

## CHAP. VI.

## DUNAVERTY AND ITS TRADITIONS.

Dunaverty Castle. — Robert Bruce. — Southend. — The Piper of Keill. — Isle of Sanda. — The Rock of Blood. — The Massacre of Dunaverty — Traditions concerning it. — The Covenanter Chaplain. — Preservation of the Infant Macdonald. — Argyll hangs his Brother-in-Law. — Story of Macdonald and the Irish Princess. — The last Macdonald and the Lord Lieutenant. — How Callum cheated the Evil Eye. — How the Clan Callum cemented their Friendship.

BUT Dunaverty, which is close at hand, is crowded with memories of the lordly days of Cantire. Here was the Macdonald's Castle, where (as we saw in the last chapter) Bruce came, on his way from Saddell Castle. Here he lay safely hid for some days, his enemies imagining that he had fled to Ireland.\* He did, in fact, go from Dunaverty to the Isle of Rathlin, distant about twenty miles, where, at the place now called "Bruce Castle," he remained in concealment for some time. On the Isle of Sanda, three miles from the mainland, and opposite to Dunaverty, there is a hill still known by the name of "Prince Edward's Hill." The only prince of

\* See Barbour's "Life of Bruce."

that name connected with the history of Scotland, is the brother of Robert Bruce, and the tradition is, that he was placed there to give timely notice to the king of the approach of danger.

A few remains of Dunaverty Castle are yet visible, on a rocky promontory, having a precipitous sea-wall, and only to be approached from the mainland by a narrow isthmus. From this point to Kilcolmkill, the land recedes in a rocky semicircle, forming the Bay of Dunaverty, in which vessels can find a safe harbour from northerly and westerly gales. Seals are often seen basking on the rocks in this bay. It is little more than a mile distant from the pretty village of Southend, which can boast of two churches, and where the tourist will find an inn, and "good accommodation for man and beast." The glen scenery between this point and Dunaverty is very picturesque; the streams abound in salmon and trout; and the heath-covered hills are well stocked with game. Thriving plantations and shrubberies add to the beauty of the scenery. A good road passes through the village from Campbelton, and, approaching the Bay of Dunaverty, passes Keill House (lately tenanted by Lord St. John), and is continued to Carskay, where more salmon fishing is to be met with. There is also abundant sea-fishing (of haddocks, whiting, mackarel, salmon, &c.) off this part of the coast, which is not the case at the Mull of Cantire, where the per-

petual conflict of the tides apparently puts the fish to the rout. The birds are consequently not so numerous at the Mull as at Dunaverty, as they naturally prefer to lodge where their food is most easily attainable. There used to be a ferry-boat from this spot to Ballycastle, in Ireland, twenty-three miles distant; and if a pier or small quay were constructed here, it would be of great advantage to the district.

There are many large caves on this part of the coast, the most considerable one being at Keill. This cave, now used as a cattle-fold, was long the resort of smugglers, and was said to possess a subterranean passage extending six miles from the mouth of the cave to the Hill of Killellan. Perhaps this tradition is but another version of the following popular story regarding the cave at Keill: the cave was said to be haunted, and whoever should dare to penetrate beyond a certain distance in it would never live to return. (A convenient invention, doubtless, of the smugglers for the protection of their hidden property.) A piper, however, made up his mind to explore the inmost recesses of the cave; and, accompanied by his little terrier dog, set forth on his expedition to the interior, while his friends watched and listened at the cavern's mouth. The piper went in boldly, blowing his pipes till the cave re-echoed. He was sooner lost to sight than to sound, and his friends heard his shrill music gradually becoming fainter and

fainter, until all at once, when, as they supposed, he had passed the fatal boundary, his pipes were heard to give an unearthly and tremendous skirl, while a yeldritch laugh resounded through the cave. The little terrier dog presently came running out of the cavern, but without his skin! In process of time he obtained a fresh skin, but *he was never heard to bark again!* As for the piper, what was his fate can only be a matter for conjecture; but he is supposed to have stumbled on the subterranean passage; for, about five miles from the cavern, there is a farm-house, and underneath its hearthstone, the piper has often been heard playing his favourite tune, and stopping occasionally to ejaculate,

“I doubt, I doubt,  
I’ll ne’er win out!”

