

MORNING SCENE.

THE shrill and persevering crow of a cock, who roosted on the rafters immediately over our heads, gradually succeeded in drawing up Grant and myself from the deep Lethean lake of slumber into which both had been plunged, and we arose yawning and most unwillingly from our simple couches, ere yet the sun had peeped above the horizon. With one consent we stole to the outer door in our dressing gowns and slippers, to inhale a few draughts of pure air, and to inform ourselves as to the state of the weather. A perfect calm prevailed, and the landscape was lying under one general sombre shadow, which made it so difficult to distinguish objects, that we could not even trace the exact line of boundary of the still waters of Loch-an-Dorbe.

One glow of an aurora hue made the summit of the opposite hill to gleam faintly, but that was enough to produce a corresponding fragment of bright reflection on the bosom of the lake. In the middle of that warm spot rested a little boat, with two men in it, one of whom was seated at the oars to keep it steady, whilst the other was standing in the stern, eagerly occupied in fishing.

GRANT, (*rubbing his eyes.*)—Can that possibly be Clifford.

AUTHOR.—Let us ascertain whether he is in his bed or not.

GRANT.—Aha! his *gite* is empty and cold! what an indefatigable fisherman!

AUTHOR.—Depend upon it we shall not see him here for some hours to come.

GRANT.—Then I shall employ the intervening time in repose.

AUTHOR.—And I shall follow your good example.

The very profound sleep into which we both of us sank, was at length interrupted by the return of Clifford with a beautiful dish of fresh trouts.

CLIFFORD.—You lazy fellows! See what a glorious morning's work I have had while you

have been snoring away like a couple of tailors. Look how large and how fine they are ! There is one now, twice as big as any that was killed last night.

AUTHOR.—We are certainly greatly obliged to you for quitting your couch so early in order to procure us so luxurious a breakfast.

CLIFFORD.—I don't think that either of you deserve to share in it, though in truth you are already sufficiently punished for your indolence by missing the fine sport I have had ; and therefore I shall act towards you with true Christian charity. Come then, my girl, get your fire up, and your frying-pan in order, and I'll stand cook.

GRANT.—You must have had a delicious morning of it.

CLIFFORD.—Charming ! The effect of the sunrise on the lake was enchanting, and the jumping of the trouts around me perfectly miraculous.

GRANT.—I am surprised that you could tear yourself away so soon.

CLIFFORD.—I believe I should have been there for some hours to come, had not my barefooted boatman told me that it was time to get on shore, for that the clouds which we saw heaping them-

selves up to the westward, threatened to discharge a storm upon us.

GRANT.—I suspect that the fellow will turn out to be a true prophet. What a dreadful blast that was! Let us hurry out to witness the effects of it.

What a change had now taken place in the scene! The sun was already high above the horizon; but dense clouds hid his face from our view, and threw a deep inky hue over the whole face of nature, excepting only where the western blast took its furious course athwart the wide surface of the lake, lashing it up into white-crested billows, the sharp and fleeting lights of which acquired a double share of brilliancy amidst the general murky hue that prevailed everywhere around. The spray dashed over the island, and the grey towers of the castle. The flocks of sea-mews, kittywakes, and other waterfowl that frequented the ruined walls, were whirled about in confused mazes, like fragments of foam carried into the air, and were utterly unable to direct their flight by their own volition. Nothing could be more sudden nor more sublime than this effect! It was so grand, and at the same time so transient, that nothing but the ready eye and the matchless mind of the Reverend

John Thomson, of Duddingstone, our great Scottish Salvator, could have seized and embodied it. It passed away as speedily as it had come. A heavy shower of rain fell after it was gone; and after that had ceased, all was stillness and sunshine.

When we again set out to pursue our way, which led by the margin of the loch, its waters were rippling gently with every light zephyr that fanned them, and sparkling and glowing under the untamed rays of the broad sun, whilst the sea-birds were partly wheeling over the deep with all their wonted variety and regularity of evolution, and partly dipping into the water, and partly resting in buoyant repose upon its swelling bosom.

