

CHAP. XXI.

STILL-LIFE, AND HIGHLAND DAINTIES.

Old Rudd. — Illicit Stills. — Moonlight, Mountain-dew, and Daylight. — Clishmaclaver. — A Fight with the Gaugers. — The big Judge. — The Excise. — Suppression of Smuggling. — A Smuggler's Profits. — Christopher North's Opinion. — The Worm i' the Bud, and the Still. — Spoiling the Egyptians. — The Sportsman's Return — How to pack Grouse. — How to heat it, and eat it. — Dinner Dainties. — Haggis and singed Sheep's Head. — Salmon. — A rare Entertainment. — An Ogreish Proposition. — Scotch Sweets. — The Sleep of a Grouse-shooter.

THE shooters are working round to another beat, and here comes old Rudd with two dogs coupled. He has to take his station here for a time, and then to shape his course according to circumstances. His game-bag is already pretty full, and Atlas-like, he is glad to rest from his load. He eases the shoulder-straps, and flings himself down on the short grass beside the heather, while his dogs tug at their couples with excitement, as they watch their comrades leaping among the heather in the valley below us, and *Mac* goes round to the

game-bag and sniffs its contents. Old Rudd's short pipe is soon lighted, and in full operation. When on duty, he forbears this relaxation, out of deference to the gentlemen.

“Well, Rudd! what sport?”

“Eh, well! pretty sport. The master's doing bravely.”

“That's a fine covey that the dogs have just flushed.”

“Eh, they're just naught but cheepers! the pair bodies o' dowgs ken nae better.”

No more did I, it seemed; so I changed the subject. “They tell me, Rudd, that there used to be a whiskey-still or two out on these hills.”

“Eh! they tell'd ye that?” and old Rudd turned round upon me with a very shrewd look.

“Stills that never troubled the government. And they tell me that you used to take a great interest in these *moonlight* matters.” The term “moonlight,” I should observe, was applied to the illicit whiskey, in contradistinction to that which paid duty, which was termed “daylight.”

“And they tell'd you that as weel?” said old Rudd, as he puffed away at his short pipe, and watched the shooters down in the valley.

“Yes! and they even went so far as to say, that at one time you could have given me a much better glass

of moonlight than the drop of daylight that this would purchase." And I handed to him a shilling.

"It'll jest whet me thrapple!" said old Rudd. But it opened his lips. "There was a still just hereabouts," he said, "doon yon glen — bigget in the hill-side, and covered up wi' turf and heather. Ye might pass close beside it a hunnerd times, and never clap eyes on it. I went there one day to see a friend. Me friend kep it, you understand!"



STILL-LIFE IN THE HIGHLANDS. — "STILL I LOVE THEE!"

"Perfectly! and you, very naturally, took an interest in your friend's property."

Old Rudd made the nearest approach to a wink that politeness would permit. "Varra weel! so I went. But me friend was not there, you understand; he'd gone out, maybe."

"Gone to market, probably."

"Aiblins he had. So it was my thought to help him on wi' his work a bit, and to work I went, and I was getting on beautiful, when they came upon me."

“Who were they? the excise gentlemen?”

“They were two chaps as ought to have known better,” replied old Rudd, whose Celtic peculiarities of language I am quite unable to reproduce on paper, and whose speech the reader must suppose to be flavoured with those words like “thocht, nicht, droukit, inkle, chiel, cantie, drumlie, mou’, tocher, carles, and kim-mers,” over which we stumble and stagger in a perusal of Burns. “I’d just step’d outside the still, and there they were. I ken’d them weel, and what they wanted. ‘But,’ said I, ‘have ye come for a little clishmaclaver?’” (which Mr. Rudd explained to mean idle talk). “‘No,’ says they; ‘we’ve not come for clishmaclaver, but for work, and we’ve caught you nicely. We thought that old cow had smelt something in the wind.’ It was the grain ye see,” said Mr. Rudd, parenthetically, “that the auld beast had smelt when it was distilling, and it had draw’d her to the spot, and the gaugers followed her. ‘Well,’ says the one, ‘we must trouble you to walk wi’ us.’ ‘Not if I knows it,’ said I, and I hit him under the lug, and knocked him down. Then the other chap ran at me, and I knocked *him* down. Then the first chap picked himself up, and I knocked him down again; and the other chap picked *himself* up, and I knocked *him* down. Then they both picked themselves up, and I knocked them both down.”

