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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for January 9th, 2015

To see what we've added to the Electric Scotland site view our What's New page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/whatsnew.htm>

To see what we've added to the Electric Canadian site view our What's New page at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/whatsnew.htm>

For the latest news from Scotland see our ScotNews feed at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/>

Electric Scotland News

I confess to having a wee holiday this week so took it easy for a while. I hope you all enjoyed your New Year holiday.

I'm anxious to get your feedback on the stories I've been adding these past few weeks. Please let me know if you like them or not and if you do like them let me know if you have any preference as to types of subjects you'd like me to look for. The one last week was chapter 1 of a book that I hoped you might enjoy and then go onto read the other chapters. The one this week is a standalone story.

Over the next couple of weeks I'll try to bring you some stories about Robert Burns in the lead up to the numerous Burns Suppers that will be happening all over the world. I know the Burns Suppers in Toronto and New York are pretty famous by now but there are many in pretty well all communities all over the world so do check out your own local events guide to see if there is one near you.

Electric Canadian

Secret Intelligence Activities at Camp X

While Canada's military contributions have been extensively documented, Canada's vital role in the development and implementation of secret intelligence operations is not well known. The secret intelligence activities at Camp X, formerly located in both Whitby and Oshawa, Ontario, constitute an important element of Canada's contribution to the Allied war effort during the Second World War. From 1941 to 1945, Camp X served as the training school for Canadian and American secret agents, the first of its kind in North America. It was also the site of Hydra, a sophisticated top-secret communications relay station that facilitated the transmission of Allied sensitive and secret information during the war, and continued to operate until 1969. The activities at Camp X also strengthened intelligence ties, and consequently relationships, between the British, Canadians, and Americans. Over 500 agents trained at Camp X before undertaking clandestine Allied missions all over the world.

You can read more about this at <http://www.electriccanadian.com/forces/campx.htm>

Electric Scotland

Deeside Tales

Or Men and Manners On Highland Deeside since 1745 by John Grant Michie (1908).

Have now completed this book and the notes are very interesting with articles about the Farquharsons and the Gordons.

You can read this book at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/deeside/index.htm>

Scottish Reminiscences

By Sir Archibald Geikie (1904). A new book we're starting.

One who has sojourned in every part of a country and for sixty years has mingled with all classes of its inhabitants; who has watched the decay and disappearance of old, and the uprise of new usages; who has been ever on the outlook for illustrations of native humour, and who has been in the habit all along of freely recounting his experiences to his friends, may perhaps be forgiven if he ventures to put forth some record of what he has seen and heard, as a slight contribution to the history of social changes.

Literature is rich in Scottish reminiscences of this kind, so rich indeed that a writer who adds another volume to the long list runs great risk of repeating what has already been told. I have done my best to avoid this danger by turning over the pages of as many books of this class as I have been able to lay hands upon. In the course of this reading I have discovered that not a few of the 'stories' which I picked up long ago have found their way into print. These I have generally excluded from the present volume, save in cases where my version seemed to me better than that which had been published. But with all my care I cannot hope to have wholly escaped from pitfalls of this nature.

No one can have read much in this subject without discovering the perennial vitality of some anecdotes. With slight and generally local modification, they are told by generation after generation, and always as if they related to events that had recently occurred and to persons that were still familiarly known. Yet the essential basis of their humour may occasionally be traced back a long way. As an example of this longevity I may cite the incident of snoring in church, related at p. 86 of the following chapters, where an anecdote which has been told to me as an event that had recently happened among people now living was in full vigour a hundred years ago, and long before that time had formed the foundation of a clever epigram in the reign of Charles II. Another illustration of this persistence and transformation may be found in the anecdote of the wolf's den (p. 292). The same recurring circumstances may sometimes conceivably evoke, at long intervals, a similar sally of humour; but probably in most cases the original story survives, undergoing a process of gradual evolution and local adaptation as it passes down from one generation to another.