Opposite to Dunaverty Bay, and about three miles from the mainland, is the Isle of Sanda, famed as having been the place for the rendezvous of the Danish fleets, in their predatory excursions to the Scottish coast, and, from this circumstance, it is often called by the surrounding people by a Gaelic name signifying “The Danes’ Gathering.”\* The remains of an old

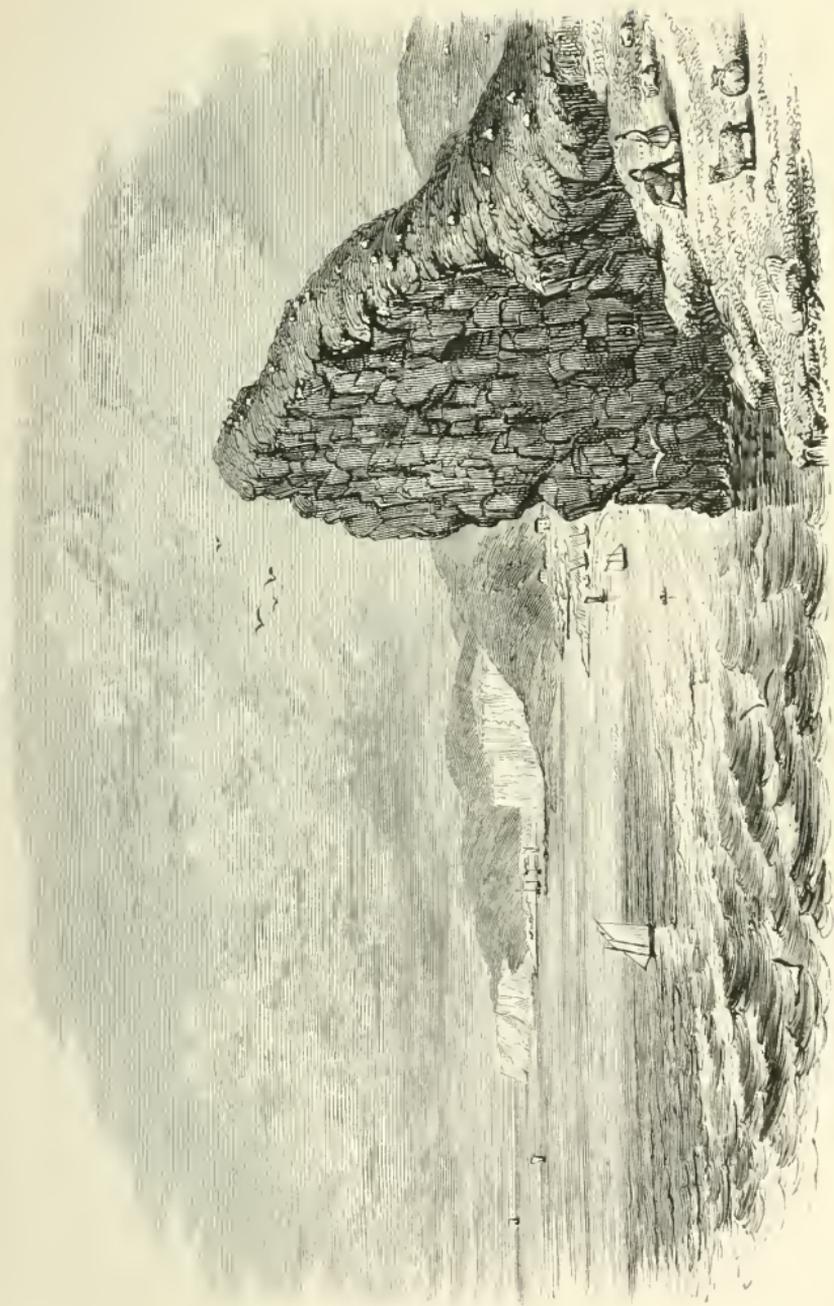
\* *Avona Porticosa*, or *Avoyrn*, “the island of harbours;” from the Danish *Hafn*, “a haven.” See Macculloch’s “Highlands,” vol. ii. p. 68; see also Pennant (“Hebrides,” p. 192), quoting from Buchanan