“Why, you must have been born for an auctioneer, with such a talent for knocking down.”

Old Rudd grinned grimly. “And I should ha’ got clean away, only the cowards had called out murder, and used all manner o’ sich dreadful language, and two other chaps had come up to help ’em.”

“And then, I suppose, *you* were knocked down?”

“Well, something like it. Anyways, they fell on me and mauled me, and took me off; and, what was worst of all, broke the beautiful still all to pieces, and wasted the wash all among the heather in the most sinful way. And then I went afore a big judge, and the big judge gave me twelve months.”

At this interesting stage of the narrative a whistle, and a movement among the shooters down in the valley, gave the policeman-like signal to Mr. Rudd that he must “move on there!” So he put out his pipe, tightened the shoulder-straps of his game-basket, and gathered himself on his legs. “I should just like,” he said, “to catch the big judge out on these moors! I’d—here *Don, Lady*, come along wi’ ye!” and away he went with the impatient dogs, who were with difficulty restrained by the coupling-leathers.

So let this be a warning to that judicial authority before whom Mr. Rudd may have been forced to appear (owing to the ties of friendship and circumstances over which he had no control), supposing him to be as keen

a sportsman as Lord Chief Justice Campbell, — not to venture for a day’s grouse-shooting on the Glencreggan moors with Mr. Rudd for a beater. It is evident that when Burns penned the line,

“Freedom and whiskey gang thegither,”

he had not Mr. Rudd and his “twelvemonth” in his eye.

The original of this picture of “Still Life” was painted not very many years ago; and, even up to this present day, a few illicit stills are said to be in existence in the Cantire Highlands. But such cases (even if they now exist) are supposed to be exceedingly rare; and smuggling of all kinds has been almost suppressed by the vigilant exertions of excise officers, aided in the discharge of their duty by the crews of revenue cutters. At one time smuggling was a chief employment of the fishermen and crofters, more especially during the winter; and many daring encounters are recorded to have taken place between the government officers and the Cantire Highlanders. Of the latter, the most desperate were the Skipness men, on the eastern coast of Cantire, with whom it was no uncommon exploit to overpower a whole crew of cuttersmen, then to carry off their oars and tackle, and coolly to set them adrift in their own boats.

Since the year 1821, emigration has done much to

thin the population of Cantire; and this, together with the more active exertions of the government for the suppression of illicit distillation, put an end to many private stills, as well as to much smuggling. The progress of education, the influence of resident gentry, and the greater facilities for procuring articles of consumption, are also causes which have assisted in this work. The cottar who can grow his little plot of barley or bear can turn it to better account by taking it to Campbelton, and disposing of it in an honest way, than if he risked it in the manufacture of illicit whiskey. The palmy days of smuggling in Cantire are over, and now-a-days it could scarcely pay a man to be dishonest in this particular; and thus the powerful argument of £ s. d. is brought to bear upon the question in a way which results in good.

But prior to the year 1821 the smuggling trade was very lucrative, and a majority of cottagers and day-labourers in Cantire (so says a very trustworthy authority), supported large families by the profits of smuggled whiskey. In those palmy days a professed smuggler could clear his ten shillings a week after all his expenses were paid, and this sum enabled him to keep a horse and a cow. A wife was an indispensable portion of his stock in trade, and early marriages were very frequent. Their trade demoralised them in many ways, notwithstanding that Christopher North writes so

eloquently in defence of smuggling and of illicit stills, and represents the maligned Highland smuggler as a sober and sedate character, and says that, "without whiskey, the Highlands of Scotland would be uninhabitable." * So old Rudd would doubtless say; and it is highly probable that the greater portion of the inhabitants would say the same. We have seen, however, in the case of the head-keeper at Glencreggan, that a man may inhabit the Highlands of Scotland, and flourish therein on nothing stronger than spring-water; but "aiblins" he was the exception to prove the rule. Yet, according to Christopher North, the pursuits of a Highland smuggler must be reckoned among those ingenious arts which soften men's manners, and do not permit them to be brutal; but what line of argument could be expected from one who can say: "An evil day would it indeed be for Scotland, that should witness the extinguishment of all her free and unlicensed mountain-stills;" and, "There is no disgrace in getting drunk—in the Highlands." The same writer also says that, to the Highlander, whiskey is a cordial and a medicine. It was indeed so; for, till very recently, whiskey in Cantire was considered a sovereign remedy for every disease.

