

CHAPTER X

THE GAY ISLE OF BUTE

OUR tenancy of Glenfalloch having come to an end, we made a raid further west, and the shooting of the north end of the Isle of Bute being to let, together with the old Castle of Kames (which had belonged to Robert the Bruce in the twelfth century), my parents went down to inspect it, and took me with them. We put up at Rothesay, three miles off, and drove out one bright February morning, when the Firth of Clyde lay still as a millpond, and the white caps of the Arran hills stood sharply out against a blue sky.

We found an ancient tower, covered with ivy almost up to the battlements, whose romantic outline amply atoned for a certain barrenness of surroundings.

It was weird, it was strange ; it was unlike any other abode we had ever dwelt in. Its stern, storm-beaten aspect might have repelled some people, testifying as it did to the warlike times in which it had been built, and the vicissitudes it had gone through ; but I stole a glance at the faces of my elders and was satisfied. The venerable walls, the tall narrow windows, the simplicity and solidity of the whole, was no less attractive to them than to me, and though my father now and again looked round with a quizzical eye, eventually he decided to sign the usual three years' lease. "If you can stand it, *I don't mind*," he said to my mother ; and as we were assured that divers small matters should be attended

to, and the whole place put into thorough working order before we took up residence there, we went down in June, full of hope and expectation.

Alas! the shock! "The ivy-mantled tower" was no more! In their zeal to do things handsomely for a tenant of sporting fame, the trustees of the then Lord Bute, who was still a minor, had had all the beautiful, leafy covering, the growth of ages, torn up by the roots, and the entire building whitewashed from end to end.

We looked at it in despair. The fine old relic of the past had disappeared; Kames was now a good, habitable, would-be modern dwelling—and only its massive walls and the noble arched roof of its "Baron's Hall" attested to its former grandeur.

It looked smaller too—infinately smaller, when thus perked up, white and new. I felt ashamed of it—I, who had inflamed enthusiasm by my glowing reports. I had now to sustain indignant looks and undisguised scorn: they were sceptical even as to the Bruce,—and I think, I *think*, they asked if there were no traces still to be seen of the historic spider?

Ah, well, we bore up. Although to the imaginative the exterior of the ancient structure was hopelessly despoiled of romance, a flavour of it still lingered within. There were winding stairs, narrow passages, odd nooks, and everywhere the deep-set windows. I hesitate, but I believe some of the tower walls were eight feet thick, and I know that it was dangerous to make any remark not meant for the public ear, until every separate recess in the "Baron's Hall" had been explored.

Once, before we grew cautious, this was most unfortunately brought home to us. We had a guest of whom we were sadly tired, while yet he was not for the world to guess it. He heard, he could not help hearing, a voice demand,

“When *is* he going?”—as, unseen by the new-comer, who paused to emit the ejaculation, he sat reading in the nearest recess. He was not allowed to go the next day—he had too much tact and good breeding to insist upon it; but *he* knew, and *we* knew, and I doubt if either of us ever forgot.

One of the boasted improvements of Kames was the installation of gas; but the gas, which had had to be brought from some little distance, was either indifferently laid on or revolted from its unnatural surroundings. After sundry playful little threatenings, it went out—went “black out,” as the vulgar say—all over the house in the middle of our first dinner-party!

As our youthful landlord, Lord Bute, was present, with whom the responsibility for such behaviour might be supposed to rest, the mishap gave rise to plenty of laughter and badinage, and if anything rather added than not to the general hilarity; but to one person “without the gate” it was gall and wormwood indeed.

Deluded by the prospect of gas—a luxury to which we had not hitherto been accustomed in the Highlands—old Aiky, now a feminine major-domo, had for the first time in her life left behind in Edinburgh the state candlesticks, of which we possessed an exceedingly handsome set, and those that had now to be hurriedly collected from garret and kitchen were of the meanest description.