You can read this book at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/archibald/index.htm>

Jeremiah Eames Rankin

In 1873 Dr Rankin published in Boston a volume of Scottish poems, entitled "The Auld Scotch Mither, and other Poems in the Dialect of Burns," which were spoken of in the highest terms of praise by George MacDonald, LL.D., of London, P. Hatley Waddell, LL.D., of Glasgow, Dr Ray Palmer, and other distinguished men, who expressed their surprise that one born two removes from Scotland should have written with such ease in the Scotch dialect, and caught the true spirit—the *ndivett* and pathos—of the Scottish muse. He has also published smaller volumes, entitled "Heather Bells Drappit on the Grave o' Robert Burns," and "Oor Kirk Fair, and ither Verses o' that Ilk." Dr Rankin appears to have given special attention to Scottish literature.

I might also add that on this page you can read an Immortal Memory in verse that he produced about Robert Burns which I think you'll enjoy. Should anyone like to type this up I'd appreciate a copy for the site.

You can read more about him and read his poems at <http://www.electricscotland.com/burns/rankin.htm>

A Voyage Round the Coasts of Scotland and the Isles

By James Wilson in 2 volumes.

Having been requested by the Honourable the Commissioners of the Board of Fisheries to accompany their Secretary throughout the course of his voyage of inspection in the summer of 1841, for the purpose of making certain investigations into the natural history of the herring, I have been since induced, not so much by the "solicitation of friends" as the more weighty arguments of my respected Publishers, to endeavour to impart to others a portion of the interest which that voyage excited in my own mind. The object of the Secretary on this occasion was to acquire a general knowledge of the whole coasts of Scotland, especially of the districts near which fisheries had been or might with advantage be established, and to make himself acquainted with the character and position of the various harbours erected by the Board. We had therefore occasion to visit many localities not within the range of the ordinary tourist, as well as to explore those numerous isles and picturesque inlets for which our western shores especially are so remarkable,—and if there is either truth or intelligence in the following Journal of Observations, it may possibly tend both to instruct those who have not yet examined the coast scenery of their native country, and to recall agreeable remembrances to such as have enjoyed that pleasure.

I have endeavoured to dwell chiefly on whatever matters may be regarded as of general interest,—the special objects of our more professional enquiries being discussed in separate reports, which Sir Thomas Dick Lauder and myself have already had the satisfaction to lay before the Honourable Commissioners.

My best thanks are due to the gentleman just named not only for the use of his Sketch-Books, from which the illustrations of the present volumes have been mostly drawn, but also for access to his Journal. By consulting the latter my own impressions have been strengthened and refreshed, and my chief regret now is that one so much more able than myself to do justice to the subject, both with pen and pencil, should have been prevented by other and more important avocations from undertaking the task. I have also to express my obligations to the Artists who have lent their labour to the work, more especially Mr. Charles H. Wilson, who not only prepared the more finished drawings, but executed the numerous etchings on steel,— a material with which he had not been previously conversant, and the harder surface of which, compared with that of copper, renders the process of etching more difficult and laborious.

Other occupations on my own part, and a prolonged residence in the lake country of the north of England, have postponed the publication of the present volumes to a later time than was intended.

J. W.
Woodville, Edinburgh.
November, 1842.

You can download the two volumes at <http://www.electricscotland.com/books/pdf/avoyage.htm>

Clan Leslie Society International
Got in a copy of the December 2014 newsletter which you can view at:
<http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/leslieint/index.htm>