* "Smugglers are seldom drunkards; neither are they men of boisterous manners and savage dispositions. In general they are grave, sedate, peaceable characters, not unlike elders of the kirk." — *Recreations*, vol. ii. p. 141.

In those days there was no more destructive “worm i’ the bud” of Scotland’s national health than the worm of the illicit whiskey-still. The maker of home-made whiskey had it always at hand, and had not to expend his “siller” in a drinking bout; the consequent temptation to perpetual tippling—or “cocking one’s finger,” as they epigrammatically term it—was enormous, and the morals of the Highlander were far from being whiskey-proof against his temptations.* Many a man, even of “strict principles,” like Andrew Fairservice, could, like him, reconcile himself to cheating the revenue, as being “a mere spoiling o’ the Egyptians,” and could echo old Andrew’s words: “Puir auld Scotland suffers eneugh by thae blackguard loons o’ excisemen and gaugers, that hae come down on her like locusts since the sad and sorrowfu’ Union; it’s the part o’ a kind son to bring her a soup o’ something that will keep up her auld heart, and that will they, nill they, the ill-fa’ard thieves.”

It will be somewhere about six o’clock in the after-

* George IV., when at Edinburgh, countenanced the illicit distillation by drinking “mountain-dew” in preference to “parliament whiskey.” Miss Sinelair says: “One very small still was discovered in the Highlands last year, with the boiler buried beneath a stone gate-post, which had been hollowed out for the chimney; and another was detected within the precincts of a Roman Catholic chapel, where the priest connived at the trick, and sold whiskey under the name of ‘holy water,’ to a gentleman who mentioned the circumstance.” — *Scotland and the Scotch*.

noon before the shooters will be back at Glencreggan, and what a "bag" there is for the larder! Perhaps thirty head of game, on an average, to each gun; and this, not from tame battue shooting, but from downright hard and honest sport. There is game enough to stock a poulterer's shop at Christmas time. The keeper ranges them in files,—here a row of black-game, there a row of grouse; here a batch of hares, there a few ducks, it may be with a stray woodcock, and a few "inconsidered trifles" as makeweights. When sufficient has been kept for the requirements of the house, the remainder will be sent away as gifts. (N. B. no vending of game at Glencreggan!) The greater part will find its way to distant English counties, where, thanks to steam-packets and railroads, it will be enabled to make its appearance at dinner in a state in which it will be impossible for it to walk off the table,—an apocryphal feat which is often reported of "high" grouse, eaten in southern English counties in the old coaching days. Their good condition on delivery, however, is greatly owing to the admirable manner in which they are packed when they leave Glencreggan. The boxes are made by Duncan McMillan at Barr, of various sizes, to hold from three brace upwards. Each bird is wiped dry and profusely peppered,—especially under the wings and legs,—and then (sometimes) wrapped up in paper. They are then laid in the box,

head to tail, in a row one deep, and the lid is nailed down, and the box despatched to its destination. No straw or heather is placed in the box, according to the custom of some packers; indeed, heather from its heating properties is about the very worst thing in which grouse could be packed.

How beautiful they look as they lie there in the larder, in all their rich plumage, from the red-brown of the grouse, to the metallic lustre of the black-game! And, how very sentimental may a non-shooter grow over them,

“Murder'd to make a *sportsman's* holiday,”

forcibly taken from their wives and little ones, and their happy homes amid the purple heather, away away on the mountain's brow! But, there's

“The tocsin of the soul, the dinner bell!”

It is time to dress for dinner, by which time all our poetical hallucinations will have cleared away, and we shall find ourselves doing ample justice to grouse soup, and, afterwards, to grouse itself. Grouse! surely we were never tired of eating it. Hot grouse, cold grouse, grouse pie, grouse soup, come under whatever form it may, still grouse was most acceptable; and, partly from the hunger-producing effect of the mountain air and the Atlantic breeze, and chiefly from its freshness and absence of “high” mite-iness, grouse at Glen-

creggan was altogether a different thing to grouse in Worcestershire. We eat it at breakfast, we eat it at luncheon, and we eat it at dinner; and we were never tired of it.

