

## THE LEGEND OF KILCHURN CASTLE.

KILCHURN-CASTLE is a noble relic of the feudal ages, situated near the head of Loch-Awe, under the impending gloom of the majestic Bencruachan, which rises in rocky masses abruptly from the opposite shore of the lake. Amid the grandeur and variety which that fine lake derives from its great expanse, and the lofty mountains with which it is surrounded, it cannot be denied that Kilchurn-castle forms its leading and most picturesque object,—

“ Is paramount, and rules  
Over the pomp and beauty of a scene  
Where mountains, torrents, lakes, and woods unite  
To pay it homage.”

No other ancient castle in the Western Highlands can compete with this in point of magnitude; and none, even throughout Scotland at large, can be compared with it for the picturesque arrangement of its buildings, the beauty and fine effect of its varied and broken outline, or its happy appropriateness to its situation. It stands upon a projecting rocky elevation at the head of the lake, where the water of Orchy flows into it, and which is occasionally converted into an island when the river and loch are flooded by rains; and though now connected with the shore by an extended plain, obviously of alluvial origin, and consequently forming a peninsula, it must have been at one time an island, and has been gradually connected with the mainland partly by the alluvial depositions of the river and partly by the lowering of the



KILCHURN CASTLE

waters of the lake. The castle must anciently have been a place of great strength; and it affords abundant indication, by its magnitude, its magnificence, and its strong position, of the feudal splendour of its ancient owners. The great tower of it was five stories high, and had its second story entirely occupied with the baronial hall, and is said to have been built at vast cost and with great labour by the lady of Sir Colin Campbell of Glenorchy, Knight-Templar, crusader in Palestine, and ancestor of the Ducal family of Argyle. That necessary appendage of a feudal castle, the dungeon, is on the ground floor, and appears to have been sufficiently dark, damp, and wretched to render utterly miserable the unfortunate beings who, from time to time, were forced to tenant it. The remaining portions of the castle, which form a square enclosing the court yard, though of considerable antiquity, are certainly not so ancient as the tower, and doubtless have been added at some more recent period. The second Sir Colin of Glenorchy, surnamed *Dubh*, or Black, son of the Knight-Templar, was proprietor of seven different castles,—a sufficient evidence of the great wealth which must have been possessed, even at that early period, by the ancestors of the now powerful family of Breadalbane. So late as 1745, Kilchurn-castle was garrisoned by the king's troops, and at a much more recent period it was fit to be inhabited; but this fine monument of baronial dignity is now a ruin,—“wild yet stately,—not dismantled of turrets, nor the walls broken down, though obviously a ruin,” and hastening to decay.

There is a legend connected with this castle, which has its counterpart in more than one legend of feudal times, as well as in the pages of Homer. During a long absence of Sir Colin, the Knight Templar, on a crusade to the south-east of Europe and to Palestine—an absence which extended to upwards of seven years—he is said to have visited Rome, where he had a very singular dream. He applied to a monk for his advice, who recommended his instant return home, as

a very serious domestic calamity, which could only be averted by his presence, was portended by his dream. Sir Colin immediately took his departure for Scotland, and, after much difficulty and danger, reached a place called Succoth, the residence of an old woman who had been his nurse. In the disguise of a mendicant, he craved food and shelter for the night; and was admitted to the poor woman's fireside. From a scar on his arm she recognised him as the laird; and instantly informed him of what was about to happen at the castle.

It appeared that for a long period, no information had been received with regard to Sir Colin, nor had any communication from him reached his lady. On the contrary, it had been industriously circulated that he had fallen in battle in the Holy Land. Sir Colin perceived treachery on the part of some one; for he had repeatedly despatched clansmen with intelligence to his lady, and surely all of them could not have perished before reaching Scotland. His suspicions were well-founded. Baron MacCorquadale, a neighbouring laird, who had been the most busy in propagating the report of Sir Colin's death, had intercepted and murdered all the messengers. He had thus succeeded in convincing the lady of the death of her husband; and had finally won her affections, and the next day had been fixed for the marriage.

Incensed at what he had just heard from the faithful nurse, Sir Colin set out early next morning for his castle at Kilchurn, where he was told his lady then resided; and, as he followed the romantic windings of the Orchy, the sound of the bagpipe, and the acclamations of his clansmen, who had assembled to join the approaching festivity, were wafted to his ears. He crossed the drawbridge, and entered the gates of the castle—at this happy season open to all—undiscovered and unregarded. While he stood silently gazing on the scene of riot which now met his view, he was asked what he wanted. “To have my hunger satisfied, and my thirst

quenched," said he. Food and liquor were plentifully put before him; he eat, but refused to drink, except from the hands of the lady herself. Informed of the strange request of the apparent mendicant, the lady, always charitable and benevolent, came at once and handed him a cup. Sir Colin drank to her health, and dropping a ring into the empty cup returned it to her. The lady, observant of the action, retired and examined the ring. It was her own gift to her husband when he departed on his distant expedition; it had been his talisman in the field, and had been kept sacred by him. "My husband! My husband!" she exclaimed, and rushing in, threw herself into his arms. A shout of joy from the clansmen rent the air; and the pipers made the courtyard resound with the pibroch of the Campbells. The Baron MacCorqudale was allowed to depart in safety; but Sir Colin Dubh, the son and successor of the Templar, after his father's death, attacked the Baron, and overcoming him in battle, took possession of his castle and his lands.

Wordsworth has addressed some fine lines to Kilchurn-castle, concluding thus:—

"Shade of departed power,  
 Skeleton of unfleshed humanity,  
 The chronicle were welcome that should call  
 Into the compass of distinct regard  
 The toils and struggles of thy infancy!  
 Yon foaming flood seems motionless as ice;  
 Its dizzy turbulence eludes the eye,  
 Frozen by distance; so, majestic pile,  
 To the perception of this Age appear  
 Thy fierce beginnings, softened and subdued,  
 And quieted in character—the strife,  
 The pride, the fury uncontrollable  
 Lost on the aerial heights of the Crusades!"