And the candles? Tallow candles, neither more or less—till during the evening a few of a better kind were procured from “the shop,” the one shop within hail,—and those barely sufficed to light an ordinary room, so that the lofty ceiling of that in which we were assembled, remained sunk in gloom.

Next day the poor old woman was found rocking herself to and fro, her chin resting upon her hands, her back hooped.

“It wasna the gas,” she whispered hoarsely; “but”—and a shudder ran through her frame—“but *thae* cannelsticks! Wow! that I suld ha’ lived to see *thae* cannelsticks upon *oor* table!” Never afterwards did an emergency of the kind find poor Aiky unprepared; but, of course, with the usual irony of Fate, never again did a like emergency arise.

Despite our first disappointment, we soon grew very fond of Kames. The old castle is charmingly situated close to the entrance of the Kyles of Bute—those narrow straits which here wind their way between one inland sea and another—while the wild Loch Striven, with precipitous banks and overhanging mountain peaks, lies directly opposite. There are parts of the Rhine whose ruined fortresses stand out upon their rocky headlands at every bend of the river, which remind one of the Kyles of Bute; but even the renowned vineyards of the Rhine cannot surpass in beauty the purple confines of the Kyles.

On the other side of the island, which narrows at this point, lies Ettrick Bay—surely a wonderful bay—with its long stretch of smooth, yellow sand, its flocks of sea-birds, and its uninterrupted view of the craggy Arran range. So little was this part frequented in our time that we often escaped thither to bathe from a low cluster of rocks, secure of such privacy as was denied us in our own waters.

We had a bathing-box there, and a footpath through the grounds led to it direct; but though the box had a species of fastening, as had the little gate of the path, it was no infrequent occurrence to find that the former had been used as a night lodging by trippers (with whom the place swarmed in July and August), and that others had invaded the premises behind, and bedded themselves in the long grass there. Sleepy and dirty, they would bounce out—or up—on our approach; and what could be said in answer to muttered excuses?

In our hearts we secretly felt for the marauders, who, after all, had done us no harm, and to whom the warm, still summer night under the stars must have been Elysium after stuffy workrooms and sweltering attics ; and we never—I am glad to think of it now—we never were hard upon them, nor lodged complaints against them.

But we preferred Ettrick Bay—at any rate, while the “Glasgow Week” lasted. We drove over in an Irish car—a recent importation, despatched by my eldest brother, who was quartered in Ireland—and a more excellent little conveyance for this purpose, as also for moorland use, could not have been imagined. It carried all the paraphernalia and got down over the sands to the very edge of the water. Then, if the tide suited for an afternoon dip, how heavenly it was!—the sun so hot above, the sea so salt beneath—(it rolled in straight from the Atlantic)—and there were anemones, purple and yellow and pink, to be found in the limpid depths of the rock-pools ; and though there were no seals, as in Mull, there were cormorants and puffins and the long-winged tern darting hither and thither—while every now and again our ears would catch the sound of a dull thud, as a solan goose from Ailsa Craig, which had strayed thus far from its native place, spied its prey from a height, and swooped.

The mild climate of Bute, which fosters a luxuriance of vegetation similar to that of Devonshire and the south coast of England, was a new experience to us, as though it might be supposed that a similar wealth of foliage and blossom would be found in all the Hebridean islands, the fact remains that it is not so—doubtless the learned know why. Even in the days I write of, Bute was fast coming into favour as an all-the-year-round place of residence, and as my mother found it salubrious and attractive, and my father was delighted with the woodcock and snipe shooting,

which he had never before enjoyed to a like extent, we remained at Kames during a great part of every winter.

This again was something fresh : we had not remained in the country for Christmas since the Blackhall days, and, truth to tell, at first the young among us did not take kindly to the prospect. But we were soon reconciled on finding that the greater part of our neighbours were stationary also, and there was no need to fear we should be left stranded. Indeed, the little island was always quite gay in a small way, and there was no regular social interregnum as in most parts of the Highlands.