church are to be seen on the island; and there is also a modern summer residence for the proprietor. Two other islands, Sheep Island, and Glunamar, lie close to the north of Sanda, together with several rocks, one of which, called Paterson's Rock, to the E. S. E. of Sanda, one-sixth of a mile in circumference, and only visible at spring-tides, has been the scene, and the cause, of many shipwrecks. This group of islands and rocks, girdled by white lines of breakers, makes a very pleasing object in the seaward view, as we stand on Dunaverty Point; and beyond them we see Ailsa Craig rising from the waves, more like a cyclopean work of art, than a freak of nature — with the southern shore of Arran, and the Ayrshire hills in the dim distance.

It is but a narrow point of rock on which we are standing, rising from the mainland by a natural staircase up to this height, on which the old castle once stood, and terminating on its three other sides in a giddy precipice. There are sheep creeping up to the very toppling edge, to browse on the short thymy grass; the curlews fly around and skim the placid sea for food; the sails of the little fleet of fishing-boats in the Bay hang listlessly on the masts; the ships go sailing slowly on, their broad sails gleaming white as the sea-gulls'

and the Dean of the Isles. Fordun mentions the church as being the chapel of St. Annian, and a refuge for criminals. Sanda is the more ancient name, as appears from Adamnan's "Life of St. Columba."

wings against the cloudless sky; the heaven is blue above us, and all is hot and still, save the soothing plashing of the breakers, the scream of the curlews, and the sheep's ceaseless cropping of the sweet grass:—all speaks of peaceful quietude; and, as we lie like the lazy shepherd, and with supine face fall into a pleasant day-dream with one of the old castle's stones for a pillow, we can scarcely imagine that Dunaverty Point has ever been witness to scenes more stirring than those that, with half-shut eyes, we now dreamily look upon. But, where you come upon the track of a Lord of the Isles, you may feel pretty sure that you are upon the footsteps of war and violence; and, as Dunaverty Castle was one of the great strongholds of the Macdonalds, who were Lords of the Isles, and Lords of Cantire, we may be very certain that this rocky promontory formed no exception to the non-peaceful rule. If I were to tell its tale with anything like completeness, or even with moderate fulness, I should have to devote a long chapter to this special purpose. But, as my reader will doubtless have something better wherewith to occupy his time, than to lounge with me, lazy-shepherd-like, on this summit of Dunaverty Point, and listen to its history and legends, with the pleasant accompaniments of a glorious summer's day, sea air, wave murmurings, curlew cries, and sheep bleatings, I will not bore him with lengthy details, but merely indicate



DUNAVERTY, CANTIRE.



a few salient points in the castle's history, which I trust will be sufficiently interesting to prevent my reader from receiving the legends in the shape of soporifics, which might prove fatal to him, and roll him from off his thymy promontory, down to those jagged rocks, far, far below us, where the treacherous sea is smiling for its victim.

This rock of Dunaverty, peaceful as it now seems to us, was so named because it was "the Rock of Blood."\* Its best-remembered baptism of blood occurred in the year 1647, during the Charles-the-First war between the Royalists and Covenanters. The Marquis of Argyll was of the latter party, and Montrose of the former. Sir Alexander Macdonald, of Dunaverty, known by the name of Allister, the son of Coll Kittach, "the left-handed," sided with Montrose; and having ravaged Cantire, and given many of its inhabitants to the sword, and their houses to the flames, was at length defeated by Argyll, and one of his generals (Leslie), and driven back to Dunaverty. There he placed 300 of his men, and leaving them under the command of his brother, Archibald Oig Macdonald, of Sanda, sailed to Ireland

\* *Dunamortaich*, in Gaelic. There is, however, some uncertainty as to the derivation. *Dunamhortaemh* is also given, which means "The Rock of the Bay of the Great Swell;" the south and east winds blowing in here with great fury. Pennant does not make any mention of Dunaverty. Lord Teignmouth gives a brief account of it, under the name of Dcunaverdich.

