

SKETCHES  
OF  
Sutherland Characters.

BY  
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EDINBURGH:  
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TO  
JOHN MACKAY, Esq., C.E., J.P.,  
*of Hereford,*

AS A SMALL TRIBUTE OF RESPECT TO  
HIS BENEFICENCE, AND UNWEARIED ZEAL FOR THE WEAL  
OF THE PEOPLE OF HIS NATIVE COUNTY OF SUTHERLAND,  
THESE SKETCHES ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED  
BY HIS CLANSMAN,  
THE AUTHOR.

## PREFACE.

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THE following "Sketches" were written as a pastime, and not with the view of publication. Some of them appeared at intervals in the columns of the *Northern Ensign*. Twelve chapters of No. 1, "The Sailor," appeared about four years ago, and were well received. To the last chapter, the editor affixed the following note:—

"We have to thank Mr Mackay for his ably written and deeply interesting 'sketch.' It has more than a local personal interest, and we are sure many would be glad if the story of 'The Sailor' were embodied in a more compact and permanent form than the pages of a newspaper afford."

It was this note and the advice of some friends who were anxious to see the sketches "embodied" in their present form, which induced the writer, with some "fear and trembling," to reproduce them. These all have been recast,

with additions. The others appear for the first time.

The Author has to tender his thanks to the Revs. Messrs Cumming, Melness, and Mackay, Altnaharra; Mr Robson Mackay, Lybster; Mr William Mackenzie, Strath Halladale, and Mr John Murray, Tongue, for information regarding "William Aberach." His thanks are also due to his friend, Mr John Mackay, late of Crask, for refreshing his memory on different occasions while penning these sketches. To Mr Hew Morrison, F.S.A. Scot., Librarian, Edinburgh Public Library, his thanks are also due; and last, though not least, to his clansman of Hereford, but for whose assistance these "sketches" would not be published, and to whom they are dedicated.

EDINBURGH, 20 ST ANDREW SQUARE,  
*July 1889.*

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# DONALD MACKAY,

*ALIAS*

DONALD THE SAILOR.

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## CHAPTER I.

“ ’Tis wonderful  
That an invisible instinct should frame them  
To loyalty unlearned ; honour untaught ;  
Civility not seen from others ; valour  
That wildly grows in them, yet yields a crop  
As if it had been sowed.”—SHAKESPEARE.

DONALD'S native country was Duthaich  
Mhic-Aoidh, or “The Mackay Country.”  
It is situated along the north coast of the county  
of Sutherland, embracing the modern parishes of  
Farr, Tongue, Durness, Eddrachilis, a portion of  
the Caithness parish of Reay, with possessions  
in the parishes of Golspie, Rogart, Dornoch, and  
Criech, comprising five-eighths of the whole area  
of the county. It is a wild rugged district,  
intersected by valleys of much natural beauty  
and pastoral fertility, and interspersed with  
mountain ranges, the highest in Sutherland, and  
large lakes, feeders to rivers abounding in salmon



and trout. Its inhabitants were termed "Clainn Mhic Aoidh" (the Clan Mackay), a doughty race of men, who aided in the expulsion of the Norse invaders, and contributed their part in asserting the independence of Scotland on the field of Bannockburn. They opposed the Lords of the Isles previous to the battle of Harlaw, and held their own in all the clan conflicts of Sutherland and Caithness, up to the Reformation era. Whatever side the Mackays espoused was generally that which won. Political subtlety to them was unknown and unpractised. Far away from court, they were frequently at a disadvantage, and accordingly suffered from the misrepresentations of their envious and powerful neighbours. Their manhood and warlike qualities, however, stood them in good stead. Their chief was amongst the first in the north to embrace the doctrines of the Reformation, adopt its principles, and provide for their propagation. Clan conflicts then ceased. The reign of law and order began to prevail, but the martial prowess, love of adventure, and warlike exploits remained with chief and clansmen as they were. Germany, Bohemia, and Hungary were then in the throes of religious wars. Austria, goaded on by the Pope, initiated, as a last resource, a war of extermination against religious liberty. The Elector of Bohemia, who had married a daughter of the Scottish king, became the elect champion of the Protestant religion, assisted by the King

of Denmark. The Chief of the Mackays, prompted by feelings of loyalty and religion, as much as by martial inclination, espoused the Protestant cause. He obtained royal permission to raise men to go to the assistance of the Elector, who was attacked by the Roman Catholic imperialists, bent upon the extirpation of the reformed religion. His uncle, Sir Robert Gordon, jealous of the great influence possessed by the Chief of the Mackays in Sutherland and Caithness, encouraged him to undertake this adventure, that he might be out of his way, and possibly be killed in battle, or involve himself financially to such a degree as to favour his designs, of humbling this powerful chief, and so pave the way to aggrandise the family and territory of his nephew the young Earl of Sutherland, whose curator he was. What was impossible for Sir Robert to accomplish by force, was at last brought about by chicanery, fraud, and corrupt court influence. The Chief of the Mackays, now raised to the dignity of baronet, having obtained the royal mandate to enrol a body of 2000 men of his own clan, and others willing to join, in a few months raised 3000 men, fully equipped, and embarked them for Germany, where they took a leading part on the Protestant side in the "Thirty Years' War." Under the heroic leadership of the renowned Gustavus Adolphus, this regiment performed prodigies of valour never surpassed

in military history. He regarded the Mackay regiment "as his right hand in battle, brought forward in all dangerous enterprises; and they might, like himself, be said to have fallen in the field, and to have been buried with the honours of war," few of them ever surviving to retread their native heaths. It is not only in Germany the military services of the Mackays are recorded; they are found in the annals of Hungary, Bohemia, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, France, and of Holland, where the name is ennobled to this day. They assisted the Prince of Orange in resisting and repelling the French invasions of Holland. They aided William III. in effecting the Revolution of 1688, which secured to Great Britain civil and religious liberties, and helped the Hanoverian dynasty to maintain the Revolution settlement. Whenever Great Britain was in danger, and a "call to arms" was made, the Mackays were to the front. In 1759 and 1777 they formed an important portion of the Fencible regiments raised in Sutherland for the defence of the country, extending their services to any part of Great Britain or Ireland.

In 1794, when revolutionary France threatened invasion, 800 Mackays enrolled themselves at the call of their chief, and served for eight years to maintain order and tranquillity wherever located. In the suppression of the rebellion in Ireland, 1798, and in the pacification of that unhappy turbulent country in succeeding years,

this gallant regiment acted bravely and humanely. They were stationed in Belfast, Cavan, Dublin, Maynooth, Athlone, Longford, Galway, over-awing the turbulent, protecting the peaceable, acquiring and enjoying the respect and esteem of all, and the highest commendation of their commanding officer. General Lake held the Mackay regiment in the highest esteem. They formed his bodyguard; they were with him in every skirmish and battle, except at Castlebar, when the troops he had there with him to resist the advance of the French disgracefully turned their backs on the enemy and fled, drawing from the gallant general the bitter expression, "If I had my brave and honest Mackays here, this would not have happened." The French advanced, the general fell back upon his supports, and being supported by his "honest Mackays" and other reinforcements, turned upon the French, defeated them and compelled them to surrender. The Mackays had the honour of escorting and guarding the prisoners to Dublin. It was at Tara Hill, in Meath County, this civilian regiment showed and proved the best qualities of the British soldier. The rebels were seen encamped on the hill of Tara. The Mackays were marching to the defence of Dublin, about 400 in number. Without hesitation they prepared to attack the rebels, who numbered 4,000. They advanced up the hill without firing a shot till within fifty yards of the enemy, who

crowded the slopes and ridge of the hill. Then commenced the firing; the rebels fought desperately, but the gallant little band persevered, and continued to advance, driving the rebels before them to the ridge, when they charged, routed, and dispersed their numerous opponents. While this conflict was going on at the front, a party of the rebels, by a circuitous flank movement, attacked them in the rear. It was met by so hot a fire that they too dispersed and fled. This spirited affair cost the Mackays thirty killed and many wounded, while the rebels left five hundred killed on the field.

On the conclusion of the treaty of peace with France in 1802, the Mackay regiment, or, as it was termed Lord Reay's Highlanders, was ordered to Scotland, and on the 26th September of that year disbanded at Stirling, with this high testimonial: "The Major-General embraces with eagerness this opportunity of expressing his highest approbation of the uniform good conduct of the regiment since it was embodied. He reflects with pride and satisfaction on the many opportunities that occurred, to evince the loyalty, good discipline, distinguished gallantry, and persevering attention of all ranks to the good of the service. The many testimonials to this effect, by the general officers under whom they served at a most critical conjuncture in Ireland, furnishes the most flattering and unequivocal proofs of their merits as British soldiers. . . .

The Major-General desires his thanks to be conveyed to the non-commissioned officers and men for the disposition to good order and soldier-like conduct they have ever manifested, and which has been so evident from the many encomiums bestowed on their general behaviour on the service in which they were lately employed. He repeats his acknowledgments to the whole corps, individually and collectively, for the general respectability they have at all times, and on all occasions, maintained, with an anxious wish that they may speedily reap the fruits of so meritorious services, by the full and permanent enjoyment of all the comforts of private life now so justly become their due."

Some of the men composing this gallant civilian regiment enlisted afterwards in the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders, of whom mention will be made in a future chapter. The clan territory, from which these brave men issued, is no longer theirs. Shortly after their return to their homesteads, king and chief forgot their promises to them—the reward for such creditable services. The wish of the general officer who dismissed them to their homes remained a dead letter. "The permanent enjoyment of all the comforts of private life, so justly become their due," was denied them. They were evicted from their homes; their habitations were made desolate; the glens they inhabited and defended, nurseries of warrior soldiers, and grateful, God-fearing

peasants, were given to "sheep." They were driven to the sea-shores, to exist as they might, —or die.

"Injustice, swift, erect, and unconfined,  
Swept o'er the land, and trampled on mankind."

The clan, so mighty in its manhood, since the day of Bannockburn, has experienced the fate of nations and empires. "When wealth accumulates, men decay." It is now landless, though members of the clan still inhabit small patches on the sea-coast of the ancient territory. The promises made to those gallant men, to give them "permanent enjoyment" of their lands, upon their return from "the wars" and the service of their country, were soon ruthlessly broken. Sheep became the golden idol; they were considered of more value than brave men who would, in their thousands, readily obey a "call to arms." These men had to make way for "sheep"! and leave their native glens to go where they listed. It was the irony of fate! the grossest injustice ever perpetrated! the basest ingratitude ever committed! The ancient devotion of clansmen to chief and superiors was thus broken. This spirit of devotion, judiciously used and cultivated, tended to heroism and good conduct in every phase of life; to elevation of manners and deportment, to loyalty of feeling, and to religious sentiment and principles; to that formation of moral and physical character that makes the man and the hero. The senti-

ment still survives, as has recently been seen in the formation of clan societies, notably that of the Mackays themselves, who, as a clan, were supposed to be extinct, except in name. All at once, like Roderick Du's men, up they sprang from every bush and every bracken, on every brae, from hamlet and town, from village and city, and from foreign lands, and formed themselves into a clan anew, on ancient clan principles, proving that the proverb is a fact, "Blood is still thicker than water." All hail, Mackays! you have led the van in many a doughty fray and battle; you have now noble work before you in the van of civilisation,—in the van of that era in which "a man's a man for a' that." Other clans will follow your example—the Frasers, the Camerons, the "Campbells are coming," men of repute like the Mackays. In generous rivalry carry your "Bratach bhan" aloft. For you, it ought to be "First and foremost." It may be an uphill work for you, but you have great, noble, and honourable traditions to animate you. Be true to them, and, in the words of the most ancient of Highland bards,

"Leanaibh gu dlu ri cliu na 'r Sinnsir."

(Closely follow your ancestors' fame.)



## CHAPTER II.

“ Nature, a mother kind alike to all,  
Still grants her bliss at labour's earnest call ;  
With *food*, as well the peasant is supplied  
On Adria's cliffs, as Arno's shelvy side.”—GOLDSMITH.

THE Mackay territory, like other districts in the Highlands at the close of the eighteenth century, was devoid of roads.\* Its inland communication was by mere tracks over mountain, moor, and river. There were no roads worth the name north of Inverness. In fact there were no roads, upon which a vehicle could travel, north of Perth and Aberdeen. Before the commencement of this century, no regular wheeled vehicle for passengers existed in the Highlands. In the year 1800 an attempt

\* “ *Saturday, Aug. 14.*—From Dornoch we set out by 7 o'clock. When we came to the Inn at the Mickle-Ferry, Mr Morison's, I, seeing a fine gilded four-wheel'd Chaise, and well coulered with Wax-Cloth, at Mr Morison's Door, without any Company or Servants, I begged to know the History of it. ‘Why,’ said Mr Morison, ‘the History of it is extremely comical; so very diverting that perhaps you have not met with the like in all your travels. This chaise belongs to Lord Rae, who himself came with it in a Ship to this Place, from your South-Country, and left it here, in order to send a Ship or some Vessel with it, to take it about to his own Castle of Tongue, in Strathnaver, and then he had no other Drive for it in that whole Country, but only to the Kirk of Tongue, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile, not a complete mile. I can aver with Truth, and can refer the matter to my Wife here, who knows the Place as well as I do.’ Mrs Morrison said it was all very true.”—*From “Bishop Forbes' Journal,” 1762, edited by the Rev. J. B. Craven.*

was made to establish coaches between Aberdeen and Inverness, and between Perth and Inverness; but such was the condition of the roads, and so little the traffic, that, after a short trial, it was found necessary to discontinue them. It was not till 1806 and 1811 that coaches were regularly established in these directions. It was only in 1754 that coaches ran regularly between Edinburgh and London, taking ten days in summer and twelve in winter to perform the journey which can now be accomplished in less than the same number of hours, summer or winter. Such being, then, the condition of inland communication south of Inverness, it can readily be conceived that north of it facilities for travelling were in a much worse plight. It was not till 1819 that the first mail coach was established between Inverness, Wick, and Thurso, through Sutherland. Even then assistance was required from Ross and Inverness to support it.

Looking at these facts, and considering the undeveloped state of the country, it need not surprise us to-day that in Sutherland and Caithness, at the period in which the subject of our sketch was born, there were no roads whatever other than mere beaten tracks. It was not till 1802 that the attention of the Government of the day was directed to the defective means of communication. In 1803 the eminent engineer, Thomas Telford, was en-

gaged by Government to report upon a subject so important to the general interests of the country at large. Upon his report being made, the Government, by the advice of a select committee of the House of Commons, enacted—"That provision should be made by Parliament for defraying one half of the estimated expense of the roads and bridges which might appear most immediately necessary; . . . the remainder of the expense should be defrayed by the proprietors of the land, or other persons who might be benefited thereby." In 1804 the inhabitants of the county of Inverness obtained powers to assess themselves to repay such proprietors as should advance money for roads and bridges. In 1805 Ross and Sutherland followed the example; and in 1816 the amount spent was £450,000, or an average of £400 a mile of roads and bridges constructed from Inverness to Wick. The road from Wick to Thurso, 20½ miles, was constructed by the landed proprietors at a cost of upwards of £650 a mile. The road from Bonar Bridge to Tongue, with a twelve-feet gravelled roadway, 49 miles, cost £350 a mile, and was completed in 1820. The road from Thurso to Farr, 30 miles, was completed about the same time; but it was not for some ten years thereafter that the extension of this road from Farr to Tongue was completed.

Funds failed. The Lord Reay of that day

divorced himself from his clansmen who so nobly responded to his call in 1794, and luxuriated in London, instead of attending to their well-being and the requirements of his estates. Worse than all, evictions in the meantime went on in his territory by the hundred,—on the Sutherland estates, by the thousand. Depopulation was universal throughout the county.

Thus were the brave men, mentioned in the preceding chapter, rewarded,—mercilessly driven from the homes that they regarded as their birthright. In the case of the Lord of Reay, the avenger soon overtook him. The inheritance of centuries departed from him and them in 1829; and the last link of the road to Tongue from Farr was completed by the purchaser, the Marquis of Stafford, first Duke of Sutherland,—a descendant of Squire Gower, of Stittenham, Yorkshire, whose son married the only daughter of James Leveson, woolstapler, Wolverhampton. James Leveson, who might have been a real son of Levi, purchased the ecclesiastical property belonging to Lillieshall Abbey in Shropshire, 35,000 acres, valued then at £330 a year, but now, with its well-developed mineral wealth in coal and lime, may be worth £33,000 a year. This property came into the Gower family at the death of Mr Leveson, whose daughter was sole heiress. The eldest son of this marriage married the heiress of Trentham estate, another ecclesiastical property;

and thus the far-famed Trentham was added to Lillieshall, the surname of the family becoming Granville-Leveson-Gower, representing the different properties in three different counties. Descendants of this last marriage became Marquis of Stafford and Duke of Bridgewater, of "canal fame." The Marquis married Elizabeth, Countess and heiress of Sutherland, and in 1833 was created Duke of Sutherland. Henceforth the family surname became Sutherland-Granville-Leveson-Gower.

The Marquis, by the death of the Duke of Bridgewater, "the father of inland navigation," in 1803 became one of the wealthiest noblemen in the kingdom. He was "a great improver," and expended thousands of pounds on his Shropshire and Staffordshire estates, draining bogs, remodelling farms, knocking down old farm-houses and building new ones, making roads, and various other improvements.

Shortly after his marriage with the heiress of Sutherland, he was for several years British Ambassador at the Court of Louis the 16th, but was recalled on the death of that king in 1793. Thus occupied in France and England, he had not much time to give attention to the Highland estates of his wife. Their time was, however, near at hand to feel his remorseless energy and power to revolutionise the past, to upset all ideas of what was due to the native population, and build up a new order of things upon

their ruin. He succeeded in his day, but left a dark heritage to his descendants that will not be forgotten for centuries. His sole idea with his immense wealth seemed to be the formation of large farms, the building of houses, the making of roads, all probably with the "best intentions," but

"Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn."

Having thus digressed on the roads and their makers, we shall pass on to the "Sailor," taking opportunities to glance at Sutherland affairs as we proceed.

## CHAPTER III.

### KIDNAPPING OF DONALD.

“ Good heavens ! what sorrow gloomed that eventful day,  
That forced Donald from his native walks away.”

WE have shown in the preceding chapter the defective modes of communication in the Highlands at the commencement of this century. The population being self-sustaining, producing almost everything necessary within their own localities, did not experience much discomfort therefrom. They were more pastoral than agricultural. Pack-horses were the medium of carriage in the Highlands, as in other countries, before the formation of roads became general ; and distances, however long, rough, or rugged, were travelled on foot or on horseback. To go from the north of Sutherland to Inverness, Aberdeen, or Edinburgh on foot, was thought nothing of by men and lads, nor by many women. Boys going to Aberdeen College walked there and back. Men and women going to harvest work in the Lothians traevlled on foot all the way, and returned in the same manner. Thus men and women were nerved to physical strength, patient endurance, and the moral fearlessness by which the Highlanders of Scotland were so strikingly distinguished.

The system of agriculture which then prevailed was well enough adapted to the character and habits of the people, and was directed solely to the cultivation of grain for food, oats, barley, and rye. Potatoes and turnips were unknown previous to 1790; but the majority of families had their "kailyard," or cabbage garden, in which cabbages, onions, and leeks were grown. The chief attention was directed to the rearing of horses, cattle, sheep, and goats. Sheep were kept for home use, for their wool and for food, few being sold. Their value not being then well understood, they were only a secondary object. Goats were valued for sale, for their milk, and for their skins, which were worth from 4s. to 5s. each. Cattle were the mainstay of the family. During the summer months the herds were driven to the sheilings in the hills, and to pastures along the margin of mountain streams. Temporary erections were put up to shelter those who tended the herds' and flocks, who milked the cattle, and managed the dairy processes of making butter and cheese, the surplus of which, not needed for family use, was sold, and along with the surplus stock of horses, cattle, and goats, formed the only sources of wealth. The produce of the arable land was sometimes insufficient to supply the wants of a family. Thus the Highland family lived, and were brought up, in comparative ease, contentment, prosperity, and enjoyment, free and inde-



pendent, leading a life conducive to health, vigour, and longevity, to morality, manliness, and high religious principles. In those days education, the education of the school, was not much diffused. The early training of the Highlander was round the home fireside; he was taught to revere parents and ancestors, to be faithful to trust, to despise danger, *to be respectful to superiors*, to fear God and honour the king. The scenery round his mountain home excited his imagination and his feelings; adventures by flood and field were congenial and familiar. There were frequent social meetings, at which romantic tales, and the traditional poetry of his country, were rehearsed; where songs of love and war were sung, and tales of battles told. New Year's Day, peat-cutting time, harvest homes, Hallowe'en, and Christmas, were seasons of great enjoyment. The christening banquets, and weddings, were occasions of much gratification and delight. Few could read or write; the postman's knock was seldom or ever heard at the door; but in the course of time a letter-carrier began to run between Thurso and Tongue once a week, leaving Thurso on Wednesday morning and arriving in Tongue Thursday evening; leaving Tongue again Monday morning and arriving in Thurso Tuesday evening.

Few or no strangers were seen in the northern parts of Sutherland. The Government itself seemed to be oblivious of its geographical posi-

tion, as no exciseman or revenue officer was in the country; hence large quantities of spirits, gin, and brandy—from Norway, Sweden, Holland, and France—were landed at various places along the west and north coasts of the county. The MacIvers of Lewis had for many years a number of vessels engaged in this contraband trade. A Captain Hill, mentioned in Rob Donn's "Dreugan falambh," was another engaged in it who visited these coasts. Walter Scott's "Dirk Hatteraick" was a west coast smuggler. Burns, when an exciseman, had frequent encounters with such contrabandists. These "gentlemen of the sea," like the buccaneers and sea-pirates of other days and more recent date, cared little for humanity, much less for right and justice. Hard-hearted, hard and harsh featured, they always were. Demoralised themselves, they demoralised all with whom they came in contact, and were seldom particular in what they did or how they acted to encompass the end in view.

The hero of this sketch was born in Armadale in 1774, the year in which the present church of Farr was built. Donald, as soon as he was well able to make himself useful, was put to herd cattle, and at the age of twelve was considered proficient enough to be placed in charge of the whole cattle of his native township. There was then little or no restriction of hill pasture, nor any restriction as to the quantity

of stock. As far as the eye could reach it was an open unoccupied common, of mountain and moor, free alike to all. Herding on such conditions was a comparatively easy employment, requiring merely ordinary attention, and affording ample time to the herd-boy to divert himself in various ways, by fishing in the streams, making little dams across them, and forming leads to set miniature water-wheels in motion, or along lake sides—there are many of them in that part—making little sham boats and seeing them sail with the wind or the stream. Poor Donald, like many of his compeers of that age, was short of tools. His great longing, his only ambition then, was to be possessed of a pocket-knife, but such articles could not be obtained nearer than Thurso. Fortune soon favoured our hero with the needful cash,—a shilling,—and his long-wished-for pocket-knife was seen at a measurable distance; but strange it is, though true, that a trifling incident in the gratification of one's wishes may have momentous results, leading to fortune or the reverse. The possession of this small coin was the means of leading young Donald into a seven years' captivity, as will appear in the sequel. Donald was anxious to exchange the coin for a pocket-knife. He considered the best thing he could do was to watch the postman as he was passing on his way to Thurso, and make him the intermediary of obtaining a knife for the shilling, which he did.

A few days previous to this, one of the MacIver's vessels had been discharging gin and brandy at Portskerra. A violent gale from the north rose, and the vessel, dragging her anchors, was dashed to pieces on the rocks which everywhere bound these shores. On the forenoon of the day on which the postman from Thurso was due, young Donald was eagerly and anxiously looking out for him. Somewhat earlier than usual for the postman to make his appearance, he observed two men making their way westwards, whom he took for the postman and another in his company. As they drew nigh he advanced to meet them, but he desisted on nearing them that they were strangers, and he withdrew. The strangers, however, called out to him not to go away, as they wished to speak to him. He obeyed, and went to them. They scanned him from head to foot, and spoke to each other in a language unknown to young Donald,—no doubt English or Lowland Scotch, of which Donald was entirely ignorant. The strangers were two of the crew of the vessel wrecked the previous day at Portskerra, and were travelling westwards to join another vessel belonging to the same firm, then at anchor in Loch Eriboll. They asked Donald in Gaelic if he knew the village of Farr. He replied that he did; and to display his geographical knowledge, added that he knew Tongue, that he had been there once with his mother visiting

relatives who resided at Kirkiboll. They then offered him two shillings if he would guide them to Farr and Invernaver. This most tempting offer was accepted, and he at once set off with them. On arriving at Bettyhill he was paid, and some refreshments given him, which made Donald think highly of his employers.

When he was about to return, the men told him as they were strangers in the district and to the road to Tongue, if he would accompany them there, he would be paid other two shillings. The boy, appreciating their generosity,—the temptation of being the possessor of four shillings flashing through his mind,—agreed.

Reaching Kirkiboll, he was paid; and as he was about to part with them, they said as he had come a long way he must be tired, that he had better accompany them to the inn, get some refreshment, stay all night, and begin his return journey in the morning. Being late, and as they behaved very generously to him throughout, he assented. A good bed was provided for him, and in the morning a substantial breakfast was given him. Breakfast over, each party prepared to take his separate way. The strangers, cruel-hearted—acting on the principle of the Central African Arab who decoys his victim till he is beyond reach of making his escape, and then makes him his slave—enticed him, by the offer of four additional shillings, to accompany them to Loch

Eriboll. True, he knew not the way there, but he knew he could make his way back easily to Tongue that night, as they told him the distance was not far. The idea of being owner of so much money—more than he could get for a whole summer's herding—prevailed; he consented, and away the three went, reaching Loch Eriboll before the afternoon was far spent. The vessel was seen lying at anchor close to the shore. A boat from the vessel was sent for them, and poor little Donald required little persuasion to go on board; for would he not have many tales to tell upon his return of the wonders he had seen on board the ship? He was delighted with everything he saw, and filled with admiration at all he was shown. He was then shown into the cabin, and well treated with meat and drink. He was so overjoyed that the evening was well advanced before he could think of leaving. He at last came on deck to get to land. He looked round him, but, alas! no land was to be seen. He was far out at sea, where for the present we shall leave him, and return to Armadale.

## CHAPTER IV.

### DONALD IN CAPTIVITY.

“Ochon! ochon! ochon-a-righ!”—*Old Song.*

DONALD not having made his appearance during the day at the usual time, his parents became somewhat alarmed; and as the evening wore away, and night came apace, it caused them serious anxiety. Their feelings regarding their missing boy may be more easily imagined than described. The intelligence of the herd-boy being missing flew through the hamlet. Men, women, and lads could be seen in anxious conversation, and in a very short time gathered together and wended their way towards the boy's home. After hearing the doleful tale from the boy's mother, it was instantly resolved to go in search of him. He might have fallen into one of the lochs, or he might have fallen over the rocks into the sea. He might have been gored by one of the cattle, and lying on the moor wounded; or he might have fallen into a hole, and been unable to extricate himself. A hundred and one guesses were made. The search was continued all night; shouts were raised to evoke a reply, but no reply was made, save the cry of a distant curlew, or

the echoes of the rocks. Daylight appeared, but no trace or tidings of Donald. The search was continued—all in vain! At last it was the unanimous opinion that the herd-boy had fallen over the rocks into the sea.

On the Sabbath-day following, some of the Armadale folks, who had gone to Farr church, learned in reply to inquiries that a boy answering the description given had been seen by some one in the company of two men, clad like sailors, travelling westwards on the very day Donald was missed. The intelligence was quickly spread abroad and conveyed to the disconsolate parents. The postman from Tongue, on his way eastwards to Thurso, was due on the morrow, and his appearance was anxiously and eagerly looked for by the people as well as by the missing boy's parents. The postman was at last despatched coming; all rushed towards him, and many were the questions put to him. He stated that he had heard of two men in sailors' garb and a boy being seen at Tongue. The description given coincided with what he heard. The parents of the boy instantly set off to Tongue, hoping he would be found with his relatives at Kirkiboll, but on arriving there they were doomed to disappointment. He had not called upon his relatives, and they had heard nothing of him. On making further inquiries, however, they were enabled to trace him and the sailors to the Tongue ferry, where they were informed



that a boy and two men habited as sailors had crossed a few days before. Beyond that they failed to obtain any trace whatever of the boy or the sailors. They went to Loch Eriboll, but all they could ascertain was that a vessel had left the loch on the very day the sailors and the boy had crossed the Kyle of Tongue together. No one, so far as could be traced, had seen either the boy or the men after crossing the Kyle.

The sorrowing parents were overwhelmed with anxiety as to the fate of their dear boy. What was to become of him? Who could the cruel men be that decoyed him from home? What were they going to do with him? Were the men French or Turks? Were they Christians? What and who were they? A thousand curses were invoked upon them for their cruelty and want of feeling. Could they see the anguish and distress of the parents of the boy, they would at once restore him. Disconsolate, sad, grief-stricken, the sorrowing parents wended their way homewards in all the sadness of despair of ever again beholding the face of their dear light-haired, cheerful, and beautiful boy, whose endearing and good qualities were now well magnified all round. Their neighbours clustered round them on their return to learn the news, and to offer them consolation, to heap imprecations upon the cruel foreigners, and invoke divine vengeance upon an act so inhuman

as to inveigle away the boy. Nothing else was talked of for many a day and night but the kidnapping of Donald, to whom we must now turn and see how he fared.

“Stripes his reward, and pain and hopeless toil.”

When Donald was permitted to come on deck, as already mentioned, the ship was miles out at sea. He requested to be put ashore. They heeded him not. He earnestly appealed to his pretended friends and decoyers of the days previous. They were deaf to all his entreaties. Poor fellow! he felt alone, helpless, friendless. Those whom he in his innocence trusted, were both indifferent and callous to his feelings, and apparently indifferent to his fate. They knew there was pith and energy in the captive, that would develop into a good helpmate, and that was all they cared for. He soon apprehended the mistake he had committed. It was too late. The penalty came quickly, and had to be borne. Though “erring steps are human,” as proverbially expressed by the Roman poet, yet they are swiftly and surely followed with condign retribution. Ignorance and innocence are no valid plea for neglect of duty. Neither the allurements of this world, nor of the world’s goods, excuse wrongdoing. Disobedience, and its fruit, prove to be very bitter; and Donald, young as he was, innocent as he thought himself, soon perceived his folly.

and bitterly felt the mischief he had brought upon himself by deserting his charge, and trusting in men of whom he knew nothing. He felt too the grief and anguish he had caused his parents by his thoughtless conduct, and he yearned to be with them again in the happy home, at the cheerful fireside, now made melancholy by his abduction and unknown fate. His young heart was overwhelmed with grief. He saw he was in the power of stern men, absolute strangers to him, and utterly unfriendly and indifferent to his entreaties. No wonder, therefore, that he gave vent to his feelings in overflowing tears. He wept and cried till he was quite exhausted. He laid himself down on deck, and covering his face in the palms of his hands he fell asleep. Waking at daylight, he looked around him. There was nothing to be seen,—nothing but the wide expanse of the ocean, bounded by the bright blue horizon, on all sides. Poor foolish lad! he again began to bemoan the fate that befell him. Ruthlessly decoyed and torn away from the home he loved—now doubly dear to him, the parents whose only son he was, the friends who had ever been so kind to him, the playmates who had been his wonted companions,—all these thoughts and feelings crowding themselves upon his young mind made him very unhappy and miserable. It was very natural. To say the least of it, it was the height of cruelty and

inhumanity to allure from his home a boy so young, so innocent; more inhuman still the pain and strain inflicted on the parents of the boy by the uncertainty of the fate of their only son, and at no time giving them the least information of his being dead or alive to palliate in some degree the atrocious offence of which they were guilty. It was the era of cruel hard-heartedness, of which the Government of the day gave the example in many an instance when naval reinforcements were required.

It has been mentioned that Donald was young; he was also uneducated, and consequently unable to communicate with his parents. Upwards of two years of captivity had passed ere he was enabled to get any one to write a letter for him. The opportunity at last offered itself, and was eagerly embraced. This communication was the only one received from him during his captivity. It could not be replied to, for the destination of the ship being unknown to him, he was unable to give any address, but it sufficed to let them know that he was still alive, and buoy them up in the hope of seeing him some day.

By this time Donald became a handy sailor; his services on deck were fully appreciated, his native buoyancy of spirits resumed their sway. He was obedient, a good worker, and very smart in performing all duties assigned to him; good-tempered, full of fun and good humour. One

who knew him intimately during the greater part of his after-life once remarked to the writer, "Bha fianh ghair, a ghnath na ghnuis,"—"A smile was ever on his countenance." It was true; his very countenance beamed with merriment. He was ever happy himself, and endeavoured to make those around him happy too. From the time he was led away till he made his escape, he had ample food and clothing found him, with fifty shillings a year in money; but the greater part of his unpaid wages was never applied for, as he preferred his freedom and liberty to paid thralldom as soon as the opportunity presented itself to effect his escape.

It is now considerably over forty years since the writer heard these events related, and having at the time no geographical knowledge of the places frequented by these sea rovers, the names have nearly faded from his recollection; but he still remembers the principal places Donald used to mention, such as Lochlin (Norway), Copenhagen, and the Faroe Isles, as common places of resort. Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and various ports on the coasts of Holland were visited. They were frequently in the Isle of Man, and on the coasts of Ireland; and when herrings appeared in the lochs on the west coast, they were there to buy and cure them, bartering gin and brandy for herrings. The headquarters of this liquor traffic seemed to be in the Lewis, the Isle of Skye, and Outer Hebrides. From these re-

sorts they landed cargoes on the mainland, all along the coast from Rhu Stoer in Assynt to Cape Wrath, and at Durness, Eriboll, Tongue, and Portskerra.

In the Outer Hebrides the flesh of seals was made use of for food by the natives, though never offered to stranger guests. Those who did make use of it seemed to be ashamed of the practice. After being some years at sea, the ship put in at a port in the Outer Hebrides. Donald went ashore with some of his shipmates to visit a family, whose habitation was not far from the shore. They were well received, and, as was the usual custom, hospitably treated with all the good things in the house. Donald was surprised that no meat was offered, though plenty of excellent broth was given. Dinner over, the conversation turned on domestic matters. One of the sailors casually asked the host in the vernacular, "Ach an dh-fhuair sibh bheag diu 'm bliadhna?" (But did you get a few of them this year?) To which the host, with much hesitation, replied in a low voice, "Och! fhuair sinn beagan" (Oh yes, a few). Donald suspected what the subject referred to was, and afterwards asked his companions if it were seals for domestic use that had been alluded to in the conversation. He was informed it was, but that their host did not like it to be known to strangers that they made use of them for food. On the mainland the flesh of the seal was regarded with as much abomination as the fish of the eel.

It is truly said that Father Time is a great leveller,—a smoothener as well as a soother. This was Donald's experience. When the first burst of anguish was over, and he had been a few days at sea, the manly part of his nature returned, the wonted buoyancy of spirits reasserted its influence. He accepted the inevitable. He partook of food, and was sent to the galley to assist the cook. In a few months he got on so well, and became so handy, that this part of the ship's work was entirely left to him. Though at first he had to put up with some reprimands for unskilfulness in the art of the cook, he got on very well, as the cooking on board such a vessel for such shipmates was no doubt plain enough.

Singular as it may appear, he was nearly a year at sea before he felt any sensation of seasickness, *mal de mer*, the terror of many besides Frenchmen. We distinctly remember him, long before we ourselves had any experience of the misery of it, describe the agonising effects of the malady on that occasion. He was given a sheep's head and "trotters" to singe. There was a tremendous swell on the sea at the time, and the ship rolled heavily. He was making an effort to get them out of the fire, when the ship gave such a roll that he imagined it was turning upside down; he was thrown backwards several yards; recovering himself, another roll in a contrary direction threw him forwards

into the fire, and his hands were burnt. Notwithstanding this mishap, and the torture he was suffering, he completed the singeing, put the sheep's head and trotters in the copper, and made the broth before he gave in. He expected some harsh comments. None were made. Probably seamen in those days were not so fastidious in taste as they are to-day. Times have changed, and habits and tastes have followed suit. Those who have experienced the prostration incident to sea-sickness, can say it is a most trying ordeal when one has nothing to do, but it is only those who have to work under its influence who can fully realise it in its fulness.

It has been already noticed that our subject had been two years at sea before he could find an opportunity of getting any one to write a letter for him to his parents. It was in Stornoway he met with a good Samaritan. This letter made his position and experiences known to his parents. He did not dare ask any of his ship-mates to do this office for him. If he did, he might be refused, or his desire revealed to the captain. To avoid the one and the other, he abstained from making known his mind in regard to this, his determination being to gain his liberty whenever a feasible opportunity occurred; and this soon happened, as will be seen in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER V.

