

CHAP. XI.

A VERY AMUSING ROAD.

On the Road. — Chevaux de Poste. — Our Tail. — An engaging Ride. — Varieties in Opinion. — Scenery of the Western Shore. — The Atlantic and Southern Hebrides. — The Impedimenta of Travelling. — Dr. Kitchener's List of Tourists' Necessaries. — Travelling for Pleasure. — Bealochintie. — Paiten. — Barr. — A Highland Village. — Inn and Shop. — An Emporium. — The Smith of Barr and the Great Plague. — Sketching. — Not to be put in the Window.



DIEU to Campbelton! We clatter away from the White Hart Inn, past the old Cross, and by the Town Hall, with our horse's head turned northwards. We are seated in one of the open cars of the country. They are inside-cars similar to those used in Wales and at the English lakes, holding four persons (not very comfortably) besides the driver, and well adapted for seeing the scenery in fine weather. Away we drive, followed by a pack of snarling curs, apparently as numerous now as

in the days when Edward Waverly entered the village of Tully Veolan, and reminding us of what Scott tells us of the French tourist who, exploring the Highlands and desirous of finding a rational reason for everything that he saw, wrote to his fellow-countrymen that the State maintained in every village a set of curs called "collies," whose duty it was to chase the *chevaux de poste*—too starved and exhausted to move without such a stimulus—from one village to another.

Our horse, however, did not stand in need of such a canine stimulant, and the administration of bark was entirely a matter of supererogation. The bare-legged and bare-headed children ran after the car, and shouted from exuberance of animal spirits,—

" And lang leggit callants gaun wanting the breeks,
Wanting the breeks, and without hose and shoon "

saluted us in Gaelic, and ran races for coppers, for which they had not begged. Thus, as befits a gentleman in the Highlands, we leave "with our tail on," but soon shake it off, as we bid adieu to the old Scottish capital.

At a short distance from Campbelton, where the road ascends a hill and passes under an avenue of limes, there is an exceedingly picturesque view of the town and harbour, and the encircling hills and distant ocean,—the which I longed to sketch, and had to smother

a strong desire to command a halt for that purpose. The road passes through the properties of Alexander Macalister, Esq., of Tangie, and the Duke of Argyll, neither of whom have a residence in the parish. The road, be it remarked, is a capital road all the way northward to Tarbert and Inverary, and is not crossed by a turnpike or any other bar to progress. When the road has passed the old burying-ground of Kilchenzie, it turns seaward, nearing the western shore of Cantire, and so continues along the sea-shore (with very slight exceptions) for thirty miles, all the way to Tarbert. Macculloch's description does not descend to many particulars, and makes no mention of Glen Barr; and Pennant condenses his account into two lines. "From Machrihanish Bay to Loch Tarbert," says Macculloch, "the beauties of the shore will not be discovered from a boat; but there is *a very amusing road*, conducted nearly the whole way on the margin of the water, which affords in itself some pleasing scenes, besides the fine maritime views which it presents of the channel of Jura and of that of Gigha, terminated by the long outline of Jura and Isla, in which the Paps form a predominant and beautiful feature. In a summer evening and with a calm sea, a more engaging ride for ten or fifteen miles cannot be imagined." *

This description of Macculloch's is exactly suited to

* Highlands, vol. ii. p. 83.

our case. It is a summer evening, there is a calm sea, and we find the ride "engaging" and the road "amusing." I am glad to fall back on Macculloch's authority, for, brief as is his description, it is sufficiently laudatory; and, as I have heard the scenery described as utterly uninteresting, and found it to be anything but that, I am not sorry to fortify my opinion by that of so eminent an authority. It is true, indeed, that, compared with other portions of the Highlands, and even with the fifteen miles immediately south of Tarbert, the road for ten miles north of Campbelton lacks timber, variety, and many elements of the picturesque. But still there is the coast, and the sea-view is a host in itself; and with the Atlantic on one side and a range of heath-covered hills on the other, no scenery could be considered as entirely wanting in interest and beauty. But he who drives rapidly through a country, and views the landscape under the most favourable circumstances of season, light, and weather, must after all be but a partial observer. I will, therefore, counterbalance Macculloch's account by quoting a description of the scenery from the pen of one who had many years' acquaintance with it, and was the minister of the parish.

