



"ON THE DECK."

[Frontispiece.]

OUR TRIP NORTH

BY

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"RAMBLES IN THE FAR NORTH," "QUIET FOLK," ETC., ETC.

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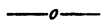
LONDON

DIGBY, LONG & CO., PUBLISHERS

18 BOUVERIE STREET, FLEET STREET, E.C.

1892

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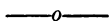
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P R E F A C E.

—o—

THE happy dreams of bygone days,
The hopes and fears of youth ;
The flowers I culled by rustic ways,
Dim gropings after Truth ;
The fancies of an idle hour,
The chat of friendships dear,
The tiny, fragrant, wayside flower,
Though slightly crushed is here :
So take the book, and if you can,
Judge kindly of your brother man.

OUR TRIP NORTH.



CHAPTER I.

We fix our Plans—Resolve to go to Orkney—Jack enlarges on Various Topics—He becomes Poetical—Mortimer is Facetious.

“WELL, Jack, old boy, have you fixed your plans for your northern trip?” was the greeting of my friend Mortimer, as he sauntered into my rooms at Oxford one morning in the end of April. “Because, you know, I don’t mind being your chum after all. I find that the North Sea may be more to my taste than tramping it among the Welsh valleys.”

"Do you know, Mortimer," said I, "you're just the fellow I was wishing to see. Here am I poring over a map of Orkney, and wondering how I am to get there, what I'll do, and how I'll do it. So lend me a hand to solve the problem."

"With pleasure, Jack. I'm just dying to get a sniff of the sea, and a tumble on her ocean lap."

"All right, Morty lad, you and I will do it together, whether we suffer from *mal de mer* or not. Listen to my plan of campaign, and tell me what you think of it."

"Go it, then ; I'm all attention."

"First of all we'll train it to 'Auld Reekie,' and look up some of the old boys we left behind us when we bade our *alma mater* adieu for

'A land of waters green and clear,
Of willows and of poplars tall,'

as 'Andrew with the brindled hair' daintily puts it. After a romp round the old haunts in your favourite Edina, we'll run down to Leith, get on board the North of Scotland steamer, and then out to sea, brave the elements, talk of Vikings and sea birds, fish and boats, like hoary-headed veterans who know all about it. Steam on past St Andrews, that quaint university town which you rave about as

'A little city, worn and grey.'

I do believe you'll make my head turn grey with your confounded talk about it. However, you must promise to let it alone this time, and to behave like an ordinary Oxonian travelling in the pursuit of knowledge. We can spend a few hours in the 'Granite City,' and then face the dangers of the Moray and Pentland Firths until the

green isles of Orcadia greet our longing eyes, and whisper of the jolly times we are going to have, and all the rest of it. Kirkwall will welcome our pilgrim steps, and thence you and I shall issue forth to explore, to admire, and to be admired."

"Why, Jack, I declare you are becoming quite poetical. When did the symptoms appear? It is just as well that you will have a sensible fellow like myself to keep you within the prosaic bounds of propriety. But your plan seems all right; so I'm your man. When do you propose making a start?"

"What do you say to Monday next? That will give us two nights in Edinburgh, and we may hope to reach Kirkwall by Friday evening."

"Your plan will suit me to a T, though in this case I should say to a C, d'ye see?"

But I don't desire to strain your intellectual faculties too much with metaphysical questions of that nature, so I'll vanish from the precincts of your chamber, consecrated as it is to the study of geography and steamboats. I'll look in again before we go and discuss the question of ways and means."

"Good-bye; Fleetwood of 'Queen's' and I are just going to have a final pull to Iffley and back before we exchange the Isis for the North Sea."

"If you catch a crab, Jack, you might fetch it round for supper."

An old boot rattling against a closed door was the only response, and my friend Mortimer stole swiftly along the street, chuckling at his wit, which he, at least, always considered excellent.

CHAPTER II.

Biographical—Oxford By-roads—Littlemore, Forest Hill—Henry Bazely and his Work—A Rhyming Puzzle—A Word about Mortimer—How Englishmen see Things—Scottish Presbyterianism—Mortimer poetises—Eldorado—Jack acts the Critic—Mac.

THIS northern trip had been thought of for some time. Mortimer and I had been fellow students at the University of Edinburgh, and had become very intimate during our Arts course. When we found ourselves at Oxford the intimacy was renewed, and we became even firmer friends. Many a pleasant evening did we spend together, and many a long tramp did we take out into the

country. We roved through Blenheim Park, explored the byeways round Woodstock, grew meditative amid the quiet beauty of Littlemore, and talked of Newman and the wonderful influence he had exercised in that memorable time which witnessed the great Tractarian movement. At Forest Hill we became Miltonic, and discussed the poet's early days when he went a-courting there, and so

“ We'd gaze until we'd got our fill
Of meadows, trees, and rustic ways
That led us down the sloping hill,
By pretty farm and busy mill.”

We both lived outside college bounds at this time, and had taken up our abode in the district known as Jericho, within the sound of the bell of St Barnabas. Mortimer was interested in social and mission work in that quarter, under one of the most

noteworthy men in the whole University of Oxford. Henry Bazely, the founder and moving spirit of this enterprise, was regarded by him and many more as a sort of religious hero. They admired him for his unselfish labour and earnestness, for his philanthropic spirit and devotion to duty. When I came up Bazely had just died, but his work amongst the poor was still carried on in premises which he himself had built at his own expense in Nelson and Canal Streets. Though educated under High Church influences, he learned to think out theological questions for himself, and in course of time changed his views, so that he severed his connection with the Anglican Church and became a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. This was a most remarkable step for the son of an Anglican parson to take in a city and university so very closely identified with

the Church of England. The work inaugurated by Mr Bazely attracted both of us to this quarter of Oxford, and was the means of showing us a good deal of the lower strata of the social life of the city. It was an interesting sight to see the Clarendon Press boys assemble on a week night to enjoy the games and literature and instruction provided for them in the mission hall in Canal Street. I remember one evening Mrs Bazely was accompanied by her father-in-law, who assisted to amuse the lads in his own inimitable way. One little problem he gave them to solve still rings in my mind. He asked us to make a rhyme out of the words, "There was an old woman, and she was as deaf as a post." We were to keep the words in the order given, but yet to make a rhyme. We gave it up. The old man's reverend face lit up

with humour as he enlightened us by reciting,—

“There was an old woman, and she
Was as deaf as a P—O—S—T.”.

The lads laughed, as did we all. There were other interesting features, which many who witnessed them will remember with pleasure and profit. It was a good work, the fruits of which will not be gathered until after many years. One old and intimate friend of Bazely was the minister of a parish in Orkney, and it was through him that we first thought of spending a few summer months in what many consider the Far North. We were both on the eve of setting out into professional life, and considered it a wise thing to enjoy a lengthened holiday before facing the turmoil of the world.

Mortimer was a bright, lively fellow, with

a good deal of *bonhommie* about him, ready for jollity or serious work, as the case might be. Expressive brown eyes suggested tenderness and thoughtfulness. He was a good conversationalist, attractive in manner and obliging in disposition. He dearly loved a joke, and did not much care whether it was at his friend's expense or not. He was the son of a small Scotch laird, and purposed entering the Scottish Bar—the one in Parliament House I mean. I was the son of a country parson and had views of the Church. It is astonishing how many young men have similar views, which take long to realise. With me at this time, the views were real enough, however distant they might be. They looked very much “at the end of a long vista,” as a certain statesman said in another connection.

We were both Scotsmen, and, therefore,

always ready for a theological debate. We would argue for hours about some knotty point, and wind up the discussion as much convinced of the other's opinion as we were at the beginning. The English undergraduates, who sometimes listened to us, often said they failed to see the point in dispute. I well believed them, for an Englishman takes a long time to see anything, though he is smart enough to let you know about it when it does dawn upon his incipient mind. They sometimes tackled us upon their own account, but very seldom. Our logic did not seem to suit them. It partook too much of sober fact, and they did not care much for that. "Facts are all very well," one of them would say; "but give me a dash of philosophy along with them, and I don't mind going into the discussion." Yet their philosophy failed, now and then, to

agree with our Scotch metaphysics, and they would turn away, remarking, "You Scotch fellows would argue with your own grandmothers!" a thing which was certainly possible enough.

I had been studying theology at St Andrews, under Tulloch, and so was later than Mortimer in coming up to Oxford. Most of our controversialists confessed that they had heard of Tulloch, and that, in their opinion, he was a scholar. Their knowledge of Scotch theology was not, however, very extensive nor very deep. The divisions in Scottish Presbyterianism were, they said, things which no fellow could understand. I am beginning to agree with them. It appears that the ordinary clerical mind, in Scotland at least, will not rest content unless there is something to quarrel about—some theological question to dispute over, or some

political idea with which to stump the country.

Mortimer and I agreed that it would add to our happiness, and perhaps to our knowledge of humanity, if we spent some time amid the quiet-going folks of Orcadia, who, we understood, were in many respects unlike the dwellers in the mainland, being Scandinavian in descent and manners. It was our Eldorado, so Mortimer said; he even forgot how prosaic and sensible he was as to indulge in a 'poetic effusion which he threatened to dedicate to me. I indignantly declined the honour; but, on his proposing to allow me to go off by myself, I weakly yielded. As compensation, however, and in order to pay him back, I take the liberty of publishing his ideas to the critical world, merely remarking that it is the effort of a *very* young man. Here it is:—

ELDORADO.

“Far off, far off, the purple towers
Lie low along the golden west,
Too far, too fair for hope of ours
To prompt us to their quest ;
Yet clear in hopeless hours of dream ;
The great sun-smitten bulwarks gleam ;
And bright to sad and sullen eyes,
That ache with ceaseless toil and shadow,
There dawns once more in distant skies
Thy splendid gladness, Eldorado.

Far off, but yet we gaze and dream
How dear it were, 'mid our despair,
To think behind their clouded gleam,
Some painless, perfect rest were there,
For life's low sob some glorious song,
Some lasting triumph over wrong ;
But still there drift athwart the light
Wide-moaning waves of wind and shadow,
The walls are rent, and floods of night,
Whelm thy pale turrets, Eldorado.”

“Now, look here, Mortimer,” I said to him, after the matter was amicably settled ;
“it is not to the Hebrides that we are going
but to the Orkneys. The former ‘lie low

along the golden west,' but the latter in the north."

"I know that bit of geography well enough, my boy, but, don't you see that it is here where poetical licence comes in. That's the beauty of poetry. You can put your words to suit your sentiment. Never make your sentiment suit your words."

"But there's another point that puzzles me, not to speak of your paucity of words rhyming with Eldorado, that may be overlooked; what do you mean by their clouded gleam? I have always understood that a cloud was the very opposite of a gleam, and a 'clouded gleam' is a phenomenon that I have yet to see."

"Well, Jack, to tell the honest truth, you'll be the death of me some day. Poetry does not seem to agree with you to-day; but I see it is just your usual

chaff. Confess, now, that you're a bit jealous, old man. Don't be too critical, however, we'll have a versifying competition when we get among the 'isles of rest,' and your friend, the artist, will adjudicate upon them, should he turn up as he said he would."

"Agreed," said I, "artist Mac as we call him, is already in Orkney, and will meet us on our arrival, so let there be an armistice until then."

CHAPTER III.

We start for the North—Mortimer has an Idea of being elevated—Interesting Ladies—We discuss the Weather—Jack talks on Sea-sickness—Sudden Disappearances—Jack says he never gets Sick at Sea—He studies Nirvana—Resolves to smoke less—The Captain's Little Joke—The Fish did it—Aberdeen—The Jew who left it—We leave it too.

ON a bright May morning, Mortimer and I found ourselves seated on the deck of a north going steamer, enjoying the beauties of the Firth of Forth and a peaceful pipe. The air was clear and bracing, the sea comparatively smooth, and we felt happy and contented. We had left dear old Oxford behind us with all its historic associations, its college halls, its "dreaming spires," and its monotony of landscape. In

Edinburgh we did not spend much time. It was too much of a rush to look up the few friends who were still glad to see us. We had also to get some necessary articles for our trip. Some fishing-rods, guns and a couple of rifles were added to our store of luggage, and the addition made us quite melancholy. We had laid it down as a first principle of travelling to take as little baggage as it was possible, to dispense with unnecessary impedimenta, and to go as light-handed as we could. By-and-by we felt light-hearted enough, but the additional equipment sobered us somewhat. Once on board at Leith our spirits rose, and we felt jolly.

"This is what I call elevating," said Mortimer to me, when the vessel gave a lurch skywards as we came more into the swell of the German Ocean. "Yes, it's not unlike a game of pitch-and-toss, don't you

think, Jack? Keep your pecker up and it will be all right."

If he thought I was beginning to feel squeamish he was much mistaken. I had always been a good sailor, ever since the time I set out as a precocious youngster of eight years with some other boys, and got on board an old tub upon a pool near by. The craft was shipwrecked, however, as it toppled over like a drunken man, and heaved us into the watery flood. We escaped with our lives, and, of course, were truly thankful.

My friend maintained that nothing agreed with him so well as the sea. In fact he loved it with an intense affection. So he declared when the Welsh pilgrimage was given up in favour of the sea excursion.

There was a number of passengers on deck. Some ladies were beside us, and appeared

not unwilling to enjoy a free-and-easy chat with two such eligibles as Mortimer and I. At least we flattered ourselves that such were their sentiments. They were bright, lively girls, going north as far as Aberdeen. We talked of the weather first of all. Everybody does so, and we were not audacious enough to break through the rule. What a blessed thing it is that in this climate the weather changes so often! People are thus able to vary the conversation. A few remarks upon the sea came next, with topographical notes, on the part of Mortimer, regarding the coast line we were passing. He was, I observed, posing as a kind of popular guide, and thereby strove to monopolise the conversation. But I did not like it. No fellow likes to be kept in the background when pretty girls are to the front. As an ordinary mortal I

determined not to be crushed, and so started off at the gallop upon the subject of seasickness. At this stage I observed that some of the more lively members of the company became very subdued and grave looking. By-and-by one after another stole silently down the companion-way and disappeared. We were standing well out to sea now, and the heavy swell made us hold on now and then to keep steady. Mortimer seemed to lose all interest in the receding coast-line. He looked seawards in a wistful way, that made me think he was growing sentimental. For a professing misogynist like him to show such a weakness was unpardonable. So, while I was about to deliver a moral lecture upon the subject, he muttered something of having to go below, and so he also stole silently down the companion-way and disappeared. I looked around to see who

were left, and, lo, I only remained. Well, this is funny, thought I. What can have come over these people? Are they afraid of the wind, or the sun, or what? With such thoughts I sat and meditated, and as I inwardly reviewed the situation, the truth gradually dawned upon my mind. They were sea-sick! Mortimer, who loved the sea, who never knew sea-sickness, was sick! Well now, thought I, what will the fellows say when they hear it? They won't give him peace, or pause until he gets perfectly wild. The idea of Mortimer getting baited was charming. It seemed such a good joke to me that I chuckled and chuckled until I thought I would go below and see how he was enjoying himself. I felt that I had been smoking rather long, and a change of air might not be a bad thing. So I went down also. But there was no sea-sickness

about me. Oh, no, I am a splendid sailor ; but I think I have mentioned that item of useful information already. If not, you can take my word for it now. I *don't* get sea-sick.

I found Mortimer stretched in the saloon with a spittoon-sort-of-thing close to his head. He really seemed' bad. When I kindly inquired what was up, he rudely repelled me, and would vouchsafe no intelligible answer. I turned away, pained at his heartlessness, and went out. I leant over the side of the ship and gazed at the moving water. I felt like a Buddhist, or something of that kind, contemplating *Nirvana*. I remained there for some time, and then, as the boat was pitching rather badly, crept over to the middle of the deck, and lay down to take things easy. The desertion of my friends justified

my act. As I made myself comfortable, I resolved to smoke less. I felt that I had been overdoing it lately. It is not a good thing to be smoke—smoke—smoking all the day like a factory chimney. But, then, a fellow must do something to console himself when other people, who might know better, allow themselves to be overcome and put *hors de combat* by the smell of the sea. I really can't stand a fellow, especially a friend of mine, showing a weakness of that sort.

As we neared Aberdeen matters looked a trifle cheerier. I had some jokes with the captain, which did me good. He was very pleasant when not shouting his orders from the bridge. When so occupied he did seem to make rather much of it. But I find it is just the way with all captains. He told me a good story about another officer,

which I take the liberty of giving away gratis. This one was crossing the Pentland Firth in his steamer one very stormy day. There were a good many passengers on board, including several ladies. Captain R——d was remarkable for his rubicund face, bordering on purple, and always gave one the feeling that he was an extremely jolly man. While the vessel was pitching about a little more than usual, and the spray was flying all over the deck, a lady crept timidly, half-terror-struck up to the Captain, and said,—“Oh, Captain, do tell me if there is much danger.” “No, no, my good lady, you need not feel alarmed until you see my face turn *white*!”

We were close to the harbour now, and the passengers who had fallen victims to *mal de mer* appeared, one after the other, on deck. Their appearance was certainly

not hilarious. Some of them looked as if they had been out having a night of it somewhere, and had forgotten to take their clothes off when they went to bed. Mortimer crawled on deck just as the steamer touched the quay. He looked far from happy, and appeared indifferent to the kind inquiries I made.

"Do you know, Jack," he said at length, "I must have taken something that disagreed with me at dinner. You've no idea how that fish upset me."

"Is that so, Morty, boy? It seems to be always the fish which does it. How in the world are you to exist in the islands when your chief diet will be fish?"

"Oh, that's different."

But where the difference lay did not come out very clearly. As we had a few hours to spare at Aberdeen we resolved to

go ashore and have some tea—a high tea it was decided. Mortimer jumped at the go-ashore idea rather quickly, I thought.

“I do want to have a good look at Aberdeen,” he said. “For years I have been longing for an opportunity to view its granite streets. It will be a nice change to rub shoulders with the canny Aberdonians. Did you ever hear, Jack, of the Jew who came here?”

“Not I. What did he do?”

“Oh, he didn’t do anything; that’s where the point of the story comes in. He was one of those financial parties—a kind of superannuated old-clothes man, you know. He came to Aberdeen to make an honest living; but he couldn’t do it, and I don’t wonder at it. The Aberdonians were too shrewd for him; they wouldn’t be taken in, except by some of themselves. So the hook-

nosed Jacob had to return whence he came, muttering to himself, 'Thish is no place for business.' ”¹

That tea did us both good. We had fish with it, too, in spite of the previous criticism passed upon that article of diet. It did not upset Mortimer this time; he became too facetious for me by-and-by. We rather enjoyed Aberdeen, and got on board again about midnight. "Nature's sweet restorer" paid us a visit, and we had a lengthened interview.

¹ There is, we believe, one Jew now in Aberdeen, doing well in the book line. He is called Moses Katz.

CHAPTER IV.

*Out at Sea—Mortimer tries to Talk—A Sun-rise
—We discuss a Poetic Fellow—Land, ahoy!—
Treeless Isles—Arrival at Kirkwall—A Ram-
bling Place—The Cathedral of St Magnus—
King Haco—Margaret, the Maid of Norway
—The Artist appears—The Voyagers reach
Terra Firma—Mac expatiates.*

IN the grey of the morning, we came on deck, and witnessed what none of us had ever seen before—the sun rising out of a watery bed. Our vessel was steaming ahead at a good rate through the swell of the cold North Sea. There was “water, water everywhere;” nobody could dispute that plain fact. The sky was leaden grey, the air felt chilly, and our surroundings did not look

very lively. There was the regular beat of the engines down below, reminding us of the heat that was there, but which we could only imagine. The captain's gruff voice was heard, now and then, giving his orders to the man at the wheel; but even that sound, like the Highlandman's potatoes, "was very seldom." Mortimer did not look extra cheerful; and, I must admit, his pathetic mood affected my usually sanguine nature. I endeavoured to make a joke, but nobody saw it, and I began to look foolish. Mortimer was doing his best to open a conversation with the steersman, but with indifferent success, when the sudden glow on the eastern horizon attracted our attention. Old Sol seemed just issuing from his bath to flood the darkened world in light. Streak after streak of gold spread over the eastern sky. The golden rim grew and grew, until half a

disc appeared. The rosy-fingered morning had come, and round his pathway stood a retinue of blushing nymphs, airy and ethereal children of light, who vanish soon after they appear. The globe of fire rose upwards and made the dull waters sparkle; the dark shadows had fled before the monarch of the day.

“That is something to see, old man,” says Mortimer; “it would be a long time before a vision like that could surprise you, even across Christ Church meadows when the floods are out. It reminds me of something a poetic fellow, who must have had a somewhat similar experience, writes. Do you remember it, Jack?”

“As my acquaintance with poetic fellows is conspicuous by its absence, I fear you must pardon my ignorance. But if you refer to the great Lake Poet, Wordsworth, who

scarcely deserves your flippant speech, I believe his lines might be applied to the circumstances of the case."

"Now, look here, Jack, it doesn't become you to ape the 'old man eloquent;' you couldn't do it, you know. But spin your lines, and don't lecture."

"Well, well; if you refuse to listen to sober prose, I'll give you the poetry. This is what you want:—

'Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn,
Have sight of Proteus coming from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn!'"

"But, Morty, lad, you will please observe that, instead of being situated on a 'pleasant lea,' we are on the hard and unsteady deck of a steamboat."

"Yes, I was expecting that philosophic

observation. You are too critical, my dear fellow. Don't forget, however, that Dizzy said, 'The critics are those who have failed in literature,' and you may degenerate sooner than you anticipate into that category."

"We must go below, I see; the sea air is too strong for you, to judge from your conversation."

"All right, Jack, the steersman tells me that it will be a few hours before we come in sight of the Orkneys."