with the remainder of his force, with the intention of endeavouring to raise an army there, and, with their aid, return and relieve the castle, and retrieve his disasters. Whilst the men were launching the boats upon the beach, Macdonald held his last council in Cantire, on the sands of the sea-shore beneath the fortress. Soon after he had sailed to Ireland (where he was killed in a battle with the Earl of Carlingford), General Leslie arrived with 3000 men before Dunaverty, and laid siege to the castle. During the month of June several desperate assaults were made upon the fortress, but were repelled with great loss to the assailants. The place was impregnable, and the Royalists, having plenty of provisions, might have stood out for a year against any force; but, unfortunately for them, about the middle of July, it was discovered by the besiegers that the water was supplied to the garrison by means of pipes connected with a spring without the walls. These were speedily destroyed, and every effort of the Royalists to supply themselves from a small stream at the base of the rock was unsuccessful. Sir James Turner, who, after the Restoration, became a Royalist, but who was then acting as Adjutant-General of Argyll's army, has left a record of this siege of Dunaverty, and thus describes the country through which I hope shortly to conduct the reader. He says, "From Inverary we marched to Kintyre, which is a

peninsula. Both before and at the entry to it, there were such advantages of ground, that our foot, for mountains and marshes, could never have drawn up one hundred in a body, nor our horse above three in a breast, which, if Sir Allister had prepossessed with those thousand or twelve hundred brave foot that he had with him, I think he might have ruined us, at least we should not have entered Kintyre (but by a miracle); but he was ordained for destruction, for, by a speedy march, we made ourselves masters of these difficult passes, and got into a plain country, where no sooner he saw our horse advance, but with little or no fighting he retired; and if the Lieutenant-General had been with him, and have given him a salvo or two, which would have disordered them, I believe none had escaped from our horse. Allister, like a fool, for he was no soldier, though stout enough, put three hundred of his men into a house on the top of a hill called Dunaverty, environed with a stone wall on the one side, and the sea on the other, where there was not one drop of water but what fell from the clouds. . . . We besieged Dunaverty, which kept out well enough till we stormed a trench they had at the foot of the hill, whereby they commanded two stripes of water. This we took, and in the assault, forty of them were put to the edge of the sword." Extreme thirst now raged in the besieged garrison. Every contrivance was made for catching

rain water ; but no rain came, and the July heat made their thirst all the more intolerable. The refreshing sight of the waves washing around their rock, added but tantalising pains to their torture. There was

“Water, water everywhere,  
But not a drop to drink ;”

and when they had held out to the very last extremity, they desired a parley. Sir James Turner was sent to negotiate terms. Alexander Oig Macdonald proposed sundry stipulations, but they were all rejected. At length the garrison was induced to surrender at discretion, or to the mercy of the kingdom. The men delivered up their arms, and were marched out of the garrison on the top of the rock, but were not allowed to pass the walls of the fortification at the foot of it. For five days they were detained prisoners, until at length General Leslie yielded to the counsel that they should be put to death. He seems to have been a nice casuist, for he thought that he kept his word by distinguishing between the discretion of the estates (which was the expression made use of in the treaty) and his own discretion. Foremost among the counsellors for the massacre, was Mr. John Nave, who had been appointed by the Commissioners of the Kirk as the chaplain to the Covenanters' army. He never ceased to tempt the General to the bloodshed, and to threaten

him with the curses that befell Saul for sparing the Amalekites. "Then the prisoners," (says Sir James Turner,) "were put to the sword, every mother's son, except one young man, Mac Koull, whose life I begged, to be sent to France, with one hundred country fellows whom we had smoked out of a cave, as they do foxes, and were given to Captain Campbell, the Chancellor's brother." According to popular tradition, the Covenanters showed great cruelty in their methods of putting the Royalist Macdonalds to death, and threw many of them from the precipice into the sea. Human bones have been found in the sand at the foot of "the Rock of Blood," and a skull, gashed with sabre cuts, was formerly preserved in the fisherman's hut near to the base of the rock, and shown to visitors as the skull of one of the sufferers in the terrible "Massacre of Dunaverty." And, in the year 1822, after an unusually high tide, accompanied with a gale of wind, the sand was drifted from a bank in the farm of Brunerican, which lies in the immediate neighbourhood of Dunaverty, and a perfect charnel-house of human bones became exposed to view.

