream."

IT befell me once, on a ramble otherwise fruitful of the pleasantest recollections, to have been afflicted with an oppressive dream, which, entirely eluding the reminiscences of several years, some of which had brought their own enjoyments, fixed itself down on a dreary period of school discipline, and recalled its most oppressive features all too vividly. There was nothing in the scenes and adventures of the day before, nor in those that might be expected to come with the morrow, to

call up weary or oppressive visions. I had walked up between the limestone walls of the valley of Lauterbrunnen, and had seen the Jungfrau spread forth her vast robe of snow before the sun, as if in haughty defiance of his power. I had examined as closely as one who does not want a sousing could the great Staubbach, or Fall of Dust, called the highest cataract in Europe; but perhaps it should be called the largest shower-bath, since, as the traveller usually sees it, it is all dispersed into a heavy rain before it reaches the green meadows of Lauterbrunnen. After this, I had gone up the Wengern Alp as the night was falling, had watched the darkening, and had seen that, while the top of the Staubbach glittered in the setting sun, it passed downwards from pink to purple, deepening as it went, so that the ribbon of water lost itself in blackness, while the snows of the mountain, after bathing themselves in rosy light, sank also into darkness as the night walked upwards. Next day was for the Grindelwald glacier, the great cataract of the Reichenbach, and the long rocky stair that descends into many-fountained Meyringen. Surely there was nothing in all this to call up the dreariest recollections of bygone days; yet so it was, that although all previous

nights on the same excursion had been mere blanks between the days' enjoyments, and the beds rested on left no other recollection but the intensity of the sleep they bestowed, this night was crowded with the whole history of certain petty school persecutions. These visions kept entirely clear of the period of genial and attractive study fostered by a kindly scholar, and fixed themselves on an episode of school-life endured under a hard, irritable pedagogue, who made his own life and the lives of all who came about him miserable.

The phenomenon had its efficient cause. I had then, for the first time in a life of many rambles, put myself, along with two hapless companions, under the jurisdiction and authority of a guide. There was no help for it if we were to do what we projected. In the first place, it would have been madness otherwise to attempt to climb at night to the lone inn on the Wengern Alp. Then we were for glacier-work next day, and that could not be accomplished without help. I had once tried it alone, to my utter confusion and humiliation. I have a lively recollection, too, of the horror expressed by a friend authorised to put LL.D. after his name, who, seeing from the inn-window at the Grindelwald certain little black

spots on the surface of the glacier, was told that these represented a body of guides endeavouring to extricate a Doctor of Laws who had stuck deep down in a crevasse, where he was then exemplifying the phenomena of congelation. Yes, it must be admitted as a humiliating fact, that a guide is just as necessary to the pedestrian on the glacier, as a pilot is to a vessel in a shoaly and rocky sea.

It was the suffering of spirit endured through some three days of the detested bondage of guidehood, that made me vow that some day when I had leisure for the task I would lift my testimony against the extension, beyond where it is absolutely unavoidable, of a system of voluntary slavery that has rooted itself among the hapless class of persons denominated Tourists. It is not alone in submission to the iron rule of the professional guide that this degrading phenomenon is developed. It exists in the mapping-out, in guide-books and otherwise, of certain routes which the tourist is to take, certain things which he is to see, and certain occurrences—generally arrant falsehoods—in which he is to believe. Having protested against a similar usurpation of authority as to the books which the collector should acquire

and read, and the method in which he should read them, I offer these fugitive pages as an inducement to the rambler to shake himself free of guidance, by endeavouring to describe to him a specimen of the kind of scenes he may alight on if he "take his feet in his hands," as an old saying goes, and independently step out of the range of the established tours. Comparison, however it may be denounced by one precept as odious, is by another recommended to us as a valuable medium of explanation. I therefore propose to "set off," as dealers say, the merits of my favourite district, by comparing it with one well known to the touring world in Scotland, and forming, indeed, the most notable feature it contains.

It was on a bright, hot day of July, which threw the first gleam of sunshine across a long tract of soaking, foggy, dreary, hopeless weather, that I first ascended Ben Nevis. The act was unpremeditated. The wet and fog of weeks had entered into my soul; and I had resolved, in the spirit of indignant resignation, that I would *not* attempt the hill. Accordingly I was stalking lazily along General Wade's road with a new-made acquaintance, who has become a distinguished geologist—we had left Fort William,

and I thought there might be a probability of reaching Fort Augustus to dinner—when we were not ungratefully surprised to see the clouds tucking themselves up the side of the mountain in a peculiar manner, which gives the experienced wanderer of the hills the firm assurance of a glorious day. Soon afterwards the great mountain became visible from summit to base, and its round head and broad shoulders stood dark against the bright blue sky. A sagacious-looking old Highlander, who was passing, protested that the hill had never looked so hopeful during the whole summer: the temptation was irresistible; so we both turned our steps towards the right, and commenced the ascent.

It is one among the prevailing fallacies of the times, that to mount a Highland hill is a very difficult operation, and that one should hire a guide on the occasion. I am able, on the ground of long experience, to say that, if the proper day be chosen, and the right method adopted, the ascent of our grandest mountains is one of the simplest operations in all pedestrianism. True, if people take it in the way in which pigs run up all manner of streets, and go straight forward, looking neither to the right nor to the left, they will run their heads against nature's

stone walls, which are at least as formidable as man's. But let any one study the disposal of the ground, calculating the gradients and summit-levels as if he were a railway engineer for the time being—let him observe where the moss lies deep, and precipices rise too steep to be scrambled over—and he will be very obtuse indeed if he is not able to chalk out for himself precisely the best way to the top.

It is a good general rule to keep by the side of a stream. That if you do so when you are at the top of a hill, you will somehow or other find your way to the bottom, is a proposition as sound as Newton's theory of gravitation. But in the ascent the stream is often far better than a human guide. It has no interest to lead you to the top of some episodical hill and down again, and to make you scramble over an occasional dangerous rough bit, to show you how impossible it is that you could have found the way yourself, and how fortunate you are in having secured the services of an intelligent and intrepid guide. As long as you keep by the side of the stream you are always gaining ground and making your way towards the higher levels, while you avoid bogs: for the edge of a stream is generally the driest part of a mountain.

Choosing the broadest and deepest scaur that is scratched down the abrupt side of the lower range of the mountain, I found it, as I anticipated, the channel of a clear dancing stream, which amuses you with its babble for several hundred feet of the ascent. Some time ere you reach the base of the hill you lose sight of the summit, and there is before you only the broad steep bank, with its surface of alternate stone and heather, and a few birch-trees peeping timidly forth from crevices in the rock. After a considerable period of good hard climbing, accompanied by nothing worthy of note either in the variations of the scenery or in the incidents encountered, we were at the top of this rampart; and behold! on the other side of a slight depression, in which sleeps a small inky lake, the bold summit of the mountain rises clear and abrupt and close, as one might see the dome of a cathedral from the parapet on the roof. Here we may linger to take a last look of the objects at the foot of the hill, for ere we resume the ascent we shall lose sight of them. Already Fort William looks like a collection of rabbit-houses. The steamboat on the lake is like a boy's Christmas toy. The waters have assumed that hard burnished metallic appearance which they convey to the

eye raised far above them in a hot summer day. The far-stretching moss, with one or two ghastly white stones standing erect out of its blackness like Druidical remains, carries the eye along its surface to the dusky and mysterious-looking ruins of Inverlochy Castle. Then gazing down on it, the mass of masonry supplied me with as good materials for reflection on the mutability of human things, and the scenes that, through centuries of shifting politics and strifes, had been beheld by those old walls, as if it had been a real ancient castle. I subsequently, on examining it, discovered it to be a sheer imposture, like the pasteboard forts which the Chinese built and painted granite-colour, to deceive our engineers in our first war with them. The Gothic screen and flanking round towers which one expected to find in the massive style of the thirteenth century, like those of other castles built during the war with the Edwards, shrunk into a wretched shell of thin rubble-work, built some time or other, perhaps in the seventeenth century, to represent at a distance the aspect of a powerful fortress.

Off we start with the lake to the left, taking care to keep the level we have gained. A short interval of walking in a horizontal direction, and

again we must begin to climb. On this side the porphyry dome is round and comparatively smooth—scarcely so abrupt as the outer range of hill which has just been ascended. But wending north-eastwardly when near the summit, you come suddenly to a spot where a huge fragment of the dome has, as it were, been broken off, leaving a ghastly rent—how deep it were difficult for the eye to fix, but the usual authorities tell us that the precipices here are 1500 feet high. When we reached their edge, we found that the clouds, which had been completely lifted up from the smoother parts of the mountain, still lingered, as if they had difficulty in getting clear of the jagged edges of the cavernous opening, and moving about restlessly like evil spirits, hither and thither, afforded but partial glimpses of the deep vale below. Though Ben Nevis was at this time rather deficient in his snowy honours, considerable patches lay in the unsunned crevices of the precipice.

Turning my eyes from the terrible fascinations of the precipice to the apex of the hill, now in full view, a strange sight there met them—a sight so strange that I venture to say the reader no more anticipates it than I did, at the moment when I looked from the yawning precipice to

what I expected to be a solitary mountain-top. No experience or learning in mountain phenomena will help the reader in guessing what it was. It was neither more nor less than a crowd of soldiers, occupying nearly the whole table-land of the summit! Yes, there they were, British troops, with their red coats, dark-grey trousers, and fatigue caps, as distinctly as I had ever seen them in Marshall's panoramas or on the parade-ground of Edinburgh Castle! I was reminded of the fine description which Scott gives of the Highland girl who was gazing indolently along the solitary glen of Gortuleg on the day of the battle of Culloden, when it became suddenly peopled by the Jacobite fugitives. "Impressed with the belief that they were fairies—who, according to Highland tradition, are visible to men only from one twinkle of the eyelid to another—she strove to refrain from the vibration which she believed would occasion the strange and magnificent apparition to become invisible."

But whether the eye winked or not, there they were — substantial, able-bodied fellows; what could it mean? Had any one, among the novel projects for increasing our defences, discovered a new system for protecting the country by fortifying the tops of mountains which an enemy

never comes near? Could it be some awkward squad sent to be drilled on this remote spot that it might escape the observation of the sarcastic public? Such were the theories as suddenly rejected as they were suggested. It was vain to speculate. No solution that could be devised made the slightest approach to probability; and the only prospect of speedy relief was in pushing rapidly forward. A very short sentence from the good-humoured-looking young fellow who received our first breathless and perplexed inquiry, solved the mystery,—"Did you never hear of the Ordnance Survey?" To be sure everybody had heard of it; but the impression created concerning it was as of something like a mathematical line, with neither breadth nor thickness; but here it was in substantial operation. The party were occupied in erecting a sort of dwelling for themselves—half tent, half hut. Though in fatigue dresses, and far from being very trim, it was easy to see that they were not common soldiers. They belonged to the educated corps of sappers and miners; and a short conversation with them showed that the reputation of intelligence and civility long enjoyed by that distinguished body had not been unjustly earned.

Though not blind to the magnificence of the

panorama of mountain, lake, and distant far-stretching forest-land that lay beneath our feet as we conversed, they did not conceal their consciousness that the prospect of passing some months on such a spot was not particularly cheering to round-cheeked, well-fed Englishmen, accustomed at Sandhurst and Addiscombe to comforts even superior to those of "the Saut-market." The air was unexceptionably pure and abundant—yet the Bedford level might have been preferable as a permanent residence. Many were the reflections that occurred to one of the feelings of a set of men thus cut off from the earth, down on which they looked, like so many Simeon Styliteses or Jacks on a bean-stalk. What a place to encounter the first burst of the November storm in, beneath the frail covering of a tent! How did their friends address letters to them? Would a cover addressed "Mr Abel Thompson of the Royal Engineers, Top of Ben Nevis," be a document to which the Post-Office would pay any more regard than to a letter addressed to one of the fixed stars? Could they ask a friend to step up to dinner, or exchange courtesies with the garrison of Fort William, into whose windows they might peep with their telescopes?

In the course of conversation with these new

friends, I alighted on a subject in which I had long taken an interest. They had already conducted some operations on Ben Muich Dhui, and they were now commencing such surveys on Ben Nevis as would enable them finally to decide which of these mountains has the honour of being the highest land in the United Kingdom. Competition had of late run very close between them; and the last accounts had shown Ben Muich Dhui only some twenty feet or so ahead. I freely confess to a preference for Ben Muich Dhui, which the recent decision against him has not mitigated—indeed, one is always bound to back one's favourite the more warmly if he is unfortunate, and driven from the eminence to which he has been deemed entitled.

It is true that Ben Nevis is in all respects a highly meritorious hill. I must do justice to his manly civility and good-humour. I have found many a crabbed little crag more difficult of access; and, for his height, I scarcely know another mountain of which it is so easy to reach the top. He stands majestic and alone, his own spurs more nearly rivalling him than any of the neighbouring hills. Rising straight from the sea, his whole height and magnificent proportions are before you at once, and the

view from the summit has an unrivalled expanse.

Still there are stronger charms about the cluster of mountains forming the Cairngorm range, of which Ben Muich Dhui is the chief or chairman. Surrounded by his peers, he stands apart from the everyday world in mysterious grandeur. The depth and remoteness of the solitude, the huge mural precipices, the deep chasms between the rocks, the waterfalls of unknown height, the hoary remains of the primeval forest, the fields of eternal snow, and the deep black lakes at the foot of the precipices, are full of such associations of awe and grandeur and mystery, as no other scenery in Britain is capable of arousing. The recollections of these things inclined me, even when standing on the rival's top, to put in a good word for Ben Muich Dhui; and before separating from these hermits of her Majesty's Ordnance, I requested, if they had any influence in the matter, that they would "find" for my favourite, to which I shall now introduce my reader; but duty is peremptory, and they were subsequently bound to reveal the fact that Ben Nevis had it by a few feet.

It is curious to observe how, in the world of inanimate existences, as in that of mankind, a little

difference in height becomes a vast difference in position when it determines who is highest. In many arenas of human struggle, he who is just perceptibly above the second in strength is the illustrious leader of whom all others are massed together as mere followers. So comes it with hills that might be illustrious elsewhere, but in the group where they happen to be there is one a little higher which gets all the honours. Should this be the fate of Ben Muich Dhui, it should but stimulate an old adherent to stand up for him. But he is so far off from his rival as to be the independent monarch of his own district, and he will suffer very little in real estimation by the conclusion of the dispute.