.
"Land, ahoy!" were the first words I heard as I followed my friend on deck. We were almost at the harbour, and must have missed a glimpse of South Ronaldshay through our negligence. As it was, we gazed with interest upon the green islands stretching in treeless beauty on either side.

This lack of trees impressed us, as well as the greyiness of the little homesteads which dotted the landscape here and there. I looked across the water at Shapinshay, and noted Balfour Castle just as Mortimer remarked, "Now, Jack, don't be dreaming about Vikings and Jarls and Norse sea-rovers. There are none now, you know, else you and I would not be here."

"I leave the dreaming to you, my boy. Since we left Oxford you appear to have been doing nothing else. Your prosaic soul has been transformed, and it would not surprise me at all to see you making a fool of yourself with some of the fair sex."

"Ah, that may be; but don't be alarmed, so far as you are concerned, the thing has been done already."

"Quite so, but here's Kirkwall, that

old grey town, the Kirkjuvagr of the Norse."

The town is a long, rambling place, consisting mainly of one long, narrow and irregular street, fully a mile in length. To the voyager approaching from the sea, the town looks weird and weather-worn, grown grey with age and the wind together. Many of the older houses are quaint, standing gable-on to the street, as if they had been indulging one day in a promiscuous dance when suddenly the music had ceased, leaving them in the midst of a figure they were never allowed to complete. Westward lies what is called the Peerie (small) Sea, once an extensive loch. A narrow opening running through an *Ayre* or ridge of earth and stones, communicates with the sea, and fills with salt water twice a day. It appears that this opening was first made with the

intention of draining the loch, but, like Lake Mareotis at Alexandria, it has become a salt marsh instead.

The Cathedral of St Magnus is a magnificent structure, founded in 1137 by Jarl Rognvald, who dedicated it to his uncle, St Magnus, the patron saint of Orkney. An old writer, Worsaae, maintains that this edifice "is incontestably the most glorious monument of the time of the Norwegian dominion to be found in Scotland." King Haco was interred within its walls in 1263, and the young Queen Margaret, the Maid of Norway, was also buried there in 1290. But both were afterwards re-interred in their native land; the latter in the high church of Bergen, by King Eirik, beside her mother.

" And at early burst of spring-time,
When the birds sang out with glee,
They took the body of Haco
In a ship across the sea—

“Across the sea to Norway,
Where thy sires make moan for thee,
That the last of his race was Haco,
Who ruled the Western Sea.”¹

We picked up much historical and other lore ere we quitted the scene of many a Scandinavian struggle.

“There’s the artist!” exclaimed Mortimer, as the steamer grated upon the quay and ropes grew taut as we were heaved to. “And he looks the pink of perfection in this outlandish place.”

“How are you, my beauties?” shouted Mac as we stepped ashore. “I’m awfully glad to see you safe in lithe and limb. How are you both?”

“Oh, glad enough to get to *terra firma*, you may be sure,” I said. “We want a good rest, a bath, and a square meal.”

“Yes, Mac, Jack’s dying of hunger.

¹ J. S. Blackie.

You see he's been too attentive to the fishes to remember his own wants. It's his usual unselfishness come to the front again."

"Now, Morty, lad, sing low, else I'll relate the whole circumstances of the case, and our artist here will sketch you as you lay down below a sight for gods and men."

"Come, Jack, get along, at this rate we'll never get to the hotel."

"The tale will keep, my ancient mariners; so come along with me to my rooms and get yourselves to rights. You do look rather washed out in appearance, but this is the place to set you up. You've no idea what a charming place Orkney is in which to spend a holiday, to meditate upon the sublime, and to dream of those worlds, which a certain professional friend of yours said 'were never realised.' You can realise

a good deal here. You miss trees, of course, but then it is sometimes a relief to gaze at the green islands and the ever-changing sea, not to speak of the wonderful skies we have in these parts. The clouds are something to behold, though rather difficult to transfer to one's canvas. '*Ars longa, vita brevis,*' you know; so come along."

CHAPTER V.

*We Breakfast—The Artist talks of Places and People—
—An Arithmetical Calculation—Our Plans—
The American Widow—A Stout Little Man—
The American enlarges on the Benefits of
Travelling—She repudiates being called a
Yankee—Mr Dowell expresses Himself—How
Lowell puts it—Mortimer speaks—The British
licked long ago—Blue Blood—Britain versus
America—Mr Dowell comes down on the Lairds
—He praises Scotch—Anglified Puppies—
Maes Howe—What is it?—Standing Stones of
Stenness—Mac delivers a Lecture—The Stone
of Odin—The Coach.*

AT the hotel we had leisure to get into proper shape, and by-and-by appeared at the breakfast-table trim and hungry. We did ample justice to the meal, which set

us up and made us both feel equal to anything. The artist entertained us with the recital of his experiences, since he had arrived some weeks before. From his own account he appeared to have had no end of a good time. He whetted our mental appetite with his poetic descriptions of scenes he had visited and people he had met. He waxed particularly eloquent about the bay of Longhope and certain ladies he had met there. A navy captain's widow came in for a large share of eulogy, and we began to make a little arithmetical calculation in which the figures 2 and 2 occurred. Curiously enough, as it afterwards appeared, we both arrived at the same result.

After doing Maes Howe and the Standing Stones of Stenness we were to drive to Stromness and sail from there on board a smack to the south isles. Longhope was

to be our headquarters for a time. We secured places on the Kirkwall and Stromness coach and found ourselves amongst quite a large party who, like ourselves, were intent on exploration. Some English tourists doing the north, a few Yankee globe-trotters, and a number of Scotch holiday seekers comprised the company. There was one American lady, a widow, who immediately entered into a very lively conversation with us. She was smart, neatly dressed, between forty and fifty years of age, had beautiful pearly teeth, and looked well for her years. The nasal twang betrayed her nationality.

"I do love Scotsmen," she said. "They are the nicest men I have ever met."

It turned out that her husband had been a Scot, and she was looking about for a successor to him. Her experience was therefore not mere hearsay. Beside me

was a stout little man, a manufacturer from the south of Scotland, who was doing the north on a short holiday. He had a rubicund face, pleasant looking, and remarkably jolly. The widow tackled him on the subject of travelling. She grew eloquent on the topic and recommended her stout neighbour to go abroad, see the world a bit and get enlarged ideas of things.

“You know, there is nothing so improving to the mind as travel. My late husband, Mr Spence, and I travelled all over Europe to see for ourselves the famous places about which we had read. It did us good, I reckon. We met all sorts and conditions of people, saw all kinds of places, and laid up a store of useful information. Poor hubby died three years ago, and I could not stay at home, so have set out on a tour by myself to see some of the places

with which he was familiar in his youth. Have you travelled much?"

"I canna say I have," replied our jolly friend Mr Dowell. "I have had only ane or twa runs across to Paris and there-about."

"Ah, you Scotch merchants are too keen on business to take many holidays. It doesn't do, I tell you, to stay at home and pile up the dollars. You don't take them with you when you die. Why shouldn't you, then, enjoy the world and get some benefit out of your money. Go round, and I'm sure you'll pick up something as valuable as gold ; you'll acquire information and polish and knowledge of humanity."

"I am beginning to see the truth o' what you say, madam, and I may tell ye I'm thinkin' o' takin' life a wee easier. 'A gangin' fit's aye gettin',' they say, and it'll

no dae for me to fa' asleep. You enterprising Yankees can let us see a point or twa."

"I'm not a Yankee. I don't like the name, Mr Dowell. We in the north like to be called Americans."

"Weel, weel, woman, I mean nae offence. It's a' the same to me. You're a free-spoken lady at ony rate, and I like frankness, either in man or in woman."

"Oh, I don't mean that I am thin-skinned. However, go you abroad a little more and you won't regret it, I'm sure. Our young friends here are just beginning to do the right thing. There's nothing like moving about, gentlemen, if you want to keep the rust off. In these days it is only the dull people who stay at home. This age is too bustling for people who wish to get on to stay at home and take things easy like their fathers. You can't live as they did half a

century ago. That is what sets us Americans abroad. We want to be up with the times and ahead of them for that matter. As Lowell puts it :—

‘ I love, I say, to start upon a tramp,
To shake the kinkles out o’ back an’ legs,
An’ kind o’ rack my life off from the dregs
That’s apt to settle in the buttery hutch
Of folks that foller in one rut too much.’

You must come over to the States, gentlemen, and see how we take life. You will learn something there I can assure you, and if you don’t, it will be your own fault.”

“ Well, madam,” says Mortimer, “ I agree with you upon the whole. My friend and I here consider life as something more than mere existence. The world is all before us to be enjoyed, and if possible improved. I believe you Americans are quite serious upon the matter of progress and desire to ‘lick

creation,' as some of you say. You want to lick the British at all events, but you will find them hard to beat."

"Not so fast, my young gentleman, we beat the British long ago, when we set up in the world for ourselves. We mean now to beat you in commercial enterprise and in scientific discovery. We are a go-a-head race, you know, determined to 'keep pegging away' as old Abe Lincoln said."

"Yes, that may be so. Your ambition as a people is laudable enough, and, no doubt, you owe the pertinacity which distinguishes your countrymen to your Anglo-Saxon blood. We are cousins after all."

"True; but over here you English and Scotch make rather much of blood, especially 'blue blood,' whatever that may mean. I am always thankful that mine is red. There are far too many social distinctions in the

old country to square with American ideas. We believe in freedom and every man for himself in that respect. You believe in aristocrats and descent. We take the man as we find him, and honour talent and ability, independent of who was his father or grandfather. We have nothing to do with these ancient parties. We live in a present day world, and make the most of it we can. It is your great Ayrshire poet, isn't it, who says,—

‘A king may mak’ a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a’ that,
But an honest man’s abune his micht,
Gude faith he maunna fa’ that.’ ”

“Of course, Mrs Spence,” said I, “you are republicans, while we believe in a limited monarchy. An old country is different from a new one like America. Britain has grown great by slow steps,—

‘Broadened slowly down
From precedent to precedent.’”

“It’s gey true what the leddy says,” put in our old friend, “there is a wee thing ower muckle pandering to folk just because they have been descended frae some robber or anither wha took possession o’ land that belonged to somebody else or to the kirk. A great many lairds craw cruise ower what should never hae been theirs. But it’s my honest opinion that there will be lots o’ changes in this auld country before very lang. The puir folk wha hae nae land maun get some o’t, and the lairds will hae to come doon a bit frae their high horse and do something for others beside themsels. Excuse my braid Scotch, but ye ken, when I get into an argument, I aye like to speak the guid honest Doric, tho’ I can turn my tongue round the English as weel

as ony o' ye. It's a great peety that sae mony Scotch folk get ashamed o' their ane langidge. Dearie me, Scotch is far mair expressive than ye're Cockney twang; but, ye see, it's no the fashion noo to speak as our forebears did. A fig for fashion, say I; it makes my bluid bile to see hoo folk ape the Londoners, as if Auld Reekie wasna a far better city, and Scotland a finer country."

"Quite right, Mr Dowell," says Mrs Spence, "I do love to hear you defend your own tongue. It is charming in my ears. My dear hubby always spoke it, and I think with you that it is a great misfortune that the rising generation give it the go-by. Our young friends here have been at Oxford, they say, and so we must not be too hard upon them."

"Ay; but that's anither thing I object to."

“What! do you object to young men going where they may obtain knowledge and culture?”

“Na, na, it's no' that. But what I mean, is the want o' patriotic feeling displayed by a great mony o' our weel-to-dae folk, wha send their sons to England to be educated, as if it couldna be better dune at hame. It maks them forget their very cradles, and turn up their noses at the guid Scots tongue. They become Anglified puppies, and strut about as if their English edication has made them superior to a'body else. The man that becomes ashamed o' his country or her customs, is to my mind a pair fushionless body, no' worth the snap o' yer finger. I maun say that Professor Blackie is richt on that point, tho' I dinna agree wi' him on some questions he is aye gabbin' about.”

“This is Maes Howe,” exclaimed Mortimer,

“so cease your debate and come to view the memorials of the past.”

The conversation was thereupon dropped, and the party descended from the coach to see this wonderful mound.

It is a tumulus about 300 feet in circumference, and 36 feet in height. A moat encircles it with a width of about 40 feet, and a depth of from 4 to 8 feet. Its interior was shown to us by a farmer in the neighbourhood, who seemed to be the temporary guardian of the ancient barrow. He produced a tallow candle of dropsical tendency, which was carefully lit inside and set in a corner to cast its fitful glare upon the dingy walls which were covered with Runic inscriptions of various kinds. The internal chamber, which is built of stone, rises in a “bee-hive” shape. The entrance to this strange mound is a long, low passage

covered with stone slabs, and extends to about 54 feet. The stones forming the floor and side-walls, are similar to the neighbouring Standing Stones of Stenness. The runes inscribed upon the interior walls are supposed to have been the work of Crusaders. The guide book says so, and such a dictum we are bound to accept in the usual way, *cum grano salis*, which, being interpreted, means you may believe it if you like; but you needn't. In one place the Runic alphabet is given, and one large inscription states, as Mortimer informed us, that "the Jorsala-farers broke open the Orkahaug in the lifetime of the blessed Earl." The "blessed Earl" was Rognvald, so these letters must have been carved, as Dr Joseph Anderson states in his *Orkneyinga Saga*, subsequent to 1158. A great many opinions were expressed upon the origin of Maes Howe,

most of which were derived from guide books and other equally reliable sources. But whether it had originally been a Norse burial place or not, was not very clearly made out. Mr Dowell voted it Celtic, Mortimer Scandinavian, and I suggested that the whole matter should be taken *ad avizandum*, and finally settled at a future time. Our American friend agreed that such was wise, and so, having tipped the custodian, we departed to visit the famous Standing Stones of Stenness.

Here we found Mac busy sketching. The artist was immediately surrounded and requested to leave his paints and palette for a little, in order that the travellers might benefit by his local knowledge and descriptive powers. Whether the prospect of acting the part of *cicerone* to a company of globe trotters approved itself to him, did not

appear. He picked himself up with the best grace possible, and with a merry twinkle in his eye proceeded to give us a lay sermon on stones. It was somewhat like this :—

“Ladies and gentlemen, the wonderful stones which meet your gaze in this sequestered plain, or, I should rather say, in this country of lake and fen, are monuments of a time too far remote for me to have any distinct recollection. But the full particulars may be found in several works which treat of these hoary lichen-covered blocks. They are, as some of you geologists may observe, flagstones of old red sandstone formation. Their average height is over nine feet, the highest being nearly fourteen feet. A certain Captain Thomas informs us that originally there must have been sixty stones. If any of you are inclined to dispute my figures as to the height of these stones, the remedy is in your own hands.

You can measure for yourselves; and if you want to know how far down they go into the soil, you can excavate the base of each and ascertain. But I need not remind you that should such be done, the coach and its freight will have reached its destination long before the task can be completed. Around us here are numerous tumuli, and some think also the remains of small cromlechs. Whether that is so or not, I do not pause to inquire. This Ring of Brogar was called the Temple of the Sun, as any reader of *Low's Tour* will remember, and the Circle at Stenness the Temple of the Moon. Many years ago, I am informed, that the Kirk of Stenness over there was the scene of great festivities every New Year's Day. The young folk of the country side were wont to meet there and feast and dance according to the custom of the time. Many marriages resulted from this festival, so you can easily

see how such a custom would keep up its popularity. Supposing a couple came to the mutual understanding that matrimony was a good thing, they stole away quietly to the Temple of the Moon, where the woman, in presence of the man, knelt down and prayed to Odin to keep her faithful. An adjournment was then made to the Temple of the Sun, where the man did the same. The final ceremony was performed at the Stone of Odin, which had a circular hole through it, where they shook each other by the hand through the opening and swore to be faithful to each other. A promise so made was considered to be of the most sacred and binding character. Divorce in these early times was cheap, simple and effective. When a pair of Orcadians considered they had quite enough of matrimony, and that it was desirable to end the contract, they merely went to the Kirk of

Stenness, and the one going out by the south door and the other by the north was sufficient to dissolve the marriage tie, and to leave them both free, if they choose, for a second venture. That, ladies and gentlemen, was simplicity itself compared to the legal difficulties which face us moderns should necessity arise. The Stone of Odin, which has since disappeared, was utilised for the prevention of palsy. If an infant was passed through the hole, it would never be afflicted by the complaint. There are a great many items of useful and amusing information connected with this district, but I find my time is exhausted as well as the patience of our driver, who appears at this moment to be affected with St Vitus' dance."

"Thank you very much, for your interesting account," said Mrs Spence, "we shall all, I am sure, be delighted to hear more of your tales of these parts when opportunity occurs."

"Yes," said I, "Mac is a sort of walking encyclopædia, only I often feel doubtful as to the point where fiction begins."

"Come, come, Jack, don't impeach my veracity, especially before ladies."

"Well, well, so be it, here's the coach."

In a short time we arrived at the Commercial Hotel in Stromness.

CHAPTER VI.

Stromness—Odd-looking Buildings—Wind Sellers—An Inquisitive Dame—A Charming Evening—Slatting the Academicians—The Youths of the West—Dictum of Decamps—Mrs Spence's Love of Art—A Wonderful Discovery—Jack suggests a Poetical Competition—Travellers' Tales—The Man who was foaled—Definition of an Orcadian—Dowell's Opinion of Women—An old Orcadian Toast.

A THOROUGH-GOING novelist would introduce some literary padding here in writing up an elaborate description of Stromness, its approach, its surroundings, and its prospects; but, as I am a mere chronicler of certain passing events, the patient reader will thankfully acknowledge the difference.

This little seaport, however, was in many ways an interesting place to us. It was to form the basis of our operations—the centre of our circuitous wanderings until the time came for striking a bee-line south. It was more of a sea-line, as the reader will find out for himself. Stromness is even more picturesque in one sense than Kirkwall. It consists of one long winding street, irregular and uneven. The houses are quaint and weather-beaten, standing at all sorts of angles. The prevailing idea of each proprietor appears to have been to have his house built as unlike his neighbour's as possible. Upon the whole the attempt may be said to have been a success. The bay creeps out and in amongst these odd-looking buildings, and innumerable jettys run out into its strangely coloured waters. The bay is known as Cairston Roads, and

has given shelter to many a whaler and passing yacht. Since the days of Sir Walter Scott's "Pirate" no little fame has been attached to this wind-swept treeless town, which looks out across the strait to the gloomy hills of Hoy, that seem to bar the way to the golden West. The swell of the deep-rolling Atlantic is felt upon the beach, and the fishing yawls and cobbles bob and beck to one another as they lie at anchor close by. An earnest fisherman—or a lazy one for that matter—can drop his line from his bedroom window and try for codlins with some prospect of success. The southern sojourner might almost fancy that Bessie Miller and Mammie Scott were still at hand ready to sell a favourable wind for sixpence, or to bargain for a gale on the shortest notice. Outside the grey old street the sea, dotted here and

there with islets, is the only object of interest, as it sweeps in rapid tideways round the shore and vanishes behind the shoulder of the Ward Hill, under the stony gaze of the Old Man of Hoy.

After tea a number of us set out on an exploring expedition. Most of the elderly folk remained indoors, but the American widow accompanied us to see for herself the outskirts of the town. We strolled along the winding street, chatting and laughing as we went. The town folks appeared to regard us with interest, and many of them stopped, turned round and looked after us, wondering, no doubt, who the noisy party were and whence they came. Requiring some tobacco, I entered a shop and gave my order. I was served by an old dame, whose shrewd face subjected me to a careful look of inquiry. The look apparently

did not satisfy her curiosity, and so she remarked,—

“Ye’ll hae come wi’ the boat?”

“No,” said I, “I haven’t.”

“Maybe ye’ll hae come wi’ the mail steamer?”

“No.”

“Then ye’ll hae come with the coach frae Kirkwall?”

“I daresay you’re right this time, my good woman.”

As I paid for my purchase and turned to leave, she exclaimed,—

“Ye’ll be going wi’ the steamer?”

“No, I haven’t thought of it.”

“Oh, then, ye’ll be takin’ the Sooth Isles’ packet?”

“What do you say to a boat of my own?” and with that parting shot I made my exit, highly amused at the persistent method

of her inquiry. The Stromness folk I found were of an inquisitive turn, and pertinacious in their desire for news. My friends laughed at the incident and thought I had been too sharp with the old lady.

We had now come to the beach. It was a charming evening. The fishing boats rose and fell as the returning fishermen steered for home. The isle of Graemsay was lit up by the setting sun, making a beautiful contrast of green with the dark shadows cast over Hoy by the gloomy looking hills. Away westwards the broad Atlantic rolled in majestic monotony, and the waves boomed as they broke into glittering spray against the rocky coast. The horizon was warm and golden, and the whole might well have been a scene from fairyland.

"This is charming," said Mrs Spence; "it reminds me so much of some of my Medi-

terrenean experiences, when dear hubby and I were in Italy."

"Yes," Mac said, "you find rich colours here, and the constant change works out a series of lovely schemes that almost makes an artist despair. If I painted what we see now, some of the Academicians would maintain that it was a 'light which never was on sea or land,' just because they had never seen it, and if they had, were unable to see anything remarkable in it."

"Come now, Mac," said Mortimer, "don't be railing against the Academies. You know what a splendid set of conventional artists they are. If they were all like you and your new school, you would find your occupation like Othello's — gone. The work of you ambitious youths of the west, couldn't stand out so well were it not for the contrast the conventional style offers so ad-

mirably. But there are some very good artists in Edinburgh and London. I do not mean the men who make their pictures all stories and leave nothing for the imagination, but those who put the spirit of imagination into their work and make you see even in common-place subjects a beauty and a meaning of which one was before quite unconscious."