“ Oh ! freedom is a noble thing !  
Freedom makes a man to have liking !  
Freedom all solace to man gives :  
He lives at ease that freely lives.”

—*Barbour's Bruce.*

TWELVE months or more after being at Stornoway, the ship coasted along from port to port, and from island to island, till eventually Donald found himself in sight of Thurso. Being short of fresh water, it was thought to be a good opportunity to get the water butts replenished. A boat was lowered and manned, our hero being one of the boatmen. They rowed into the river, which the boat no sooner reached than Donald recognised some Armadale men in another boat quite close at hand. He hailed them ; but as soon as his ship-mates saw that he knew these men, and they knew him, whether it was from fear of his making his escape by the help of those men, or the fear of being lynched by them for taking him away in the manner previously indicated, they immediately pulled away to the ship, set sail without the water supply, and an opportunity of gaining his liberty was lost to Donald.

Time passed, and Donald was still before the mast in captivity. The last winter he was to be at sea had now arrived. He was transferred to another ship, the crew of which were strangers to Donald. His first trip in this vessel was from the Lews to the mainland. No skipper was on board for the trip, one of the owners being in charge. It was a beautiful moonlight night, with a pleasant breeze filling the sails; our hero was at the helm. The captain or owner had, it was supposed, gone to bed, for he had been seen to divest himself of part of his clothing. Now and again he came on deck, looked round, and asked the helmsman how the ship's head lay; when satisfied upon the point down he would go. In a short time up he would come again, look aloft, and maintain that the sails were improperly set. When persuaded they were quite right, something else was wrong, and he would needs put it right. Then something else was out of place, he would needs put it right too. To do this he went to the lee side of the vessel, and when handling some ropes fell overboard, whether accidentally or intentionally no one could tell. Donald, who was watching the master's movements, instantly put down the helm, shouting to the "look-out" that the master was overboard, and threw a cask out to mark the place. A boat was at once lowered, and quite close to the cask was found the lifeless body of the master floating on the surface. When everything was put in order, a

consultation was held to decide upon the course to be adopted in such melancholy circumstances. "Right-about-ship" was the decision, and sails set to steer for the part of Lews from which the vessel started. The remains of the master were conveyed to his home, and kept in the house for seven days, the sailors faring well all the time, extra allowance of food and drink being given them; and, along with a large concourse of the inhabitants around, they followed the remains to their last resting-place.

Eastward ho! was the order and rule for the spring season generally. The spring of 1792 formed no exception. How many trips were made in that season and the succeeding summer have not been recorded, but in September the ship put into Loch Eriboll for water, for the first time since our hero had been captured. Donald recollected the place again, as well he might. Having been only transferred to this ship in the previous winter, as we have seen, the other hands were unaware of Donald's associations with the locality, neither could they be aware of the plans he was now forming in his own mind to make a bold attempt for freedom. To him the present was a most favourable opportunity. Would he not embrace it? The difficulty of accomplishing it did not appear insurmountable; it nevertheless required caution. But how could he get his money? Four years' balance of wages was due him at the termina-

tion of this voyage, and it was too much to leave behind him ! Here was the rub ! here the dilemma ! here the great consideration ! Would it not be better to continue the voyage, get his money, and then, if possible, bolt away ? For a short time he was undecided ; money or freedom wavering in the balance ; but, said he, in a low tone,—

“ It’s braw to be free ; ”

and love of freedom gained the mastery, for he ever yearned to be free. He quietly glided to his bunk, put on as much clothes under his canvas suit as would not excite any suspicion, put all the money he possessed in his pocket, slipped down the ship’s side into the boat, and, along with another elderly mate of the same name, rowed ashore for water. The casks were filled, and all being ready to return, Donald asked his mate to get into the boat and he would shove it off. The elderly man suspecting nothing, jumped in and sat himself in the stern. Donald, pretending to shove the boat off, deftly slipped the two oars ashore, and then gave the boat a good shove out, and with, “ Beannachd leat a’ Dho’nill ” (Good bye, Donald), took “ leg-bail ” for it. After getting some distance away, he stood and looked back ; he saw the old man waving his hand to those on board the ship, and shouting, “ D’fhalbh am balach mor-thireach ” (Gone is the mainland youth). The term was applied in the Lews to Donald as he was not an islander. Seeing

another boat leaving the ship, and fully expecting pursuit, Donald took to his heels again. Coming to a field of corn newly reaped, he crept inside a stook, and there concealed himself, waiting events. He had not been long in his hiding-place when he heard the voices of his pursuers vowing vengeance upon him as soon as he would be overtaken. They passed in pursuit, but Donald quietly remained where he was for some time, till he heard the same well-known voices on their return after giving up the pursuit, muttering maledictions upon him, combined with observations upon the loss they had sustained in so handy a member of the crew running away from the ship. He now began to breathe more freely, and darkness coming on he emerged cautiously from the stook. Looking around he saw the coast clear. He instantly made off over the Moine at the utmost of his speed, nor did he halt by the way till he reached his relations in Kirkiboll. He remained with them for two days retailing his adventures, and on the evening of the third day of free life arrived at his father's house in Armadale.

Being dusk, he found his father sitting alone by the fireside. He asked if he could be accommodated for the night. His father replied in the usual Highland fashion, that they were not in the habit of turning the wayfarer away from their door, and least of all a sea-faring man as he appeared to be, for their own and only son was

a sailor, if he was alive ; but, he added, the wife, who was in another part of the house, would have to be consulted. He entreated the sailor to take a chair in the meantime, and draw it towards the fire, as the evening was cold. The goodwife soon made her appearance. She was consulted. She looked at the stranger, scanned his bronzed features, but said nothing. Donald at the sight of his mother could not further restrain his feelings ; he exclaimed, “ O ! mo mhathair ! nach eil sibhe gu’m aithneachadh ? ” ( O ! my mother ! do you not recognise me ? )

## CHAPTER VI.

“Thou seest the braided roots that bind  
Yon towering cedar to the rock ;  
Thou seest the clinging ivy twined  
As if to spurn the whirlwind’s shock.

Poor emblems of the strings that tie  
Her offspring to a mother’s heart ;  
For those will, mouldering, yield and die,  
But these can never, never part.”

—*Fireside Education.*

THE relation that subsists between parent and child is the strongest, the closest, the tenderest that exists in human society. To the affection which nature teaches us to bestow upon our offspring, reason and reflection add other and more endearing ties. How many hopes and fears, how many ardent wishes, how many anxious apprehensions, are twisted together in the threads that connect the parent with the child ! Donald’s mother, on turning to her long-lost son, was soon encircled by his arms. She wept for joy, calling him by every endearing epithet which only a fond mother can make use of, and all in a breath related to him the many sleepless nights she endured ; the many thoughts and even dreams

she had about him in his enforced absence, the many times he appeared to her in those dreams, the intense agony of mind his long-continued absence had caused to herself and his father before they received his letter to let them know that he was still in the land of the living, and how the fact of the letter being received caused them the intensest longing for the return to them of their only son—their much-loved long-lost boy. The father was no less demonstrative, though more sober in the expression of his joy, at the recovery of his boy, his hope, his only stay; the one that he thought and hoped would see his head laid upon its last pillow. For years Providence had tried them, proved them; and now, in response to their united prayers, restored him to them safe and sound!

The joy was too great not to be partaken of by all the neighbours around, who were speedily informed of the return of the long-lost herd-boy. All flocked in to see him, to welcome him home, to hear from his own lips how he was spirited away, and how he had fared during the years he had been absent. His return was the topic of conversation in the district all around. He became a veritable social lion. He was fêted in every house, he was invited everywhere, his company was courted by all, and the lassies thought young Donald the best-looking lad in all the land, proud of



the sailor taking notice of them, shaking hands with them, talking and joking with them, telling them yarns of his adventures, and sailor stories. May we not say it was very natural? Those who do not know, or are unacquainted with rural life and customs in their natural simplicity, or the intense interest taken in the conduct and well-being of a member of a rural community far from his home, and the deep affection that subsists amongst parents, children, and relations in the Highlands, may smile at the recital; nevertheless, it is the fact. No wonder, then, that the honest, warm-hearted, simple-minded Armadale parents and the Armadale people showed expressions of love, sympathy, and affection for the long-absent member of their community, and gave vent to their feelings of joy, satisfaction, and thankfulness at his reappearance amongst them. Not only were those expressions and feelings publicly manifested, but in every house, in the stillness and quietude of the night, when parent-priests offered their devotions to their Maker and Guardian before retiring to repose, and commended themselves and their belongings to His care during the night, thanks were devoutly offered to the Almighty, the Omniscient, the Giver of all bounties, for the restoration to them of him for whom they long mourned, and whose return in life had been so long and so ardently wished for and prayed for.

“ Let not ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure ;  
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile  
The short and simple annals of the poor.”

The hamlet was all cheerful and merry during the winter following, and none enjoyed himself or made himself more enjoyable than the sailor. He appreciated at its proper worth the fervid kindness and partiality shown to himself, and the extreme kindness and sympathy experienced by his parents from neighbours all around them during his enforced absence. He was informed of the general lamentations for his uncertain fate, and the great sympathy it aroused for his parents. He was overjoyed, he was thankful, he was grateful.

Thus we see the intimate and endearing relations that existed between the inhabitants of townships and hamlets, and between parents and children. Children were regarded by parents as their great and best stay and support in their old age. The children, as they grew up, would never allow them to want or be a burden on the community. So long as they had their children about them they were happy, and considered themselves independent of all the vicissitudes of life. The affection of children to their parents led to the most zealous exertions and the greatest sacrifices in providing for their parents' support and comfort. Children were considered less as a present encumbrance than a source of future assistance, and as the prop

of declining age. Whatever their misfortunes might be, they believed that while their offspring could work they would not be left destitute; and it is pleasing to observe that among many changes of character this laudable feeling still continues in considerable force. If a poor man's family are under the necessity of going to service, they settle among themselves which of their number shall in turn remain at home to help and take charge of their parents, and all consider themselves bound to share with them whatever they are able to save from their wages. This sense of duty is not extinguished by absence from the mountains. It accompanied the Highland soldier amid the dissipations of a mode of life to which he was not accustomed. It prompted him to save a portion of his pay to be remitted to his parents, and to work when he had the opportunity that he might increase their allowance. Innumerable instances of this are well known, some of which will hereafter be recorded. Rents have been paid for parents at home by sons and daughters in service in the south of Scotland, in England, and in the colonies. Thus, in the words of the Mackay poet,—

“ Each Highland hut was the home of domestic affection,  
Honour and industry sat at the hearth of the poor;  
Piety prompted the day's and the night's genuflexion;  
Those who felt sorrow could still be erect and endure.  
Born in no bright summer bowers,  
Sweet were the fair human flowers,

Maids of the Highlands array'd in their glory of smiles ;  
Blessings of good men's lives,  
Thrifty and sober wives,  
Mothers of heroes ! Where are they now ? *tell me where ?*

Nimrods and hunters are now lords of the mount and the forest,  
Men but encumber the soil where their forefathers trod ;  
Though for their country they fought when its need was the sorest,  
Forth they must wander, their hope not in man ! but in God.  
Roaming alone o'er the heather,  
Nought but the bleat of the wether,  
The bark of the collie, or crack of the grouse-slayer's gun,  
Breaks on the lonely ear ;  
Land of the sheep and deer,  
Albyn of heroes ! the day of thy glory is done !"

The winter months passed away, and as the days began to lengthen Donald began to revolve in his own mind what he would be at, what his future course would be, to what he would turn to get an honest living. At home, or in the whole county, there was no employment of any kind to be found.

Like Robinson Crusoe, our hero wished to assume, for want of other employment, his old habits as sailor, the only course he could see open to him. He informed his parents, who were sorely grieved at his resolution, of his intention, and how unhappy he felt at having no useful work to do, idling his time away when he might be earning some money and rendering them some assistance by sharing his pay with them. He told the writer many years afterwards, that, were there a road to Stornoway, he would at that time have undertaken the journey with great delight. Events soon decided his career.

Within a few weeks thereafter rumour was afloat that a Sutherland regiment of fencibles was about to be raised, on the same principle as those of 1759 and 1779. Donald was delighted at the news, for if such were to be the fact he would be the first to enlist. A sailor's experience was no unimportant preparation for a soldier's mode of life and duties. Discipline on board ship was a step towards that of a soldier. The endurance of all kinds a sailor has to undergo fits him at once to be a hardy military man, and to sustain fatigue and vicissitudes of weather with equanimity. The rumour proved to be well founded, for in the month of March 1793 the young Countess of Sutherland appealed to the able-bodied men of her extensive estates to arm in defence of their king and country, menaced by the French Revolution. This appeal of their young lady chief was nobly, patriotically responded to by the *élite* of the population. The same zeal and spirit with which the youth of this distant county engaged in His Majesty's service in the years 1759 and 1779 were manifested this year. No deficiency of spirit was shown. The number of men required was a thousand. All the appointed officers had to do was to make a selection of the men best calculated to fill up the ranks of the regiment, which was completed in as short a time as the men could be collected from the rugged and distant districts they inhabited.

Donald with a large number of the Strathnaver young men were the first to enlist. This beautiful strath became the property of the Sutherland family by fraud and force in 1647, and ever since that time the Earldom of Sutherland derives its second title from it. It formed till then the most fertile and most populous portion of the territory of the Mackays. The ranks of this Sutherland regiment bore evidence of the propriety of this appellation, for in its ranks were upwards of 250 Mackays, 104 of whom bore the name of William—all *Strathnaver men*. In the case of our hero "Donald Mackay," "The Sailor" suited better, and the *sobriquet* stuck to him as long as he lived, and to his descendants to this day.

The martial spirit of the men of Sutherland shone conspicuously this year and next. In a previous chapter we have seen with what alacrity the Mackays responded to the call of their chief in 1794. Thus, in the same year as it were, two thousand men voluntarily, and by promises of future protection to their families, and to themselves on their return, left the county, as gallant, brave, and high-spirited men as ever marched. Citizen soldiers they were, but they conducted themselves in quarters, and in the field in face of the enemy, in a manner superior to many of the regiments of the line. What a misfortune to the State and the country that such men cannot now be found in the county! How many, it may

be asked, could be enrolled to-day in the same district?—*not one*. An attempt was made during the Crimean War to enlist men to reinforce the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders by offers of large bounty; it ended in a miserable failure. The cry went forth, "*Let — with his sheep go and fight the Russians.*" This change of feeling of respect and reverence for superiors was brought about by the circumstances that took place between 1812 and 1820, and the dreadful evictions and atrocities perpetrated upon a population the most contented, happy, virtuous, brave, and moral of any in Great Britain. A more particular account of these transactions will be given in future chapters. In the meantime we shall follow Donald in his new career as a soldier.

## CHAPTER VII.

“ In the garb of old Gaul, with the fire of old Rome,  
From the heath-covered mountains of Scotia they come ;

No effeminate customs their sinews embrace,  
No luxurious tables enervate their race ;  
Their loud-sounding pipes breathe the true martial strain,  
And their hearts still the old Scottish valour retain.”

—SIR HARRY ERSKINE.

THE great distinction of a country is, that it produces a superior population. Though natural advantages are not to be disdained, yet they are of secondary importance. No matter what races of animals a country breeds, the great question is, does it breed a noble race of men? No matter what the soil may be, the important question is, how far is it prolific of moral and intellectual power? No matter how stern and inclement its climate may be, if it nourishes a force of thought and virtuous purposes. These are the products by which a country is to be tried, and institutions have value only by the impulse they give to the mind. It has been sometimes said that the noblest men grow where nothing else will grow to perfection. At the time of which we write the county of Sutherland was an instance of the truth of this. The same may be asserted



of the whole extent of the Highlands. At this period the happiest relations existed between the tenantry and their chiefs and landlords. "The reciprocal duties of protection and obedience were then acknowledged and observed. The common interests of chief and clansmen had not as yet been diminished by considerations of political expediency or private emolument. The chief was satisfied with that species of dominion, the power of surrounding himself by a contented attached tenantry, and of influencing the mind and the will ; whilst clansmen were happy in acknowledging the kindness of their chiefs, not only by a complete devotion to their service, but by giving such value for the territorial possessions they held, and paying such rents for their lands, as enabled the noblemen and gentlemen of the Highlands to support with dignity and independence an honourable station in general society. In what manner the poor but hardy and economical tenantry of the north enabled the great chiefs and lairds to support their independence, preserve their estates, and convey them from father to son for so many centuries, is evident from the remarkable fact that in no part of the kingdom, containing an equal number of inhabitants, have families and estates been so long preserved as in the Highlands, where the heirs of eighteen chiefs who fought at Bannockburn in 1314 are at this period (1793) in possession of their estates. The Chief

of Sutherland (and Mackay) had the honour of bearing a part in that great battle."\*

The great distinction the "Black Watch"—the "Freacadan du"—had acquired in the battle of Fontenoy, and the "Loudon and Montgomerie Highlanders" in Holland and Germany, the "Fraser Highlanders" in America, their brilliant conduct and eminent services "heard over all Europe," were now fully acknowledged. "The many national jealousies formerly entertained with regard to the character of the Highlanders began to be considered as ill-founded and unjust. With the view, therefore, of adding more men of this description to the military force of the country, Government, at whose head was the Earl of Chatham, granted authority to various noblemen in the Highlands to raise regiments under the patronage of the chiefs and gentlemen of the country, whose sons were to be appointed officers. By their influence, and by the confidence which the people reposed in their chiefs, it was expected that the young men would readily enlist in a corps in which all were to be of the same country, speaking the same language, wearing the same garb, and possessing the same habits. These expectations were well founded."† From 1740 to 1760, including the Black Watch and Loudon Highlanders, 12,000 were raised, and served at home and abroad. Of the services rendered by the

\* General Stewart.

† *Ibid.*

Highland regiments in Germany, Prince Ferdinand, who commanded in chief, reported in flattering terms, "The soldierlike perseverance of the Highland regiments in resisting and repulsing the repeated *attacks of the chosen troops of France* has deservedly gained them the highest honour. Their intrepidity merits the greatest praise."

In 1759, notwithstanding the drain on the population of the Highlands caused by the sending forth of so many men to fight the battles of the country abroad, its internal defence was not overlooked. In this year the Earl of Sutherland was commissioned to raise a regiment of fencibles. Such was his popularity, such the esteem in which he was held by his retainers, that in nine days 1,500 men assembled on Dunrobin Green to be enrolled,—1,100 were selected. General Stewart remarks that, "The martial appearance of these men, when they marched into Perth in May 1760 with the Earl at their head, was never forgotten by those who saw them, and who never failed to express admiration of their fine military air.\* In this corps there was

\* References to the Sutherland regiment of 1759 are worthy of reproduction. The following is a paragraph in a letter from Aberdeen, dated 30th May (1760):—

"Lord Sutherland's Highland battalion marched in line in two divisions on the 19th and 22nd curt. I have not seen a finer body of men as to their size, order, or discipline. In replacing the troops succeeded, relieving and posting sentries, &c., they seemed equally knowing and regular as any old regiment in the service. I have seen them once and again at exercise on the links, pre-

no light-infantry company, upwards of 260 men being about five feet eleven inches in height. In 1763 they were marched back to their own county and reduced, with the honourable distinction that during their term of service no man had been punished. This earl died soon after, leaving an infant daughter his successor.

In 1779 the popularity of her father was not forgotten. A nephew of the late earl was commissioned to raise another regiment of fencibles. No difficulty was experienced. In the parish of Farr alone 154 men enlisted in two days. Next year they were marched away, and remained stationed chiefly in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, always distinguished for sobriety, probity, and the most scrupulous and orderly

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paring for their review, and they went through their manual and platoon exercise, evolutions, and different firings, with an exactness, order, and regularity which does great honour to their officers and commanders.”—*Edinburgh Evening Courant*, July 14, 1760.

“The Earl of Sutherland’s regiment of Highlanders are come to Aberdeen, where they are to continue for the summer. They make a very fine appearance, are surprisingly expert in their exercise, considering the short time they have been in the service.”

“The following anecdote with regard to the Earl of Sutherland’s regiment of Highlanders (now arrived from the northern counties to Aberdeen) we copy from the *Aberdeen Journal* of last post:—‘On arrival of the first division on the western bank of Spey, the ferry boat was not just ready; and that way of passing the river seeming very dilatory, they took immediately into the water (tho’ considerably increased by rain in the Highlands), and above sixty of them actually passed it without the least disorder or concern; and the whole would have followed had they not been restrained by their officers, upon the inhabitants representing that the river was still rising,—a notable instance of the natural

attention to duty. Such was their economy, that if any of their officers in whom they had confidence required a temporary supply of money, one thousand pounds could be raised among the men. This regiment was reduced at Fort-George in 1783.\*

temerity and hardiness of our yet brave and ineffectuated countrymen."—From the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, Wednesday, May 28, 1760.

"On the gallant behaviour of the Right Honourable the Earl of Sutherland's regiment when reviewed on the Links of Aberdeen, July 17th, 1760.

" See *Scotia's* genuine sons in armour drest !  
 While native courage glows in ev'ry breast.  
 Hark ! how the *Bagpipe* animates the whole  
 And kindles ardour up in ev'ry soul !  
 See clouds of smoke in dusky columns rise,  
 While closest volleys thunder thro' the skies !  
 With what exactness ev'ry motion's done,  
 As if perform'd by some automaton !  
 See myriads round, with admiration gaze,  
 And approbation smile in ev'ry face !  
 Children, when grey with age, will tell they've seen  
 The SUTHERLANDS review'd at Aberdeen.  
 (Continue, Heav'n, to aid our conqu'ring arms,  
 And guard our happy isle from Gallic harms.)  
 Where'er they come, let Frenchmen be afraid,  
 And tremble at the PHILIBEG and PLAID."

—*Aberdeen Journal*, 21st July 1760.

"A letter from a gentleman in Inverary to a gentleman in Edinburgh, dated August 4th, 1760, has the following paragraph :—On Friday last arrived here in the way to the Roads, eight miles from this place (Inverary), 100 sturdy fellows of Lord Sutherland's Highlanders, commanded by Lieutenant James Mackay, of Skerray ; though after a fatiguing march, they made as fine an appearance as any troops I ever beheld, and though they are but a young corps, there is scarce a regiment in his Majesty's service better disciplined."—*Caledonian Mercury*, August 13, 1760.

From notes to Dr Pococke's "Tour in Sutherland," edited by Mr D. W. Kemp.

\* General Stewart.

In 1793, as already mentioned, another county fencible regiment was raised. It was embodied at Fort-George, and in a few weeks marched off to Perth. It has been said that Highlanders were then, and are now, averse to military service. Those who knew them best then could and did contradict the baseless assertion. Facts are stronger than assertions or fictions. In the case of this fencible regiment, as it was with the preceding ones, young men from every parish in the county came forward to fill the ranks. No sooner was the regiment stationed at Perth than a band of 200 young men voluntarily left Sutherland in the hope of being able to join their countrymen, walking all the way to Perth. The strength of the regiment having been fixed by Government at 1,000 men, the commanding officer was unable to accept their services; but seeing the fine physique of these men, permission was obtained to add another company to its complement of men, increasing it to 1,100 strong. Some of those not accepted returned home, but the greater portion elected to enlist in other regiments. This forms a most striking contrast at this period to that of the Crimean War. The *morale* of this regiment, like that of the Mackay regiment of the same period, was of the highest order. It was commanded by officers who knew their men and the discipline that suited them. The adjutant, a martinet from the 42nd, did not, in the first instance, as we shall see hereafter,

attend to this; he resorted to coercion, which was proved to be unnecessary. The judicious interference of the commanding officer checked the asperity of the adjutant, and all went on smoothly. Five years passed without any individual offending in a manner which could be called crime. In 1797 the regiment was ordered to Ireland. It was said of this corps, as it was said of the Reay or Mackay fencibles, that "their conduct and manners softened the horrors of war, and they were not a week in a fresh quarter, or cantonment, that they did not conciliate and become intimate with the people." \*

The disturbances in Ireland being suppressed, this regiment was ordered home, and disbanded at Fort-George. We must now return to our subject. Of all the men who composed this fine regiment, our hero, Donald the Sailor, was the best known, if we except Big Sam, or Samuel MacDonald, of whom we shall have to record some anecdotes and adventures. Donald was the pet of the regiment, known to every officer and man as full of fun and fond of practical joking. Whatever was enacted in the way of fun, joke, or frolic, was invariably attributed to the "Sailor." "Bha'n sailor an sud" (the sailor was there). The "Sailor" was quite content to bear the imputation. When accused he would merely smile and make no reply. He had a commanding appearance, five feet nine inches in

\* General Stewart. \*

height, strong and robust, with elastic step and erect bearing, a strikingly manly countenance, high forehead, clear skin, blue eyes, dark brown hair, thin compressed lips that, when they moved, disclosed a set of teeth which many a fair damsel might envy, as perfect at the age of seventy-five as they were at twenty-five,—altogether as perfect a specimen as could be seen. Wherever he was he soon became the centre of attraction. He was not given to much talking, yet he could keep those around him always in good-humour, frequently in roars of laughter. Good-humour and fun welled from his eye and mouth ; his very look and countenance, even at a distance, excited mirth and created jollity. Whether a-field or in the barrack-room his companions clustered around him. Fun-loving, mirth-making, he was never known to neglect duty, but invariably impressed upon others the necessity of duty first, amusement after. His name was never entered in the "Defaulters' Book." Above his companions in intelligence, he soon learned his drill and became an active soldier. During the years he was at sea he acquired English and Scotch, and could speak both with fluency. A stranger listening to him would conclude that he was well educated in English. Many, if not all, of his comrades knowing only their mother tongue, had some difficulty on that account in learning their drill. The drill-instructor of that day, like his compeer of this day, was mighty and



voluble in vocal sounds, voluminous in meaningless words and phrases, and instead of teaching and showing how to do it, bewildered and stupefied those whom he had to instruct. In many instances the men lost heart in learning their drill. The "Sailor," being of a genial disposition, knowing human nature under disadvantages, and drill alike well, was often "told off" to instruct the more backward, or, as it has been called, the "awkward squad," an occupation he by no means relished. The issue showed that his heart was not in the work. While quartered in Edinburgh Castle, the regiment was at drill in the fields now called the Queen's Park. Donald was ordered to drill a young recruit from Durness who had joined the ranks. He interested himself more in keeping his comrades in a merry mood than acting as a drill-instructor, and succeeded in accomplishing the end he had in view, for every time the front of his comrades, who too were at drill, was turned in the direction of his pupil and himself, an irrepressible outburst of laughter was the consequence. The adjutant at length became annoyed at the unusual behaviour of the men, and gave the word, "Stand at ease;" "Stand easy." In a quiet gentlemanly manner he told the men that he was much annoyed at their misbehaviour, so uncharacteristic of them; that they were there for a given purpose, for which they were paid; and consequently, for their own credit, and on his

account, they ought to behave themselves in an orderly and becoming manner as befitted good soldiers. One of the sergeants told him that the “Sailor” and his pupil were the sole cause of the unseemly conduct of the men. Receiving this information, the officer turned and looked on for a short time, and then went forward towards the pair. He asked the recruit how he was getting on with his drill. The young man replied he was doing fairly well, but that there was one movement to master which he found it very difficult, in fact impossible, for him to do. The officer asked, what was the movement. The young fellow could not well explain what it was, but that the “Sailor” termed it “The left backward shoulder.” The officer said it was a term with which he was not well conversant, and would like to see him perform the movement. The recruit replied it was very difficult to do, but he would try. It was to take the musket by the right hand at the end of the barrel, placing the thumb in the muzzle, then swing it round the back of the head towards the left shoulder, and then bring it to the former position without losing hold. “Oh!” said the officer, “I see it now;” and turning to Donald ordered him to the ranks,—precisely what the “Sailor” wished to happen. He was never afterwards told off to drill the “awkward squad.”

While the regiment was for a time under canvas on Musselburgh Links, the “Sailor” with

some of his comrades, going for a stroll, came upon a man building a small boat near the shore. The "Sailor" looked intently at the boat, and examined the apparatus of the builder very minutely. Seeing Donald so interested, the boat-builder asked him if he had ever seen such work before. He replied he had. Where? The builder was told, and in reply said he had not been in that part of the country, but from what he had heard the people there were only ignorant savages, incapable of doing such work, and that he himself was the best boat-builder in the district around. Donald and his comrades were disgusted with the opprobrious terms applied to their countrymen, and with the arrant self-conceit of the man. On the way back to camp he said to his companions that he thought the conceited fellow deserved retaliation, to which they all agreed. The "Sailor" planned and carried out the only mischievous act recorded of him. As soon as darkness set in he and those who had been out with him went off to the boat, struck two planks off it, and left. This was repeated time after time, till one afternoon when they were at drill the boat-builder was seen carrying away the keel of the ill-fated and unfinished boat. The "Sailor" pointed him out to his comrades, remarking that it served him right for his self-conceit and incivility to strangers.

At this time the adjutant previously referred to, who was no favourite with the men from

his imperious manner and harsh conduct, took it into his head to go listening among the tents after mid-day drill on a hot summer day. It is said that an eavesdropper seldom hears himself praised if he be the theme of conversation. As he was passing the tent in which the "Sailor" was, an argument was going on respecting his merits as an officer and Christian. He stood listening to the opinions expressed. One maintained that he was a very religious man; another that he was not, in the way Highlanders regarded religion in its effects upon Christian character; that he could not have the power of godliness in his heart, as he showed in his conduct the temper of the devil. The controversy went on for some time between the two. One of them, finding his opponent getting the better of him in the argument, pointing to our hero, who lay stretched in a corner of the tent, exclaimed, "Bidh do thosd, dhuine, cha 'n 'eil nis mo dhiadhachd annsa na'n Do'ull Sailor!" (Be silent, man, there is no more godliness in him than there is in Donald Sailor.) The adjutant, who was still listening, could no longer restrain himself, and, despite the awkwardness of his position among the tents, loudly exclaimed, "Tha fios aig Dia ga'm beil sin beag gu leoir" (God knows that is little enough).

Highlanders of that period, like our subject, entertained no gloomy views on religion. They did not consider that religion was designed to

make their pleasures less. It was founded on the simplest principles of Christianity, and cherished by strong feeling. Their moral education, grounded upon an honourable and tolerant feeling transmitted to them from their forefathers, begot in them a spirit of charity, which continued till within quite recent years. They were wont to be merry, cheerful, and wise. While they made no outward show of their religious feelings, they had the spirit of godliness in their hearts, deeming that religion, in its truest sense and essence, was designed to elevate character, improve morality, and inculcate the grandest of all doctrines, that man to man should brothers be, and do to each other as they would desire others do to them. This was characteristic of Sutherland Highlanders, as exemplified in the various regiments and companies of men raised for the defence of religion and the State from 1626 to the beginning of the nineteenth century. There was no policeman in the county, and no need of him. Public opinion preserved order, and obedience to law enforced morality and kept the peace. Rarely was a door locked for the night. Clothes were left out to bleach at night without guard or watch. All disagreements were referred to a third party. Litigation was abhorred, and seldom resorted to. A sad change of character followed upon the evictions. The condition of the people from Arcadian abundance to poverty,

consequent upon those direful evictions, deteriorated their character. In the same way, and from the same cause, the taste of the people for music, poetry, dancing, and all kinds of social amusement has been chilled. Their evening meetings are now seldom held, and when they do occur, instead of being enlivened by the tale, the poem, or the song, they are too frequently exasperated with political discussions, and complaints against their superiors. This exerts a baneful influence as well on their general manners as upon the natural civility which, in the time of our hero, never permitted a Highlander to pass any person of respectable appearance without a salute or some civil observation; whereas at present, so great is the change, that instead of the cordial greetings of the past, a Highlander will frequently pass his immediate superior without the slightest notice. The aspect of the Highlander, his air, his bearing and carriage, have all undergone a marked change.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN ECCENTRIC COMRADE.

“Twixt sense and nonsense hesitates all day.”

IN the company of which the “Sailor” was a member there was a private soldier of the name of MacDonald, better known by the *alias* MacHuistean (Hugh’s son), a native of Kirtomy, a hamlet in the parish of Farr. MacHuistean was a character of no ordinary type, full of drollery and eccentricity, simple-minded, artless, yet at times shrewd, though confiding, and thus easily led into scrapes. As such he was not only well known in his company, but in the whole regiment.

One of the officers, the adjutant of the previous chapter, had the misfortune to have his right eye defective in sight, probably in consequence of a wound in battle. It gave his countenance a rather grotesque appearance. Unfortunately for himself and the men, he made himself thoroughly disliked by the entire regiment, especially by the “Cuideachd eutrom,” or the “Light Bobs” of that period, who were regarded as more playful, more frolicsome, reckless and mischief-making, than the grenadier

or battalion companies. The light companies of every regiment sustained this character in quarters and on the field of battle. The "Light Bobs" of the Sutherland Fencibles, of whom the "Sailor" and MacHuistean were members, were no exception. They too were true to this standard and stamp of character; active, lithe in body and limb, full of vigour and animal spirits, which *would* find escape and become irrepressible at times. The officer with the defective eye was no longer adjutant. He was given a company. As already mentioned, he was no favourite, and soon became the butt of MacHuistean's inimitable powers of mimicry. MacHuistean, in making wry faces and grimaces, would have done credit to a professional clown. While at drill, and going through the various evolutions that constituted the stock-drill of that day, MacHuistean embraced every opportunity of mimicking the facial contortions and postures of this officer. It became impossible for the men near him to avoid laughing, and sometimes bursting out in loud fits of it. The cause of this levity could not for some time be discovered by the officers. At last the officer mentioned suspected that he himself was the person at whose expense the frequent hilarity was created. He was on the watch. One day, wheeling his company into line in front of the "Light Bobs," he gave the order "Eyes front; dress," in doing which he was in the habit of



bending forward and looking to the "dressing" in a peculiar manner, to see that it was perfectly done. This was the position that MacHuistean delighted to mimic, so as to cause the men within view to laugh outright. It would appear that MacHuistean was in great form that day, producing roars of laughter by his behaviour. These being repeated, the officer, turning sharply round, discovered MacHuistean in the very act of his folly. Walking up to the culprit, he said, "I have watched you, my man; and I'll be on the watch for you."

He was as good as his word, as we shall see further on. MacHuistean, however, desisted from the practice, to the no small chagrin of his comrades, who delighted to see this particular officer ridiculed. He was an excellent officer notwithstanding, extremely attentive to his duties, though occasionally very overbearing and imperious in his manner to the soldiers, irritating them by harsh language to a degree which their spirits could not brook. It was for this conduct on his part that the men did all they possibly dared to annoy him, and encouraged MacHuistean to exercise his powers of mimicry.

In those days of rough habits and manners, refinement was not much studied. The laws of hygiene were as little studied as thought of. Though great progress has been made within the last half-century in this respect, we have

still much to learn. Little heed was given to the science of sanitation at the beginning of this century. It had not then begun to work out nice problems of health being much affected by eating or drinking, by taste or smell. Effect from cause did not then enter so much into the calculations of physicians. Every unknown disease was incurable, and was regarded as a "plague," for which there was no known remedy. *It was a judgment from heaven for sins committed*; so it was, *the transgression of natural laws*, always divine, propounded by the first historical sanitary engineer, Moses, whose regulations have simply been copied by modern engineers carrying impurities outside the city, town, or camps, and then disposed of by fire or water. At the time we are describing, there was outside every barrack-room door in Edinburgh Castle, and at other military stations, a barrel for holding the men's urine. When full the contents were pumped into other casks and carted away. When the "Sailor" was questioned by the writer as to the utility of all this process, his reply was that the carting away was "for a secret purpose" of some kind. Probably it was all *he* knew of it. One night, after the lights were put out in the barrack-room, and every one had gone to bed, some one got up quietly, took down MacHuistean's kilt from its peg and threw it at him; the poor fellow, unaware that it was his own kilt, threw it to the

next to himself, who in turn threw it to another, till it went round the room several times. It came for the fourth or fifth time to MacHuistean, who, annoyed at the rough play, exclaimed (he was a stammerer, as well as a mimic), "Bh—bh—bheir mis ortsach nach d' thig thu 'n taobhs' a rithisd" ("I—I—I'll make thee that thou wilt not come this way again"), and getting up, he went and put it in the cask outside the door, then returned and quietly lay down. At the sound of the *reveillé*, the morning bugle-call, every one rose to dress. Poor MacHuistean could not find his kilt. Search was made for it all round the room, without success. Beds and blankets were turned and over turned, but MacHuistean's kilt could not be found. At last light dawned upon him, and he recollected his own act of the previous night. He went to the cask outside, and out of it he fished the missing kilt. Holding it up at arm's length, dripping as it was, he looked at it with so quaint and peculiar an expression of countenance, that his companions burst out into an immoderate peal of laughter, by no means relished by the kiltless MacHuistean, who was heard to mutter in anger and anguish, "M—m—ma ta, am fear bu charaich ris so, gu—gu—gu'm be chiad rud a ni e, gu'n croch e mhathair" ("Th—th—the man who was the cause of this, may his first act b—b—be to hang his mother"). No doubt the irrepressible laughter of his comrades at the sight of the kilt, found in such a

plight and place, banished for the time being from MacHuistean's mind the fact of the kilt having been placed by himself where found. The expression made use of makes it evident that for the moment it did not occur to him the act was his own. It was characteristic of the man. How the episode ended, or how he appeared at morning drill—with or without a kilt—has not been recorded.