Dancing was the order of the day—perhaps I should say of the night ! Everyone danced, old or young. As we were a large party of ourselves, we often danced even when not reinforced by outsiders, and while the “Baron’s Hall” resounded to the “ring of the piper’s tunes,” humble folk from the little port close by, would steal up and plant themselves along the low terrace which ran round the tower, and was on a level with the windows.

We could see their faces, hear—although they did not suspect it—their voices ; but it was quite customary in old Highland houses to admit members of the household to galleries and doorways when the gentry were amusing themselves ; we did not mind the eager eyes of our friends outside, even if they were a little near the seat of action.

Reels and country dances are, it must be owned, better worth looking on at than their arbitrary supplanter of the ballroom, however much the waltz may be preferred by those taking part in it. Waltzing, indeed, we had ; but it was usually kept for more ceremonious assemblies—and it may interest the curious on this point to know that the step we practised then, and the only step we knew, the “Deux-temps,” is the very “Two-step” of to-day ; but in the “Long Line Hoolachin,” the “Triumph,” and other for-

gotten and forsaken but once glorious romps, we had our chief delight, and our humble friends outside their spectacle.

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Our cousins, the Campbells of Stonefield, were also great dancers, and now that we had come to reside in their part of the world, there were constant summonses from one house to the other.

Stonefield was an ideal Highland home. Its gaiety, its boundless hospitality, its maintenance of old traditions on the part of the elders of the family, united to a readiness to march with the times on that of the younger, made it the perfection of a meeting-place for all.

The white-headed, ruddy-cheeked, keen-eyed laird—health, goodness, benevolence, stamped upon his countenance—was as a father to all the cadets of the house. They came to him from school for their holidays ; from their ships, or regiments, later on. They were not bidden to come ; they did not even ask themselves : they came. They were expected to appear. The keepers and watchers anticipated their arrival as regularly as that of “the Twelfth.”

Nor was it in the handsome suite of brimming guest-chambers that they would be accommodated ; no, they were *at home* ; each had his own nook. Ah, if other heads of families would bethink themselves of what it is to young lads passed out into the world—and it may be a cold world—to be thus engrafted back into the parent stem when perchance their own branch of it has snapped, there would be many happier hearts in the world !

Old and enfeebled relatives were also an institution beneath that kindly roof. Some were nearly always to be found there, unobtrusively content within the mullioned recesses of the windows, or pottering at their own pace about the grounds. They, too, were *at home*. They crept hither and

thither as the spirit moved them. The days slipped by ; and, peacefully oblivious of time, they were never reminded of it by word or look.

For they had come to *stay*, it was shown that they were meant to stay ; others might come and go, but like the brook, they went on for ever ; and old age loves thus to snuggle down in the dear familiar haunts of childhood, where every scene and every stone is fraught with memories. In such sunshine, outward and inward, collateral branches of the house of Stonefield could freely bask.

Yet were they not neglected—far from it. I have seen them on their frail old feet when the dance was forming, proud and pleased to be begged to join it. I have seen them conducted to seats of honour when weary, tenderly helped into the cosiest corner of the close carriage for church, made to drink the best claret. Albeit a young and thoughtless on-looker at life, I saw all this, and felt the beauty of it even then.

The Highland steamers which had played us so many scurvy tricks in the Mull days, were at it again now that we were once more within their grasp. As we went and came from Stonefield by water—(and there were also Southall, Knockdhu, and Glendaruel only thus to be reached)—it was often of vital importance to us that the *Iona* or *Mountaineer* should be “on time”—and in the herring season, which was unluckily the Argyllshire visiting season also, they rarely, if ever, were so.

How could they be ? Piers everywhere, large and small, would be choked with barrels, as well as blocked with cattle ; and though the transference of them would be mainly accomplished by other vessels of the tramp order, in times of pressure, passenger traffic must of necessity be disorganised also. Herring ruled the roost when autumn set in.