According to tradition, the young man, Mac Koull, was not the only person saved. It is said, that there was in the garrison a woman named Flora McCambridge, who was nurse to the infant son of Archibald Macdonald. When the massacre commenced, she fled

along the beach, with the naked child in her arms. She was met, and laid hold of by the Captain Campbell (of Craignish) just mentioned. She said that the child was her own, the son of a countryman. "It has the eye of the Macdonald," observed the Captain, "but no matter, it wants clothing." And so saying, he cut off the tail of his belted plaid, and gave it to her for a covering for the child. She fled with it in safety, and concealed herself in a cave in the Mull of Cantire, until the Covenanters' army had left the country. The child who was thus so wonderfully preserved from the massacre, grew up to be Ronald Macdonald, the husband of Anne Stewart, the sister of the first Earl of Bute.\*

General Leslie and the Marquis of Argyll burned Danaverty Castle to the ground, and razed the outworks. They were never afterwards reconstructed, and one of the greatest strongholds of the Lords of the Isles is now only represented by these few scattered foundation-stones on this thymy promontory, where we are lazily lounging on this summer's day, amid the sheep

\* His father and grandfather were buried in the middle of a field on the farm of Machribeg, not far from the shore, together with another chieftain, Macdonald of Largie, as it is said. The graves are marked by three large flagstones sunk deeply in the ground; and remain undisturbed, although the field has been ploughed and regularly worked for more than a century. On this farm of Machribeg are some very good modern farm buildings, erected by the Duke of Argyll. A fine coral is found on the shore (and also at Keill), which is serviceable for manure.

and the sea-gulls, with the fishing-boats below us, and every sea-going vessel looking

“As idle as a painted ship,  
Upon a painted ocean.”

There is the sandy beach, along which the faithful nurse ran with the naked child, and happily encountered that truly Christian gentleman of a Covenanter captain. Here is the precipice, from whose giddy height the miserable prisoners were dashed upon the ragged rocks beneath, and bade to quench their thirst with a draught of sea-water. There, maybe, is the spot where that puritanical preacher (so rightly named a knave), may have stood, and misapplied his fierce denunciatory texts. And here is the spot where the thirsting garrison were forced to capitulate on terms that proved far more cruel than their previous sufferings. All this comes before us like a fevered dream, as we lie here basking in the sun, and the fresh sea-breeze. But they were terrible realities at Dunaverty two centuries ago; and were only surpassed, when, a few years later, the great plague came in its “white cloud” from Ayrshire, and depopulated not this district only, but the whole of Cantire. So completely were the estates of the Marquis of Argyll wasted by this pestilence, and by the scourge of war, that a sum of money was voted by the estates of Parliament for the support of himself and family, and a

collection was ordered throughout all the churches of Scotland for the relief of the people. Lowlanders, who had joined the standard of Argyll, were induced, after the war, to settle in Cantire; and as others came from the opposite mainland, bringing with them their servants and dependents, a considerable part of Cantire, especially around Campbelton, which admitted of being cultivated and ploughed like Ayrshire, was speedily occupied by a thriving colony of pious and industrious inhabitants.

