CHAPTER VIII

THE COLQUHOUN COUNTRY

We went next to Glenfalloch, near the head of Loch Lomond.

This change was liked by none of us except our youngest brother, a little fellow of ten, who had his own reasons for the preference. On being asked whether he liked Garth or Glenfalloch best, he promptly answered: "Oh, Glenfalloch: I have a ferret there."

How often have I thought of this since! How often do we hear in effect the same thing said! Some place vaunted, and its graces fondly dwelt upon, all because the speaker has "a ferret there,"—and if the "ferret" be some lovable human being, well and good; but if it be only some point of luxury, some trifling ingredient fused into the main issue by a vague and undiscerning mind, it must raise a smile. Let me, however, return to the new home.

Such of us as had no "ferrets" of any kind at Glenfalloch, which was merely a small stone house in a deep glen, whence were no outlets except at either end, found our chief consolation in its proximity to the Colquhoun territory, and in especial to Rossdhu, our father's early home.

Two uncles and an aunt now lived there, and as they were most kind and indulgent relatives, there was constant to-ing and fro-ing between them and us—nothing being easier than the transit by boat between Luss and Ardlui, our several points of embarkation, on the small steamers which plied, and still ply, up and down the loch.

ROSSDHU HOUSE, LOCH LOMOND

Facing

In these our faithful Aiky was constantly to be seen, and had her favourites among the various crews, whom she would address as "Captain, dearie, or "Stewarty, dearie," one little black-haired steward being her especial protégé.

"Mrs Aitken" being a personage to them, and dainties from her housekeeper's room very acceptable, she might call them what she chose—and no lady of the land was helped on and off their gangways more tenderly and deferentially; but when she carried her endearing epithets into strange places, we had occasionally to wince. Thus once it was, "Hey, let me oot o' the train" (in which she was seated on a southern migration); "I want to speak to the gaird," and when the guard appeared—"Eh, noo, Gairdy, dearie, are oo i' the richt train?" in coaxing accents that would have elicited an impudent rebuff from a man with no sense of humour. But happily that guard had, and he simply roared.

At the upper end of Loch Lomond steamers are able to penetrate a short way inland, as the river Falloch broadens into a sort of canal before losing itself in the waters of the lake; and the little saloon steamers thread their way up this as far as Inverarnan, where they come to an anchorage at a rustic pier beneath a huge, wide-spreading elm. When we saw the steam arising from this secluded spot (which we could do from the windows of Glenfalloch House), we knew the boat was there, and ten minutes' walk would take us to it.

Half-way was the boundary between Dumbartonshire and Argyllshire, with a turnpike-gate on the edge of either county. Thus there were two turnpikes within a hundred yards of each other—a queer state of things, which has since passed away.

There being no West Highland Railway at the period, coaches from the north were the only means of conveying tourists and other passengers from Dalmally and Tyndrum

to Loch Lomond, Loch Katrine, and the far-famed Pass of the Trossachs ; so that every afternoon these came in rapid succession, galloping, rocking, and swaying, down the glen.

There were dangerous corners to be turned ; but of course the bulk of the coach-load did not know this, and were innocently happy as they spun past, though we, who soon grew familiar with every inch of the road, were well pleased when they disappeared among the trees on the plain below.

Once when my father was landing a large trout—large for the Falloch,—the driver of the coach pulled up to allow his load—and himself—to witness the spectacle. In their excitement some on the near side leaned over so far that a cry arose, "Look out, there!"—and for a moment, a terrible moment, a catastrophe seemed imminent. They were right in the middle of a bridge, too—a bridge over a side stream ; we wondered how our fisherman could calmly bring his trout ashore ; but he knew nothing, and mercifully nothing happened ; we never, however, passed "The Otter's Inn" afterwards without, I fancy, a vision of what might have been rising before our eyes.

"The Otter's Inn" was so called because a well-known old gentleman-otter, who was in the habit of passing his time between Loch Duchray and Loch Lomond, finding the journey too much for his powers to compass in one day, established a regular stopping-place within a crevice of the rocks about midway—and nothing would have induced my father to intrude upon his privacy. Even if he suspected the "Inn" to be tenanted—and sometimes it was whispered that the old otter was lying low for a day or two—he would quietly fish the pool below, which was one of the best on the river, and pass on.