Then what agonies did we undergo, waiting and waiting on Port-Bannatyne quay—our point of embarkation, the little port being close to Kames—and what succeeding ecstasies when, after many a hope deferred, the red funnels were actually and unmistakably there! Thud—thud, the paddles beat the water, and the dear, kind, good boat, to whom all was now forgiven, would throw out her gangways. Hurrah! we were on board—all was well.

Stonefield was our best goal—no place like it in our eyes. Up the Kyles there would be more herring, more cattle, and more interminable delays; every port humming, and every port bent on detaining us. Then pitch and toss round Ardlamont Point, and a wildish crossing to Tarbet Harbour; but that little seaport once in view, what relief, what joy! For there would be the carriage and the cart—how long soever they had waited, they were there, not gone, as the croakers among us loved to predict, but stationary as though time were of no account; and there would be the scarlet cloaks and pretty faces of our girl cousins, (the men were, of course, on the hills), and soon all was a tumultuous hubbub of welcome, and bursts of information, and thrills of anticipation—and—and—oh, they were *fine*, those old days! Don't suppose, you girls of to-day, that you have it all your own way, even though we did live in those prehistoric ages.

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And on one occasion the recalcitrant *Iona*, of which we had so often to complain, did us a good turn.

This time we were departing from Stonefield, our merry three days' visit over; the last farewells had been said, and we were deposited bag and baggage at the little Tarbet Inn, there to await the return boat from Ardrishaig to Glasgow.

We had been begged to stay longer; but my parents

were old-fashioned people, formal even with relations, and "The rest day, the dressed day, and the pressed day" was enough for them; they were not to be moved either by the entreaties of their older hosts, who really wanted us, as an impromptu dance was in prospect, nor by the wistful looks of the younger. Here we were then, so far on our way.

"The boat will be late, sir." Such was the announcement at Tarbet.

"Late? how late?"—was demanded.

"Oo, late. Jist late. Mebbe a guid bit late. She was late i' the byegaun."

"Humph!" My father disappeared into the inn, frowning.

He did not relish the idea; but, after all, he had got away from the house. He had dismissed the coachman and horses, and no one could now, he thought, force him to put off the return journey. Here I must say that country-house visitings was at all times obnoxious to him; that he only went anywhere under pressure, and was out of his element under any roof but his own; so that the above indicated no ill-will towards kinsfolk for whom he had a very real affection, and against whom the utmost he could allege was that the bounding exuberance and effervescence of their fine, old, clannish house was less congenial to him as an older man than it would have been as a young one.

He now settled himself down to read the newspaper, and we girls sat in the windows, sunk in sad reflections.

Hours passed, and still there was no smoke above the headland, no sign of the approaching steamer, while the dusk of a November afternoon began to gather outside.

Suddenly we saw a sight. Not the loathed steamer—which, however, we could almost by this time have welcomed, so sickening was that weary watch, with nothing to hope for,—but the carriage—the carriage—descending the opposite hillside, and what could it be coming for but—us?

Someone, too, was inside. "Stonefield" himself!

He was not to be gainsaid; he overruled all objections. What? Spend the night at this wretched place, when they were dying to have us? He was so kind, so cordial, so insistent—while my sister and I listened with beating hearts—that in the end his triumph—and ours—was complete. Fate was too much for even my parents' resolution. Our reappearance was hailed with enthusiasm, and we never afterwards cherished a rankle against the good steamer *Iona*.

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We had our dull epochs at Kames. It was a cheerful place, and we were a cheerful party, but occasionally—let me narrate what once happened to intensify the dreariness of a certain dreary month.

A beautiful Japanese peacock, together with a couple of swans, a Nile duck, and some geese of sorts, had been presented to us by our friends the Keith-Murrays of Ochertyre, who, having seen a piece of ornamental water lying fallow at Kames, kindly bethought them of furnishing it with occupants from theirs. The peacock was, of course, an extra; but he was a lordly creature and could trail about upon the bank, and we were delighted with such an addition to the party.