The eccentricities of MacHuistean were so well known to his superior officers, and caused so much merriment, that they were sometimes overlooked, but they were not always forgotten. One of MacHuistean's failings was too great a liking for strong drinks, whisky being his favourite, when there was a prospect of obtaining it at another's expense. The strings of his own purse were always kept rigidly tight—only loosened to put in, never to take out, except when the time came to make a remittance to his parents. He was not known to be without money. He used every art to beguile his comrades into giving him a glass of whisky or the money to pay for it. One of those artifices was to compose doggerel rhymes, which had no sense in them. These he would recite in a manner certain to cause much amusement, and draw out the wished-for coin. When at any time he saw any of the officers in civilian dress in the streets, he at once accosted them with the greatest *non-chalance*, saluting, and planting himself right in

front of them, and nearly closing his right eye, while the eye-lashes were made to quiver like aspen leaves, saying, "Ge—ge—gentle—men, what will ye get again, faither speak Scotch, to te, sicken bonnie laddie, partikinary ground, ferra fine cumpany, salt malt comin' aboot, our nonsense here." Then another salute, holding out his hand, he would conclude with, "Ge—ge—gentle—men, wull ye gie's a saxpence to get oor morning." He seldom missed obtaining the desired boon, for his peculiarly comical expression of countenance, assumed for the purpose, was considered to be worth the "saxpence." The same act was practised on civilians. He was wide enough awake not to accost those unlikely to be amused, only those likely to comply with his wishes. MacHuistean's acuteness was not infallible. He sometimes encountered stern rebuffs, threats, and insinuations of being both knave and fool. We now leave MacHuistean, to return to him with his regiment in Ireland, where they went in 1797. In that country they were stationed for more than a year, but except one skirmish with the rebels no fighting fell to their lot. Historians of the Irish Rebellion of '98 allude to companies of the Sutherland Fencibles making rapid marches by day and night, coming unexpectedly upon gatherings, and dispersing them before any resistance could be organised. Yet they were much respected, in proof of which several of the men returned home

in 1798 bringing Irish wives with them, and good specimens of the women of Ireland they were, cheerful, handsome, and industrious. In the next chapter, we shall pick up another Sutherland noted character.

## CHAPTER IX.

SAMUEL MACDONALD.

“There were giants in the earth in those days.”

SAMUEL MACDONALD, commonly known as “Big Sam,” was a soldier in the Sutherland Fencibles. He was too big a man to stand in the ranks, and was generally placed on the right of the regiment when in line, and marched at the head when in column, accompanied by a huge mountain deer of uncommon size. This animal was so attached to MacDonald, that whether on duty with his regiment, or on the streets, she was at his side. Big Sam was a native of the parish of Lairg, in the county of Sutherland. He was seven feet four inches in height, and in every way stout in proportion. His parents were of good size, but in nothing otherwise remarkable. MacDonald fortunately possessed a quiet, equable temper; had it been irritable, he might, from his immense strength and weight of arm, have given a serious blow without being sensible of its force. He was considered an excellent drill, from his mild and clear manner of giving his directions.

After the peace of 1783 he enlisted in the

Royals. From that regiment he was transferred to the Sutherland Fencibles of 1793. The Countess of Sutherland, with great kindness and consideration, allowed him 2s. 6d. a day extra pay, judging probably that so large a body must require more sustenance than his military pay could afford. He attracted the attention of the Prince of Wales, and was for some time one of the porters of Carlton House. When the 93rd was raised in 1800 he could not be kept from his old friends; and joining that regiment, he died in Guernsey in 1802, regretted by his corps as a respectable, trustworthy, excellent man.\*

The "Sailor" knew Sam well while serving together in the 1793 fencibles. Many have heard of his extraordinary feats of strength. The "Sailor" delighted in telling tales of Samuel, one of which was his carrying a cannon into the guard-house. Sam's turn came to be on duty as sentinel on an exceedingly cold night. His conception of his duty was that it consisted in guarding the cannon. He did so for a time. The night air was extremely cold and uncomfortable, and near at hand was the guard-house with a good fire brightly blazing in it, and his comrades, whom he could hear, enjoying themselves around it by song and story, each time he passed them in his rounds. Revolving in his mind the relative situations of himself and

\* General Stewart.



his comrades, he concluded that it would be much more comfortable to guard the cannon by the fireside than out in so cold a night. He accordingly lifted it in his arms, and carried it into the guard-room, much to the surprise and consternation of those at the fireside. In laying it down he said, "I have taken this thing with me inside, for I considered it better to watch it here than in the cold outside."

On a certain occasion the officers invited Sam to join them at the mess-table. The cloth being removed, two men brought in a huge vessel filled with wine and placed it before Sam. Whether he suspected this to be a ruse of the officers to test his strength of arm, or that he thought it an ordinary circumstance, he said nothing, but good-naturedly grasped the vessel, filled his own glass, and passed it on to the next man beside him, and there it had to remain.

At another time, in the barrack-room, one of his comrades wanted a loaf of bread from a shelf which he was unable to reach. He asked Sam to hand it down to him. Sam, who was standing near him, looked at the man for a moment, and reaching out his big arm, took his comrade by the back of the neck, and lifting him up to the shelf, told him to help himself and expect no one to be his servant, much less he. Such feats were considered marvellous, but Sam himself, evidently unconscious of his vast strength, never thought there could

be anything extraordinary in them. Some men are met with who, when they do anything appearing to themselves out of the ordinary blazon it about, and are ever looking out from the corners of their eyes for the applause which might be given with credit did they not thus spoil the effect. Such vain notions never occurred to Sam.

That keen observer and student of men and animals, the late amiable Dr John Brown, in his "Rab and his Friends," says—"You must have observed the likeness of certain men to certain animals, and of certain dogs to men." There is not in animated nature any other animal that resembles man so much as the dog. Many people have been bitten by dogs when teasing them. The fault was theirs, not the dogs'. The writer, when he meets a huge specimen of the canine breed sauntering along the street, cannot resist turning and pulling its tail. When the good-natured animal turns his head round to see who or what interferes with him, the look of the dog is something to admire but difficult to describe,—a look of inquiry and genial contempt; yet were the same thing done to one of the fry of which John Bright once said in the House of Commons, "that you would hardly know their head from their tail," he would quickly curl his lip, show and use his teeth. Big Sam, like the big dog, was good-natured and dignified. Nevertheless,

the "Sailor" was wont to say that he once saw him in a very angry passion for an indignity offered him, on which occasion he played havoc all round him, as we shall see further on.

Sam's huge proportions made him a conspicuous object, especially on the streets of Edinburgh and Dublin. Attired in his full regimentals, the uniform of his corps, kilt, bonnet and feathers, he appeared to be of enormous size and height, the observed of all observers. His quiet and amiable demeanour was sometimes taken advantage of. Although seldom known to resent remarks or tricks played upon him by thoughtless loungers, he was not quite proof against repeated indignities from the same person. Passing along one of the streets of Edinburgh, a jehu, who often touched him with his whip in passing, tried it once again, hitting him slightly on the face and causing some pain. Sam turned round, caught hold of the back part of the carriage and stopped the horse; and notwithstanding the effects of the whip upon the poor animal, Sam held the position till the jehu descended to Sam's command, and on his knees begged pardon, to the intense amusement of the crowd.

"While this regiment was quartered in Richmond Barracks, Dublin," says Captain Burgoyne in an appendix to his "Records of the 93rd Highlanders," "Sam was generally entrusted to

act as purveyor to the men of the room to which he belonged. The butcher with whom he had dealt for some time used frequently to quiz him about his reputed strength, and was perhaps inclined to think, from the silence maintained by Sam on the subject, that it was not just so great as report stated. One day, while higgling about the price of some purchase,—‘Come, come,’ said the knight of the cleaver, and pointing to a bullock of very excellent appearance, ‘take that on your shoulder, and if you carry it to Richmond you shall have it for nothing.’ The proposed task, strong as Sam was, seemed infinitely beyond his power, Richmond Barracks being distant nearly two miles. The offer, however, was extremely tempting, and he well knew what *éclat* such a prize was sure to obtain for him among his fellows. Sam therefore got the carcase on his back, and to the astonishment of the chopfallen butcher succeeded in carrying it triumphantly to the barracks.”

We may imagine what wonderment the “big man” caused in his bullock-carrying journey to the barracks, a crowd of Dublin street arabs following him, while the more sober and staid citizen stood and gazed at and after him.

This feat of strength, as well as others he was seen and known to have performed, added much to his fame, and led many to think he might be differently constructed by nature to men of

ordinary size; hence arose a desire amongst medical students and others to see Sam in nature's garb, so as to examine him. But the difficulty was how to manage the matter. At last it was ascertained that some of the Dublin butchers were intimate with Sam. One or more of the knights of the cleaver, while he was in the market, induced him to go into a public-house near at hand, where many of the students were waiting for him. He was liberally treated to various glasses of whisky, to which, report says, he was very partial, though no small quantity would affect him. They were all very jovial together. They complimented Sam upon his remarkably fine appearance, his extraordinary size, and the picturesqueness of his uniform, and at last hinted to him their wishes and intentions. Sam, as modest as he was good-natured, spurned the idea. A sum of money was offered him, which was equally inefficacious. The young gentlemen thus baulked, determined to gain their object in another manner. They counted without their host. They might pay the reckoning with the host, but to reckon with Sam was another matter. A whole body of them fastened upon him to throw him down. This was too much for Sam's good-nature to stand. His choler was at-once aroused by so combined and sudden an attack. Shaking himself loose from them, he grasped one of the fellows by the shoulders,—some say by the legs,—and swung him round and

round, knocking two or three down at a time, and well thrashed every one around him, routing them pell mell out of the room, and sending them headlong down the stairs over one another, till they lay in a heap at the foot. He then threw the *man-whip* down on the top of them. The yells of fright, consternation, and pain, in which Irishmen excel, quickly attracted a large crowd of the market people and townsmen to the door of the public-house. The condition of the young fellows, as they were carried away still yelling and groaning, caused great excitement. It was ascertained that it was the Scottish giant who had maimed and maltreated their countrymen. The indignation of the crowd was extreme, yet none dared enter to lay hands upon him. No one inquired who was in fault or who caused the "shindy," but one and all attributed the whole fray to the ferocity of the Scottish giant. They besieged the house, and watched for him to come out. In the crowd was a blacksmith, a powerful fellow, who, attracted by the commotion, had come from his anvil close by, hammer in hand. This fellow stationed himself on a stone by the side of the door. Luckily for Sam he happened to be in full dress that day. As he emerged from the door the hammerman dealt him a tremendous blow on the head, which for a moment stunned him, but instantly recovering himself, he faced the crowd, and cleared a way for himself through it as he would through a

field of corn. All gave way before him, some to the right, some to the left, and any one courageous or stubborn enough to impede the way was brushed aside, with more or less force, without any ceremony, and Sam, like another Wallace, went his way, none daring to pursue.

The mark of that blow remained on Big Sam's head to the day of his death. The effect of it may in some measure account for his premature demise, four years afterwards, at the age of forty-two. No doubt the blow would have been immediately fatal, had it not been for the protection afforded to his head by the feather bonnet he wore. The feathers and thick cloth of the bonnet of the Highland soldier deadened the force of the stroke and saved his life, as it has done on many a field of strife in which its gallant wearers had to contend with overwhelming numbers, from the time it was first worn to the siege and capture of Lucknow, where it saved several officers of the Highland regiments from the tulwar strokes of the ferocious and desperate Sepoy mutineers.

This is the head-gear, so useful, so soldierly, so picturesque, and so national, that the War Office in its tailoring wisdom seemed determined a few years ago to suppress, as they had a few years previously attempted to do with the kilt,—a very unwise proceeding. Scotland is justly proud of its national regiments. Their distinctive uniforms preserved their nationality. The wise

statesman who desires to rule and govern a people or a nation, must study their idiosyncrasies, and as much as possible conform to them. A nation proud of its race, proud of its past history in peace or war, does not quietly acquiesce in its nationality being obliterated by its alliance or amalgamation with another power, even in dress or uniform. In the French wars of the Revolution the representative regiments of Scotland, "in the garb of old Gaul," reflected honour upon their country and upon the military character of Scotland, though blended for one common purpose with English regiments. The national dress of the Highland regiments marked them out for distinctive comment on many a field of fame, from Alexandria to Waterloo, while in naval victories Scotland remains undistinguished, except in the names of commanders like Duncan, Northesk, and Cochrane. The 94th, or The Scots Brigade, which more than any other regiment distinguished itself in the Peninsula, had only the ordinary uniform of a line regiment, hence its deeds of bravery were lost in the general crowd, and conferred no honour upon the military character of its country.

The Scots Greys at Waterloo were purely Scottish. Napoleon was unaware of it. When its invincible charges called forth his admiration, he only exclaimed, "*Tu'ils sont terribles ces chevaux gris!*" ("How terrible are these grey horse!") Their nationality was unknown to him



It was different when he saw the 92nd Gordon Highlanders, only 250 strong, in their bonnets and kilts, marching up, like Greeks or Romans of old, from behind the ridge that protected them from the fire of his artillery, and charging into his solid column ; he at a glance discovered their nationality, and consoled himself for their repulse and defeat of his chosen troops by the exclamation their intrepidity and bravery involuntarily drew from him, "Les braves Ecossais!" ("The brave Scottish men!")

Individualisation of national corps produces the best effect, and gives a full opportunity of appreciating national character. It stimulates heroism, and creates emulation in tent and field. National corps are always respected. The national dress has had its influence on soldiers and officers, and ever will have, when men believe that preserving, or disgracing, their own character reflects on their corps and their native country. Long may it be so. "Vive l'Ecosse!" said a Frenchman, when he discovered the nationality of his interlocutor.

It is a sad and lamentable reflection upon Highland noblemen that no sooner were the services of the gallant Highland soldiers dispensed with by the Government, than the terrible evictions of the people from the homesteads that reared them were commenced. This proceeding will ever remain a stigma upon the Government that permitted the atrocity, and upon those,

the more guilty, who perpetrated such infamous deeds upon a brave, loyal, and attached people. The day of retribution will undoubtedly come. The words of the Mackay country bard were frequently and not inaptly quoted in reference to those events:—

“Ghlac na Sasunnaich fàth oirbh,  
Gus bhur fàgail ni’s laige,  
Chum’s nach bithteadh ‘gur cunntadh,  
‘Nur luchd-comhstri ni b’ fhaide.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Tha mi faicinne bhur truaighe,  
Mar ni nach cualás a shamhuil,  
A ‘chuid a’s fearr de bhur Seabh’gan,  
Bhi air slabhruidh aig clamhan ;  
Ach ma tha sibh ‘nar leòmhnan  
Pillibh ‘n dobhruinn’s ‘na teamhair  
‘S deanamh ‘n deudach a thrusadh,  
Mu’n teid bhur busan a cheangal.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Which may be literally rendered—

“Strangers seized hold of their opportunity  
To leave you more feeble,  
That you might not be accounted  
A people of strife still.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“I do behold your woes,  
Such like have not been heard,  
The better portion of your hawks  
Being enchained by a kite ;  
But if you are of the lion kind,  
Repel in time the impending strife,  
And clench your teeth betimes  
Before your mouths are tied.”

## CHAPTER X.

“ And aye he gied his nose a thraw,  
And aye he crook’t his mou’,  
And aye he cockit up his e’e,  
And said, ‘ Tak tent the noo.’ ”

—G. MACDONALD.

WHILE the Sutherland Fencibles were quartered in various districts of Ireland, they did not come into serious conflict with the natives. Their motive seemed to be rather to overawe than to coerce. On one occasion they were forced to take some prisoners. Being late, and far from headquarters, the officers resolved to stay where they were for the night, to prevent a surprise or ambuscade in the dark by the way. Near at hand was a large farm-building, forming three sides of a square. Here the prisoners were immured, and to keep guard over them a detachment of the light company was told off for that duty, among whom were the “Sailor” and MacHuistean. The night was exceedingly cold, and each of the prisoners had a blanket given him to protect him from the inclemency of the weather, and, if disposed, to sleep in it. During the night it came to be MacHuistean’s turn for guard in a portion of the building. One of the prisoners pretended

that he had been seized with colic, made a great moan about it, and entreated the sentinel, by every term of persuasive language, to permit him to go out into the yard. MacHuistean granted him the desired permission. The prisoner on going into the yard found a graip, which he stuck in the ground and placed his blanket on it to conceal his movements, and crawling away backwards, keeping MacHuistean in view, got away in the dark. A few minutes elapsed, MacHuistean was heard to exclaim to his prisoner, whom he supposed to be under the shelter of the blanket, "S-s-s's fhearr dhuit bhi tighinn, tha thu fada gu leoir ann sin" ("Y-y-you had better be coming, you are long enough there"). Some of MacHuistean's comrades hearing what he said, came towards him, and finding what had occurred, accused him of having accepted a bribe to permit a prisoner to escape. MacHuistean, innocent of any wile, continued to call upon his prisoner to come in. Receiving no response, he ventured towards the blanket perched on the graip. He had not advanced more than a few steps when he found himself sinking in the manure heap, running the risk of soiling his boots and white spats. He stepped back, stood and gazed at the blanket, calling out in loud tones, "'S-s-s's fhearr dhuit a bhi tighinn steach, tha thu fada gu leoir ann sin" ("Y-y-you had better be coming in, you are long enough there"). It is needless to say that

the prisoner heard not the word of command. He was too quick-witted for MacHuistean. He had gained his liberty long before MacHuistean was relieved and off guard. Next morning MacHuistean was questioned as to his having permitted a prisoner to escape. In reply he simply said, “ ‘S -’s -’sann dh-fhalbh e mar fhaileas teinn adhair, ‘s cha’n eil fios agamsa c-’aite an deach e ” (“H-h-he went away like a flash of lightning, and I know not where he is gone”). This dereliction of a soldier’s duty was overlooked at the time, yet it was placed to his debit.

Some time afterwards the “Sailor” and MacHuistean were on the same guard, but in different sentry-boxes. Tired with the monotony of his duty, the latter, in an unlucky hour, placed his “brown Bess” in a corner and marched off to have a chat with his friend the “Sailor,” who expostulated with him on the danger he was incurring by leaving his post and abandoning his musket. The subject he had come to discuss with the “Sailor” was to him of more importance than his sense of duty. In the interval, as bad luck would have it,—bad luck always follows neglect of duty,—the officer, who was the butt of MacHuistean’s mimicry, making his customary round, came to MacHuistean’s box and found the sentinel missing. The “Sailor’s” box was next visited, and MacHuistean was found there. The officer had, as already stated,

declared he would be on the watch for him. This delinquency presented him with the desired opportunity. He embraced it. MacHuistean was immediately ordered to be arrested, sent to the quarter guard-house, and reported. The poor fellow was tried by court-martial, and sentenced to be flogged. This was a great event in the regiment. It cast a gloom over all, and especially over those who well knew that MacHuistean's mistake and misapprehension arose from sheer simplicity of mind. Never did it occur to himself that he was guilty of any dereliction of duty or aught that was wrong, nor that punishment would be the result. No one was more grieved at the crime and its result than the "Sailor," for he was aware it was MacHuistean's attachment to himself that in a manner led to the unfortunate affair; and though he could not in the least degree help it, he felt he was in a measure to blame.

When the day arrived to carry out the sentence, the "Sailor" shrank from being an eyewitness of the scene. Although not his turn, he got one of his comrades to exchange places with him, and he acted as cook for the day. Whatever may have been the number of lashes to which MacHuistean was condemned, the commanding-officer ordered only the half to be inflicted. Before this diminished number was inflicted the doctor ordered his release and directed that he should be taken to the hospital. Under-

standing the meaning of the order, MacHuistean lifted his hand as if to strike the doctor for ordering him to the hospital, and declared he would go to no such place; he would go to his friend the "Sailor," who would attend to his wounds better than any hospital man or woman. His wish was granted. The "Sailor" was glad to see him back again. MacHuistean, after resting for a time in the barrack-room, asked the "Sailor" what he considered the best thing to apply to his wounded back. Donald informed him that he thought whisky the best medication, though very painful at first. The whisky was obtained, and the wounds rubbed for a short time, but the pain was unendurable. The "Sailor" prevailed on him to drink some, saying, "What is good for the outside must be good inwardly, so you will take the remainder inside." Poor MacHuistean, exhausted with pain, was only able to take half-a-glassful, and begged the "Sailor" to drink the rest.

In a short time MacHuistean recovered, and went about as usual. In the barrack-room the flogging was never alluded to, but the cure advised by the "Sailor" became a frequent source of fun, the allegation being that the "Sailor" advised it for the sole purpose of a share of the whisky falling to himself. Such was not the fact, the "Sailor" only knew that the whisky cure was recommended for pains and stiffnesses. Whether it was a proper cure for MacHuistean's

wounded back or not may be debatable; still it had the desired effect, for the patient soon recovered.

While the regiment was in its last quarters in Ireland, the "Sailor," along with another private from the parish of Rogart, and a sergeant of the same company, were billeted in a gentleman's house in the town. The gentleman had a family of two sons and a daughter. The eldest son was somewhat weak in intellect, the daughter was similarly affected, but the younger son was a smart fussy young man, and an officer in an Irish regiment of militia. In the house as cook was a young woman from Ayrshire. One forenoon the "Sailor" was sitting at the kitchen fire pipeclaying his belts preparatory to parade, when in came the *daft* son, spat on his finger, rubbed it on the bottom of a pot at the fire-side, and drew it along the "Sailor's" pipeclayed belt. The "Sailor" mechanically stretched out his hand and pushed the fellow from him, when, coming in contact with a seat that stretched across the kitchen, he fell backwards and severely cut his head. In a moment blood streamed down his cassock to his breeches and white gaiters. He howled fearfully; his sister ran to him, and seeing him bespattered with blood, asked "Who did that to you, my dear?" He blubbered out, "Och, sure! the Scotchman did, an' I hate him!" The sister ran to the mother, who, on entering the kitchen and seeing



the state in which her son was, commenced shrieking as only an Irish affrighted woman can do. The other son, who was also preparing for parade, was buckling on his sword when he heard his mother's shrieks, and came to ascertain the cause. Seeing the condition of his brother, while his mother's shrieks rang in his ears, he at once drew his sword and aimed a blow at the "Sailor's" head, but just as he was about to strike, the cook, with astonishing presence of mind, took her apron, struck the sword with it with such force that it not only caused the weapon to miss its aim, but wrapped itself round the blade in several folds. The "Sailor" instantly perceiving this, caught hold of the blade near the point, covered as it was with the damp apron, and bent it back in such a way that it broke near the hilt. "Come, now," said the "Sailor" to the officer, "let us see who is the best swordsman." The officer was no match for the "Sailor," with or without a sword, so he slunk away. In a short time every member of the household was in the kitchen. The "Sailor" adjourned to his room upstairs. He was enraged at the indignity put upon him. He asked his comrades to go and report at the barracks "that this was a house of rebels and croppies, and that their lives were in danger in it." The old gentleman now interfered, and said he wished to explain that to report such a thing would,

under the circumstances and the times they lived in, inevitably bring upon his house disgrace and ruin; that his family was few in number, only three—one a madman, the other a fool, and the third an idiot; and as it happened that such was his lot, he found it a heavy burden, yet withal to be borne with resignation. He desired the "Sailor" to compose himself and not carry the matter further, but continue in the house as if nothing had happened. He would provide them with all they required free of cost, and he would pledge his word of honour, that while they did remain, they would not see his imbecile son and daughter. They acted on the old gentleman's advice. He faithfully fulfilled his promise. They remained in the house until the regiment was ordered to Scotland six weeks later.

On the day they left this house, the cook left it too, and accompanied the regiment. The "Sailor" was married a short time before the regiment was sent to Ireland, otherwise, he was heard to say, he would have married her to whom, in God's providence, he owed his life. His comrade, who was unmarried, made her his wife after arriving in Scotland. She proved to be an excellent helpmate,—as good a wife as she was a cook, and a brave woman.

Soon after arriving in Scotland the regiment was marched to Fort George, and there disbanded in the autumn of 1798.

General Stewart states, that considering the great demand for men at that time, and the character this corps had sustained, it was a matter of subsequent regret that no attempt had been made to encourage them to re-engage on a more enlarged scale of service. There is every reason to believe that almost all of them would have re-enlisted. Two-thirds of the men returned to their native country. This oversight, however, was in some measure remedied, and their service again called for. In what manner they answered this call will be seen by the service of the 93rd Sutherland Highland Regiment.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE 93RD SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS.

“Faithful to trust is the lion-like host,  
Whom the dawn of their youth doth inure  
To hunger’s worst ire, and to action’s bold fire,  
And to ranging the wastes of the moor.  
Accustomed so well to each enterprise snall,  
Be the chase or warfare their quarry ;  
Ay, ever they fight, the best for the right,  
To the strike of the swords when they hurry.”

THIS, perhaps the most Highland of Highland regiments, was raised in the year 1800, letters of service having been granted for that purpose to Major-General Wemyss of Wemyss, a near relative to the Countess of Sutherland. He had previously commanded the 1793 Sutherland Fencibles, many of whom joined the new regiment. The strength at first fixed upon was 600 men, which number was raised in a short time, —460 were Sutherland men, and the remainder from Ross-shire and adjoining counties. The regiment was, however, soon augmented to a thousand men. A striking peculiarity in the constitution of the 93rd consists in its having probably furnished the last instance of the exercise of clan influence on a large scale in the Highlands. A census was made of the disposable

population, the Countess appealed to her numerous tenantry in Sutherland for their able-bodied sons to join the ranks of this Sutherland regiment, as a test at once of their duty to their Chief and their Sovereign, promising the tenantry her protection in all time coming, and provision for their sons on their return home. The appeal was well responded to. The young men seemed never to have questioned the right thus assumed over their military services by their Chief, at the call of the Sovereign. In a few months the regiment was completed. In another chapter—the darkest chapter in the history of any district in Great Britain or Ireland—it will be seen how these promises were fulfilled, and how this devotion to Chief and Sovereign, and the service of the State, were requited.

As a crucial proof of the high character of the first levy for the 93rd, it may be stated that until the final inspection of the corps the recruits were never collected. After enrolling their names they were freely permitted to pursue their ordinary avocations at their homes, until it was announced in the different parish churches that their presence was required at headquarters, when a body of 600 men assembled, and marched in military form, pipers in front, without a single absentee, to Inverness, where Major-General Leith Hay inspected them in August 1800.

During the sojourn of the regiment at Inverness, there was no place of confinement in connection

with it, nor any guards mounted, the usual precautions necessary with soldiers being considered quite inapplicable to the high-principled self-respecting men of Sutherland. Many of the non-commissioned officers and men were the sons of respectable crofters, and almost all of them of reputable parentage. The officers were mostly well-known gentlemen of Sutherland and Ross. Indeed, the regiment might be regarded as one large family. A healthy rivalry and stimulus to the best behaviour was introduced, as in the Fencibles of Sutherland, by classifying the different companies according to parishes. While the characteristics referred to seem to have strongly marked the men of Sutherland, they also, in a greater or less degree, belong to the original levies of all the Highland regiments.

In September 1800, one month after assembling at Inverness, the 93rd embarked at Fort George for Guernsey, where it was fully armed and equipped, and where it made rapid progress in drill and military training. Here it was in 1802 that "Big Sam" died, as related in a previous chapter. He joined the 93rd when it was raised. His tomb was restored in 1820 by the non-commissioned officers of the 79th, and in 1879 by the officers of his own regiment the 93rd.

In 1803 the 93rd was removed to Ireland. While quartered in Dublin it had to assist in quelling an attempted rebellion, and performed

the disagreeable duty kindly, yet firmly and effectively.

In July 1805 the 93rd joined the armament under the command of Major-General Sir David Baird for the capture of the Cape of Good Hope. The expedition sailed early in August, landed in Table Bay in January 1806, and was brigaded with the 71st and 72nd Highlanders in a Highland brigade. In landing in Lospard Bay, on the 6th January, thirty-five men of the 93rd were drowned by the upsetting of a boat in the surf. On the following day General Baird moved forward to attack the enemy. Ascending the Blauw Berg, or Blue Mountains, he found them 5,000 strong, drawn up in two lines on a plain, with twenty-three guns. Quickly forming his troops in two columns, he directed one to attack the enemy's right, while the Highlanders moved on to attack in front. The enemy opened a heavy fire of grape, round shot, and musketry on the advancing British force. Arriving near the enemy, order was given to charge. This order was obeyed with the alacrity usual with Highlanders. They rushed upon the enemy with their accustomed impetuosity, which struck their foes with terror, who, discharging the last volley without aim or effect, turned and fled in confusion, leaving upwards of 600 men killed and wounded on the field. The 93rd lost sixty men killed and wounded. The total British loss in killed and wounded was 207. The colony immediately surrendered.

The 93rd remained in garrison at the Cape till 1814, when they re-embarked for England. During the long period of eight years' service at the Cape, nothing occurred to vary the regular life of the regiment. This life was, indeed, remarkably regular, even for a Highland regiment, and would probably find no parallel in any corps of modern times. The men—who were mostly actuated by genuine religious principles, such principle as is the result of being brought up in pious well-regulated families at home—conducted themselves in so orderly a manner, that during the whole of their stay at the Cape severe punishment in their case was unnecessary; and so rare was the commission of any crime, that twelve and fifteen months elapsed without a single court-martial assembling to try a soldier of the 93rd. As an emphatic compliment to the steadiness of the men, they were not ordered on parade to witness the infliction of corporal punishment upon men of other regiments in garrison with them.\*

The most remarkable proof of the earnestness and genuineness of the religious feeling in the regiment, as well as of its love of all that was peculiar to their native land, was this:—There being no divine service in the garrison except the customary one of reading prayers to the troops on parade, these Sutherland men, in addition to their stated meetings for reading the

\* History of the Highland Regiments.



Bible and for prayer, formed in 1808 a church among themselves, appointed elders and other office-bearers, engaged, and paid a stipend to, a minister of the Church of Scotland, and had divine service regularly performed according to the forms of the Presbyterian Church. As a memorial of this institution, there still remains in the possession of the sergeants' mess the plate used in the communion service. This establishment had an excellent effect, not only upon its immediate members, but also upon those who made no pretence of being guided by religious principles.

Such men were not likely to forget the claims of benevolence and relationship; and indeed such were their economical habits and frugality, that in addition to their contributing to the support of their minister, and to the charitable funds formed in the regiment, the men were in the habit of lodging in the hands of a trusted officer savings amounting to £5 and even £50, until an opportunity offered of forwarding money to their relatives at home. On one occasion in particular, £500 was remitted to Sutherland, exclusive of many minor sums sent home through the post-office and by officers, as will be related below.

This excellent conduct on the part of the Sutherland men did not proceed from any temporary cause. It was founded on principles uniform and permanent, the result of fireside

education of character at home, the holiest, the most lasting of all. When these men disembarked at Plymouth in August 1814, the inhabitants were both surprised and gratified. Instead of rushing to spend their savings in gin-shops and taverns, the soldiers of Sutherland were seen in booksellers' shops supplying themselves with Bibles and such books and tracts as they desired to possess. As at the Cape, so they were in Plymouth, steady, sober, while they indulged in dancing and social meetings. Their religious habits were free of all fanatical gloom, and they always promoted that social cheerfulness characteristic of the homes from which they came. Their social meetings were frequently joined by many respectable inhabitants, happy to witness such scenes among the common soldiers in the British service. While they were thus keeping up the customs of their native land, and conducting themselves as high-bred soldiers of the Crown, such of them as had relations in Sutherland did not forget the *change in their condition consequent upon the evictions of 1812*, and the operations of the so-called *new improvements*. Upwards of £500 was lodged in one banking-house in Plymouth to be remitted to Sutherland to aid them in their dire distress. Several of these sums exceeded £20 from an individual soldier.

On the eve of leaving Ireland for the Cape the reviewing officer complimented them as ex-

hibiting "a picture of military discipline and moral rectitude; and although the junior regiment in his Majesty's service, they exhibit an honourable example worthy the imitation of all."\*

On another occasion the character, discipline, and interior economy of the 93rd were declared to be "altogether incomparable." They were characterised in similar terms by every general officer who commanded them. Lord Howden (General Craddock), when this regiment was leaving the Cape of Good Hope in 1814, while expressing "the respect and esteem of the inhabitants, their regret at parting with men who will ever be borne in remembrance *as kind friends* and honourable *soldiers*," adds,—“The Commander of the Forces anxiously joins in the public voice, that so approved a corps, when called forth into the more active scenes that now await them in Europe, will confirm the well-known maxim, that the most regular and best-conducted troops in quarters, are those who form the surest dependence and will acquire the most renown in the field.”†

Such were these men in garrison, and such were the expectations founded on their principles. How thoroughly they were guided by honour and loyalty in the field will be shown in the succeeding chapter.

\* Gen. Beckwith's General Orders.

† Gen. Stewart.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE 93RD SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS—

*continued.*

“Dauntless and patient, to dare and to do,  
Our watchword is ‘Duty,’ our maxim is ‘Through’;  
Hardship and danger but nerve us the more  
To rival the deeds of the true men of yore.”—MACKAY.

**I**N August 1814 the 93rd landed in Plymouth, and in less than a month was ordered to proceed to North America under General Keane. After landing near New Orleans, they distinguished themselves, as they had ever done, in that most disastrous affair of the 8th of January 1815, when they lost no fewer than 506 officers and men. The history of the regiment under such trying circumstances bears out in a very marked manner the fact that the *morale* of the corps remained *unshaken*, and how thoroughly they were guided by honour and loyalty in the field, in hospital, or in prison! Not one of them remained behind in America, though solicited by friends and relatives, who were ready and anxious to receive them; not one of them forgot their allegiance, at a time when desertions from the British army were but too frequent. Men like these did credit to the peasantry of their

country, and contributed to raise the national character. If this conclusion is well founded, the removal of so many of their people from their ancient abodes, where they acquired those habits and principles, may be considered a public loss of no common magnitude. In the new situations where so many of the descendants of these brave and gallant men are now placed and crowded in such numbers as to preserve the numerical population, while the districts from which they have been evicted are left without inhabitants, how could they resume and maintain their ancient character and principles which, according to the reports of those employed by the proprietors, have been so deplorably broken down and deteriorated?—a deterioration which was entirely unknown till the change in the condition of the people, and the introduction of a new system every way detrimental to the probity, religious and domestic habits of the same people when placed in situations and societies where there was more danger of losing than chance of acquiring such valuable habits. It is only when parents and heads of families in the Highlands and everywhere are moral, happy, and contented, that they can instil sound principles into their children, who in their intercourse with the world may once more become, what the men of Sutherland have been, “an honourable example, worthy the imitation of all.”

The fragment left of the 93rd, after the day of New Orleans,\* arrived at Spithead on the 15th May 1815, being in too weak a state to take part in the stirring events on the Continent. Those fit for duty were ordered to Cork, where they arrived on the 28th May. Those unfit from wounds for further service were kept in hospital, and eventually discharged with sixpence a day pension. Several of these men belonged to the parish of Assynt. On their arrival at home—the homes from which they had issued—they beheld nothing but waste fields, and the houses in which they were born burnt and levelled to the ground,—hardly a stone, or sod remaining. They asked what had happened; they were told. In the agony of their despair they wept and wrung their hands, asking where their parents and relations had gone, and how they were faring. When told, they exclaimed, “If we had arms and ammunition in our hands, tired, weary, and crippled as we are, we would march to Dunrobin Castle and level it to the ground in less time than we stood at New Orleans to be shot at by the Yankees!”