There being but few outdoor amusements to be had

in this new moorland home, which was also bare of the *entourage* we were accustomed to, we started something fresh. We kept boats at Inverarnan, and we five sisters learned to row scientifically. Hitherto we had only handled an oar now and again as occasion offered, but now my father (himself an expert) regularly trained his feminine crew, one acting as cox. We named the largest boat the *Fanny*, after our mother.

And often we pulled down the loch as far as "Rob Roy's Cave," on the Inversnaid side, lit our fire, and boiled our kettle there, rowing home again after tea and a rest. It was a good long pull, but we took most of the day over it. And when presently we lost by her marriage one of our best oarswomen, who feathered her oar with as much "skill and dexterity" as the young Thames waterman in the song, my father had himself to be cox. That, however, he grumbled at. It spoilt the appearance of the boat.

Of course we climbed Ben Lomond. Not as our Colquhoun great-aunts had done, to dance a reel on the top by moonlight—much as we longed to do this—but in more commonplace fashion. Every now and then a party would be formed for the ascent, which was not a difficult one, and guests from the South were sure to want to go. The late Lord Herschell was one of these, and years afterwards when re-visiting us on Loch Lomond's banks as Lord Chancellor, he would fain have repeated the expedition—but climbers were not forthcoming.

I must tell a comical incident of this later visit. We had accompanied our departing guest down the loch, and made a halt at Rossdhu on the return journey. No one was in residence; but the old housekeeper showed us hospitality, and, in return, the young ones of the party informed her with much *empressement* that they had been allowed in strict privacy to hold the Great Seal in their

hands the evening before. "Did you so? Eh, dear!" responded the much mystified old woman. "To think of that!" continued she, seeing more was expected, "and was it—was it—*alive*?"

N.B.—This piece of simplicity on the part of good Mrs Sim has, I know, been attributed to others; but there are plenty now living who heard her, and when one comes to think of it, the simplicity was not all on her side. It was foolish to suppose that one of her class, and a country woman to boot, should have any clear ideas about a State matter so far beyond her ken.

A grievance we had at Glenfalloch, which had not fallen to our lot before. My aunt, Miss Colquhoun, took it into her head that the clan tartan was becoming and appropriate clothing for her nieces, especially now that they were so much on their own ground, and proceeded to have webs of it woven at Stirling for our especial benefit.

Having presented a piece, she expected to see it worn, and worn on all occasions—and no one ever knew when she would appear at Glenfalloch. The material was beautifully fine and soft, and a Frenchwoman would have been charmed to see herself turned out so *chic*; but we were shy of being conspicuous, and, moreover, some of us were at the awkward age, when dressing is most difficult. We anathematised our aunt's taste, but we dared not wound her feelings.

Later on, when our kind uncle gave a ball for us, with *carte blanche* to order what we chose for it, including ball-dresses, we did indeed use our pretty tartan with extremely good effect; but bodices and "peplums" of it in velvet, over white silk skirts, and scarfs of the silk bordered with the tartan, looped up on the left shoulder, might be, and were, much admired, while plain frocks entirely made of the plaid—however, we had to wear them, and I daresay they were not as ugly as we thought.

Dumbartonshire was not a lively county, but occasionally there were functions at which my uncle, as Lord Lieutenant, had to preside. For these the big coach was ordered out, and as Sir James, the shyest man in Scotland, liked to be supported by as many of his own people as possible, we crammed in, three on either side.

Not that it was much of a cram. It was an enormous vehicle, rather magnificent in its way, and it did not heave and swing. I do not think we minded it nearly as much as our grandmother's carriage at Park Place.

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Even when very young we were not treated by our father's family as by our mother's. In the latter we were "children" up to any age; and though, as I have said, very kindly regarded as such, our opinions carried no weight, and we were never asked for them.