THE STORY

A Day in the Neighbourhood of Loch Skene
From Tait's Edinburgh Magazine

There are few in this world, where sorrow has greeted her mournful sovereignty, to whom the sombre sights and sounds of a sick chamber are unknown. All have more or less experienced the melancholy impressions produced by the death-like stillness, the shaded sadness, the strange indefinable mystery that reigns around the couch of a human but immortal sufferer, when the spiritual elasticity, the tumultuous buoyancy of heart, and the joyous restlessness of vigorous vitality, are only reminiscences of a past that may never have a corresponding future. We remember well, when afflicted with a grievous and depressing malady, with what anxiety we longed for the shut of day's garish eye, the silence of the distant jarring murmur of busy existence, which too vividly recalled the hours when a clear health pervaded our functions as we struggled with tense nerve and lightening eye among the animated throng of combatants on life's dusty arena, or revelling in the luxurious consciousness of power to feel, to enjoy the beauties of nature's scenery, we smiled on the laughing fields, sung with the warbling brooks, and, with eyes streaming with grateful tears, looked up to heaven and blessed the day that ever we were born. We loved the mild melancholy moonbeam that palely sat upon our emaciated fingers, the dim twilight of the pensive stars that symbolised the shade that rested on the half-lit landscape of thought, and the tingling silentness of solemn midnight that lulled the spirit into soft quietude and repose. But the day of deliverance was at hand. The pulse beat with a steadier throb, the disease slowly retreated, balked of its prey, the faces of solicitous relations beamed sunnily with the light of hope, and immediately the eye of day was welcomed, the shutters, so long half-dosed, were thrown open for his smile, and the prospect of once more tasting the felicities of social intercourse, and conversing with scenes of beauty and sublimity immortalised in the memory of the heart, animated us with energetic joy, and robed the future in a vesture of glad enchantment. Pleased with our newly-recovered faculties, we resolved to enjoy the rapture of their healthy exercise. The alienation to which we had been subjected for a while unfitted us for the delights of human communion. We longed for the calm solitudes of nature, the suggestive loneliness of quiet pastoral regions, where, without restraint, we might lay open our whole soul to their genial expansive influences, and give unfettered expression to those extacies of gratitude that swelled the heart almost to bursting. The mind that has lost its equilibrium by struggling with the intangible abstractions of infinitude dislikes, at first, on the restoration of its faculties, to associate much with mankind. It still remained in the region where the disturbing forces first acted upon us during the whole of its self-oblivion, or what visions floated daily and nightly before its wild, framed eye; visions, the remembrance of whose Uvfees, fitful, and fantastic forms, imposes a kind of illusion on the realities of life even after we are consciously breathing, or moving, and acting among them. Things as they are in the work-day world appear insipid, flat, dull, and uninteresting. They have no power to awake the emotions of long slumbering sentiment. Uneasy, restless, and dissatisfied, we long for the wanton winds of heaven, as they sweep in joyful freedom, murmuring wild music along the tufted summits of sequestered hills—for the strange ravings of the impassioned torrent, "the hiss of homeless streams," and all the wild and wayward melodies of the harp of nature.

A round trip from Moffat Dale, up pass Grey Mare's Tail and then up to White Coomb via Rough Craggs. The route then goes on to Firthhope Rig and then Lochcraig Head before returning via the shores of Loch Skeen.

<http://youtu.be/KRSkLkTUq0Y>

We fly from the matter-of-fact scenes of ordinary life, to lose ourselves for a while amid the idealities of existence. Agitated by similar feelings, we resolved on a tour through the more interesting districts of the Scottish and English Borders. These localities had long been hallowed in imagination by the romantic and bewitching poetry of Scott, the wild and wizard ballads of the Ettrick Shepherd, the exquisitely true, touching, simple, and sweet strains of Wordsworth, and the weird "auld world" creations of the Border Minstrelsy. We had read many books of travels descriptive of the scenery of our native land; but in some of them these enchanting regions had been altogether overlooked, while in others they were dismissed with the briefest notice. Tourists unfortunately deprive themselves of much gratification, and the public of much useful and delightful information, by following too closely in the wake of stage coaches and railroads. Are Yarrow and Ettrick, St. Mary's and Loch Skene, to be unvisited, because, forsooth, they do not happen to lie somewhere between Carlisle and Gretna Green, Cornhill and Kelso, or Belford and Berwick? No real lover of nature will refuse to leave the beaten track, and gladly weary himself out among her pathless solitudes, till he sinks down on the heath for his pillow, fanned to sleep

by the lullaby winds, and curtained by the clouds of the open sky.