In connection with the massacre of Dunaverty, tradition says, that Alexander Mac Cholla Macdonald was nearing the castle with a small force, in order to assist his clansmen, when the Dunaverty piper, who spied them coming, struck up the air of “Colla nan rùn, seachuinn an Dùn,” which meant, that he was to keep away from Dunaverty. Mac Cholla understood the hint, and profited by it: but the faithful piper was rewarded by having his fingers cut off by his savage conquerors. There is also a family tradition among the Macallisters, that, at the time of the massacre, Glenlussa (which we passed on our way to Campbelton, as we came down Kilbrannan Sound), was possessed by Mr. Hector Macallister, who had married the Marquis of Argyll’s sister. He was rich, not only in land, but in “the sinews of war” — money; and Argyll begged him to espouse his cause. But Macallister refused to fight

against his neighbours, the Macdonalds, who had not done him any harm. Argyll was angry; and Macallister, fearing his wrath, fled with his three sons towards Dunaverty, but was captured near to Campbelton. When his wife heard of this, she rode with great speed, that she might save the lives of her husband and children. Argyll saw his sister coming, and bringing out his brother-in-law and the sons upon the Whinny Hill, told his men to hang them speedily, as he feared his sister would put a stop to their execution. The men asked "Which of them shall we put up first?" and Argyll replied, "The whelps; and afterwards the old fox." The lady reached the hill only in time to find the bodies of her husband and three sons swinging lifeless in the air. She fell upon her knees, and said in Gaelic,

"Mo sheachd mallachd air mo chinneach,  
 Gun iad adhol aon la an sinnead;  
 No gun oighre air an ionn-ogha."

Lord Teignmouth says, that "there are several traditions respecting the massacre" of Dunaverty, and mentions one of them. It is this:—"A fine young highlander sprang from the rock to reach a boat which contained some of the fugitives, when Argyll, compassionating him, interceded with Leslie in his behalf. His name was Stuart; he proved grateful to his protector, and became his first factor; for, by this conquest, Argyll

became possessed of Cantyre, and divided it among the Campbells.”

There is an old legend of Dunaverty, which may here have its place, and which the Cantire Highlanders tell thus :— In times long ago, when there was a great stronghold on this “Rock of Blood,” the Macdonalds were the lords of Dunaverty. One of them was asked over to Ireland, to partake of a feast given by the great king of Ireland, at which all the lesser kings were to be present with their wives and daughters. The daughter of the king of Carrickfergus was to be there, with whom O’Connor, the king of Innisheon, had fallen in love ; but she did not return his love, and her father would not permit him to marry her. This caused O’Connor to use a stratagem to obtain her. He placed his armed followers in ambush at a certain part of the road, where the king of Carrickfergus and his daughter would have to pass in going to the feast ; and when they came, attended only by a few followers, pounced upon them, and after a struggle, in which the king was wounded, made them his prisoners. But O’Connor only wanted the king’s daughter ; so he told his followers to release the king and his men after a short space, until he had time to get away. Then he set the damsel upon his horse, and galloped off with her as fast as he could. It so happened that Macdonald of Dunaverty was coming along the road, in order that he might be at the feast ;

and when he saw O'Connor galloping towards him, with a young girl screaming behind him, he placed himself at a narrow part of the road, and opposed O'Connor's progress, with his drawn sword, commanding him to set the damsel at liberty. O'Connor leaped from his horse, and fell upon Macdonald, and they fought desperately, until the king of Innisheon was slain by the Lord of Dunaverty. Macdonald then mounted O'Connor's horse, set the young lady behind him, and restored her safely to her father. The king was rejoiced to get his daughter back again; and kept Macdonald at his house for some weeks, entertaining him with great kindness. At last, Macdonald was obliged to return. The king thanked him for his services, and promised to grant any favour that he would ask. Macdonald had only one favour to ask; and that was, that the king should give him his daughter in marriage. The king had never thought that Macdonald would have the boldness to ask for his daughter; and instead of granting the favour, and keeping his word, he fell into a violent passion with Macdonald, and threw him into a dungeon. The king's castle was by the sea, on Belfast Lough; and Macdonald's dungeon was near to the shore. The king's daughter had fallen in love with him; and she now found means to requite him, for releasing her from the king of Innisheon. She contrived to get him out of his dungeon, and had a swift