The second battalion of the 93rd having this year been disbanded at Sunderland, the frag-

\* The following from the parish of Farr were killed or died of wounds at New Orleans, 8th Jan. 1815:—Hugh Mackay, William Macleod (2nd), William Macleod (3rd), John Maclesal (Macleod?), William Mackay (3rd), Angus Mackay (3rd), Robert Mackay (1st), John Mackay, Donald Macdonald (2nd), Donald Mackay (2nd), Adam Glass, William Mackay (4th), Hugh Mackay (3rd), William Mackay, Alexander Macintosh.

ment of the first battalion in Cork Barracks was filled up by a large draft of officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates from the former. While the second battalion was stationed in the county of Durham, 1813 to 1815, a great commotion occurred amongst the colliers, who ceased work, and threatened to proceed to violence. The Highlanders were ordered out to quell the riotous proceedings of the colliers. Immediately orders had been received, several of the non-commissioned officers were seen to go to blacksmiths' and carpenters' shops to whet their swords. News of this extraordinary proceeding on the part of the soldiers were spread about from house to house, from hamlet to hamlet; and the effect was, when the Highlanders arrived at the scene of the disorder next morning, the colliers were seen trooping away to get underground to their work as fast as they could, and the disturbance ceased.

From this time forth, to the Crimean War, the story of the 93rd is comparatively uneventful. The regiment appears to have moved about from Cork to Athlone, Nenagh, and Limerick, sending out numerous detachments in aid of the civil authorities. In 1818 it removed to Dublin. In 1819 it again removed to the southern counties, where it was frequently called upon to perform the most delicate duties.

In 1823 the 93rd proceeded to the West Indies. During the eight years' stay in various parts of

Ireland it lost not a single man by desertion. On its departure from Ireland, Lord Combermere, the hero of Salamanca, issued a general order laudatory of the services of the regiment while in Ireland, stating that "no regiment in the service stands in greater estimation, or has been more conspicuous for its discipline and soldier-like conduct, than the 93rd."

The regiment remained in the West Indies for two years and a half, having its headquarters successively in Barbadoes, Antigua, St Christopher, St Lucia, and Dominica, sending detachments to Demerara, Montserrat, and other Windward and Leeward Islands. During its stay in the West Indies, the proportion of deaths was considerably lower than in other regiments.

The 93rd landed at Spithead on the 6th May 1834. The original intention was to send it on to Scotland, where it had not been quartered since its formation thirty-four years before; but on account of the serious demonstrations that were made by the populace of London at this time, it was deemed expedient to have as many troops as possible around the capital. The 93rd was consequently ordered to Canterbury, where it arrived in May 1834, and was there joined by its dépôt companies from Scotland.

During the stay of the Sutherland Highlanders in Canterbury, the most notable incident in its history was the presentation of new colours to the regiment by the great Duke of Wellington,



an event which even now is looked back upon as a red-letter day in its calendar. The presentation took place on the 7th October 1834. Immense preparations were made for the ceremony. The day turned out to be particularly favourable for a display. Not fewer than 10,000 people turned out to witness the ceremony, including many of the nobility and gentry of Kent. The Duke, accompanied by general officers and aides-de-camp, came on to the field in their gayest military attire, and reviewed the kilted Sutherland men. Formed into three sides of a square, the hero of Waterloo presented the new colours to the regiment, and gave them a stirring address. He referred to its past achievements and soldierly appearance, and the conduct of the men; he urged upon officers and men, as the result of his long experience, the inestimable value of discipline in maintaining the efficiency of a regiment, without which no amount of personal valour would be of avail. Said the Duke,—“I have passed the best years of my life in the barracks and the camps of the troops. The necessities of the service, and of my duty here, compelled me to study the dispositions and the wants of the soldiers, and to provide for them. And again I repeat to you, enforce the observance of the rules of discipline, subordination, and good order, if you mean to be efficient, to render service to the public, to be respectable in the eyes of the military world as a military

body, to be respected by the community, to be comfortable and happy among yourselves,—and above all, if you mean to defend to the last your colours which I have presented to you, the person of your sovereign, and the institutions, dominions, and rights of your country, and to promote its glory by your actions, as your predecessors have done in this same regiment.”

Colonel MacGregor having replied, the regiment performed several evolutions before the great Field-Marshal, who expressed his entire approbation of the soldier-like appearance of the men and their steadiness under arms. The rest of the day was devoted by officers and men to festivity and rejoicing. The Duke, along with two hundred guests, were entertained by the officers at a magnificent banquet in the mess-room; while, on the opposite side of the barrack-yard, tables were laid for seven hundred non-commissioned officers and privates with their wives; and in the evening the soldiers further enjoyed themselves to a late hour, dancing reels and strathspeys to their national music.

A few days after this memorable occasion, the 93rd left Canterbury for Weedon, Northampton. In 1835 into Lancashire, with headquarters at Blackburn; afterwards in Liverpool. In the latter end of 1835 it was removed to Dublin, where it remained till the end of 1836, when it removed to Newry. Remaining there

for a year, it was sent to Cork preparatory to embarking for Canada to suppress the insurrection that threatened British power in that colony. This service was effectually performed. In the various and complicated movements necessary to suppress risings in many distant localities, the regiment was much divided, and some of the companies endured great hardships in their movements from place to place during the winter. It was re-united at Toronto on the 28th November 1838, and remained in that locality till June 1843.

The behaviour of the regiment during this period received the unqualified approbation of the inspecting officers, whose reports drew from the Horse Guards, in December 1842, the following flattering notice:—"This fine regiment still continues to maintain its high character for sobriety and good order amidst the dissipation with which it appears to be surrounded; and that it is as remarkable for its splendid appearance in the field, and the correctness of its evolutions, as for the quiet and orderly habits of its men in their quarters."

In Toronto officers and men were exposed to great temptations by the abounding hospitality of the inhabitants of the town and district. It was in Toronto and the surrounding district that the evicted of Sutherland found refuge on their expulsion from their native homesteads. Thither they had gone, year after year, for twenty years pre-

vously. They were overjoyed to see the soldiers of their own county regiment in their tartan array and waving plumes. Many of the soldiers were their near relatives, some of them their sons or brothers or cousins. The delight was mutual, the fraternisation affecting. They recounted to each other all that had happened since they parted in the dear old land. They feasted and fêted the soldiers, whoever they might be. If they were Sutherland men, all the more endearing; if not, it was enough that they belonged to the Sutherland regiment,—they wore its uniform, which constituted them Sutherland men.

On leaving Toronto the 93rd went to Montreal. On leaving Canada West, Major-General Armstrong issued an order, in which he spoke of it in the highest possible terms, calling it "superb." It left Montreal in July 1846—the month in which the regiment received its first supply of percussion muskets—for Quebec, where it remained until August 1848, when it embarked for Scotland after ten years' service in the Canadas and forty-eight years after it left its native land, and disembarked at Leith on the 31st August. It at once proceeded to Stirling Castle, where it was joined by the dépôt companies; sending during its stay detachments to Perth and Dundee, and furnishing a guard of honour to the Queen during her stay at Balmoral in the summer of 1849, and in the autumn of the same year when Her Majesty visited Glasgow.

In April 1850 the 93rd removed to Edinburgh; furnishing again a guard of honour to Ballater, as well as to Holyrood during Her Majesty's stay in that historic palace. From Edinburgh the regiment went to Glasgow in 1851. In February 1852 it removed to Weedon, where it remained only six months, when it was sent to Portsmouth. In June 1853 it went to Chobham Camp. On leaving Chobham the regiment proceeded to Devonport, part of it being stationed at Plymouth and part at Dartmoor prison.

We shall now leave the Sutherland Highlanders, and proceed to see what the "Sailor" had been doing in the interval.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“ The world has its delights,  
And its delusions too ;  
But home to calmer bliss invites,  
More tranquil and more true.  
Life’s charities, like light,  
Spread smilingly afar ;  
But stars approached become more bright,  
And home is life’s own star.”

**I**NDEED the great sources of a nation’s power and happiness must always lie about the domestic hearth. There, as nowhere, are sown, and for many years cherished, all those virtues which bloom afterwards in public, and form the best ornaments of the commonwealth. Men are everywhere what their parents make them. If they are slaves, narrow-minded, ignorant, unhappy, those in their turn will be so also. The domestic example, small and obscure though it be, will impress its image on the State, since that which individually is base and little can never, by congregating with neighbouring littleness, become great, or lead to those heroic efforts, those noble self-sacrifices, which elevate human nature.

That we should love the land of our birth, of our early happiness, of that social system under which that happiness had been produced and protected,—the land of our ancestors, of all the

great names and great deeds which we had been taught early to venerate,—is surely not less wonderful than that we should feel a sort of affection for some object we may have borne about with us for a length of time. Loving the land of our birth, we love those who inherit it, who are to us as part, as it were, of the land itself, and the part that brings it most immediately home to our affections.

“Breathes there a man with soul so dead  
Who never to himself hath said,  
‘This is my own, my native land!’  
Whose heart has ne’er within him burned,  
As home his footsteps he hath turned  
From wandering on a foreign strand.”

The Sutherland Fencibles of 1793-98 being reduced at Fort George, the men cheerily set their faces to the north, and with light step and light heart marched towards their homes in Sutherland; on reaching which, one and all were received with open arms and affectionate hearts by parents and relatives, and indeed the whole community. Nowhere is such a reception given to a soldier who has worn a regimental uniform as in Sutherland, whose kindly hearted people are all fond of military life. Truly the poet sang of the soldier’s return,—

“A leal light heart was in his breast,  
His hand unstained with plunder,  
And for fair Scotia hame again  
He cheery on did wander.”

Donald and MacHuistean at length reached their respective homes, and the “Sailor” took

up his abode at the north end of Swordly. During the following winter, on a very stormy night, as he and his wife were retiring to rest, loud cries of distress were heard from the direction of the shore. On looking out, a great conflagration was seen. Not apprehending what it was, Donald went to the shore, and there saw a stranded ship in flames. It was the cries of the crew that were heard, after leaving the ship and climbing up to the summit of the rock-bound coast, where by the reflection of the flames he could see them move backwards and forwards. He hailed them. They came to him. The vessel had struck the shore at high tide; the crew were therefore able with less difficulty to save themselves. Donald led them to his house, where they were comfortably attended to. They told him their ship was named the "Euphemia," of Dysart, laden partly with logwood from the coasts of South America, but they did not disclose of what the other portion of the cargo consisted. The opinion formed was that a portion of the cargo must have been contraband, and set on fire by the crew before abandoning the ship. Pieces of the logwood, which had got wedged in the clefts of the rocks, were from time to time driven ashore, and for upwards of half a century afterwards some pieces were picked up which were as fresh and sound as ever. The people of the district used the wood for dyeing. Donald was informed by



the crew he harboured that they parted company with another vessel, from the same port, off the Butt of Lewis a day previously, and that they very much feared that ship had also met with the same fate as their own. It was afterwards announced that it was wrecked on Sule-skerry, a small island lying northwards, about thirty miles from the coast, and about the same time that the one was stranded and burnt at Portmore; that the crew, after being on the island six weeks, constructed a boat out of the wreck in which they reached Stromness. The "Sailor" some years after went on a sealing excursion to the island with a boat's crew from Armadale, saw the remains of the hut the seamen had put up for protection, and some wreckage on and about the island. The coast was then very dangerous in the absence of lighthouses. It is known that several wrecks occurred at different times on these islands, of which there are two—Stack and Skerries. The crews must have perished, as no account had ever been heard of them. It was with the liveliest satisfaction that the writer, a few years ago, noticed that the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses had it in contemplation to erect a light on the Skerries, as it would be a great boon to ships taking that course east and west.

There was at this time a receiver of wrecks at Borgie, near Torrsdale, whose name was

Donald. He was it would seem a "swell." He always wore boots, which in those days were uncommon; the natives therefore nicknamed him "Do'ull nam boite" ("Donald of the boots"). It would appear he was a "snob" too, thinking himself to be much above using his mother-tongue. The next day after the wreck at Portmore occurred, he was at his post. The intelligence of the vessel being wrecked brought a number of people from near and far to see it. To prevent anything washed ashore being taken away, the receiver proclaimed in Gaelic, "'S leamsa mùr 's tir" ("Mine are sea and land"); which, to be put properly, should be thus:—" 'S leamsa na chuireas mur gu tir" ("Mine is what the sea sends to land"). Hearing the proclamation made in what was conceived to be blasphemous terms, the people around, among whom was our hero, laughed outright, and ridiculed the proclamator, who at once suspected our hero to be the instigator, and showed his resentment accordingly.

In those days salt was very dear, being very heavily taxed; consequently each family living in proximity to the sea generally manufactured its own stock of salt from salt water, as they could not afford to pay the price of rock salt. The "Sailor," having heard the bumptious terms in which the proclamation was made, that sea and land belonged to the receiver, slipped away to his house close at hand, took up two buckets,

approached "Do'ull nam boite," saluting the gentleman in true military style, and asked in his blandest manner, "Mu se bhur toile, an thoir sibh dhomhsa, làn dà bhiota do shail?" ("If it be your pleasure, would you give me two bucketfuls of salt water?") The receiver, who was not in the best of humour, probably on account of the derisive way in which his proclamation had been received, looked at him for a moment, and no doubt suspecting the "Sailor" was chaffing him, angrily retorted by telling him to go to the d—l, and asking the "Sailor" what he meant by demanding permission to take two bucketfuls of salt water. "Oh!" replied the "Sailor," "you said a few minutes ago that sea and land were yours, and as I am in need of a little of the former, I thought I was in duty bound to ask your permission before helping myself." Those present appreciated the "Sailor's" joke, and laughed heartily, to the great humiliation of the receiver, and a lesson was conveyed to him which proved of great benefit to him ever after.

Shortly after this episode the "Sailor" removed to Armadale, amongst the scenes and companions of his earlier days. Though his life throughout was a very happy one, he considered the ten years he spent in Armadale the happiest. Mr Gabriel Reid, afterwards of Kilculmkill, was at this time tacksman of Armadale. The smaller tenants paid their rents to him, in

money, kind, and labour. They were obliged to work for him, being their tacksman, at less than ordinary wages, viz., sixpence a day. Probably the rent was lower in proportion. A rent-book of those days would be a great curiosity. When any one was sent away on a journey, an extra allowance of sixpence was made him. Mr Reid had then a manager of the name of Thomas MacDonald, better known as "Tomas-a-phuirt," from his being a Portskerra man. Thomas, like others endowed with a little authority, occasionally tried to display it in a very authoritative style of "tall-talk." Those who knew him cared very little, as it in no way affected them. Thomas had a son-in-law named George Mackay, otherwise "Seoras MacSheorais" ("George the son of George"). He and the "Sailor" were often at work together, and on journeys. George possessed a vein of humour, not the most refined, and at times was quite ready to prevaricate to suit his own aims and ends. He was at the time miller in Armadale. The writer met George in 1859, and had a long conversation with him. He was then ninety years of age, yet his faculties were as keen as they had been at the age of fifty. No one was more ready to play pranks on his father-in-law than George. Every season before hay-cutting time, Thomas ordered a new scythe from Thurso for his own use, while the rest of the hay-cutters had to work with the old scythes. Thomas had thus comparatively easy work of it,

while the others had to work hard to keep up with him. He was a strong able-bodied man, and an expert mower.

During the hay-cutting, when they all rested for the mid-day meal, Thomas went to Armadale House on pretence of receiving orders, but in reality to get a good dinner and something strong; while the other mowers had to sit at a well-side to eat their crust, and be satisfied with a drink of pure spring water. One day Thomas went to the big house as usual, the others to the well-side. George, on finishing his frugal meal, immediately drew a piece of wood from his coat sleeve, and commenced to whittle it with his knife. Each of his mates in turn inquired what he was doing. George vouchsafed no reply, but kept on whittling. The "Sailor," equally ignorant of George's intentions, suspecting he had some prank or other in view, had told the others to let the man alone, as no doubt he had a purpose to effect. When the piece of wood was dressed, George rubbed the wood with mud to darken it. He then got a stone, and going a few paces into the grass in front of his father-in-law's swathes, stuck the piece of wood firmly into the ground till only a few inches of it were above the surface, and then sat down beside his fellow-workers, seemingly falling asleep. Very soon thereafter Thomas was seen emerging from the big house, hurrying to the scene of operation, his hands going like the arms of a windmill. Coming

within hailing distance, he shouted it was high time for them to be astir and at work. All of them started to their feet except George, who rose lazily as from a deep and sound slumber. He was heard to mutter aloud, that the All-seeing knew how unfit they were to go through their heavy work on bread and water, in comparison to other mowers who were better treated and specially favoured. Thomas, well refreshed, went to work in good earnest, the others followed his lead in silence, when, lo and behold! in one of his mighty sweeps, Thomas's scythe came in contact with what was supposed to be a tether stake, and broke in the middle. The other mowers gathered round their leader, bemoaned the misadventure, and none of them pretended more sorrow than George, who had no difficulty in making the matter clear, "It was, he had no doubt, men from Lead-na-gúilleán who came there at dead of night in the summer, tethered their horses, and to add insult to injury left the stakes behind; yet it was nothing short of what those for whom they had to toil and sweat deserved, for if any of their cattle approached the edge of the 'Mains,' the dogs were instantly set at them." George gained the end in view. His father-in-law said nothing, but he improved in conduct, and they all had an easier time of it that season.

George being the village miller, he occasionally required assistance to raise and lay the top stone

when it required fresh picking. The "Sailor" was always at hand to render this assistance to his friend. The mill, like many of the rural ones of the day, was an undershot one, the progenitor of the modern turbine, common in Orkney and Shetland; and farther afield, common in ancient times in Syria and Persia before wind was used as motive power for grinding and pumping. Ingenious men in all ages made use of the powers that nature placed at their disposal by its elements of water, wind, and fire. Necessity is the mother of invention, and however crude the first attempts of using them were, men's intelligence was developed in the ordeal, by slow practice and observation, each era improving upon the first attempt. Nothing was more remarkable in an Arcadian country like Sutherland, remote from scenes of industry, which quicken perception, than the rude skill exhibited by its rude citizens without any knowledge of Euclid or mathematical principles other than what practice and observation taught them. Self-contained, self-supporting, happy and contented, rejoicing in the approbation of their superiors and chiefs, they vied with each other in deserving recognition of bodily and mental worth, of moral and social distinction. With them it was,—

"Honour or disgrace from no condition rise,  
Act well your part, there all the honour lies."

None more than they regarded "blue blood,"

alliance, and descent as a *sine quâ non*, yet the man of merit was ennobled by his deeds, and treated accordingly by inferiors and superiors.

Miller George was well aware of the "Sailor's" ingenuity to overcome any or every difficulty. He imagined one day that the top stone was not equally or fairly balanced. He appealed to the "Sailor" to come to his aid to solve the question. The "Sailor" examined the position of the stone, told George to put a little water on to move it gently round. He pronounced it "all right." George was not satisfied, and asked the "Sailor" to sit on the side that he considered off the level, while he turned a little more water on the wheel to test it. The "Sailor," rarely found napping, objected, and told George that he himself being a heavier man would be a better test, and besides being more used to wheels and stones, and moving and balancing them, would be more likely to detect defects. The bait took, George sat on the stone, directing the "Sailor" how to turn the water on and how to turn it off, adding, when he held up his hand as a signal he was to turn the water off. The "Sailor" took his place as instructed, but whether intentionally or not, sure enough it was, the water came in greater quantity and force than was necessary; round went the millstone with increasing velocity, and with it went George. The "Sailor" all the while looked on, expecting to see the miller's hand held up as the agreed-upon signal to turn



off the water. No signal was given, no signal could be given, the velocity was confounding. At last the centrifugal force of it hurled George into a corner of the mill, where he lay for a time speechless. When he recovered, "the Sailor" assisted him, dazed as he was with the shock and giddiness, into the open air, where he soon began to improve.

When George had in a measure recovered his equilibrium, he evinced wild anger at what he conceived to be a trick played upon him. Had it been any other than his boon companion the "Sailor," no doubt George would have soundly thrashed him, being a very powerful man, but as it was the "Sailor," he would not inflict his resentment upon him. Burns says:

" When neebours anger at a plea,  
And just as wud as wud can be,  
How easy can the barley bree  
Cement the quarrel.  
It's aye the cheapest lawyer's fee  
To taste the barrel."

The "Sailor" was equal to the occasion. He perceived his friend was justly angered at what had happened, and mollification in the shape of a dram would not only benefit George in his dazed condition, but appease his wrath. Luckily a neighbour near at hand, of the name of Munro, well known to have always a store of whisky which he sold to the good people of the hamlet and the wayfarer, kept what would be termed now a "shebeen." The "Sailor" proposed going

to Munro's house; George was agreeable, and thither went the pair. Munro was a humorous sort of man, and the best companion possible for fun and jollity. His whisky was of the genuine barley bree. They were in no haste to leave. When they did, George appeared unsteady in his gait, either from the effects of the velocity of the whirl on the millstone, or of Munro's genuine article, or both. The "Sailor" had to accompany him home. Arriving at his house, George insisted on the "Sailor" turning in, to have supper with him. By this time, George's wife and family had retired to rest for the night, and all was dark within. Light was procured. George found a pot at the fireside with broth and meat in it. While in the act of taking the meat out of the pot, it fell in the ashes. Apologising for this mishap, George said, "Dho'ull, mo chagair, glanaidh burn e" ("Donald, my dear, water will clean it"). Supper done, the "Sailor" was about to take his leave, but George would not allow him till they engaged in prayer, saying, "Dho'ull, mo chagair, cha téid thu air falbh gus an dean sinn focal ùrnaigh" ("Donald, my dear, thou wilt not leave till we engage in a word of prayer"). Though the "Sailor" very well knew that George was not in the fittest state for devotional exercise, yet, unwilling to part with him on bad terms, he consented. Both kneeled, and George began the exercise. He had not been long on his knees when words be-

came almost inarticulate, and eventually failed him altogether. Presently Donald heard a snore. A second and a third satisfied him that George had succumbed to the power of the drowsy god, and was in the land of dreams.

Donald rose and went to his own house. On his way to work in the morning, he called as usual upon George. Entering the house, he found him in the same position as that in which he had left him the night before. Taking no further notice of him, he went to the bedroom door, and knocking, called out: "George, it is time you were up." George did not respond, but his wife did, with "Cha'n fhaigh an donais a chuid fhein gus am faigh e thusa. 'S math tha fios agad nach cil Seoras ann so" ("The Mischief will not have his own till he has thee. Well you know George is not here"). "What!" replied Donald, "is George away?" "No," retorted she, "he is not away, he is where you left him last night, and you could not have missed seeing him as you came in." The "Sailor's" reply to this retort has not been reported, but it may be remarked that Mrs George was irritable and unforgiving, when irritation and anger swayed her feelings. She was like Mrs Tam-o'-Shanter, a

. . . . "sulky sullen dame,  
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,  
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm."

Donald retreated before the storm, went to George, tapped him on the back, telling him it

was time to get up off his knees, that he had prayed long enough, and that it was full time to be up and at his work.

At this time, as it has been mentioned, there were no roads nor bridges in that part of the country, and pedestrians going eastward or westward had to cross rivers the best way they could. The Strathy river was generally crossed at its mouth. The "Sailor" and George were on one occasion sent from Armadale to Torr, Halladale. The two were frequently sent there, Mr Reid of Armadale being by marriage connected with Mackay of Bighouse, then proprietor of the Halladale or Bighouse estate. Crossing the Strathy river, they came on a sea-bird sheltering itself from the storm behind a large boulder stone, with its head under its wing apparently asleep. George caught the bird, examined it all over, and inquired, "Dho-ull gu de ni sinn ris?" ("Donald, what shall we do with it?") Donald replied, "Cur e an lub do bhreacan," ("Put it in the fold of your plaid"), "we may knock a gill out of it." George did as he was told. Arriving at Melvich, they went into the inn. It happened to be rent day for the Bighouse estate. The inn was consequently crowded with the Strath Halladale tenants. Rack-renting was not the rule in those days. The Strath tenantry had generally something to spare after satisfying the laird. Jolly fellows most of them were, who on that day would

countenance the public-house, satisfied with themselves, satisfied with their condition, satisfied with the laird and factor, toast to their good health and long life, and not enter nor see the inside of a public-house till the same day next year again. The inn being thus crowded, our two worthies had some difficulty in finding sitting room. They managed, however, to find a corner. Being strangers, they were the sooner accommodated. The usual gill of whisky was asked for, and brought them. While quietly discussing the contents of the small measure, an elderly man from the Strath asked, "If it were not bad manners to ask, he would like to know where the strangers came from." George replied they had come from a distant part of the country, Balnakill, Durness. The company, hearing the distance the strangers had travelled, were profuse in their hospitality, each vying with his neighbour in proffering refreshments. The pair were soon at home with their newly acquired friends. It has been said that "freedom and whisky gang thegither," and freedom of tongue between the parties soon became the rule. The strangers being affable were by and by questioned as to their journey and its purpose. It was presumed to be something very special that caused two such men to come so long a distance at that season of the year, November. George at once said they had guessed rightly, and that he would

soon explain to them the reason. He said that a gentleman in India, a particular friend of Lord Reay, had sent from that country, as a present to his lordship, a very rare bird, but as his lordship was so often away in the south and in London (an unfortunate circumstance for himself, and more unfortunate for his successors), he thought it best to send it as a present from himself to the Earl of Caithness, and they being trusted men of his lordship were sent with it, their instructions being to stay at that inn for the night. This was news indeed. Could they be permitted to have a sight of this *rara avis*, this wonderful outlandish bird come from the Indies! George shook his head dubiously. On reconsideration he appealed to his comrade the "Sailor." "An saoil thu, Dho-ull, am feuch sinn an t-eun do na daoine?" ("Think you, Donald, may we show the bird to the men?") Donald, in a very sedate manner, replied, that undoubtedly before leaving the strictest orders were given them not to expose the bird to view, but as the men present showed them so much kindness and hospitality, he thought they might venture to give them a sight of it. George uncovered the bird partially, and the leading elderly man went on his knees to examine it minutely. Loud in his admiration of its beauty and fine plumage, he began gently stroking it, when the bird, unused to such caresses, and disliking such intimacy, stretched

out its neck and fastened its long bill on the bridge of its admirer's nose. The frightened man started backwards, but the bird held its grip. Up the poor fellow sprang to his legs. Still the bird held fast to the nose. In sheer desperation he took it by the neck, and giving it a sudden twist and a strong pull, tore it off his nose, and threw it with all the force of desperate energy into a corner of the room, the result being death to the bird, and a bloody nose to the poor old man as a reward for his curiosity.

This caused a great commotion in the inn for some time, but when it subsided, and quietness was restored, George began to give vent to his grief and perplexity for the loss of the bird, and to expressions of terror for the awkward position in which disobedience to orders had placed them by the death of the bird. How could they face their chief? What they were now to do was something he could not divine, nor dare to think of. Indeed he was afraid the two of them would be banished from the estate for disobedience to orders and neglect of duty. The "Sailor" at length suggested that the inn-keeper should be consulted in the affair. As it occurred in his house, that he might at least bear witness that it was a pure mishap, and be consulted as to the best means of getting out of a difficulty that no one could have foreseen. This was agreed to, and Mr Sinclair, the landlord, was sent for. He knew the "Sailor" and George

well, as men given to practical joking. He himself was not a whit less expert in taking part in a harmless prank. He was brimful of wit and humour, but grave as a judge when the occasion required it. He afterwards removed to Dunn, near Wick, where he was very much respected. When Mr Sinclair heard the whole story of the bird, its viciousness to its admirer, and its violent end, he said the case was unfortunately a grave one, and the death of so valuable and so unique a specimen of the bird kind, a present from India to Lord Reay, and from him to the Earl of Caithness, seriously complicated the matter; yet it was one of many that it was impossible now to remedy. His opinion was, that the Earl of Caithness not being made aware of the present that the two men were carrying to him, the better way would be, that they should return and say, that the bird, unaccustomed to the piercing coldness of the weather, had died in their hands despite all the care they had taken of it, and the efforts made to keep it warm; and if any doubts were expressed, or any blame attributed to them on their return, that he would be quite ready to give all necessary explanations, and stand by them if required. This advice was received with acclamation by all, and harmony quickly restored. The host suggested that the man who caused the commotion by killing the bird, however much he may have been wounded in paying



attentions to it, really owed a fine to the company, and should at once pay it, by ordering something for them for the trouble and turmoil he had created, by his meddling with what he had nothing to do. He ought, at the same time, to defray the cost of the night's lodgings for the men. The old man offered ten shillings for the two men's lodging, which was politely declined by Mr Sinclair, who stated that he himself would see to their comfort for the night.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A DANGEROUS SEALING EXPEDITION.

“The landsman may quail  
At the shout of the gale ;  
Perils are the sailor’s joy.”

THERE is no class of the community that stands more in need of being expert swimmers than seafaring men, yet it is frequently found they have the least knowledge of this useful and healthful art. In sea-coast communities, there is an idea if a youth be an expert swimmer, he is sure to be drowned sooner or later. What a fallacy ! The art of swimming is exceedingly useful, not only as an exercise for bracing the frame, but as a means of preserving life, when one may accidentally fall into the water, or as giving confidence to plunge into it to save the lives of others. It has been said that the art of swimming can be as easily acquired as the practice of swearing. “A man of Kent” wrote a book in which he asserted that there were two things which, if acquired in youth, would never be forgotten. These were,—“swimming and swearing.” Whatever truth may be in the assertion as regards the latter, those who have learned and practised swimming in youth can testify to the truth of

it as to that. Youth is the period of life when all useful exercises that tend to strengthen the frame are more readily acquired and more easily practised. In youth, our hero the "Sailor" learned the art, and it frequently served him in good stead. His boldness in swimming and diving often caused alarm to by-standers, as the sequel of this story shows.

In Strathy Point is a cave which, by its position, is inaccessible from the land. It was a favourite resort of seals, and the "Sailor," on one occasion, persuaded his neighbour George, the miller, and two other men to accompany him on a sealing expedition to the cave. A boat was got in readiness, with knife, ropes, candles, &c., all necessaries for the exploration of the cave, and the slaying of any seals that might be encountered therein. It would appear from the "Sailor's" description of it that at the entrance to it from the sea, it was wide enough at low water for a small boat, such as they had, to enter. It was high enough at its mouth, but a little farther inwards, the top gradually lowered till it came within a few feet of sea-level at low tide, and so continued for a further distance, when it expanded into a huge cavern, the dome-like roof rising to a considerable height. It again lowered gradually, to the end, and terminated in a small beach. Between this beach and the low-roofed middle, was a deep dark pool. On arriving at the outside, none of

his companions dared venture inside with him. It was not esteemed safe, the water kelpie might be inside and swamp the boat; they avowed they could not swim, and might be drowned. The "Sailor" left them in charge of the boat, and accoutring himself with all the gear he considered necessary, fearlessly took to the water, swimming gently so as not to disturb the seals, if any there were. Approaching the beach at the far end, he espied a number of seals quietly resting on the beach. He prepared himself for an onslaught. On his emerging from the water on to the beach, the inoffensive animals were greatly alarmed at the sudden appearance of so unfamiliar an animal as the "Sailor," and made for the water, but the swimmer was too quick and expert for all of them to make a safe retreat. He killed five, and immediately began to flay them. So eagerly was he bent upon this operation that he entirely forgot that "time and tide will no man abide," and only became conscious of the well-known adage, when he saw the rising tide whirling and swirling about and around him, making escape practically hopeless. His companions left in charge of the boat, expecting him to return every moment, did not warn him of his danger, till it was beyond their power to do it. It was not till the tide had closed up the low portion of the cave, that they began to halloo to him to beat a retreat. It was too late. His position was a

critical one. Even though he could escape drowning, he would have to remain in the water for many hours, and probably die of cold. His companions outside were in the greatest consternation. They were unable to render any assistance. They speculated on his fate, accused him of great rashness, and thought the receding tide might carry out his lifeless body. But our hero proved equal to the danger surrounding him. Awaking to a sense of his danger by the influx of the tide, and seeing his retreat cut off, he instantly determined on his course of action. Calmly finishing his work of flaying, he tied the five skins with the blubber on them in the rope, and took to the water, dragging the skins after him. He swam till he felt he had come to the low part of the roof of the cave, then taking a "header," he kept on swimming under water till he thought he had cleared the low part. On rising to the surface he was within a few yards of the boat. When he was descried by his companions making for the boat, he was instantly greeted with a loud cheer, again and again repeated, and eager hands soon helped him aboard with his booty perilously but gallantly won. Here is an instance of the virtue of being an expert swimmer, an instance of great presence of mind and resolution, an instance of daring and self-confidence, in a time of imminent danger, as useful in water as on the field of battle.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A "FIND" AT CRASK—THE BUTTON COLLECTOR— FUNERALS.

"Ge b'e 'bhios gu math rium, bidh mi gu tric aige."

—*Gaelic Proverb.*

**I**N the year 1812, hundreds of families were evicted from Strath Brora and adjoining glens to form a huge sheep-farm. Mr James Loch, commissioner of the Sutherland estates for the Marquis of Stafford, describes this farm "as one of the most extensive upon the estate, extending from the Brora river to the Helmsdale in one direction, and from the summit of the hills near the coast to the sources of the rivers Skinsdale and the Frithe, respectively falling into the rivers Brora and Helmsdale," comprising an area of 100,000 acres capable of maintaining 20,000 sheep of the Cheviot breed. Strath Brora is one of the loveliest straths in the county, with a great quantity of excellent arable and meadow land, and on its slopes good hill pasture. A numerous tenantry inhabited this fertile locality from the earliest ages, as indicated by the number of places of worship founded amongst the inhabitants by the disciples of Columba. There are no less than seven, the names of which are still preserved, the chief being Kilcolm-Cille.

The farm thus formed by "clearing out" its primitive and ancient inhabitants, driving them down to the sea-shores, without compensation or remorse, was offered to Mr Gabriel Reid, then tacksman of the Armadale farm, whose name has already been mentioned. He was prevailed upon to take it. That same year Mackay of Bighouse sold his estate to the Marquis of Stafford, and verysoon thereafter, the changes of tenantry, with their baneful consequences to the native population, introduced in the south and west of the Sutherland estates, were introduced in the north. Mr Reid having left Armadale, the "Sailor" lost his superior, who was much attached to him. Captain Gordon was then tacksman of Farr, Crask, Cattlefield, and Ard-an-iasgaich. He lived at Clerkhill. He knew the "Sailor" personally and by repute. He induced him to become his manager and general overseer. The captain gave him a house and some land at the Crask, adjacent to Clerkhill. The "Sailor," by his activity and natural shrewdness of character, soon became a great favourite with Captain Gordon and his family. His eldest son, a chip of the old block, by his gentle manners and vivacious conduct, ingratiated himself with the captain's sons, and they frequently played together. One day, while amusing themselves, playing about the sandy braes of Cnoc-a-chraigs, the "Sailor's" son struck his heel against some hard substance, and out issued a

number of yellow coins. The boys seeing this, examined the spot, and found it was a jar full of coins. Digging out the jar, and collecting the scattered pieces, they carried the whole to the captain at Clerkhill. No one ever heard what coins were in the jar, or their kind, or number, but next day the captain gave the "Sailor" five guineas, and promised the boy from time to time to give him a share, but whether the promise was kept or not, no one ever knew. Events occurred shortly after that caused a general dispersion of the people, and forced Captain Gordon and his family, who could not brook to see or bear the "new order of things," which they perceived to be detrimental to the welfare and high morality of the inhabitants, to leave the place. Trivial events, like this "treasure trove," were forgotten in the anticipation of the impending desolation and gloom that was likely to sever the intimate relations that subsisted between the lower, middle, and higher classes of the society. Each order had hitherto accommodated itself to the other, promoted each other's welfare, and producing as a result, a high degree of good manners, good conduct, and high morality founded upon the best Christian principles.