Accoutred as a pedestrian, in a shepherd's dress, with a sturdy oaken stick as our only companion, and a petit sack with its complement of edibles, and potatoes to boot, which were found of essential service when far from the shielings of the hills, we set out with high expectations destined to be more than realised. We shall never forget the intensity of delicious emotion diffused through every fibre of our newly-invigorated frame when we found our limbs, for the first time for many months, promptly obeying the active dictates of a resuscitated volition; our lungs eagerly inhaling the untainted breath of the morning; our eyes, of late dullness and dead, lustrously sparkling as they returned the sheen slied from the radiant beauties of the outer world; our ears regaled with the well-known, but long unheard, voices of the early birds, and our mind, with something like its former buoyancy and vigour, going out in tumultuous joy to commune with the glorious universe. What a transition from the sad experiences of a melancholy illness! The suppressed whisper, and stealthy noiseless step of foreboding friends, were exchanged for the full choral swell of a happy creation; the white drapery, contrasting powerfully with the leaden gloom of our lonely chamber, for the curtain clouds of the sky hang round the roseate couch of Aurora, radiant with the crimson blush of the early day.

It is not our intention to fatigue the reader with a recital of the many singular rencontres we had with the simple-hearted inhabitants of these districts; nor with a detail of the varied emotions produced by each successive picture as it floated past in the beautiful pastoral panorama; but, selecting a few of those spots which struck us as most remarkable for classic interest, sublimity, or beauty, and which have left their image indelibly portrayed on our memory, we shall briefly describe their principal features, and expose those sentiments and impressions with which they will for ever be associated in our mental history.

Fancy us, then, refreshed, after a long day's journey, by a night's rest at the far-famed cottage of Lilly Shiel's, awake with the earliest dawn—while the family are still in the arms of the drowsy god—striding vigorously towards the scene which fancy had often depicted as the realization of our ideal of dark sublimity, where we hoped to dream away the remembrance of a work-day world amid the absorbing wild melody of the cataract, and the solemn meditative loneliness of Loch Skene. It was a bright, dewy morning in June. The few song-birds that frequent those scenes, “where flourished once a forest fair,” were trilling their matin music from the scattered grey birches, the ruddy mountain ash, and the gaunt, grim, black pines that still, in stunted dwarfishness, relieve the solitary nakedness of the hills of Ettrick. The curlew's scream, usually suggestive of musing melancholy, seemed no longer drear and dissonant. The grasshopper was pottering his monotonous contralto among the tall herbage of the valleys, and the industrious bee added his sonorous bass as he hummed happily away from the purple heath, already charged with the treasured sweets of the morning. The scattered flocks were lifting at intervals their tranquil bleat, which the herds, hung on the sides of the quiet hills, promptly returned, as they raised their mild, innocent gaze to welcome the glories of the reddening dawn. The sun presented a singular appearance, which we do not remember to have observed before. His gold seemed transmuted into silver. His flaming disc, like a circular map of molten argent, gradually rose above the tops of the mountains, whose soft, rich verdure glistened changeably, like the ever varying hues of shot silk, in his sheeny white rays, that filled the whole surrounding atmosphere with a blinding lustre.