Among the Colquhouns it was different. They liked us to talk, to tell them things, to report whom we had met and what we had heard. When our uncle took his tea-cup to his own table apart from the rest—tea was still brought in at Rossdhu about eight o'clock—one of us would fearlessly follow and proceed to entertain him, satisfied if he merely blinked his eyes and smiled in response—elated if his lips moved to emit some slow, shy question or comment. My father was devotedly attached to this particular brother, and we all inherited the feeling more or less.

Accordingly, when seated opposite him in the coach, we prattled of all the doings in the countryside: anxious to please, and tolerably secure of doing so, since there is no more greedy devourer of gossip than the man who is incapable of procuring it for himself. A woman is better off: her maid can cater for her; but comparatively few men chatter with their servants, and my good uncle would

have starved in this respect had we not dutifully provided him with choice morsels.

On one occasion we were summoned from Glenfalloch to attend an open-air gathering at Balloch ; new colours were to be presented to a volunteer regiment, and a luncheon provided by some Glasgow magnate. The then Duchess of Montrose was to present the colours.

All went well : the sun shone as it *can* sometimes shine on Loch Lomond side, and we young people followed our elders into the luncheon tent, where my sisters were speedily provided with seats ; but none was forthcoming for me, and I had to wander miserably round the table till a chair was inserted—I know not by whose orders—between the host and the great lady on his right hand.

Conscious of having no claim to be in company so old and grand, I was sitting dumb, wishing myself anywhere else, when there came a voice in my ear, speaking in the confiding whisper of one school-girl to another :

"Have *you* ever eaten off gold plate before ?"

Of course I had not.

"Neither have I," whispered the duchess, back. Then she made a face and laughed ; whereupon I feebly tried to laugh also, and thereafter, much comforted, endured the situation philosophically.

And in after years, whenever I read of "Joe Manton's" successes on the turf, I thought of that kind, merry face and reassuring laugh, and my grateful heart hoped that the colours of such a friend in need would always win.

Large dinner-parties were given at Rossdhu during the autumn months, and once when one of these was in prospect, we had an adventure which might have turned the day of feasting into a day of mourning.

My cousin, the late Sir James, then a young man at Cambridge, had some of his undergraduate friends staying

at Rossdhu, whom he was anxious should see the beauties of the neighbourhood; and as their time was limited, and wet weather had prevailed before, when a doubtful morning cleared into a glorious summer day, no power on earth could stop his ordering out the launch.

Further, we must go to the head of the loch—though it was represented that we were starting too late for such an expedition, when it was necessary to be back in time for the dinner-party. The hour for dinner-parties was seven, and we girls protested we must be back by six at latest.

As, however, we were all athirst to go, we were quite sure this could be done. Opposition only made us surer, and we persuaded or bullied my good-natured father into accompanying us.

Away we went in the so-called launch, about which a word. It was a curious affair, designed by a kinsman, George Boyle, and sold by him to our too confiding uncle, who thought it ingenious and suitable for the loch. He fully believed in its sea-going properties—to our cost, as the event proved.

This amateur vessel was worked by paddles and petroleum lamps—and all at once, when we were far out in the middle of the loch, the machinery, such as it was, broke down and the paddles ceased to work!

We hoped a passing steamer might, however, rescue us, and signalled one before long. Alas! we could not make her understand that anything was wrong. She merely dipped her flag in playful response to ours—when our boatmen exclaimed, "She thinks the chief's on board," and looked blankly at each other as she held on her way.

Then a little wind got up. Oh, it was nothing—a mere ripple on the surface of the water; but it caught our awning, and we had hastily to take it down. My father, the only responsible member of the party, began to look anxious.

The sky darkened, the squalls from the hills grew more frequent, and a little, a very little, more boisterous. It was time to get ashore. Nay, get ashore we *must*—but how?

We had no oars. By some supreme piece of folly these had been left behind, and we were at the mercy of wind and water; and though we little dreamed then of the tragedy to be enacted one day not far from the spot whereon we lay helplessly drifting, we realised enough to sober even the indomitable spirits of youth.