To bring the region I refer to within the daylight of the guide-books, I shall suppose the adventurer set down at Braemar. The scenery he is there closely surrounded by is in every way worthy of respect. The hills are fine, there are noble forests of pine and birch, and some good foaming waterfalls; while over all preside in majesty the precipices and snows of Lochin-ye-gair. Still it is farther into the wilderness, at the place where the three counties of Aberdeen, Inverness, and Banff meet, that the traveller must look for the higher class of scenery of which I

propose to send him in search. The Linn of Dee, where the river rushes furiously between two narrow rocks, is generally the most remote object visited by the tourist on Deeside. There is little apparent inducement to farther progress. He is told that all beyond that is barrenness and desolation, until he reach the valley of the Spey. I remember, when inquisitive as a boy about this region, being told by a Highland gamekeeper—who had not acquired the tourist slang, and, like all Highlanders in a state of nature, considered a cultivated field, if there were one near him, the most interesting of objects—that it was "a fery fulgar place, and not fit for a young shentleman to go to at all." Then, without going to the climax of the vulgarity which was to be found in the precipices and snows, one observes that the pine-trees decrease in number, the hills become less craggy and abrupt, and the country in general assumes a bleak, bare, windy, bog-and-moor appearance that is apt to make one uncomfortable.

The opening of the Highland railway line now provides a still more direct access to the scenery of the Cairngorm group. I hope there are some whose loyalty is so free from the aggressive character often infecting that quality in this country,

that they will be glad to find an entrance by which they can reach the scenery of the upper Dee without the chance of disturbing the privacy of Balmoral. From Rothiemurchus there is a direct path upwards through a gorge where the waters of the Spey and the Dee almost meet, and there you are in the centre of the Cairngorm range; but from that side the approach promises as little as the other. In fact, to the westward the slopes are gentle; and though a rugged edge or two appears over the broad shoulders of the hills, one sees nothing to hint to him the great precipices with which the heights that rise so gradually before him drop to the east. This class of mountain scenery, in fact, does not tell what it is at a distance. Even the great precipice in Lochin-ye-gair, viewed many miles off, looks like a mere puckering in the folds of the mountain, and has been treated with a disrespect which has abruptly vanished on sudden close acquaintance —as, for instance, when, the bemisted wanderer sitting or standing unconsciously on its edge, the mist at his feet is suddenly blown away, revealing a vista twelve hundred feet down. Such an incident is apt to confirm Burke's theory that the sublime is made emphatic by a little of the terrible.

As the scenery of the Cairngorm range may now be undoubtedly more easily hit by the distant traveller from the valley of the Spey than from that of the Dee, it might, perhaps, have been the more courteous plan to take him up and away by the shorter route. I have always, however, been accustomed to reach the various places I am to speak of from the eastern side; and, like a showman who has got into his groove of narrative, I should find a difficulty in beginning at the opposite end.*

Of the various methods of approaching Ben Muich Dhui, the most striking, in my opinion, is one with which I never found any other person so well acquainted as to exchange opinions with

* To avoid a possible risk of incurring a charge of plagiarism, it is as well, perhaps, to explain that a considerable portion of what follows is a retouching of an article which I contributed to 'Blackwood's Magazine' for August 1847. It was at the time attributed, by some undiscerning persons, to a much more distinguished pen than its author's. Much of it was suggested from reminiscences of holidays spent in the old house, or Castle, as it was called, of Abergeldie, among Highland cousins. The place that has known them shall know them no more. By a reversal of the usual fate of old houses, their dwelling-place has been occupied by inmates far more illustrious, in whose history, also, is recalled the sentiment of the heathen moralist, not less solemn that it is of common use—

"Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas,
Regumque turres."

me about it. I did once, it is true, coax a friend to attempt that route; he had come so far with me as the edge of the Dee, but disliked crossing it. In the superabundance of my zeal I offered to carry him over on my shoulders; but when I came to the middle of the stream, it so happened that a foot tripped against a stone, and my friend was very neatly tilted over into the water, without my receiving any considerable damage in my proper person. He thereafter looked upon me, according to an old Scottish proverb, as "not to ride the water with;" and perhaps he was right. As an administrator of justice, I sometimes wonder whether he remembers his sousing in the Dee as well as I do the adventures that befell me as I proceeded on my journey alone.

My method was to cross right over the line of hills which here bound the edge of the river. Though not precipitous, this bank is very high—certainly not less than a thousand feet. When you reach the top, if the day be clear, the whole Cairngorm range is before you on the other side of the valley, from summit to base, as you may see Mont Blanc from the Col de Balm, or the Jungfrau from the Wengern Alp. From this bird's-eye view you at once understand that peculiar structure of the group which makes the

valleys so much deeper and narrower, and the precipices so much higher and more abrupt, than those of any other of the Scottish mountains. Here there are five summits springing from one root, and all more than four thousand feet above the level of the sea. The circumference of the whole group is as that of one mountain. One might imagine it to have been a huge, wide, rounded hill, Ben Muich Dhui being the highest part, and the whole as smooth and gentle of ascent as some of the Ural range, where you might have a fixed engine and "an incline," without levelling or embanking. But at some time or other the whole mass had got a jerk in the course of the upheavals or subsidences which are so convenient to the geologists; and so it has been here and there split from top to bottom, and shivered and shaken and disturbed into all shapes and positions, showing such chasms as the splitting of masses of stone some two or three thousand feet thick must of necessity produce.

The scene is one of solidity and firmness—as far removed from ideas of the shifting and the fugitive as anything in the crust of the earth can be—yet its variations are manifold as the changes of the restless elements. In which mood of the capricious skies may one expect

the mountain-range to show itself to chief advantage? Shall it be at the dawn of a bright summer day, when the last clouds of the night have rolled themselves up to the hill-tops, and gone off into the blue sky like ships going to sea, leaving the bright sun to gaze on the glittering dew they have left upon the heather and the lichens, and to reveal to the eye every rock and crevice and little inky lake and white patch of snow with dazzling distinctness? Shall it be on the eve of the same summer day, when the sun has gone behind the hills, and their purple outlines lie softened in the edge upon a field of blazing gold, and nothing is visible of crag or peak or scaur or torrent, but the whole looks warm and soft and still, as if the hills and the sky were made out of some material of the same texture—neither of them hard and rough, and neither of them untangible like the air? Or shall we take a tempestuous day, when black clouds are wandering and rummaging about in the scaurs and gulfs as if busy in the manufacture of storms, letting this black precipice appear terrible in all its height, closing it up again, or revealing half of its terrors, and enhancing them by mystery, while the ear is kept in awe by strange eldritch sounds —perhaps they are the mutterings of thunder,

perhaps flighty, impulsive gusts of wind, but altogether blowing as if the spirits of the air were whispering to each other about their stormy labours?

Any way the scene is a luxury; and if the traveller has seen it in one mood let him go back and see it in another. Among the silly notions of the tourist intellect, one is the varying of the scene, and the avoidance of routes that have been already taken. There are scenes that will bear a thousand visits better than others will one; nay, with a mind that loves scenery, it improves on acquaintance, opening up new and special enjoyments. If we see it under different aspects of the sky, these act and react on different aspects of the mind, and fill it with varied forms of fancies and recalled images while "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter memories." There is a beautiful instance of the very simple real and the purest ideal touching each other in Uhland's song about the Ferry, where the traveller so realises the two friends who had crossed at the same spot years and years ago, that half-unconsciously he offers the boatman two additional fares for the spirits twain that have crossed with him.

There is no more powerful aid to reflection than

a revisit to some remarkable scene in altered circumstances. Few conditions, probably, have supplied more food for pensive poetry. I remember being struck by the impressions on one who in early youth rambled up the glen from his Lowland home to the Highlands, who had no opportunity of travelling on the same road for many years afterwards. The interval had been eventful; and whatever might be said of the tenor of his fortunes, he was, both in reality as to the lie of his journey, and metaphorically as to the influence of years, going down the hill. On his first journey he had returned by a different way, and thus he did not come down the glen until many years after he had walked up it. And as the scenery which opened up recalled all the impressions that immediately preceded his ascent, and he had his back to the mountain, for which he was then eagerly straining forward, the feeling, he said, came upon him as if he were going home to get rest, after the struggle with the world that lay between his morning walk up the glen and his evening walk down again.

Be in no hurry to leave the bank with the full view it gives you into the recesses you purpose to penetrate. This may be a suitable place for introducing you to a Highland shower,

which sometimes turns out a rather startling phenomenon. Under a bright sun and a cloudless sky you suddenly catch something like a thud on the hat. Startled, and looking upwards, some half-dozen tumblerfuls of water come splash on your face. There seems no cause for this, except that the hills seem to be covered with tinfoil, and the sun looks a little hazy, and seems to be leering at you—but this only for an instant, while you are at the edge of the cloud: suddenly all becomes dark as an eclipse, while the tumblerfuls rattle down in millions. After a couple of minutes the whole stops suddenly as with a jerk, or as if the grandmother of all buckets, as the Persians would say, had been emptied. When you come to your senses you see the cloud careering away like a black curtain, lifting its skirts over mountain after mountain, and revealing them to the sun, while stretching over its back is a double rainbow—not hazy and translucent like common specimens, but all clear as if painted on a black board, though with colours so bright as to eat out any ever laid on by hand of man. On your own side everything glitters in the sun as if millions of diamonds had been strewed about, and over multifarious clattering brooks, tiny irises caper away in all their finery like distracted fairies.

From the steeped birches in the hollows, and the fields of bog-myrtle, the hot sun draws out and disperses a fragrance to which the odours of all the cosmetics of the perfumers' shops are what the Dutch call them—stinks. You have been as completely soused as if you had been dipped under Foyers; but the sensation is worth paying for, and you may yet have refreshing recollections of it when traversing some shingly plutonic vine district or dry sandy plain of France or Germany.

Having completed to his satisfaction his preliminary survey, the traveller may descend into Glen Lui Beg, as it shall presently be described.

Returning to the Dee, a short distance below the Linn, the stream of the Lui forces a passage through the steep banks and joins the river. You enter the glen from which this stream flows by a narrow rocky pass, through which the trees of the Mar forest struggle upwards. As you proceed, the trees gradually become more scarce, the rocky barrier is left behind, and you are in a long grassy glen shut out from the world. This is Glen Lui. A better introduction to the savage scenery beyond, for the sake of contrast, there could not be. Everything here is peace and softness. Banks lofty, but round and smooth, intervene to hide the summits of the mountains. The

stream is not stagnant, but it flows on with a gentle current, sometimes through sedge or between grassy banks; elsewhere edged by a beach of the finest yellow sand. The water is beautifully transparent, and even where it is deepest you may count the shining pebbles below. A few weeping birches here and there hang their graceful disconsolate ringlets almost into the stream; the grass is as smooth as a shaven lawn, and much softer; and where a few stones protrude through it, they are covered with a cushion of many-coloured mosses. But with all its softness and beauty, the extreme loneliness of the scene fills the mind with a sense of awe. It surely must have been in such a spot that Wordsworth stood, or of such a scene that he dreamed, when he gave that picture of perfect rest which he professed to apply to a far different spot, Glen Almond—a rough rocky glen, with a turbulent brook running through it, where there never was or can be silence:—

> "A convent—even a hermit's cell
> Would break the silence of this dell.—
> It is not quiet—it is not ease,
> But something deeper far than these.
> The separation that is here
> Is of the grave, and of austere
> And happy feelings of the dead."

Nor in Glen Lui can one feel inclined to join in the charge of mysticism which has been raised against this last simile. Its echoes in the heart at once associate themselves with a few strange, mysterious, round mounds, of the smoothest turf, and of the most regular oval or circular construction, which rise here and there from the flat floor of the valley. The natural feeling of the traveller incidentally coming on them is, that they cover, and have covered—who can tell how many hundred years?—the remains of some ancient people with whom history cannot make us acquainted, and who have not the benefit of tradition; for how can there be traditions in places where no human beings dwell? If desirous of assigning an epoch to them, he will perhaps recall the passage in Ossian, "Grey stones and heaped-up earth shall mark me to future times. When the hunter shall sit by the mound and produce his food at noon—'Some warrior rests here,' he will say."

I feel it to be a cruelty, and can scarce justify it to myself, to say that, having in early visits indulged in suchlike speculations, an inspection of the spot, under the instruction and the scepticism of maturer years, has led me to believe that my sentiment was all wasted, and that these mounds are geological formations—the diluvium left by

the recession of waters. It has somewhat confused the settlement of the origin of this kind of phenomenon that many of them have been used as tombs, the great man having been taken to the mountain instead of the mountain being laid over him.

One might run on in a new train of sentiment guided by geology, but after such a lesson one is apt to get a sickening of sentiment. Going out of the past, and inclined rather to look to the future, you think how soon the solitude of the spot may be invaded. Perhaps the glen may turn out to be a good trunk level—the granite of Ben Muich Dhui peculiarly well adapted for tunnelling, and the traffic something of an unanticipated and indescribable extent; and some day soon the silence may be awakened with the fierce whistle of the train, and the bell may ring, and passengers may be ordered to be ready to take their places, and first, second, and third class tickets may be stamped with the rapidity of button-making—who knows? Nobody should prophesy in this age what may *not* be done. I once met a woeful instance of a character for great sagacity utterly lost at one blow, in consequence of such a prediction. The man had engaged to eat the first locomotive that ever came to Manchester

by steam from Liverpool. On the day when this marvel was accomplished, he received a polite note enclosing a piece of leather cut from the machinery, with an intimation that when he had digested *that*, the rest of the engine would be at his service. And, indeed, as it is, are we not now almost within range of the whistle which has wakened up the nearly as solemn solitudes of Drumouchter and Badenoch? When last in those regions, I had pointed out to me a well-known scene as being "within the Aviemore contract;" and was assured that "them 'ills, when you blast them, make first-class ballast." I had made up my mind, when traversing Inverness-shire, to sleep on Saturday night and spend Sunday in the quietest of inns at Lynvaig, near Rothiemurchus. I had not calculated, however, on two facts—that there was a railway then in the crisis of rapid completion, and that it was pay-night. In the dark the way to the inn was easily traced by a sort of double fringe of navvies' legs lying on each side of the road. When such of them as did not reside under the roof were driven forth at the canonical hour, the sounds outside and attempts at ingress reminded one of the stories of lone houses in Continental forests surrounded by bands of starving wolves. It was plain that this was

not the place to spend a quiet day in; so I had breakfast set for me over-night, and let myself out and was fairly off soon after daybreak. There had been noises in the night, not sufficient to break a pedestrian's rest, which I found had been caused by the discovery about the premises of the dead body of a navvy. I was told the particulars by Policeman 15 on the way to his station after his disagreeable night's work, while we walked together through the fragrant woods of Rothiemurchus, then deserted and quiet—for it is not the fashion of the crowds by which the place was surrounded to frequent the woods at early dawn.