The upland streams, narrowed by the recent drought to tiny rivulets, forgot their wintry turbulence, and sung “a quiet tune,” as they gently curved round the splintered, wave-worn fragments of their rocky channels. The sides of the hills were striped by small cascades, gleaming like suspended crystal rods in the sunbeam, weeping so softly that “the sound but lulled the ear asleep,” chastened the exhilaration of the soul, and disposed to sweet, solemn meditation. “The feeling of the hour” was of a mixed character. There was much to elate, more to tranquillize. It was sunlit solitude, it was voiced loneliness. Surrounded by such a scene, on such a morning, we have often wondered since that no pious sentiments were awakened. We luxuriated in the free play of feeling and fancy. We revelled in the exulting transport of an almost spiritualized body; but the cloudless sun, the hymning birds, the warbling streams, and the tranquil smiling hills provoked no thought of Deity. How was this?

Singular to tell, it often happens that the fountain of religious sentiment is sealed during the period of mental aberration. The heart that wont to turn spontaneously towards the origin of all its blessedness becomes proud, self-centred, sullenly obdurate, and reserved. Every object is shunned that would suggest the idea of a present God. Oppressed with this cold dislike and dead insensibility, even here, amid the scenes that appeared the best fitted to revive our former sentiments of love and adoration, the frost of death still froze up the genial current of the spiritual affections. But the hour was at hand, the means were prepared, and amid the solitary wilds of Loch Skene we were again to experience what the joyous dawn, with its mingled accompaniments, had failed to produce. Mending our pace, we rounded the tortoise-shaped hills that rise in unbroken succession between the Lowes and the entrance into the Pass of Moffatdale, and soon stood at the opening of the vista formed by the undulating mountains, clothed with verdure to their summits, that stretch away into the fertile plains of Dumfriesshire. From this point, which is regarded as the highest ground between Ettrick Forest and Moffatdale, the whole romantic scenery of the defile is presented in varied beauty and diversified grandeur. During the former part of the morning we had been completely encircled by hills, which shut in the view on all sides. A feeling of lassitude and ennui was beginning imperceptibly to take the edge off our enjoyment. It is a fact, that the same phase of beauty or sublimity which at first, and for a while, charms the senses and awakes the most delicious emotions, by being repeated in unbroken uniformity for several miles, gradually ceases to exercise its former influence, and the eye, wearied and sated by the constant presentment of the same unvaried objects, languidly longs for variety.

A tall black cliff cowering over a rifted cavern, a splintered rock heaving its gashed forehead to the sky, a rugged ravine torn by the kelpie's scream, a fantastic cloud gambolling capriciously along the shaggy brows of a sullen mountain, or a distant prospect of green

woods, of cultivated, calm, and placid plains, suddenly bursting on the eye in the midst of uniformity, freshens the feelings, revives the interest, stimulates the curiosity, feeds the desire of novelty, and inspires a glow and an elasticity of spirits peculiarly sympathetic of a renovated life. Insensibly sinking under the pressure of this fatiguing similarity of scene, the view from this spot provided exactly the stimulus required. We stopped to gaze for a while on the beautifully curved ranges of hills that flanked the pass, rolling their alternate waves towards the well watered and richly diversified landscape of the west, where the fashionable and picturesque village of Moffat invites, by its medicinal springs and sweet sequestered walks, the regards of the invalid.

Invigorated with this pleasing variety, we began trippingly to descend into the valley. A distant murmur was now perceptible, and, on reaching the table-land, the weltering waters, covered with foam, were seen flashing impetuously down the black, sinuous gorge of the mountain, as if, glad at their escape from the noise and fury of the cataract, hurrying happily away to smoother channels, and softer scenes in the quiet plains below. Striking off towards the right, we encountered an ascent of considerable difficulty. Pleased with the tumult of the waters, we selected our route by the banks of the descending current, and gradually climbed our way to the jutting crag that conceals the cataract. A multitude of strange sensations took possession of us as we tugged up the rugged acclivity, produced by the gradual increase of the wild music of the waters, as they raved wrathfully against the insensate rocks into the boiling cauldron. The sound, varying with the fitful breeze, was stilling the soul and inducing oblivion and entrancement, when, of a sudden, on rounding the projecting mass of intervening rock, the charger's snowy tail whisking into our eyes a shower of blinding spray instantaneously aroused a new set of feelings and reflections.