boat and stout men ready for him at the shore ; and, in a few hours, Macdonald was safe at home at Dunaverty. But he could not forget the Irish princess : and, at length, when he could no longer endure to be separated from her, he sailed across to the Irish coast, and made good his landing at Carrickfergus, at dead of night. Now the king had discovered that his daughter had supplied Macdonald with the means of escape ; and to prevent her from following him, he shut her up in a room that was over the precipice. Macdonald contrived to learn where she was imprisoned, and climbed up the precipice to her window. He gave her a signal, which she understood ; she lowered herself into her lover's arms, and he bore her in safety down the rock, and into his vessel, which was soon swiftly sailing back to Dunaverty. Next morning, when the king found that his daughter was gone, he fell into a mighty rage ; and, guessing whither she had betaken herself, he raised an army, and sailed to Dunaverty, with the intent to destroy every Macdonald. But his daughter interfered, and so soothed his mind, that he became reconciled to his son-in-law, and brought him back to Carrickfergus, where he lived long and happily, and where his offspring became kings. The earls of Antrim are said to be descended from these Macdonalds of Dunaverty.

Until the Jurisdiction Act of 1748 took it from them, these chieftains possessed the power over life or death,

and, as a matter of course, thought no small beer of themselves. When the last Macdonald of Dunaverty who possessed this power was invited to an entertainment given by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, he chanced to be amongst the last in coming in, and sat himself down at the foot of the table, near to the door. The Lord Lieutenant spying him there, called to him to come and sit beside him at the head of the table. "What does the Carl say?" asked Macdonald, in Gaelic. It was explained to him that the Lord Lieutenant wished him to move towards the head of the table. "Tell the Carl," was the reply, "that wherever Macdonald sits, *that* is the head of the table!"

In older times than those of the Macdonald, Dunaverty was an important stronghold, for it was the principal fortification of the Danes, on the mainland, on this part of the coast. It was also the place where King Fergus the First landed, to take possession of the Crown of Scotland, and, from its position, it was always considered a fort of considerable strength and importance. Let us now descend from this "Rock of Blood," and dismiss its tragical memories; but, ere we leave the Land's-end of Scotland, let us pause at the pretty village of Southend, a mile on our way towards Campbellton, and refresh ourselves at the inn, while mine host tells us the following story from his budget of traditional lore.

Once upon a time, there was a tenant-farmer of the name of Callum, who lived somewhere up north. He had twelve sons, fine strapping lads, and on a certain New-year's Day they all appeared in their best clothes, at the feast given by the great lord of the place. Now his lady was childless, and when she saw those twelve well-dressed hearty lads, she envied Callum his children. This was a bad thing for poor Callum, for, when once the envious eye had fallen upon his sons, some mischief was sure to follow. And it did; the lads fell sick, and fell away, without having any disease. One after another died, and before New-year's Day had come again, only three of the twelve sons remained. In despair, Callum advised his three surviving sons to leave the place, and go away to some other. They obeyed, and made ready. Each of them took a horse, laden with two creels, in which their luggage was packed. These creels were slung over the horses' backs by *woodies*, or twisted rods, and Callum advised his sons to go straight on until their woodies broke. So the three sons went away together. They had reached Kilmartin, when the woodies on the first horse gave way, and tumbled the creels to the ground. So the first son bade his brothers farewell, and settled at Kilmartin. The other two pursued their journey, and got as far as Clachan before the next pair of creels fell to the ground through the bursting of the woodies. The third brother went

on his solitary way down Cantire, with his face towards the Mull, and when it appeared as though he must march into the sea, if he would obey his father's command, his woodies broke, and he settled at Southend. In this manner it was that Callum cheated the evil eye, and saved the lives of his three sons. They had large families, and in process of time, the clan Callum became numerous and important. The Callums of Southend communicated with those of Clachan, and it was agreed that they should salute their brethren of Kilmartin, to whom a message was sent to that effect, with the proposal to meet them half-way. They met near to Tarbert, but did not know each other. Then they demanded each other's names, but in those days it was considered a sign of cowardice to answer such a question when put in such a manner. So instead of answering each other's question, and saying who they were, they fell fiercely upon each other with their swords, and fought so long and hotly, that the greater part of them were slain. At last, they came to understand the mistake they were making, so those that remained alive shook hands, and expressed their sorrow for what had occurred. Then they buried their dead brethren, and returned to their homes again. And that was the way in which the distant ends of the clan Callum cemented their friendship.