"Well, I think you are on the right lines. The younger men, who are, to a certain extent, influenced by the best traditions of French art, set themselves to paint, not mere conventional pictures, but pictures which we believe to be the best artistic products that we can at the time produce. You may call it impressionism, if you like. I don't care much about names. We seek out the essential and difficult, and strive to touch the higher artistic feelings. The public are

not quite educated up to this standard; but I believe the time will soon come when they shall acknowledge that this new school, if school you can call it, has set before it the true idea of what art should be. I think it was Decamps who said to Millet that he liked to see painting, young, vigorous and healthy. That is what we are after."

"Stop, stop," said I, "we shall discuss all that another time. Mac mustn't talk shop, especially before a lady."

"Oh, now, Mr Jack, you go too far," said Mrs Spence. "I do love to hear about art. You know I have seen some of the finest pictures in the galleries of Europe, and am always glad to get the opinion of artists. We don't pay much attention to conventionalities over in the States. I do think artists look at the matter from a point of view different from the critics. I can't say I

understand what they mean sometimes, but I suppose it is just my ignorance. Nature is so beautiful at all times, that I would rather be under its spell, so let us enjoy this lovely prospect. The sea always appeals to me; it is so soothing."

"I agree with you," said Mortimer; "and, like old Wordsworth,—

‘I have felt
 a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.’"

"Very well brought in, young sir. I fancy you must be a poet yourself."

"Ha, ha! Morty, boy!" said I, "the trip has already done you good. Here is a lady, all the way from America, making the wonderful discovery that you are a poet. Do you know, Mrs Spence, that my friend and

I agreed to have a versifying competition sometime after we came north, and the artist here is to adjudicate upon the effusions."

"Oh, that will be splendid! I should like so much to see the poems when they are written, and I hope you will be good enough to send them to me. Yet, why not settle the matter to-night, or before we separate? It would be such fun."

"Certainly, Mrs Spence," said Mac. "Let the contest come off at once, and I shall gladly hand over the responsibility of judging to you. I don't know much about poetry—at least, not enough to set up for critic. If you would be judge, I know there would be no grumbling afterwards."

"But I mightn't please either."

"No fear. You know, were I to say Jack's was better than Mortimer's, Mortimer

would say I know nothing about it; and if I were to say Mortimer deserved the laurel, Jack would call me an ignorant artist, who knows nothing about literature, and very little even about art."

"That would be dreadful! So, if it will smooth matters any, I shall do what I can; but remember, gentlemen, I do not undertake to be a good judge."

"We shall be perfectly satisfied!" we both exclaimed in a breath.

The subject was dismissed for the time, and the walk back continued. It was a lively stroll, and when we reached the hotel, we were quite ready for the dainty fish-supper that had been prepared. The talk round the supper-table became general. Travellers' tales seemed to predominate, and fiction was at a premium. A few commercial gentlemen related anecdotes of their

various trips to the Orkney and Shetland Islands, and these reminiscences called up others. Our friend, Mr Dowell, added his experiences; and, amongst other stories, told how a former Earl of Caithness, while travelling in Shetland, inquired of the boatman who was taking him across some bay, where he had been born. The islander slowly scratched his head, and gazing intently into the bottom of his yawl, replied, "Oh, please your Lordship, it's no for da like o' me to be born, I was *foaled* in the puir island o' Whalsay, and rocked in a keyshie."

"I don't think the people are so very backward now," said Mac, "at least during the time I have been here they seem remarkably shrewd and self-assertive. They think a good deal of themselves and their islands, but not much of the 'ferry-loupers' as they

call those who come from across Pentland Firth."

"That is so," said a tourist, "the Orcadian is an intelligent fellow who looks well after his farm and fish and anything else he can lay hands on. I think it is Mr Tudor who speaks of the difference between the Orcadian and the Shetlander. He was told by one gentleman that 'the Shetlander is a fisherman who has a farm; the Orcadian a farmer who has a boat.' The definition is rather good, though I am afraid that in many of the small isles the women do most of the farm work while the men are at the *haaf* fishing."

"There you are now," added Mrs Spence, "the poor women get the drudgery to do. It is time women's rights were asserted."

"Ay, maybe," said old Dowell, "but I'm thinkin' the women folk can tak' gey

guid care o' themsels. Whether they get the franchise or no they'll aye mak' themsels heard and get their ain way in the end. The women up here'll no be far ahint their neibours i' the sooth."

"They are clever lassies whatever," said a west country fishcurer, "and I do believe they are nearly as braw looking as the highland queans from the west, who come here to the herring fishing. So before we adjourn I'll give you all an old Orcadian toast. "Helt ta man, death ta fish, and detriment ta no man?"

After this, most of the party retired, and Mortimer, Mac and I joined a few others in a final pipe and chat ere we turned in for the night. On the suggestion of the artist our poetical competition was to be upon "Mermaids."

CHAPTER VII.

*Versifying Mermaids—Take care of the Ladies—
The Poet's Dream—The Poet forgets Himself
—The Result of Smoking Bad Cigars—What
a Critic is—Book-tasters—The Autocrat on
Critics—Captatores Verborum—A Gram-
matical Bug—The Lack of Originality—
Biglow's Opinion—Dowell recommends
Something—Letters or Gossip.*

NEXT morning at the breakfast-table Mrs Spence found two notes awaiting her. These contained the verses upon whose merits she was to decide. Being invited to join her in her private parlour after breakfast, we duly put in an appearance and prepared for the discussion that was sure to arise out of the affair. The only other person invited to this sanctum was our jolly fellow-

traveller Mr Dowell, who, by this time, seemed to stand very well with the American lady. He was such a jolly Scot, frank and genial, that we all wished him well in whatever views he might have regarding the future.

Mortimer and I had arranged to affix *noms de plume* to our verses, and whatever the result, to keep dark which was which. These were the names of two neighbouring parishes, "Harray" and "Birsay." Mrs Spence proceeded with a melodramatic air to read the two productions aloud. The first was entitled,—

THE ORCADIAN MERMAID.

Three fishers went sailing out in the bay,
As the sun was rising out of the sea ;
And they cast their lines as the people say,
They cast their lines these fishers three ;
Yet they caught no fish—at least it's said—
But they pulled aboard a pretty Mermaid.

The prettiest Mermaid that ever was seen
Was caught by those brave fishers three;
But one glance of the eye of this deep-sea queen
Made the fisher's hearts feel sad and dree
That ever they caught—at least it's said—
And pulled aboard this pretty Mermaid.

She smiled and laughed and pointed below
To the deep-sea caves from which she had come;
The fishers with her, she said, must go
Forever to live in her deep-sea home,
To love and be loved by each Mermaid
Forever and ever; for so it is said.

She touched each man with a tip of her hand,
And together they dived to the depths of the sea;
But never since then have they come to land
To tell the tale, these fishers three;
For down in the deep—at least it is said—
They dance and sport with the pretty Mermaid.

“Well, young gentlemen,” said our fair critic, “if that is the result of catching mermaids, I hope you will keep clear of them. But no doubt it's meant for an allegory. Is the moral of the tale ‘Take care of the ladies?’”

If so! I feel sure you will alter your opinion some day. Let us hear the other now."

THE POET'S DREAM.

A dreaming poet by the sea
Sat musing with himself one day,
And felt that there was harmony
In what the little wavelets say.
The pictures that his fancy drew
Were curious shapes and forms sublime,
The like that worldings never knew,
But poets saw in olden time.
And as he lay upon the sand
And gazed far out across the sea,
A winsome Mermaid touched his hand
And said, "Pray, come along with me."
Bewildered by the touch he rose
And followed where the Mermaid led;
He felt a spell, but then, who knows
By what these subtle things are fed?
'Twas love, or fate, or fairy wit,
Or anything you like to say,
What'er it was, he could not sit
And dream as he had done that day.
The maid was fair, with locks of lint;
Her eyes were blue, just like the sea,

With here and there a greenish tint
Which made them flash with roguish glee.
She turned and smiled and skipped along,
The poet followed, dreaming still,
Until he heard a siren song
Float up the sand and o'er the hill.
The notes of music made him start,
So sweet and tender did they seem,
They reached into his very heart
And broke the spell of that strange dream.
He looked around, the maid was gone,
No trace of her bright form was seen ;
Indeed, he found himself alone,
And homeward turned, sick with chagrin.
A bad cigar had made him queer,
The sun had helped to make him sick,
He felt like one who drinks vile beer
And thus his brain had played the trick.

"The poet maun hae forgotten himsel',"
broke in Mr Dowell, "did he say he had
drunk bad beer and smoked a bad cigar?
Weel, weel, it's nae wonder he saw a fairlie."

"What's a fairlie, Mr Dowell?" asked
Mrs Spence.

"Oh, a fairlie is just a warlock."

"I am afraid you have made me as wise as ever."

"Anything of the fairy breed," said Mortimer, "is called a fairlie by the Scotch."

"I understand now. Very well, the two pieces are unlike in many ways, and it is not easy to say which bears the palm. The moral of the last appears to be this:—Not to lie in the sun, especially after you have been drinking vile beer and smoking bad cigars. But I think both of you are sceptical as to the existence of mermaids. I have heard that there are wonderful tales of these strange creatures in both Orkney and Shetland. The folk-lore of the islands has a good deal about sea-trows and such like. Yet, perhaps, you are right in maintaining that it is very much a matter of imagination."

"Our two poets, here," remarked the artist, "haven't solved the difficulty how-

ever. I don't think very much of their hurried verses. 'Harray' seems to have had Charles Kingsley's 'Three Fishers' running in his head when he wrote his effusion, and perhaps a reminiscence of sea-sickness as well, while 'Birsay' does not yet appear to have recovered from a dose of over-smoking."

"Come, now," said I, "you are very flippant, Mac, in your criticisms. Critics are at the best one-sided individuals."

"Just so," said old Dowell; "it's far easier to see faults in ither folk than in yersel'. We a' forget to apply the maxim o' Robbie Burns,—

'O wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us,
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
And foolish notion.'

"Talking of critics," said Mortimer, "reminds me of a definition I saw not long

ago of the average critic, viz., 'a person who is a book-taster, but has no taste for books.' Of course there are many critics of whom this would not be an adequate description. But, generally speaking, the modern critic is subject to fits of temper and internal qualms—not qualms of conscience, I fear."

"That may be so," replied Mac, "but the newspaper critic performs a very useful function; and without our critiques upon the newest books life would lose half its charm. In these days of hurry and bustle a man has not time to look into the multitude of volumes which litter the counter and shelves of his bookseller. Life is too short for such an undertaking, and so he depends very much upon the opinion of the critic to determine whether he will buy this book or that. Yet, it must be admitted that

the critic is not always judicious nor correct in his estimate."

"Yes," broke in Mortimer, "some of these book-tasters are like jelly bags, which allow all the pure matter to run out and retain only the refuse; others, like the Golconda miners, pass by the worthless and retail to the public mind only what may be considered true gems. Authors, as a rule, are very sensitive concerning the children of their own brains, and do not like to see fools intermeddling with their joy."

"Creators are apt," said I, "to resent the remarks of critics, especially if the hurried reading of the latter has failed to bring out the real aim of the former. The critique in such a case may be unfair, if not unkind. But then, as some of us know, there are critics and critics."

"It is very refreshing," exclaimed Mrs

Spence, "to hear you young gentlemen discuss this matter so freely. There is a passage I came across the other day when reading the *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, by my countryman, Dr O. W. Holmes, which deals with the subject under discussion. Allow me to read it:—
'I have made mistakes enough in conversation and print. I never find them out until they are stereotyped, and then I think they rarely escape me. I have no doubt I shall make half-a-dozen slips before this breakfast is over, and remember them all before another. How one does tremble with rage at his own intense momentary stupidity about things he knows perfectly well, and to think how he lays himself open to the impertinences of the *captatores verborum*, those useful but humble scavengers of the language, whose

business it is to pick up what might offend or injure, and remove it, hugging and feeding on it as they go! I don't want to speak too slightly of these verbal critics; how can I, who am so fond of talking about errors and vulgarisms of speech? Only there is a difference between those clerical blunders which almost every man commits, knowing better, and that habitual grossness or meanness of speech which is unendurable to educated persons, from anybody that wears silk or broadcloth.' Don't you think Dr Holmes puts the matter very neatly?"

"He does, indeed," said Mortimer. "It is he too, if I remember rightly, who refers to the same kind of critic as a *scarabæus grammaticus*, or grammatical bug. From such people it is foolish to expect wisdom."

"I am of opinion," said Mac, "that in

literature, as well as in art, there is at the present time a sad lack of originality. We seem to be too much tied down by conventionalism. Of almost every present-day writer, it may be said that he is 'nothing, if not critical.' Both in prose and poetry the creative power of imagination is conspicuous by its absence."

"Well, gentlemen," said Mrs Spence, "it seems we are agreed upon this, that we live in an epoch of criticism. When such is the case we ought to feel thankful to the critics, and bide our time till a new era of imaginative writers dawns. We shall look to you young gentlemen to do something to bring about the change. Meanwhile, we must console ourselves, I fancy, with the saying of old Biglow:—

'Ef you're arter folks o' gumption,
You've a darued long row to hoe.'

"Ay, ay," exclaimed Mr Dowell, "we maun hae patience. Patience and perseverance are two most necessary qualities, and I recommend them to a' writin' bodies and painters. Business folk ken their value."

"True," said I, "you believe that everything comes to the man who waits. But it is time we were seeing about our boat to Longhope. I believe she starts some time in the afternoon."

"Three o'clock's her time," said Mac, "but it is very much a matter of tides. The skipper must wait for a good tide if he wants to make headway. But the wind is favourable, so I think we shall have a fairly quick passage."

"You must let me know your movements, gentlemen," said Mrs Spence, "for I shall expect to see you again, either here or in Kirkwall. Mr Dowell and I, it seems, will be in Orkney for a few weeks yet."

"Well, Mrs Spence," remarked Mac, "you must not expect many letters, for the postal arrangements in the South Isles are not perfect. It may take a letter three days to travel twelve miles; but, of course, there is always the telegraph."

"Dinna send ony telegrams," said old Dowell; "it does weel eneuch in business; but, remember, we're on holiday, and, therefore, should take things quietly and philosophically. Pleasure is pleasure, and business is business, say I. Nane o' yer telegrams for me."

Mac and I went off to arrange about our berth in the Longhope packet, and Mortimer and Mr Dowell retired to enjoy a cigar, while Mrs Spence sat down to finish her somewhat voluminous correspondence. Ladies always appear to have a lot of writing to do. It is, I often think, a good substitute for gossip.

CHAPTER VIII.

On Board the "Bella"—I wonder Who You are—Viewing the Scenery—Landing the Mails—Peter Tainsh turns up—Comparing Notes—Jack thinks He is not Orthodox—Mac talks of Art and the Glasgow School—Mortimer sits on Creeds—Peter on the Religious Novel—Mortimer criticises—Peter on the fin de siècle—The Benefits of Quiet—Mac moralises—A Summer Evening—Become Lotus-eaters.

WE left our fellow-travellers and sailed out of Stromness harbour on board the packet *Bella*, bound for Longhope. The afternoon was lovely, and a slight breeze was blowing off the Atlantic. The gentle dip of the boat, so different from the roll of the steamer we had recently left, the swish of the water as we sped along, and the

unique brightness of the scene filled us with a feeling of elation. The crew of three men and a boy went about their duties with that methodical care and quietness which betoken good seamen. A number of islanders were on board, returning from a day's marketing, and the talk in which they indulged was mainly about fish, cattle, and boats. The women folk chatted about more personal matters, and eyed us strangers with I-wonder-who-you-are kind of stare. Mac and I sat near the steersman, while Mortimer stretched himself upon some sailcloth and contemplated his surroundings in his usual philosophical way. We all agreed for once that the little voyage was most delightful. It is not possible to describe adequately that lovely seascape which met our gaze. For the time being we allowed ourselves to indulge

in day-dreams and fanciful notions as to the early Viking days, when the Norse sea-rovers pursued their warlike calling. The hills of Hoy formed a massive barrier towards the west, where the slowly sinking sun gilded the hill tops and made the water sparkle as we sailed along. The Claw Hamars formed an amphitheatre around the Dwarfie Stone, which Sir Walter Scott immortalises in his *Pirate*, and which Hugh Miller visited when cruising round this coast on board the *Betsy*. The little green island of Graemsay looked sweet in the summer light, and seemed a fitting abode for lotus-eaters to dream the time away and to enjoy the calm which the fret and worry of the south denies. Behind us rose the rounded slopes of Pomona, green and bright in the pervading sunshine. The islet of Cava, with its

few white-washed homesteads, looked a veritable gem set in silver and gold. The bright blue of the sea formed a marked contrast to the verdant landscape, and the clear, cloudless sky above suggested an Italian scene. Merrily on we went, past scar and cliff and fishing smack to the southern isles of Pharay and Flotta, and to the welcome opening of the bay of Longhope, guarded by its two Martello towers. Our little vessel was brought to the close to west bay of Flotta, where we landed several passengers and the mails. Several tacks were made before we reached the pier at South Walls, and found ourselves at our destination.

On being taken to the rooms secured for us near the quay, we were agreeably surprised to find an old college friend, named Peter Tainsh, who, now a licentiate, was

doing mission work in the neighbourhood. He gave us all a cordial welcome, and assured us that we would have a really good time.

"It is quite an age," he said, "since we roamed together over Arthur Seat, and discussed the great problems which perplexed the student mind. How have you got on Jack, at Oxford? Mortimer and you must be great dons now."

"Well, Tainsh," remarked Mortimer, "you must look after Jack. I am beginning to fear that the Church will not secure his services after all. Don't you know he has a great hankering after a literary life."

"Is that so, Jack?"

"Perhaps there is some truth in what Mortimer says," I answered. "At least there are some matters which disturb my mind somewhat. I am beginning to think

that orthodoxy is not just my *forte*; but time will tell. We are up in Orkney, along with our good friend Mac, whose artistic taste and sense of the beautiful may help us somewhat to enjoy life, if not to understand better those knotty points of theology about which we were so sure in the old days."

"Well, old boy," said Tainsh, "I do trust you will not wander away from your first love, and that we shall see you by-and-by in the work your father loved; but there are many spheres in which good, honest work for truth can be performed. I believe myself that the press is becoming one of the most effective motive forces in our time for the advancement of truth and goodness. I can't say, however, that I am *en rapport* with your new journalism; it is too highly spiced for my taste. Is there

not a little of the same thing in the new art also, Mac?"

"Now, Peter, you are on dangerous ground. The new movement in the art world may seem absurd, but there are the elements of good in it. Of course, in every new venture there must always be a tendency to exaggeration; and, frankly speaking, some of the Glasgow School go in rather much for that phase of art which may be called Japanese decoration. But there is truth in it all the same."

"We must have an art discussion some evening," said Mortimer, "and perhaps Peter will give us his ideas too. The Church, however, speaking in a broad sense, has reached a transition stage; and, while the truths of Christianity are as certain as ever, the form of expressing these has changed and is still changing. To my lay mind, there seems to

be a great amount of uncertainty about religious dogmas. Creeds do not seem so fashionable now as they once were, and the poor Westminster Confession of Faith has had to run amuck lately. It is fashionable now to be heterodox, whether there be wisdom in it or not."

"True," remarked Peter; "the forms of religious belief are, no doubt, undergoing change, but the essence is still the same. We are getting back, though, I must confess, in a peculiar way, to the essentials of religion, and humbug does not have such a pleasant time of it. Even the novelist must now write a so-called religious tale, to air his theories and show the world how difficult it is for a story-writer to be a good novelist and a good theologian at the same time. Most of the religious novels of our day are very weak, superficial, and narrow.

There is too much straining after effect, and the kind of people you see delineated in these books are scarcely ever to be met in real life."

"But you must admit," said Mortimer, "that the literature of the time reflects the religious ideas of the people as well as their social interests; when a writer attempts to do this, he must necessarily come short of the actual. It is so difficult to understand the motives of many men's lives; for I believe that actions do not always indicate the real motives which prompt them. There is a great deal of unreality about many of our clergy and pietistic people, who are content to assent to certain beliefs which they very inadequately strive to exemplify in daily life. Don't you think so, Peter?"

"There is a Scotch proverb, you know,

which runs, 'It's an ill bird that files it's ain nest;' yet there are weaklings and humbugs in every sphere, and you find them among the clergy as well as among the laity. At the same time I consider that there never was more earnestness and zeal in the Church than you find at the present day. The conditions of life in this *fin de siècle* are vastly different from those of former days. We live in a practical age, full of enterprise, discovery and energy. There is such a rush in every branch of knowledge that one is apt to look at things in a very cursory way, and to come to hasty and ill-formed conclusions, especially on religious matters. You must take time and pains to consider the spiritual tendencies of your fellows, else you are certain to fall into error. It is not what appears on the surface that is the most enduring element in the religious life of our country.

One requires to go down below the froth and spume of fanaticism and cant, to realise how true and honest and beautiful is the real faith which moulds a nation and preserves it from internal decay. Since I came up here, partly for change and partly to do some mission work, I have thought a good deal about these questions ; and the more one thinks, the greater the need he finds there is for careful investigation and consideration of what goes to form the inner life of individuals and society at large. You need the peace and quietness such as you have here, to get into sympathy with the truly spiritual life. The ever-changing sea around you is suggestive of the ebb and flow of human opinion, while the unchanging hills and rocks remind you of the everlasting truths which remain the same, no matter how the forms for expressing these may vary. Such an experience is

valuable in showing how it was possible in the days when life was easier and more prosaic to formulate creeds and dogmas to which the unvarying assent could be given. You come to understand, somewhat, the intense earnestness of such men as subscribed the Solemn League and Covenant, and dared even death for their faith. There was reality about that, whatever you may think about our present day opinions. The truth will stand fast, when the fluctuating opinions of man vanish before the winds of popular excitement. But I mustn't preach."