This fall, commonly called the "Grey Mare's Tail," is the highest in Scotland, descending from a precipice nearly 300 feet in height. The rocks round it are rugged, black, stern, and splintered, surmounted by a few tufts of coarse peat, hanging in matted abigginess over their dark brows, that contrast strangely with the foamy whiteness of the cataract, or the misty clouds of powdery spray that perpetually ascend from the vexed waters of the abyss. Cora Linn, Foyers, and Lowdore are, in our opinion, not to be compared with the Grey Mare's Tail. None of them possess the same bewildering power, the same ragged grandeur, the same utter solitude, or the same combination of all that can produce that deep silent awe which usurps the soul on the contemplation of the mysterious, undefinable solemnities of nature. In the others we think there is too much scope for the eye; as the wide range of objects that immediately, in considerable diversity, surround you, prevents that fixity of attention which is necessary to the absorption of the soul in the grandeur of one majestic object. Here, sitting opposite the cataract, you are deep down in a chasm of the mountains, with rude rocks rising on all aides perpendicularly to the sky, where a small blue patch alone can be seen, canopying the shaded vault, which the sunbeams, even at noon, penetrate with a sickly light, scarcely relieving the dim, dark gloom of the cavern; the leaping flood breaking over the torn ledge in a sheet of foam, dispersing in its descent dense clusters of snowy pearls, or long strings of diamonds, emitting faintly prismatic hues, and dancing through the mist and darkness into the roaring hell below. With these the eye is filled, while no sound falls on the ear but the incessant dash of the tormented waters thundering and surging away through the gashed mountain, or the wild affrighted scream of the curlew, as, for a moment arrested on the wing, she glances her fearful eye into the savage scene, and then hies precipitately to her silent fastness.

Here is loneliness, here is solitude; but it is a loneliness we love, a solitude we covet. The hum, the buzz, the shock of men never can be encountered here. The world is excluded. We are alone with nature. She converses with us; she unrolls her mysterious stores, and makes her strange secrets known. The solitary, the unknown of a city, feels his loneliness oppressive, distressful, melancholy; he would fain recognise one countenance, meet one responsive eye. In despair, he scans the features of the stranger multitude that rush heedlessly past him in endless succession down the stream of busy existence, and though all are members of the same family and heirs of the same ultimate destiny, they have no interest in him, and if his name were blotted out from the register of life, would drop no tear over his new-closed grave. Dreariness, desolation possess his soul, and drive him where he least wants to go, into the recesses of his own being.

How totally the reverse of all this is felt by the solitary traveller among the wilds of nature. His eye never rests on an object with which he cannot commune; and even silence has a voice for his ear, sweet, soothing, solemn, and sublime. Embosomed in the absolute solitude we have described, we made no effort to think; our inner man lay exposed to all the influences of the place. At first, we were exclusively engaged with the object before us. We seemed identified for a while in dreaming bewilderment with the thundering waters. But the eternal hiss, the perpetual dash, the motionless contemplation of continual motion in the flood, and of everlasting stability in the rocks, induced by degrees a feeling of utter abstraction from all the sights and sounds by which we were surrounded.

In thought we wandered far from the present, but, strange to say, naturally lapsed into meditation on the past. The future was totally excluded. The genius of the place was retrospection. He swept the chords of the spiritual harp that lay bared to his potent touch, but no new strange melody broke on the oar. The music seemed familiar. It was an echo of the strains we had heard in other and departed years. It awoke the memories that slumbered in the cells of mind. The visions of infancy floated past us with all their joyous recollections, the spring-time of life again stood clad in its glittering illusions; the family circle seemed still unbroken; a mother's smile played on our ruddy cheek, and a father's voice, like solemn music, spoke in kindest accents, with warnings and sage counsels. The companions of our early years rose from their lonely graves, "where pearls lie deep, or where we often walked when the sombre hues of evening steeped the saddened landscape, and wept and I prayed. We spoke to them; they smiled and spoke again. The world, that late had seemed a wintry wilderness where our fairest flowers had faded, now rose, at the command of the magician, into the happy valley, robed in the joyousness of a sunny spring. Love an object, memory and imagination will make it immortal; the being loved can never die, the heart's affection is eternal as itself, and can bestow perpetuity on all its objects. What a provision against the