To return to the Lui: after being for a few miles such as I have tried to describe it, the glen becomes narrower and the scenery rougher. Granite masses crop out here and there. The pretty, dejected, weeping birches become mixed with stern, stiff, surly pines, which look as if they could "do anything but weep," and not unnaturally suggest the notion that their harsh conduct may be cause of the tears of their gentler companions. At last a mountain thrusts a spur into the glen, and divides it into two: we are here at the foot of Cairngorm of Derrie, or the lesser Cairngorm. The valley opening to the

left is Glen Lui Beg, or Glen Lui the Little—containing the shortest and best path to the top of Ben Muich Dhui. The other to the right is Glen Derrie—one of the passes towards Loch A'an or Avon, and the basin of the Spey. Both these glens are alike in character. The precipitous sides of the great mountains between which they run frown over them and fill them with gloom. The two streams, of which the united waters lead so peaceful a wedded life in calm Glen Lui, are thundering torrents, chafing among rocks, and now and then starting unexpectedly at your feet down into deep black pools, making cataracts which, in the regular touring districts, would be visited by thousands.

But the marked feature of these glens is the ancient forest. Somewhere, I believe, in Glen Derrie, there are the remains of a saw-mill, showing that an attempt had been at one time made to apply the forest to civilised purposes; but it was a vain attempt, and neither the Baltic timber duties, nor the demand for railway sleepers, has brought the axe to the root of the tree beneath the shadow of Ben Muich Dhui. There are noble trees in the neighbouring forest of Braemar, but it is not in a state of nature. The flat stump occurs here and there, showing that commerce

has made her selection, and destroyed the ancient unity of the forest.

In Glen Derrie the tree lives to its destined old age, and, whether falling from decay or swept to the ground by the tempest, lies and rots, stopping perhaps the course of some small stream, and by solution in the intercepted waters forming a petty peat-bog, which, after a succession of generations, becomes hardened and encrusted with lichens. Near such a mass of vegetable corruption and reorganisation lies the new-fallen tree, with its twigs still full of sap. Around them stand the hoary fathers of the forest, whose fate will come next. They bear the scars and contortions of many a hard-fought battle with the storms that often sweep the narrow glen. Some are bent double, with their heads nearly touching the earth; and, among other fantastic forms, it is not unusual to see the trunk of some aged warrior twisted round and round, its outer surface resembling the strands of a rope. A due proportion of the forest is still in its manly prime—tall, stout, straight trees, lifting their huge branches on high, and bearing aloft the solemn canopy of dark green that distinguishes "the scarcely waving pine." You feel in the whole scene the

potent influence of the natural primeval forest. Doubtless a large tree, though it have been planted by man, holds rank among nature's grandees. Its self-willed strength has thrown off the taint of man's handling. In the healthy oak, with its shadow ever broadening, there is nothing to remind us of the nursery where its acorn was planted in a row with others, and its infancy was nourished some time in Queen Anne's reign. The world owes thankfulness that the Giver of all bounties has supplied so powerful an element for giving dignity to flat scenery. But there is something about the self-planted tree of the primeval forest that stamps it as the master, and in picturesque rank the superior, by a long distance, of its civilised relation.

There are some lines by Campbell "On leaving a Scene in Bavaria," which describe such a region of grandeur, loneliness, and desolation as this, with a power and melodiousness that have been seldom equalled :—

"Yes! I have loved thy wild abode,
Unknown, unploughed, untrodden shore,
Where scarce the woodman finds a road,
And scarce the fisher plies an oar;
For man's neglect I love thee more;
That art nor avarice intrude,—

To tame thy torrents' thunder-shock,
Or prune thy vintage of the rock,
Magnificently rude.

Unheeded spreads thy blossomed bud
Its milky bosom to the bee;
Unheeded falls along the flood
Thy desolate and aged tree.
Forsaken scene! how like to thee
The fate of unbefriended worth!
Like thine, her fruit unhonoured falls—
Like thee, in solitude she calls
A thousand treasures forth." *

It is after proceeding through Glen Lui Beg perhaps about three or four miles from the opening of the glen, that you begin to mount Ben Muich Dhui. At first you clamber over the roots and fallen trunks of trees; but by degrees you leave the forest girdle behind, and precipices and snow, with a scant growth of heather, become your sole companions. Keeping the track where

* These verses were published not many years before Campbell's death, and it seemed as if the ancient harp had been re-strung to more than its old compass and power. Feeling curious about them, I spoke of them to himself, and found that, like all of his that were fitted for immortality, they had been the fruit of his younger and better days. The reason he gave for not sooner publishing them was an odd one. He said he was afraid that, from their cynical tone, the world would charge him with mimicry of Byron's 'Childe Harold.' No charge need have been less feared. Without making any estimate of merits, the two poems are, both in thought and system, totally unlike.

the slope of the hill is gentlest, you pass on the right Loch Etichan, lying like a drop of ink at the base of a huge dark mural precipice—yet it is not so small when seen near at hand. This little tarn, with its background of dark rocks interspersed with patches of snow, might strongly remind the Alpine traveller of the lake near the Hospice of the Grimsel. The two scenes are alike hard and leafless and frozen-like—but the Alpine pass is one of the highways of Europe, and thus one seldom crosses it without encountering a pilgrim here and there. But few are the travellers that pass the edge of Loch Etichan, and if the adventurous tourist desires company, he had better try to find an eagle—not even the red-deer, unless driven to his utmost need, seeks such a shelter; and as for foxes and wild-cats, they know too well the value of comfortable quarters in snug glens, to expose themselves to catch cold in so Greenland-like a region.

The climber will know that he is at the top of Ben Muich Dhui, when he has to scramble no longer over scaurs or ledges of rock, but, walking on a gentle ascent of turf, finds a cairn at the highest part. Around is spread something like a table-land, and one can go to the edge of the table and look down on the floor, where the

Dee, the Avon, the Lui, and many other streams, are seen like silver threads, while their forest banks resemble beds of mignionette or young boxwood. There are at several points prodigious precipices, from which one might contemplate the scene below; but I recommend caution to the adventurer, as ugly blasts sometimes sweep along the top.

Some people are indeed too ready, in sailor's phraseology, "to swing on all top-ropes" when they have reached the crown of a great mountain. Whether it be the rarefaction of the air, or what else, a sort of mercury gets into the blood, and prompts to strange unwonted actions. Among these a favourite, almost a universal one, is the heaving down great boulders—setting them agoing, perhaps, on a field of snow, where, gliding smoothly along, they acquire a rapid velocity, then clear the snow, and are heard in their career roaring and crashing through the crags below, until they reappear with their followers in a cloud of dust in some distant vale. The labour I have seen bestowed on this phenomenon by men not given to hard work is marvellous—perhaps it is a safety escape for the excitement of the hill-top. Other marks of latent eccentricity I have known to come out under

such an influence. Once, coming in early spring upon a pair of gloves and a cane which had been left by the last autumn tourist, I saw my companion, a man of solemn demeanour and responsible walk in life, stuffing the fingers of the gloves with moss. Looking down, he found a place where a fresh heap of stones and gravel lay at the foot of a rock; then sticking in the cane, he half buried the gloves, so that the fingers protruded through the heap in a very ghastly fashion; and all with the same gravity with which he winds the red tape round his daily correspondence.

When a mountain is the chief of a district, we generally see from the top a wide expanse of country. Other mountains are seen, but wide valleys intervene, and thus they are carried to a graceful distance. Probably more summits are seen from Ben Nevis than from any other height in Scotland, but none of them press so closely on the monarch as even to tread upon his spurs. The whole view is distant and panoramic. It is quite otherwise with Ben Muich Dhui. Separated from it only by narrow valleys, which some might call mere clefts, are Cairn Toul, Brae Riach, Cairngorm, Ben Avon, and Ben-y-Bourd—all, I believe, ascending more than four thousand feet

above the level of the sea — along with several other mountains which very closely approach that fine round number. The vicinity of some of these summits to Ben Muich Dhui has something frightful in it. Standing on the western shoulder of the hill, you imagine that you might throw a stone to the top of Brae Riach. Yet, between these two summits rolls the river Dee; and Brae Riach presents, right opposite to the hill on which you stand, a mural precipice said to be two thousand feet high—an estimate which no one who looks on it will be inclined to doubt. Brae Riach, indeed, is unlike anything else in Scotland. The object that at a distant view it most resembles is Salisbury Craigs, near Edinburgh, which may serve for a model of the mighty mass, such as one sees of a mountain in a Dutchman's garden. Sometimes when I see the dark line of the craigs over the tops of the Edinburgh houses, it forcibly reminds me of Brae Riach as one sees it over the shoulders of smaller hills from Ben-y-Gloe, the Scarsoch, and other neighbouring spots whence the view is wide.

In fact, Brae Riach—an object for which I have the profoundest respect—is not properly a hill, but a long wall of precipice, extending several miles along the valley of the Dee. Even in the

sunniest weather it is black as midnight, but in a few inequalities on its smooth surface the snow lies perpetually. Sometimes I have seen it, indeed, even near the end of July, spread out an apron of snow nearly as becomingly as the Jungfrau herself. Seldom is the cleft between the two great summits free of clouds, which flit hither and thither, adding somewhat to the mysterious awfulness of the gulf, and seeming in their motions to cause certain deep but faint murmurs, which are in reality the mingled sounds of the many torrents which course through the glens, far, far below.

Having had a satisfactory gaze at Brae Riach —looking across the street, as it were, to the interesting and mysterious house on the opposite side—the traveller may probably be reflecting on the best method of descending. There is little hope, he may as well know, of his return to Braemar to-night, unless he be a person of more than ordinary pedestrian acquirements. For such a consummation he may have prepared himself according to his own peculiar ideas. Perhaps his most prudent course will be to get down to Loch Avon, and sleep under the Stone of Shelter. Proceeding along the table-land of the hill, in a direction opposite to that by which he has as-

cended, the traveller comes to a slight depression. If he descend, and then ascend the bank towards the north-east, he will find himself on the top of a precipice the foot of which is washed by the Loch. But this is a dangerous, windy spot: the ledge projects far out, and there is so little shelter near it, that, from beneath, it has the appearance of overhanging the waters. It is not an essential part of the route, and I would rather decline the responsibility of recommending it to the attention of any one who is not a practised cragsman.

In the depression just mentioned will be found, unless the elements have lately changed their arrangements and operations, the largest of those fields of snow which, even in the heat of summer, dispute with the heath and turf the pre-eminence on the upper ranges of Ben Muich Dhui. If one were desirous of using high-sounding expressions, this field might be called a glacier; but it must be at once admitted that it does not possess the qualities that have lately made these frigid regions a matter of ardent scientific inquiry. There are no icebergs or fissures; and the mysterious principle of motion which keeps these congealed oceans in a state of perpetual restlessness is unknown in the smooth snow-fields of Ben Muich Dhui.

But there are some features common to both. The snow-field, like the glacier, is hardened by pressure into a consistence resembling that of ice. A stream issues from this field of snow, formed, like the glacier streams, from the ceaseless melting. It passes forth beneath a diminutive arch, such as the source of the Rhone might appear through a diminishing glass; and looking through this arch to the interior of the hardened snow, one sees exemplified the sole pleasing peculiarity of the glacier—the deep blue tint that it assumes in the interior of the crevasses, and on the tops of the arches whence the waters issue. This field of snow, which I believe has never been known to perspire so much in the hottest season as to evaporate altogether, constitutes the main source of the Avon. The little stream, cold and leafless though it be, is not without its beauties. In few places are there to be seen such brilliant mosses as those which cluster round its source: they are of the softest pile and the most powerful colours —red, yellow, crimson, and all varieties. Their extreme freshness may be accounted for by remembering that every summer day deducts so much from the extent of the snow-field, and that the turf in its immediate neighbourhood, just uncovered and relieved from prison, is enjoying the

first fresh burst of spring in July or August. I cannot help thinking that this little region of fresh moss is quite worthy of comparison with the far-famed "Jardin" of the Talèfre, which is described in Murray's hand-book as "an oasis in the desert, an island in the ice—a rock which is covered with a beautiful herbage, and enamelled in August with flowers. This is the Jardin of this palace of nature, and nothing can exceed the beauty of such a spot, amidst the overwhelming sublimity of the surrounding objects, the Aiguilles of Charmoz, Bletière, and the Géant," &c. "Herbage," "flowers"!! Why, the jardin is merely a rock protruding out of the glacier, and covered with mosses and lichens; but, after all, was it reasonable to expect a better flower-show ten thousand feet above the level of the sea, and some nine thousand or so above all horticultural societies and prize exhibitions?

As we follow the course of the little stream, it becomes gradually enlarged by contributions from subsidiary snow-streams, and winds along for some distance not inconsiderable in the volume of its waters, passing through a beautiful channel of fine sand, probably formed of the *detritus* of the granite rocks, swept along by the floods caused by the melting of the snow in spring.

The water is exquisitely clear—a feature which at once deprives it of all right to be considered glacier-born; for filth is the peculiarity of the streams claiming this high origin; and none can have seen without regretting it, the Rhone, after having washed itself clean in the Lake Leman, and come forth a sapphire blue, becoming afterwards as dirty as ever, because it happens to fall in company with an old companion, the Arve, which, having never seen good society, or had an opportunity of making itself respectable, by the mere force of its native character brings its reformed brother back to his original mire, and accompanies him in that plight through the respectable city of Lyons, till both plunge together into the great ocean, where all the rivers of the earth, be they blue or yellow, clear or boggy, classical or obscure, become alike undistinguishable.

Perhaps our traveller is becoming tired of this small pleasant stream running along a mere declivity of the table-land of Ben Muich Dhui. But he will not be long distressed by its peaceful monotony. Presently, as he comes in sight of the valley below, and Loch Avon lying a small pool at the base of the dizzy height, the stream leaps at once from the edge of the hill, and disappears for a time, reappearing again far down in a narrow

thread as white as the snow from which it has issued. Down the wide channel, which the stream occupies in its moments of fulness and pride—moments when it is all too terrible to be approached by mortal footsteps—the traveller must find his way; and, if he understand his business, he may, by judiciously adapting to his purpose the many ledges and fractures caused by the furious bursts of the flooded stream, and by a careful system of zig-zagging, convert the channel, so far as he is himself concerned, into a sort of rough staircase, some two thousand feet or so in length.

The torrent itself takes a more direct course; and he who has descended by the ravine may well look up with wonder at what has the appearance of a continuous cataract, which, falling a large mass of waters at his feet, seems as if it diminished and disappeared in the heavens. That Staubbach, or Fall of Dust, in Lauterbrunnen, is beyond question a fine object. The water is thrown sheer off the edge of a perpendicular rock, and reaches the ground in a massive shower nine hundred feet high. But with all respect for this wonder of the world, I am scarcely disposed to admit that it is a grander fall than this rumbling, irregular, unmeasured cataract which

tumbles through the cleft between Ben Muich Dhui and Ben Avon. I should not omit, by the way, for the benefit of those who are better acquainted with Scottish than with Continental scenery, to notice the resemblance of this torrent to the Grey Mare's Tail in Moffatdale. In the character both of the stream itself and the immediate scenery there are many points of resemblance, everything connected with the Avon being of course on the larger scale. We don't do much in cataracts in Scotland, and to make the best of what we have, it may be well to dispense with some of the points which make a perfect waterfall in tourist science. It is counted in height from the tip of the precipice to the surface of the pool into which it disappears, all else being counted for nothing. If we take it in this strict fashion, the descent of the Avon, from Ben Muich Dhui to the loch, goes for little; but if we look at it just as it is, it is a sublime object. And poor as we may be in Scotland in the cataract element, let us be thankful when we look round among some of our neighbours. No custodier hurries on before, as in Germany, to lift the sluice that you may see the performance you have paid for. There are almost more touching examples still, of poverty husbanding

its poor resources, in those "Chines" which the frequenters of the Isle of Wight go wild about. I felt the sort of misgiving one has after an act of discourtesy to meritorious poverty, when I told the exhibitor of one of these Chines, after I had paid my fare, that if his chine were mine, I would flag it over as I would a dirty drain.