"Don't think that," said Mac, "it is a pleasant change to talk about such questions. You know most of us are so engrossed with the trivial movements of the hour that we forget the more important realities which lie behind these, hidden somewhat by the clouds and dust which our petty strivings after the

transitory raise. I fancy, however, that each of us, in his own sphere, will find the highest reward in working out in his own way, the truth which he believes he has a mission to propagate. Whether it be in literature, in art, or in daily practice, the good, the beautiful, and the true must be our aim."

"Right you are," said Peter; "I am glad you fellows are serious in the view you take of one's life work, and whether Jack goes into the Church or tries the uncertain path of journalism, he will find a sphere wide enough and honourable enough to satisfy the high ideals we cherished in those student days which this happy meeting revives once more. Come and have tea, and then a stroll up the beach to see what sort of a place you are in."

We enjoyed a pleasant meal, and chatted

away on lighter themes than the one already mentioned. After our sea trip we felt peckish, and did ample justice to the eggs and fish and fowl which were set before us. The good landlady must have thought us a boisterous company, but she was too polite to indicate the idea.

What a pleasant walk we had that summer evening! The daylight lingered as if unwilling to depart, and the lovely bay, which looked like a huge mirror, reflected the boats which rode at anchor, and the few white-washed houses which dotted the shore. It was a time for meditation, and we felt the infinite calm which in June seems to brood over an Orcadian scene. The hills of Hoy stood out like gloomy warriors guarding the golden gates of the west, and the dull murmur of the Atlantic fell upon our ears, reminding us of the soothing cadence of a

cradle lullaby. We even failed to notice the absence of trees, so little were they missed. The quiet water, the green sward, the cloudless sky and the bright gleam of the western horizon, formed a complete picture of restfulness and peace. It was the gloaming time. And what a gloaming! In the south, the shadows of night would be stealing across the Cherwell and the Oxford meadows, while here, daylight lingered on far into the night. Peter persuaded us to enter his boat and paddle out into the bay, so that we might enjoy to the full the sweetness and the beauty of our surroundings. As we lay upon our oars and only heard now and then the piping cry of the sleepless landrail, one felt inclined to believe oneself in some fairy country where work was needless, and dreaming the only thing to be enjoyed.

"The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
In the red west : thro' mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland,
A land where all things always seem'd the same,
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotus-eaters came."

CHAPTER IX.

A Trip up the Bay—Ladies again—Peter reveals a Secret—As Good as Norway—Globe-Trotters—The Exorbitant Highlanders—Jack defends Them—The Ayre—An Act of Heroism—A Night of Sorrow—What Rejoicing—Tittley Geo—A Big Jump—A Hoy Hawk—The Old Man of Hoy—Such a Dinner—The Doctor comes in—His Story of the Old Whaler—The Tale of a Salt.

NEXT morning after breakfast Mac informed us that he had arranged a sea-trip up the bay to a place called Berridale. On our arrival at the quay where the boats lay, we were not altogether surprised to find two ladies, whom the artist graciously introduced as friends of his. Mrs Byrom and her daughter were so much alike in every re-

spect, that they could have passed for sisters more readily than for mother and daughter. As we stood chatting together, Peter whispered into my ear,—

“Mac would never speak to you of the Miss here.”

“No,” replied I; “he spoke of a widow, but not a syllable about a daughter. I am afraid he has taken us in.”

When I say that Mrs Byrom was a handsome lady, of average height, with golden hair and a sweet expression of face, and more youthful looking than her years implied, I do not express more than the truth. She was really a charming woman, and her daughter was equally winning. The longer we knew them the more we liked them. But it soon became evident that Mac was quite gone on Fanny, the younger of the two. He had met them

first on his way north, and on his recommendation they had come to Longhope and taken up their residence, for a time, at Snelsetter, a somewhat rambling old country house, beautifully situated on a picturesque bend of the bay.

We stepped into the boat. Mac took the helm, and Peter, having hoisted the sail with the assistance of Mortimer, took charge of the foresail sheets. The ladies sat to windward while I settled myself comfortably near the bow. A light breeze bore us gently up the bay, and the motion of our little craft was something pleasant to enjoy.

"What a lovely country this is," remarked Mrs Byrom. "I never thought that Orkney was so delightful. I wonder more English people do not come here instead of rushing away to Norway."

"The islands here," said Peter, "are as well worthy the tourist's attention as the fjords of the hardy Norse. I feel sure that the wild gloups and geos, which are so plentiful around these coasts, would charm the eyes of all lovers of the beautiful and the picturesque. But, then, you see, it has not yet become the fashion to wander hither."

"A good many artists," broke in Mac, "have already found it fruitful ground, and no doubt it will soon be inundated by flocks of globe-trotters."

"I do hope," Miss Fanny said, "that when the crowd comes, the good Orcadians will not be spoilt as many of the Highlanders have been. The too generous spending of money tends somewhat to make the recipients greedy and extortionate."

"Oh, yes," said her mother "you have

no idea how exorbitant were the charges at some of the hotels in the Highlands. When one grumbles at the high charges, one is coolly told that a few months in the summer is the hotel-keepers' harvest, and they must make money while the stream flows. They forget that such a policy will help more than anything to make the stream run dry."

"People must live, you know," said I, "and, like the ants, these people must make in summer what will tide them over the dull winter."

"Let us be thankful that there is no cause to complain here," said Mortimer. "We have found living cheap, good and substantial. I shall recommend this land of fish and eggs to all my friends when I return south."

"So shall we all," added Mac.

We were well up the bay, and our steersman told us that there were some dangerous skerries near, which, at low water, were quite visible. As it was nearly full tide we did not require to be so careful, and so we tacked about now and then to view better both shores, and to get glimpses of the headlands. We landed at a narrow neck of beach, which divides Aithhope from Longhope, called the *Ayre*. Here Mac pointed out to us the lifeboat which had proved in many a stormy sea the valuable work rendered by means of the National Lifeboat Institution. On our way across to the Melsetter sands we met the coxswain of the lifeboat crew, one Benjamin Stout, who had been, he told us, instrumental in saving more than sixty lives from shipwreck. He showed us, with modest pride, the medal of the Society, and told many

tales of himself and crew, as they bravely did their duty in the most tempestuous weather.

On one occasion they went to the rescue of an English steamer, which was being swiftly borne by the strong tides of the Pentland Firth upon the dangerous rocks. Those sixteen, almost all the able-bodied men on that part of the island, willingly manned the lifeboat, and battled with the wild and raging sea. They struggled for hours to reach the doomed vessel, and could not get within reach. Darkness was coming on, and the watching women on shore strained their eyes to see how it fared with the breadwinners of their families. But it soon grew too dark to see, and fear fell upon the anxious watchers. A beacon-light was kindled to guide them as the boat rose and fell upon the waves.

A few hours later a rocket went up into the air, and wives and daughters knew that as yet their friends were safe. Soon a red light shot upwards into the dark night and then all was darkness again. Mothers looked in vain, wives peered out to sea with beating hearts and tear-dimmed eyes, but no further sign was given. Were they lost? was the one question which rose in the minds of all those weary night watchers, and to that question no answer came.

The coxswain's wife feared the worst, and would not be comforted. Her little boy a brave son of a brave father, did his best to cheer his mother, and explained that the first light meant that the crew was well, while the second and last red light, which went up at the mouth of the bay, was to intimate that they could not

land, and must make for some other harbour. It was a reasonable explanation, but his mother hardly credited its truth. There was weeping and wailing that night by the shores of Aithhope. When morning dawned with no signs of the absent ones, fear grew into certainty, and no pen can describe the saddened homes and heavy hearts of those desolate homesteads. Another day passed ; the storm moderated, and on the distant water a boat appeared, making in their direction. Could this be the gallant crew returning from their fruitless quest? At last the boat grounded on the beach, and there stepped ashore the sixteen brave hearts who had, two days before, set out at their peril to rescue their fellows from a watery grave. What rejoicing ! What a welcome they all received ! The night of terror had passed ; the day of joy had come. And

when the tale was told, they rejoiced the more. Not only were they safe themselves, but they had, after desperate efforts, reached the sinking ship, and saved every soul on board. The tempest was too strong to permit of their landing, and the rockets sent up, being all they had, were intended to convey the very message which the little boy had imparted to his mother. They were forced by stress of weather to make for South Ronaldshay, where they remained until they could return home.

It was after this gallant rescue that the silver medal was presented to the coxswain, in recognition of the many services rendered by that fearless crew. I had heard some of the details of this adventure on board the steamer, from the lips of a South Shields lady, who was full of praise in honour of these sturdy Orcadian fishermen.

It was a double pleasure to meet some of the crew, and to express the admiration we all felt at such deeds. Truly the days of heroism are not past.

Near Aithhope we came upon Titley Geo, and admired the rich colouring of the rocks tinged with ironstone. Mac became quite enthusiastic about the artistic effect, and the ladies were in raptures with the rugged cliffs, and the dark blue tinge of the Atlantic, as its waters rushed impetuously against their base, giving forth loud sonorous sounds. By the time we reached Berry Head we were ready to enjoy the luxury of a rest as well as the delightful prospect from the summit of this cliff, which rises six hundred feet above the sea. It was a charming view we obtained. Each one pointed out what was considered the most telling effect, and a rather lively

discussion arose on landscape and seascape.

Peter diverted the current of our thoughts by relating a story connected with one of the deep fissures or geos, which are to be found on the southern side of the Berry. One day long ago an itinerant packman was making his way along the coast from that most primitive of all Orcadian townships, Rackwick, to Longhope, when he was suddenly beset by robbers. At least the frightened pedlar maintained that such they were. To escape their clutches he took to precipitate flight, and in his haste, coming to one of these wide clefts, he boldly leapt across. If he really cleared it then, it is one of the most remarkable jumps in the world. It is still called Pedlar's Geo, and remains a silent witness to the truth or untruth of the story.

As we lay resting after enjoying a modi-

fied pic-nic, the artist moved away with Miss Fanny to do some sketching. Mrs Byrom invited our friend Peter to give us some more of his tales. Of these one may be re-told here. We were admiring the northern cliffs of Hoy, when he informed us that the Orcadians had tee-names for the inhabitants of the different islands. The Hoy folks were known as "Hawks." One day he, told us, a Hoy "Hawk" paid a visit to his minister and said, "Oh! sir, but the ways of Providence are wonderful! I thocht I had met a sair misfortune, when I lost baith my coo and my wife at aince over the cliff, twa months sin'; but I gaed over to Graemsay, and I hae gotten a far better coo, and a far bonnier wife."

It was now time to retrace our steps, however reluctant we might be to leave behind us the glorious solitude of the Berry,

and the wide stretching moor which extended across the island to the eastern shore. We joined Mac and his young lady at the foot of the hill, and could scarcely get Mortimer away from the pursuit of grasshoppers, which, it appears, are to be found nowhere else in Orkney. He declined to give up the hunt until he had captured two fine specimens. They were, he declared, the largest he had ever seen. Here Peter pointed out a stalk of rock rising from the sea close to the cliffs. It is called the Needle, and does not impress one so much as the Old Man of Hoy, which is a familiar object in northern guide books and photographers' windows. As some of us had not yet seen this grand old man of the sea, we had to content ourselves with a graphic description given by Miss Fanny, who wound up her little oration with Malcolm's verses :—

“See Hoy’s Old Man! whose summit bare
Pierces the dark blue fields of air;
Based in the sea, his fearful form
Glooms like a spirit of the storm;
An ocean Babel, rent and worn
By time and tide,—all wild and lorn;
A giant that hath warred with heaven,
Whose ruined scalp seems thunder-riven;
Whose form the misty spray doth shroud;
Whose head the dark and hovering cloud;
Around his dread and louring mass,
In sailing swarms the sea-fowl pass;
But when the night-cloud o’er the sea
Hangs like a sable canopy,
And when the flying storm doth scourge
Around his base the rushing surge,
Swift to his airy clefts they soar,
And sleep amidst the tempest’s roar,
Or, with its howling round his peak,
Mingle their drear and dreamy shriek.”

We were glad to reach our boat, as the long tramp had completely tired us all out. The warm sun had made the trip a little fatiguing, and the pangs of hunger began also to be felt. We invited the ladies to

dine at our rooms, but, being anxious to get home, they would not wait. Mac and Mortimer accompanied them to Snelsetter, and spent the evening there. Peter and I dined alone. I don't think I ever enjoyed such a dinner. We were joined a little later by the resident doctor, who took a pipe and entertained us amongst the smoke with his amusing talk. He was an Edinburgh graduate, and knew many of the men with whom we had also come into contact. He was full of stories about the people, who were, he said, a kindly, if somewhat cautious lot. One tale of an old whaler named Jamie Thomson may amuse the reader. The story was told the doctor by the hero himself. Along with a companion, the old salt went one day cod-fishing in the Pentland Firth. As they were cruising about from one fishing-ground to another,

they sighted a whale sporting in the waters. The whaling instinct was strong in Jamie, and, with the consent of his neighbour, he gave chase. As they plied their oars, he muttered, "I'd gie a' the cod in the boat to ha'e a harpoon the noo." But the firth was scarcely the place where the want could be supplied. Thinking the opportunity too good to be lost, he seized the sprit (the long pole which stretches out the sail), and, taking a steady aim, he launched it at the monster. His aim was good, and the sprit became transfixed in its blow-hole. The huge fish disappeared, and Jamie lost both sprit and whale.

Next season he took it into his head to join a Dundee whaling vessel, and while engaged one day in an exciting chase in the Arctic Seas, they captured a whale with some peculiar object on its head. In its

blow-hole, strange to relate, was found part of the very sprit Jamie had used in the Pentland Firth the summer before! "And if ye'll no believe me," said he, "just come awa' round here to the barn and I'll show you the very identical sprit." He did not, however, produce the whale, the doctor added, and I fear the tale must be accepted with the proverbial grain of salt; indeed, it might be called the tale of a salt.

CHAPTER X.

Mac suggests a Seal Hunt—Seal Stalking—A Bad Miss—The Tourist and the Native—A Critical Moment—Who shot the Seal—Mortimer turns Diver—Mac's Success—A Second Cousin—A Fisherman's Superstition—His Unhappy Fate—The Three R's of Orcadian Education—When to Marry—Matrimony in Flotta—A Big Drink—Kirkin' the Bride—The Three Voyagers.

“WHAT do you say to a seal hunt?” was Mac's suggestion as we were debating a day's outing.

“The very thing,” said Mortimer.

“I'm on,” said I, and so the expedition was fixed. “But where shall we go? Where can we find the seals?” I ventured to inquire. “You ought to know, Mac, as

you've been here longer than any of us. But perhaps seal stalking is not quite in your line, thou man of the brush?"

"Oh, I've had a brush with the selkies before this, my man, and if you like we can sail over to Flotta and do a little stalking at the Calf."

"What! stalk a calf?" exclaimed Mortimer.

"If you were there, we might," replied Mac. "Don't you know that the little island off the N.E. point is called the Calf of Flotta? That is, I believe, the best place within easy distance to find a large number."

We proceeded at once to get our rifles and ammunition, and were soon ready to set out. A boat had been prepared by our landlord, whom we found waiting at the jetty. The wind had fallen since early

morning, and a gentle breeze, aided by the outgoing tide, took us quietly down the bay. Nearly an hour's sail brought us close to the Flotta shore, and as we cruised about before landing a seal's head appeared astern, attracted apparently by Mac's whistling, as he entertained us with a few bars of an operatic air. Each of us prepared to fire. But it seemed too bad that three shots should be expended all at once at the defenceless head of one seal. It was agreed that Mortimer should get first shot. He raised his rifle. Bang went his bullet, but missed its billet, and the seal's head quickly disappeared.

"The boat jerked," explained Mortimer.

"Oh, ay, there's nae doot you've missed," said the boatman.

As no more seals appeared, we pulled ashore and walked across the island to the

Calf. On the way Mac entertained us with some of the stories he had picked up during his sojourn among the islands.

On one occasion an English tourist happened to ramble over the island to which we had come, and meeting a hardy fisherman entered into conversation with him. The Englishman asked him how often he saw the mail-steamer, which usually passed the other side of the island.

“Oh, sometimes i’ the winter we ne’er get a glisk o’ her for twa months,” was the reply, “and whiles we dinna get letters for weeks. The sea is ower rough for the post-boat to land the bag.”

To which the tourist answered,—

“At such a time, my good man, you must feel very badly off to know what is going on in London.”

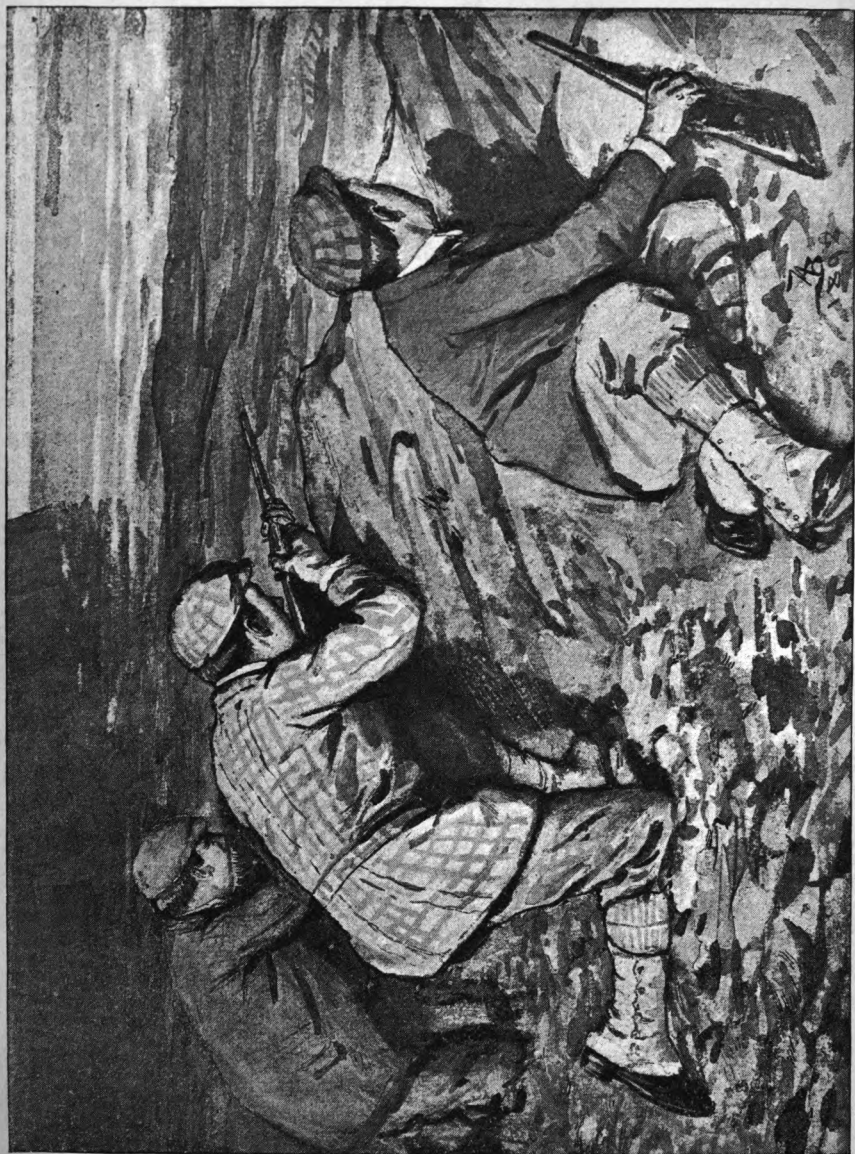
“Na, na,” said the Orcadian, “the folk

in Lunnon are just as badly aff tae ken what's gaun on here."

This anecdote is a very good illustration of the importance which a native attaches to his northern home.

Having reached Panhope we obtained another boat and boatman, and crossed over to the long narrow point called the Rhone, which juts out close to the Calf. We were informed by one of the islanders that a few seals might be found on the rocks, or, at least, not far from the shore, in the channel which divides the small holm from the larger island. After a council of war, it was agreed to proceed carefully, so as not to disturb any of the seals. We crept along the shore, amongst the low-lying rocks and seaweed, in Indian file, and as noiselessly as possible. Mortimer, who was ahead reconnoitring, signalled that there were some





"WE TOOK AIM LONG AND STEADY."

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not far from land. As we crept nearer, our excitement began to rise, and we whispered directions with bated breath. By-and-by we saw four fine specimens, swimming slowly, close by the opposite shore. We prepared to fire. Concealing ourselves as best we could amongst the tangle and seaweed, we lay flat upon the shelving rocks, unheeding the pools of water into which we unconsciously crawled. We took aim, long and steady. At a given signal two rifles went off simultaneously, and the third was only a second or two behind. When the smoke lifted we looked eagerly to see the result. It was *nil*. The bubbling water was all we saw. At one spot, however, the sea seemed to be tinged with blood. The seals, which a minute before were quietly enjoying the summer sun, were nowhere to be seen. One had been shot, but had

immediately sunk. Our boatman ran off to fetch the boat round, and we three disconsolate sportsmen sat down to wait. The monotony of this occupation was somewhat unprofitably relieved by a dispute as to who shot the seal. Each of us, it appeared, had fired at this seal; and as no decision was come to, the matter was left undecided. Mortimer ventured to remark that very probably the weight of our three bullets had borne the brute to the bottom. Half-an-hour elapsed ere the boat arrived. We all got in, eager to find and claim our missing prey. As we pulled about over the spot, the boatman made a suggestion,—

“I’m fear’d the beastie has been carried oot by the tide, and it’ll be a kittle job to find it.”

We peered over the boat’s side into the water, but failed to make out anything

on the rocky bottom resembling the object of our quest. Suddenly Mortimer shouted,—

“I see it, I see it!”