"Its general aspect is rather tame and uninteresting, with very little variety of scenery, destitute of woods and inclosures, gradually rising from the level

of the sea to the height of 700 or 800 feet, diversified and intersected by some heights and hollows, three narrow glens, and various streams. The lower part of the hills sloping towards the shore, occasionally half a mile in ascent, is uniformly cultivated, and produces plentiful crops of oats, bear, potatoes, peas, and beans. The higher ground beyond the region of cultivation is naked, bleak, and sterile, covered with stunted heath, generally interspersed with detached spots of coarse grass, sheep fescue sprits, rushes, and gall, a species of alpine myrtle. The hills range from north to south, and are pretty uniform in height, with the exception of Beinn-an-tuirc. . . . At the termination of Bealochintie Bay, the coast assumes a more bold and rugged aspect. A promontory of detached rocks and loose stones of immense magnitude projects into the sea, which seem, since the creation, to have set the utmost efforts of the waves at defiance. In the immediate vicinity of the sea, and throughout the whole extent of the parish, a narrow strip of low alluvial land, edged by an indented declivity, bears evident traces of having at one period been occupied by the sea. The general belief among the aged inhabitants is, that the sea is gradually retiring from the land. In confirmation of this belief, the bank or sloping declivity which forms the boundary of the level land, occasionally assumes a shelving appearance, and, in such places as the

sea has encountered obstruction from projecting precipitous rocks, they have formed an irresistible barrier against any encroachment of the ocean; but, where no such interruption occurs, the waves seem to have forced a passage further inland. Along the shore, the remains of some rude circular inclosures are still visible, which, from their appearance and position, must at one period have been surrounded by the sea. . . . A few obelisks of rude unpolished stone, and evidently sepulchral monuments, are scattered through the parish. The most conspicuous has been erected in the neighbourhood of a ruinous building, and measures 16 feet from the surface; a grave at the base of the obelisk, covered with turf, is 18 feet 7 inches in length, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ in breadth. Barrows or tumuli are sometimes to be found not far from the shore. In one or two which have been opened, nothing was discovered but a few human bones, almost reduced to ashes, and some chips of burned wood, which sanctions the belief that our forefathers were in the practice of burning their dead. In the recess of a soft freestone rock, not far from the sea, where a farmer was lately preparing to erect a cart shade, and had commenced to level the bottom, he met with a great collection of sea-shells, and discovered in the face of the rock several apertures, or square holes, crammed with human bones. He immediately desisted from his operations, and left

undisturbed the repositories of the dead. In the south division of the parish, two circular inclosures, commonly known as *Dūn fhūinn*, or “Fingal’s Fort,” and *Dūn-na foghmhar*, or “The Giant’s Fort,” attract the attention of the traveller. They seem to have stood for many ages, and baffle conjecture to account for their origin. The vulgar, who are fond of the marvellous, consider them ancient residences of Fingal and his giants;—and the antiquary, Druidical temples of worship. At this distant period of time, without written records to throw any light upon the subject, it is very difficult to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion with regard to their original design. As inclosures of a similar nature frequently occur in the Highlands of Scotland, and have been uniformly erected upon elevated situations, it is by no means improbable that they might have been originally intended as places of temporary retreat and security for some of the domestics and cattle of the natives, when engaged in battle with their enemies.”

Such is the Rev. D. Macdonald’s account of that western-shore country north of Campbelton, through which we are now rapidly driving, on this lovely summer’s evening. Perhaps (as one of our friends suggested to us) the country appeared all the more picturesque, because we turned our backs upon it, and looked out to sea! And, to a certain degree, this may