To come back to Ben Muich Dhui. The wanderer has perhaps indulged himself in the belief that he has been traversing these solitudes quite alone — how will he feel if he shall discover that he has been accompanied in every step and motion by a shadowy figure of huge proportions and savage mien, flourishing in his hand a great pine-tree, in ghastly parallel with all the motions of the traveller's staff? Such are the spirits of the air haunting this howling wilderness, where the pale sheeted phantom of the burial-vault or the deserted cloister would lose all his terrors and feel himself utterly insignificant. Sometimes the phantom's head is large and his body small, and then he receives the name of Fahm. James Hogg has asserted, not only poetically, but in sober prose, that he was acquainted with a man who

"Beheld the fahm glide o'er the fell."

I am bound to confess that I never had the

honour of meeting with this megacephalous gentleman, nor did I ever encounter any one who professed to have seen him, otherwise I would certainly have reported the case to the Phrenological Society. But there is no more occasion to doubt his existence than that of the spectre of the Brocken. Sometimes the shadowy spectre of Ben Muich Dhui is a gigantic exaggeration of the ordinary human form seen stalking in a line parallel with the traveller's route, striding from mountain-top to mountain-top as *he* steps from stone to stone, and imitating on an enlarged scale all his gestures. The spectre has an excellent excuse for all this unpolite mimicry—in fact he cannot help it, as the reader may infer from the following account of one of his appearances on a reduced scale. The description is given by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, who, along with Mr Grant of Ballindalloch, had ascended Ben Muich Dhui:—"On descending from the top, at about half-past three P.M., an interesting optical appearance presented itself to our view. We had turned towards the east, and the sun shone on our backs, when we saw a very bright rainbow described on the mist before us. The bow, of beautifully distinct prismatic colours, formed about two-thirds of a circle, the ex-

tremities of which appeared to rest on the lower portion of the mountain. In the centre of this incomplete circle, there was described a luminous disc, surrounded by the prismatic colours displayed in concentric rings. On the disc itself, each of the party (three in number), as they stood at about fifty yards apart, saw his own figure most distinctly delineated, although those of the other two were invisible to him. The representation appeared of the natural size, and the outline of the whole person of the spectator was most correctly portrayed. To prove that the shadow seen by each individual was that of himself, we resorted to various gestures, such as waving our hats, flapping our plaids, &c., all which motions were exactly followed by the airy figure. We then collected together, and stood as close to one another as possible, when each could see three shadows in the disc; his own as distinctly as before, while those of his two companions were but faintly discernible."*

We are now at the upper extremity of Loch Avon, or, as it is pronounced, Loch A'an, and beside the far-famed Stone of Shelter. This reminds me again of poor James Hogg, with

* 'Edinburgh New Philosophic Journal,' 1831, p. 165.

whom I had a standing feud about the extent of Loch Avon. His recollections were taken from the days of that brilliant assemblage of choice spirits on its brink recorded in the early 'Blackwoods.' When I last discussed it with James, after many of these had been gathered to the dust, I found that he stuck to his principles to the last; and in a discussion of the subject not many months before his death, after he had just remarked that he had "a blessed constitution," he reiterated his old statement, that Loch Avon exceeded twenty miles in length. His views on this subject were indeed a sort of gauge of the Shepherd's spirits. In his sombre moments he appeared to doubt if he were quite correct in insisting that the length was twenty miles; when he was in high spirits he would not abate one inch of the thirty. Now, when one man maintains that a lake is thirty miles long, and another, as I did, that it is but a tenth part of that length, it is not always taken for granted that the moderate man is in the right; but, on the contrary, paradoxical people are apt to abet his opponent; and it was provoking that one could never find any better authority against the Shepherd than his own very suspicious way of recording his experience at

Loch Avon in a note to the 'Queen's Wake': "I spent a summer day in visiting it. The hills were clear of mist, yet the heavens were extremely dark; the effect upon the scene exceeded all description. My mind during the whole day experienced the same sort of sensation as if I had been in a dream." If my departed friend has left any disciples, I can but call up against them the highest parochial authority. We are told, in the 'New Statistical Account,' that "Loch Avon lies in the southern extremity of the parish, in the bosom of the Grampian Mountains. It is estimated at *three miles long* and a mile broad. The scenery around it is particularly wild and magnificent. The towering sides of Ben-y-Bourd, Ben Muich Dhui, and Ben Bainac, rise all around it, and their rugged bases skirt its edges, except at the narrow outlet of the Avon at its eastern extremity. Its water is quite luminous, and of great depth, especially along its northern side. It abounds in trout of a black colour and slender shape, differing much in appearance from the trout found in the limpid stream of the Avon which issues from it. At the west end of the lake is the famous Clach Dhian or Shelter Stone. This stone is an immense block of granite, which seems to have

fallen from a projecting rock above it, rising to the height of several hundred feet, and forming the broad shoulder of Ben Muich Dhui. The stone rests on two other blocks imbedded in a mass of rubbish, and thus forms a cave sufficient to contain twelve or fifteen men. Here the visitor to the scenery of Loch Avon takes up his abode for the night, and makes himself as comfortable as he can where 'the Queen of the Storm sits,' and at a distance of fifteen or twenty miles from all human abode."*

At the eastern end of the lake, let us stop and take a glance at the whole scene. Right before us stands the broad top and the mural precipices of Ben Avon, severing us from the north-western world. On the right, the scarcely less craggy sides of Ben-y-Bourd and Ben Bainac wall up the waters of the lake. The other side is conspicuous by a rock which in front is a sharp peak, while, seen from the lower end of the loch, it is a precipitous bastion projecting outwards. This is the same which I have already mentioned as seeming to hang (and it certainly does so seem from this point) over the edge of the

* 'New Statistical Account of Scotland,'—Banffshire, p. 298.

water. I never happen to have seen the sun shining on Loch Avon; I suspect its waters, so beautifully transparent in themselves, are seldom visited by even a midsummer gleam. Hence arises a prevailing and striking feature of the scene—the abundant snows that fill the hollows in the banks, and sometimes, even in midsummer, cover the slopes of the mountains.

Perhaps tourists in general would consider Loch Avon the finest feature of the whole group of scenery here spoken of. For my own part I must admit that I prefer the source of the Dee, to which the reader shall be presently introduced, as more peculiar and original. Loch Avon is like a fragment of the Alps imported and set down in Scotland. One's recollections of it invariably become intertwined and confused with the features of the scenery of the upper passes. An Alpine devotee—for the passes and the glaciers are coming to be among our objects of secular worship—might console himself here, and in a few other recesses of the Cairngorm range, by recalling the impression of the distant objects of his worship. If he chose to come to the Cairngorms in winter, indeed, he might realise all the dangers, excitements, and phenomena of any of the great Alpine feats of which we now hear so

much. It would be a far better realisation of their great object in life than the devotees of skating and curling accomplish when they try to imitate these pursuits in summer by means of mechanical contrivances. Perhaps among the most enthusiastic of the Alpenstockers there are some who get a little tired of snow and precipices and glaciers, but who, after a long absence from them, might find at Loch Avon a refreshing reminder of their favourites. I remember an old Indian who used to frequent the palm-houses in a botanical garden for the sake of the "auld lang syne" of Eastern reminiscences which their contents excited. He admitted that he had had rather too much of the same sort of thing at Arcot, yet the reminiscence pleased him.

The Alpine character of the scene was, I remember, particularly marked on the 1st of August 1836: it was a late season, and every portion of the mountains that did not consist of perpendicular rock appeared to be covered with snow. The peak detached from Ben Muich Dhui shot forth from the snow as like the Aiguilles of Mont Blanc as one needle is like another.

That was on the whole an adventurous day. A band of us had set off from Braemar very early in the morning, taking a vehicle as far as it

would penetrate through Glen Lui. The day was scarcely promising, but we had so long been baffled by the weather that we all felt inclined at last to put it at defiance, or at least treat it with no respect. In Glen Lui everything was calm and solemn. As we passed through Glen Derrie the rain began to fall, and the wind roared among the old trees. The higher we ascended, the more fierce and relentless became the blast; and at length it tore away, as if a thousand steam-bellows had been let loose on us. When we came within sight of Loch Avon, the interstices in the tempest-driven clouds only showed us a dreary, winter, Greenland-like chaos of snow and rocks and torrents. It taxed our full philosophy, both of the existence of the *ego* and the *non-ego*, to preserve the belief that we were still in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and that it was the 1st of August. Our indefinite projects had gradually been contracting themselves within a narrow compass. To reach the Stone of Shelter was now our utmost object of ambition, but it was clear that that was impracticable—so we looked about for some place of refuge, and with little difficulty discovered a stone about the size of a parish church lying like a pebble at the foot of

the mountain, with a projecting ledge on the lee side, sufficiently large to protect our party. Some dry furze happened, by a singular accident, to lie heaped in a corner of this natural shed. With a little judicious management it was ignited, and burned so well as to overcome the wetness of a mass of thick heather roots which we added to it. We were in the possession of some raw venison;—do not open your eyes so, it was most unromantically and honestly come by, being duly entered in the bill at Mrs Clarke's. Having brought certain conjuring utensils with us, we proceeded to cook our food and make ourselves comfortable. Water was easily obtained in the neighbourhood; and being in possession of the other essential elements of conviviality, we resolved that, as the weather was determined to make it winter outside, we should have some of the joys of winter within. In the evening there was stillness, but no sunshine; and the long walk gave time for the saturated clothes to get dry.

Another adventure I remember in the same place, but that was long, long ago; in fact, it was when in boyhood I had first entered into that grand wilderness. Some note of the blunders that brought it about may be a seasonable warning to the unwary, of the characteristic

difficulties and perils of the ground. I had reached the top of Ben Muich Dhui early in the day. The little wallet of provisions had been carelessly left on a tuft of heather where I had rested, and I could not afterwards find the spot. Somewhat tired and faint with hunger, I descended the rocks by the side of the cataract, believing that Loch Avon, seemingly so small from the summit of the mountain, was the little Tarn of Etichan, which had been passed in the ascent from Deeside. It was alarming to find the lake extending its bulk as I approached, and to see the glens looking so different from any of those I was acquainted with on Deeside; but to have returned up the mountain would have been insanity, and by pursuing the track of a stream, one is sure in the end—at least in this country—to reach inhabited land; so I followed the waters of the Avon, so deep and transparent, that many miles down, where they join the Spey, their deceptious character is embodied in the proverb—

> "The water of A'an, it rins sae clear,
> 'Twould beguile a man o' a hunder year."

A few miles below the exit of the stream from the loch, as the extreme dimness of the valley showed that sunset was approaching, I met a drover who had gone up into the wilderness in

search of stray black cattle. He could speak little English, but was able to give me the startling intelligence that by what was merely a slight divergence at first, I had gone down towards the strath of the Spey instead of that of the Dee; and that I was some thirty miles from the home I had expected to reach that evening. My new friend took me under his charge, and conducted me to a bothy, made of the bent roots of the pine-tree found in the neighbouring mosses, and covered with turf. It was so low that one could not stand upright in it, and a traveller might have walked over it without observing that it was an edifice made with human hands. The sole article of furniture of which it could boast was a trough, in which my new friend hospitably presented me with a supper of oatmeal and water—my first nourishment for the day. The supply was liberal, whatever might be thought of the quality of the repast. The floor of the bothy was strewed with heather, somewhat coarse and stumpy, on which I lay down and slept.

Conscious of a confused noise and a sort of jostling, it was with some surprise that I perceived that no less than ten men had crowded themselves into that little hut and had lighted a fire.

This was like a realisation of some of Cooper's romantic incidents, where, after a silent desert has been described, it somehow or other becomes suddenly full of people and fertile in adventure. My new companions were not of the most agreeable cast; they were rough and surly, hiding, as I thought, a desire to avoid communication under the pretence of inability to speak anything but Gaelic; while, in the midst of their Celtic communications with each other, they swore profusely in the Scottish vernacular. What their pursuits were, or what occasion they had to be in that wild region, was to me a complete mystery, opened up slightly by reflecting on the two great lawless pursuits, smuggling and poaching, of the fruit of neither of which, however, did I see any symptom. Such a position was not, for many reasons, great and small, to be envied: however, it was the best policy to make one of themselves for the time being, so far as their somewhat repulsive manners would permit.

It was not, however, with much regret, that, after having been packed for some hours with them on the hard stumps of heather, I left them in full snore at sunrise on a clear morning, and ascended the hill dividing the waters that run into the Spey from those which feed the Dee.

The dews lay heavy on the moss and heather, and, as I neared the top of the ridge, glittered brightly in the new-risen sun; while here and there the mists, forming themselves into round balls, gradually rolled up the sides of the hills, and, mounting like balloons, disappeared in the blue sky. As I passed down through the broken forest-land on the other side, I could see, on the top of the gentler elevations, the slender-branched horns of the red-deer between me and the sky. Even on a near approach the beautiful animals showed no signs of panic,—perhaps they knew the traveller's innocence of the power to harm them; and they gazed idly as he passed, only tossing their heads in the air, and scampering off disdainfully when he approached offensively close.

I reached the Dee by following the stream of the Quoich, which, like the Lui, passes through the remains of an ancient forest. It derives its convivial name from a peculiar cataract often visited by tourists from Braemar. Here the gneiss is hollowed by the action of the water into circular cavities like those of the Caldron Linn; and in one of these the guides will have the audacity to tell you that a bacchanalian party once made grog by tossing in a few ankers of

brandy, and that they consumed the whole on the premises.

I must now tell the pilgrim how he is to find his way by the more direct route from Loch Avon to Braemar, and one may at the same time afford a hint to any one who desires to proceed towards the Lake without crossing Ben Muich Dhui. Near where the stream of the Avon issues, it is necessary to turn to the right, and to keep rather ascending than descending. In a few miles the brow of the hill shuts out the wintry wild, and in a hollow are seen two small lakes called the Dhu Lochan, with nothing about them to attract notice but their dreariness and their blackness. The course of a burn which feeds them marks the way to the watershed between the Spey and the Dee, whence a slight descent leads down to Glen Derrie, the position of which has been already described.