Not so the gardeners. It must be confessed that "Joseph"—so named for his coat of many colours,—soon despising the water and the waterfowl, took his airings further and further afield, and complaints arose that he was "ruining the kitchen garden."

How often these were made I cannot say; but one fine morning we were greeted by the news that our beauty was no more, had been found defunct in a corner of the garden where he had no business to be. The head gardener, professedly grieving, pointed out that "the poor bird" was in

the habit of browsing on certain herbs grown there, and was sure that these had "done for him."

Not being learned in peacock lore, we accepted the suggestion for lack of another ; but scarcely had we ceased to mourn for Joseph when the Nile duck followed suit with an equally sudden demise, and the Nile duck never went near the herb corner. M'Phail, however, framed a fresh solution of the problem, and again we had to be content.

But now more mysterious deaths occurred in rapid succession. A favourite cat, a rabbit, and at last—and this was the murderer's undoing—two valuable dogs, a pointer and a setter. He had poisoned them all.

What he might have gone on to poison, who can say ? for on being discovered and arrested, he avowed that he had at first had no intention of killing anything but the "nasty peacock," but that, finding it "no that deefficult," he had proceeded to exterminate any creature that "vexed him."

And my father, albeit greatly chagrined at the loss of his good dogs, and horrified at the cool unconcern with which this wretch gratified his spite whenever it was provoked, was yet humane enough to intercede for a mitigation of his sentence when it was pronounced after the trial. "A poor ignorant creature. I did not want him to get more than he would have done, because the Sheriff felt for me," he said. Sheriff Orr was a fellow-sportsman, and sympathetic ; he said afterwards that he had been much struck with this sense of justice and mercy combined.

Now, trivial and unimportant as the above may seem in the retrospect, what dwellers in country houses but know from experience how such an episode may fill every thought, if it happens at a time when nothing else is happening.

Such times, such flat, dull, eventless periods come to all, and usually, if not invariably, in bad weather. The old

year is waning, or the new one has just begun ; and except perhaps in hunting districts, where the sound of the horn and the hound cheer up the dismal landscape, there is a lack of outdoor interests as well as of indoor conviviality—a certain stagnation without and within.

The arrival of the post, especially the afternoon post, assumes the character of an event. And just because it does so, letters are few and uninteresting : if they contain any news at all, it is bad news—yet not bad news of an exciting and stimulating character.

That could be borne ; yes, it could ; for human nature is human nature, and something to talk about and think about would *be* something at any rate ; but news of a disagreeable, disconcerting sort : an investment is not reported of very favourably, a suggestion is nipped in the bud, a promising young friend or relation is hardly fulfilling expectations—without being cut to the heart, the recipients of such intelligence feel that the gloom has deepened around them.

The front-door bell is never rung. Where is everybody gone ? What has become of all the faces that were so familiar of late ?

Perhaps, however, there is a peal—a loud clanging demand—and what music in the sound, what hurry-skurry to catch a peep over the banisters—what breathless straining of attention—what hopes, what fears, what sharpness of dismay as the door shuts, and there is no result !

The cruel servant—they are all alike, men and women—dallies in the hall, quite aware of the burning impatience which, for dignity's sake, cannot have vent. It is pleasant to him or her to feel that no one else has as yet the key to the mystery. Why not prolong the pleasure ?

But, of course, in the end there is a would-be careless inquiry—a casual “ Who was that, John—or Mary ? ”—and the truth has to come out.

Only someone come to the wrong house ! Only some simpleton who has tricked and mocked its inmates ! Deeper than ever the gloom falls.