have been the case; for the sun was slowly sinking over the Atlantic, and throwing the long line of Islay and Jura into a deep purple, while we inhaled all the fresh fragrance of the sea-breeze, and watched the waves rolling in almost to our very feet. Consequently, the sea was the leading attraction of our drive; and we (*i. e.* my wife and I*) had so placed ourselves in our open inside car, that we looked towards the Atlantic, and turned our backs upon the hills. Our luggage was piled chiefly upon the opposite seat. We had condensed it as much as possible, knowing by experience, that there is no greater drawback to the enjoyment of a long tour than an over-crowding of luggage; and this is peculiarly the case in the Highlands, where, in many cases, the means of traffic are confined to one car, like to that in which we are now driving, so that the over-weighted tourists must leave behind them one half of their *impedimenta*, to follow them at an uncertain time, and at a grievous inconvenience and expense, even when they are fortunate enough to find the one car disengaged, and (for this is often a *non sequitur*) a horse also at liberty to draw it. The tourist in Cantire (as in many other parts of

* "I and my wife," would be more grammatical; but, in a case like this, grammar must give way to courtesy if not to facts, and the wife must have the leading place. Wolsey's grammatical "*Ego et meus Rex*" was by no means a politic proceeding.

the Highlands) will therefore find it best to write a few days before-hand, and engage his conveyance.*

We, therefore, can the more enjoy our summer-evening drive along this Atlantic shore, and in sight of the Irish coast and the southern Hebrides, because we have no agonising thoughts (like poor Mrs. Seymour in Albert Smith's *Mont Blanc*) as to the "black box" that has been left behind, and which may pursue us, like *atra cura*, all through our Scotch tour, and never reach us until we are safe at home again, and don't want it. Our minds are at ease on this score, for all our luggage is stowed away with us in the car. I fear that Dr. Kitchener would consider us but scantily provided for our journey; and that we could only answer, "Where, indeed!" if he demanded of us, Where are those things that I told you, in my "Traveller's Oracle," were absolutely needful for every tourist? Where is the hunting-watch with seconds, with a detached lever or Dupleix's escapement? Where are your two pairs of spectacles with strong silver frames? Where are your own knife, fork, and spoon; your "galoches and paraloses;" your traveller's knife, containing a large and small blade, a saw, a hook for taking a stone out of your horse's shoe, a turnscrew, a gunpicker, tweezers,

* Letters for this purpose should be directed to Mr. Freeborn, White Hart Hotel, Campbelton, N. B.; to Mr. Sheddan, Barr Inn, near Campbelton; or to Mr. Stewart, car proprietor, East Tarbert, Loch Fyne, N. B.

and long corkscrew? Where are your two greatcoats, your dreadnought, and your Welsh wig? Where is your folding one-foot rule, and ruby or Rhodium pen, made by Doughty, No. 10, Great Ormond Street? Where are your double-barrelled pistols, with spring bayonets, which you should take the first unostentatious opportunity of showing to your landlord? Above all, where are your sheets, your light eider-down quilt, and your two dressed hart skins, wherewith you are to render yourself independent of damp beds? My dear Doctor, you might as well ask, Where is the warming-pan? neither have we provided ourselves with the corkscrew door-fastener that you so highly recommend to your travelling friends, who would, doubtless, find more work for the corkscrew than for the door-fastener. Imagine the commotion that we should make at the hotels, to say nothing of private houses, if we travelled with all your paraphernalia, and made use of it. The landlady sulky at our precautionary sheets, the landlord furious at the unostentatious display of our double-barrelled pistols with their spring bayonets! What an agreeable tour of pleasure we should make! It was all very well for you, Dr. Kitchener, whose relaxations even were performed to most exact rule, to have your journeys made wretched in a lumbering chaise large enough to hold your Welsh wigs, and sheets, and stone-water bottles, and all your other little comforts, and thus to

roll about from one hotel to another in miserable expectation of what might await you at the hands of ruffianly landlords, and murderous landladies; but we are neither invalids nor hypochondriacs; nor "if circumstances should unhappily compel us to ride on the outside of a coach" (which is the most distressing position for a tourist that your vivid imagination can conceive) should we coddle ourselves in accordance with your directions. No: we are quite best off as we are, with our luggage reduced to sensible dimensions, and not swollen with extra sheets and Welsh wigs.