I now propose another excursion to the sources of the Dee. The wanderer is to suppose himself again at the Linn of Dee. As he proceeds up the stream, the banks become flatter, and the valleys wider and less interesting, until, after a good many miles, the river turns somewhat northwards, and the banks become more close and rocky. At this spot there is a fine waterfall, which, in the midst

of a desert, has contrived to surround itself with a not unbecoming clump of trees. The waters afterwards fork into two; the Geusachan burn joining the stream from the west. At last the conical peak of Cairn Toul appears overtopping all the surrounding heights; and then, a rent intervening, we approach and soon walk under the great mural precipice of Brae Riach, which we have already surveyed to so much advantage from the top of Ben Muich Dhui.

The adventurer is now on the spot which to me, of all this group of scenery, appears to be the most remarkable, as being so unlike any other part of Scotland, or any place one can see elsewhere. The narrowness of the glen and the height of its walled sides are felt in the constrained attitude in which one looks up on either side to the top, as if one were surveying some object of interest in a tenth-storey window of our own High Street. This same narrowness imparts a sensation as if one could not breathe freely. If we compare this defile to another of the grandest mountain-passes in Scotland—to Glencoe—we find a marked difference between them. The scene of the great tragedy, grand and impressive as it is, has no such narrow walled defiles. The mountains are high, but they are

of the sugar-loaf shape—abrupt, but never one mass of precipice from top to bottom. Cairn Toul resembles these hills, though it is considerably more precipitous; but Brae Riach is as much unlike them as a tower is distinct from a dome.

In this narrow glen I could tell of sunsets and sunrises, not accompanied by such disagreeable associations as those I have recorded in Glen Avon. Picture the very hottest day of a hot year. The journey in the wide burning glen up from the Linn of Dee has been accomplished only with the aid of sundry plunges in the deep, cold pools, which the stream has filled with water fresh from the inner chambers of the mountains. The moment you enter the narrow part of the glen, though the sun is still pretty far up in the heavens, you are in twilight gloom. You have no notice of his leaving the earth, save the gradual darkening of all things around you. Then the moon is up, but there is no further consciousness of her presence, save that the sharp peak of Cairn Toul shows its outline more clearly even than by daylight; and a lovely roof of light-blue, faintly studded with stars, contrasts with the dark sides of the rocky chamber. In such a time, when one has mounted so far above the level of the waters

that they only make a distant murmur—when there is not a breath of wind stirring anything—it is strange with how many mysterious voices the mountain yet speaks. Sometimes there is a monotonous and continuous rumble, as if some huge stone, many miles off, were loosened from its position, and tumbling from rock to rock. Then comes a loud, distinct report, as if a rock had been split; and faint echoes of strange wailings touch the ear, as if this solemn desert were frequented at night by beings as little known to the inhabitants of our island as the uncouth wilds in which they live.

But let not the wanderer indulge in thoughts of this description beyond the bounds of a pleasant imaginativeness. Let him take it for granted that neither cayman nor rattlesnake will disturb his rest; and having pitched on a dry spot, let him pluck a large quantity of heather, making up a portion of it in bundles, and setting them on end closely packed together with the flower uppermost, while he reserves the rest to heap over himself. It is such a bed as a prince has seldom the good fortune to take his rest on; and if the wanderer have a good conscience, and the night be fine, he will sleep far more soundly than if he were packed on the floor of a bothy, with ten

Highlanders who every now and then are giving their shoulders nervous jerks against the heather stumps, or scratching the very skin off their wrists. Perhaps a Londoner would rest amid such conditions all the more refreshingly by knowing that for sleeping in the open air in Scotland he is not liable to the punishment of vagrancy as he is in England.

When the wanderer awakens, he finds himself nearer to the top of Ben Muich Dhui than he had probably supposed, and the ascent is straight and simple. He may be there to see the sun rise, a sight which has its own peculiar glories, though most people prefer seeing the event from some solitary hill, which, like Ben Nevis, Shehallion, or the Righi, stands alone, and looks round on a distant panorama of mountains.

To return to the Dee.—The river divides again, one stream coming tumbling down through the cleft between Cairn Toul and Brae Riach, called the Garchary Burn. The other, less precipitously inclined, comes from between Brae Riach and Ben Muich Dhui, and is called the Larig. Like what the Nile was a while ago, but is now no longer, the Dee is a river of disputed source. As we shall presently find, the right of the Garchary to that distinction is strongly maintained

by pretty high authority; but I am inclined to adopt the Larig, not only because it appears to contain a greater volume of water, but because it is more in the line of the glen, and, though rough enough, is not so desperately flighty as the Garchary, and does not join it in those great leaps which, however surprising and worthy of admiration they may be in themselves, are not quite consistent with the calm dignity of a river destined to pass close to a university town.

Following, then, the Larig over rocks and rough stones, among which it chafes and foams, we reach a sort of barrier of stones laid together by the hand of nature with the regularity of an artificial breakwater. As we pass over this barrier, a hollow rumbling is heard beneath; for the stream, at least at ordinary times, finds its way in many rills deep down among the stones. When we reach the top of the bank we are on the edge of a circular basin, abrupt and deep, but full of water so exquisitely clear that the pebbly bottom is everywhere visible. Here the various springs, passing by their own peculiar conduit-pipes from the centre of the mountain, meet together, and cast up their waters into the round basin—one can see the surface disturbed by the force of their gushing. Soon after passing these "wells of Dee"

we are at the head of the pass of Cairngorm, and join the waters which run to the Spey.

The claims of the Garchary to the leadership are supported by that respectable topographer Dr Skene Keith, probably on account of his own adventurous ascent of that turbulent stream, which I shall give in his own words, all the more readily that the reader will find in it some evidence to confirm my assurances of the grand scale in which the scenery of this district is cast:—

"At two o'clock P.M. we set out to climb the mountain, still keeping in sight of the river. In a few minutes we came to the foot of a cataract, whose height we found to be one thousand feet, and which contained about a fourth part of the water of which the Garchary was now composed. In about half an hour after, we perceived that the cataract came from a lake in the ridge of the mountain of Cairn Toul, and that the summit of the mountain was another thousand feet above the loch, which is called Loch na Youn, or the Blue Lake. A short time after we saw the Dee (here called the Garchary from this rocky bed, which signifies in Gaelic *the rugged quarry*) tumbling in great majesty over the mountain down another cataract — or, as we afterwards found it, a chain of natural cascades—above

thirteen hundred feet high. It was in flood at this time from the melting of the snow, and the late rains; and what was most remarkable, an arch of snow covered the narrow glen from which it tumbled over the rocks. We approached so near to the cataract as to know that there was no other lake or stream; and then we had to climb among huge rocks, varying from one to ten tons, and to catch hold of the stones or fragments that projected, while we ascended in an angle of seventy or eighty degrees. A little before four o'clock we go to the top of the mountain, which I knew to be Brae Riach, or the speckled mountain. Here we found the highest well, which we afterwards learned was called Well Dee, and other five copious fountains, which make a considerable stream before they fall over the precipice. We sat down completely exhausted, at four o'clock P.M., and drank of the highest well, which we found to be four thousand and sixty feet above the level of the sea; and whose fountain was only thirty-five degrees of heat on the 17th of July, or three degrees above the freezing-point. We mixed some good whisky with this water, and recruited our strength [a very judicious proceeding]. Then we poured as a libation into the fountain a little of the excel-

lent whisky which our landlord had brought along with him [a very foolish proceeding]. After resting half an hour, we ascended to the top of Brae Riach at five P.M., and found it to be four thousand two hundred and eighty feet above the level of the sea."*

I must not leave this mountain desert without asking attention to a peculiar feature in the hills connected with a disastrous history. In many places the declivities are seamed with trenches some forty or fifty feet deep, appearing as if they were made by a gigantic ploughshare which, instead of sand, casts up huge masses of rock on either side, in parallel mounds, like the moraines of a glacier. There are many of these furrows on the side of Ben Muich Dhui nearest to the Dee. Though I had long noticed them, it was not until I happened to be in that district, immediately after the great floods of 1829, that I was forcibly told of the peculiar cause of this appearance. The old furrows were as they had been before —the stones, grey, weather-beaten, and covered with lichen, while heather and wild-flowers grew in the interstices. But among them were new scaurs, still like fresh wounds, with the stones

* Dr Skene Keith's 'Survey of Aberdeenshire,' p. 644.

showing the sharpness of late fracture, and no herbage covering the blood-red sand. It was clear, from the venerable appearance of the older scaurs, that only at long intervals do the elements produce this formidable effect—at least many years had passed since the last instance before 1829 had occurred. The theory of the phenomenon appeared to be pretty simple. Each spring is a sort of stone cistern, which, through its peculiar duct, sends forth to one part of the surface of the earth the water it receives from another. If, through inordinately heavy falls of rain, there be a great volume of water pressing on the entrance tubes, the expansive force of the water in the cistern increases in that accumulating ratio which is practically exemplified in the hydraulic press, and the whole mass of water bursts forth from the side of the mountain, as if it were a staved barrel, rending rocks, and scattering their shattered fragments around like dust. Hence, we may presume, arose these fierce pulsations which made the rivers descend wave on wave. Hence, too, the assertions of some of the people of the district, that they heard and saw a piece of the mountain of Ben Avon fall down. If this be a just explanation of the cause why the rises in the rivers were instantaneous,

while the downfall of rain which caused them was continuous, then it is a fact that in the rocky recesses of those mountains there are great tanks which may at any time burst forth on a rainfall, exceeding perhaps but by a few inches some specific height—just as a mine explodes when the ignition of the train reaches it.

That deluge was a memorable epoch in the strath of the Dee, and in all others watered by streams descending from the northern Grampians. People speaking of family events there used to particularise them as having occurred before or after "the flood." It is good that such an event should be remembered and its special phenomena studied, for what has occurred once may occur again. I remember well to what a terrible ordeal it subjected the kindly stately lady of the old house on the brink of the river, renowned for its abounding birches. She who, when vagrant kinsmen arrived soiled and tired and hungry at her hospitable door at utterly untimely hours, had not the heart to administer any more severe rebuke than a recommendation not to arrive after midnight, had on that dreadful night of the 3d of August to summon the iron nerve of her warlike race. It was she who had to give courage and hope to domestic and guest while the tor-

rent which cut them off from human intercourse roared around them madder and madder every hour, as if furiously chafing for its prey. The place of refuge was naturally the tower with the vaulted dining-room; but even this mass of stone, which seemed built to endure with the crust of the earth, shivered from its foundation before the rush of the waters and the trees and great stones which, like a besieging enemy, they cast against it, and nothing seemed more likely than that at any time the whole might come down with a crash. When the subsidence of the waters permitted the mistress of the mansion to walk through her drenched and desolated grounds, her little dog fell a-yelping at the foot of a tree, and, looking up, she saw sticking in its fork a dead fawn. It was a neat enough antithesis to this that a neighbouring peasant-woman caught a trout in her plate-rack. It all reminded one of our school friend the fables of the Metamorphoses, and

> "Ille supra segetes, aut mersæ columina villæ
> Navigat; hic summa piscem deprendit in ulmo."

Johnson said he would like to see a shipwreck from Slains Castle—not, as he explains himself, that he would desire such a thing to be performed for his gratification, but if a shipwreck *did* occur

there, he would like to see it. So, in any of the places where its terrors were at their highest, it was a piece of good fortune to have seen the floods of '29. I only saw the August flood in the lower reaches of the rivers, as where the Dee shattered the granite mole or pier at Aberdeen. It had been built to resist the sea, not the river, and thus was taken by surprise, like a general attacked by an unexpected enemy on his rear. I remember, too, the "wight wa'" of Balgonie brig threateningly pressed on by the dark waters. But, being on the tramp soon afterwards, the Findhorn favoured me with a supplementary flood reputed to be as good as its predecessor. There had been two or three days of heavy, heavy rain, when a bright cheerful morning came, and I was wending my way out of Forres. I was told that the water was up, and I would be stopped. When I came to the river, as I supposed, it did not seem a serious obstacle; it was in a great hurry, to be sure, but neither very broad nor very deep. This, however, was a detachment from the main stream, wandering away for its own purposes into a parallel hollow. When I turned round a little the whole was before me. What used to be a glen with a river winding at the foot of its banks,

was itself filled with water to the mouth, and that water was hurrying and roaring past as one supposes an American rapid to do. Quantities of trees were floating down; a few others still keeping their ground raised their heads above the tide, along with certain cottage chimneys and some fragments of a ruined bridge. On the whole, it was a scene to be remembered ever, but not with relish. It had all the characteristics of a stream carrying with it death and destruction—not life and fruitfulness.

All over the country I had abundant opportunity of seeing testimonies to the havoc these floods had spread around them. Noble trees prostrated, verdant river-banks torn down, rocks even upset and scattered in fragments. But a sojourner did not take these so much to heart as the testimonies to the ruin of man's patient industry. The broad haughs or alluvial deposits at the sides of the rivers—the only arable land in the mountain districts—were seamed in great gashes, which might have been empty canals, but that you saw plainly no spade or mattock had been used in the delving of them, and no puddler had worked up the sides, smooth though they were. Over these gashes hung the drowned grain crop, green and rotting. Turnpike roads had their

metal and curb-stones pitched deep into bogland to puzzle future geologists. Still more touching were the remnants of human habitations, and the broken bridges brought the whole affair home to the wanderer's notice in a very significant and inconvenient form. I remember especially one instance of this. It was getting dark, and between me and Fort Augustus, where I meant to sleep, was the Feachloin, a considerable stream—the same that falls over the rock at Foyers. There were irreconcilable opinions among the people I met. Some said the bridge was carried off—I could not pass; others said I might. It was a fair case of the truth being between the two. Substantially the bridge was carried off, but one parapet of it remained, spanning the deep black but narrow stream with a mere rib of stone. I may now confess—what would have brought me at the time utter ignominy among my own set—that I did not walk, but crawled along it, and was glad when I got to the end.