ills of this scene of evanescence and transition. We have a power against which death strives in vain, a power to immortalize the beings that we love, a power to rescue the victim from the grave, a power to retain the image we adore, to converse with those with whom we delighted to commune, to live to dwell for ever by their side; once united, the tie never can be severed. The union of hearts knows not, and never shall know, disruption. An object loved "is a thing of joy for ever."

Awaking from our long trance, we started up in half unconsciousness, with difficulty recalling our situation and our purposes. The illusions of the past still lingered around. The cadence of the fall met our ear as if for the first time. Its voice seemed to have been entirely hushed during our reverie; and now that the spell was broken, it again drew breath, and rushed wildly as before into its rocky receptacle. The day was advancing; we wished to remain, but the aspect of the heavens warned us away, and Loch Skene was yet unvisited.

The rocks rising round the basin of the linn, as we have already said, are almost perpendicular. They present nothing to assist the traveller in his ascent but a thin brittle projection here and there, which frequently yields and crumbles into fragments the instant it is laid hold of and unless he be unusually agile and dexterous, he will often be in extreme danger of losing his life. We have known many instances in which this attempt was attended with the most perilous results. Several times we clutched a ledge of slaty rock, which gave way, and it was only after a desperate struggle, in which every muscle of the system was strung to its utmost, that we could regain our former footing. Never did we feel more forcibly that

"Facilis descendit Averno,
Sed revocare gradum, hoc opus et difficile est."

Seated at last on a level with the brink of the cataract, we leisurely surveyed the boiling waters, that seemed urged on by some remorseless demon in a fierce fit of uncontrollable frenzy through the fractured rocks. Scott, to whom the whole of the district was familiar from his earliest days, assigns this wild spot as the most congenial to his "Mysterious Man of Woe":—

"And well that palmer's form and mien
Had suited with the stormy scene,
Just on the edge, straining his ken
To view the bottom of the den,
Where, deep, deep down, and far within
Toils with the rocks the roaring linn;
Then, issuing forth the foaming wave,
And wheeling round the Giant's Grave,
White as the snowy charger's tail,
Drives down the pass of Moffat Dale."

We soon grew dizzy, and retiring from the edge of the fall, we sat down to rest our wearied powers for a little, and then turning northwards, proceeded along the banks of the stream for nearly a mile, while a scene of unusual grandeur and sublimity was gradually disclosing its imposing features. The spot is unimaginably wild and lonely. The sun had been languishing for some time, and now straggled ineffectually with a dull leaden sky that hung in unvaried uniformity over the smooth deep waters of the loch, lying sadly under the combined frown of the lowering heavens and the gloomy mountains. There was nothing to remind us of the pastoral beauty of St. Mary's. Large tracts clad with heath, patches of dangerous morass, and white cannach scattered in all directions; gigantic rocks rising wildly on the sides and summits of the mountains that completely enclose the lake, and cast a perpetual shadow on the stunted vegetation of the valley, a solitary isle rearing its black, bleak crest above the dull sullen waters, and the occasional cry of some feathered inhabitant of loneliness, and the apparent absence of any outlet, complete the picture of utter desolation.