Not that we were limited to grouse as an article of consumption; for the larder was always in a plentifully varied state, and the Glencreggan dinners were things to be remembered — pleasant at the time, and pleasant to look back upon — *dapes inemptas*. There is a Highland proverb which says, “Make a good breakfast, for you know not where you may dine;” and at Glencreggan we secured the breakfast, although tolerably certain of the locality of our dinner-table, and its profusion of good fare. Besides the English cook, a genuine Scotch cook had been added to the establishment; so we were favoured with several national dishes, of which we might otherwise have been deprived. To a southron’s eye, some of the Scotch dishes make a peculiar figure on the dinner-table. Haggis to wit; of which Christopher North has said that, if such a thing were to be found in a glen, no untravelled Highlander would be able to swear, conscientiously, whether it belonged to the vegetable-kingdom, or was a pair of bellows, or a newly-imported bagpipe!

Then, there was a Scotch hotch-potch, and Scotch barley-broth, and singed sheep’s head, of which a

recent genial Scotch essayist has said, "The sheep's head of northern cookery has not, at the first glance, an attractive aspect; nor is the nutriment it affords very symmetrically arranged; but still, as Dr. John Brown has beautifully remarked, it supplies a great deal of *fine confused feeding*."* Of this dish, too, Miss Sinclair tells us, that one English traveller thought its preparation was confined to the singeing of the hair, and declared his intention ever afterwards to throw some burned wool into the soup to give it that peculiar zest which he so greatly admired. Another English traveller, a lady, and a woman of observation, when she saw a singed sheep's head brought to table, remarked, that she had noticed that the faces of the sheep, when off the table, were also black. "Yes," it was replied to her, "there is such a demand for sheep's heads in Scotland, that the farmers are obliged to keep them ready singed." "What made ye sae late?" said Mr. Jarvie to Frank Osbaldistone. "Mattie has been twice at the door wi' the dinner, and weel for you it was a tup's head, for that canna suffer by delay. A sheep's head ower muckle boiled is rank poison, as my worthy father used to say; he likit the lug o'ane weel, honest man!"

Of course our table was well supplied with salmon, salmon-trout, and trout. Old inhabitants of Shropshire and Worcestershire can still remember the days

* Recreations of a Country Parson, second series, p. 72.

when Severn salmon were so cheap and plentiful that, one of the clauses in the indentures of an apprentice bound his master not to give him salmon more than three days in the week! Something like this appears to have been the case in the Highlands a century ago; for the author of the "Letters from Scotland" says, "The meanest servants, who are not on board wages, will not make a meal upon salmon, if they can get anything else to eat. I have been told it here, as a very good jest, that a Highland gentleman who went to London by sea, soon after his landing passed by a tavern, where the larder appeared to the street, and operated so strongly upon his appetite that he went in; that there were, among other things, a rump of beef and some salmon. Of the beef, he ordered a steak for himself; but, says he, 'Let Duncan have some salmon.' To be short, the cook who attended him humoured the jest; and the master's eating was eight-pence, and Duncan's came to almost as many shillings." Elsewhere, the same writer tells us of a horrible mode of cooking salmon at Inverness, on great occasions, when the judges are entertained on circuit, and the freedom of the corporation presented. "The entertainment is salmon, taken out of the cruives* just by, and imme-

* These were the weirs. The rails of the cruives had to be made of a certain width, to permit fish of a certain size to pass up the rivers. See Pennant's "First Tour," p. 117.

diately boiled and set upon a bank of turf, the seats the same, not unlike one of our country cock-pits; and, during the time of eating, the heart of the fish lies upon a plate in view, and keeps in a panting motion all the time, which to strangers is a great rarity." For the credit of humanity, it is to be hoped that it *was* a rarity, and that such a sight could be witnessed at no other place.