It happened that this great phenomenon of the Moray floods was observed and recorded by one especially fitted for that function—Sir Thomas Dick Lauder. He was a man of genius both with the pen and the pencil. His book is a thorough romance of realities. Perhaps he owed something

of the quickening of the spirit towards his task by the desolation of his own beautiful grounds of Relugas; but the real inspiration of the book sprang from his kind heart, and its sympathy with the sufferings of those who could less bear the weight of their losses, small though they might be in the great world's eye.* It would be useless to cite that work here, as, however spirited the passages may be found to be, what the author saw and best described did not occur in this district. There is, however, a little book which no one should enter the district of the Dee without putting in his pocket—'The Deeside Guide,' by James Brown. From it I adopt the following cursory description of the whole affair; and it will be admitted that, whatever be the merits of the style, it is the author's special property, and not likely to have been borrowed from any standard models:—

"For some time previous there had been more than a common downfall of rain, and in especial the day before, the rain had been pouring down in one incessant torrent; but the rise in the river was nothing to speak of. Up among the glens,

* This book is now scarce and costly. Query to the publishing community, Whether a new edition is not demanded?

too, there had been heard the rumblings of many fierce thunder-claps; but this, at that season of the year, was nothing unusual. Nowise alarmed, therefore, and dreading nothing, the people of Ballater went to their beds as usual, and laid them down to sleep without fear or suspicion. But at the dead hour of midnight they were awakened from their sleep by the terrible roaring of the river, which roared louder than any thunder; and before they got their heads well raised from their pillows, and while they were yet terrified by that awful and uncouth din, and perfectly astounded, knew not what to do, the rush of the waters was heard near at hand, and, in a hand-clap, in it swept with a furious swirl and a swell, dashing everything before it, and breaking in waves over the very beds where the people lay quaking and panting with fear at this strange and unaccountable calamity. Many, heedless of the awful roaring of the river, lay dead asleep, and peacefully slept on till the cold plash of the water on their faces startled them wide awake. Then began such a terrible commotion, such a hurrying to and fro, and such a perplexity and confusion on all hands, as never man saw in Ballater before. People awakened from their sleep by the cold water plashing about them, suddenly started

up, and, scarcely knowing what they did, rushed out from their houses naked and unclothed, shouting and lamenting when they beheld on all sides of them nothing but a great sea of troubled waters, upon which they saw floating, sheep, hay-ricks, great trees torn up by the roots, chairs, tables, eight-day clocks, and all sorts and manner of things, while always the river was roaring on like thunder. Such a running about as was then to be seen! Such a sound of wailing and of woe as was then to be heard! For all the world like the ants in any of the ant-hillocks on Craigendarroch, when you tear a piece of it down, did the people of Ballater run about to and fro, hither and thither, on that awful night. Pitiful to behold! There were some hurrying about with their goods in their arms, others labouring like anything trying to catch their furniture as it was floating out at their doors; some running with their bairns in their bosoms away from that terrible flood—others with their wives or mothers upon their shoulders, wading breast-deep through the water, and sometimes stumbling and falling, disappearing wholly out of sight for a minute, then tottering up again, while the women set up their screamings more desperately than ever; here a whole family rushing out helter-skelter,

plashing across the square like as many geese in a burn—there some bonny young lady visitor with a blanket about her, wading to where she saw dry land, and picking her steps, poor thing, as well as she could, while always she gave the other scream and shudder as she plumped into any pool above the knee: and all these people little better than naked; some with nothing but their shirts on, others with a blanket about them—some with petticoats, some with trousers; in short, as you may conceive, it was a scene just altogether indescribable. Meantime the river continued to rise higher and higher still; greater lots of trees, bushes, and other wood began to gather about the arches of the bridge; and as they were still blocking up the water-course, it became an evident thing to all the sorrowful people of Ballater that down their brave bridge must go; not that some did not still entertain hopes, and always as the stately structure held out, their hopes grew the stronger. Many began to think that the water was beginning to abate, and vainly thought that the substantial workmanship of the bridge, as it had so long held together, would surely withstand against the raging water, now that the worst, as they thought, was over. But always the water rose higher upon the

bridge, and another tree was still dashing against the piers, making the whole structure to tremble. At the last the waters were so dammed up that no power on earth could withstand them, and the first sign that the bridge was falling was a loud crack which it was heard to give, as loud as the report of a musket. Then the solid masonry of the bridge was seen slowly to bend like a bow of fir, till, with a noise like that of the loudest thunder, it flew from each other into a thousand bits, and was hurled with a plash into the river to be seen no more. The fall of the bridge shook the ground near it like an earthquake; and such was the force of the river that, as it furiously rushed over the falling bridge, it made the spray of its waters flee over the roof of the inn. Thus perished the stately bridge of Ballater, once a great ornament to the village, and an unspeakable convenience; and now its place is supplied by a beautiful bridge of Braemar timber, which, while it is useful and ornamental, reflects credit on the spirited contributors to its erection, and also on the Messrs Gibb, by whom it was planned and executed."

Having endeavoured to give an example of what may be met with by getting loose of

the regions dominated over by guides and their auxiliaries or accomplices, I cannot conclude without lifting my protest against this and some other cognate systems of slavery. We inhabitants of the British empire no doubt have secured our personal freedom from political despotism; and, alas! close as other nations one after another appeared to have come to the same happy destination, so one after another seems to be going back to its old regulation paternalism, as the inmates of Newgate, when Lord George Gordon's rioters burned it, were many of them caught wandering in the ruins. Perhaps it is part of the great compensating principle of the world's government that, along with our political freedom, we should be infested by a multitude of conventional slaveries of our own making and maintaining, from which countries where there is less political liberty are free. The fact is, that the inhabitants of the island of Great Britain, especially of its southern portion, are in all things too dutiful and laborious. They are extremely bad hands at getting up real enjoyment. Start as you will, any pursuit, however joyous, it is sure in the end to crystallise itself into the hardness and angularity of a laborious duty.

See the affluent merchant, early in August, on

his way to his moor. The marks of care are deeply cut into his face. No one ever saw him that way on 'Change—and for the best of reasons; he knows his ground there, and no banker would be so insane as to refuse his drafts. But in the work he is now after, he has anxieties such as may have haunted the sleeping tent of M'Lennan or Grant. The question with him is, Whether the 'Inverness Courier' will announce to the London journals that on the critical twelfth his "bag" has reached the canonical number. His heart vibrates between the awful anxieties of a great success and a great failure.

An angler I have seen, also a successful and cheerful sojourner among what are deemed the more important walks of life, whose anxiety it was painful to contemplate as he endeavoured to coax towards a substantial realisation, a certain nibble, which was the fruit of four hours' hard work both of body and mind—a mind disturbed with the probability, coming hourly nearer to certainty, that his rod was to make no "basket" that day. Cricket—that pastime so unseductive to the uninitiated that a French princess, after enduring a couple of hours of it, sent a message to represent that she would be glad if the gentlemen would abbreviate the preliminaries, and

begin with the game—cricket, as I am informed by persons interested, is becoming a terror to those English youth who are not endowed with preternatural patience, punctuality, obedience, and general endurance, so much are these qualities drawn on by the professional cricket-masters, whose sacred function it is to take order that this great institution does not degenerate in the hands of the patrician youth of our day. Even the Alpenstock, since a run upon it has set in, is becoming a sort of working tool with which a hard day's duty is to be done; and, worse still, when the workman has done that part of his duty he takes up another tool, the quill, and performs with it work still harder and more dutiful and dreary, as all who have made attempts on some Alpine volumes have sensitively felt.

In the days of Sir Charles Grandison it was the duty of every youth in a certain station to perform "the grand tour." Its stages were as exactly laid down as those of the overland mail to India; yet, lest the victim should stray from it, or neglect any of its established observances, a person was set over him who was aptly called a "governor," since his functions were so far more rigid than those of a tutor that they could only be likened to those of one ruling over a for-

tress or a prison. It is amazing how advancing civilisation applies its organisation to shifting circumstances. Multitudinous as our tourists now are, they are under discipline at least as strict as that of the travelling governor's.

It is a pity to have it to say that the descendants of those Helvetian patriots who achieved the freedom of their country, are among the most persevering and subtle members of the conspiracy for riveting upon the free-born Briton the chains of the social tyranny I have been referring to. I owe the recollection of many delightful days to wanderings among the Alps; but the district has its blots. Chief of these is the sad abandonment of personal freedom to which one is subjected. You are in a land where every human being lives by showing the stranger about; it is the territory of a vast corporation of showmen, who are determined to transact business with every one who enters it. If you ask that peasant, who professes to be engrossed in his hay, whether the right or the left hand path leads to Interlachen, you find that you have engaged a sort of valet for some unknown period. Nay, with no such excuse, a stout native will select you for his victim. The road is open to him as well as to you; he may walk side by side with you—nor

can you stop his mouth if he chooses to insist on pointing out to you the prominent objects of interest on the way; and when at last he maintains that you have taken him into your employment, and you desire to refer the matter to a magistrate, you are directed to the landlord of the inn at which the prosecutor serves, who finds that appearances are against you, and decides accordingly. I remember on one occasion, when a native fixed himself, like the old man of the sea, on a small party I was one of, we came to a consultation, and passed a resolution to beat him. We communicated it to him pretty emphatically. He took a surly thought on the matter, probably balancing present pains against future redress, and walked off.

Every common cattle-gate you pass is opened by a mob, who all claim a share in the reward appropriate to that important service. Oh, horrible! on the brink of that precipice see two men struggling with each other in mortal conflict! Don't be alarmed, they are only exhibiting to the stranger the national accomplishment of wrestling—presently they will come for their money. You get such a start that you nearly tumble into the gorge, from the discharge of a cannon close to your ear, the roar of which

reverberates among the rocks like the discharge of a park of artillery. While you are trying to keep down your indignation at this malicious trick, you find that you are expected to pay for it, for it was done for your special benefit. Then comes a string of croaking girls, singing that horrid 'Ranz des Vaches.' Further on stands a big fellow with an Alpine horn to astonish you; and—is it possible?—he is attended by two full-dressed damsels, in the Drury Lane costume of Swiss peasants, performing for your benefit on musical glasses. The same spirit, when it can get no higher utterance, vents itself in children holding out wild strawberries in their dirty hands, or even a common flower or two—a practice which Byron, surely not expecting credit for simplicity, speaks of as

> "Peasant girls with deep-blue eyes,
> And hands which offer early flowers."

One may get rid of this torture by leaving the established touring-ground. I have found that by so simple a measure as crossing the Grimsel and going down the valley of the Rhone —which, for some occult reason, tourists were not under an obligation to "do"—I was entirely free from the tormenting swarm in the Oberland. But the affair assumes another and more serious

aspect. Of course, it is not in human nature for a person to frequent a country and avoid seeing some types of its most remarkable scenery. But this cannot be accomplished in the Alps or other snowy ranges without assistance, and the traveller must subject himself to the humiliation of taking an occasional guide—a calamity to which I have already made allusion.

In him one has not employed a servant, but has put himself at the disposal of a master, who bids him do this, and he doeth it—go there, and he goeth. Your thoughts, even, are not your own, for he will speak to you; and if he do not excite in you a sympathetic response to his separate thoughts, he will at all events drag you away from your own by rousing your indignation. He becomes your instructor too, for the time being, in archæology, if not also in geology and botany. Would the meek tourist think of sending his son to a lubberly peasant or a vagabond hanger-on at an inn to have him taught science? Yet such is the spell with which he becomes besotted, that he puts himself—a man past middle age, perhaps—to school with precisely such a person, to be instructed in some of the most delicate and difficult departments of knowledge, and imbibes all he is told with an

implicit reliance which he would not bestow on the works of the greatest philosopher of the age, in the freedom of his own elbow-chair.

He who has ever had the fortune to hear members of this class explaining to foreigners the objects with which he is familiar at home, may estimate what amazing and preposterous nonsense he is liable to be told by guide, commissioner, or cicerone in foreign parts. It is sometimes supposed by simple souls, that these men are the depositories of the old traditions of their districts. Traditions! Nonsense. Such things disappear wherever books circulate or places become spoken of in print. In these the oral tradition becomes only a bad version of the best history or poem relating to the district. At Loch Katrine you are now told the whole story of the Lady of the Lake as a local legend founded on fact; in Carlisle they show you the dungeon where Fergus M'Ivor was chained; and in Leipzic one may see the cellar where Mephistopheles drew various kinds of wines out of the table with his gimlet.

It is important to know where the guide is needed, and where the curse can be dispensed with. One might manage several of the passes and the tops of some considerable hills without

him, but he becomes, to the stranger, necessary on the glacier. I feel it yet—the bitter humiliation with which, after having tried the glacier unassisted, with no profitable result, unless the moral instruction communicated by a good fright might be so characterised, I was reduced to the necessity of taking an attendant, as I have already mentioned, when glacier work was to be done. A guide is, I repeat, as necessary on the glacier as a pilot on an unknown sea, and from the same cause—the existence of sunken rocks. These make reefs and breakers in the one case; in the other they interrupt the uniform progress of the glacier, and create those terrific chaotic jumbles of spike and precipice which, were you getting within any of them unguided, would make you feel so utterly beyond the reach of hope.

Then the changes are so quick and terrible. A *tourmente* or snow-storm sweeps over, and in a few minutes there is a treacherous covering on those deep crevasses which you have been vainly endeavouring to see to the bottom of. Over the field of snow where, in the hot sunshine, you have walked knee-deep in slush, the shadow of the mountain has passed, and on a sudden it is metamorphosed into a crust of glittering slippery ice. In the morning, as you pass upwards, you

may notice a ball of quartz basking in the sun, and melting a small circular orifice round it in the ice: while you are absent the cavity increases, until the vagrant melted waters on the surface of the glacier find it out, and, tumbling in, break through to the caverns below; and so it comes to pass that the wanderer, whose eyes feasted at morn on a small bowl, of a cerulean blue so pure and clear as no artist ever fashioned in the finest Bohemian glass—when he looks for it at eve sees a ghastly chasm, into which a roaring torrent finds its way far down beyond the stretch of human eyesight into the dark and rugged vaults of the glacier. Such and fifty other shifting phenomena put the glacier beyond the safe handling of the self-relying pedestrian; and it is therefore necessary that, while he is at work so ambitious, he should abandon his liberty, and put himself into the hands of a professional adviser.

If the practice of slavery stopped at this point, or even near it, it would be all very well. I remember a good and sterling friend, a Chancery barrister—he was steeped in all acquired and conventional accomplishments, and had many talents which he could employ according to regulation. With a slight misgiving, however, I

am bound to confess that the incident of our intercourse on which my memory dwells with the keenest and distinctest recollection was the anxious way in which—it is more than twenty years ago now—he put to me the question, if I could recommend to him "a steady guide to Arthur Seat."

Another instance I recall of dutiful submission —it was to the dictation of the guide-books. A man in a considerable position, and very good on 'Change, had just finished the tour of Northern Germany. In the course of conversation at table, just after his return, some casual remark awakened him to the consciousness of the appalling fact that, when at Potsdam, among the crowd of other claims on his notice which he had to discharge within a very limited period, he had omitted to visit the mill of the litigious meal-grinder of Sans-Souci. In fact, the fountains being in solemn squirt, he was so much delighted with them that for once he enjoyed himself and neglected his duty. I saw him tremble and change colour, and from certain circumstances connected with my own travels, at once recognised the cause. He cast an imploring glance at me which, more eloquently than words, besought me to keep his secret—

and I did so. For some time he was like "a man forbid"—given to extreme depression of spirits, and a sickness of all the joys of life, which could not fail to awaken a lively anxiety within the circle of his family and close friends.