At this time there lived at Dalnadrochait, near Skelpick, an individual, familiarly named "Alastair Eolach," from the fact of his knowing all the *tittle-tattle* of the district, which his



wandering habits enabled him to gather. Alastair could not be prevailed upon to perform any outdoor *manual labour*, but he possessed to an inordinate degree the faculty of acquisitiveness, which showed itself in a mania for collecting large buttons, and hoarding them up as treasure. Some of those buttons, as large as a crown piece, have been seen by the writer. They were apparently of copper or bronze, or somewhat similar material. Rows of these buttons he would have on his overcoat, front and back. The rest he hoarded up as valuable relics, which he examined and counted morning, noon, and night, as carefully and religiously as a devotee would count his beads. When angered, or enraged, "Alastair Eolach" would give expression to his feelings in unmeasured terms, in violent gestures, and in words and style, worthy of the worst and most blatant shrew, and for that reason very few liked to provoke him. For one of his favourite buttons he would work the whole winter's night plaiting ropes of heather, or of rushes, or of straw, or in summer herd cows all day long. He attended, uninvited, all marriages and funerals in the whole district around, and never felt satisfied without having or carrying away a dozen or a score of oat-cakes as his own proper share. But if the least part of a cake was broken, he would not take it. He was fond of whisky. Money he cared nothing about. His brother-in-law had a pet ram, of

which Alastair was very fond; and as he conceived it improper for himself to divulge the gossip tattle of one hamlet in another, he would compose a *Duan* (doggerel rhyming tale), embracing the *tittle-tattle*, rehearse it, and maintain it was the ram's story he told. This he termed "Duan-an-reithe" (the ram's tale). When in good-humour, he would recite this to his favourites, one of whom was the "Sailor," for a big button.

For a few of his favourite buttons, a travelling packman induced Alastair to carry his pack on one occasion through Caithness and into the Orkneys. Of the wonders he had seen in (to him) these remote portions of the globe, he composed on his return another *Duan*, which he termed "Duan-na-circe-mara" (tale of the sea-hen). While crossing the Pentland Firth in a boat, this sea-hen, with her brood, had kept company with the boat, and in teaching her brood the art of swimming, Alastair pretended the sea-hen told him the tale he delighted to rehearse. The concluding words of each stanza were,—  
" 'Sa-ho-o, nach d' thig thu comhladh ruinne do 'n t-snamh? " (" 'Sa, ho, o, won't thou come with us to swim?") His reply to the invitation being, " Och! cha teid, oir cha d' ionnsaich mo mhathair òg mi " (" Och! I won't, for my mother taught me not in my youth"). Alastair was always ready to recite this tale in his own melancholy style, for his usual reward.

When the "Sailor" lived in Crask, Alastair was a too frequent visitor. He called at his house one evening in winter, and was told the "Sailor" was at sea fishing for Captain Gordon, but was expected to return soon. Alastair would wait for his return, put off his overcoat, and hung it up near the door. The "Sailor" returned in the gloaming, and found Alastair at the fireside enjoying himself, and apparently in the best of temper and humour. The "Sailor" spied the overcoat, garnished with its many buttons, and asked his wife to assist him with the fish, which was his own share after serving Captain Gordon. While his wife was thus engaged, the "Sailor" surreptitiously managed to take three buttons off Alastair's coat. When dinner was over, Alastair was solicited to recite "the tale of the ram," and a button would be the reward. Alastair replied, "O dhuine, cha'n eil putan agad" ("Oh, man, thou hast not a button"). A sight of the precious treasure was vouchsafed him. It was enough. The tale was recited with animation. The button was handed to him, and he was overjoyed with his good luck. The "Sailor" then solicited him to give the tale of the "cearc mhara" (the sea-hen), for which he would be given another button. Alastair obeyed with great alacrity, and obtained the prize. He was afterwards requested to repeat "the tale of the ram," for which another big button would be the reward. He declined to

comply unless he saw the button. It was shown him. He insisted on its being given to him to look at. This was done. He turned it over and over, round and round, looking at it, and then comparing it with the other two, and giving all the while a glance at the "Sailor." Detecting something in Donald's countenance betraying guilt, Alastair rose and examined the coat. Seeing he was duped, he poured out a tirade of abuse the most appalling, and finding the "Sailor" indifferent to all the opprobrium cast upon him, Alastair with redoubled vigour turned upon the wife, pouring upon her devoted head and ears the vials of his wrath with undescribable volubility, torrent after torrent, telling her she was unworthy of her sex to remain in the house with such a husband, a two-faced shuffler, a disgrace to mankind, unfit to be amongst Christian people. His power of abuse being exhausted, Alastair shouldered his greatcoat, went away, and never troubled the "Sailor" again. This was what Donald wished and planned, for Alastair had become a nuisance to him.

As already mentioned, Alastair attended all marriage festivals and funerals within miles of his habitation. Shortly after the foregoing incident occurred, the funeral of an aged woman, reputed to have had some money, was to take place. In the period of which we write, it was the common custom of the country to offer re-

freshments of toasted oatcake, cheese, and a glass of whisky, previous to starting for the burial-place, and as it often happened that long distances had to be traversed, a glass of whisky, cake, and cheese were given by the way. Before the people assembled, wooden deals, in double rows upon slight trestles, were laid both but and ben, to serve as tables, and seats of the same kind were laid alongside of them. The tables were covered with white linen cloths of home manufacture, and laid with plates a few feet apart, with half-a-dozen cakes in each, and a kebbuck of cheese frequently cut in slices. It should be mentioned that few of the cakes and less of the cheese were used, for the people assembled of their own accord, out of respect for the dead, and not for eating and drinking. When all were seated, the man appointed to take the head of the table, or some other noted personage at his request, asked the Divine blessing upon what they were to partake on the mournful occasion. All having partaken of what was offered, another was asked to return thanks to the Giver of all good, in whose hands are the lives and bodies of all mankind, for the bounties of His providence to His creatures, and His never-ceasing care over them.

On this occasion the "Sailor" was late in coming. All were seated as he entered. He looked round for a vacant seat, and to see if "Alastair Eolach" was present. He was seen

sitting in a corner in the farther end of the house. The "Sailor" went forward and seated himself right in front of "Alastair," much to his discomposure and annoyance. Alastair's object in selecting this farther corner was to make a raid upon the cakes in going out, and take away his prescribed number. The host, or man at the head of the table, being the nearest relative of the deceased, was the first to serve out the whisky. He had the character of being very parsimonious. While serving out the drink he several times excused himself for not filling up the glasses on the plea that his grief at the loss of his aged relative had unnerved him. The ancient Gaelic proverb says, "Cha laidh bròn fada air fear dileab" ("Grief lies not long on the legatee"). When he came the length of Alastair, the nervousness had not improved, and a glass little more than half full was offered. Alastair looked at the glass, then at the giver of it, and in an imperious tone, said, "Lion a' ghloine, a dhuine" ("Fill the glass, man"). No notice was taken of the command. Alastair repeated the request without effect. He then exclaimed, "A ghead air sròn, a ghad air sporan, 'sa thom an diultaidh, fhìor choin, lion a' ghloine" ("You tuft on nose, you twig on purse, you heap of refuse, you pure dog, fill up the grog"). It need scarcely be added that this burst of invective was effective, but in all human affairs

"There's many a slip  
Twixt the cup and lip."

As poor Alastair was in the act of putting the cup to his lip, the "Sailor" took hold of his wrist and held it fast as if in a vice. He made an attempt to make it reach his lip, but could not succeed. He for a moment looked daggers at his tormentor, exclaiming, "Air sgath Dhia, dhuine, leig thugam i, 's m' anam innte" ("For the sake of God, man, let it come to me, my life is in it"). He was then allowed to drink his whisky in peace. When the people began to move out, Alastair rose to gather his quantity of cakes, but to his inexpressible dismay he saw the "Sailor," as he was moving out, break a piece off every cake left whole. Alastair was perfectly nonplussed, stood staring as if petrified, and almost bursting with anger and wrath, he shouted, "Droch crioich ort, a bhiasd, an robh thu comaidh ri duine riamh?" ("Bad end to thee, thou beast; hast thou ever messed with a man before?") Notwithstanding this, Alastair left not the house without his wonted number of cakes.

When Alastair himself at last succumbed to the common doom, the people of the whole countryside turned out to attend his funeral. Funeral processions in Strathnaver and in all other parts of Sutherland were a sight worthy of being seen. In no part of the Highlands were these mournful processions conducted with more decorum and military order. Hundreds of stalwart men—and they were *men*, and not sheep, who then inhabited the strath of the

Naver, men worthy of the name, the best and bravest in Sutherland, "Daoine ro fhiughanta, ainmeil, iad 's a chinneadh, fhad 'sa bha feum agus meas air daoine' uaisle 's air gaisgaich" ("Men heroic, and renowned, in the clan they were, so long as there was need and respect for gentlemen and heroes")—formed the procession, especially if long distances had to be traversed. An old veteran soldier was appointed to "size" the people assembled, and marshal them in order, two and two. When all were ranged in this order, the coffin covered by a pall was brought by relatives of the deceased to the head of the procession. The first four lifted the bier with the coffin on their shoulders, and waited the word of command. The old veteran then placed himself in front of the bier to give the pace and keep step, and order "relief" to the bearers. He directed the piper in front of him to play the clan lament, and gave the order to march. Marching in slow time, the first four behind the bier advanced to the side of the bearers to be ready to shoulder the burden as the order "relief" was given, which was every 150 or 200 yards. Those relieved turned aside and stood till the whole procession passed, when they fell in in the rear, and thus the procession moved on, the bearers being relieved as the procession marched on without a stop, or breaking pace. No one spoke to his neighbour. Every one seemed to feel the solemnity of the occasion.



The burial-place reached, the friends of the deceased assisted to place the coffin in the grave, and all stood around uncovered while dust was committed to dust, ashes to ashes, and each threw a handful of earth into the grave. Few, or none, left the scene till the grave was filled, and the green sod put on as the last covering. Alastair Eolach's funeral, whatever he himself may have been, was conducted like all others in the manner here described.

In no particular were the refined feelings of the Highland peasantry more clearly shown than in the orderly observance of a decorous burial to their departed relatives and friends. Of death itself they spoke lightly. "Chaochail e" (he changed) was the common expression in conveying intelligence of death. The poorest person made some provision for a decent funeral. It was a singular and characteristic sentiment in the Highland character to contemplate the prospect of death with complacent familiarity, and regard it as a change from one to another kind of existence, enlivened with the certain hope of joining, and being joined again, by those they loved. The effect of this sentiment was seen in the anxious care with which provision was made for a "decent" and "becoming" funeral.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### ADVENTURES AND REFLECTIONS.

“ Chaidh Eoraidh do 'n aird  
Dh' iarraidh pag air a leannan,  
An-uair chunnaie í 'n-t-each càrn  
'S ann bu mhall le'a casan.

Rinn e toll air a gùn,  
'S chaidha glùinean a ghearradh;  
Thug e'm barr deth a sroin,  
Cha robh an corr aice ri chantain.

Cuiribh fios do'n Rhi-ruaidh  
Ceart cho luath 's tha'n ar craiceann,  
Gu'n deach Do'ull a leon,  
Marbhadh roin air na leacan.

Cha'n'eil craobh 'san Allt-mhor,  
Nach bi caoin' 's each na'n cadal;  
Agus eagal orr h-uile h-oidhche,  
Gu'm bi oighre air 'Do'ull againn.' ”

WHEN Donald the “Sailor” resided in Crask, there lived at the west side of the Farr Sands, on a croft called Leac Margaid, a man of the name of Donald, better known as Do'ull Leac Margaid. Nature itself is sometimes accused of being unjust to men and animals. Donald's stunted growth was attributed to one of her freaks, although it might possibly be the fault of his nurse. He was also bow-legged. If Nature bestowed upon him but “scrimpit stature,” she endowed him with a long and glib tongue,

and a high estimate of himself. In stature he fancied himself a son of Anak; in handiwork, unparalleled; in love, an Adonis, a mighty "lady-killer," yet he remained a bachelor. He was frequently seen in the Altmor wood stripping and hacking trees for bark, and various other purposes. One day, while sauntering among the rocks in the vicinity of Leac Margaid, he came upon a seal fast asleep on a rock. Thinking the poor seal to be dead, Do'ull caught hold of it by one of its hind flappers to drag it away, but the sleepy *phoca*, once awake, objected to be dragged over rough stones and rocks in so uncereemonious a manner. To Do'ull's great horror and dismay, the *phoca* turned upon him. He immediately let go his hold, but not before the *phoca*, in his own defence, caught hold of Do'ull's garment. Do'ull attempted to run for his very life, but the seal would not let go the hold he had obtained, and as a matter of course kept pace with him in his flight. Though bewildered he kept on. At length the weight of the seal proved too much for the strength of his garment. Do'ull thought he had a happy release, though minus a part of his raiment, which was much injured in the flight. He did not wait to look back to see whether or not the poor beast found its way back to its own element, or had kept the torn part of his raiment as a trophy of war.

Do'ull, however, excelled as a ploughman,

when good ploughmen were the exception, and scarce. In that capacity he was often employed by Captain Gordon, Clerkhill. One of the "Sailor's" sisters-in-law, Eoraidh (Dorothy), was at the time cook in the Captain's house. Eoraidh was a very good-looking young woman, but somewhat haughty in her bearing,—as good a specimen as could be seen, and as kind-hearted as she was comely in appearance. One day while Do'ull was ploughing at Ard-an-iasgaish, Eoraidh was sent with his dinner, the distance being too far for him to come to the house and the horses to be stabled. One of the horses which he had in the plough was blind of an eye and very restive, given to kicking when anything touched him. Do'ull was well aware of the animal's failing and propensity, and to guard against anything disturbing him, he sat upon the plough to eat his dinner. When he had finished his frugal meal, he gallantly thanked Eoraidh for the honour she conferred upon him by being the bearer of his dinner, and thought it right to repay her condescension by kissing her. Young men sometimes attempt such liberties, but young women as frequently resent them, and so it was the case with Eoraidh. Do'ull would not be balked. A struggle for the much-wished-for kiss ensued. Do'ull for the moment forgot the vicious propensities of the one-eyed horse. Something touched him on the blind side; he let fly, first one hind leg, then the other, and broke

the harness and several articles pertaining to the plough. Eoraidh was terrified, and ran away. In her haste and fright her foot caught against a stone; she fell right on her face, hurt her knee, scratched her face, and tore her dress. Her brother-in-law the "Sailor" was informed of the mishap. It set him a thinking, and he made the adventure the basis of the ditty given above, which was often sung in the locality. The writer heard it frequently in his youth, but with the exception of the first stanza had wholly forgotten it, till a singular incident, equally honourable to the parties concerned, recalled most of the stanzas to his recollection. This incident is worth recording. It shows the friendly, the kindly, nay, the brotherly, relationship that existed in times, now alas! gone by, between employer and employed, between masters and servants, between tacksmen and crofters and cottars, between chiefs and retainers,—mutual respect and reciprocal affection, which ever should be the bases of a well-ordered society, then common enough the rule, but in the present day, with our vaunted civilisation, our absentee landlords, absentee and stranger tacksmen, very rare. Then, chieftain and tacksmen were all stay-at-home gentry, in daily contact with the people surrounding them, moulding their inferiors at their will, influencing by their good and kindly example the lives, the manners, the character, and the habits of the people imme-

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diately about them, and for miles from them, in a manner incredible in these days of a social economy, debasing, degrading, in the highest degree, and reprobated by every lover of his country and his country's people. Without any doubt the grand influence such friendly intercourse between all classes, high and low, gentle and simple, had in forming the character of Highlanders generally, and particularly in Sutherland, in the past, has been proved by the result produced on the part of the people, not only by acts of devotion to their superiors, but by heroism on many a bloody field of battle. The effect of this genial intercourse has stamped itself so much in the ideas and habits of Sutherland Highlanders, that it exists still, after the lapse of seventy long years of ill-treatment, oppression, and repression on all sides from the highest to the lowest menial of landlordism.

The writer happened to be on a visit to that part of the country in which Eoraidh, the subject of the song, lived. It is now sixteen years ago. On the way to the post-office one day he met a tall, elderly, and military-looking gentleman, with a clan tartan plaid on his shoulder, who saluted with the very common expression there and elsewhere, "'S briàdh an latha sin" ("Fine day it is"). The salutation from so grand a specimen of a Highland gentleman attracted immediate attention on our part, and made us desirous to know who and what he

might be. We replied in the language in which we were addressed. This led to further conversation, still in Gaelic. At length he excused himself, saying he was very sorry he could not carry on conversation now in the language of his youth, which was once familiar enough to him, but through long absence from the home of his youth he had lost the use of it in conversation. This still more excited our curiosity, and emboldened by the gentleman's affability and appearance as a thorough "Duine uasal," we asked if we had the honour to meet a native Sutherland gentleman, then rare, now never seen. Said he in reply, "I once was, my name is Gordon. I was born in Clerkhill yonder (pointing in its direction), but left it at the age of ten." We remarked we had heard our grandfather speak of the family of Gordon of Clerkhill. He asked, "Who was he?" He was told. "What!" said he, "are you a descendant of Donald 'the Sailor?'" Taking us by the hand, he said, "Glad I am to meet a descendant of that worthy man. I have spent more than thirty years abroad. The remembrance of Donald's quaint sayings and witty remarks gave me greater pleasure than anything I have ever since listened to. Oft on the plains of India, scorched by the heat of the sun, and in low spirits, when I remembered 'Donald' and 'Chaidh Eoraidh do 'n airde,' I was cheered more than words can express." He repeated the four verses of the

song which have been given at the beginning of this chapter. Anglicised, the ditty may be thus rendered :—

“ Dorothy to the height went  
To get a kiss from her lover ;  
When she saw the one-eyed horse  
Her feet failed to be clever.

He caused a rent in her gown ;  
And her knees, they were hurt ;  
He took the tip of her nose,  
She had nothing more to blurt.

Send word to Rhi-Roy  
As fast as can be carried,  
That Donald was wounded  
Killing seals on the skerries.

There's not a tree at the Alltvor  
But moans, and others sleeping,  
Apprehensive every night  
That an heir will succeed him.”

A most pleasant and enjoyable afternoon and evening were spent with Colonel Gordon in visiting the scenes of his boyhood.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE WOUNDED AT NEW ORLEANS.

“ When wild war’s deadly blast was blawn,  
And gentle peace returning,  
With monie a sweet babe fatherless  
And monie a widow mourning,  
I left the lines and tented fields  
Where lang I’d been a lodger,  
My humble knapsack a’ my wealth,  
A poor and *wounded* sodger.”—BURNS.

WE have seen how the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders had been so dreadfully cut up in front of the American cotton-bale breast-works. Many of the wounded lay on the field of slaughter all night, weltering in gore and unattended to, till early next morning. Amongst the wounded was our old friend the Durness man who was initiated while drilling under the orders of the “Sailor” in the “left backward shoulder exercise,” who had been previously wounded at the battle of the Blue Mountain, but after being in hospital for some time was pronounced fit to rejoin his comrades. He ever afterwards referred to his wounded limb as the “cas bhochd” (poor foot). Another, a private of the name of Neil Mackintosh, a native of Torrisdale, near Tongue, was also wounded at New Orleans. Both had enlisted from the Sutherland Fencibles of 1798 into the 93rd on its enrolment in 1800.

In the spring of 1816, a cripple, weary and worn, in the garb of a soldier, was seen on the road leading to Swordly. He made his way to the hamlet, entered the first house he came to, and was kindly and hospitably received. It was Neil Mackintosh of Torrisdale, who had been wounded at New Orleans, taken prisoner, and sent to hospital, where he caught fever and ague. He was a perfect skeleton on his return. He remained a few days in this house to recruit himself, receiving the kindest attention from his host's youngest daughter, who afterwards became his wife. Neil reached home at last, where he spent the summer, autumn, and winter. By assiduous care, and strength of constitution, Neil made great progress in recovery from the wound and ague. Six months had not elapsed when he became as active and vigorous as ever. It was ascertained at the depôt that Neil was quite convalescent. An order was issued for him to join the depôt companies, after receiving a medical certificate. An army surgeon happened to be at the time residing at Syre, in the middle of Strathnaver, and thither Neil was ordered to proceed, report himself, and be examined. Neil would prefer to go to Swordly, to be near the fair attendant who ministered so gently, carefully, and kindly to his recovery while under her father's roof, but superior orders had to be obeyed. Neil considered the situation, and thought he had had enough of soldiering. Though

the wound above his ankle gave him no pain, it had not quite healed. The night before starting for the strath, he took two copper coins, placed one of them on each side of the wound, and tightly bandaged his leg. Between anxiety and pain Neil slept little that night. Early in the morning he took the road for Syre; road there was not, and Neil chose the roughest paths he could select. When he came within a mile of the surgeon's residence, he unbandaged his leg, which, from the bandages, the copper coins on the wound, and the fatigue endured in travelling so great a distance as fifteen miles over rough ground, now presented a very disagreeable aspect. By the aid of a stout staff he hirpled towards the doctor's abode, and submitted himself to examination. One sight of the leg, and of Neil's woe-begone countenance indicating much suffering, satisfied the doctor that his subject was unfit for further service, and he reported accordingly. Neil left Syre with a light heart, pleased that his ruse had so well succeeded. Soon afterwards his discharge was sent him, and attached to it was an award of a pension of sixpence a day, which in a few years was augmented to ninepence, and a further award of "Kinloch money" by the Corporation of the Scottish Hospital. Soon after receiving his discharge he married the daughter of his Swordly kindly host, and in that hamlet he brought himself to anchor, in a "barrack" "free from war's

alarms." To increase his income Neil would apply himself to some remunerative trade. Having acquired some knowledge of military tailoring during his twenty years' service, from 1793 to 1815, in the Fencibles and 93rd, he chose to be a "knight of the goose." These "knights" were proverbially "light bobs." In their itineracy from house to house they came in contact with "all sorts and conditions of men;" they were given to mirth and jollity, song singing, story telling, and not above taking leading parts in "practical jokes." In the whole fraternity few excelled Neil Mackintosh in pure humour, harmless fun, and knowledge of the world. Though Neil practised his adopted craft in his own locality, he never went far afield; he had select houses to which he ministered. He was much thought of, and his company much courted. His stories and tales about everything he had seen in barracks, camps, and the ways of men in England, Ireland, Africa, and America, and his experiences on board ship, were everywhere appreciated by old and young. His description of the disastrous campaign which terminated at New Orleans was vivid and unique. He made it out that "General Mismanagement" commanded during that short and lamentable campaign. For a fortnight preceding the battle, the soldiers had not any rest night or day, the cold was intense, and night attacks generally apprehended. Some had been made in force,

resisted, and easily repulsed when the Americans came out in the open. The night before the battle, he, with a great number of his comrades, was told off to form and erect a battery on the banks of the Mississippi, at which they toiled all night. Several of them lay down under cover, huddled closely together for warmth, and fell asleep. In the grey of the morning the captain of his company found them in that condition, and touching each of them with the point of his sword, startled them into consciousness, saying, "Rise, lads, go to the rear and get your allowance." In an instant every one of them was up, seized his arms, and saluted the officer. Neil thought at the time that he meant some other "allowance." However, it was not so. They, double quick, marched to the rear, and an allowance of grog, of which they stood much in need, was served to them. They were ordered to hasten to join their company, which had already advanced to the slaughter. Before they overtook their advancing comrades, they came upon one of them stretched dead, a ball through his head; a second was met, who turned out to be he of the "cas bhochd," the former pupil of the "Sailor" in the "left-backward shoulder" exercise, a ball having shattered his leg. Melancholy as the scene was, and exciting the moment, as artillery and musketry were now playing upon the advancing troops, and balls were whistling, hissing, and fizzing about their heads and in the air as thick

as hail, Neil, in passing him by, could not resist asking his right-hand comrade, in a jocular way, "An e so a chas bhochd?" ("Is this the poor foot?") The wounded gallant soldier coolly replied, "Whether it is or not, let it alone, this is not the time or place for banter; run on, and join your company, and quit yourselves like men; help will come to me when you rout the enemy." Neil had not advanced many yards when he himself was stretched on the field, a musket-ball going right through his leg, and there *he* lay with a "cas bhochd" too. After being in hospital for six weeks, amputation was ordered to be performed, but by the advice of a French doctor in the hospital it was delayed. On further examination the former order was repeated. His benefactor again intervened, saying he would stake his existence upon a perfect cure being effected. The case was therefore left in his hands. He was right, for Neil enjoyed the full use of the "cas bhochd" till the end of a life lengthened considerably beyond eighty. The wounded at New Orleans was, as we have previously related, very considerable. In a certain parish in Sutherland fifty years ago, there were no less than twenty-four pensioners, wounded at New Orleans, drawing quarterly pensions, varying from sixpence to half-a-crown a day, according to rank, service, and nature of wound. One of these used to relate, that when standing in front of the ditch and trenches, a cannon-ball

struck his brother's head clean off by his side, and threw himself down flat without doing any injury to him, and shortly after taking his position a musket-ball shattered his right elbow. The arm was amputated in hospital, an operation borne with the indifference of a stoic. A wounded comrade lying near him, viewing the operation, jocularly remarked when it was completed, and the amputated portion lying on a small table by the side of the bed, "Ian, cha bhuail an laimh sin, duine gu bràth" ("John, that hand will never strike any man"). John requested the operator to give him a last look at "a hand that served him so well and so long," a request instantly complied with. John looked earnestly and seriously at his lost limb, and looking towards his companion, struck him with it, exclaiming, "'S thusa fear mu dheireadh" ("Thou shalt be the last").

When the 93rd was stationed in Ireland previous to its embarking for the Cape, John was in company with some more of his comrades enjoying themselves in a public-house, when in came an Irish bully to pick a quarrel with the kilted lads. They would not be drawn. The Irishman was a formidable-looking fellow. He at last challenged the best of them to a combat of fisticuffs. The Highland lads were not accustomed to fisticuff combats, however well they might use their digits in other ways. None accepted the challenge, telling the Irishman they did not come into

his country to provoke quarrels and make themselves disagreeable. Emboldened by this pacific reply, he challenged the best man in the whole regiment. This was too much for little John, who got up, and told the Irishman he would have a "go" at him, if the room was cleared and a fair field given them. John knew nothing of the "noble art" of self-defence by boxing, but intrepidly faced the Irishman, who put himself in an attitude of attack and defence. John stood at a respectful distance from his giant opponent, eyeing him and measuring him, and planning his mode of attack, which was quickly made. Ducking his head, he made a rush at the giant, hit him with his head like a ram in the stomach, and laid him senseless on the floor. His comrades now stood up, drew their bayonets, and cleared the house. John, seeing the value of the "noble art" in self-defence, learned it to perfection, hence the remark of his comrade. John was a hardy, sinewy, veteran pensioner, sober and steady, endowed with great good sense, and much "mother-wit." He never lost the elastic military step of the soldier, enjoyed his pension of sixpence a day for fifty years, and died regretted by all his acquaintances.

When the "Sailor" had removed from the Crask to Swordly, he and Neil became companions, and their friendship lasted unbroken for thirty years, till the demise of the "Sailor,"—a very natural result with men who appreciated



each other's good qualities, and had the sense to overlook weaknesses. They were both "army men," "men of war," who had seen a great deal of the world outside of their own native localities. Each of them had his peculiarity. The "Sailor" full of quiet unobtrusive humour and wit; the other, who was outspoken, would instantly pass from the height of fun and laughter to the gravest subjects, and assume a most rueful countenance. Such blending of extremes was seldom witnessed.

One night in "winter's stormy blast" Neil stayed till a late hour in the "Sailor's" house. When he rose to go, the "Sailor" said, "Neill, tarruing an doruis as do dheidh" ("Neil, draw the door after thee"). Neil replied that he would, and suiting the action to the command he quietly drew the door off its hinges, and dragged it after him. The "Sailor," sitting cosily by the fire, soon felt cold blasts coming from the doorway, and rather testily told his wife to go and shut it, as the imp who had gone out had not done as he promised. The wife went, but could not find a door to shut. She groped for it in the dark; it was in vain. At last she called out she could not find the door, she could only feel the doorway. Instantly light dawned on the "Sailor." Neil had literally executed his command. Up he got, out he went, and ran in the track of Neil, who, when he heard the "Sailor" coming close upon him, laid down the

door on the snow and sat upon it. The "Sailor" coming up to him, sat down by his side, each enjoying the joke; and there the two worthies sat till the frost and the cold warned them that they had better separate, when each took his separate way to his own house.

Neil left Swordly on the demise of his wife, feeling his bereavement so much that he could not remain in the same house in which he had so much enjoyment and delight while she lived. His departure was much regretted. He was an excellent and an obliging neighbour. His companionship and his presence, which had lent so much charm to the limited society of the hamlet, was missed, as no other's had been, as we ourselves, who had seen him and knew him, can testify.

For years after quitting Swordly he once a year regularly came to the "Sailor's" house to make his clothes. This period was a red-letter day in the hamlet. Young and old crowded every night into the "Sailor's" house to have "a night" with Neil, enjoy his conversation, and listen to his tuneful rhetoric. Should a conversation develop into argument and contention, Neil would call upon his "goose" to be given him. He would then stare the "goose" in the face as if in conversation with it, strike its heel on the board across his knees with such a force as startled every one present. Pressing it down with his hands across the handle, he would sit, his head

quivering from the effects of ague, staring his opponent in the face; his own, which but a few minutes previously had been beaming with laughter, and his large dark eyes streaming with the exuberance of the dewy softness of his heart, would assume a rigidity of muscle, a petrifying stiffness of appearance, as for a moment chilled every one, till at last every one burst into laughter. Then Neil's features relaxed, a smile began to play upon the muscles of that extraordinary countenance, and all was over, peace and amity were restored.

“ The poor dear sodger ne'er despise,  
Nor count him as a stranger ;  
Remember he's his country's stay  
In day and hour of *danger*.”

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FOOLS AND GABERLUNZIES.

“ Among the farms and solitary huts,  
Hamlets, and thinly scattered villages,  
Where'er the aged beggar takes his rounds,  
The mild necessity of use compels  
To acts of love ; and habit does the work  
Of reason.”—WORDSWORTH.

**I**N the Highlands, in the time of which we write, fools and gaberlunzies were always well, or seemingly well, received as often as they made their rounds. Quarters and food were never denied them. Frequently, for a few days, they made themselves useful. They sometimes were tormented by the thoughtless and the young, and aroused to a state of passion that caused their tormentors to fly in terror.

In those days there lived in the district of Farr an old maid commonly called “An Do-ill 'ic Ian, ic Alastair,” briefly “An Do-ill,” but nicknamed “An Reithe” (the ram), from her masculine and forbidding appearance, rough features, and hirsute appendages on chin and cheek. It could not be said of her, as Burns said of Captain Grose, “Ane wad rather hae fa'n than fled.” The youth of the place were a source of great annoyance to her, and she frequently was a cause of terror to them. Their

nimble limbs gave them a great advantage, and distance lent them courage for annoyance. One or more of them caught in her strong grasp, felt the power of her arm and the degree of her wrath. Experience taught them that discretion was the better part of valour, in their skirmishing with "the Ram." They fired their volleys from a respectful distance, by imitations of the bleating of the quadruped whose name was applied to her. These jeers enraged her very much, and forced the retort from her, "Eudail! cloimh 's adharcan, adharcan 's cloimh a bhi oirbhsa" ("May wool and horns, horns and wool grow on you").

She was a "curiosity" in her dress. She wore an "overall," in the shape of a widely-chequered white and blue home-made blanket, fastened on the breast by a "braisd" or brooch of silver, oblong in form, four inches wide across its middle, such as would to-day gladden the eye of the antiquary. Her headgear was of the same material, dyed to a bluish colour, cut to the style of the ordinary "mutch" of the time, a cord running through in the front to draw it closely to the face, with a fitted border of different material, some inches wide, all round the face. In her hand she carried a shepherd-crook-like staff, fully longer than herself.

Notwithstanding her peculiarities and oddities, the "Do-ill" evinced shrewdness in no ordinary degree. In her younger years she saved some

money, and in those days of her wandering aberrations was in the habit of giving it in loan to parties whom she thought she could trust and be in need of it, charging one shilling per pound per year as interest, with the additional stipulation that she would be made welcome and have free quarters for a night or longer when she came their way. When the "Sailor" removed to Swordly he had to build himself a new house, and make other requisite improvements. None of his family being at the time able to provide for themselves, he was somewhat hard up, especially when the rent-day came round. To make both ends meet, his wife advised him to apply to "the Reithe" for a loan. This was a shift he much disliked, but the rent had to be paid. The wife's advice was adopted; the loan was applied for, and granted. Whether it was, or was not, from the genial manners of the "Sailor" and his better half, they had cause to regret the loan, as from the day the money was given "the Ram" was scarcely a night away from their house.

The "Sailor's" next-door neighbour was a young unmarried man, a sister keeping house for him. One night during that winter Neil Mackintosh was tailoring in the young man's house. Wherever Neil happened to be he attracted company. After nightfall the "Sailor" went to have a chat with Neil. He had not been many minutes in his neighbour's house

when the young man, who was acting the "peer man" or candle-holder to the tailor, requested the "Sailor" to take his place for a short time. The "Sailor" assented. This night "the Ram" was in the "Sailor's" house. Immediately the young man got outside, he ran to the "Sailor's" house. Sauntering about the door for a time, a precocious little boy came out of the house, who in answer to the young man told him that "the Ram" was within. The young man enjoined the boy, on promise of reward, to tell no one when he went in, that he saw him outside, and if asked if he had seen any one to say that he had seen none but the "Sailor." The boy promised, and acted as he had been told. The young man went to the back of the house where a window was opposite to the fireplace. Between the fire and the window sat "the Ram." Not many moments passed when a shrill baa! baa! was heard from the window. "The Ram" started as if shot, and turning towards the window gave vent to her accustomed retort, "Cloimh 's adharcan! adharcan is cloimh, cloimh is ad-adharcan a bhi ortsa," then sat down in high dudgeon. She had scarcely seated herself when the bleating was reiterated. Up she rose in a towering rage, repeating her previous ejaculations, and opened the window, but nobody could be discovered in the darkness. The "Sailor's" wife became uneasy and uncomfortable. She

asked the boy if he had seen any one about when he was out. The boy replied, "None but the 'Sailor.'" This was enough. "The Ram" at once came to the conclusion it was the "Sailor" who was outside, insulting *her* who was his guest and benefactor. The "Sailor's" wife came in for a share of the abuse "the Ram" poured forth. She knew not what to do; and having a child in her arms, was unable to go for her husband, who she was certain was not the delinquent. She took his part in the best way she could, but "the Ram" was unappeasable. She called her and her husband rank hypocrites, two-faced vermin; she would burn their brand new house over their heads. Suiting the action to the word, she took hold of her long staff and scattered the fire to every corner of the house, her passion increasing by every stroke of the long staff, while she actually foamed at the mouth in a paroxysm of towering rage and anger. The two younger children, frightened at the virago, screamed in chorus, and crept for safety behind their mother. One of the elder children coming in, was at once despatched for the father to come at once, as "the Ram" was setting fire to the house, and their lives in great danger. The moment he heard this he suspected his young neighbour to be the cause of it, and hinted so much in going out. The "Sailor's" appearance on the scene did not mend matters. He was in a dilemma, between two fires, the



wife and "the Ram,"—in familiar phrase, "'twixt the devil and the deep sea." To attempt to deny the charge was useless. His wife blamed him for the trouble and the scare he had caused, "the Ram" screaming and vociferating for her money there and then, otherwise she would burn the house about their ears, and pouring out all the torrents of abuse an enraged virago only could utter. The long night passed away much in the same way as described. "The Ram" would not leave without her money. At day-break the "Sailor" made his way to Kirtomy to see his friend "Ian Òg" (young John), who was reputed to have a "stocking" hid away somewhere in a box or in a hole in the wall. Young John did not disappoint him. He obtained all he wanted, returned, and paid off "the Ram," who acted the "bailiff" so outrageously. The "Sailor" was glad to be rid of her, his wife more so. "The Ram" never troubled the "Sailor" nor his wife after this singular incident.

Another character used to frequent the locality, of a different type to "the Ram," "a wandering innocent," not a native. He was known as "Alastair-nan-ordagan" (Alexander of the toes), from the more than ordinary size of those members, swollen with bunions, and possibly owing to this, he seldom wore shoes. As a substitute he covered his feet with woollen stockings, termed "maolagan," that is stockings

without the soles. He was a simple-minded personage, and when properly coaxed and well fed would make himself very useful.

The young man referred to in "the Ram's" outrageous proceedings, and the real cause of them, much to the "Sailor's" disgust and annoyance, and much more to his wife's, possessed a good deal of that gift said to be acquired by Irishmen from kissing the "Blarney stone." He soon got round Alastair-nan-ordagan, and managed to detain him for a whole month or more each winter performing very useful services. Alastair was a good barnman, and as handy in plaiting heather ropes or rush or straw ones. The winter following the scene created by the young neighbour of the "Sailor," Alastair was again in his usual place. Whether or not the "Sailor" desired to secure Alastair's services for himself, does not appear, but he was the means of Alastair's forsaking his wonted sanctuary.