The price of salmon in towns, this author tells us, had been one penny per pound; but by a regulation of the magistrates, had been raised to twopence, which was "thought by many to be an exorbitant price." A fowl cost twopence or twopence halfpenny, and was dear at the price; for the hens were so miserably thin that you might have cut up one with the breast bone of another. When they had any oats given them, the individual oats were counted out to them. A hungry stranger at an inn was one day set down to one of these starved chickens, and expressed his dislike to it, whereupon the landlord placed before him a piece of fine salmon, saying, "If you do not like the fowl, what do you think of this?" "Think!" replied the guest; "why I think it is very fine salmon; and no wonder, for that is of God Almighty's feeding; but I suppose if you had the feeding of it, it would have been as thin as this fowl."

The Scottish pronunciation plays sad pranks with

our English tongue; for it converts a duck into “a duke,” a fowl into “a fool,” and a moor-fowl (or grouse) into “a mere fool;” which will account for the old English gentleman’s horror, in the accompanying sketch, at the Scotch waiter’s ogreish proposition. This, however, is merely an imaginary sketch; but history presents us with a genuine example, which could scarcely



English Tourist in the Highlands. “Waiter! what can I have for dinner?”

Highland Waiter. “Weel, what wad ye wish? we can cook ye a fool, or a duke, or a mere fool!”

be improved by any flight of fancy. A Scotchman was giving evidence at the bar of the House of Lords in the affair of Captain Porteous, and telling of the variety of shots that were fired on that unhappy occasion, was asked by the Duke of Newcastle, what kind of shot it was. “Siccan as they shoot fools wi’,” was the reply. “What kind of fools?” asked the Duke. “Why,

dukes, an sic kin' o' fools!" was the answer. Of course the man referred to "fowls" and "ducks."

Of Highland peculiarities, among the sweets that made their appearance at the Glencreggan dinners may be mentioned the Scotch pancakes, and the very excellent light pudding known as "Panferry," the receipt for which Miss Acton would do well to procure.

One cannot wonder at a grouse shooter thoroughly enjoying a good dinner, or a sound night's rest, and sleeping that sleep, which

"Could snore upon a flint,
While drowsy sloth finds a down-pillow hard."

And we had an amusing example of this, which, for the time, made a sensation. Among the company staying in the house was a lady with her "grown up" son and daughter. The son had to return to England before his mother and sister, and was to be aroused at six o'clock on a certain morning in order that he might drive to Campbelton, to meet the Greenock steamer. After a farewell day on the moors, during which he had done great execution on the grouse, and had satisfactorily proved that the motto of "Floreat Etona" had lost none of its power by the bracing air of Glencreggan, he had retired to rest, with orders to be called at six. At that hour the faithful butler knocked at his door, and knocked, and knocked again. No response from Etona. Louder did the butler knock and

shake the door ; not a sound was to be heard, not even a snore. The door was locked on the inside, and so also was the outer door of the dressing room, which opened upon the lobby ; the windows afforded no facilities for escape, and it was clear that Etona must be in his bedroom still — yes ! *very* still. The butler began to get alarmed. He did not like to rouse the house ; but the time was getting on, and the occupant of the room ought to be getting up ; and yet there was not the faintest sound to be heard within, either of motion or of *life*. Dreadful thoughts filled the butler's brain, and, inspired by them, he hammered at the door, and shook, and rattled it, with a total disregard whether it alarmed the household or no. Which of course it did. Presently appeared the mother and sister, full of alarm, as may be imagined ; then the master of the house, also full of alarm. All knocked at the door, individually and collectively ; and then listened breathlessly for the slightest sound or murmur from within. Not a word came to cheer them ; even a sigh or a groan would have been a relief ; while a snore would have been esteemed as the lifting off of a weight of anxiety. After an anxious and very serious consultation, it was determined that force must be applied. A poker was procured, and vigorously handled by the head of the house. With a crash the door was burst in, and the anxious group peered into the room.

And what did they see? Etona turning round in his bed, just aroused from sleep, and, as his eyes encountered the unlooked-for apparitions, drowsily inquiring, "Hallo! what's the row? is it six o'clock?"

And the simple explanation of this scene (which sounds like fiction, but which, nevertheless, is pure fact) was, that he had been kept awake the first part of the night by a window that *would* rattle (it faced the Atlantic, where a storm was brewing); and, to the rattle of the window, the roaring of the Nor'-wester, and the ceaseless dash of the Atlantic breakers, had at length sunk to rest, and had slept the sleep of the grouse-shooter.