Very grave and cold, we sat still and eyed each other for a dreary, indefinite period; but at length a species of deliverance came. The wind, instead of veering about in short puffs, blew steadily from one quarter, and our boatmen, seizing the plank which was used as a landing-stage, contrived to row against it, thus propelling the launch forward, till by slow degrees they brought her to land on the nose of a long promontory about ten miles from Rossdhu.

So thankful were we to be on *terra firma* that what followed was merely food for merriment, albeit it consisted of our borrowing from a farm a mile off, a cart and horse, (the only one available, as it was hay-time), into which we packed—eight of us—one, my brother Roderick, standing up to drive.

No cushions, no straw, nothing but bare cart to sit on, and in—yet we galloped along at the top of that great, gaunt horse's speed, his fetlocks streaming in the wind, (I have never seen such fetlocks since), the thought of our uncle and his dinner-party overpowering every other emotion.

Our poor father, now an elderly man, naturally suffered most; but all he said was "Get on—get on!"—and get on we did with a vengeance. A carriage was in front, and a carriage behind, as we tore up the Luss avenue, distancing both by our headlong speed—for what did we care? We had only one thought at the moment.

And it was justified. A figure stood at the bottom of the long flight of steps beneath the portico. Our hearts beat faster as we recognised it.

There was always something sacred about the person of our uncle—he was never spoken of to us by any other name than "your uncle"—and that he should be standing there, waiting and watching, in full evening-dress too, equipped for the forthcoming party! The anxiety which drove him thus to depart from his usual secluded habits must have been great indeed; and as he turned and hurried up the steps again, we looked at each other in silence.

And how we raced to our rooms, and how we flew down when ready! The guests had all assembled, of course, but not a word of rebuke or reproach was said to us; nay, the only reply some stammering syllables of explanation and contrition met with next day was an approving "You weren't long in dressing," and this kindness penetrated our very souls.

Will elder people take the hint? I should like to say a word at this point anent a practice more common in my youth perhaps than now—that of scolding the young for a misdemeanour before awaiting a possible explanation of it. My dear mother, with a highly strung temperament, did not always understand the mistake of doing this; and if she had exacted a promise to be back by a certain hour, she expected that promise to be kept at all hazards.

So well was this understood by my father and brothers that they would run a very real risk rather than expose her to the uneasiness of a fancied one. They would pelt home from the moors at the close of a long and arduous day at such a pace that they were often too worn out to eat; and on one occasion my eldest brother fell down in a dead faint on the threshold.

One would be slow to censure the nervous fears of an affectionate parent, but perhaps it would have been better

for us all if ours had been a little more philosophical—above all, if she would have been content to sit in a window which did not command a view of the front door!

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The china room at Rossdhu was a great delight to us. No restriction was laid on our re-arranging it to suit our ideas, and we spent many happy hours there. A former Sir James had been a collector, laying out money upon this costly craze which his wife considered would have been better applied elsewhere, and accordingly she endeavoured on one occasion to outwit him.

He had purchased for a considerable sum a pair of large Indian vases, a bright yellow in colour, and covered with marvellous designs. By these he set much store, and of course they—or rather one of them—got broken (by whom history sayeth not, nor yet why it was not mended); but at any rate, thenceforth the other remained alone in its niche.

Now comes along a pedlar, ready either to dispose of his wares or add to them as occasion arose—and here was Lady Helen's opportunity. She produced the solitary vase, (her husband being well out of the way), and trusting to his holding it to be of but little value since its mate was no more, struck a bargain with the pedlar, who gave her ten shillings, and popped his purchase into his wallet.

We may believe that he then hurried off as fast as legs could carry him, for well the wily rogue must have known what he was about—and perhaps he would have slipped aside if he had foreseen whom luck would presently run him up against. But Sir James, a bent old man, in his rough homespuns, probably looked little like a great Highland chief, and there was nothing about him to warn what an encounter might lead to. The pack was readily opened at his bidding.

Now here was the crucial moment. It might have been expected that the familiar features of the Indian vase would at once have disclosed to their former owner his lady's nefarious proceeding—in which case both she and Master Pedlar would have found themselves in a tight place ; but either the old gentleman had not looked at his china for some time or his eyesight was dim with advancing years, for all he thought was, "Here is a chance ! Here is a match for my Indian vase ! "—and proceeded to haggle with the pedlar, eventually buying the vase for ten pounds.