One evening after dusk the "Sailor" stepped across to his young neighbour's house. Entering, none was present but Alastair plaiting heather ropes, and evidently in good glee, as he was accompanying the work of his fingers by whistling various airs. The "Sailor" saluted him, giving him at the same time a hearty shake of the hand, and inquired how he was? how he was getting on? and what success he had met with since the last winter? inquiries which

highly pleased Alastair. The "Sailor" then examined his work, which he pronounced to be all that could be desired. He then took a seat at some distance from Alastair. Presently the young man's sister came in and seated herself near the "Sailor," entering into conversation with him, Alastair all the time going on with his work and whistling. After conversing with the young woman for some time, the "Sailor" said it was not altogether the right thing on her part to make remarks about the poor man's toes and bunions, for though they were conspicuous enough it was no fault of his, it was more his misfortune than his fault. Hearing this, Alastair started up, eyed the young woman with an air of indignation, disdain, and contempt. She was taken quite aback, and for the moment did not know what to say. Her confusion however, in the mind of Alastair, confirmed her guilt; and although she eventually denied absolutely the impeachment, Alastair would not be appeased. He laid aside his work, and passionately declared he had too long been made a dupe of in that house, that she and her brother were very fair to his face so long as he worked for them, but now he found out it was all hollow pretence, would have no more of it, and would take good care that they never should have the opportunity again of imposing upon him by their fair and smooth tongues. Seizing his greatcoat, Alastair in a most wrathful mood

took to the door, made his exit without further ado. He kept his word, and never afterwards re-entered it. The "Sailor," in the confusion created by Alastair, made his exit too.

On the following morning the young man called upon the "Sailor," blamed him for depriving him of a useful assistant, and remonstrated with him on his conduct of the previous evening, adding, "Agairidh Dia ortsa, a nith rinn thu, a t-aon chobhair tiomail bh' agamsa, thoirt uam" ("God will lay to thy charge what thou hast done, depriving me of my only earthly help"). The "Sailor" replied that no doubt he would on his return home be put about, would miss Alastair's help, yet to reflect how much he had put him about the night "the Ram" threatened to burn his house to the ground.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### EVICCTIONS IN SUTHERLAND: THEIR ATROCITIES AND DIRE RESULTS.

“ The chiefs, whom for ages our claymores defended  
When landless and exiled, and our fathers befriended,  
From their homes drive their clansmen, when famine is sorest,  
Cast out to make room for sheep and deer of the forest.

Yet on far fields of fame, when red ranks were reeling,  
Who pressed to the van like the men from the sheiling?  
Ye were fain in your need Highland broadswords to borrow,  
Where, where are they now should the foe come to-morrow?”

—PROFESSOR SHAIRP.

“ The hills that our brave fathers trod  
Are now to the stranger a store;  
The voice of the pipe, and the bard  
Shall awaken them never more.”

—R. CHAMBERS.

“ Weep, Albyn, weep ! for this dark desolation !  
Green are the mountains, and blue are thy streams as of yore  
Broad are thy valleys to feed and to nurture a nation ;  
Mother of Nations ! but nation thyself never more.  
Men of strong heart and endeavour,  
Sigh as they leave thee for ever.  
Those who remain are down-hearted, and weary and few :  
Low in the dust they lie,  
Careless to live or die,  
Misery conquers them—foemen could never subdue.”

—C. MACKAY.

POETS have sung, philanthropists have spoken, and patriots, who loved their country and its inhabitants, have expatiated upon and written of these atrocious evictions,—the greatest stretch of the rights of property

that have been enacted in any country in Europe, and at a time and period in the history of our country when the best men of the Highlands were battling with their country's foes, whose martial achievements and renown rang in every one's ears from Hindostan to Panama. When the Emperor of Russia reviewed Wellington's army on the Champs de Mars in Paris, in 1815, so struck had he been with the reports of the bravery of the "soldats Ecosais" and their martial appearance at the review, that he requested half-a-dozen of them to be taken from the ranks and brought to him for closer inspection. The men came, and saluted the Emperor, who was on horseback surrounded by field-m Marshals and generals of every European power. He stedfastly gazed upon the veteran-looking soldiers, praised them, exclaiming, "No wonder that Wellington won victories by such soldiers." He dismounted, ordered the men forward to him, felt them all round the chest and arms to find if they were padded. He found nothing but bone, muscle, and hardened gristle. Mounting his horse he ordered his aide-de-camp to present each man with a gold coin, which was most respectfully declined. He imagined the kilted men might be of the same nature as his own Cossacks. The Emperor of all the Russias was surprised, and turning to the general officers near him, said, "Ces braves Ecosais, quel gentilhommes !" ("These

brave Scottishmen, what gentlemen!") Yes, well might the Russian emperor say so. He knew some of their countrymen in his own armies, amongst them Field-Marshal Barclay de Tolly.

When many of us, natives of the Highlands, visit the "old folks at home," sad to us is the aspect our native glens present, desolate, tenantless, the happy homes of our brave forefathers in complete ruin, green grass growing over them, the ridges and furrows of the fields they once cultivated now overgrown with moss and heather,—nothing to be seen, no sound of human voice to be heard, all "dark desolation."

" Roaming alone o'er the heather,  
Nought but the bleat of the wether,  
The bark of the collie, or the crack of the grouse-slayer's gun  
Breaks on the lonely ear."

Where is the man, where is the native, or the patriot, that does not feel strong emotions rising in his breast when he surveys a Highland glen, once replete with robust life, and sees on the hillsides and low down in the valleys the crumbled walls of dismantled houses surrounded with patches of land still green preserving the memory of what they once were,—the happy homes of brave men, and as brave women, and hardy healthy children, stout lads and bonnie lasses,—the homes of virtue and piety, the abodes of mirth and song, joyfulness and gladness, hospitality and comparative prosperity,—the homes of men who were sober, industrious, and

thriving, honest, high-minded, God-fearing,—the homes from which went forth that soldier-race who formed the front attack, the only successful attack on Fontenoy, and formed the forlorn hope that covered the wreck of the allied troops retreating from the field before the victorious French on that murderous day; that scaled the rock-face over the St Lawrence and greatly assisted to win Quebec; that broke the forces of Hyder Ali in the Carnatic, and restored the prestige of the British soldier in India; that overthrew the power of the Mahratta hordes on the plains of Assaye, and gave Wellington his maiden victory; that before this century opened up its vista sent scores of battalions from glens beyond the Grampians to fight England's battles in Germany, America, India, and Flanders, and when this century saw its younger years and middle age to Egypt, Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, America, Turkey, Russia, India, China, Africa, conquering for her in every field, first in the assault, last in retreat!

Even when the pilgrim or pedestrian stranger visits those vales, unacquainted as he may be with their past history, unacquainted with our unequal and, it may be said, unjust land laws, and sees the scenes their landscape unfolds, and hears the story of the cruelties perpetrated in them, upon the parents, the brothers and sisters of those incomparable soldiers in the early part of this century, whose fame had attracted him to view their



birthplaces and see the population from which they had sprung, he would naturally ask, seeing the desolation around him, "How is this? What had this people done against the State? What class had they wronged? For what crime had so dreadful a punishment been inflicted." The answer would be,—“They had done no wrong. They had ever been loyal and true men, every year sending forth thousands of their sons from these glens to follow the battle flag of Britain, wherever it flew, and by their devotion to it made it respected and feared. While those gallant men were away all over the earth, their humble happy homes were burnt down, the whole sky lurid with the fire of their blazing houses, and darkened with the smoke that arose from the conflagrations; the very air rent with the wail of women, the cries of children, the sound of which was wafted on the same breeze that bore the scent of the heather, the freshness of the dewy blossom, and the thousand sweets that endeared the life of the Highland peasant, and made his abode blest with health, happiness, and contentment.” It is unnecessary to describe the impression that so a true a tale would create, but it would no doubt be thus:—

“Scenes may be enacted on the field of battle, and in the dark hours of carnage and strife, which sometimes make the blood run cold as we read of them, but they are not nearly so terrible in their red-handed vengeance as the cold ma-

lignity of a civilised law that permits a brave, a noble, God-fearing, and a rent-paying peasantry to be dispossessed of the homes in which for centuries they dwelt, and to disappear by the operation of legalised injustice."

Terrible the effect was. Retribution upon the actors will surely and inevitably come.

What was the reason, we ask, for these dreadful desolations and atrocities in Sutherland, when the population, as it had been shown in previous chapters, had ever been so attached to their superiors, so loyal to the crown and to the State beyond and far above any other portion of the Highlands? Let the originator, the prime actor, and the accomplicher of such inhuman deeds tell the story in his own words:—

"So long as men for recruiting the Sutherland regiments were the great object of consideration, the chief had no reason, nor did he complain, of the arrangement. It was one of those taxes he laid his account with paying, in order to maintain and support that system from which he derived part of his consequence and influence. When however this regiment (93rd), like other corps of the same description, was made a regiment of the line, and became subject to every regulation applicable to the rest of the king's army, a complete alteration took place in its whole character and economy. It was no longer commanded by the chief, or by any person nominated by him. It was certainly desirable there-

fore that the system should not be continued, *while the benefits that were derived from it were entirely done away with.* "Many of the discharged men of the 93rd entertained the expectation, although well and liberally rewarded by the bounty of the nation, that they should still have obtained farms in the same manner as those who, after having served the views and forwarded the interests of their chief, had tacks of land granted to them. The dissatisfaction which a contrary arrangement produced with them, was such as might have been expected and looked for."

There can be no doubt about these words. The interests and the welfare of the people were entirely ignored; the new idea was the enrichment of the *landlord*, at any cost of suffering, degradation, and even the annihilation of the people. This was clearly the object in view in this cold-blooded, iniquitous, unjust, and illegal, indeed inhuman, resolve. Men for war ceased to be valuable, but could not be sold. Sheep were considered more valuable because they could be sold for thirty shillings to forty shillings apiece.

Promises of land, or "tacks" of land, were made as an inducement to young men to enlist in the fencible regiments and in the 93rd; future protection was also a condition made to parents, to induce them to encourage their young men to volunteer. These promises and condi-

tions having been denied, because they were not written documents, remained engraven upon the people's memory, and were brought forward before the Royal Commission in 1883. The Right Honourable Lord Napier, the chairman, expressed himself anxious to obtain documentary evidence upon this point. None was then forthcoming, but ample evidence of the kind his lordship desired to have has since come to the light of day. The assertions then made have been amply verified. These assertions were not even challenged, much less was there any attempt made to rebut them.

Having now shown the motives to action in the "clearances" in Sutherland, we shall proceed to describe the *modus operandi* and the *opera*, so fatal to the population from every point of view, and as it would appear, also fatal in its retribution, upon the third and fourth generation of the guilty parties.

In the outset, it is just to say that the Countess of Sutherland, the Marchioness of Stafford of the day, may, by inference, be said to have been averse to disturbing her ancient tenantry who for centuries, from 1200 to 1766, had shown such devotion and attachment to her ancestors, and from 1766 to 1802, had shown equal zeal and attachment to herself, the only living child of her father, Earl William, the eighteenth chief. This inference seems to be true, for while evictions and clearances raged on the con-

finances of the Sutherland estates for three or four years, there was nothing to indicate any such revolutionary movement on them; and further, when the innovation was pressed, and south countrymen overrunning the land, were offering very high prices for leases of various parts of it, it was not till 1809 that a consent was extorted, that a tentative commencement might be made upon a large tract of hill pasture in the neighbourhood of Lairg that would not interfere with, or disturb, but few of the ancient tenantry. Thus was the thin end of the wedge got in, and without doubt, by false and interested information, the rest followed within three years. There was ample time thus given for further schemes to be hatched and prepared for a fell swoop to be made in 1812. In proof of the foregoing, and the repugnance of the Countess herself to the new ideas that prevailed in Ross-shire, when it became known in London that people were evicted in districts of that county bordering upon Sutherland, instructions were sent to the local agents in Golspie to give shelter to such of the evicted of those districts as chose to accept it, on Dornoch Moor, a barren, uncultivated, and unpopulated expanse. However well inclined her ladyship personally might have been, she was in the hands of designing men, and in the hands of a strong-minded, self-willed husband, who in England was "a great improver of estates," and who

succeeded to vast wealth by the death of the "famous Duke of Bridgewater, of canal renown."

The Countess knew little of the land of her ancestors, nor of the people or their condition. She did know of their great attachment to herself, as the daughter of her father, who was deservedly the idol of his people for his high qualities of head and heart, so graphically recorded by the poet, Rob Donn, in one of his best elegies. The poet knew him personally for four years while serving in the Sutherland Fencible Regiment of 1759-64, and was well able from his own observation, and the great esteem and affection in which he was held by his immediate retainers and clansmen, to give a true estimate of his character and virtues. This excellent nobleman died in Bath on the 16th June 1766 at the early age of thirty-one. His Countess, Lady Mary Maxwell, whom the poet calls "a chéile òg Mairi Macsuel" ("his dearly beloved young spouse, Mary Maxwell"), died on the 1st June, a fortnight before her lord, worn out with anxiety, fatigue, and apprehension for his recovery from a fever he caught shortly after coming to Bath. Night and day she watched by his bedside in constant attendance upon the husband she adored. After one and twenty days and nights of this incessant vigil, without retiring to bed, nature gave way, and she succumbed, a martyr to womanly devotion to a husband. He was not informed of her death.

His own followed a fortnight after. Lovely and pleasant they were in their lives, in their death they were not parted. Their bodies were brought together to Holyrood and there interred. They had two daughters, Catherine, born in Dunrobin on the 24th May 1764, died there 3rd January 1766; Elizabeth, born 24th May 1765. She was thus only thirteen months old when she succeeded to the estate. Thus left an orphan, she was brought up in the family of one of her guardians in the south of Scotland. She was married in 1785 to Viscount Trentham, afterwards Marquis of Stafford. Entering at once into London society, and shortly thereafter into that of Paris and the Court of Louis XVI., to which her husband was sent as British ambassador, she could not have known much of her Sutherland tenantry except by repute, and the alacrity they evinced in 1777, 1793, and 1800 in responding to the call she made to them to arm in defence of their king and country.

The continual representations or misrepresentations made to her husband by designing men, of improvements and innovations, such as were adopted in many other counties, with the result of greatly increased rents, and forsooth! the greatly increased comforts and prosperity to the ancient tenantry which were sure to follow, unfortunately told and took effect, first as has been said, tentatively, then, as more pressure was applied, quite in a storm and hurricane in 1812.

In 1809 the first sheep-farm was formed on the Sutherland estate, which we shall call No. 1, known then as the "Lairg sheep-farm," and let to Atkinson and Marshall, two Northumbrian sheep-farmers, who were the first to introduce Cheviot sheep into the county. This farm extended from the vicinity of Lairg, right away to Lochnaver, a distance of eighteen miles, bounded on the west side by the river Terrie, which falls into Loch Shin, and the Bagastie which falls into Lochnaver, with an average breadth of eight miles, passing through the heights of Strath Brora by Allt-a-mhuil to the eastern end of Clibreck mountain, and down by the river Mallard to the Naver, an area of 144 square miles, or 92,000 acres. The tenantry in the heights of Strath Brora, in the hamlets of Dalmore, Cnocan, and Dalnessie, were evicted, and so were those in Strath Bhagastie, in Achadh-na-damph, Corry-phrise, and from Allt-na-harra, along the south side of Lochnaver to the river Mallard, the hamlets of Clibreck, Rhi-an-t-sealbhaig, Achoul, Achness, Allt-na-ba, Alt-an-laoghart, and all round Loch Coire-na-fearna, once the territory of the Aberach Mackays,—in all about 350 people.

No. 2, Invershin sheep-farm, of about 6,000 acres, was formed in the same year (1809), and let to Morton and Culley, two Northumbrians who had entered upon a large tract of land in Ross-shire. A score of families were



ejected on this farm to make way for the new "idol" sheep.

The people had rest and tranquillity for the next three years, which somewhat allayed their apprehensions of further encroachments; yet fear and dread were felt to be in the air, the calm before the storm, and it so proved to be, for in 1812, after plans were matured, the whole of the inland population of Assynt were expelled from the homesteads of their fathers, and driven headlong down to the sea-coast. A mournful account of these evictions, the terror created by them, and the losses in stock suffered by the evicted, was related to the Royal Commission at Lochinver in 1883. No less than forty-eight townships were evicted, their houses burnt, and many of the inhabitants left to shift for themselves as best they might. The whole area thus cleared of humanity was let to six sheep-farmers, who soon replaced the ancient inhabitants by sheep. Great credit was taken that these six farmers were native gentlemen.

Coming now to the centre of operations, the next sheep-farm formed was the "Shinness" (No. 9). It lies on the west side of the rivers Terrie and Bagastie, contiguous to No. 1, the Lairg sheep-farm, extending westward to Loch Merkland, adjoining the great Reay deer-forest, a breadth of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles, and from Loch Shin to the river Mudale, about 16 miles, an area of 120 square miles or 77,000 acres. All the

ancient tenantry along the shores of Loch Shin and on the banks of the Terrie were ejected.

At the same time No. 10 sheep-farm was formed, named "Rhaoin" or "Rhine," 6,000 acres, and let to Gilchrist of Ospisdale. All the ancient tenantry, many of them in prosperous circumstances, were expelled or congested into hamlets about Lairg and Strathfleet, and left to shift for themselves, or emigrate to Nova Scotia.

No. 11 sheep-farm, "Torboll," was formed in the same year, about 3,000 acres, nearly 150 acres being arable. It was let to Captain Kenneth Mackay. All the old tenantry round about Torboll, and in Strath Carnaig were ejected. Small lots of three to four acres of waste moor on the hill-side were given to a few, some left the country, others thrust into hamlets already congested.

Next in order was "Morvich," No. 12, an arable and sheep farm of about 3,000 acres. It was first occupied by Earl Gower, son of the Countess of Sutherland, as a summer residence. He afterwards became, in 1833, second Duke of Sutherland. On his leaving it he was succeeded by Patrick Sellar, who held it for thirty-eight years, along with other arable and sheep farms, which will be mentioned. Many families were expelled; the principal townships were Morvich and Aberscross, the seat of the Murrays, men noted in their day, guardians and saviours of Dunrobin in many a conflict, fray, and foray.

The best services of these noted men of war were forgotten; men, strangers in the land, were preferred.

We pass on in chronological order, and come to No. 13, "Kilcalmkill" sheep-farm, to which allusion has been made in a previous chapter. The expulsion of the ancient tenantry took place in 1812.

No. 14, Sciberscross sheep-farm, let to James Hall, a Roxburgh man, who a few years previously had come to Caithness as an ordinary shepherd. Such men possessed skill and experience in the management of sheep, but no capital. The stock sheep were found for them; they paid the rent, and paid the stock by degrees, and eventually became wealthy men, much in the same manner as squatters on the Australian plains, or the Dutch Boers in South Africa, who dispossessed the native population. This farm lies between the "Kilcalmkill" on the east to the "Lairg" on the west, a distance of 8 miles, and from the Blackwater river on the north, to the Brora on the south, with an addition on the south side of the Brora river to the watershed of Beinn na Corn, an average breadth of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles,—22,000 acres or 36 square miles. Sciberscross was an ancient seat of a chieftain of the Dunrobin family. Colonel Alexander Sutherland, a relative of the Countess, held it in 1812, a gentleman of the old school and a soldier. He liked to see the old tenantry happy and

comfortable around him. He too had to go and flit before the blast of the cold-blooded determined "new ideas of improvement"; hence the whole of the ancient tenantry from the valley of the Blackwater and the valley of the Brora, comprised in twenty townships, were driven out in one day. Those of them who had means emigrated to Nova Scotia, where, after much privation and endurance in the primeval forest of that colony, they eventually made themselves comfortable homes, ever sighing for the land of their fathers; while others squatted down on uncultivated moors, and eked out a miserable existence, till their relatives who had gone to America transmitted them the means to defray the expense of their passage to that land of refuge for the oppressed.

No. 15, "Pollie" sheep-farm, on north side of the Blackwater, lies between the "Sciberscross" on the south, the "Lairg" on the west, the "Rhiloisk" on the north, and the "Kilcalmkill" on the east, having an area of 7,000 acres. It was let to John Clough, a shepherd from the Borders like James Hall. Six townships were denuded for the formation of this sheep-farm, the people of which had to undergo the same fate as the preceding.

No. 16, "Dunrobin Glen" sheep-farm, always held by the proprietor. Within recent years it has been turned into a "deer forest,"—area 6,000 acres. The few families ejected were located

on miserable and miserably small lots in the Backies.

No. 17, "Uppat" sheep and arable farm, the summer residence of the chief-commissioner James Loch, once the residence of relatives of the Dun-robin family, area 5,000 acres; part of it is now comprised in the deer forest. All the ancient occupiers were placed in small allotments on the outskirts.

The foregoing, so far as sheep-farms are concerned, comprise the expulsions and clearances of the 1812 campaign, but it by no means exhausts the dread lists of the evictions of that year and the preceding one, for the formation of arable farms along the coast, from Rovie to the Helmsdale river.

From 1810 to 1814 evictions on the coast went merrily on for the formation of arable farms. The evicted were located on the hill-sides skirting these farms, to be serviceable to the large farmers; or driven into the villages of Golspie, Brora, Portgower, and Helmsdale, to extract from the sea part of their living; or crowded in new settlements on small lots in Clyne and Wester and Easter Helmsdale, the last two of which were afterwards further congested with refugees from the burnings and clearances of Kildonan in 1814-19.

The large arable farms thus formed along the coast were Rovie, Davoch Beg, Kinauld, Cam-busmore, Skelbo, Proncy, Evilix, Sidera, Cuthil,

Kirkton, Culmaily, Drummuie, Rhives, Golspie-Tower, Dunrobin Mains, Inverbrora, Clynelish, Clynetradwell, Loth-Beg, Cracaig, Kilmote, Culgower, Wester Garty, Midgarty, Navidale—twenty-five farms.

In 1813 there was a lull, but new plans for further evictions were being formulated, to be put into execution in 1814. In the month of April of that year the evictors and fire-brigades made their appearance in the heights of Strathnaver, and laid waste the whole of the east side of the strath, from the river Mallard all the way down to within a mile of the sea, over twenty miles long, throwing down and burning houses, outhouses, mills, kilns, and every other structure, to form three sheep-farms, Rhiloisk, Rhifail, and Skelpick,—Patrick Sellar, taking the first two; John Paterson, a Border man who a few years previously had come into Caithness an ordinary shepherd, the other. The ancient tenantry thus displaced were mercilessly driven down to the sea-coast, and settled amongst others on miserably small sterile lots, mostly waste land till then considered quite unfit for cultivation. The area thus made desolate of brave men comprised upwards of 85,000 acres of excellent hill pasture and meadow and cultivated lands along the right bank of the river Naver, upon which lived for ages a hardy, peaceable, contented population, numbering 150 families.

In the same year were formed the sheep-

farms of Torrish and Suisgill, on the left bank of the Illigh or Helmsdale river, an area of 25,000 acres. The inhabitants were remorselessly driven out. Several families retreated into Caithness; some to small lots in Helmsdale; while those better off, and able to pay their passage, went to America, to Glasgow, to Edinburgh, or Dundee. This was the territory of the brave Clan Gunn.

The crowning point of these desolating evictions has yet to be reached and related. In 1819 the west side of Strathnaver from Mudale to the sea, a distance of 28 miles, and the heights of Kildonan, were made desolate, and their inhabitants expelled root and branch, to form two huge sheep-farms. The lull in the storm of evictions from 1814 to 1818 led the people to believe that an end to such dreadful atrocities had come. It was not so. In less than a week the whole of this immense area was devastated and denuded of upwards of 400 families. These repeated and ever recurring evictions in Sutherland raised a tremendous storm throughout the whole country, till at last it reached London, and questions were asked about them in the Parliament of that day. Severe animadversions were passed upon them in the House of Commons. The evil was already committed, and every excuse was put forth to palliate their extent and their inhumanity. Yet the obloquy of these misdeeds, the brutality attending them, the remorselessness

evinced in carrying them out, were not forgotten by the public, for when some twelve years thereafter Earl Gower at a general election contested the Eastern Division of Staffordshire, and came upon the hustings in the town of Stafford to be nominated, the cry of Fire! Fire!! Fire!!! was raised, in allusion to the house-burnings at the evictions in Sutherland. He understood what was meant, and immediately descended, went away, and never again sought parliamentary honours. The story of these last awful scenes shall be given, as recorded by an eye-witness. It may be added that the area thus cleared of people comprised 130,000 acres, and was formed into two sheep-farms, one of 75,000 acres, the other 55,000, the former let to Sellar, the latter to John Paterson, who already held the Armadale and Bighouse sheep-farms. In addition to the above enumerated sheep-farms, there were formed in Tongue, Durness, and Eddrachilis parishes ten others, from which all the ancient tenantry were expelled and driven to the sea-coasts. It has been calculated that no less than 15,000 people were thus displaced from 1809 to 1819, with a remorselessness which has no parallel whatever in any county in Great Britain. It was more like the devastations of war, than the result of the cool cold-blooded calculations of Whig political economy. What the people thus driven from their ancient habitations suffered and endured from that day to this, may be better imagined



than described. To all of them it was a tale of woe and disaster; but let the eye-witness referred to describe in his own graphic language the eviction scene on the west or left bank of the Naver. It is a picture of all evictions.

“The reckless and lordly proprietors had deliberately resolved upon the total annihilation of their long-standing and strongly-attached tenantry on their widely extended estates, and the Sutherland clearances of 1819 was not only the climax of their system of oppression for many years before, but the extinction of the last remnant of the Scottish peasantry in the United Kingdom. Acts of atrocity, like violent tempests, send out a deep and sullen sound before them, the precursors of their more immediate approach; and I can yet recall to memory the deep and thrilling sensation which, as I sat in my little parlour, I felt, when tidings from headquarters of the meditated expulsion first reached me. It might be about October 1817. The first report reached the people by one of themselves, a tenant from the middle of the strath, who had gone to Rhives to pay his rent. He was told himself, and he was authorised to tell his neighbours, that the rent for the next half-year would not be demanded, as it was finally determined by the *noble family* to eject all the tenants of Strathnaver and the heights of Kildonan at the next Whitsuntide term, and lay the whole of the country thus depopulated under sheep. This

intelligence was, when first announced, indig-  
nantly rejected by the people, notwithstanding  
the many by-gone experiences which they had  
had of the loving-kindnesses of 'Ban Mhor  
fhear Chat' to the people of Sutherland in  
former clearances. They could not, after all,  
but cling to the hope that she would never thus  
cast them out as dross, her people handed down  
to her, from father to son, no less than her broad  
earldom, by inheritance, from her hundred noble  
sires; and if the tidings were true, oh! it could  
not be her doing—the factors were, and only  
could be, to blame. She was all that was kind  
and amiable; the factors were monsters of  
cruelty. But the course of a few short weeks  
speedily undeceived them, and as clearly de-  
monstrated that, in the spirit of cruelty and  
unkindness, the factors and the factors' con-  
stituents were one and indivisible. The sum-  
monses of ejectment were issued, and the under  
menials of the law, loaded with those startling  
documents, were despatched from the factor's  
office at Rhives to spread themselves all over  
the district. In all the citations must have  
amounted to upwards of a thousand. Those  
summonses were distributed with the utmost  
minuteness. They were handed in by the sheriff-  
officers at every house and hovel door in the  
whole district, be the occupiers who or what  
they might, minister, catechist, elder, tenant or  
sub-tenant, out-servant or cottar, it did not

matter,—all, from the least to the greatest, must, according to law and in the great and abstract principle of justice, be made to feel that the earth on which they lived and breathed, and the fulness thereof, was the lawful property of The Most Noble The Marquis and Marchioness of Stafford, having the full and irresponsible right to dispose of it as these noble and very gracious personages might see fit. The enormous amount of citations issued, however, might be accounted for in another way. But the effects produced by these first and very decided measures upon us, I could not then but notice, and cannot now but distinctly recollect. Having myself received one of those summonses of ejection, I made every preparation to quit. The people received the legal warning to leave for ever the homes of their fathers, at first with a sort of stupor, that kind of apparent indifference which is often but the external aspect in certain circumstances assumed by the deepest and most intense feelings. As they began to awaken, however, from the stunning effects of this first intimation of their ultimate departure, their feelings found vent, and I was much struck with the different ways in which, as a collective body, they gave expression to those feelings. The truly pious, and of those there were a goodly number, at once acknowledged the ‘mighty hand of God’ in the whole matter. The factors and their constituents might be the

instruments, but the causes of the Divine displeasure they discovered to be in themselves. In their prayers, their religious conferences, and in their intercourse with each other, not one solitary expression could be heard indicative of anger or vindictiveness against their oppressors; but in the sight of God, and under His hand, they humbled themselves, saying, 'Thou, O Lord, art righteous, but we have sinned,'—a noble testimony to the real influence of the truth upon their hearts. Those amongst them who, whilst they maintained much outward decency, were strangers to such exalted and ennobling impressions of the Gospel, gave vent, as it were between their teeth, to deep and muttered curses upon the heads of those who treated them with such brutal insensibility. The openly profane and reckless of them did not scruple to indulge in the most culpable excesses. These were the fewest. The dark hour of their trial at last came in right earnest. In the middle of April it was that they were all, man, woman, and child, from the extreme heights of the parish of Farr to the mouth of the Naver, and in one and the same day, to quit their tenements and go, many of them they knew not whither. For by much the fewest number some miserable patches of ground along the shores were doled out as lots, without anything in the shape of the poorest hovel to shelter them. These lots it was intended they should build houses upon, culti-

vate at their own expense, and also to occupy as fishermen, although the great majority of them had never put a foot on a ship or boat all their lifetime. To these lots, on the day of their removal, they were driven at a week's warning. Others of them, and the majority of them, knew not where to go; and unless their neighbours on the shore had provided them with a temporary shelter for the time, they would, on the day of their removal, not be allowed to remain even in the open air, or on the bleakest moor, for twenty miles around them. On the Sabbath a fortnight previous to the fated day the minister preached his farewell sermon. We all assembled together for the last time at the place of Langdale, on a beautiful green sward, overhung by Sir Robert Gordon's antique romantic little cottage on the eminence close beside us. The still flowing waters of the Naver swept past us a few yards to the eastward. The Sabbath morning was unusually fine, and mountain, hill, and dale, water and woodland, amongst which we had so long dwelt, and with which all our associations of 'home' and 'native land' were so fondly linked, appeared to unite their attractions in order to bid us all a 'long farewell.' The scene was solemn for us all. The minister selected a text that had a pointed reference to our peculiar circumstances. The difficulty was how to restrain our feelings. The very aspect of the assemblage was of itself a

sermon, a most impressive one. Old Achoul sat right opposite to me, and around him his junior fellow-travellers to Zion. As the eye alighted upon his venerable countenance, bearing the impress of eighty-seven winters, it was deeply affecting. The minister preached, the people listened, but every sentence uttered and heard was in opposition to both the 'wind and tide' of our natural feelings. At last all restraints were compelled to give way, the preacher ceased to speak, the people ceased to listen, all lifted up their voices and wept,—we mingled our tears together. It was the place of parting, and the hour. The greater number parted then and there, never any more, either there or anywhere else, to behold each other in the land of the living.

"The middle of the week immediately thereafter brought on the very day of the Strathnaver clearances of 1819. It was on a Tuesday. At an early hour of that day Sellar, accompanied by the fiscal of the county, and at the head of a strong body of constables, sheriff-officers, and other compulsitors of the law, began the heartless and unholy work at Grumbmore, the first inhabited township to the west of Achness district. Their plan of operations was to clear the cottages of their inmates, give them half-an-hour to remove, pack up, and carry off their furniture, and then to set the cottages on fire. To this plan they ruthlessly adhered, without

the slightest regard to the feelings of the people, or to any obstacle, however formidable, to the safety of their little property, or even of their lives, that might arise in carrying that plan into execution; and such obstacles did present themselves, in two instances deeply affecting. At Grumbeg lived a soldier's widow, one Henrietta Munro. She had followed her soldier-husband in all his campaigns, marches, and battles in Sicily and Spain, until he came at last to engage and be vanquished in his ultimate conflict with the 'king of terrors.' Whether his death was on the field of battle or the result of fever I forget, but his faithful helpmate attended him to the last hour; and, when his spirit fled, closed his eyes, and followed his remains to their last resting-place. After his death she returned to Grumbeg, the place of her nativity, and being utterly destitute of all earthly means of support, she was affectionately received by her friends and countrymen, who built her a small cottage in which she resided. They gave her a cow too, and a cow's grass. Here she dwelt for some years previous to the bursting of the storm of evictions, naturally enough supposing that her earthly migrations were here to terminate for ever. It was not so, however, determined by Him who well and wisely orders all things. Poor aged Henrietta, or 'Hennie' as she was familiarly called, was a model after her kind of the widow and the wife of a soldier. The din

of arms, orders, marches and counter-marches, orders and counter-orders from headquarters, skirmishes and pitched battles, advances and retreats, were the leading and almost unceasing subjects of her winter evening fireside conversations. She could also with much readiness speak the common slang of the languages of Italy, Spain, and France. In short, the soldier's widow was such a joyous cheery old creature, so inoffensive moreover and so contented, and so brimful of goodwill to all, that instead of doing her any harm, every man, woman, and child who even only for a single day became acquainted with old 'Hennie' Munro, could feel towards her aught but the intense desire of doing her a good turn were it only for the warm and hearty feelings of gratitude with which it was received. Patrick Sellar and his 'posse' of iron-hearted followers, however, though they might have felt otherwise, didn't know 'Hennie,' or if they did they cared not. After the houses in Grumbmore were emptied of all their inmates, and roof and rafters lighted up into one red blaze in the air, these miscreants, for the same atrocious purpose, rushed upon the residence of the soldier's widow. When the intimation was given that the houses and cottages were to be cleared of their contents within the very limited time given, 'Hennie' stood up to plead for her furniture, the coarsest and most valueless that well could be, but still it was her



earthly all. She first asked, what a Robespierre would scarcely have refused, that, as her neighbours were so much occupied each with his own furniture, hers might be allowed to remain until they should be able, after securing their own, to remove it on a future day and more convenient occasion. This request was harshly and promptly refused. She then besought them to allow a shepherd on the opposite shore of the lake, who was present and who offered his services for the purpose, to carry the furniture to his own residence to remain there till she could carry it away. This also was refused, and Sellar with an oath told her that if she did not singly and alone take her 'infernal trumpery' out of her hovel in the course of half-an-hour, both should burn together! The poor soldier's widow had nothing for it but to task the last remains of her bodily strength, and address herself without further delay to the arduous work of dragging forth her chests, beds, presses, and stools out at the door, and placing them at the gable of her cottage. But no sooner was her task accomplished than the torch was applied, and the widow's hovel, built of materials highly combustible, speedily ignited, and rose up rapidly at first in a cloud of dense smoke and very soon thereafter into a bright lurid flame into the air. The wind unfortunately blew in the direction of the widow's furniture, and the flames lighting upon it speedily reduced the last pin of it to ashes!