I have a distinct recollection of just such a season at Kames, and that, as drenching skies and stormy seas continued day after day to shut us in from the outer world, we had no distraction for our thoughts when the cruel M'Phail and his murderous propensities absorbed them. I may add that though the clouds passed and the sun shone out again, the pretty duck-pond remained empty, for the swans flew away—flew out to sea—and, though twice recovered and brought back by fishermen, eventually settled, it was said, at a spot on the mainland, where there was a swannery—for they were seen in our bay no more.

Before all these catastrophes took place, however, and while yet Joseph and his brethren were flourishing, a letter received from a little midddy who had been at Kames—and from whose home the above Joseph & Co. had come—afforded us some little amusement ; and, having just unearthed it from among relics of those days, I cannot resist quoting its concluding sentence :—

“ Please give my love to all. To Joseph—to the gooseberries, to Auk,¹ to the Hawks, two Swans, one Nile Duck—to the 18 other ducks, to the ducks' eggs by the side of the Pond—to the broods of chickens, and to the stray Cocks and Hens—to the bent pocker and the dead Rat, and to the Family.—From your affectionate friend,
ARCHIE KEITH-MURRAY.”

Why some of the favoured creatures are honoured by having capital letters to their names while others are not it is not for me to say ; but I dimly recall that the “ bent pocker ”

¹ A black retriever.

refers to a certain poker which Master Archie had himself battered in the heat of battle—cause unknown—and which thereafter was elevated to be a cherished memory.

We twice saw waterspouts when at Kames ; and on each occasion they were travelling rapidly between the south of Bute and the Isles of Cumbrae, where eventually each broke. I have had waterspouts pointed out to me since—in the Mediterranean and elsewhere ; but they were nothing like the dark, whirling pillars that stood out so markedly and impressively against the foaming Firth of Clyde. And why each should have pursued precisely the same track, when they were visible at entirely different times, cannot be explained.

The Isles of Cumbrae lie within easy distance of the south of Bute, and when tempestuous weather is abroad, the bells which ring out for prayer from the college in Cumbrae, founded by our cousin, George Boyle, (who afterwards succeeded his brother as Earl of Glasgow), can be distinctly heard. My mother, larger minded than some, loved to hear them.

Her feelings, however, were not shared by the humbler population of Bute, for when Mr Boyle, who was a truly pious man, stood for Parliament, he was widely objected to on the score of his religious opinions. A Port-Bannatyne elector grumbled that he was a *Fuchsia*. What a *Fuchsia* might be was a puzzle ; but inquiry elicited that it stood for “Puseyite” !

This was something to go upon ; but again what did a simple, unlettered fisherman know about Puseyites ?

The unlettered one hesitated, a shade uncertain as to what he really did mean. “Come on,” quoth my father, encouragingly.

“Aweel,” rejoined Donald, turning his cap in his hands, “aweel—I’m no saying—it’s no *me* that says it ; but”—

with a burst of confidence—"there's them that says the like o' they disna gang to the kirk"; and, whether from this cause or another, the *Fuchsia* failed to win the election, and it was believed that the Port-Bannatyne fishermen turned the scale against him. "They ne'er thocht he micht hae a kirk o' his ain," quoth Aiky, very superior.

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If, however, the fisher folk were ignorant and prejudiced, if they stood out against a candidate they did not know and for whose repute they did not care, they could be fervently, almost passionately, loyal where it seemed to them that loyalty was due.

There was one among them, (their eyes would kindle as they spoke), if *he* would have gone to the poll, Port-Bannatyne would have gone with him to a man.

That was his house—they would point to a large, opulent-looking villa on the hillside. Those were his lodge gates—another impressive point of the finger. Then, with a final burst, and turning in another direction, and *that* was the bit cottage in which he was born.