At length he disappeared mysteriously for about five days, and the alarm of his family was agreeably dissipated by his rejoining them an altered man, endowed with all his old geniality and serenity. He began immediately, in a matter-of-course manner, to speak of the Sans-Souci windmill, and as he was a man of perfect probity, I knew that he had seen it, having made a special pilgrimage for the purpose. It was accomplished, of course, with considerable rapidity, since the pilgrim's course was not burdened with duties at any other shrine but this special one; and never have I known an instance of a journey proving in its results so well worthy of its cost. He seemed, indeed, very desirous to obtain exact value for his money, for his talk about the mill bore much about the same proportion to his conversation on all other topics, as the time spent in the second journey to Potsdam bore to the rest of his travels. He became ingenious in leading the conversation in that direction. If republicanism, despotism, the aristocracy, the

Habeas Corpus Act, or any other political topic were on the carpet, it was easy to discuss the story of Frederic and the miller as a constitutional precedent. Anything said about law of course led to it directly. Political economy led to it through the progress of machinery back to the days of mere wind and water power, and manufactures took the same course, while agriculture found an easy way to the mill as connected with agrarian husbandry.

When things come to a pass like this, it is necessary to take a stand. And you can't take a stand against such things by simply saying it has gone far enough, and must be checked,—it is necessary to bring some antagonistic principle against it—something that meets it with the impetus of a counter authority. Of course, to the worshipper there is no use of reasoning; for, like the pilgrims to Jerusalem or Mecca, the performance of the vow is only rendered more acceptable and precious by the labours, the anxieties, and privations attending its fulfilment. But let those who are not devotees, but mere casual indolent followers, doing as they see others do, just consider for a moment what a wretched affair that of "I can say I have seen it" is. Does it not mean this—that your seeing has been specially charac-

terised by the absence of any lesson taught you, or impression made on you, which leaves consciousness of that which you have seen, or even a knowledge that you have seen it, beyond that knowledge which arises from your having formed the intention of doing so, and taken the proper steps to put this intention in execution?

Let those who have any hesitation about the condemnation of these slavish ways look to the practice of original thinkers. I hold that the qualities, instincts, capacities, or whatever you like to call them, which take the mind through fresh fields in literature, whether as a reader or an author, will make their owner an independent rover over nature, disdaining the slavery of the paths beaten for him by established rules and authorities. One can scarcely believe in a man, with an intellect that demands freedom to pursue its own original instincts, calmly submitting the enjoyments of the eye to the dictation of others. Accordingly, we find traces of curious and special travel in almost all men of original thought, although fate has often chained them so sternly to some destined spot that their wanderings have cost them dear. What a picture poor Goldie gives us, when, after that description of the good man's home, so well known by its con-

clusion about learning the luxury of doing good, he goes on :—

"But me, not destined such delights to share,
My prime of life in wandering spent, and care,
Impelled with steps unceasing to pursue
Some fleeting good that mocks me with the view,
That, like the circle bounding earth and skies,
Allures from far, yet, as I follow, flies,
My fortune leads to traverse realms alone,
And find no spot of all the world my own.
Even now, where Alpine solitudes ascend,
I sit me down a pensive hour to spend,
And placed on high above the storm's career,
Look downward where a hundred realms appear,
Lakes, forests, cities, plains, extending wide,
The pomp of kings, the shepherd's humbler pride."

But hardly less pathetic than the poor youth's footsore wanderings—"remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow"—was that outburst of the natural spirit of the original man which carried Johnson in his mad career into the Highland wilderness after years and honours had been heaped upon him. It was the original yearning for expansion —pressed down by the weight, first of poverty and then of the conventional life of a social despot—getting the mastery at last, and bursting forth like some volcanic eruption through the overlying strata. And, if we compare its strange record to the wanderings of the young student, unoppressed with sordid cares, whose steps are light-

ened by health and hope and love of novelty, they are things as unlike to each other as the scarred volcanic rock to the rich landscape of wood and water through which it has burst.

I am not going to enumerate the great thinkers who have been great wanderers, but I take occasion in passing to drop a word about what my own experience among men has furnished. I have often heard Professor Wilson revel with a sort of wild delight on his roving days. I have known reminiscences of such free life called up also in quarters where one would not so naturally expect it. Jeffrey, for instance, in his old age, used to sigh after those wild joys, and even speak of attempting to repeat them in his decrepitude. I remember well his telling me of an excursion over ground then untrodden—the district round Loch Katrine. The names of the party attest that it must have been delightful. Among them were Willie Clark, Frank Horner, and Jack Murray, as Jeffrey profanely called one who had, like himself, risen to high office and title. The last named performed a feat which was a precocious forecast of the noble hospitality for which he became afterwards famous. All the rest were in a country inn, looking with dismay at the prospects of breakfast, when Murray stepped in and

gladdened their hearts by setting on the table, with a flourish, a whole hive of honey which he had just bought for twelve shillings from a countryman who was carrying it to market in the nearest town.

De Quincey's wanderings were of an astounding kind, with a dash of the supernatural about them. He would make his appearance with his stealthy tread, gazing, with his solemn face and dreamy eyes, right up at some friend who had every reason in the world to believe he was hundreds of miles off, and knew by a sort of instinct that no coach or other established locomotive apparatus had brought him. How, then, did he come? Perhaps the question was put in a very common way. "Bless us all, De Quincey, you here! How on earth did you come? or did you drop from the clouds?" The answer would perhaps refer to the very powerful and appropriate metaphor that had just been employed, and to its extremely opportune use on the existing occasion, since he had just been endeavouring to articulate a course of parallelism between physical and intellectual absolutism on the one hand, and physical and intellectual indistinctness on the other, and the similitude of the mind wandering in obscurities to some existence veiled in clouds

had just occurred to him as an apt illustration. But the articulation of the whole theory had been disturbed by the utterly illogical conditions of a disagreeable discussion he had had. It was a discussion with a lawyer; and it was not the fact of his disputant being a lawyer that made the discussion disagreeable; on the contrary, he had often thought that the influence of a portion of the acrid humours which seemed an element in the human mental constitution being drained off, as it were, in forensic disputation, raised the lawyer above the average of mankind in the qualities that give enjoyment to society. But the special reason why the interview in question was disagreeable was that it was with *an adverse* lawyer—not that the element of adverseness was innate; on the contrary, it was communicated by one whose fertile imagination had conjured up certain pecuniary claims—and so on. Such was the sort of form that answers to inquiries about mileage per day and the points of the compass would take. I have often wondered whether a detective in search of some noted criminal might ever have come across the track of that strange creature in his mysterious wanderings, and had so been led off the scent, as hounds are said to be when some peculiar animals cross their course.

It is among one's contemporaries that one can best speak to such specialties of personal habit as that of the wanderer among scenery; but then all one's contemporaries—even the men of ability among them—are not known to the world. It would be in vain to name that "old man eloquent"—he was not a contemporary, by the way, in the strict sense of the term, though he made himself one by nature—who presided at our feast under the stone at Loch Avon. It was his way to like young men and their pursuits, and they took his kindly wit and wisdom from him, and made him free of their corporation, even to the extent of practical jokes. His remarkable resemblance to Scott made the passing him off for the Great Unknown irresistible; and when death nipped this joke in the bud, advantage was taken of his gravity, his sable coat and white neckcloth—a kind of costume he had a great fancy for; and waiters and other frequenters of inns where we were, hearing in our talk the word "Moderautor" shouted forth in the stentorian manner peculiar to church courts in Scotland, would take him for the Moderator of the Presbytery or Synod, if not of the General Assembly, until undeceived by certain objurgations which a clergyman may use in the pulpit but not out of

it, and these, he said, would be debited to our conscience—not his. Nor would it avail to name his fast friend, who provided half the wit and mirth that rattled under the stone, and is now silent under another, and who might almost have said—

> "We talked with open heart and tongue,
> Affectionate and true—
> A pair of friends, though I was young,
> And Matthew seventy-two."

I can, however, call up three names not unknown—John Brown, John Blackie, and Joseph Robertson — each in his own way a sturdy thinker, and each a sturdy vagabond. From the silent land, too, I can call up the name of William Spalding. In him the aspirations and the accomplishments of the daring roamer were the more remarkable, as his health had to pay the penalty so often paid as the price of a conquest over so large a world of knowledge as he achieved.

His wanderings have not been without a record, which the world has read and praised without knowing its author. In early youth he published, in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' a journal of a ramble in Central Italy, which proves that, had he not felt it his duty to devote his powers

to the work of helping others to acquire fame, he might have stood at the head of the popular literature of his day.*

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* "Eight Days in the Abruzzi"—'Blackwood's Magazine' for Nov. 1835. At the beginning comes this passage with pleasant artistic touch:—

"Among the ruined palaces and temples of Rome, and in the vineyards and orange-groves beside the blue sea of Naples, I had warmed my imagination with that inspiration which, once breathed on the heart, never again grows cold. It did not desert me now as I entered this upper valley of the Apennines, to seek a new colour and form of Italian landscape. Happy and elevating recollections thronged in upon me, and blended with the pure sunshine which slept on the green undulating hills. I had to trace upwards, for more than twenty miles—nearly indeed to the source of the river—the valley watered by the Liris, and called, above Sora, the Val di Roveto. I had soon issued from the pass of Sora; the path winded along the hills, high up on the left side of the stream, and the valley for several miles lay open before me. It is deeper and narrower than beneath Sora, never perhaps more than two miles wide, and often less. The river, in most places, flows silently and swiftly between low sandy or pebbly shores; but in some spots the banks rise and approach each other, forming deep rocky ravines. The outlines of the landscape are soft, waving, and varied. At one time the whole breadth of the valley is spread out in a flat green plain, sometimes the hills shoot down long arms into the hollow, or round grassy eminences are scattered about; and in one or two spots the hills are cleft into steep gullies, running up sidewise into the bosom of the mountains.

"The Tuscan Apennines—I have especially in view the mountains of the Casentino—are chiefly lumpish heaps, presenting abrupt outlines only among the glens about their roots. Standing on the heights, and looking far abroad, one

There is one curious instance of an original thinker who did not like rambling — at least country rambling—Charles Lamb. But no man

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sees only indications of fine forms: we could believe that the mountains had been suddenly stopped in their growth. In the Roman Apennines, and yet more in those of Naples, we see far bolder shapes and more sudden elevations. Many of the Abruzzi mountains are magnificent in contour, very many are beautiful in their prolonged undulations. But even amongst these we recognise only detached fragments of the Salvator landscape. Everywhere the Apennine has a character distinctly different from the steepled, castellated Alpine landscape; it is smoother, more waving in lines, composed of parts which flow imperceptibly into each other. The Alpine chain is a fortress built for the genius of Italy, with stupendous towers and moats, ramparts and bridges: the Apennine is the summer palace in which she reposes, looking down on her gardens from long airy terraces, and descending into them by winding staircases.

"In the whole Val di Roveto, we scarcely find, either in the kind of vegetation or in its abundance, any token of our having left the fortunate fields of the Campagna. The mountains are grassy to their summits, scattered woods wave far up their sides, and in the hollow of the valley, corn-fields, vineyards, and olive plantations bloom everywhere; large beech-trees are frequent near the stream, and several thickets are formed by old oaks, splendid in shape and size, some of the finest indeed I have seen in Italy. When I passed up the valley, these trees had stood out the winter cold, and yet their foliage, though brown and dead, remained hanging on the boughs, often embowering one as thickly as in the verdant glow of their summer. They bore witness to the mildness with which winter visits Italy. The old robber is softened by the beauty of his victim, and the touch which he lays on her is as gentle as a lover's."

The reader will readily excuse me for offering a specimen

was less under guideship, and the manner in which he stood by his city walks and associations was bold and original. A friend to whom he main-

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from the passages that are more minute in descriptiveness. He has descended into the tunnel for carrying the water of Lake Celano into the Liris :—

"We walked through the horizontal gallery towards the lake, entered an ascending staircase, and in about half an hour after descending into the darkness, we saw daylight from the other side of the mountain twinkling above us, like a clear, white star. My guide blew out his lamp; the spot of pure sky grew larger, and the light fell faintly about us; and then we stepped out at once from the glimmer and gloom of Hades into the broad open light of upper earth and day.

"The transition and the spectacle were overpowering: it was as when the adventurer, in a midnight cavern, had touched a talisman; and, lo! a fairy land lay around him, glowing in enchanted sunshine. The picture was the blue, smooth lake—a picture six-and-thirty miles in circumference; the chasing in which it was set was plain, and wood, and icy mountains. It was about mid-day; the sun was high and bright, the sky deep and cloudless; and the landscape which melted into the light was a wide pageant, which nature had adorned with her richest magnificence. Round and round soared vast rocky mountains, some of the loftiest of the Apennines; the never-melting snows crowned their kingly heads, forests wrapped their feet, and human dwellings slumbered white and peaceful beneath their shadow. The outlines of the scenery were varied as well as bold. We stood a good way above the level of the water, on the side of a flattish, moory range of hills, the only inconsiderable heights about the lake; and about half a mile beneath us, beyond a sandy plain, the inland sea rippled against its shore. To the left rose a very fine and lofty mountain, steep and bare, with two conical summits, and

tained that all the world should be "Town," asked him where his favourite pease would grow then? True to his principles, he answered promptly, "On the roofs of the houses." He infused similar notions into his friend Talfourd; but behold the force of truth! Talfourd came to Scotland,

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snow lying in the gullies far down its face. This was the Mount Velino; and on a rugged hill, among its roots, a tuft of cypresses marked the site of the ancient prison-town of Alba. At the foot of the mountain, a beautiful wooded plain, verdant like an orchard, came forward to meet the lake; and through its bowers twinkled the roofs, church-towers, and castle of Avezzano. When the eye moved thence, still along the brink of the lake, the garden-plain between hill and water appeared to narrow; white dwellings shone among the trees; a huge misformed rock strode down like a promontory from the great mountain-chain nearly to the lake; and beneath it stood the town of Celano, the largest on the lake. Round this left or north side of the lake, as far as the sight could distinguish, ran a girdle of woods gemmed with habitations; and over the rock of Celano were piled prolonged mountain-ridges, line behind line, a perspective along leagues of snows, the border of an inaccessible icy wilderness. On the right side of the lake the heights were less remarkable. Some headlands dipped right down into the water, and gloomy pine-woods darkened the northern sides of the sloping hills. Directly in front, beyond the east side of the lake, the view was bounded by a long, distant mountain-range, the celebrated Majella, which, seen from so remote a point, presented a more gradual elevation than the other mountains. Fields of snow clothed it wide and deep, and from its flat head two immense black rocks projected into the sky, the temples where old devotion worshipped the mountain-spirits, or the castles in which the genii might have dwelt."

and meeting with some good fellows there, took to wandering, He did so rather awkwardly, as old beginners will—trying, for instance, to get to the top of Mont Blanc, but failing. Had he "taken to the hill" some twenty years earlier, he might have been living now to cheer the world with his kindly smile and glittering wit.