Mac and I looked too, and imagined we saw it also. But the question arose, how can we get it up? The boat-hook was too short, the oars would not touch the bottom, and there was no appliance at hand of any service. I suggested that the only plan was for one of us to dive down. Mortimer at once volunteered, stripped and plunged over the side. In a few seconds he rose to the surface, and, having taken a breath, said he failed to see or feel anything like a seal. Once more he dived, and we observed him swimming near the bottom. He rose again with the same information. By this time we saw it was a useless search, and we had just to console ourselves with the boatman's

theory that the tide had carried the seal out to sea.

"Ye ken," he remarked, "the tide's gey strong, and as it's runnin' oot, the beastie 'll be carried wi' it. But I'll keep a look oot for a day or twa, in case it might rise and float. It'll be a peerie¹ while before that, I'm thinkin'."

With such consolation we took to the oars, and pulled round towards Panhope. As we were well over the bay, a large seal popped up its head some forty yards the boat. Mac, who was seated in the bow rifle in hand, took as steady an aim as the motion of the boat allowed, and fired. This time there was no mistake. We saw the seal roll over as if dead. A few quick strokes brought us close up, when we perceived that the bullet had pierced its skull.

¹ Little.

The surrounding water was crimson with blood. I seized the beast by one of its flippers, and so keeping hold we towed it ashore. It was a large grey seal, fat and silky. Our boatman, with the assistance of a neighbour, carried it to a cottage, where in due time the skin was taken off, and the oil divided between the two worthy fishermen. The skin was afterwards sent south and tanned, and is now the visible proof of that day's sport.

On the invitation of the Earl of Zetland's local land steward, we were very kindly entertained in his house, and treated to a high tea. We had found seal-stalking a rather hungry occupation, if not a very successful one, and made up for our lack of skill by doing substantial justice to the repast. Our hostess, a very amiable lady, related for our amusement some peculiar

incidents of Orcadian superstition, and told us that many of the islanders considered the seal as a kind of second cousin in disguise. An old idea, was that the seal or selkie could transform itself into the human form, and *vice versa* as circumstances demanded. The Scandinavian Sagas abound in such incidents, and might be studied with profit by keen Darwinians.¹

There is a strange circumstance connected with that day's adventure, which may be related here. The fisherman who came to the assistance of our temporary boatman, and who shared in the seal oil, expressed regret that a seal should have been shot. He believed in the superstitious notion referred to above, and fancied that some misfortune would ultimately overtake his friend. Nothing was

¹ See my *Rambles in the Far North*, 2nd ed., pp. 233, 236, 240. (London: A. Gardner, 1884.)

to be feared on our behalf, it seemed, as we were interlopers and not natives. For a native Orcadian to assist at the death throes of a "puir selkie," was a sad reflection upon the supposed kinship which existed between the two.

That evening these two fishermen went out as usual to look their haddock lines. They had just stowed sail and were beginning the operation, when they both observed an old seal eyeing the boat intently. "Look," said the superstitious fellow, "there's the mate o' the puir selkie ye helped to kill. Come, let's get hame; we'll ha'e nae luck this night. The widowed selkie's on our track." As he persisted in the idea, there was nothing for it but to let the lines lie and to make for home. When we were told of the affair we all laughed at the absurdity of the thing. But a different complexion was given to the

incident some time after we had left the north. One morning the islanders were startled to learn the melancholy intelligence, that an old boatman had been found in one of his outhouses suspended to the rafters by the neck. He had committed suicide. His neighbour fisherman maintained that this sad termination to the life of his friend, was the fulfilment of the forebodings he had entertained that night when "the widowed selkie" came upon their track. The death of the seal had been avenged. When I read the sad occurrence in the newspapers, I thought of that day's seal-stalking, and of the happy companionship we enjoyed with this poor man, who met such an untimely and melancholy fate. On making inquiries I found that there was a taint of insanity in the family, and that the poor fellow had taken his life while under its baneful in-

fluence. In Orkney, as in other fishing communities, the frequent intermarrying is the cause of a great deal of the insanity which exists, as well as of the prevalence of scrofula and kindred diseases.

Before we left the island to return to Longhope we met the schoolmaster, who is now, I believe, somewhere in Australia. From him we picked up a great many tit-bits of northern folk-lore. Mr Garson was a very intelligent representative of his class, though, I understood, a not very successful teacher. He was full of stories about the islands and the people, and seemed to have given a good deal of attention to the superstitions of the north. He was peculiarly happy, I thought, in the description he gave of the three R's of an Orcadian boy's education. They were these: To steer a boat, haul a cod line, and know all the tides in

the Pentland Firth. That may have sufficed some time ago, but I fear these days of school-boards, inspectors, and compulsory officers demand some additional knowledge.

Marriages, he told us, were usually celebrated on a Thursday, which was considered to be the lucky day. Friday was avoided, as any undertaking begun on that day generally turned out unsuccessful. To marry with a waning moon brought misfortune, but with a growing moon happiness was certain. Some years ago, when the minister of Walls had the ministerial charge of Flotta, the stormy weather often prevented him from getting across; and so the islanders were without Sunday services for two or three weeks. "Under these circumstances, if a couple were in a hurry to be married, the bridegroom, accompanied by his best man, proceeded to the session clerk on the Saturday

night, the day when the engagements were generally made, to give directions for the proclamation of the banns. On the following day (Sunday) the clerk, sexton, and a friend, proceeded to the kirk, where the clerk gave out the banns, a ceremony which was repeated, as elsewhere, on the two following Sundays. The wedding seems generally to have taken place on a Thursday, and at the wedding-feast a sort of loving-cup was handed round, called 'the bride's cog,' or 'leem.'

"The cog was a sort of diminutive washing tub with two handles, and held about four English quarts. The 'marriage drink' consisted of ale and whisky mixed. What *heads* the company must have had the next day if the cog circulated freely; it is something awful to contemplate! The following day (Friday), known as 'ranting day,' after

more eating and drinking, the company assembled at the kirk, when someone, having been elected minister for the nonce, he proceeded to read a portion of scripture, and sing a verse or two of a psalm. This ceremony was considered to have a retrospective effect, and without it the bride was looked upon as 'unclean.' If before she was 'kirkit' the bride had visited the houses of any of her neighbours she was considered to have defiled them, and rendered them liable to be overrun with moths. When the olive branches came, the mother, on recovery, had to attend with her cummers and the 'wise woman,' or midwife, at the kirk, where the 'skilly wife' read a verse of a psalm, and pronounced the quondam patient 'clean.' There is no service in the Scottish Church analogous to that in the Church of England for the

churching of women after childbirth, and as far as the writer can make out, never has been since the Reformation. This last custom, therefore, must have survived from Roman Catholic times.”¹

We embarked for the return journey at Houska Bay, our friend the schoolmaster seeing us on board. In little over an hour we were back in our snug rooms at Longhope. The weather began to look somewhat threatening, and we were glad to get the homeward trip safely over. After supper we sat round the fire, which the considerate landlady had kindled, though it was the month of June, and smoked and talked. The rain had begun to fall, and the wind rose to a light gale. Mortimer favoured us, as we prepared to retire, with

¹ *The Orkneys and Shetland*, J. R. Tudor, London; Stanford, 1883, p. 334.

an effusion which closes this chapter as it almost did our eyes.

THE THREE VOYAGERS.

The rain fell fast outside,
While we sat and smoked within,
And heard the rush of the tide
As it made a clattering din
Upon the gravelly beach both far and wide,

We heeded not the storm
That arose as we sat down ;
Our rooms were snug and warm,
And we were far from town,
Away from the toil and fret, in a cosy farm.

Then Mac told tales of art
In the artless way he had,
While books were Morty's part ;
He had read both good and bad,
And these he praised or blamed with all his heart.

But Jack philosophised
In his own didactic way,
And coolly each advised
To note the peculiar trait,
Which marked the various men he had criticised.

And the wind outside rose high
As the talk within grew loud ;
The stars came out in the sky,
But the smoke formed quite a cloud
Which circled round our heads and lingered by.

We talked till the morn had dawned,
And our eyes looked heavy and red,
As one by one we yawned
And longed to get off to bed
To sleep or dream of Morpheus and his wand.

To dream perchance of seals,
Of mermaids fair and tall,
Of fish and nets and creels,
Or over the garden wall,
Round which the salt sea water gently steals.

To dream but not to sleep,
For the supper was heavy, not light,
And the storm howls over the deep,
So let us all say "Good night,"
And into our hammocks like keen sportsmen creep.

CHAPTER XI.

Pleasant Days—A Keen Antiquarian—Moonlit Scenes—On the Sands—Mac goes Shopping—A Whale ashore—An Unlooked-for Tug—A Stern Chase—The Whale gives the Slip—Another of the Same—A Night at the Manse—Mac and his Ladies return—Their News—A Suspicion—An Autumn Prospect.

THE next few weeks were spent pleasantly in delightful weather. Fishing excursions and botanical rambles took up most of the time. In the latter we were generally favoured with the society of the ladies. Occasionally they accompanied Mac in his sketching tours among the little homesteads where he sought old fashioned interiors, and always returned expressing their delight with

the crofters. Sometimes Peter joined our company, and kept us well posted up in the local folk lore. He introduced us to his "Bishop," as he called the minister of the parish, and we found in him a keen antiquarian who possessed quite a wealth of stories concerning both the Zetlandic and Orcadian people. Before we went south his hospitable manse became a kind of second home to us. Mrs Byrom and her daughter were also by this time on terms of close intimacy with the young ladies of the manse, and many were the delightful evenings we spent there round the whist table. One of the sons had just completed his curriculum at the Aberdeen Medical School, and his arrival added a new element of interest. He very soon became a great friend with all our party, and his keenness of wit and vivacity of temperament kept

us always lively. We found him a splendid guide to all the most interesting places for miles round. He took us down dangerous cliffs, into almost inaccessible caverns, and along precipitous mountain paths. Many a night as we pulled up the calm moonlit bay, returning from a day's fishing, we made the shores jocund with our songs. These were usually college ditties with good rattling choruses, which were given out with more strength of lung than gracefulness of expression. We were indeed a merry, light-hearted crew. When any of us think of those bright summer days spent so delightfully amid the green islands of the cold North Sea, the memory of that past is all the sweeter from the fact that now life is more serious and holiday times less frequent. But the reflected light which comes from that bright holiday casts

a genial glow over the hard working look of our grave faces, and the pictures which rise up in the mind's eye add humour and pathos to the sternness of outside realities. But it is thus that a man learns the use of

“The dark lantern of the spirit

Which none can see by, but he who bears it.”

One lovely forenoon, Mortimer, the young Medical, and I set off to explore Melsetter Sands and Brims. Mac had left that morning, along with his two lady friends, in the post boat. Their intention was to do some shopping at Stromness. We gave the artist a few commissions, and Mortimer asked him to be on the look-out for Mrs Spence, our American fellow - traveller. We had heard a few days before that she was likely to be in Stromness about that time.

The walk up the side of the bay was

enjoyable and lively. Mortimer and our new friend were exchanging rapier thrusts of wit, and punning seemed to be indigenous to the soil. As we neared Salt Ness, I fancied there was some little excitement on, to judge from the number of men that were hurrying down to the beach. As we turned a bend in the road we met Magnus Flett, a fisherman, who informed us that a large whale had got aground at Salt Ness. He was just coming for his boat, and on his suggestion we three agreed to accompany him. Jumping in, we pulled for the spot where the sea monster lay helpless. When we arrived, everybody fancied that the whale had been killed. A carpenter's 'fit each' or adze had been driven well into its head. It lay there—a hugh mass of quiescent whale-bone and bluboer, and measured about sixty feet in length. Magnus agreed to tow the

whale down the bay to a suitable spot where the flinchers could successfully accomplish their task. A strong rope was immediately made fast to the tail, and Mortimer and the young Medical fastened the other end securely to the boat's stern. When all was ready our four rowers put out their oars. Magnus took the helm. Mortimer and I sat in the bow, while our friend the Medical and a fisherman kept a watch upon the rope and the whale. A good start was made and everything seemed going well. The 'fit each' lay buried to the hilt in the monster's head, and no sign of returning animation appeared. Suddenly we felt a jerk at the stern which very nearly pitched Mortimer overboard. The whale had come to life again, and was tearing across the bay. The boatmen had no chance with this unexpected kind of tug. Things began to look rather serious, and as

the speed at which we were going increased, some of us felt rather anxious as to the result of this peculiar experience. We soon saw that there was no hope of the whale giving in from exhaustion, and our steersman gave orders to prepare to cut the rope. At this moment our boat was almost drawn under, and the command, "Cut away, boys," just came in time. The rope was severed, and away flew the whale, "fit each" and all, down the bay at the rate of some eight knots an hour. Our prize was gone; and we were all thankful that the boat had not been swamped. As we came ashore we found disappointment on every face. Magnus was dreadfully vexed that his prey had escaped, but consoled himself with the reflection that a similar experience had happened not so very long before, amongst the Pentland Skerries.

"That," said the Med., "was 'another of the same.' I suppose you have heard the story about that expression."

"No," said I; "let us hear it."

"Well, there was a crofter who came one day to the old minister of Hoy, saying there was a passage in the Scriptures which he could not understand; it was in the metrical version of the Psalms—'Another of the same.'"

"Do you know John Sabiston who lives at the Gloup?" asked the minister.

"Fine that."

"What do you think of him?"

"He's a born idiot."

"Well, you are 'another of the same.'"

Although we had lost our whale, we were glad of the unique experience of being towed by one, and at such a furious pace. When we got on land the element of fear

had vanished, and we began to crow a little at the adventure.

“Won’t we make Mac jealous,” said Mortimer, “when he comes back from Stromness?”

“I’m not so sure of that,” said I; “its another kind of fish that has got him in tow at present.”

“But, Jack, you can’t say it’s very like a whale, at anyrate.”

Most of the afternoon was spent at Melsetter sands, and roaming about the rocks and cliffs. When we got back to our abode at the South Ness, we found an invitation to dine at the manse awaiting us. No time was lost in getting up the hill to that hospitable house. The morning’s adventure, and our lengthy ramble, had whetted our appetites, and seldom was a dinner more enjoyed by any of us. An adjournment

being made to our host's cosy study, the events of the day were discussed amid a cloud of tobacco smoke. The doctor looked in as he returned from his daily rounds, and contributed his share of wit and story to the general talk. As we joined the ladies in the drawing-room for the usual cup of tea, little Bertie, one of the juniors of the family, brought us word that the post boat was coming up the bay. The arrival of this vessel was always an important event. It only occurred three times a week, and the batch of letters and papers were eagerly looked forward to. Our host and the doctor, along with the young Med., Mortimer and myself, set off together for the pier to await the landing of Her Majesty's mails and the passengers. We expected Mac with his lady friends, and anticipated that they would bring some interesting news.

We arrived just as the dingey touched the shore, and hailed our friends, who greeted us with their cheery salutations. They all seemed delighted with their trip to shop-land, and the ladies chatted away with more than usual animation. The minister and his party accompanied them to their abode, while Mac adjourned with Mortimer and I to our rooms. The artist was full of news. He had met Mrs Spence at the hotel, and found her in a most genial mood. She told him Mr Dowell had gone south with the steamer which left Stromness the day before, and she expected to meet him the following week in Edinburgh. She also hoped to see the three of us there on our way south.

“It’s my opinion,” said Mac, “that the American and our old friend have improved the shining hour and made it up. At least, she dropped a pretty broad hint to that effect.”

"Yes, that's what I expected," remarked Mortimer, "they did look as if matrimony would agree with them."

"Ah, well," said I, "Mrs Spence is quite wide-awake, and knows perfectly well what she is about. I understand Mr Dowell is very wealthy."

"But there is something else worth hearing," added Mac. "I met Sir John Mallet, the artist; he is on a yachting trip, and put into Cairston Roads for a couple of days."

"Did he give you an invitation to join him?" asked Mortimer.

"Not exactly; but he did something just as agreeable. He offered me, and you fellows too, if you care for it, a fortnight's salmon fishing upon his water on the Tay."

"That is a good chance," said I, "I hope you accepted."

"Yes, I did. We can go south to Aberdeen

and train to Perth. His fishing is a few miles north of 'the Fair City.' I am sure we shall enjoy it after our pleasant experience here. Sir John won't be able to touch a fishing-rod for a month yet, he told me, as his party were out for a long trip, *vid* Shetland and Norway."

It was agreed that we should go south the following week.

CHAPTER XII.

An Evening Chat—Art and Tobacco—The Doctor rouses the Artist—Artists don't like Critics—Art and Criticism—Mac waxes Eloquent—Emerson's Definition—Sufficient Knowledge—Art Critics not up to Date—True Art—Corot—Literateurs—Angelo and Raphael—Amplius—Fault-finding—Clap-Trap—Story-telling Pictures—Whistler on the Imitator—New English Art Club—Walter Sickert—Glasgow Men—Japanese Art—Never mind the Public—Whistler's "Ten O'Clock"—His Estimate—Mortimer blames Artists—The Doctor means to stick to Medicine.

LATER in the evening the doctor dropped in to smoke a pipe and take a share in the talking which was going on. One subject after another was discussed; until something that Mortimer said about art roused Mac from his

usual philosophic quietness, and no other subject was talked about for the rest of the night. Art and tobacco smoke filled the room.

"I tell you what it is;" he said, "you fellows know precious little about the matter. You are prosing away there in the usual conventional style, while all the time you are losing sight of the very essence of art. You miss the *raison d'être* of an artist's profession. What do you mean, doctor, by saying that artists are simply imitators of nature?"

"Well, you know," replied the doctor, "that's only my opinion. I consider an artist imitates nature, and does not make a great job of it after all."

This was what stirred Mac up, and for once we realised that even he could become eloquent. The discussion touched his ideal, and roused the artistic faculty. Instead of giving the common places of the others which

brought out his individual opinions, I shall endeavour to summarise his views. We all helped to lead him on ; and a sarcastic remark now and then from Mortimer kept the ball rolling. Mortimer had been praising up art critics and, no doubt, mischievously hinted that without the help of the critics, artists could not get along. After that, Mac delivered his soul somewhat in this strain.

“ Artists do not like critics. The average art critic is a sham, because he writes about what he generally knows little and cares less. I agree with that American artist Mr W. M. Hunt, who says, with a great degree of truth, that if art depended upon literature, there would never be much. The artist, no doubt, needs help. As a rule the critic comes to find fault, not to help. This is an epoch of criticism, and art will not escape any more than literature. It will survive, however. There

are more people found crowding our picture galleries than frequenting our public libraries. That may arise possibly from the fact that anybody can look at a picture, while few take the trouble to read and appreciate books. A glance may satisfy in the one case, while in the other long hours may not suffice. But pictures will always be popular from the interpretation of nature which good art gives. We are all, even though city-bred, children of nature,

‘Lovers of the meadows, and the woods
And mountains, and of all that we behold
From this green earth.’

Painting, like poetry, sculpture and architecture, is all that ultimately remains of a nation. The critics are somehow not in it. But life would be stale without criticism, and art life would positively be a dream, were it not for the outrageous critiques which now and then disturb the equanimity of the

painter. There are many men who know art when they see it, and who can appreciate it at its real value. Unhappily, few of these are the art critics of our journals. That is why you find a Harry Quilter calling a water-colour portrait of John Ruskin an oil, necessitating a scalping process on the part of a Whistler. We require a school of criticism no less than a school of art itself. But he would be a bold man who would begin such an institution. It is well that we are not all made after the same pattern; otherwise existence would be a tame affair, with no diversity, no idiosyncrasy, and no criticism. There would be nothing to criticise.

“Emerson says somewhere that the chief difference between man and man is a difference of impressionability. It is a relief to say now and again with Buffon, ‘*Le style c’est l’homme.*’ It all depends upon

the impression. Both writers and painters are greatly helped in their work by noting down the impressions of the moment. If a man is incapacitated by the kind of brain he possesses from receiving correct impressions of anything, you need not be surprised to find his critiques incorrect and absurd. It would be surprising if they were not. Like Topsy, the modern Art critic grows, no one seems to know how. But then he generally grows all wrong. It may be said that authors, artists, and all creators of anything which may claim to originality, exist for the critic. He lives on them. There is not much of sacrifice in his profession, unless it be that of sacrificing the works of others upon the altar of his ignorance. Critics either know too much or too little. The difficulty is in getting one whose knowledge is just *sufficient*.

Were the birds to read the daily newspapers, I am afraid we would miss their music next morning. But they are above that sort of thing.

“To criticise fairly and well, one must *know* what really is the subject of his criticism. Our modern Art critics have a knack, somehow, of picking out mediocre work as if it were the best. Of course they never do so in the case of the old masters. Time has saved them from the folly. But recent Art is peculiar. Conventional Art is being elbowed aside, and a younger, fresher school is coming to the front. This is rather puzzling to the critics. Why? Because they have not developed along with Art. The old canons of criticism are somehow inadequate to meet the emergency. The public, however, are not dependent upon the *dicta* of the journalists,

else many an artist would find few patrons coming to his studio, and receive a poor reward for all his toil. The critic is in search of what he is pleased to call originality, forgetful of the *dictum* of Ruskin, 'That virtue of originality that men so strive after is not newness, as they vainly think (there is nothing new), it is only genuineness.' A true artist is true to Nature, in so far as he receives the impression of her truth. As Browning puts it:—

' Art may tell a truth
Obliquely, as the thing shall breed the thought,
Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word.'