“But a far more atrocious act of their cold-blooded cruelty was perpetrated at Ceann-na-coille, the next township they came to in their fire-raising and destroying progress down the strath. An aged widow resided there, who by years and infirmity had been reduced to such a state of debility and bodily weakness that she could neither walk nor lie in bed. She could only, both by night and through the day, sit in her chair; and being confined for many years to that posture, her limbs became so stiff, that any attempt to move her at all was instantly productive of the most acute pain. She was the mother of Samuel Matheson, and had been previously removed by Sellar from Rhimisdale. Sellar’s treatment of her and others had been the subject of judicial inquiry before the circuit court of Inverness; and although she had a narrow escape for bare life from the unfeeling ruffian on that occasion, it was so ruled in the providence of God that he should be instrumental in the hands of a God whom he did not know to hurry her to her everlasting rest. ‘Bean Rhaomasdail’ (the goodwife of Rhimisdale), as she was called, was revered as one of the ‘Annas’ of that generation of God’s Israel. In her house diets of catechisings and prayer-meetings were held, and many were signally refreshed by her humble and heavenly Christian converse. When Sellar and his fire-brigade commenced operations at this township, the aged widow’s

house was among the very first which was to be consigned to the flames. Her family, and the whole of the neighbours in a body, waited on Sellar, and represented to him her strong claims on his compassion from her bodily weakness and the imminent danger to her life of removing her to such a distance as the lower end of the strath, at least ten miles off, without a suitable means of conveyance. They implored him with tears to suffer her to remain only for two days longer, and that such a conveyance should be provided and the excellent old woman conveyed in safety to the place of her destination. But to all their prayers and remonstrances the ruffian turned a deaf ear. She must be brought out of the house by her friends or he would order the constable to do it, and if that was hard measures they should have thought of that before. What the consequences of her removal now might be, to her or them, he neither knew nor cared anything at all about! It was of no use to argue with him any longer on the matter. The good-wife of Rhimisdale was raised up by her weeping family from the chair on which she sat for many a long year, placed in a blanket, each corner of which was held up by four of the strongest youths of the place. All this she first bore with the greatest meekness, not a murmur escaped from her lips; and whilst the eyes of the attendants were streaming with tears, her pale and gentle countenance was

suffused with a smile, but when they rapidly moved out at the door bearing the burden, it was too much for her. The change of posture, the rapidity of the motion, awakened the most intense and excruciating pain, and her cries, which might have pierced a heart of stone, as they bore her away, never ceased until a few miles of her destined residence, when she fell asleep. Out of that sleep, and of a burning fever the effect of her suffering, she never recovered. Her death followed in a few months. During these heartless proceedings I had occasion in the week immediately ensuing to go to Tongue. On my way thither I passed through the scene and locality of Sellar's fire-raising campaign on the week before. The spectacle presented to my view at almost every step of my progress was hideous and ghastly! The banks of the river and the lake, formerly teeming with life and studded with cottages, now met the eye with one widespreading, heart-sickening scene of desolation. The roofs of the houses were gone, reduced to ashes; the walls, built of alternate layers of turf and stone, still remained, but the flames of the preceding week still slumbered in their ruins, and sent up into the air small spiral columns of smoke; whilst here and there a gable, or a long side-wall, undermined by the fire which burned within them, might be seen tumbling in rude fragments to the ground, and from which first a cloud of

smoke and then a dusky flame sprung up. The sooty rafters of the cottages, as they slowly burned, filled the air with a heavy and most offensive smell. In short, nothing could more vividly represent the horrors of grinding oppression, and the extent to which one man dressed up in a 'little brief authority' will exercise that power, without feeling and without restraint, to the injury of his fellow-creatures. One would, indeed, have thought that all the atrocities of the French Revolution, happily extinguished on the field of Waterloo, were again to revive on the banks of the Naver."

The above is the story of a credible eyewitness of the mournful scenes enacted in Strathnaver in April 1819. These evictions were planned and carried out with the most obstinate determination, utterly regardless of the sufferings, and the heartrendings of the inhabitants, in being driven from their homes of centuries in such numbers.

In February 1818, the commissioner, James Loch, announced to the minister of the parish of Farr the determination arrived at, to eject the whole of the inhabitants of the west side of Strathnaver, in these words:—

"You are probably aware that a considerable change is to be made in the settlement of the people of your parish, which is to be completed by Whitsunday 1819, by removing the inhabitants of the upper parts of the strath to the

sea-coast, extending from the mouth of the Naver to Strathy and Armadale. . . . You will assure them that the measure has been *too well* considered not to be *fully acted upon, and too well arranged not to be carried into effect*. Indeed, the lands they hold are already let to others from Whitsunday 1819. I not only give you leave to show this letter, but beg of you to make it as public as possible.

(Signed) JAMES LOCH."

Mr Mackenzie, the minister, replies to the above in March 1818, saying:—

"I perused, with the necessary attention, that part of your letter which refers to the important changes which are to take place among the tenants of this parish. I have complied with your wishes in giving publicity to the letter, by showing it to some and reading it to others, and by satisfying the inquiries of many who only understand the Gaelic language. In my humble opinion, the mere process of removing the people from the upper parts of the strath to the sea-coast, then to leave them to depend upon themselves for subsistence on the natural productiveness of their stances, will not ameliorate their circumstances so as to put them beyond the reach of calamity. I presume you know that the lands on the sea-coast, with the exception of Strathy and Strathy Point, are already thinly inhabited; and let me assure you, as a positive

fact, that the calamities of last year were as general and as severely felt among them as among those of the upper parts. From what I know of the circumstances of the majority of those around me, since so many were sent down from the heights to clear Sellar's farm, I do not perceive how the great addition, which is intended to be made to their number, can live comfortably as you anticipate. The lands on the coast are not extensive, neither are they good; the surface of the ground is extremely rugged, and incapable of improvement to any extent. There is no lime nor marl, and but a scanty supply of seaweed for manure. The coast, as you know, is remarkably bold and rocky, landing-places few, and some of them far from safe. There is no kind of traffic or industry, nor any opportunity of earning money by day labour. The great population of the heights, removed to such a coast, will have to contend with all the inconveniences arising from their new situation. The difficulties which they must encounter before they build their houses, furnish themselves with boats and fishing implements, will be very great. With my knowledge of these circumstances, and because I am yet ignorant of anything to be done for the people, further than that *upwards of one thousand inhabitants* are to be added to the population already on the coast, I beg leave to be excused from giving them any assurance of the change being made for their advantage. I

decline this task. I have endeavoured to contemplate the change in all its bearings upon the interests of the people, as far as I can penetrate, and I must confess that I am fully persuaded in my own mind, that the sea-coast of the parish of Farr, with its present local advantages, will not secure a permanent subsistence to the great population to be removed to it. You will readily allow it is a serious matter to remove, at one term, in one parish, *upwards* of two hundred families, who are still struggling with the unavoidable difficulties in which they have been placed,—low price of cattle, reduction in the profits of day labour, and, above all, the failure of last year's crop. I am willing you lay this letter before Lord and Lady Stafford.

(Signed)      DAVID MACKENZIE."

This letter shows and proves the honest and candidly-expressed opinion of the parish minister. What he foresaw, was in a few years made evident. But let us quote Mr Loch's rejoinder, which shows and proves the determined resolution, heartless, cold-blooded, arrived at:—

"30th March 1818.

"I have this morning received your letter, &c. I have also laid it before Lord and Lady Stafford. Though I regret I cannot carry you along with me, entirely to the extent I could wish, yet I am well assured that you will fully explain to



the people,—and it was this I urged particularly in my last letter to you,—that though they might not view the change in the same point of view, yet that the same was not undertaken in the mere wantonness of power. This explanation *calls for no expression of opinion from you*, nor involves any compromise of deeply-rooted feelings. From what I have said, you will perceive that I continue firm in the opinion of the propriety of the measures I have recommended; and in doing so, I beg to assure you it is from no feeling that it would be unmanly or wrong to retract opinions erroneously or too hastily formed. On the present occasion, the subject has received too much consideration, and has occupied too much of my anxious thoughts, not to have been viewed in all its bearings. I should wish it to be understood, that I wish the responsibility of this measure to rest entirely upon myself, so that its unpopularity may neither be cast on the one hand to the door of the landlord, nor on the other hand to that of the local factors; nor, when I do so, do I wish to undervalue the extent of such responsibility, &c.

(Signed)      JAMES LOCH."

These were the last of the great clearances of Sutherland; the west side of Strathnaver and the heights of Kildonan. Terrible they were in their red-handed injustice, oppression, and the repression that followed. Thus was Strath-

naver depopulated, the strath from which the most, and best, men were obtained for all the regiments raised in the county from the wars in Germany, 1626 to 1634; the wars of the Covenant, 1644 to 1646, in 1745-46, in 1759, 1777, 1793, 1800, 1802. Truly it was a most ungrateful return for the highest devotion, a most unmerited reward for fidelity and loyalty. The native gentry of the county shared the same fate with the crofters. These high-minded men would not submit to the indignity of being made tools and instruments of to oppress or seize hold of their neighbours' lands and possessions, and to appropriate them for their own aggrandisement and increase of wealth; hence they had to quit their native county and find an asylum and a habitation for themselves in other lands, as many more of their less fortunate countrymen were forced to do. Among the former was Captain Gordon of Clerkhill, whom the "Sailor" had served as manager, till his retirement in consequence of the Strathnaver evictions. To make room for some of the evicted of Strathnaver, it was proposed to take from him portions of the lands he held on lease. Seeing the high-handed proceedings that were going on, opposed as he was to such nefarious practices, and judging that nothing but misery and degradation were to follow the course pursued, he preferred giving up all the land he occupied for the sake of the people he loved so

well, whose excellent qualities of head and heart he so much appreciated, and take himself and his family away from such scenes of destruction and desolation to another part of Scotland. The "Sailor" then left the Crask, and removed to Swordly, where he remained to the end of his days.

For many years after the people from Strathnaver had settled down in the miserable locations allotted to them on the sea-coast, they felt the change most keenly. For some years they were in a state of transition, battling with their new circumstances to earn and eke out any kind of existence. Gloom and despair took possession of minds that once were cheerful and lively in the highest degree, deterring them from active exertion. Their very modes of living, their manners and customs, at once received a shock, so rude, so sudden, that they were almost helpless. Cooped up within narrow bounds, deprived of their flocks and herds, which were always their chief means of subsistence, deprived of the freedom to which they were accustomed, and now obliged for mere existence to have recourse to an element with which they had no acquaintance, no knowledge nor experience, the sufferings and hardships they endured may be better imagined than described. In a few years the youthful portion of the evicted began to take courage, and the aged to cast off their gloom. Loss of life by sea was very frequent

during the first years of their inexperience as seamen. The coast around is very rocky, very stormy. Each succeeding accident by boat intensified the gloom of the new situation.\* They persevered. Many of both ages by degrees became initiated in the mysteries of seamanship. They became possessors of boats and nets, and set about prosecuting the herring fishing, which was done with some success, although they had neither pier nor harbour, nor yet any facilities to ensure a continuance of that success attendant upon those necessary adjuncts to commercial prosperity. Still they persevered against all these unequal circumstances, frequently suffering from inexperience and storms, loss of boats and nets, and, more mournful still,

\* An instance may here be recorded. Six young men of Farr—the most of whom but a short time previously came there from Strathnaver—went to sea one forenoon in February. The morning was fine, but as the afternoon advanced it blew a stiff breeze from the north. They made for Leac-Margaid, a dangerous place to land at generally, but more especially to such as they who knew little of the locality. Indeed they were in the midst of the breakers ere they became aware of real danger. Seeing the inevitable, despair got the upper hand of them. A young woman, who stood on the cliff right above witnessing the sad scene, said that they all joined in chorus to repeat the 4th verse of the 93rd Psalm :—

“ Is treise Dia ta chömhnuidh shuas  
Na fuaim nan uisge garbh ;  
Is treise Dia na sumainnean  
Is tonna cuain gu dearbh.”

The boat came broadside to the waves and was swamped. Five out of the six were drowned. Two were brothers, Peter and Angus Mackay (Roy), William Mackay (Mac-Rob), William Mackay (Tailor), and Charles Macleod (of Dun).

great loss of valuable lives,—which affected the sensitive minds of the people far more than loss of property,—and chiefly from the want of harbours for shelter and retreat from the furious gales and storms that so often beat upon that northern and rock-bound coast. From the time the boats were launched in May till they were hauled up in September, the fishermen found little rest on shore. On many occasions during the fishing season they were forced to haul up their boats on the beach to avoid the effects of the tempestuous ocean. But they were of good mettle, and not readily daunted. It is within our recollection that fifteen boats fished from Kirtomy, seven from Skerry, seven from Armadale, twenty from the Melness side, and thirty from Portskerra. At length the inevitable happened. Wick, with its facilities of harbour and ship and steamer accommodation and communication, attracted to itself the whole fishing trade, became the port, the chief port, for the herring fishery, and every boat's crew that could go went to Wick, leaving the other fishing stations which possessed no facilities of harbour or accommodation or communication to languish, then to be deserted. The fishcurers went first, the boats and crews had to follow, although it was well known that the fish caught on the north coast and in the Minch were of much superior quality to those caught in the German Ocean and landed in Wick. Everything militated

against the successful prosecution of the trade at the stations enumerated. The fishermen and curers not being afforded facilities, they retired in disgust.

Thus were the evicted of Strathnaver served by those who reduced them to the position of fishermen,—expelled from their ancient homesteads in the sheltered valleys and straths on the plea and under the guise of improvement and amelioration of their condition, to the rugged, rocky, sterile sea-shores to obtain their living from, as it was said, the boundless wealth of the ocean, and thus left even to the present day. Every petition, every representation, every demand for protection by a few harbours, breakwaters, or even piers, consistently, persistently ignored from the year 1820 to this year of grace 1889. Common humanity would have indicated, common benevolence would have dictated, common sense would have shown, ordinary justice to the expelled would have urged, that some provision or facility should have been given to men so cavalierly treated, to men who showed that they were willing to avail themselves of the new order of things which they were compelled to accept, so as to foster that industry held out to them to be a source of inexhaustible wealth, and to secure the amelioration of their condition that was promised. No attention whatever was paid or given by the authorities to these necessities, and at last, in the natural order of things, the

industry and the trade, so auspiciously commenced, fled to ports that presented the requisite facilities and protection.

The historian of the so-called Sutherland improvements, from 1808 to 1822, represents in glowing terms all that had been done in the county for its improvement. Fine roadways were made, bridges built, large farms formed, new buildings for them erected, immense tracts put under sheep, wealth accumulated, strangers encouraged and petted; while the expelled native tenantry, impoverished and reduced to the verge of starvation, were unheeded, left to their own devices, made hewers of wood, drawers of water, without the slightest aid or encouragement being extended to them. He can only point out along the three sides of the county two spots at which anything in the shape of aid or facility to fishing industry has been given, namely Brora and Helmsdale, and these merely quay-walls. He admits that on the Strathnaver coast there are only "wretched creeks"; yet, notwithstanding, he says further on, that the natives fishing from these creeks "became with a rapidity beyond history the most intrepid and dauntless seamen." Then why not have encouraged such high qualifications? Is it not lamentable that such apathy, such inattention and neglect, should have been shown to the just requirements of this submissive and admittedly brave and energetic population, in order that, if they undeservedly

endured the hardships and the suffering attendant upon their expulsion from their ancient homesteads, they might by proper encouragement, by necessary facilities, be able to retrieve the past and rehabilitate themselves from the sufferings they had endured for years in their cheerless new homes? Much has been heard, much has been written of, the princely expenditure of the House of Sutherland upon the Sutherland estates, as if it stood unique in the matter of expenditure in estate improvements. By disclosures made before the Royal Commission in Golspie, and recorded in the blue-books of evidence taken, it was seen that the expenditure made for the improvement of the people—that is, that portion compelled to be fishermen, and the other portion called crofters, occupying merely on an average four to five acres of arable land—had been very small, indeed only an infinitesimal fraction of the whole. While Caithness had been increasing its population and its commerce, Sutherland was declining, although its area is three times larger. The cause of this was not far to seek. Caithness had the benefit of many spirited proprietors, several of them resident, who carried on improvements gradually—not, as in Sutherland, by leaps and bounds, producing rapid exhaustion of energy and means with the usual result, disappointment and disaster. Sutherland, unfortunately for itself, fell under the sway of one dominant family, resident only



for two months in the year, and for the other ten leaving it to the tender mercies of three factors, whose sole *rôle* seemed to be to permit not a penny to be spent upon, or for the sake of, the evicted tenants struggling between life and death for bare existence, but merely to keep accounts, gather in the rents, and repress the people if any of them showed a manliness of spirit to complain of the least inequality or injustice. In fact they obstructed and discouraged any outlay that might be considered an encouragement or aid to improvements. If the crofters made improvements of their own accord, they might do so; if not, nothing was said if they paid the rent, and even rent was raised upon improvements made by the people. A case in point. A man took a lot at the rent put on by the factor; he had a family of five sons, who began to reclaim more land from the waste, and improve and enclose the whole. At the death of the father, the eldest son, who succeeded, was forced to pay £10 rent for the lot or take himself away. This is a sample of the rule of the factors in Sutherland. Absentee landlordism with its ruling factors was the curse of Ireland, it was the bane of Sutherland. The people were oppressed to such a degree, that to utter a complaint was regarded as the knell for a summons to quit. The landlord, absent for ten months in the year, did not know nor seemed to care for the requirements of the

people. No complaint was permitted to reach him. He seldom or ever came amongst the people, never inquired about their necessities, nor studied what would tend to their improvement and advancement.

A humane proprietor, caring and anxious for the improvement and advancement of such tenantry as James Loch, the chief-commissioner, described them to be, "the most intrepid and dauntless seamen," would have given them facilities for the exercise of such qualities, by altering their "wretched creeks" into something of the shape of a harbour for landing "the wealth of the ocean" and for the protection of their boats, their only means of existence after they were huddled together around the "wretched creeks." Will it be believed, that every time the boats returned from sea, women and men and lads were to be seen dragging up the boats on the beach out of possible storm's way, and next day seen again pulling away at the boat to launch it!

The so-called "wretched creeks" could at very little expense be converted into simple, safe harbours. On the north coast, such localities as Portskerra, Armadale, Kirtomy, Skerray, Talmine, Erriboll, and Rispond, may be instanced; but for the last seventy years, nothing more than "talking about it," and "unfulfilled promises," have been done. The "big fairmers" took no interest in the matter; it did not

concern them. The factors looked on such improvements obliquely. The expense would diminish the estate revenue, and would merely benefit the crofter and fisher class. When it came about in 1872 that the "big fairmers" began to complain of heavy rents, and the great expense of wintering their sheep far away from their homesteads because their old meadow and arable lands, reclaimed and cultivated by the people evicted for them, deteriorated, gigantic efforts were made by every means that science could suggest and money could command to reclaim new lands, to provide winterings for these sheep-men; but after an enormous expenditure of nearly £300,000, the whole matter ended in disappointment and disaster, and sheep-farm rents had to be reduced by fifty per cent.

The localities indicated in the north coast to which so many of the evicted of Strathnaver had been driven, situated on the "El Dorado of ocean wealth," were left as Nature formed them. It may be asked, Is not Portskerra easily capable of being made a safe and good fishing station, as it was in the outset? Are not the other bays indicated of equal capability? Was not this great want, unattended to for seventy years, brought before the Royal Commissioner of 1883, as one of the people's great and long felt grievances? The sad decline of the fishing industry, previously noticed, is a proof, a sad proof, of the utter neglect to which

the population, brought down, driven down, to the "El Dorado" for *their own benefit*—ah! for their *demoralisation* and *destruction*—have been subjected for years, and is beyond belief.

Will it be believed too—can it be believed—that several of the townships along the north coast of the county, between two and three miles from the main road, have had no communication with the main highway better than a mere track, while if it were a shepherd's house or a shooting-lodge, a proper communication was the first thing considered and done? Hence it became a byeword, "Anything is good enough for a crofter," and hence it is not, nor can it be, a matter of surprise, that cries from this quarter and other quarters similarly affected reached the House of Commons, and had the desired effect, the appointment of a Royal Commission for inquiry into the condition of the Highland people. The cry for inquiry was the spontaneous outburst of the people, demanding inquiry into their real and actual condition, and redress of just grievances.

Several parties who gave evidence before this Commission proved that crofters, for the areas they occupied and reclaimed from the waste, were charged double and treble per acre what the sheep-farmers paid for their areas, although they comprised the meadow and the arable of those evicted. A more unequal, unjust treatment, cannot well be imagined. It is scarcely

capable of belief, and yet it is, it must be the truth, as its accuracy has not been impugned. Let us leave this odious scene, this repulsive story, to see what in the meantime the "Sailor" had been doing.

## CHAPTER XX.

“ Let us work ! we only ask  
Reward proportioned to our task ;  
We have no quarrel with the great,  
    No feud with rank,  
    With mill, or bank,  
No envy of a lord’s estate ;  
If we can earn sufficient store  
To satisfy our daily need,  
    And can retain  
    For age and pain  
A fraction, we are rich indeed.”—C. MACKAY.

THERE is nothing earthly more mean and despicable, to my mind, than a man destitute of all sense of his responsibilities and opportunities, and revelling in the luxuries of our high civilisation, and thinking himself a great personage. The “Sailor” was not one of these ; luxuries he had not to play with, but he felt he had responsibilities and opportunities in the dire change of circumstances that befell himself and many hundreds of his immediate countrymen. It has been shown that he was of a cheerful, joyous, hopeful disposition, qualities of mind to which he now gave free scope in cheering, and assisting to cheer, those unfortunates who had been driven down to the coast to find existence and *wealth*, or live upon cockles and mussels. Cheerful and hopeful himself, he inspired every one who came in contact with him to cast off their gloom, and apply themselves

with vigour to make the *best* of the *worst*. His knowledge of the sea in his youth now stood him in good stead. The experience he acquired in his captivity with the MacIvers of the Lewis, was now made available to his poor neighbours and those of surrounding localities. They knew nothing of boating, fishing or fishcuring. He knew the whole mystery attending each, and cheerfully imparted all he knew, and took pains to instruct them by word and deed. He accompanied them in fishing excursions, taught how to apply the oar, how to steer, and how to set, change, and reef the sail, set and take up their lines and their nets,—and all with a joyous hopeful reliance upon their own exertions, taught by precept and example, that there was no happiness which hope cannot promise when allied with self-help, no difficulty which it cannot surmount when men persevere in self-exertion to gain experience and tact, no grief which it cannot mitigate, be the loss what it may. He taught them too, by force of precept, and above all by example, that hope is the wealth of the indigent, the health of the downcast, the freedom of the captive. He taught them to

“Keep pushing ! that it was wiser  
Than sitting aside  
And dreaming and sighing,  
And waiting the tide ;  
In life’s earnest battle  
They only would prevail,  
Who daily marched onward  
And never said fail !”

The "Sailor" during those years of gloom and despondency was of inestimable usefulness to all the surrounding localities dependent upon the "El Dorado" for subsistence and existence. He was generally employed by the curers in looking after the curing, the classing, and the shipping of the fish, and often in piloting the vessels coming to take the cured fish away, and well did he manage all he undertook to perform. Genial, kind-hearted, and benevolent, his house was frequented by every wayfarer, and no one was sent sullenly away.

From our earliest recollection, down to the passing of the Poor Law Act for Scotland in 1845, the northern parts of the Highlands were really the resort of vagrants, sturdy beggars, tinkers, gypsies, imbeciles male and female, and the halt and the blind. Although these were often hounded away from the doors of the rich and well-to-do folks, yet from the doors of the poor crofters and crofter fishermen they were never driven, they were never refused the aid they seemed to be in need of. Food and drink and shelter were always offered them. The "Sailor's" house was pre-eminently one of those,—

"Far am faigheadh coigreach bhaigh,  
Agus an t-anrach bochd a lòn."

("Where the stranger would find a welcome,  
And the wandering poor their food.")

The laws and behests of hospitality to the deserving, or the undeserving, were never infringed by the Highlanders of those days.



It has been said by interested parties, who wished it to be credited, that the Highlanders, and especially Sutherland Highlanders, were in days previous to the eviction times miserably poor, subject to famines. Any one who knows the statistics of social life previous to 1800 can deny that. The condition of the population of the Highlands, by virtue of their comparative wealth in flocks and herds, was much superior to other districts in Scotland. While in 1782 many died elsewhere of utter starvation on road and at fence sides, none died in Sutherland. They felt the pinch of scarcity of meal, not of famine. From 1812 to 1814 and 1816 they felt the same pinch, but they had their flocks and herds to fall back upon, to sell and procure meal, to kill and make food of. In 1809, in the parish of Farr, there were not more than £12 dispensed to the poor throughout the year, for many years previous, and for twenty years thereafter. Since 1870 upwards of £600 a year have been expended by the Parochial Board for the maintenance and care of the sick and indigent, a very remarkable difference when the decrease of the population of the parish is taken into account. This shows an extraordinary difference in the resources and high morality of the inhabitants of 1800 and those of 1880-88, a difference easily accounted for by the reader of these pages to be entirely due to the difference of circumstances then and now.

After 1844 the writer was away from the district, except on rare occasions, consequently he had few opportunities of seeing the "Sailor" during the last few years of his life. In September 1849 he was seized with swelling in his feet, which gradually affected his whole body and very much enfeebled him, so that at last he had to be propped up with pillows; yet, in the midst of great suffering, he maintained that cheerfulness and buoyancy of spirit natural to him through life. A few days before his decease, an old respected friend, Neil MacLeod of Farr, called to see him. On his friend asking him how he felt, he replied in the genial manner peculiar to him, "Tha ghruagach cho math dhomh, tha thu faicinn gu bheil mo chuid 'g oirbheart orm" ("The damsel is so good to me that what I partake of fattens me"). He always applied the term "damsel" to his wife. His reply was in allusion to his swollen condition. He died in October of that year, and was interred in the clachan churchyard, at the north end of the church, close to the "Standing Stone." Two of his grandsons placed over his remains a memorial-stone with a suitable inscription. Thus passed away from this sublunary scene a clansman typical of the last century,—one of the many who were a credit to their parish and their county; one of a race famed in story; cheerful, buoyant, making gloom sunshine; a good neighbour, a useful man, a fast friend.

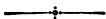
In closing this sketch of the career of Donald Mackay, the "Sailor," it may not be inappropriate to quote a remark of our favourite county bard, Rob Donn, in his elegy composed upon the death of a man noted in his own day, and truly applicable to the "Sailor," of whom we now take leave:—

"Bu tu 'm companach deala,  
'S bu tu ceannard na cloinne,  
Bhu thu 'n t' aon rud dh' fhearr eile's dut fein."

("Thou wast the friendly companion,  
Thou wast the leader to the clan,  
Thou wast the same to another as to thyself.")

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## MACHUISTEAN AND THE GAUGER.



“Paint Scotland greeting ower her thistle,  
Her mutchkin stoup as toom’s a whistle,  
And damn’d excisemen in a bustle  
    Seizing a stell;  
Triumphant crushin’ t’ like a mussel  
    Or lampit shell.”—BURNS.

**S**MUGGLING, in its proper definition, means introducing prohibited goods, or introducing goods which have evaded legal duties. The term though applied to illicit distillation is not correctly applicable. Distillation is an act of the highest antiquity. Ancient poets sang of the *nectar* of the gods, who in their friendly moods led a jolly life, and enjoyed, or were assumed to enjoy, themselves. What the nectar was distilled from, whether from flowers or not, we are not informed. One of these minor gods, Bacchus, has had the honour conferred upon him of being the inventor, discoverer, or teacher of the art of distillation of wine, and to have been not only addicted to the use of it, but by example to have taught the use of it to his

followers. Whether this legend be true or not, there is some fitness in the conception of ascribing to the gods the credit and glory of having first revealed to mortals the secret of distilling the "nectar," or the "water of life," or "aqua vitæ," or "uisge-beatha." The legend of the ancient poets may be imaginary. Probably the merit of the discovery may be ascribed to the ancient Egyptians, who in their day were scientists of no mean note or acquirement, and grew grain of various kinds, or to the Chinese who grew rice. If these peculiar and ancient people knew chemistry so well as to invent powder, they may likely enough have carried the art so far as to invent distillation. Whether the Chinese invented the art of making powder and producing alcohol or not, it is a subject of doubt whether either of the inventions has been beneficial to man.

Early mention is made of wine and strong drink. Noah, poor man, cooped up in his ship for many days, was overjoyed at feeling his feet on firm ground, partook of wine to a little excess, and is the first on record who felt its somniferous effect. The Jewish priests were forbidden by Moses to partake of wine before engaging in their religious duties. The wise mother of Lemuel warns him against the use of strong drink, and advises him to "give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to him that is heavy of heart." Burns cleverly

and with the greatest good taste, paraphrases this advice:—

“Gie him strong drink until he wink  
That’s sinking in despair;  
And liquor good to fire his blood  
That’s press’d with grief and care.”

If the Egyptians discovered the art of distillation, it would be communicated by them to the Arabians, Babylonians, and Phœnicians, who in turn would transmit it to the Celts of Spain and Gaul. It is said the art was first introduced into Europe by the Moors. When Henry II. invaded Ireland in 1170, his Normans and Saxons found amongst the Irish both the art of making aqua vitæ and the habit of drinking it. In the “Four Ancient Books of Wales,” the Celts of the sixth and seventh century poems are called “distillers,” “furnace distillers,” “kiln distillers.” Whisky is simply a corruption of the Gaelic “uisge-beatha” (water of life), and was regarded as a panacea for all disorders, whether applied inwardly or outwardly, and sometimes applied to inspire heroism. We have heard of a good dose of it being given to Russian soldiers before engaging in battle, and the poet of Scotland claims a virtue for Highland whisky, when he says:—

“But bring a Scotsman frae his hill,  
Clap in his cheek a Highland gill,  
Say, such is royal George’s will,  
And there’s the foe;  
He has nae thought but how to kill  
Twa at a blow.”

The earliest mention of the manufacture and drinking of whisky in the Highlands is seen in the "Statutes of I. Colmkill" in 1609, when prohibitions were enacted as to the inordinate use and consumption of wines, brandy, and aqua vitæ, but this liquor named aqua vitæ may have been the French eau-de-vie (water of life). It would appear that wine after this enactment became a general drink, for in 1616 the Privy Council passed an "Act agans the Drinking of Wynes in the Yllis," and in 1622 a more stringent measure was passed. Possibly these repressive measures gave rise to whisky manufacture in the Highlands. It has been said that Highlanders made ale and whisky of heather top. Whether they did or not, that art is lost; but we have seen that a vast deal of smuggling went on on the west coast in wines and brandies, in which the vessels of the MacIvers of the Lewis were engaged when the "Sailor" was kidnapped; and in those days, when rum and brandy were much more used than whisky, ale was also a common drink. It was in 1660 that the first duty was laid on whisky in Scotland, of 2d., 3d., and 4d. a gallon according to the material from which the spirit was made. In 1707 the whole duty amounted to £1,810. In 1724 the duty was 3d. to 6d., and the amount of duty paid was £3,500 in that year. In 1887 the duty paid was £3,315,000, the duty being at 10s. a gallon since 1864!

In 1785 the pre-emption granted to Forbes of Culloden in the excise-duty upon whisky distilled at Ferrintosh ceased, by Government paying him £21,000, and the duty raised to 3s. 11d. a gallon,—a high duty, which produced some agitation, fostered by Burns's poetic genius:—

"Thou Ferrintosh ! O sadly lost !  
 Scotland laments from coast to coast !  
 Now colic grips and barking hoast  
                     May kill us a' ;  
 For loyal Forbes' chartered boast  
                     Is ta'en awa'.

Tell them wha hae the chief direction,  
 Scotland an' me's in great affliction  
 E'er sin' they laid that curst restriction  
                     On aqua vitæ ;  
 An' rouse them up to strong conviction,  
                     An' move their pity."

This high duty produced illicit distillation, and once begun it continued though the duty was reduced to 2s. 7½d. in 1786. In the early years of this century more barley was produced than ordinary. No sale could be obtained for it. It was turned into whisky for sale, and illicit distillation increased, particularly in the Highlands, causing much turbulence and lawlessness. High duty operated as a bounty to the illicit distiller. Notwithstanding the alertness and vigilance of the excisemen or gaugers with their assistants, illicit distillation flourished.

Various were the ways, the arts, and the wiles practised in "doing" the unpopular gaugers, and there has gathered round them, and the mass of



lawlessness they tried to repress, a cluster of stories of cunning and daring and wonderful escapes which casts a ray of interest over the dismal picture. All parts of the Highlands were affected with the rage of the "bothy distilling." Sutherland was no exception to the general epidemic.

We take this opportunity of once more introducing our old acquaintance "MacHuistean" to the reader. Two men in Kirtomy had a "brew" ready for distillation in a "bothy" on the side of the burn known as "Dubh Alltan," when the sentinel gave the warning-note of "Gaugers." The two men had nothing for it but to throw all they could into the burn and decamp. MacHuistean, who had been looking after his sheep, came upon the scene as the men began to conceal some of their utensils. He grasped the copper pot, shouldered it, and made off with it to the shore. One of the officers gave chase, the other went towards the bothy. MacHuistean ran with his burden as fast as he could. The exciseman followed in eager pursuit. The burden-bearer arrived at a steep brae, which he nimbly endeavoured to climb; the exciseman gained ground, but he too felt that running up a brae was not a very easy matter even without a burden. The hope of having the copper pot, however, as a trophy, inspired increased exertion, though it was at the expense of breath. Before reaching the summit his power of endurance began to fail, and think-

ing MacHuistean would be glad of a rest like himself, he stopped, and shouted to the pursued MacHuistean, "Stop, man, stop!" By this time MacHuistean gained the summit and was over it, running down towards the Mains of Kirtomy, where the people working in the fields spied him, and with voice and gesture raised a shout encouraging MacHuistean to persevere. The gauger resumed the chase, shouting, "Stop, man, stop!" and to every shout of this description MacHuistean loudly replied so that the encouraging folks should hear, "Ith thusa an ——" ("You eat the dust"). MacHuistean did persevere, and took across Kirtomy Mains, at this time in "run-rig" system. The "clachain criche" ("boundary stones") were thickly set, and impeded the gauger's course, who began to fall behind, discouraged by the cheers which encouraged the other to further effort. The scene was exciting. The working-people threw down their implements to follow "the hound and the hare." The gauger would not be done out of his prey. MacHuistean did his best. Pursued and pursuer now got on smoother ground. The gauger was a good hound; he would catch his prey or run him down. MacHuistean was game too, though handicapped by his burden. They were now near the shore, which is rocky, high, and steep. MacHuistean was making for a lobster-boat which he knew to be lying-to near the shore. The gauger noticed the boat, and perceived

too MacHuistean's objective point, and redoubled his efforts to baulk him. By the time MacHuistean reached the edge of the brae leading down to "Pòrt-na-culaidh" ("the port of the boat"), the gauger was nearly at his heels. One glance backward, another forward, decided MacHuistean's resolution. He would not be captured. He knew the brae, which was steep, and slippery, with no foothold, so throwing himself on his back, pot in hand, he slid down the brae, and in a twinkling was landed on the gravelly shingle at the bottom. Instantly recovering himself, he jerked the pot on to his shoulder, and off he was again toward the boat. The folks who followed the chase came upon the scene, and seeing from the top of the brae MacHuistean making for the boat along the "sgeir mheallach," raised a tremendous cheer. The "sgeir mheallach" ("lumpish rock") ran out from the beach a considerable distance, dividing the so-called port into two, and opposite where the boat lay rising some feet above high-water mark, but in the intermediate distance forms a curve. MacHuistean ran along the curve; the gauger hot in pursuit approached him, took the straight course along the chord of the curve with the intention of intercepting him. But the rock being slippery, in the eagerness of pursuit he slipped, and in trying to recover himself his foot became jammed in a cleft of the rock, and he had some difficulty in extricating

it. In the meantime MacHuistean got on board the boat with his burden, and was now safe from the reach and the efforts of his pursuer. He was again and again cheered by the folks on the brae top. The gauger having extricated his foot from the unlucky cleft, surveyed the position with much chagrin, and saw his intended victim composedly sitting on the pot in the boat, making his usual grimaces at him, with his thumb to his nose and his fingers moving as if playing a tune on an imaginary reed, much in the same style as London street arabs are depicted by *Punch* in the exultation of victory or revenge. The discomfited gauger looked on with as much composure as he could command, and at last burst out into laughter, retraced his steps rather more slowly and deliberately than when in pursuit, and troubled MacHuistean no further.

MacHuistean was a character; yet for all his drolleries and peculiarities and odd grimaces it is right and just to say, that in view and face of the "king of terrors" no man is or was cooler than the old Highlander of MacHuistean's stamp, be it called fatalism or stoicism. Once MacHuistean was a-fishing with a boat's crew from Kirtomy, when one of those sudden storms from the north, common in the winter, overtook them, placing their little craft and themselves in imminent danger. They made for the shore, but there was no harbour to run into, no light to guide

their course. On nearing land they could hear the breakers roaring and beating upon the rocks with a thundering noise. The crew were fully convinced of the danger they were in, and of the hopeless position in which they were placed. Their frail bark would not have a moment's opportunity of saving itself in the wild confusion of waves and rocks. They rested upon their oars for some time, hoping for more light to perceive a spot or a "creek" to row into, and some mitigation of the storm. Despair was on every countenance, no word was spoken or uttered, no lips moved, unless in silent prayer to the Lord of storms and the providential Preserver of all in the midst of all dangers. In the midst of this silence and danger and despair, MacHuistean pulled his bonnet off his head, and unconcernedly took from its inside a needle and thread, and coolly began to darn a mitten he had on his left hand, by the glimmering light such a dark afternoon storm afforded. His nonchalance in the face of such danger had such an effect upon the crew, that, after calmly considering the chances of their dangerous position, their courage was raised, they braced themselves to their work, manipulated their boat, persevered, and got to land without loss of life or hurt of limb.