The question next arose, how to get the money out of the house, and the purchase into it ? But the laird's strong-box was in his private sitting-room on the ground floor, and down the same passage was the china room. The two men—we could see them as we hearkened to the tale !—stole with stealthy steps inside through a back way, and both feats were soon accomplished, when again, and this time finally, the successful trickster vanished, and his dupe hastened to enjoy his triumph.

And here the story ends, but the yellow vase still stands alone in its corner at Rossdhu.

Of this Lady Helen, after whom the town of Helensburgh was named, a sister of the first Earl of Sutherland, and a beautiful woman if fairly represented by her portrait, many stories were told ; one being that which elicited the well-known reply anent Dr Johnson, who, on his tour round the Hebrides, paid Sir James and Lady Helen Colquhoun a visit.

Her ladyship was, for those days, a fastidious woman, and the doctor's manners displeased her. She muttered aside, "What a bear ! "

"A bear, it may be, madam," retorted one of the great man's followers ; "but if so," he appended wittily, "it is *Ursa Major.*"

Lady Helen was also an autocrat, and a determined one. She ruled with a rod of iron and took practical measures to have her behests carried out—as is attested by a relic still to be found at Rossdhu in the shape of a ring which she had had made for a housekeeping purpose.

No hen's egg which could pass through this ring was deemed fit for consumption by the frugal dame ; and as all retainers within hail were expected to bring their eggs to her for sale, these were regularly subjected to the ordeal, and woe betide the seller whose hens often failed in their duty.

One more word about this lady. She was one of the first flax-spinners of her day, and the present writer is now in possession of her beautiful little satinwood spinning-wheel, being the only one of her descendants who has acquired and cultivated the obsolete art. It was in consideration thereof that the wheel was presented to me, and, needless to say, it is one of my treasures.

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A small but valued heirloom still to be seen on a table in Rossdhu drawing-room has a peculiar interest attached to it.

My father, when a young man, was bathing in the bay, when his attention was caught by a glitter beneath the pellucid waters, responding to the sunshine overhead. He dived, and brought to the surface an old, enamelled box, which had however no lid.

Considering that the lid might be somewhere about, he dived again, and again brought up something, which still was not what he sought. It was a small silver box, in the shape of a heart.

Elated by success, he descended a third time to pursue his quest, and a third time came up with a reward for

perseverance in his hand—not indeed the lid of the enamelled box, but of the silver one—proving to be the most precious find of the three, since on it was engraven a name, that of Humphrey Colquhoun—beyond doubt that of his ancestor "the fierce Sir Humphrey," of whom many a bloody tale is told in the family annals.

When properly cleaned, the little group looked like the laird of Cockpen's wig, "as guid as new," bearing no traces of their long immersion; but, often as their discoverer searched the spot thereafter, he found no further relics of the past. Perhaps it was rather wonderful that he had found these.

Although it is to the discredit of a forefather, I must tell what happened on one occasion at Rossdhu, as it explains what has often puzzled readers of certain novels and poems.

We Colquhouns have been asked over and over again, "How is it that there is scarcely any mention of your family in Scott's famous novel *Rob Roy*, which is cast in your own country, and wherein the best scenes take place on your own lands?"

The same inquiry has been made respecting *The Lady of the Lake*, wherein the solitary reference to us is scarcely polite, and certainly not true. "Glen Luss and Rossdhu" are *not* "smoking in ruin," nor do "The best of Lomond lie dead on her side"; but Sir Walter had his own reasons for putting such statements into the mouth of our hereditary enemies, the Macgregors.

When engaged on the novel—which preceded the poem—he travelled down to Loch Lomond-side to collect material and obtain local colour, and presented himself at the then Sir James Colquhoun's door, confident of welcome and assistance.

But he had reckoned without his host. That Sir James

was my grandfather, and as stupid a county magnate as existed, though perhaps it is not for me to say it. Truth, however, will out ; and we descendants of the worthy gentleman—and no one more than his own son, my father—had cause to rue his pride and pompous stupidity as regards the famous author.