Having waved our last adieu to Loch-an-Dorbe from the summit of a knoll at some distance from the lower end of it, we took our course across the moorland, where the views on all sides were peculiarly dull and dreary. A black turf hut was now and then visible, proving that it was at least possible for human beings to live in this bare district; but all signs of cultivation were limited to a few wretched patches of arable ground lying along some of the small burns that here and there intersected the peat-mosses. Nothing could be more

miserable than the country, or than the humble dwellings of its natives; and yet even here we fell in with a picture of human felicity that strongly arrested our attention.

A group of ragged urchins were sporting on a little spot of greensward before the door of one of these hovels, and shouting and laughing loudly at their own fun. The youngest was mounted on a huge gaunt-sided sow, with a back as sharp as that of a saw; whilst two elder imps, one on either side, were holding him in his seat, and another was urging on the animal, by gently agitating the creature's tail. All this was done without cruelty, and in the best humour. The father and mother had been in the act of building up their next year's stock of peats into a stack, that rested against the weather gable of their dwelling, so that it might do the double duty of sheltering them from the prevailing blast, as well as furnishing them with food for their kitchen fire. But the merry scene that was passing below had become too touchingly attractive to the hearts of both the parents, and their labour was arrested in the most whimsical manner; for the man sat perched on all-fours on the top of the frail edifice he was engaged

in rearing, grinning with broad delight at the gambols of his half-naked progeny ; and his wife's attention having been arrested whilst she was in the very act of tossing up an armful of the black materials of her husband's architecture, she still stood fixed like a statue, with her arm raised, quite unconscious of the inconvenience of her attitude, and entirely absorbed in her enjoyment of the spectacle, her whole countenance beaming with the maternal joy she felt, and giving way to sympathetic roars of merriment.

GRANT.—You see it is not in the power of poverty altogether to extinguish human happiness.

AUTHOR.—Nay, no more than riches can ensure it.

CLIFFORD.—How different the hard fortune of that poor creature, from the sunshiny lot of those women of quality and fashion whom we have seen figuring in fancy dresses, and glittering like dancing Golcondas, at Almacks ; and yet how much more heart and honesty and true mirth there is in that rustic laugh of hers, than in all the hollow gaiety of that professed temple of pleasure.

AUTHOR.—This merry Maggy of the moor here

has indeed received but a small share of the good things of this life, compared with that which has been showered on the proud heads of those wealthy and titled exclusives. But individual happiness must not by any means be measured by the degree of wealth. And then, when we direct our thoughts to our prospects of happiness in a future life, and reflect how apt those favourites of fortune are to be led astray by that very abundance which has been heaped upon them here below, we cannot but congratulate Maggy there as having at least the safer, if not the better share of the treasures of this world.

GRANT.—True; and we have the authority of almost every moral poet, from Horace to our Scottish Allan Ramsay, for the great truth that even happiness in this world is to be more readily found in a comfortable middle state, than in either of the extremes,—

“ He that hath just enough can soundly sleep,
The o'er-come only fashes folk to keep.”

CLIFFORD.—Ha! ha! sermons and poetry for pilgrims in the desert! But then arises the

difficult question, what is it that constitutes that "*just enough*," which the poet holds to be the talisman of human happiness.

GRANT.—Give economy fair play, and it will make that talisman out of any thing.

AUTHOR.—And so, on the other hand, extravagance could never possess it, even if the subterranean treasures of Aladdin, or the diamond valley of Sinbad were to be placed at its disposal.

CLIFFORD.—Your allusion to the Arabian tales puts me in mind of our story-telling ; and the subject we have now accidentally got upon, brings to my recollection a remarkable story which you once related to me, Grant.

GRANT.—You mean the legend of John Macpherson of Invereshie.

CLIFFORD.—The same. Pray tell it to our friend here.

GRANT.—If you, who have heard it before, have no objections to the repetition of it, I can have none to the telling of it.