"The great requirement of our newspaper Art critic is to have the faculty of putting himself in the artist's place. Did he do this, there would be more truth in his critique, though perhaps less pungency. Very few people cared for the works of Corot

some twenty years ago, because the critics said he was 'so very peculiar.' They can't get enough of him now. A favourite criticism is to point out the want of *finish* in certain pictures. But is there anything finished in Nature? A man can scarcely be said to be finished until he dies. Then he ceases to be an object of interest. Were some pictures finished to the idea of the critic, very few people would have any interest in them. *Litterateurs* know little or nothing about the *practice* of painting, and so their comments on Art are often very ludicrous to artists. Did they know better what was useful in painting, they would not commit so many egregious errors in their estimate of it. But it takes a great man to know his own ignorance. Socrates was one of these, and it is a long time since his day.

“Whatever is *real* is Art; for Art is not limited to the work of the painter’s brush. In criticism we require broader treatment. It is told of Michael Angelo that one day he entered the studio of Raphael when that artist was absent. On the easel were some figures sketched. Angelo took the chalk, and drew lines outside the figures, and wrote underneath the word *amplius*. It is said that this was the turning-point in Raphael’s career; hitherto he had been too cramped. To the modern critic it requires to be said also, *amplius*. He must take a larger view of the subjects which come under his notice, and of the principles of the profession which he criticises. *Fault-finding* is a very narrow notion of the function of the critic. Where are the critics who have been the first to discover great painters? Echo answers *where?* Literature might become

very helpful to Art in these days were there less conceit in its votaries. But we are not in a hurry. The time will come."

Mac was frequently interrupted during the delivery of his onslaught upon the critics; but the remarks interjected tended only to give point to his views. From criticism, the talk drifted to the essentials of Art. The conventionalism of the day came in for condemnation, and he came down hard upon those people who consider story-telling pictures as the correct thing. "Painters of these," he told us, "were not true artists. Most people cannot look upon a picture, as a picture, unless there is some story which it is supposed to tell. Real art must be independent of such clap-trap. It appeals to the artistic sense, without confounding it with emotions—such as devotion, or pity, or love,

and such like. You find, in the Academy, any amount of this conventional stuff, which passes muster as good painting. Such men may well be termed the commercial travellers of Art, whose wares are the works they produce to sell, and not to educate and enlighten the public mind. The doctor," he went on to say, "maintains that an artist is an imitator; but I beg to differ from that opinion entirely. I agree with what Mr Whistler says, in *The World* :—' The imitator is a poor kind of creature. If the man who paints only the tree, or flower, or other surface he sees before him were an artist, the king of artists would be the photographer. It is for the artist to do something beyond this: in portrait painting, to put on canvas something more than the face the model wears for that one day; to paint the man, in short, as well as his features;

in arrangement of colours, to treat a flower as his key, not as his model.'"

"True," said Mortimer, "mere imitation is not Art; but some of the impressionists produce pictures fearfully and wonderfully made. A few members of the New English Art Club, and one or two Glasgow men, have certainly ceased to be conventional; but then they have become absurd. Their mannerisms are too pronounced."

"Of course," continued Mac, "you will always have some artists who may be carried away with the tendency of new ideas. Mr Walter Sickert, for instance, makes people consider him a producer of guys, an opinion about which I do not care to say anything. Henry and Hornel, among the West of Scotland men, are more decorators than painters. The predominant feature about their work may be, as many say, a tendency to colour

effects, such as you find in Japanese art. I do not pass judgment upon such artists, but time will settle their respective claims."

"For my part," said I, "I think that, in their efforts after true impressionist effects, they appear to step beyond the limits of true Art and enter the confines of burlesque. They have caught the best elements of the French *Salon*, and succeeded so far; but they have failed in their efforts after the decorative, by imitating too closely the schemes of colour and arrangement shown in Japanese art. I have no doubt, if they are wise, time will cure them of their eccentricities, and age will sober their youthful exaggerations."

"It is easy to act the critic," remarked Mac; "and you fellows should make due allowance for the good attempts made to elevate British Art. With Decamps, 'I like to

see painting young, vigorous and healthy ;' and that is what one may honestly say of the methods of the younger Scottish painters. No doubt, it is, to a certain extent, experimental ; but these men have set themselves to paint, not pot-boilers, but what they believe to be the best artistic work they can possibly produce."

"There is one thing," broke in the doctor, "about you younger men, which seems strange. You paint to please yourselves and not the public. Don't you think that you ought to educate the public taste by the fruits of your brush ?"

"A true artist must paint what he believes in his soul to be the true impression which Nature leaves there. When he ceases to do that he ceases to be true to his Art, and becomes a seeker of cheap popularity. An uneducated eye can no more appreciate

a true painter than an uneducated ear can be expected to appreciate a musician. The public can appreciate a story-telling picture ; but pure Art is about as much beyond them as pure mathematics."

"That's all very well," replied the doctor, "but if artists are to depend upon patronage they must paint what will suit the tastes of the patrons."

"That," said Mac, "is the degradation of art. Many artists, or so-called artists, do so ; but he who feels his work, and gives of his best in the service of Art, will not permit such unworthy motives to influence him. He will rather starve. Of course, the *blasé pococurante*, who patronises Art by making a speculation in old masters, is ready to discover geniuses after they are dead, or when their pictures are rising in the market. But 'Art,' as Mr Whistler tells us

in his *Ten O'Clock*' (which you will pardon me reading to you), 'is a goddess of dainty thought, reticent of habit, abjuring all obtrusiveness, purposing in no way to better others. She is withal selfishly occupied with her own perfection only, having no desire to teach, seeking and finding the beautiful in all conditions, and in all times. As did her high priest, Rembrandt, as did Tintoret and Paul Veronese, as did, at the Court of Philip, Velasquez.

"No reformers were these great men, no improvers of the ways of others! Their productions alone were their occupation, and, filled with the poetry of their science, they required not to alter their surroundings; for, as the laws of their Art were revealed to them, they saw, in the development of their work, that real beauty which to them was as much a certainty and triumph

as is to the astronomer the verification of the result foreseen with the light given to him alone. In all this their world was completely severed from that of their fellow-creatures, with whom sentiment is mistaken for poetry, for whom there is no perfect work that shall be explained by the benefit conferred upon themselves. That is a true estimate of our position."

"Yes," said Mortimer, "I grant you there is a ring of scorn for ordinary mortals in this statement of Whistler. But, my dear Mac, you artists must be as consistent as the writer of the *Ten O'Clock*. The public are no more fit to appreciate art than a trout the pleasure of angling."

"Well, for my own part, I do not wish to see the idea carried to its only logical conclusion. I think, however, that in the course of time many, who at present can-

not understand real Art, will come to recognise what is truly valuable. You must surround the public with an artistic environment. At present it is not so. Our very furniture is ugly."

"Just so," replied Mortimer; "the artist is more to blame for the decadence of Art than the public."

"I think we've had enough of Art," I broke in, "and it would be wise to let the matter rest. We can't agree, that's plain; so let us agree to differ."

"Very well, Jack," replied Mortimer, the discussion has not been useless. I shall take a fresher interest in things artistic after this."

"I don't want to prolong the sitting," said Mac, "but you will, perhaps, allow me to wind up the case by calling in the aid of a poet whom Mortimer says he admires. Browning puts it thus:—

'For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted—things we've passed
Perhaps a hundred times, nor cared to see,
And so they are better painted.'

"Good night, all," shouted the doctor at the door, "I really feel quite muddled over this Art business. But I mean to stick to medicine."

"I think you'd better," was Mac's parting shot, and we adjourned to bed.

CHAPTER XIII.

Mac loses his Ladylove—Jack and the Doctor have an Adventure—They get stranded—In a Gale—What's to be done—A Disaster—Safe at Last—The Farmer enlarges—Jottings of his Talk—Trow tak' Thee—Widder-Shins—How Magnus Mouat paid the Penalty—He is rescued—Tumuli—Fairies—How to cure Toothache—The Wrestin' Thread—The Gloups of Stanger Head—The Doctor draws the Long Bow—A Glorious View—Sea Birds—Mac chaffs the Doctor—Leaving Longhope—Letters—Bazely's Friend—To the South.

THE pleasant summer days sped on apace. We all enjoyed the sea excursions and became fairly good boatmen. We learned to manipulate the sails to the satisfaction of our old friend, who initiated us into all the mysteries of deep sea and in-shore

fishing. It was a merry time. Mrs Byrom and her charming daughter had left their summer quarters and returned South. Mac was absent for some days, seeing them so far upon their journey. He accompanied the ladies to Kirkwall, and said his fond adieus upon the deck of a south-going steamer. On his return he stood our chaff remarkably well, and never got out of temper, although it was sometimes put to a severe test. He told us that he had arranged to join the ladies in London at the beginning of the autumn, when, as he hinted, an interesting event would occur. One day towards the end of our sojourn the doctor and I had an adventure which nearly deprived the world of his professional skill and of my attempts at history.

We set out together to sail from Longhope to St Margaret's Hope in South

Ronaldsbay. The outward voyage was successfully accomplished, and we spent an exceedingly pleasant afternoon with some student friends at Roeberry. By the time we prepared to return, a change took place in the atmospheric conditions, and the sky became overcast and threatening. A stiff breeze began to blow, and our friends hinted that the sooner we got our sea trip over the better. They did not like the look of the weather. We hurried to the beach and got into our little craft. The tide was well out, rendering it necessary to haul the boat down the shore to deep water. When the sail was successfully hoisted, the doctor took the helm and I sat amidships to hold the sheets and keep a look-out. We had not gone more than a few hundred yards when our craft grazed a sunken reef, and with a sudden lurch be-

came fast. The mainsail was immediately lowered, each seized an oar and did his best to shove the boat off the rock. But it would not do. She was quite fast, and merely heeled over from one side to the other. We worked away for a quarter of an hour with no result, and had just to sit down and meditate. The wind had freshened, and the sea was getting choppy. There was no help for it but to wait a little as patiently as we could until the tide flowed enough to float us into deeper water. After half an hour's meditation we made another attempt, and sailed out to sea. Neither of us knew of the sunk reef, which only became dangerous to small boats at very low tides. We had lost time, however, by our mishap, and felt that the turn of the tide meant a very bad passage between Hoxa and Stanger Head. The sea

between these two points is a dangerous one at certain conditions of tide and wind, and we would have it at its worst. With full sail we sped along, shipping a bad sea now and then, which necessitated the frequent use of the bailer. By-and-by the wind blew half a gale, and a heavy rain began to fall. The evening was coming on and things did not look very lively. Indeed, they were getting too lively for us. The doctor steered his best, and manœuvred so as to avoid shipping seas as much as he could. It was no easy task. At last he said, "You must reef; this can't last. We are sure to be swamped if we don't." But how to take in reefs in such a sea and with a strong gale blowing was a puzzle. I lowered the mainsail and allowed the boat to scud away with the foresail. As quickly as I could I got in the reefs and

hoisted again. But at this moment an unlucky accident happened. The wooden handle of the rudder broke, to the great consternation of the steersman. This complicated matters a good deal, and our little vessel almost became unmanageable. But the doctor held on by the small piece left, and did his best to steer us into safety. It now became clear that we could not get back to Longhope that night. The nearest port was Kirk Bay, in the island of Flotta. The boat's head was turned in that direction, and in half-an-hour we grounded at the quay. We never stepped ashore more thankfully than we did that night. Wet and cold and miserable, we were both glad to get into shelter. Fortunately the farmer at the "Bu," whom we both knew well, was at the jetty, and on his hospitable invitation we made for his house, where we

changed our wet garments for some of his. If the change did not add to the elegance of our attire it certainly added to our comfort. A high tea cheered us up somewhat, and the story of our adventure was told.

“ Well, boys,” said our host, “ ye had a bad time o’t. I ken hoo dangerous that string o’ tide is oot by Hoxa, even to guid boatmen. It wad be your boat that ‘Talk-in’ Sam’ saw frae his door. That’s a name he’s got, ‘Talkin’ Sam,’ because he’s aye blethering aboot things. I met Sam coming doon the hill frae the rocks, and he telt me a boat had gaen doon a peerie while sin’. He thocht the craft wis lost. That wad be the time ye lowered the sail to reef. He saw the sail disappear and fancied yer boat wis swamped. Ay, boys, yer better here than at the bottom o’ Hoxa.”

We agreed with the old fellow that it

was certainly more comfortable to be sitting by his cheery fire than getting knocked about amongst the fishes in Hoxa Sound. Having lit our pipes, we made ourselves at home, and listened to many curious tales which our host told of fishermen, smugglers and fairy lore. He was a most entertaining talker. On looking over my note-book jottings of that evening talk, I find some items of information of a rather curious and interesting kind. I venture to reproduce a few of these for the benefit of the general reader. I do so for the reason that this old-world lore is fast passing away, and soon few traces of such primitive habits and notions will survive the advancing tide of a superficial civilisation. He explained that the exclamation, "Trow tak' thee," which the doctor had heard our irate housewife utter more than once to her refractory children,

was a survival of the old belief in fairies and trows, who, at one time, were believed to haunt the islands. The people, like all fishing populations, were tinged with superstition. Its hold upon them, however, was gradually growing less, and the younger folk began to laugh at the stories which their parents sometimes told round the ingle on winter nights. But there was one custom still observed faithfully by most of the boatmen. They were very careful not to turn their boats *widder-shins*, or against the sun, at the beginning of an excursion. If any unlucky fisherman did so he would certainly fare badly at the fishing and return home a sadder, if not a wiser man. Such was the result to Magnus Mouat. He forgot some of his fishing gear and had to return to the house again—an unlucky thing to do. But worse followed. On

arriving at the noust (quay) he found himself amongst the last to start for the fishing ground, and in his hurry turned his boat *widder-shins*. Malcolm Flett, who saw him start, shook his head gravely at the circumstance, and muttered to a neighbouring crofter that "Magnus wad hae nae luck dis day. Da auld chield, maun ha'e got had o' the boy." Before Magnus, who had made such an unpromising beginning, reached the cod bank the sprit of his sail broke, and he had to get along as best he could with his jib and foresail. By this time he was much out of temper, and grumbled at everything in general. His bait can had been nearly knocked overboard in his scramble to save the broken sprit, and at least half of his cockles and limpets were lost. The cod were not taking well. His bait would not stay on the

hooks, and all his good luck seemed to have left him. At last Magnus resolved to return home in disgust. He could not make out what was the matter at all. On rounding a rocky headland, some distance from the jetty, he struck a hidden rock and stove in the side of his boat. The sea rushed in at an appalling rate, and the poor fisherman thought he was bound for the bottom. He managed, however, to get into a *geo*,¹ where he got ashore. The rocks were too steep to climb, and there was no outlet except by the water. That exit was closed to him owing to the knocked-in condition of his boat. What was to be done? He must wait as patiently as he could for the returning fishermen, some of whom would pass his way. After a few hours' weary waiting

¹ Narrow creek.

he espied one of the little fleet, and summoned the men to his rescue. When the tale of his misfortunes was told to the crowd of fishermen on the beach, Malcolm Flett said, "Ay, boys, Magnus cud ha'e nae luck dis day. He turned his boat *widder-shins* at the noust, an' ye a' ken that a man nicht as weel gae fishin' wi' da black tief as dae that." It was unanimously agreed that the day's misfortunes were all due to this untoward incident.

The *tunuli* which existed in the island were considered by some of the old folk as fairy knolls, in which brownies dwelt, and from which they issued forth under cover of night to milk the crofters' cows, or to commit some depredation upon an unfriendly fisherman. Even sea-trows had sometimes been seen. On such occasions the fishermen who saw them would have

little luck. But these sea-trows, as they were superstitiously called, were nothing else than the innocent porpoises or pelacks. Naturally enough the schools of cod and haddock were disturbed by such tumbling intruders, and the fisherman's take consequently reduced.

Our host had quite a fund of information about charms and peculiar cures, which were much sought after by people of a superstitious turn of mind. One charm was said to be an effective cure for the toothache. As this is a common complaint, I venture to give the cure here gratis. If it proves successful there must be something in it after all. But the patient requires to have implicit faith in the charm before he can hope for any benefit. It runs thus :—

“ A Finn came owre fra Noraway,
Fir to put toothache away.
Oot o' da flesh an' oot o' da bane,
Oot o' da sinew an' oot o' da skane,

Oot o' da skane an' into da stane,
An' dere may du remain !
And dere may du remain !
And dere may du remain ! ”

These words must be repeated by the suffering party. Another prevailing cure for sprains was the use of the *Wrestin' Thread*. I believe a few Orcadians still use this method of curing a sprain. It is a novel charm. The patient required to tie nine knots upon a thread of black worsted which was wound round the injured limb, muttering during the process the words—

“ The Lord rade,
And the foal slade ;
He lighted,
And he righted.
Set joint to joint,
Bone to bone,
Sinew to sinew,
Heal in the Holy Ghost's name ! ”¹

¹ See *Rambles in the Far North*, 2nd ed., p. 212. (London : A. Gardner, 1884.)

Bedtime came, and we all turned in. Early next morning Mortimer and the young medical arrived in a state of anxiety regarding our safety. A report had reached them shortly before they left that a boat had gone down in Hoxa Sound, and, of course, they were in a condition of uncertainty as to whether the doctor and I were not perhaps of the unhappy party. As it was, we were all glad enough to meet under happier auspices.

A visit to the Gloups of Stanger Head was suggested, and we set out to see one of the sights of Flotta. These gloups are immense caverns, worn out by the action of the sea, which run underground for a hundred yards or more, and open with a crater-like mouth in the surface above. As the spectator looks down, he beholds the moving waters dark and dismal washing

against the worn sides of the subterraneous vault. The depth of the sides of the ghouls is close on a hundred feet, and would be a dangerous spot to venture near in a dark night. Away down the rugged rocks tiny ferns peeped out, and waved their fronds as if in invitation to the spectators to come and pluck them from their hiding-places. We, however, valued our lives too highly to make the attempt, and amused ourselves by casting large stones into the deep water down below. We wandered out to the edge of this prominent headland, and made ourselves comfortable upon the green sward overlooking the now placid Sound, in which we had the adventurous voyage of the previous evening. The doctor gave a graphic picture of our plight in mid-sea, and drew upon his lively imagination for most of the details. Mortimer listened

somewhat incredulously to the tale; but the young Medical openly laughed the description to scorn, and related adventures of his own as stirring and wonderful. We could well afford to laugh now that the danger was past, and I suggested that Mac should be commissioned to paint a picture of the scene, with the doctor crouched up in the stern of the boat wildly crying for assistance. The attractive seascape drew our thoughts from such pleasantries, and a discussion arose upon the beauties of such scenery. It was indeed a glorious view. The North Sea stretched southwards between the bare green islands, until it died away in the distance beyond the Pentland Skerries and the sandy shore of John O'Groat's House. The little isles of Swona and Stroma stood out boldly in the glassy sea, and the Atlantic steamers crept slowly

eastwards, fighting bravely against the adverse tide which raced through the Pentland Firth. The almost cloudless sky lent its intense blue colouring to the water, and the rippling wavelets glistened and sparkled in the brilliant sunshine. The southern precipitous cliff of Switha seemed alive with its thousands of sea-birds as they circled round the sharp rocks, and skimmed the surface of the seething sea below. According to the doctor, among these birds were numberless gullimots or *Tysties*, puffins or *Tammy Nories*, teal, shieldrake and mallard ducks, scaup ducks, the red-breasted merganser, the red-throated diver; innumerable gulls and kittiwakes, the skua and Manx shearwater or *Lyre*. Now and then a stormy petrel would sweep along the water and disappear. As we chatted of birds and their habits, the doctor aired

his knowledge of ornithology, which was certainly extensive. Speaking of the bernicle geese, which are abundant in the islands, he related the old superstition that the bernicle was hatched out of barnacle shells. These geese come about the end of harvest, and disappear by the beginning of spring. An old writer speaks of these fowl being hatched out of trees. Butler, in *Hudibras*, has a confused reference to the barnacle-shell theory—

“ As barnacle turns soland geese
In the islands of the Orcades.”

We were informed that grouse disease has never been known in Orkney. The birds are lighter in colour than those commonly met with on Scottish moors, and seem to grow larger. There were large numbers of rock pigeons haunting the caves round about Stanger Head, and the doctor said he had

often got fair sport amongst them, shooting a good many each time he went out. But it required exceptional skill to make a good bag. The sportsman fired from his boat at the mouth of one of the caves, and it needed a sharp eye to do execution, as the birds flew out of the dark recesses at enormous speed. It is quite a different thing from shooting them from a trap. By the time the bird lecture was ended we had returned to the shore, and got on board to sail for Longhope.

We made a fast run over to Longhope, and entertained Mac with a revised version of our adventures. He chaffed the doctor by saying that the folks were wondering if they would have to advertise for another medical officer. We were to leave for Stromness next day, and had enough to do between making farewell calls and packing

up. We had become acquainted with so many kind friends, that we all found it not altogether a pleasant matter to bid the warm-hearted people good-bye. But it had to be done. Our friend, Tainsh said he would miss our cheering company ; but hoped to come across some of us again in Edinburgh, to which city he returned later in the season. The minister and his family parted from us with regret, and many promises to keep up the friendship so pleasantly begun. At Stromness we met a few mutual acquaintances on their way north to Shetland. Among the letters awaiting us I found one from Mrs Spence, the American widow, intimating her engagement to Mr Dowell, and inviting the three of us to the wedding in September. The event was to take place in Edinburgh. Mortimer remarked that, as far as he knew, the American ladies excelled

at coming quickly to the point on any matter, matrimony especially. On consultation we found it very probable, that our engagements would enable us to be in "Auld Reekie" at the time, and acceptances were immediately posted.