So we drive pleasantly on, watching the red disc of the sun sinking behind the Atlantic, in a line between us and North America, and we think, with Macculloch, that it is "a very amusing road," and that on "a summer evening, with a calm sea, a more engaging ride for ten or fifteen miles cannot be imagined." Ten miles from Campbelton we reach the small village of Bealachintie (or as it is more properly spelt in Gaelic *Bealachantsuidhe*) which is the site of the parish church of Kilchenzie. The bay of Bealachintie comprehends a circuit of nearly two miles, and shows many formidable rocks over which the waves break into foam. Close by, is the burial-ground of Paiten (or *Cloagh nam Paitean*), which is said to have been first used as the last resting-place of shipwrecked sailors. The chief monuments are those of the Macalisters of

Glenbarr, the most recent being to the memory of the late Colonel Macalister of Glenbarr Abbey. Presently, our driver flourishes his whip, when we are on a hill over a deep glen, and pointing off to the right among the woods in the valley, exclaims, "Yon's the big hoose!" which, being translated, means that we are approaching Glenbarr Abbey. The road descends the hill, crosses a bridge over Barr River, then twists sharply to the right, past the entrances to the Abbey, and between its garden walls, up a steep hill completely overhung by shadowy trees, and then gives another twist into daylight and Barr Village. Not that it is daylight now, however; but, as we shall have many opportunities of seeing the place by shine and shade, we will condense the observations of our repeated visits into one description, and so dismiss the subject. There will be an additional advantage in lingering awhile over Barr Village, as a description of it will be a description of all the other villages in Cantire; for they are much of the same pattern, and differ from each other as little as do the dinner parties of Mesdames Smith, Brown, Jones, and Robinson, where with a slight experience, you may always calculate to a nicety, the quality of the jelly, the nature of the soup, and the sequence of the dishes and *entrées*, as well as the deadly hilarity of the whole affair, and the thankful satisfaction you will feel at its conclusion.

Barr Village then, is rather more than twelve miles from Campbelton, built on high ground over the glen, and at a short distance from the Atlantic. It consists mainly of one short, wide street, laid out on the slant of the upper portion of the hill. The houses are low, built on the ground-floor only, roughly thatched, and invariably whitewashed—much whiter outwardly than inwardly. There is an Inn, a Post Office, a general shop, a blacksmith's, and a shoemaker's. The Inn is first in dignity, the shoemaker's first in indignity, for neither time nor man have kept their defacing, or "effacing fingers" from its battered carcase. The Inn can boast of an upper story, and as this is constructed in the roof, you are enabled, as you lie in bed, to study through the narrow skylight, the courses of the stars. The accommodation, therefore, although clean, is somewhat cramped; but tourists in the Highlands, especially they who come intent on sport, can put up with much rougher accommodation; and among the shooting tenants of that low sky-lighted bedroom, have been a gallant officer who obtained his majority for his conduct on that terrible day at the Redan, and his brother-in-law, a noble lord, who of all men in the United Kingdom is alone entitled to wear his hat in the presence of his Sovereign.* Down stairs there is a good and com-

* A right never, of course, exercised; but gracefully recognised by George IV. when he held a levée at Dublin, and bade the noble lord's father "be covered."

fortable room, neatly furnished; and in the way of creature comforts, the traveller who puts up here for a time, is not likely to starve. The inn is red tiled, and has a signboard with a simple inscription:—"GLENBARR INN, J. SHEDDAN, LICENSED." In these Highland villages, where there is no opposition beer-house (or rather whiskey-house), it is needless to distinguish the inn-sign



BARR VILLAGE.

by any one's arms, or, for that matter, his legs, as in the case of the Isle of Man, whose arms are three legs! so they simply write up the name of the village, with the word "inn" after it, and subjoin the name of the landlord. Turning in at the door with its whitened step, the guest's room is to our left, the common room to the right, and further on, other buildings, in the front of

which, in the street, we see a light "trap," and an open car, in which Mr. Sheddan will send you and your luggage on your next stage. A bare-legged lassie flits about over the whitened stone floor, and Mrs. Sheddan, who wears shoes and stockings like a superior being, (which, indeed, she is, for is she not mine hostess, and has she not been my lady's maid?) and whose former beauty is far from faded, superintends operations, and looks to the bairns.

