

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

HAVING been asked by the Publisher to write something by way of Preface to this Edition of **THE MORAY FLOODS**, and, recollecting how much we all felt for his disappointment when prevented bringing it forward some years ago, I am unwilling to refuse his request. I feel, however, that anything I may write cannot in any way enhance the value of this Book, one of the very best of my father's Works. His memory still lives in the hearts of so many who knew him, that it is unnecessary that his daughter should give him the praise which the goodness of his character so truly merited. His genial, kindly, sympathetic nature, made him the joy of the home circle, and of his intimate friends; whilst the brightness and versatility of his talents ensured his being a favourite with all who met him even for the first time in society. He had also a tender heart for the poor, and exerted himself with energy and success in many useful labours of philanthropy.

It may, perhaps, be interesting that I should give my recollections of the time when this Book was first thought of, and of the event which called it forth. For this purpose I have to look along the vista of past years to the time of my happy childhood. Well do I recollect "The Flood" of Monday, 3d August, 1829. We, the school-room children of the family, after lessons were over, sat at the window looking out upon the trees bowed by the wind, the glaring sky, and pelting rain, wondering if we should ever get out again. I remember also the excitement caused by the message

that the rivers were up "beyond the memory of man." It was not at first intended that we should go out at all; but our pleading looks touched my father, who could never bear to see us disappointed, and we were accordingly sent to equip ourselves in our old pelisses of the winter before, covering our heads with boys' caps, for umbrellas were impossible in the wind.

I think we must have looked very like a troop of ragged Highland terriers, as we joyfully followed my father down the garden! And very full of glee we were, until we stood with wonder and awe beside the raging Divie. Then, indeed, our joyous tones were hushed—no sound could be heard but the mighty voice of the waters. One after another, the large trees bent over like willow wands, and on the surface of the flood were for "a moment seen, then gone for ever."

• We followed my father further up the river to a place above the Divie Fall, where an incident occurred which has not been recorded in *THE FLOODS*. The river-walk, at this point, was at a great height above the ordinary course of the stream, but in its flooded condition the river was raging along quite close to it. My two sisters, ignorant, as we all were, that the walk was undermined, were standing on it, gazing with wonder at the river. An English gentleman, one of our visitors, who was out with us, possessed by what seemed to us all a vain fear, called to them, and entreated them to return to where the rest were standing. They did not hear him, and remained gazing on the flood. My father, who had himself no doubts as to the safety of their position, could not, however, bear to see the anxiety of his friend, and shouted to his daughters to come back. They immediately obeyed, and the whole party turned up the bank. Happening just then to look round, I saw the portion of the walk on which my sisters had been standing break away, and fall into the raging torrent. My father's kindness of heart had thus mercifully saved himself a great sorrow.

We now followed my father to the Divie Bridge, and to the junction of the rivers. Here all was indeed changed. The Findhorn, in its ordinary state, received the shallower and more impulsive Divie into the depths of a long dark pool, like a strong man taking into his arms his gleeful child. How different now! The rock, which, with its graceful covering of mingled birch and fir, jutted out, as if presiding at the union of the rivers, was not even to be seen, and far up the bank the rivers met, no longer lovingly, but like contending armies rushing to battle. A stone, put up by my father, still marks the almost incredible point of union.

Darkness alone drove us home that night. Next morning we wandered forth again, retracing our steps of the evening before. Reports of the devastation at Dunphail, and anxiety about its inhabitants, made my father continue his walk up the Divie, and with sorrow we gazed on the destruction there. I remember that, whilst so engaged, the sun, which had been struggling through the clouds, suddenly burst out upon the scene. It seemed, like Noah's bow in the Heavens, to say, "Comfort yourselves; all is over; it shall not be so again."

Urged by the entreaties of his friends—in particular, by those of Lord Cockburn—my father undertook to write this book. The task soon became a labour of love. Information poured in from all sides; but my father himself visited all the scenes of devastation reported to him, making frequent expeditions on horseback for days at a time to places he could not otherwise have reached, for rivers had to be forded where bridges had been carried away.

At last the book was finished, but was considered by the Publishers too voluminous for publication, on a subject supposed to be only of local interest. It was a hard task for my father, but, after demurring for a while, he patiently set himself to the work of re-writing and condensing a book which has proved one of his

work has necessarily compelled me to pass over all the lesser, though more numerous items of destruction, nothing approaching to any just estimate of the grand total can possibly be formed.

I beg now to acknowledge my obligations to

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