We were then regaled with a little story—this happened at the beginning of our stay, while we were yet ignorant of the lie of the land,—and the story was to this effect: that some fifty years before there had been born among the people of the port, of village parents like themselves, a boy who by a stroke of good fortune had been raised high above their heads, but who, unlike so many others thus ascended, instead of shunning his native parts, where he was known to all and related to many, chose still to dwell in their midst, claiming them for his friends and kinsfolk—here the speaker would clear his throat, and mutter softly, but with a thrill in the tones, "*Weel may we be prood o' him—him that's no ashamed o' us.*"

If more were encouraged, more flowed apace. Mr Smith had done more for Port-Bannatyne than anyone had ever done before. No one knew *what* he had done—and given. He was in the front and at the back of everything—big things and small, public and private, high and low.

There wasn't a wedding or a christening, or a funeral that he wasn't there. Never too grand, or too busy—indeed, if away at the time, he would often come back on purpose.

The bride, or the baby, that was of his blood, had a hundred-pound note from him—or leastways a note of some kind—it was all “according”—and always more than could have been expected, or would have been thought of by anyone else.

The minister was forever at his door. *The* minister? All the ministers. His heart and hand opened every way.

As for the gentry, they were as “daft” about him as the rest. There was his lordship: he couldn't keep away from Mr Smith, and get Mr Smith over to Mount Stuart he would by hook or crook. And there was—and a list of well-known names followed. “They're a' his freens—a' his freens,” summed up our informant, waving an encircling arm.

But it was only after we ourselves became acquainted with the subject of this eulogium that it had any interest for us new-comers. He was absent for some time after we arrived at Kames, and, truth to tell, we were bored by the constant reiteration of his name, and the chanting of his praises. We felt inclined to say, “Oh, do let Mr Smith alone!” when people of our own class began to join the chant. What was this unknown, uninteresting individual to us? He lived close by—but that was all.

It was impossible to idealise him. Imagination could not cast a halo over an elderly, commonplace personage, with a name that was hardly a name at all. When at length

it was announced that the paragon was actually within our own drawing-room, it was difficult to get anybody to go down to him.

By this time I wonder if any reader of the above guesses why it has found its way into these pages? Mr Smith? Who was he, what was he, that his existence should not have been long since forgotten? Why should I seek to rekindle the ashes of the past? There he was—a short, stout, grey man, with nothing in his appearance or manner to arrest attention or call for comment—nothing except—ah, well, I have said it all elsewhere; and though it was some years before the idea arose of bringing *my* “Mr Smith” before the world, the hero, if hero he can be called, of my first novel stood before me that summer day at Kames.

A letter I wrote at the time thus cavalierly disposed of him: “The Port-Bannatyne swell has appeared at last. He is quite harmless—indeed rather nice. And Mama says his driving up in a solemn carriage and pair was in very good taste. She was sure it was meant for respect; but why he could not have stumped up on his own two legs, I can’t think.” That was all—for the moment.

One by one, however, little things happened. Week by week our new neighbour grew upon us. We no longer needed to be hunted out and reluctantly driven downstairs when he called. When our father returned the calls, he was sorry if Mr Smith were out, had plenty to say about him if he were at home. When his first invitation to dinner arrived, there was a competition as to which of us young ones should go.

Aiky was invited by Mr Smith’s housekeeper to “see the table.” A brougham was sent for her, and, after tea with Mrs Sanderson in that functionary’s private room, she returned brimful of news.

It was true that Mrs Sanderson was Mr Smith's sister, and the way she spoke of her brother it was "just wonderful" to hear. Her husband was the butler. He waited behind his master's chair when there was company, but when alone they were one family and lived as such.

They both "fair worshipped" Mr Smith—the brother-in-law as well as his wife could talk of nothing else.

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But I must no longer linger over this congenial topic. As I have said, it did not at the time occupy such thoughts as I gave to literary effort, which were busy producing certain little sketches, afterwards to see the light in a small volume. Of these *Polly Spanker's Green Feather* and *Will Darling's Cross in Love* survive, though *The Merchant's Sermon* was the first to appear in print. All, however, were rigidly hidden from view while at Kames, and the brown albums which contained them were stowaways in the trunks, when we departed thence in the spring of the year 1866.