The Post Office (at the upper end of the street, on the right, where those children are approaching the door) is also the shop, with few outward adornments, but a wonderful place within, gaily papered with scenes from Uncle Tom's Cabin, the sable hero himself, and the gentle Eva, in china effigy, in the window; it deals in nearly everything that you could possibly ask for, and is presided over by so civil a couple that "shopping" became a pleasure, as well as an excitement. In this repository for multifarious conveniences and needs, where fitches of bacon and tubs of butter jostled against a stock of stationery and "Queen's heads," and where cheeses and pickles coquetted with ready-made clothes and blue woollen cloth, you could purchase the best biscuits either for yourself or your dogs, obtain all your groceries and sauces, buy your pins and needles and thread, get your Highland "bonnets" and plaids, lay in your winter flannel and hosiery, procure your

oranges and lemons and best blacking, replenish your salt and tobacco boxes, order your loaves of bread and oatmeal cakes, and have your game boxes made up in any number and to any size, wherewith to contain all those braces of grouse and black game that you proposed to send to your friends in England. Verily, Mr. Duncan McMillan may well have dignified his shop by the name of an "Emporium," for almost everything that man requires in the Highlands was to be purchased there; while the post-office was as well managed duly and daily, as in an English country town. Opposite to "the shop," is the blacksmith's, where the Highland Vulcan is at work on the hind legs of a beast, with a coat as rough as Mr. Bright's tongue. We are reminded of the traditionary tale of his predecessor in the office during that dreadful time when the great plague visited Cantire, and when one of the keenest fears that attended it, was that a man might die, and there would be none to bury him. Of the smith of Barr, it is said, that he took the plague. It developed itself by a great swelling, and unless this swelling broke, there was no chance of recovery. The smith had the plague tumour, and it did not break. He feared that he should die, and that his friends would flee from him in alarm, and not give him the rites of sepulture. So he went and lay down under the brow of an old dyke, hoping that not long after his death, it would fall

over him, and cover his mortal remains. But while he lay there, the tumour broke, and the smith recovered. It is said that he made himself very useful in performing the last sad offices for such of his friends and neighbours at Barr who fell victims to the plague.

The blacksmith's and the post-office are on the upper and higher end of the street; at the further and lower end is the inn. Looking down the street, the view is bounded by the garden wall of Glenbarr Abbey, with its dense screen of fine timber, the high road twisting sharply off to the right, round the inn, and down into the glen. Let us walk down to that wall while I set my back against it, and looking up street, make a water-colour sketch of the village and its inhabitants. Fowls go cackling about, and a few ducks dabble in a dirty gutter; bare-legged children, with nothing on their heads, and not much more on their bodies, stare at the sassenach, and appear to regard the reproduction of themselves and their homes on the drawing-block, with as much amazement as the Red Indians who, as they looked upon their own likenesses when painted by Mr. Catlin, would have tomahawked him for painting them in profile (which they regarded as a charm to make the other half of their face wither away), had it not been to their evident interest to preserve his life until he had painted them in full face, with both their eyes and cheeks.

The butler from the abbey comes by, and talks to the late lady's-maid, something to my disadvantage, perhaps, for their conversation is in Gaelic. A butler and a late lady's maid talking Gaelic! Oh, Jeames! oh, Frippery! do you ever carry your Gaelic into May-



THE RAG AND BONE WOMAN.

fair, and excite the astonishment of the Belgravian yellow-plushes at your Highland "di'lect." Presently, the rag and bone woman of the district comes by, with her bare feet and her white "mutch" cap, and is greatly

flattered at the marked artistic attention that I pay her. She has a stock of English at her command, and she begs me not to put her likeness "in the window." She is evidently somewhat ashamed of her rag-and-bone bag and odds-and-ends basket, and would doubtless wish to appear without them, and in her Sunday best, whenever she is "put in the window."

But too long have I kept the reader from Glenbarr Abbey. The Queen, however, is always last in a procession; and the lion is more highly thought of when we have been gazing upon inferior animals. So, now that we have seen the smaller fry, let us pay a visit to (what our Campbelton car-driver called) "the big hoose."