On the way to Kirkwall we passed a night at the manse of Bazely's friend, and found him busy with a *magnum opus* on Biblicial criticism. It was afterwards published anonymously; but we were glad to find one of the Scottish Universities wise enough to confer an honorary degree upon him as an acknowledgement of his deep scholarship. In his case it was a well deserved compliment. He had held a Kennicott Scholarship when at Oxford, and kept up his Hebrew by daily reading. It was his custom always at prayers to read the Old and New Testament from the original, translat-

ing as he read. At Kirkwall we were joined by the doctor, who had come to town to see a patient sent south to the Edinburgh Infirmary. He told us that in a month or so, he would quit Orkney for a practice he had purchased in Stirlingshire. We agreed to look him up there upon the first opportunity. With his merry laugh ringing in our ears, we steamed away from Orcadia's capital to the south.

CHAPTER XIV.

Salmon Fishing—A Fascinating Pursuit—Jack catches his First Salmon—An Exciting Moment—Sensations -- Duffers — An Angling Duffer's Wail — Peter o' the Ponds—John Bright—Leech—Traherne—When to strike—Flies—A Good Bite—A Quick Despatch—The Otter—Jack—A Cunning Lure—Salmon in the Sulks—The Fish I caught.

FROM Aberdeen we trained to Stanley Junction. This was the most convenient station to Sir John Mallet's fishing water on the Tay. Comfortable rooms were provided for us near the river, and we settled down for a fortnight's most enjoyable salmon fishing.

Every angler knows how fascinating the pursuit of the salmon becomes to lovers

of the rod. The sport grew upon us daily. Mortimer was a keen and skilled disciple of old Isaac Walton, but Mac and I were far behind, *longo intervallo*. These two weeks enabled us, however, to make considerable progress. It was a totally different experience from the more prosaic sea-fishing, which took up our wandering attention in the north. The autumn was just beginning to steal across the land, imprinting its changing colour upon the forest trees. The golden grain was ready for the sickle, and the retreating summer lingered on its western march. The rushing of the river lulled us asleep at night, and soothed us in the day-time. The artist talked of the striking features of the landscape, and kept his sketch-book ever ready to note the changing effects of wood and stream, of cloud and hill. The wood-fringed banks of deep rolling Tay

were a welcome change after the treeless islands of the North Sea. The dreamy idleness of that summer time turned into lively days of energetic labour as we whipped the water from early morn to dewy eve, and chased with youthful ardour the wily fish that took our flies.

Nearly two miles of the river were at our disposal. A boat, manned by two fishermen, was provided for trolling the pools. Mortimer preferred to fish the streams, into which he waded manfully with his eighteen-foot rod. His luck was generally better than ours in the boat, although some days we had excellent sport. The catching of my first fish was an experience to be remembered. The boat was gliding gently over a part of the river called the "Cat Holes," when the rod at my right hand gave a sudden bend as the reel whirled.

"You've got him," shouted one of the rowers; "keep him ticht."

I instantly lifted the rod, and allowed the line to run slowly out. The salmon seemed game for a race. The boatmen skilfully kept in the wake of the startled fish. Across stream he rushed at full speed, then suddenly slacked. I reeled in the silken line, and waited the next move. Up against the current went my prize, and out sped the quivering line once more. Back and forth we followed in pursuit. At last he stopped in a deep pool and sulked. The line tightened, and we drew nearer his hiding-place, but no movement was made. Birr went my reel again, and off went the fish at a furious rate. This time he came nearer the bank. The boat was speedily pulled ashore, and out I stepped to play the fellow from the land. By this time I was

quite excited, but, following the hints of the old fisherman, I kept my rod well up and the line as tight as I reasonably could. That he would require some play soon became evident. Out and in he sped as I kept moving up and down the bank. Once he set off at a great pace, and, finding the line taut, gave a leap out of the water, showing himself a fine clean fish. The hook held, and, as the gut was strong, I felt he was safe. By degrees I worked him to the side, and one of the boatmen prepared to gaff him as he ran under the bank. The cleek was almost touching when off he set again, and some more minutes were passed in manœuvring him towards the side. Once more he swam obediently to the shortening line, and we saw his glittering belly as he neared a rock. Down went the gaff, and up went the fish out of the water and on

to the grass. He was a splendid fellow, and turned the scale at twenty-six pounds. Mac congratulated me upon my success, and for the remainder of the day I felt that I really had distinguished myself. The sensations one feels when hooking a strong salmon are more easily imagined than described. There seems to be an electric current running up the line from the fish to the angler, who experiences the joy of capture, and dreads the possibility of loss from the weak hold of the hook or imperfect gut. All the time needed to play the wily salmon, one realises how keen and intense the excitement is. One's nerves quiver in unison with the motion of the spinning reel, the sound of which is sweet music to the ear of the true angler. Skill and care and patience are required in the management of a lively salmon, which loves liberty and gives his

captor all the trouble he can before the final surrender is made, as he

“Seeks the furthest ooze, the sheltering weed,
The cavern bank, his old secure abode :
And flies aloft, and flounces round the pool,
Indignant of the guile.”

Some days we lost more fish than we caught, and of course blamed the tackle. Mac and I once or twice cracked off our hooks when fishing from the bank. We were not perfect casters, and so had to gain our knowledge by the usual experience, which teaches wise men as well as fools. Mortimer knew his ground better, and won the admiration of our boatmen, who knew a good angler from a duffer. I am afraid at that time I was very much of the duffer. Now and then an overhanging bush intercepted my cast ere it reached the stream, and much valuable time and temper were thereby lost.

But if there is one virtue which an angler learns, I think it is patience. Veracity is somehow not in it. Angling does not really tend to untruthfulness, but it stimulates the imagination. Thus so many anglers are poets. Even Mac was tempted to tread the flowery vale of poesy as he sometimes sat upon the river bank sketching instead of fishing. When tired of the brush, he took up the pencil and scribbled his thoughts about his friends and their engrossing pastime. One effusion deserves to be chronicled, and I abstract it from the portfolio with many apologies—not for the verse, but for the act.

AN ANGLING DUFFER'S WAIL.

If trout would only take my flies
I'd linger by the stream all day,
But sometimes I get not a "rise"
To keep my pecker up, and pay
For wandering under stormy skies,
If trout would only take *my* flies.

But no. They let them all float past,
And take the real ones, till at last
I utter words so quaint and rare
That e'en the very fishes stare ;
Of course, I'd not speak in this wise
If trout would only take my flies.

Our head boatman was named Peter. Locally, he was better known as "Peter o' the Ponds." He resided on the other side of the river at the Stormont fish ponds, where the salmon ova came to maturity, and young fry were reared. Peter was a stout, old fellow, bluff and hearty. He was full of angling lore, and with many a humorous story regaled our ears during that fishing time. His life had been spent beside the banks of Tay, and his occupation had always been the same. In his time he had come into contact with many anglers. Mr John Bright, John Leech, of *Punch*, Major Traherne, and a host of other men

well known in the angling world, had laughed at his wit, and enjoyed his story-telling powers. Mac delighted to draw him out, and all of us agreed that our lunch hour would have been dull without his garrulous talk.

In return for our tips, he gave us many a tip on how to hold the rod and work a fish.

“You see,” he would say, “it’ll no dae to be rash when ye hook a beastie in the current. Ye maun keep the p’int o’ the rod low, wi’ the line straicht oot. Whan the salmon rises to the flee, ‘strike’ gently. Raising the p’int o’ yer rod will often be eneugh. If ye strike ower sudden, ye’ll vary likely break a’ yer tackle or pu’ the flee oot o’ the fish’s teeth. Whiles ye’ll ‘shy’ the fish and mak’ him sulk for the rest o’ the day, but if yu’re fishing i’

slow water and a blawin' wind that bags yer line, ye'll need to strike him firm and sharp. Salmon are awfu' cunning. I've seen ane, whan the hook touched its mooth, soom richt on to the fisher and sae lat the hook drop frae his mooth afore there was time to mak' him fast. Ye canna be ower cautious at sic times."

What a knowledge Peter had of flies! His talk sometimes was rather confusing to a duffer like me.

"Ye'd better try a 'Jock Scott,' sir,'" he would remark, "or maybe a 'silver doctor.'"

One local favourite was the "Back of Benchill," which did good execution. Others were the "Yellow Wasp," "Black Dog," *et hoc genus omne*. Once or twice we tried the phantom minnow or spoon with dubious success. After the first

few days, I felt my arms and back ache from the use of the rod in casting ; but as Mac and I stuck to the boat, Mortimer got the most of that exercise. His long, strong arms seemed of iron, and he would wade in the streams as if there was nothing more enjoyable in life. A number of the villagers came down in the evening to try their luck, and never seemed to think that they were poaching. We did not mind, and Peter told us it was little use trying to keep them off the water. Most of them said they were only fishing for trout. But a good salmon or grilse never came amiss to their baskets.

One evening Mortimer told us he had a good laugh above Thistle Brig. He was in mid-stream and overheard a brief conversation between two worthies fishing for trout on either side of the pool below. A smothered

yell made him turn round, when he heard the man on the right bank cry out,—

“I say, man, hae ye got a bite yet?”

To which the other replied,—

“Ay, I hae got a bite; but it was frae the keeper’s dug.”

When the story was told to Peter, he related another, which he himself had heard not long before. I give it as told that day.

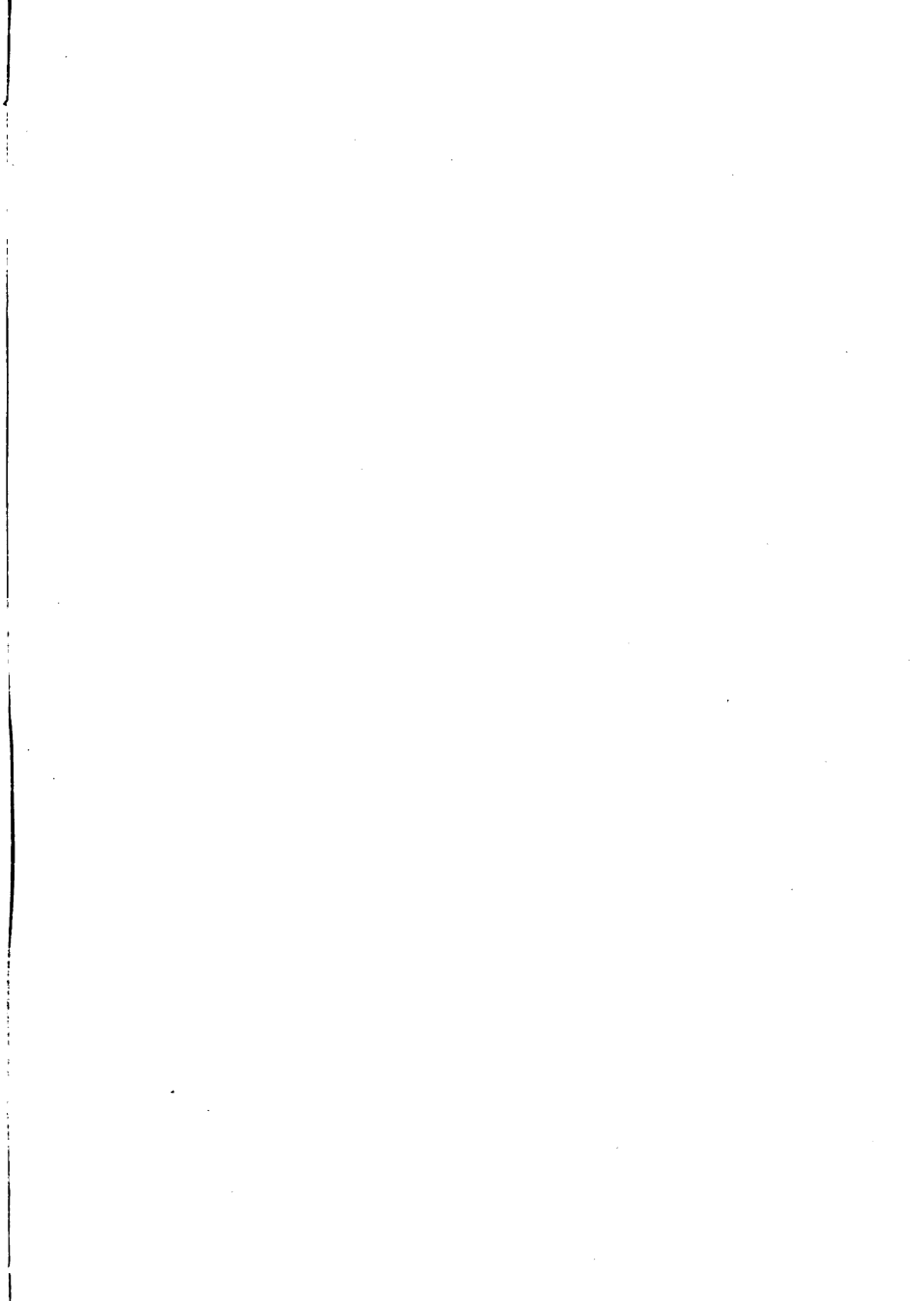
“Weel, gentlemen, twa o’ the Stanley billies gae’d aff a’e mornin’ to fish in a loch no’ very far frae Blairgowrie, but they hadna made mair than twa or three casts when they were turned awa.

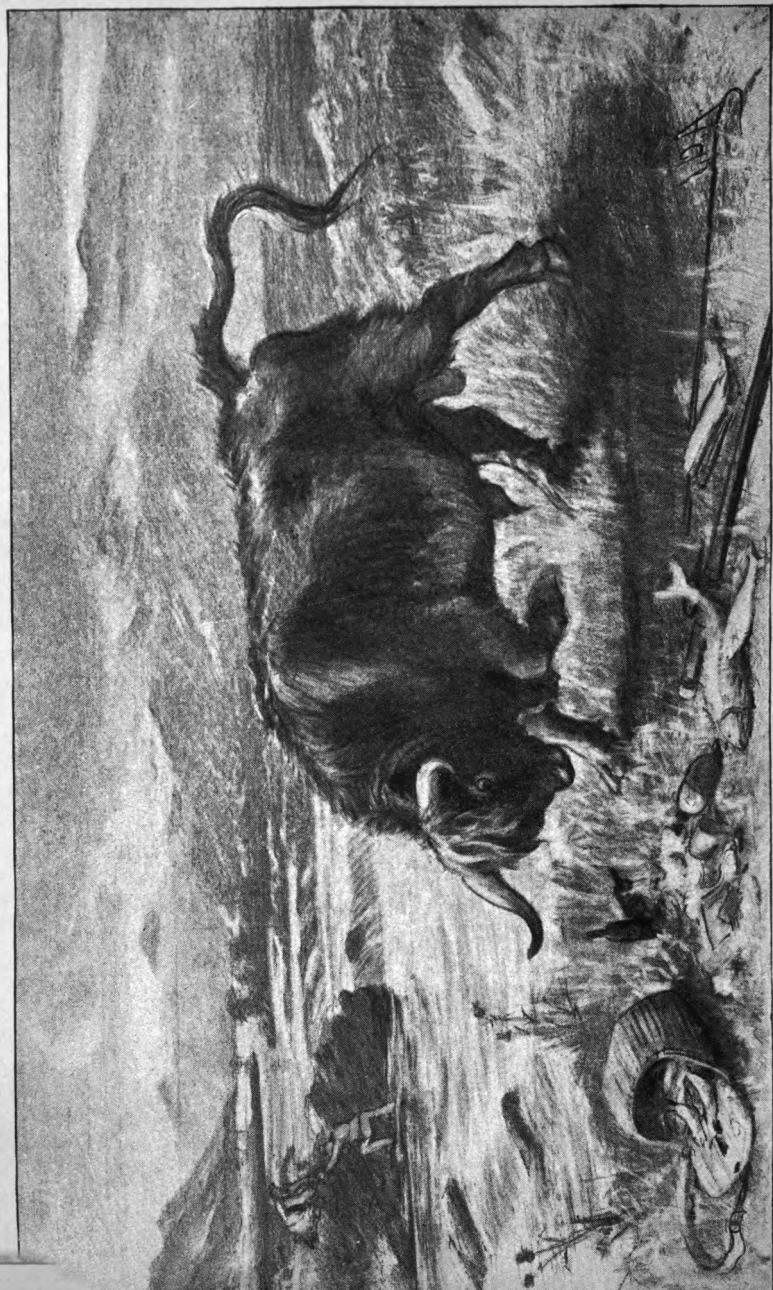
“‘Wis it a keeper that pit ye aff?’ I asked them.

“‘Ay; it wis a keeper—a new ane.’

“‘An’ what did he say?’

“‘Never a word—just mairched round the loch an’ drave everyane afore ’im.’





“THE NEW KEEPER.”

“ ‘ But didn’t ye ask him for his authority ? ’

“ ‘ No, faith, there wis nae mistakin’ his authority ; ye could see it in his look, an’ especially in his lang shairp-pointed horns. I can tell ye we didna stand to argy-bargy wi’ him. It wis a wild, black, Hielant bull.”

We came across a wonderful specimen of the wandering angler, who was familiarly known as “ the Otter.” He resembled that animal, I suppose, from the marked success he had in catching salmon, and from living most of the year by the river side. He was a born poacher. No one excelled or equalled him in the busking of flies. He was expert at hook-dressing, and made his own tackle. His somewhat ragged figure was a picturesque object which Mac one day transferred to canvas, unknown to the unconscious model. “ The Otter ” was very reticent, however, regarding the results of his pis-

catorial ventures, but he haunted the river night and day. His bed was often made beneath a furze bush or spreading willow, from which he would rise in the grey morning to try his luck, long before ordinary anglers were out of bed. This queer old fellow was a true child of Nature. When others failed to get a "rise," he would succeed in landing a grilse or sea-trout. Mac chummed on to him and drew many a droll story from his lips. In the evening light, as we smoked and chatted over the experiences of the day, the artist would put us into fits of laughter, as he related, with due embellishments, the tales he had succeeded in worming out of the old fisherman. Our friend Peter told us he had known "the Otter" for many years, and testified to his wonderful skill and luck. He lived, when at home, somewhere near Perth, but in

autumn days his home was by the rushing stream.

Another angling worthy was Jeek, baptised John. Like "the Otter," he was a nondescript character, full of wit and impudence. We only came across him twice; but Peter told a good story about his inventiveness. The version according to Jeek was as follows:—

"I was fishin' a'e day doon by the pool ca'd 'Spruntie,' when I noticed a gentleman tryin' his best to cast his flee ower the tap o' a big salmon that was jumpin' maist awfu'. It's a bad sign, ye ken, whin the fish jump sae muckle oot o' the water. Weel, as I wis sayin', the gentleman wis dae'n' his level best to hook that fish, but he couldna' dae't. Sae I reeled up my line and daunder'd awa' doon beside him. I noticed that the fish was jumpin' at wee specks o' thistle-down that floated on the

tap o' the water. This made me think a bit. Sae I thocht what I cud dae to get that fine fish. Efter a wee, I ran doon to Pate Deuchars' hoose and catched ane o' his hens—a white ane it wis. Weel, I pu'd oot o' it's wing a fine downy feather, and sat down to busk my hook. I wisna lang aboot that job, I can tell ye. When I wis dune, I cam' awa' back, and resolved to try my luck wi' the beastie. I cast my line gey far oot in the stream, and worked it gently ower the place whar the fish wis lyin'; and—wad ye believ't—up he jumped, and whir gaed my reel. The salmon was hooked—ay, it was weel hooked, I can tell ye. Sae I worked him up and doon the water till he got gey sair forfouchten, and in a wee I had him on the bank. He wis a braw beast—mair than twenty-aucht pun' gin he were an unce. There's naething like buskin' yer

flees to suit the occasion. But he *was* a grand fish!"

Jeek's stories were not always credited, and I am afraid he had himself to thank for it. But, then, all anglers are believed to indulge in exaggeration now and then. It is astonishing how a fish, especially if lost off the hook, grows in size and weight the oftener the exploit is told. The biggest fish is invariably lost. I know that such was the case with Mac and me. We were positive that the biggest fish landed by Mortimer was nothing compared to some that managed to elude us when fishing from the boat. I had a forty-pounder hooked one day, but the monster got into a deep pool and sulked, winding the line round a piece of rock. The result was, that when the line did come away it was minus the hook and part of the cast. It made me

mad to think how near I was of capping Mortimer's catch of a thirty-six pounder, only to receive nothing but chaff. He enjoyed crowing over us two. I hope it did him good. Mac and I got used to it, and did not mind; at least it does not disturb us now. Mortimer added insult to injury when he recited one evening, in a pathetic voice, *à la* Austin Dobson, this rondeau:—

THE FISH I CAUGHT.

The fish I caught were big and rare,
Their like no other angler got,
Though day by day he madly sought
To find them, if he could, somewhere.

So very large and fine they were,
I do not know you could have bought
The fish I caught.

And yet I doubt if it be fair—
I somehow think that it is not—
That you should go and claim the lot,
And utter with a solemn air,—
“The fish *I* caught!”

I think it was a spirit of mischief which made Mortimer pen such rhymes. Of course, I could excuse Mac's attempts in the same line; he was dreaming of love and pretty Fanny Byrom. That explained the number of studies he produced of that fascinating young lady's face. No doubt the frequent letters from London fed his fancy. But in spite of quips and cranks and witty sallies, we spent a pleasant time, and were loath to leave the romantic banks of Tay for more prosaic scenes. The time of journeying approached, however, and we said good-bye to old Peter and the other acquaintances we had made during our brief stay in Perthshire. The sport we had was really good, and most of the time the river had been in excellent ply. We were considered fortunate in weather and in "takes," and certainly had no reason to complain. As I

look back upon those fishing days, I seem to hear the swish of the line as it drops into the stream; the whir of the reel buzzes in my ear; and the shout of Peter makes me start up in my chair. As I sit thinking of it all, the cheering sounds mingle with the murmur of the flowing water, and gently die away.

CHAPTER XV.