Isolated from every sight and sound that could remind us we had a brother-man, and awed by the augustness of the solitude that sat throned upon the scene, the stilled thoughts rose reverentially and slowly to the idea of Deity in whose presence we felt lost, absorbed, annihilated, mingling with the infinite, with the Great Spirit that fills the "wide waste" and dwells amid "the city full." Neither the glories of the morning around sweet St. Mary's, nor the varied grandeur of the fall, had availed to produce one religious sentiment. But resistless was the "majesty of darkness," that now covered this solitary place, to inspire an overwhelming consciousness that we stood in the temple of Nature's God.

Abstracting ourselves from our age and interests, we rose, amid the stillness that reigned, into the period of the divine solitude in the anterior eternity where we saw the Deity existing alone, engaged solely in the calm contemplation of His own infinite perfections, while the universe was yet unvoiced and unpeopled. Then no angels hymned His praise, circling His throne, rejoicing; then no pomp of worlds gemmed the sky; then no blazing orbs wheeled through the tracts of immensity. All was silence and all was solitude, and yet all was voiced and all was full. The universe was empty, and yet the universe was filled; for God was alone, and the universe was filled with God. We stood on the utmost line that bounds imagination's flight into unepoched, motionless duration in the past, and thence, casting our eye on the solitary Infinite, as if we had been the only being existing apart from Himself, we contemplated His glorious perfections, His underived sufficiency, His absolute blessedness in Himself. The feeling was but one of dreariness, for the fountain of all beauty and good was the alone object of thought. Boundless love—love, measureless as immensity, was revealed, and

in its amplitude we were swallowed up.

When thus engaged, we sank insensibly on our knees upon the heath, and, far from human eye or ear, caused our adorations and prayers to ascend on the wings of the mountain winds to the throne of the Eternal. That was a moment of divinest rapture never to be obliterated from the volume of our spiritual experience. The remembrance of Loch Skene has been a check to many an unhallowed thought, to many an unholy imagination, to many an impious project. We never can forget our solemn vows, our self-dedication, our complete surrender of soul, body, and spirit to the service of God, on the altar of the lonely wild.

We subsequently visited York Cathedral, one of the proudest fanes of these islands; not its vaulted roofs, "its long-drawn aisles", its "dim religious light," evoked no sentiments so awful, so solemn, so memorable as the temple of Loch Skene. We had often before admired the noble simplicity of worship practised by our Druidical fathers, but not till that day had we learnt fully to appreciate their choice of the altar and the temple that Nature had provided for the worshippers of her God. Of the ancient Germans it is finely laid, "Nee colubere parietibus deos, neque in ul-lam humani oris speciem assimil&re, ex magnitudine eretostiam arbitrantur; Inoos ac nemoro consecrant; deorumque nominibus appellat secretum illud, quod soli reverentii vident." It is more than probable that on this very spot the Covenanters of the southern districts of Scotland frequently assembled on Sabbath.

It is pleasant to think that perhaps these waters have been used in holy baptisms, that these wilds have echoed with the "grave sweet melody" of sacred song, that this very turf has been pressed by the knee of many a persecuted saint of whom the world was not worthy. These recollections invest the place with an aspect of peculiar sacredness. Infidels and atheists! we invite you here; and, through grace from on high, we believe you will return to the world sadder, perhaps, but wiser men. None but those who have finally and hopelessly sealed up their hearts against the sentiments of piety can stand surrounded with such scenes and associations without involuntarily exclaiming, "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

We rose slowly from the posture of devotion, looked somewhat dreamily around, and, ere we were aware, the re-action of our powers, that had been kept so long on the stretch, suddenly commenced, and away we sprang, with the speed of an arrow, across the bogs and fens, climbed, with incredible velocity, the intervening hills, descended, with inconceivable rapidity, the most frightful precipices, and, dashing down the sloping sides of the mountains guarding the pass, found ourselves, in a state of utter exhaustion, slowly pursuing our way to Moffat, which we reached at a late hour, after having spent a day that shall never be forgotten in the annals of our moral and religious history.

That's it for this week as the weekend is almost here hope it's a good one for you.

Alastair