I do not profess to bring forward my authorities as condemnatory of good guide-books when put to their proper use. Let them be taken as servants, not as masters—as helping you to the places you wish to go to, not as dictating where you are to go. In this sense I have no doubt that all the eminent roamers I have called up would acknowledge their obligation to Anderson's 'Guide to the Highlands.' And while standing up for the right of private judgment, it would be signal ingratitude in the wayfarer abroad to say a word in disparagement of Mr Murray's red books. In some respects, indeed, they enable us to go over all the rest of the tourable world with a certainty and precision entirely wanting to us in our own land. Our information about that great essential of travel—inns—is especially indistinct; so much so, that I know a very distinguished person, a clever man in every practical sense, and well acquainted with the world, who, pedestrianising in

Argyllshire, and looking out for a likely terminus to his day's journey, was so far deceived by the mistiness of the guide-books, that he selected "Rest and be thankful" as an inn having a good name, and likely to prove an acceptable place of refreshment and repose. So there he arrived about eleven o'clock at night, to find himself in one of the wildest glens in western Scotland, many miles distant from any inn, and noted in the maps merely for its possession of a stone seat for the wayfarer. It was literally an instance of desiring bread and obtaining a stone.

Perhaps it would be injudicious to bestow on places of entertainment in our own country the frank character given to those abroad. Actions of damages might be rife. Nay, it is wonderful that some of the people over the water have not sought redress in our courts; for the words "bad and dear," or the like, are a fatal blow. To the numerous class who are passively obedient to the tourist code, they are, of course, the denunciation of an inspired prophet. It happened to me once to bear witness to the influence of such condemnations, from being one of a party who made up their minds to a little insurrection against 'Murray,' by going systematically to the inns condemned by him. It was a very fortunate idea

These establishments, poor things, had evidently, when too late, resolved to turn over a new leaf. While the characteristic faults had been amended, there was none of the crowding and bustle of the approved inns; and it was delightful to find people so thoroughly glad to see you, and so amiably attentive to all your wants, as their afflicted landlords.

No; I would not take on me the responsibility of uttering an opinion which would induce the traveller—especially the pedestrian—to dispense with anything that will help him to know what he is about. Already is he only too apt not only to bring himself to grief, but to cast trouble upon others.

In the thoughts of the pedestrian wanderer, to whom difficulties have become familiar, there are apt, if he be a kindly or even a conscientious man, to arise misgivings, when he looks back upon his career, and remembers how ruthlessly he has sacrificed the peace and comfort of others to that pursuit which is his own luxury and enjoyment. If brought to penitence, such a one would have sad revelations to make in his confession—how, for instance, he leaped from the thicket, and nearly startled the life out of the simple peasant, who was whistling as he

went for want of thought. The relentless wayfarer, in fact, distracted by cross-roads, knew from old experience that, if he stood revealed in the moonlight at the place of their meeting, he might wait long indeed before any simple peasant or other person would approach his suspicious presence.

There, again, is a whole affrighted household startled out of deep slumber by the fiercest banging at the door, and they have all been seized with palpitations of the heart, and they have all lost the remainder of the night's rest; and for what has this sacrifice been accomplished? Merely that a blundering stupid stranger may be informed whether it is the right-hand road or the left-hand road that leads to Brieg. Then, again, the cries of murder and fire, the yells in imitation of Indian war-cries, or the ringing of the church bells at dead of night, if nothing less will rouse the slumbering hamlet. Have not vines and fields of maize been ruthlessly trodden under foot to get at those lonely Swiss houses which have no visible approach? Has not the haycock, which was a miracle of agrarian art, been ruthlessly torn to pieces to form a couch; and—climax of insolence and iniquity!—has not some household to tell of the midnight wanderer who let himself

in by the unguarded window, and was found snoring on the best sofa?

The benighted pedestrian is, in fact, one of the most unscrupulous of the human race. He is more resolute than the housebreaker, since he is a desperate man, yet has not the evil conscience that makes a coward of the plunderer—nay, he sometimes flatters himself that he is only awakening the people he persecutes to a sense of their own interest. Dogs and threats of firearms are alike powerless against his despair. I remember a venerable swain, throwing as much thunder as he could into his tremulous accents, exclaiming that there were "plenty of fire-irons in the house!" The early closing of the city gates, and other early Continental habits, are the cause of many of those difficulties, so inimical to his own peace, as well as to that of the public, which the Briton is apt to tumble into. But this specialty is not one-sided, like Charles Lamb's vindication of coming late to his office—viz., that he went early away; it has a compensation in the early rising and beginning of the routine functions of the day, in which, if the traveller duly participate, he will find both profit and enjoyment.

With all the precautions he can take, however, the pedestrian *will* sometimes get into diffi-

culties, especially if his heart be thoroughly in the pursuit, wandering as his feet are with a sense of freedom and indefiniteness which cannot brook accurate calculation about time and distance. If the spirits of all those whom he has teased and inconvenienced, if not still more cruelly entreated, were to rise up upon the experienced pedestrian with all their reproaches, it would be a sad affair for him; and yet, connected with his difficulties and releases, would arise memories of civility and good feeling, and even disinterested generosity, preserving bright spots in the memory, dimmed only by the thought that, in the devious wanderings of life, there is small chance of again crossing the path of the benefactors, and giving due thanks for the kindly deeds.

Of course, the better the pedestrian is acquainted with his function, the less liable is he to get into scrapes; and I hope he will excuse me if, as an experienced brother or rather father of the staff, I venture to offer him a word of advice.

As in many other things, to be suitable, the less elaborate the preparation is the better. Pedestrians with a complete articulation of portable instruments designed to supply them with the elements of home comforts, will soon find themselves very unhappy victims. There is an ingen-

ious method of packing up a box of weights, the philosophy of which I would recommend to all travellers, whether of the superior, meaning the pedestrian order, or of the vehicular. The smallest of these weights—say the ounce—is a solid lump, which can be contained in the next of two ounces, which is a cup sufficient to receive it, so that the two together make three ounces—and so on indefinitely. The traveller's raiment should be on this principle. With the exception of his linen, his clothing should be increasable, not by change, but by addition. It is said that Sir Isaac Newton, when he wanted the mice hunted in his study, made a large hole in his door for the cat's accommodation, and a small one for her kitten's. This is the blunder committed by him who takes a light coat for warm and a heavy for cold weather, instead of one light coat to wear above the other.

Avoid waterproof articles of every kind and fashion: on an active person they keep in far more wet than they keep out. But one should not be afraid of rain; an occasional shower is refreshing and invigorating. The Romans most aptly called luggage *impedimenta*. If the pedestrian must take some superfluous raiment with him for bad weather, he will find the common plaid or maud to be the least impedimental in

weight and inconvenience for the amount of comfort obtainable from it. No other garment is so pliant or available to cover the part of the body requiring, for the time, the largest amount of protection. It has the merit of drawing additional comfort from wetness; for a soaked plaid is a good non-conductor, and will keep the cold well out if it has not got in already. There is neither fable nor folly in the legends of the mountaineers soaking their plaids before going to bed on the moor. The plan has in later times been revived, not only as salubrious, but even curative, in the cold-water cure. Moreover, the plaid may be made a knapsack of, either by its proper folds, or by being slung to the shoulder with a strap when the weather is warm. Conveying effects in this manner, however—loose in the stitched-up corner of a plaid—I have known instances of their disappearing by instalments, insomuch that any clever detective might have traced the owner by the droppings—a brush here, a cigar-case there, and so on. A remedy for this is to pack the whole into a small haversack, and deposit it in the plaid-corner: so bulky an article is not likely to drop out; and if it did, its tumble would be at once detected. Whether he adopt my favourite plan or not, I entreat the pedestrian not to hamper himself with

anything akin to those male representatives of the old ladies' reticules which have lately come into use. You will see a bulky article of this kind, which, besides its own iron jaws, its lock, and its angular pasteboard and leather—in themselves a considerable burden—will carry nothing more than a handkerchief and a pair of gloves. It is like the dogfish, all jaw and teeth. Whence this potent mechanism of security? Because it happens that these bags were constructed in imitation of those used by couriers, which were constructed for the security of large sums of money and valuable papers. A pedestrian can carry his money and watch in his pockets, and need not have anything else in his custody worth locking up.

In the way of provisions, it is a good thing, before forecasting the wants of the day, to have a ships' biscuit or two somewhere in the locker in case of need. A too complex commissariat is not to be commended, and sometimes disastrous results have followed ambitious attempts in this direction. Let me mention an instance or two. I can see, in shadowy distance, at this moment, the exceedingly prudent young man who, on the first outbreak of the Macintosh, had so thoroughly invested himself in this texture as to present no possible chink to descending wet. But all his

precautions did not prevent its coming to pass that, in crossing a ferry, his coat-tails should hang in the water. Under these tails were pockets, and in one of them was a choice box of seidlitz powders. At the touch of the cool water, the acids and alkalies of which these consist fell a-quarrelling with each other in the most relentless manner, and were not to be appeased until, like other belligerents, they had spread the dire results of warfare around them; and the consequence was, that their nearest neighbours, consisting of cigars, gingerbread-nuts, and Bologna sausages, were chemically combined into a sort of viscid conglomerate not easily describable.

Another case in point. All smokers know how apt their craft are either to forget, or insufficiently supply themselves with, the materials necessary for animating the dull weed they delight in with fire. It need not be said that in these days, when the art of ignition has been brought to such perfection, there is a greater dependence than there used to be in the old days of flint and steel, on a proper provision of the necessary machinery being laid in. Of all trials of temper, probably there is none more overwhelming than the position of the confirmed smoker who, on the long, dreary, uninhabited moor, when evening closes

in, and the clouds are heavy with moisture, finds that, with abundance of tobacco, he has at his command no means of possible ignition. It was with the tradition of such calamities in his mind that my prudent friend, before leaving the region of first-rate shops, provided himself with a large stock of new patent fusees, warranted to take fire with unusual facility, and burn with unprecedented ardour. Having deposited this treasure in a side-pocket, he sauntered with a feeling of security along a populous promenade, when, his eyes meanwhile occupied with the beauty and fashion to be seen congregated there, he jerked against a lamp-post. The knock was not serious, or in itself worth consideration; but it was immediately followed by a sense of burning heat near the vital parts—his whole store of combustibles had become ignited into a small explosive furnace. What could he do? Nothing but what, with great presence of mind, he did—pull off his nether garments in the admiring presence of all the beauty and fashion which he had been so ardently contemplating.

Another mishap of the same kind, rather more tragical in its results, I cannot resist the impulse to narrate, although the gentleman tourist will at once disclaim its relevancy as a warning example

applicable to himself. I wish I could confer on the incident the picturesque freshness with which it was told to me by the genial and accomplished author, who is the literary glory of Inverness. It was in a druggist's shop in that distinguished city that a poor wasted shred of humanity solicited the notice of the attendants, asking if they remembered him—remembered him last autumn—when he was not as he now appeared, "but a pig, strong, pretty man." After some difficulty they recalled to recollection his features and figure, though both were so changed that, as Scott says, "the mother that him bore might not have known her son." His story was this: He had visited Inverness, commissioned by the surgeon of a district in the Western Highlands to lay in for him his winter stock of medicines. The messenger, in bending his way homewards, purchased also for his own consumption on the journey a stock of parched pease—a food said to be nutritive, but not to be commended when more succulent viands can be obtained. It happened that among the medicines there were certain boxes of pills, and these, breaking loose, became mixed with the pease. The consequence was, that the poor messenger consumed the whole stock of pills destined for the winter consumption of his native district—much, doubt-

less, to the benefit of the health of its other inhabitants, but certainly to the detriment of his own; though it might be argued that the pills, being divided into opposite parties, designed to produce contrary therapeutic effects, the one half should have neutralised the other.

On the matter of stimulants, advice is already all too abundant; and, keeping clear of great questions of ethics and physiology, I shall only offer a word or two of a very narrow practical character. Whatever may be his habits or his pleasure at other times, the wanderer, if he value his life, must determinedly abstain from spirits if he finds that, from cold and fatigue, their exhilarating influence is desirable—even seems necessary—to stimulate him to further exertion. The reaction will come presently, adding torpor to the other impediments of the poor wayfarer; and if he yield to that it is all up with him. Many have made narrower escapes in this form than they have been conscious of. It was in the cold September of 1847, I remember, that two young Englishmen were found lying together dead by the side of the road from Ballahulish, near Glencoe, leading over the Black Mount. It was thought a strange coincidence that two should have fallen together, but nothing was more nat-

ural. Suffering from cold and tiredness, they had sought comfort and strength in the potent *vin du pays* of Scotland, to which they were unused. When one of them was overcome by drowsiness, the policy of the other should have been to go for help; but if, unconscious of their fatal position, he sat down beside his companion, he too would infallibly be overtaken, and so would any number in the same condition. Certain associations make me remember with peculiar freshness the touching incident. I happened at the same cold season to cross Corryarick, where there is always wind and rain if nothing more; and on the southern side, the people in a lone house recommended me to go no further, telling me of the finding of the two bodies. Some time afterwards, as it became dark, I saw a man waver from side to side before me, and then fall across the road. He possessed just sufficient articulation to inform me that he was a person of peculiar, almost of culpably, temperate habits, and was one of the few people in this wicked world who could solemnly declare that they never had exceeded. Having got him poised on his legs, he proposed a domiciliary visit to his brother-in-law, an excellent fellow—to accomplish which we had only to get through the Spey, which was

roaring away in blackness a few yards below us. The information I had just received rendered the case a perplexing one; but, I believe, had I left the fellow, his Highland blood would have saved him from the fate of the poor Saxons.

Of restoratives or exhilaratives in critical circumstances, tea, if it can be got, is the best, and it can't be too strong. If no roof, with its accompanying comforts, be available, the policy of the benighted wanderer is to walk on and on, cheering himself, if he can, with variations on the popular song, "We shan't go home till morning," or any other scheme, consistent with continued exercise, for making the night cheerful. There are some who know how to make themselves cosy, covered, like the babes in the wood, with leaves, and quite luxurious with bunches of heather set on end, in the way I have elsewhere described; but these are achievements only to be tried with safety by thorough adepts; and the unpleasant part of the whole affair is, that of those who get into such scrapes, it is the poor fellow not hardy enough to provide for himself in the open air, and do a little bit of savage life for a few hours, who must, if he value his life and health, determinedly walk on until he can get beneath a hospitable roof.

And now I see that you are bored, and I know what you are going to say. You are going to charge me with acting like all anarchists who want to pull down their tyrant that they may themselves rule more despotically. Everybody, it seems, must go to

> "The grizzly rocks that guard
> The infant rills of Highland Dee,
> Where hunter's horn was never heard,
> Nor bugle of the forest-bee."

And everybody must not only go thither, but adopt my nostrums about the way of going. No; I protest that you are wrong. By your leave, I have a higher ambition—to give an item of help towards the emancipation of my fellow-men from thraldom. I have my favourite district—all I say is, take yours, and don't be dictated to. I have a good feeling towards Byron for celebrating a place so close to my own as Lochin-ye-gair; and as I found an apt line from him to begin with, so shall I conclude, as appropriate to my object, with that in which he expresses his

> "Detestation
> Of every despotism in every nation."

THE END.

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