*Dowell before his Wedding—The Happy Morning
—Princes Street—Mac discourses on Streets
—The Verdict—The Wedding—The Missing
Ring—Is there to be a Hitch—All's Well that
ends Well—The Ring found—The Bride-
groom's Speech—The Wellington Boot—The
Trip North comes to an End.*

THE evening before Mr Dowell's wedding I joined Mortimer at his hotel in Princes Street. Mac had not yet arrived in Edinburgh, but we expected him to turn up early next morning. He had gone to Glasgow after leaving the Tay, and no doubt amused the frequenters of the Art Club with his yarns. Old Dowell looked uncommonly well. He entertained us very hand-

somely, and spoke in the highest terms of the American who had become his enslaver.

"Where are you going to live after the happy event?" inquired Mortimer.

"Oh, our first trip is across the herring pond, as folk say. We are gaun to see the States a bit, and maist likely we'll bide a year or twa in America. Ye see, I aye had a notion to find oot a' I could about the way the Americans manage their business, and get ahead at sic a rate."

"You could not have a better guide than your wife to be," said I.

"That's true. She's got a fine gift o' the gab; and that's what a woman's nane the war o'. She kens mair than maist leddies I ha'e met, and we'll get on fine."

He was certainly pleased with himself, and with his choice, and neither of us had

the heart to interject any of those cynical remarks which young men and bachelors are so fond of throwing at the heads of their marrying friends. It would have been too bad of us ; so we refrained.

The happy morning dawned. It was a lovely September day. The gardens looked sweet and restful ; the old castle stood out against the clear sky, and the romantic city basked in the warm sunshine. The grey, old town, with its lofty houses jutting out irregularly, looked, in smoky gloom, across the intervening railway and gardens at the more pretentious new town, with its wider streets and gayer crescents. Princes Street formed an unsurpassed promenade—the loveliest and most romantic in the world. As Mortimer and I passed along under the shelter of the trees we were joined by Mac, who had just arrived from the west. Arm-

in-arm the three of us walked along the south side of the famous street, and talked of former times and future prospects. As we neared the Mound, Mac became extremely eulogistic over the many beauties of the street.

“Don’t you think Union Street, Aberdeen, is as good?” asked Mortimer,

“Come now,” said Mac, “Union Street is not bad. Indeed, it is a very fine street, with its sombre granite houses, but nobody who has seen the cities of Europe would compare it to this on which we walk. I don’t praise this Princes Street of ours from mere patriotic feeling, but from its exceptional charm in an artistic sense. If you look at the question from an architectural point of view, there are, perhaps, no other streets in the world comparable to the Avenue de l’Opera, Rue Rivoli, or Champs Elysées in

Paris; Regent Street or Thames Embankment, in London; or Unter den Linden in Berlin; but here you have something which excels them all—a street with fine stone buildings upon the one side, overlooking beautiful gardens on the other, with here and there those classic monuments which add to the completeness of the whole; and then, above all, the castle towers, a watcher over the valley which divides the Edinburgh of yesterday from the Edinburgh of to-day.”

“But,” I suggested, “what do you say to Broadway, New York: I am told it is a splendid street?”

“Oh, as regards Broadway, there are a few good buildings, such as the Equitable, Union Trust, and some others; but there is no harmony. Broadway is a jumble of all kinds of unharmonious buildings. The fault

of American cities, from an artistic point of view, is that the streets and avenues cross each other at right angles. There are no terraces or crescents, nor such lovely villa residences and gardens as you see in British cities. No, I don't think you will get an impartial judge to deny the superiority of our Princes Street over any other street in the world." We all agreed, and turned in to our hotel to prepare for the approaching event.

The wedding took place, as the general custom is in Scotland, in the house of a friend of the bride at Drummond Place. The party was small and select. A few gentlemen, friends of the bridegroom, two or three ladies, and we three made up the company. On the arrival of the clergyman everything was in readiness. A young American girl was the only bridesmaid, and

a nephew of Mr Dowell performed the duties of groomsman. As we all stood round the drawing-room, I thought it looked a little like a business meeting; but, by-and-by, things grew livelier, and more in accordance with the circumstances. The ceremony began. When the minister asked for the ring, the bridegroom searched his vest pockets with an anxious air. He searched diligently, but found nothing. A hasty glance was cast across the room, and we knew the wedding ring had been lost. The nearest rug was turned up, but no ring appeared. The scene was beginning to assume a ludicrous aspect, when the groomsman quickly removed a ring from one of his fingers and handed it over. It did duty for the missing jewel, and the ceremony came to an end. The usual congratulations and kisses followed, and a general conversation began.

"I canna mak' oot what's come ower the ring," said Mr Dowell. "I had it in my hand since I cam' to the hoose; but it seems gaen noo."

"It's perhaps on the floor," suggested one of the ladies. A search over the carpet was duly made, but unsuccessfully.

"I was beginning to feel gey queer," continued the newly-married bridegroom, "and thocht mysel' unco stupid; but Frank, here," pointing to his nephew, "got me oot o' the difficulty very neatly. He's a lang-headed chap is Frank. If ony o' you leddies want a guid man, keep your eyes on Frank."

The new Mrs Dowell beamed graciously upon her husband, and told him it did not matter. It was a little variety in the proceedings, and she, for one, was well pleased. Mac happened to move the edge of the

fender and discovered the lost ring lying at his feet. Mrs Dowell snatched it up, and, with a merry laugh, ran to her husband, exclaiming,—

“Dear hubby, here it is! You must put it on now, and kiss me after.”

The old fellow did as he was bid, but with a slightly shamefaced air. He did not altogether like to be so gushing, he remarked to me afterwards, before so many spectators.

“I’m Scotch, ye see,” he said, “and no juist into her American weys yet. But she’s a fine woman, I can tell ye.”

After that we were a lively party, and kept the fun going with spirit. At the luncheon a few speeches were made in honour of the principal parties. Mortimer, in a neat oration, proposed the health and happiness of the wedded pair, to

which the bridegroom replied in this strain :—

“ My freends, I’m richt glad this day to see ye here, and I thank ye a’ for your kind and hearty good wishes for my wife and myself. Nae doot I’ve been a lang time o’ entering into the happy state o’ matrimony. It needed a leddy frae ower the water to bring me to my duty, and, alang wi’ her, I’m ready to sail to the United States. That’s no joke, mind ye. We’re juist about to start across the Atlantic, and I feel kind o’ solemn. Nae doot, had I no been mairied I’d hae been mair solemn. But I wish ye a’ weel, and hope tae meet ye some ither day. Mrs Dowell and I will aye be glad to see our freends, and mony o’ them. Ladies and gentlemen, I thank ye kindly.” The other toasts were given in humorous vein, and the feast passed off to the satisfaction of all.

When the carriage drove away, there were showers of rice and old shoes sent flying after the happy pair. Mac and Mortimer managed to tie an old wellington boot to the axle of the hind wheels with a long cord. As the horses galloped down the street, the old wellington bumped and leapt into the air, to the great delight of the street urchins, who are always ready to scent a marriage. It disappeared round a corner, and we saw Mr and Mrs Dowell no more for some years. The pleasant meeting amid the Orkneys had ended happily, and none of us regretted the result.

In a few days, Mac set out with some artist friends to spend a few months in the east; Mortimer returned to his law studies, and I went south to visit friends in London. Tainsh had been appointed to a lovely country parish in the Midlands, and our old

friend the doctor had begun practice in Stirlingshire. We arranged to meet again next summer at Mortimer's chambers. Our holiday was over, and, somewhat reluctantly, we said "good-bye."

CHAPTER XVI.

*Mac and Tainsh compare Notes with Mortimer—
What came over Jack—He turns Journalist—
Jack's Letter from Leipzig—The Voyage—He
describes Leipzig—Die Messe—Kleine Paris
—The University—The Rosenthal—Weather
Changes — Professors — Jack's Letter from
London—The Winter of his Discontent—A
mere Anatomy—A Bread-and-Butter Eldor-
ado — Mortimer and Tainsh dispute—Mac
remonstrates—Gathered Threads.*

THE reader of the foregoing chapters may be interested enough to follow one step further the fortunes of the *companions de voyage*. If not, he need hardly read further. But a few last words may be added. In the winter of the following year, immediately after the opening of the Royal Scottish

Academy, Mac and Tainsh met to spend an evening with Mortimer at his rooms in Great King Street. There had recently been an election of Associates to the Academy, and Mac found himself elected an A. R. S. A. The honour was well merited, and he ceased to rail so much against the fossils of the Academy. An effectual method had been adopted of shutting his mouth. The prospect of a new charter enabled him to explain his new position with becoming grace.

The only one whose absence was really felt was Jack. He was in London endeavouring to make his way in the world of literature as will by-and-by appear. Mortimer gave his two friends a hearty welcome, and entertained them in his usual handsome style. After dinner they smoked their cigars, and talked of the old days when

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pluck."

they so merrily enjoyed that trip north. The conversation turned on Jack's prospects in book-land.

"I rather regret this move of his," said Tainsh, "I really thought he would stick to theology, and amuse himself with literature in a *dilettante* fashion. But he means to give free scope to his ambition."

"There's no fear of Jack," remarked Mac, "he knows what he's about. I saw him in London on my return from the East, and he was more hopeful than he had been for some time."

"When he went to Leipzig I fancied he still meant the Church," broke in Mortimer, "but his views appeared to himself to be too broad for the orthodox ministry, and he did a very straightforward thing in following his own bent. I like his pluck."

"Have you any of the letters he wrote you from Germany?" asked Tainsh.

"I believe I have. Wait a minute and I'll see. Yes. Here are two of his early ones, which I shall read. After them I'll read you one from London, which will explain to a certain extent the turn of affairs. The first Leipzig epistle was written in May:—

"As an apology for my last letter I promised to write you as soon as I got settled down.

"I left Scotland on Wednesday, April 28th, and arrived in Hamburg after a sail of forty-three hours. I met Tainsh in Edinburgh, and he remained on board the *Breslau* till they weighed anchor.

"There had been a heavy gale the day before, and though this in time sank into a stiff breeze, a heavy sea was running

during the entire voyage. I stood the passage well: all the other passengers were dreadfully sick.

“There were two Glasgow students on board. They were first-class honours men; but were wretched muffs, and had suffered severely during the voyage. They were going to Braunschweig, but the three of us spent a night in Hamburg, staying in the same hotel. I did not do justice to the great Frei-stadt, which is in some respects the most interesting city in Germany; but I hope to satisfy myself on my way home.

“You are aware that Leipzig is in Königreich Sachsen, a province on the very boarders of Austria; but perhaps you would not expect that the railway journey from Hamburg to it should have taken me from 4.30 on Saturday to past 4 on the next

Sunday morning. It was indeed horribly wearying—far more so than the passage from Leith to Hamburg, though that indeed was slow enough and utterly devoid of interest, and though

‘Evermore most weary seemed the sea,
Weary the oar.’

“I had great difficulty in finding lodgings in Leipzig, and in the end had to board. You may think that rather strange in a city whose population is now over 160,000 inhabitants; but it turned out that the celebrated fairs, called ‘Die Messe,’ had just begun. I had hoped to escape this rabble, but it turned out that this year it was postponed owing to the lateness of Easter. During the Messe the city is full of Russian and Austrian Jews, who sell articles of a more multifarious character even than old John A’thing himself—furs, dishes,

ornaments, brushes, sponges, toys, books, clothes, leather, sticks, flowers, fruit, and I don't know what not. They say it is something to have seen the Messe, but it is as disagreeable as it is interesting. The town has more people than it can hold, the streets are crowded with pickpockets, and the hotels charge double.

“Leipzig is a very beautiful city, though its environs are flat, and not interesting. It is called ‘Kleine Paris,’ as it is all built of white stone, and its fine gardens, its sumptuous *cafés*, and its grand promenade remind the traveller of the great French metropolis. But the most interesting, wonderful, and attractive feature in the neighbourhood is the lovely ‘Rosenthal.’ This is a wood of considerable size. A pretty little river runs through it, and the trees, which have here all their leaves on,

grow to a great height, while the nightingale and other song-birds fill the air with music. In the evening the footpaths, which are wide and very well kept, are crowded with people walking, driving, riding, and bicycling.

“The university is, of course, very great. That of Edinburgh would appear quite small beside it. The number of students must be immense, as I have seen a matriculation card over 3800. It is considered in some respects the foremost seat of learning in Europe. I have not counted the number of professors yet, but there must be hundreds. There are more than twenty in theology alone, and that is the smallest of the six faculties.

“I was in time to matriculate among the first, and what an amount of ceremony I had to go through. Tainsh told me to take

my M.A. diploma, and this they kept till I leave. Where are you going to spend your holidays this year? Not north again? What a trip that was! If you bend your romantic steps in this direction, you would find it well worthy of a visit. I am in rather a rum squad at present. There are five of us. Two of the number are Greeks, one is an American, another a German, who is the only extra-mural member of the company. Frau and Fräulein R. dine with us, and only German is spoken. I have as yet been unable to find a single compatriot, and consequently feel a little lonely. I thirst and pant as the hart for Scotch news, so you must please write and tell me all about Mac and Tainsh and the others.

“I am just now busy with the *Bucolics*, though I’ve read them more than once

before. I become more and more enchanted day by day, and when I walk in the Rosenthal, I hear the 'woods re-echo for Amaryllis.' Yet the time seems long. I expect, however, to be home in August. I still hesitate about taking my trials before the Presbytery: I am between two opinions. The Church on the one hand claims my heart, while on the other the fair nymph of literature beckons me away. At any rate, let me hear from you. I may at times appear absent and forgetful, but I can hardly walk a step without sad remembrance of Longhope, and old Dowell, and that memorable scene at Drummond Place, and I sigh as I say that

'The tender grace of a day that is dead
Will NEVER come back to me.'

"That's Jack's first letter. I shall read another written about the end of June."

Mac and Tainsh smoked on while Mortimer read.

"I need not say I was very glad to get your kind letter the other day, though it arrived somewhat later than I expected. You must understand I feel very dull here, and I have no mercy on my correspondents, however busy they may be. So far as I can discover, I am the only British student here this session. Americans are numerous, but you know they are not my stamp. I had one friend from the Far West, but, alas, he is stricken down with a sore disease. He has been ill all this month, and still lies in bed.

"The climate is very trying. A week ago we had 26° (Réaumur), and I had to sit without a jacket, and with my shirt sleeves tucked up, close by an open window: now I can hardly sleep for cold. We have plenty of thunder and sudden showers.

“I like all my professors. They appear to be men of enormous ability. After all, there is not so much difference between the college life abroad and that at home. Better order I think is preserved here than there used to be in Edinburgh, though it is fair to say that in the ‘Modern Athens’ the classes are larger, also the students here, as a whole, are much older. No roll is ever called, and there are no exams. for class honours.

“I don’t at all go in with the German student society. Their mode of beer drinking is simply bestial. In this they are encouraged by the professors, one of whom presides over their gatherings. They are also much coarser and shabbier in appearance than the British students, and I must say that if they are—as they are commonly said to be—above us in learning, they

certainly don't look like it. It looks strange to a son of Great Britain to see a soldier in full uniform listening to Delitzsch lecturing on the unity of Isaiah. That celebrated Biblical critic is now old and infirm. He is of very short stature, and his voice is scarcely audible. Luthardt—also well known in England—is as tall as you, and in style and appearance resembles the U.P. Principal Cairns. Here he is regarded as the foremost living preacher. Schmidt is a young man of great classical culture, and is highly popular here. Loofs, a still younger man, is rapidly rising to the front rank amongst German church historians. Lechler, whose book on English Deism I read in Edinburgh, also lectures here, but he is now superannuated. I have not his class.

“Well, you see I have got enough to do, considering the little rest I got at the end

of last session. I still, you will be glad to hear, keep the Sunday in the Scotch fashion. In fact, the German manner of holding the Day of Rest has almost converted me to worship John Bunyan. I go to the Episcopal church in the morning, and to the Yankee meeting in the evening. There is no Scotch church here, so I must do the next best thing.

“Do write, for goodness’ sake. I always prized your letters and doubly now, when I get so few. I don’t know what has come over Tainsh. But you were ever a faithful correspondent, so have pity on the lonely emigrant.”

“I never knew so much before about Leipzig,” remarked Tainsh. “Jack is rather hard on me. I only got one or two letters from him, and was so busy with my parish work that I must confess to have delayed unduly my replies.”

"I've often thought of paying a visit to that part of the Fatherland," said Mac, "and hope some day to persuade Jack to act the guide. He would do it well."

"However," said Mortimer, "many things have happened since then. Here is the London letter. You will notice a change of style as well as a change of prospects. He writes from Oxford:—

"Thank you very much, my dear fellow, for your very welcome note. I did not need to have my memory freshened, for I had not forgotten my promises to yourself and to others, but I was none the less glad to hear from you. What I needed, and what I still need, is a little quiet, both in mind and circumstances, in which to send you something a little better worth your reading than the crude, undigested, inorganic, and otherwise indescribably abominable scrawl with which I

must ask you to put up for the present. You say you have been wondering and imagining what your old friend was doing in these pleasant summer days. 'May I perish, and be sawn asunder, and be cut up into yoke-straps'—as I think Aristophanes hath it somewhere—if I know what I have been doing myself. I did not know it was summer till you reminded me, being just now in the winter of my discontent. With me it has been a very old story, and such for the present it seems likely to remain. After turning over matters for the last four years, I came to the conclusion that I could not enter the orthodox ministry without a much greater compromise than I could conscientiously make. And so I have been in London—the new Jerusalem or new Babylon, which you please—on the look out for work. So far with no result, except empty promises and very real rebuffs, and but for my

friends I should have had to live on Chameleon's food—light and air. There your letter reached me, but I was not able to answer it, as I should have liked, on the spot. Now, however, I am back in Oxford, under my own vine and fig tree once more, heartily weary of vain seeking, and with that unwritten page before me, whose distressing blankness one does not know how to fill up. Apart from this I am pretty much as I was—working still in a dead-alive sort of way, but feeling older and harder than of yore. Carking care has eaten into my ribs and left me a mere anatomy, at whose gauntness

Attenuation's utmost stretch
In wonder dies away.

My hair is thinner than of old, and if this goes on much longer there will not be a lock left for the deftest handed little burglar to pick at. *Query*—What is the

feminine diminutive of burglar? One needs the genius of a Christopher de Gamon, who starting with Espingle, manages to get out of it Espinglette, Espinglelette, and finally a veritable Liliputian among diminutives,—

ESPINGLETELETTE.

This is a digression, but I am in no mood for narrational continuity. You will guess how sorely pushed I have been when I tell you that I have scarcely written half-a-dozen verses since leaving Leipzig. I am in search at present of a bread-and-butter Eldorado—that other one of my dreams is a city of the sea, that only now and again revisits the glimpses of the moon, like that legendary city near the cliffs of Moher, on which, if a man could but keep his eyes fixed, it would abide above the waters in all its splendour. But I am the prey just

now to innumerable littlenesses that eat up my time like worms, and can only send you this scrap to assure you of my remembrance and regard. If I am slow in writing it is not that I have a short memory where my friends are concerned. I have got to find my life-work, and am not a little bewildered in the search for it; it is this which fetters my hands and rusts my pen."

"There you have the makings of the journalist," said Mac. "Jack has got pluck and talent, and I believe he will do good work in journalism."

"I shall always regret that he did not see his way to go into the Church," replied Tainsh.

"Would you have had him swallow his scruples," returned Mac, "and lower himself in his own esteem?"

"No, no, I don't mean that; but, to my

mind, Jack always appeared to be cut out for a preacher. He would have made his personality felt in ecclesiastical affairs. It is our loss that he is not with us."

"Ah, well," said Mortimer, "what is the Church's loss will be the world's gain. Jack will now preach more effectively through the press to a larger audience than he could ever have done from the pulpit. I really think the clerical atmosphere would have stifled him, or at least narrowed his wide sympathies."

"Come now, Mortimer," said Tainsh, "you must not fancy that there are no broad, tolerant minds in the Church of to-day. The Church of Scotland has room for all. She is a democratic and truly sympathetic institution. Her sons find an ample field for diversity of gifts."

"Now, you two mustn't begin an argu-

ment," remonstrated Mac. "We all know that the press wields a benign power in these times, and, next to your own, I know no profession, my dear Tainsh, which is nobler than that of the true journalist. Of course I do not speak of the mission of the artist. He touches a smaller crowd than the literary man. It would never do if we all sailed in the same boat. I see in the development of our old chum's mind the idea which Browning gave utterance to shortly before he died. Jack is like

'One who never turned his back but marched
breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted,
wrong would triumph,
Held, we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep, to wake.'

"That is so," said Mortimer. "He is now making some headway and enjoys his

work. His heart is in it, which is the great thing. You will be sure to see him, Mac, when you go south. Your marriage to Miss Fanny takes place next month, doesn't it?"

"Yes. You know it was put off for a year owing to the death of Mrs Byrom's father. I hope you two will be able to come and give me your countenance."

"You may depend on us," replied Tainsh. "Mortimer and I are anxious to pick up a few hints. We shall see how the Londoners do it."

"It's too bad of you," said Mortimer. "First old Dowell went wrong and is still mooning about in America; then Mac goes and follows suit; and I hear of rumours about Tainsh here. Really, what shall I do in my bachelor abode? I suppose a poor soul like me will hardly ever see your faces."

“Won’t you, just?” said Mac. “It strikes me you’ll soon get over your absurd ideas about being a misogynist.”

“Ah, my dear boys, time will tell.”

And it did. Mortimer was duly called to the Bar, obtained many briefs, and married. Jack is now the editor of a clever literary journal, which is growing in influence. Tainsh is an extremely popular parish minister, and the doctor lives not far from his manse. When the old friends meet, as they occasionally do, the talk is sure to come round to the many lively incidents of that trip north.

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