Who and what was a mere Edinburgh lawyer to the Chief of Colquhoun ? Mr Walter Scott—he was not yet "Sir Walter"—might be a clever man of letters, but he was a person of no consequence, as Sir James esteemed consequence, and he slunk out by a back way to avoid an intrusive, prying body, having ordered *the butler* to show him round !

Such an affront was never forgotten nor forgiven ; in *Rob Roy* the Colquhouns were absolutely ignored, and the scene of the *Lady of the Lake*, originally intended to be laid on the banks of Loch Lomond, was removed to Loch Katrine !

As Sir Walter himself made no secret of the why and the wherefore of this, and as my father often referred to it with much regret, I have no hesitation in stating it as a fact.

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Sundays at Rossdhu were as strictly kept as in our own home—rather more so in fact : for though we were allowed to receive any *letters* that came by post, (the bag being put into the carriage at Luss while we were at church), none of its other contents were doled out.

Our uncle, on reseating himself within, would solemnly unlock the bag and scrutinise every envelope before handing it either to the recipient or the recipient's representative ; but every newspaper, book, or parcel was put back again, to await a "lawful" day of issue.

We had, however, certain amenities during the service. We sat in our own loft, and in the centre of the loft was a

fireplace, which in cold weather contained a fire—although I have not often mentioned it, we were often at Rossdhu in the chilly months of autumn and spring, it being the custom for our relations there to invite such of the family as did not take part in the annual migration to Park Place—consequently we were very glad of that church fire.

When the text for the sermon was given out, we turned round our chairs—huge red and gold armchairs which had been in family use for two hundred and fifty years—and settled ourselves with our toes on the fender ; and at least once, and sometimes twice afterwards, our uncle would rise and put on fresh coal—a proceeding always watched with the greatest interest.

And I think we liked being prayed for as "the family that is held in highest distinction amongst us"—though there came once to Luss parish a modern young minister who did not, and prevailed on my uncle to let him omit the clause, it being obviously out of date and appropriate only to feudal times.

My uncle was quite agreeable, but the people were not. They decided that the modern young man was seeking to belittle a worthy family from whom many of their blessings flowed, and indignantly demanded that he should do as his forbears had done. He had to give in ; and though, with the growth of Time, there came a certain change of feeling and removal of ancient landmarks, the tie between the Colquhouns and their people has always remained a strong one on both sides.

My dear uncle was beloved on his estates. He was "as gentle as a lamb," we were often told, and could an old man or woman but reach his ear with a petition, it was attentively hearkened to and promised consideration. Nor was the reaching difficult, for this truly good landlord, who never entered the house of a compeer except under a sense of

noblesse oblige, was a frequent visitor among his poorer friends, and kept a patriarchal eye on all their concerns.

He did not indeed make up marriages between them, as his own father had done to their satisfaction—("Aweel, Sir James, if ye'll bring it aboot," had been a frequent response to the latter's "I'm thinking, John—or Peter—that Mary—or Maggie—So-and-so, would make you a good wife"); but he was always pleased to hear of a wedding, and invariably attended it. In other matters, I say advisedly that appeals were "promised consideration," since my uncle was not an impulsive man, and he had to consult the factor, Mr Wyllie.

As I write the name of "Wyllie" I can hear Scotchmen of a former generation exclaim, "Wyllie? I know! I remember those Wyllies. All sons of a father who was a factor, *nascitur non fit.* There was a Wyllie in every part of Scotland in my day."

As my uncle had been lucky in securing the services of a specially able and upright member of the family, it was no wonder that he acquired the habit of referring all matters of the estate to him; and my father, who was sometimes a little restive on the subject, and could say what he chose to a brother with whom he was on the most free and affectionate terms, would sometimes have his jest at "the omniscient and infallible Wyllie."

His "What does your paragon Wyllie say to it?" or "You have to get Wyllie's consent, of course," would, however, be taken in perfectly good part, and once the laugh was turned against himself.

At Glenfalloch he had unearthed a nice little cottage, hidden deep in a moorland glen, and precisely on the boundary line between the Breadalbane and Luss estates.

Having carefully prepared his little trap, he soon had our uncle within sight of the hut, and pointing to it with

his stick, casually observed, "Whose cottage is that, I wonder?"

The wonder meeting with no response, he put the question straight, "Whose cottage is that, James?"

"I don't know," said James, simply.

"Why, it's *your own*," shouted my father, much delighted. "It's your own; and I thought that you wouldn't know, and I bet you Mr Wyllie——"; but the words died on his lips, for behold! there was Mr Wyllie emerging from the cottage door! It was some time before he jested at the latter's expense again.

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The household at Rossdhu was almost invariably recruited from homes on the estate. Boys and girls were brought thither for inspection as soon as of an age to leave school, and if they inclined to domestic service, a niche was found for them in the pantry or kitchen, whence they gravitated upwards, or were drafted onwards as the occasion offered.

At a later period than that of which I write, I had a pleasant and touching experience of the feeling sometimes—we may hope often—engendered by this, and may perhaps be pardoned reproducing a little account of it jotted down at the time under the subjoined heading.

"*Freddy: A Touch of Nature.*

"He was a gorgeous creature, and he sunned himself like a great bird on the steps of a Mayfair mansion. His coat was pink, a rosy pink, well set off by the under plumage, so to speak, of jet black and snowy white. Shoe-buckles finished him off and glinted ravishingly as he stuck out his toes and eyed them from time to time. One word more: powder crowned his top-knot, and the smoothness of the cheek beneath and the unruffled outline of the features were only

redeemed from beauty by an all-pervading expression of profound and unfathomable inanity.

"The hour was five o'clock—calling time. Suddenly, in the midst of the glittering equipages which crashed in ceaseless kaleidoscope around, there stopped, beneath the gorgeous creature's nose, a humble little vehicle with a solitary occupant.

"The creature's eyelids dropped ; he did not approve of victorias for the afternoon—moreover, the lady inside was old enough to have known better. Had she been very young and very smart ?—but as it was, his descent of the steps was a protest in itself—slow, supercilious, vengeful. As much as he could hate anything, he hated that victoria, root and branch ; his soul—he hadn't much of a soul—but such as it was, it sickened at the thought of taking in cards from so mean a source. Then all at once something happened.

"The lady was busy with her cards ; the footman—Good Heavens ! can it be that this crimson, quivering, palpitating, *human* face belongs to that stucco image of the doorstep ? Its very nostrils are working with excitement. They breathe entreaty, expectation.

"The lady sees nothing—goes on shaking off the little tissue papers which fly about ; there is a sort of gasp at her side.

"Still she takes no notice—why should she ? To her a footman is but an automaton ; and she will be gone and never know ; in sheer desperation he breaks convention's fetters.

"She starts, looks at him confusedly for a moment ; then all at once, with an electric shock of recognition—'*Freddy !*'

"A mist swims before Freddy's eyes ; for he sees, and knows that she sees, not the great, pillared houses blazing in the June sunshine, not the fluttering crowds and champing horses, not the pride and pomp and artificial

grandeur and luxury of it all—but a brown hillside, and a blue loch, and a heather-roofed hut by a wimpling burn.

"And the resplendent Frederick of Mayfair is a mountain laddie again, running to tell his mother that 'the ladies' are passing on the road below; and now, with shaking fingers, he flies for refuge to the modest carriage-wrap they would have disdained to touch five minutes before; and as he smoothes and tucks for appearance' sake, his trembling lips can hardly find words to reply to the gracious and, oh, so prized inquiries.

"He has got a very good place, ma'am, thank you, ma'am: he is doing very well, ma'am, thank you, ma'am; his old mother is alive and well, ma'am, thank you, ma'am—thank you very kindly, ma'am, for asking after her: she will be pleased to hear, he will write and tell her: and if you please, ma'am, he hopes the family is very well, and the little misses very well, (and everyone else very well that Freddy can think of); and though the whole only lasts a few minutes, spin it out as he may, when it is over, and the little carriage rattles cheerfully off, Frederick the Magnificent stands quite still, with the cards in his hands, looking after it as if all the light had died out of his sky."