# WILLIAM ABERACH, PACKMAN, SHOPKEEPER, WANDERER.



“ Wha’s this, bedight in tattered claes,  
Comes loutin’, owre a sturdy rung,  
Wi’ cloutit wallets fore and aft ? ”

—*The Gaberlunzie.*

PREVIOUS to the construction of roads in the Highlands of Scotland and elsewhere, the few artificial and finery requirements of the population, especially those of the female portion, of the communities lying scattered in secluded and out-of-the-way districts, were supplied by travelling merchants under the names of chapmen, packmen, and pedlars, the forerunners of a class not unimportant now-a-days in commercial circles everywhere throughout Europe, America, and the Colonies — the commercial travellers. From remote ages we have heard of them in the East, travelling from one country to another in groups for mutual protection, under the designation of “caravans,” bartering and selling as they went, and returning into their own countries with the bartered and purchased goods of the lands they visited. Thus in ancient

days the surplus produce of one community was disposed of, and the requirements of another supplied. The travelling merchant, or the packman, is a very ancient institution. When civilisation advanced, roads and bridges constructed, and intercourse between town and country became more frequent, the *role* of the packman was gone; then the commercial traveller arose, and could be seen everywhere, sometimes on horseback, sometimes in his two-wheeled or four-wheeled vehicle, carrying with him samples of his wares. Roads and canals of a past era made a revolution in the old modes of carrying on trade and commerce, and prepared the way for another revolution in the mode of inland communication and intercourse, sweeping away by the expansion given to trade all ancient forms, and establishing almost at a bound the present system of locomotion, trade, and intercourse. The greater facilities given, the more commerce and intercourse extended themselves, and the sooner old institutions such as the "chapman billies" disappeared. One hundred years ago, the era in which the hero of this story lived, there was not, as mentioned elsewhere, a cart or a carriage road north of Inverness. There was little trade in the county of Sutherland. The only export trade was in black cattle, ponies, goats, and skins; any other native produce found a sale in the various fairs and markets established in the county, and was carried on horses' backs,

frequently on men's and women's. Packmen frequented these fairs, exhibiting and selling their wares. Many of them perambulated the country, visiting hamlets and townships, endeavouring to sell something or other in every house. Free quarters were given them wherever they went. They were a jolly fraternity, made themselves agreeable, told tales, sang songs, and related the news of the day. They were great newsmongers, delighted their hosts and their families with tidings from far and near, which to the unsophisticated inhabitants of the Sutherland glens seemed exceedingly strange, so much so that it became a common saying, that "News from the packmen and papers were all lies."

One of the last of these in the Reay country was popularly known by his assumed name or *sobriquet* of "Ian-reic-saor," otherwise "Cheap Jack," and to the youthful imagination he was a man of note. His well-knit frame, his ever-smiling face, and dapper-gentlemanly appearance, may still be remembered. Clad in drab cut-away coat, with a bonnet of the same hue with a glazed leather peak, he was known from afar, his pack slung across his shoulders, a finely polished ellwand ornamented with dark notches and brass bands in his hand. Entering a house, the pack was unslung and laid on the table, the bonnet was taken off, a bright coloured handkerchief taken out, and the perspiration wiped off the brow, while surveying the situation preparatory



to his beseeching question, "Well, mistress, what can I supply you with to-day?" Without waiting for a reply, the pack was thrown open, and a well-arranged assortment of goods of various colours and designs in shawls, silks, ribbons, extremely tempting to the feminine mind, was displayed. A more general spread out of the articles presumed to be the most in request then followed, to enable the "gudewife" and her daughters to examine and make a selection. Were an inclination to buy evinced, and prices asked, some haggling ensued before a bargain could be struck. Were an article really required, but a purchase of it declined on the plea of "want of cash," the packman was accommodating; he wanted to sell, he wished to lighten his load; he was perfectly aware the article would suit, and please too; he could get the money on his next round, he did not care for the payment then, he knew well he would get it, he would be only too glad to have the opportunity of calling again. Thus a bargain would be struck, the goods changed hands, and both parties were satisfied. Of this class of itinerant merchants was the subject of this sketch,—*"Uilleam Aberach,"* whose life and its vicissitudes, whose doings and sayings, it is the object of this paper to give, so far as they could be depicted and collected from the recollections of several, who have seen him, and from traditions of him, remaining in his native district.

The first glimpse that can be ascertained of Uilleam is as a packman. It is said that he was an illegitimate son of an Aberach of that ilk, and born in Strathy, in or about 1747. He seemingly received a good education, much above the ordinary run of his time, and from his vocation, he would most probably improve as he advanced into manhood. He was reported to be a very good man of business. Not content with merely carrying a "pack," he gradually commenced to use horses to carry his wares, frequented fairs and markets throughout the county, and extended his rounds into Caithness and Ross, selling and bartering. He kept horses in Shebster, parish of Reay, at Huna, in the parish of Canisby, made trips to the Orkney Isles, and ordered goods from Edinburgh and Glasgow. He employed several assistants in different parts of the country, when he gave up carrying the "pack" himself. It was as a "hack" that "Alastair Eolach" crossed the Pentland Firth, when he composed "Duan-na-circe-mara" (ode to the sea-hen), to which reference has already been made.

Rural and town fairs were more numerous and common in those days than now. Every parish and every town had its periodical fair, lasting more than one day. Tents were erected in various ways for the exhibition and sale of all kinds of native products and foreign goods. Shopkeepers of considerable wealth did not dis-

dain to erect their tents on the market stance, to exhibit their goods to the rurals, and buy from them in exchange such articles as might command ready sale in the towns. It is certain Uilleam Aberach availed himself of every such opportunity to dispose of his goods, and purchase something in return, for which he well knew where to find a sale. William, it would appear, was a general favourite at these fairs and markets, from his upright dealings, his cheerful conduct, his droll remarks, his witty sayings, and dislike to young people giving themselves airs of gentility above their station in life. He was one day attending a fair in Tongue, Feille Hoisbeacaidh. On his boards was a pile of goat and calf skins. Every Gaelic speaker knows that "craicionn" is a general term for the skin of small animals, such as sheep, dogs, &c., but not many are aware, when a distinction is necessary, that "bocainn" is the proper term for goat and buck skin. Sometimes the term "bocainn" was applied to calf skins too. Parading the market stance was a foppish-looking young man, who flourished a cane in his hand. Willie noticed him going from stance to stance, superciliously asking the price of the various articles on sale, but making no purchases. Coming to Willie's stance, and striking the pile of skins with his cane, he asked in a sneering way, what was the price of the "craicionnan." Willie at once replied, "Half-a-crown the bocainnin; will

you buy any?" Upon which the idle fop slunk away crestfallen, to the no little merriment of the bystanders, who at once exclaimed, "Serve him right!"

How long Willie carried on this itinerant trade there is no record, but it is certain that he accumulated a good amount of capital, for about the year 1780 he set up as a shopkeeper in Crask, parish of Farr, where he could command the custom of the hamlets around, and the greater part of Strathnaver,—a site well chosen, and evidently congenial to his wishes and aspirations, for after his mind had become unhinged, when asked for anything which he was not inclined to grant, he would say, "Ubh! bi glie, 's tog tigh 's a Chrasg" ("Ubh! be wise and build a house in Crask"). It was during the time he kept the shop there that he made the acquaintance of Annie, yellow-haired Annie, the cause of all his woes. In his case it might well be said that "the course of true love seldom runs smooth." Annie, like many other good-looking lassies, had more admirers than Willie, "more strings than one to her bow."

"A carpenter for his bride had sought her,  
And a winning tongue had he."

Ross was preferred, and the shopkeeper was discarded. Willie had not philosophy enough to ease his mind over this cruel event by saying and believing that—

“ As she is gone, so let her go,  
No longer shall she grieve me ;  
For I'm a brisk and bonnie young lad,  
And little will relieve me.”

In palliation, if not in justification of Annie's apparent fickleness, let it be mentioned that Ross was a good-looking, handsome young man, qualities which poor Willie in his best days did not possess. “ Bithidh gaol aig gach aon d'an aodann is boidhche ” ( “ Everyone loves a beautiful face ” ). A Sutherland sage once said, “ I would prefer giving my daughter in marriage to the man earning his livelihood by the spade and pick than to give her to a merchant,” no doubt regarding the one as certain, the other precarious in attaining to success. His daughter was the “ belle ” of the parish, married the merchant, and came to grief. Annie may have acted upon advice.

Being thus discarded, Willie's mind became a prey to disappointment. The woman of his choice, the woman whom he adored above all others, to forsake him thus and to prefer another, was more than Willie could endure. Disappointed love unhinged many a man's mind before and after Willie's day, unseated reason's seat, and caused mental ruin. Annie was a young woman in Kirtomy, in whose father's house he no doubt passed many a night in his peregrinations with the pack. She is said to have returned, or feigned to

return, his affection, but finally gave way to the address of a more ardent, if perhaps less worthy, suitor. The event overwhelmed Willie, reason forsook him, his business was neglected and finally given up. Willie soon began his wandering career. He girded himself with so hideous an agglomeration of rags and bags, that it is still a country saying where one is seen uncommonly ragged, "He is nearly as bad as Uilleam Aberach." Willie, even in this condition, morally and mentally, was not an unwelcome guest in many a house or at many a table. His warm-hearted countrymen, who knew him well in the day of his prosperity and intellectual vigour, pitied and deeply sympathised with his sad condition and sadder fate, deplored the cause of it, and as far as it was possible for them, soothed and assuaged his troubled mind. Amid the exuberant hospitality and overflowing charitableness of the then population of the Highlands, the demented man never was permitted to feel hunger's pangs, nor the want of a night's shelter. Wherever Willie was known, his harmlessness, his quaint sayings, secured him a welcome. Many of his sayings have passed into the list of his country's proverbs.

Uilleam Aberach, in common with many of his countrymen of his day, possessed a considerable amount of rhyming, if not poetic genius; like a few more, who in virtue of this quali-

fication, raised themselves in the estimation of their countrymen, it remained latent, till it was aroused by grief, for the loss of friends and relatives, or the promptings of passion, such as had caused him the loss of his reason. Though forsaken and rejected, Willie's first love remained fixed in his affections. Instead of that love turning to hate, it prompted him to extol the beauty of his faithless Annie, and sing her charms in mournful and melancholic strains, of which a few stanzas may be given here:—

“ 'Se dhuig gu grad á m' shuain mi  
Am brudair so an raoir,  
Cha chadal domh, ach smuaintean  
Bho'n dh'fhuairich do ghaol.

'Se ribhinn donn nan dual  
Bhi toirt fuath dhomh gun ao'ar,  
O! taisich is gabh truas rium  
Bho'n fhuair thu mo ghaol.

Ciod e rinn mi dh'eucoir?  
An uair a threig thusa mi,  
Cha 'tug mi riamh dhuit beum  
'S cha 'n 'eil t-aogais anns an tir.

Ged dheubh iad droch sgeul ort  
Cha bu leir leam i,  
'S ged dh'eubh iad a bhreug ort  
Cha'n eisdinn-sa rith'.

Mo *lilidh*, ta gun mhor-chuis  
'S tu 's boidheche leam na càch,  
Le do dhuail bhuidh' bhoidheach  
'S dreach an òr orr gu' m barr.

Gu ma slan an ribhinn òg sin  
'S tu dheanadh an comhradh tlath,  
Na'n gealladh tu mo phosadh,  
Bheireadh e beò mi o'n bhas.

Cha tug mi gaol do'n airgid  
 Na idir gaol do'n òr,  
 Cha tug mi gaol do'n t-sioda  
 Na idir gaol do'n òl.

Cha tug mi gaol do'n fhion  
 Ged lionadh e mu'n bhord,  
 'S nach neònach leibhse an goal sin  
 Tha daonnan' nam fheoil.

Ach thug mi gaol do'n og-mhnaoi  
 'S boidhche tha fo na ghrian,  
 Le cul buidhe boidheach  
 S dreach an ròs air a gruaidh.

O ! shiubhlainn 'na mo chota  
 An Roinn Eorp' leat gu leir,  
 'S b'fhearr na oighreachd Sheorais'  
 Deagh choir ort o'n chleir.

Ged b'oighre do Dhiuc mi  
 'Sged chruint' mi mar Rìgh,  
 Gu'n deanin-sa do phosadh  
 Mur diultadh tu mi.

Mo chridhe trom gun aoibhneas  
 'S m'inntinn fo bhròn,  
 Mo chridhe cha dean eiridh  
 Ged dh'eisdinns ri ceòl."

Thus sang Willie of his lost love. In it there is not a word of hate. His affection for her was deep, pure, and genuine. On a Sabbath Day, Willie was in the church of Farr in his "rags and tatters," and who should be sitting opposite to him but Annie and her husband! The moment he espied her, he commenced to hum aloud the above ditty. Mr Dingwall, then minister of Farr, told him such conduct could not be tolerated in church. Willie replied, "Cha 'n eil comas againn air, nach d' thanuig i fa'r



comhair ? ” ( “ We can’t help it ; did she not come before us ? ” ) Some years afterwards, he met her barefooted on the moor, carrying peats on her back ; he offered her seven shillings, with which to buy shoes, telling her, “ Tha thu cho mi-shona ruinn fhein, na’n robh thusa againn, bhitheadh seadh ann mo cheannsa ’ s bhitheadh brogan air do chasan-sa ” ( “ Thou art as unfortunate as ourselves ; had we thee, there would be sense in our head, and there would be shoes on thy feet ” ). Another time passing through Kirtomy, he met her again shoeless, and offered her a guinea, with the remark, “ Dh’fhoghnadh dhuit bhi mar sin, ged bhitheadh tu againn fhein ” ( “ It were enough for thee to be like that, even wert thou with ourselves ” ). Willie, in speaking of himself, invariably used the first person plural. Annie died in 1840. Three of her daughters are still living, of the respective ages of ninety-six, ninety-one, and eighty-five.

Willie, in his visits to Kirtomy, often met Annie. On one occasion she would not speak to him, which indignantly drew from him the remark, “ Mo ! thruaighe nach robh thu riamh balbh ! ” ( “ What a pity that you were not ever dumb ! ” ) But on another, not meeting, or seeing her about, he entered her dwelling and sat down. She was present, but would not speak to him. Noticing a pot on the fire, he advanced towards it, and raised the lid. Annie, who had become annoyed at the persistent manner in

which he was pouring forth his regard for her, and no doubt wishing to give him a scare, said, "William, if your regard for me is such as you say, I'll believe it if you take the meat out of the pot with your bare hand," or words to that effect. In proof of his sincerity, poor William stretched out his hand and presented Annie with the reeking meat. It ever remained a stigma on Annie's womanhood that she was the cause of so much suffering to poor William Aberach. His hand never regained its old form. To his dying day he carried with him the evidence of what was a wanton infliction of cruel and needless pain upon a mind already unstrung and unnerved.

William Aberach eventually became noted as a confirmed wanderer, gaberlunzie, and mendicant, migrating from place to place, from township to township, all over Sutherland, Caithness, and Ross, everywhere hospitably received, charitably entertained, and even welcomed, on account of his inoffensive conduct, his trite remarks, and clever sayings. His grotesque appearance, with ragged habiliments, patched with clouts of varied kinds, sizes, and colours, made him an object of notice,—meal bags slung fore and aft, to leeward and windward. He became a man of mark,—the wonder and astonishment of all. He was known at a great distance; his form was unmistakable. Every one knew the figure, however distant, and exclaimed,

"There's Uilleam Aberach coming." Mrs Mackay of Bighouse of that day, a deft sketcher, was most anxious to take a sketch of Willie, with his "bags, an' brats, an' a'." This was no easy task; the difficulty lay in Willie's restless manner. A ruse accomplished what no other means could effect. Willie was seen one day leaving Melvich, and coming towards the Halladale river. An idea struck Mrs Mackay how her long-desired object could be attained. She was aware of Willie's anxiety for the possession of money. She requested her husband to meet Willie as he was emerging from the river, and ascending the bank, to have a handful of pence and halfpence, and to give him one occasionally, keeping him in conversation, while she slyly sketched him from the window of a small building close to the river-side. The ruse succeeded: the sketch was taken. The photograph taken from this sketch clearly shows how keenly Willie eyed the treasure that was doled out to him, beguiling him to stand still while the quick-witted lady was accomplishing her purpose. Nevertheless, Willie, though fond of the acquisition of pence and halfpence, was no miser. His acts on more than one occasion, as we have seen, show a different spirit, and several subsequent acts, that may be termed "highly honourable," prove it. Though poor Willie was partially bereft of reason, and despite his more than ordinary peculiarities, he was an honest

man. Before relating these honourable traits in his character, let us turn aside a little, and introduce a contemporary of Willie's, a noble woman, the wife of his half-brother, Jane Mackay of Armadale, better known in Sutherland and Caithness as "Sine Armadail." Few, if any, like her in that part of the country in her day and generation,—large-hearted, tender, and sympathetic, with breadth of views, moral and religious, very far beyond her day and surroundings, yet withal very unostentatious,—the "belle ideal" of a true and real Christian woman. She belonged to the class,—unfortunately for the world, unfortunately for mankind, they are few,—whom her clansman, Rob Donn, had in his mind's eye when he said,—

"Soillear comharadh an deagh Chriosdaidh  
De'n nòs bhi gnìomhach gun fhuaim."

("It is the sign of the real Christian to be active in good deeds without sound.")

Jane was genuinely religious. It partook of nothing of the showy, sham, or outward form of godliness, too common then as now. She felt the power of godliness, and practised it in spirit, in daily life and conduct. Yet, notwithstanding her meek and unostentatious disposition, her fame spread far and near—far beyond the county in which she dwelt. When the late Rev. Dr Guthrie ministered in Free St John's Church in Edinburgh, more than a quarter of a century ago, the writer often heard him preach. The

reverend doctor was one who could most ably delineate human nature in its various characteristics. His text on one occasion was "Pure religion," &c. (James i. 27). He expatiated upon the text in a manner peculiarly his own. The doctor was no great admirer of the Celtic race, but to our surprise and no less our delight, he made mention of the name, "Jane of Armadale," as a specimen of the class to whom his text had reference, in words which are now beyond recall, with the exception of his concluding remarks:—"When in her latter years, bed-ridden, lying sleepless in her bed at night, when all else around her was hushed, she would in imagination visit her relatives and friends, many of whom were forced to leave the land of their birth, to which they were deeply attached, and there, in Canada, Australia, and other parts of the world, hold conversation with them, then recommend them to the care and guidance of the All-Seeing. Darkness by that time would give place to daylight, bringing in its train brighter hopes and a change of ideas." Jane was twice married, her first husband being half-brother to William Aberach, by whom she had sons and daughters.

When Jane's sons grew up to manhood, for want of other employment they adopted fishing. The curing of herrings, not being then commenced on the north coast of the county, native crews went to Wick, Lybster, or Helmsdale. At

the end of one fishing season, as the boats were returning to port, a storm broke out which compelled those homeward bound to seek shelter in the nearest creeks or bays along the coast. The boat on which two of her sons were, was seen taking the Pentland Firth before the shades of evening set in, but sad to relate, was never afterwards seen. For some time faint hopes of their safety were too fondly entertained. The missing boat and crew never turned up. Before all hopes were abandoned, Jane one morning told her surviving son that tidings of the missing crew would never be obtained, but if he would go the length of the Caolas Cumhann (narrow strait), Kylesku, some of their effects would there be found. He obeyed, and sure enough, a vessel westward-bound had called there, and landed some chests, and other articles which it had picked up. They belonged to the ill-fated crew. A very plaintive elegy was afterwards composed upon the sad event, by a townsman of theirs, entitled “‘C-Aoidhich ’s Rothaich Armadail” (“The Mackays and Munroes of Arnadale”), the unfortunate crew being Mackays and Munroes belonging to that hamlet, of which the two first lines are—

“Mo Chreach ! ’smo leòn ! gun thuit an seòl  
Aig ‘C-Aoidhich ’s Rothaich Armadail.”

And one verse ended with the couplet—

“‘S Uilleam MacAoidh thoirt dheth a stiuir  
Thug naigheachd chiùrt’ do dh’ Armadal.”

After William Aberach became a wanderer he frequently called upon Jane. He was never known to pass through the hamlet without paying her a visit, probably prompted by ties and claims of kinship, as well as by the kind and genial treatment he invariably received from the noble-minded woman, who not only administered to his physical comforts, but cherished and admonished him in every possible manner to raise him up from the slough of despond into which he had too long floundered, and endeavoured by soothing and encouraging words to bring him to a more reasonable frame of mind. No one could or would do this so effectually as this admirable woman. The attempts were in vain, Willie's mind had received too great a shock.

As has been previously recorded, Willie commenced shopkeeping in Crask. It had been said that Jane Armadale's first husband, Willie's half-brother, lent him then some money. One day while in Jane's house during her widowhood, he was in more than ordinarily bright mood. It occurred to Jane to embrace so favourable an opportunity, to broach the subject of repayment to him. She well knew her husband had lent him some money; she knew too that Willie could refund it. We may feel assured she would put the case to Willie in the best and most effective way possible. He listened to all she had to say, shook his head, and said, "Ubh! ubh! bi glic istog tigh 'sa

Chrasg" ("Ubh! ubh! be wise, and build a house in Crask"), his usual expression in reply, when required to do anything to which he was disinclined. Jane replied that she stood much in need of wisdom, and equally so in need of building a house, and were he to give what she was entitled to get from him, it would help to build the house. Said Willie, "Ach, an d'thubhairt e ruit gu'n d'thug e dhuinn airgid?" ("But did he tell thee that he gave us money?") Jane replied, "Most certainly he did, or I would not be the one to ask it of you now." Willie was silent for a few moments, looked at his "packs," considering and reconsidering, without vouchsafing reply. She was in suspense, and repeated her appeal. Willie repeated his former inquiry, "Ach an d'thubhairt e ruit gu'n d'thug e dhuinn airgid?" "Thubhairt gu cinnteach" ("Certainly he did"), replied she. Said Willie, "Bhuil! bhuil! ma ta, falbh, 's thoir an so e, 's ma chanas e sin ruinn' an drasd, gheibh thusà an t-airgid" ("Well! well! away then, and fetch him here, and if he says so to us now, thou shalt have the money"). Jane, it is said, did not get the money then, but she got the whole or part of it afterwards.

Near Jane's house was a well, at which it was Willie's wont to rest himself, drink of its pure, clear, and limpid waters, and there commune aloud with himself, previous to his departure on his periodical pilgrimages, planning out his cam-



paign, and entreating his Creator to be ever present with him. On one such occasion he was overheard to guide the Creator, as to the places to which he would lead him, and to the houses he should call at on the way.

Beginning at the Ord of Caithness, he made mention of every hamlet and every house at which to call, till he came to Armadale to "Fuaran-a-bhordan" the name of this well. "There then," he went on to say, "gabhaidh tu deoch a Fuaran-a-bhordan, agus snaoisean, 's fhearrrd thu e" (he was an inveterate snuff-taker, as will be related in a succeeding page), "theid thu seachad air Ciurtami 's cha chom thu air, ach bithidh tu air oidche an taigh Iain 'ie Alais 'C Adhu' an Suardli" ("There then, thou wilt take a drink from Fuaran-a-bhordan [the well of the little table, or flat land], and a pinch of snuff; thou shalt pass by Kirtomy, and thou shalt not bend towards it, but thou shalt pass a night in the house of John, son of Alas, son of Adam, in Swordly"), and so on all the way to Assynt. It was in Kirtomy Annie lived, consequently the Creator was directed to avoid passing through Kirtomy. Probably this was in consequence of the warm reception his hand had received in the boiling water when he last visited Annie.

For many years during the earlier part of this century, two sailing vessels, the "John o' Groat" and the "Union," plied regularly between Thurso and Leith. In one of these Willie once took his

"passage" to Leith. It has been said that he was decoyed on board. The sequel does not warrant that supposition, as we shall find that it was with the most honourable intention Willie undertook the voyage. It might be the fulfilment of an idea entertained, in the heyday of his prosperity, to see the "big toon" of Dunedin, with which he had business relations, and it might also be an idea that he would fare better in the south, regarded then as a land flowing with "milk and honey." Be that as it may, one "honourable" idea without doubt prompted his undertaking the voyage. Willie sailed away from Thurso, and in due time was put ashore in Leith, arrayed in his usual paraphernalia of "bags, brat, and rags," to find his way through the labyrinth of streets as best he might. We may easily imagine with how much curiosity and surprise such an exotic as Willie, arrayed as he was, would be regarded as he passed along, and what an object of wonderment and derision he presented to the eye! He met the jeers and jibes of the street arabs on the way towards the city of Edinburgh. He found his way to the High Street, then as now infested with ragged urchins. Willie soon experienced the torment these street arabs are capable of inflicting when such a spectacle as our "northern gaberlunzie" exposed himself to their derision. The active urchins enjoyed the fun, and made the most of it. Willie, with his cudgel, kept a

clear circle round him, and kept on his way in the best manner he could. The 93rd was stationed in the Castle at the time. In the regiment was an officer from Tongue, Neil Mackay, whom we have seen, and was locally better known as "Nial Chaonasaid," a township on the north side of Ben Loyal. Neil happened to be in uniform, and on his way from Holyrood to the Castle at the time. He was surprised at the crowd of boys in the street, shouting at something, and making an uproarious noise. Approaching to the outskirts of the crowd, he was astonished to find "Uilleam Aberach" stoutly and fiercely defending himself in the midst of his tormentors. Neil soon made his way through the circle, and dispersed the crowd, then turning to Willie, the maddened object of the urchins' derision, he exclaimed, "O Dhia! ne so thu, Uilleam?" ("O God, is this you, William?")—an expression characteristic of the young man; but Willie was equally characteristic in his reply. "'Se, 's b'fhearr nach b' e,"—a reply the meaning of which it is difficult to convey in a translation, but it may be given thus: "It is I, 'twere better it was not." Before parting, Neil, who knew Willie's love for money, put his hand in his pocket, and taking out half-a-crown, offered it to Willie, who, much to Neil's astonishment, indignantly declined to accept it, saying, "Cha ghabh sinn e" ("We won't take it"). The officer pressed him to take it. "Ud! ud!

Uilleam, gabh e" ("Ud! ud! William, do take it"). Willie emphatically rejoined, "Gu dearbh, cha ghabh, cha bhi buint' againn ris" ("Indeed, we shan't take it; we shan't have a touch with it"). Willie did not know who the gentleman in uniform was, or pretended not to do so. Said the officer, "Am bheil thu 'g am aithneachdain, Uilleam?" ("Do you know me, William?") Willie, with a shake of his head, replied, "B' aithne 'dhuinn sgòrr Chaonasaid" ("We knew the peak of Caonasaid"), which is the northmost and highest peak of Ben Loyal, and right above Neil's native hamlet. Neil again pressed Willie to accept the half-crown, by saying, "'S c'ar son nach gabh thu an leth-chrun, Uilleam?" ("And why won't thou accept the half-crown, William?") As emphatically as before, Willie rejoined, "Cuir do phòcaid e dhuine, 's iomadh uair 's aite, anns am feum thusa tharruing, nach teid fhoighneachd ri Uilleam bochd Aberach, am beil sgillinn aig'" ("Put it in thy pocket, man; many is the hour and the place in which thou wilt need it, when poor William Aberach won't be asked if he has a penny").

Neil was about to part with him, when Willie inquired if he knew a certain merchant in that locality. Neil did not know, but after some inquiries found out the place, and pointed it out to Willie, who at once made for the shop. Curiosity caused Neil to follow him at a dis-

tance. Willie entered the shop door, but, in doing so, the wallets struck the sides of the doorway. Willie, feeling this, at once stepped back, exclaiming, "Thig sinn a mach, gus an téid sinn a stigh ceart" ("We'll go out, that we may go in aright"),—an invariable habit and expression of his when the "packs" touched the door-posts of any house he entered.

On entering, Willie inquired for the shopkeeper, who at the time happened to be in a back room. At the spectacle and figure Willie presented, the young men behind the counter laughed at him, and told him to be off out of the shop. Willie was not the man to be so easily put away. He had a purpose of his own to effect, and insisted upon seeing the master. The principal was sent for, who, when he came, said to honest Willie, "Be off, I have nothing for you." Willie replied gravely, "We shall not do that, we have something for thee."

Neil, who had been watching events, and overheard the conversation, now entered the shop, and begged the merchant to give attention to what his extraordinary visitor had to say. Upon this Willie asked the shopkeeper to let him know what he owed him, to turn up his books for a certain year, and refer to a date mentioned, for he would there find his name, and the amount—long since owing. The merchant, struck with surprise at the appear-

ance of the man, and the sternness of the request, consented. The books were produced, and examined. It turned out as Willie had said. There was found an account, written off as bad and irrecoverable debt, and here was the debtor. Willie paid the amount, and asked for a discharge, which no doubt was thankfully and gratefully given. This done, Neil asked, on getting outside, if he would have a dram, probably for the purpose of taking him from the street, and having a quiet conversation with him. Willie consented, and both entered the tavern nearest at hand. The lieutenant called for whisky, but at Willie's request it was changed to brandy. The lieutenant put down the coin in payment. Willie would not permit him to pay, saying, " 'S'iomadh neach a ghabhas gloin' bho oichear, nach gabhadh deoch bho dheirc-each " (" Many a one would accept a glass from an officer, that would not accept a drink from a beggar"). The officer understood the compliment, and permitted Willie to pay. He then tried to engage Willie in conversation, but he found him all abroad. Nothing coherently could be obtained, till at last Neil said, " Come, come, give us some of the Tongue news—no more of that," which Willie did quite sensibly and consecutively, leading the lieutenant to think that Willie's derangement was a pretence, and to ask, " Why he went about in such an extraordinary manner?" Willie merely replied, " Bho nach

urrainn sinn bhi mar bha sinn, bithidh sinn mar tha sinn ” ( “ Since we cannot be as we were, we will be as we are ” ).

Willie made his way back on foot all the way to the land of his nativity, with his cudgel, his “ packs,” and “ wallets,” gathering grist and corn as he went on. It was on this journey homewards, and when between the two Beinn-Ghriams, he sat himself down in a dry green spot to rest, and to mend his shoes, which from his long journey needed some repairs. Willie always carried about him material to stitch and darn and sew—awls, thread, and needles. While thus employed, one of his countrymen passing the same way as Willie had taken, accosted him, and said, “ Bheil thu greasaidheachd, Uilleam ? ” ( “ Art thou cobbling, William ? ” ) William, either too intent upon his work, or not inclined for conversation, without regarding his questioner, merely replied, “ Dheanadh sinn beagan nam bitheadh rùm againn ” ( “ We would do a little, had we room ” ). Whether he meant the little space that was in the inside of the shoe to get at easily, or space to stretch his hands in pulling the thread, the wayfarer being in his way, is left to conjecture, but this saying of Willie’s has passed into a proverb, when a coarse patching work is done, it is excused “ from the want of room.”

On a subsequent occasion, in his wanderings in the heights of Caithness, Willie came upon a

sheltered green plot by a brook side, sat down to rest, and utilise the time he rested, by mending or adding a patch on to his tattered and rent habiliments. While thus busily employed, a shepherd passing spied Willie, and went towards him. He stood gazing at the object before him, and the work he was engaged in. Whatever questions he asked, Willie condescended no reply. At length the thread in the darning needle was exhausted, and Willie looked for another thread, putting the needle down on the grass by his side. Willie turning his head round to get another thread out of one of his wallets, the shepherd lifted the needle. On Willie's looking round to get the needle, and missing it, he began to look about for it in the grass. The shepherd meanwhile said to Willie, he hoped he did not suspect him of taking up his stitching instrument? "No, no," Willie replied, "but at the same time, if there were no other here than the hills and the needle, it would not have gone amissing."

One day, while in Wick, two of his nieces—Armadale Jane's daughters—spied him as they were crossing from the Pulteneytown side over the bridge into Wick. "Look," said the younger to the elder sister, "there's Uncle William, don't look at him; pretend that you do not see him." Willie noticed, and knew them, and appreciated the situation. The younger went rapidly past him, without deigning to look his



way. Not so the elder, who was endowed with more sense and maturer judgment, imbibed from her mother. She accosted Willie, spoke kindly to him for a little, and then wished him "good day," making a move to overtake her sister. "Fuirich, fuirich," said Willie, "an fheadhainn a dh'urraicheadh oirn, urraichidh sinne orra" ("Stay, stay, those that would recognise us, we would acknowledge them"). So saying, Willie handed her a guinea, telling her to buy for herself the best shawl in Wick, in token of her magnanimity and good feeling. There is another side to this anecdote. Willie, instead of giving her the guinea, took her to the nearest shop, requested her to select the shawl she liked best, and he would pay for it, which he did, remarking, "An dream d' an aithne sinn 's aithne dhuinn iad-sa" ("Those who know us, we know them").

In these anecdotes and traditionary stories, we have enough to judge of Willie's character as a man,—honest, honourable, and high-minded. We shall now proceed to give other anecdotes, characteristic of his habits.

It has been already said that Willie was a great snuff-taker. He was never known to hand his snuff-box to any one, but if a pinch were asked, he would give a penful to him on the back of the hand. An instance is recorded in which Willie, for the sake of pacifying a man, offered the box. This anecdote was recorded by

a Strath Halladale man, who saw the affair when a boy. Willie came to his father's house on a Saturday evening, with the intention of staying over Sunday. Later on came another, to whom quarters were given. On the Sunday the adult members of the family went to the meeting-house, some distance away, leaving Willie and the other man in the house. When the boys of the neighbourhood had heard that Willie was in the house, they flocked together to have some fun with him. Willie was a reverent man. Seeing the boys bent on some mischief, he would not be drawn on the Sabbath Day at any rate. Failing to make any impression upon Willie, they turned upon the other, and annoyed him so much, that he lost his temper, and chased the lot of them out of the house. After a time the more daring of the boys returned, and recommenced their pranks, which annoyed and maddened the poor man to such a degree that he took up his stick, and revenged himself upon the fire in the middle of the house, scattering it in all directions. Willie remained all this time quite silent, and seeing the fury of the other man, moved into a corner, and asked a boy of the house—he who related the story—"De tha tighin ris?" ("What is the matter with him?") The boy replied, "Tha e fo bhoil tombac" ("He is mad for want of snuff"). Willie took out his box, handed it to the boy, saying, "Thighearn thoir sin dha, air ghaol na sith,

bheireadh sinne cruitheachd Dhia, airson na sith air latha na Sàbaid" ("Lord, give him this, for the love of peace; we would give God's creation for the sake of peace on the Sabbath Day").

When Willie happened to run short of snuff, which he took in large quantities, and, like other prodigals, he felt the want of it sometimes when he was not in the way of procuring a renewal of supply, his ingenuity in providing a substitute did not fail him. Necessity is the mother of invention. Willie usually carried oatmeal and oaten cakes about him. When his snuff supply failed him, and no shop within miles of him, he would toast one of his oaten cakes by the fire; as it got browned by the heat, he scraped off the browned surface, and set it to the fire again, repeating the operation till the cake was worn out. He would then pound and grind it finer, place the produce in his box, and snuff away, till he could obtain a better supply.

Willie's love of peace has been shown above by an exceptional act on his part. This trait in his character is illustrated by two different anecdotes, which are similar, though related from different districts. One is related from the heights of Reay, or the borders of Latheron. In a house in which Willie was wont to be well entertained, boys used to play pranks upon him, and torment him. Some distance from this

house was another, in which he found much tranquillity, but not such abundance of food. He was one evening in this locality, and was overheard saying to himself, aloud as usual, "Uilleam, ma theid sinn do Thorghlais (name of the farm) gheibh sinn biadh is ifrinn ann, ach ma theid sinn null gus an taigh eile, gheibh sinn gort is sith ann" ("William, if we go to Tor-glas, we shall get food and hell there; but if we go over to the other house, we shall get famine and peace in it"). The counterpart of this anecdote is laid in Melness, in a gentleman's house, in which Willie quartered for the night. He had abundance of food given him in the kitchen. Boys, hearing that Willie was there, crowded to see him, and most likely to have some fun. The servants, probably as fond of a bit of fun as the boys, egged them on, and instead of moderating the love of fun in the lads, encouraged it to excess. Willie at last became uneasy and impatient of the pranks practised upon him, rose up, gathered his wallets together, arranged them all in due order about him, and left the house, exclaiming as he departed, "Tha pailteas do mhaitheas san tigh so, ach cha'n 'eil sith. Ann an tigh Sheorais Sutharlan tha gainne de throcairean, ach pailteas sith" ("There is abundance of food in this house, but there is no peace. In the house of George Sutherland there is want of the mercies of life, but abundance of tranquillity").

Hospitable and charitable as the inhabitants in his rounds might be towards William in entertaining him while in their house, they seldom or ever neglected to load him with profusion of victuals of all kinds, which he stowed away in his wallets, to use on his way from hamlet to hamlet, when he rested, or when he passed a night in one of his "houses of peace," in which there was abundance of that felicity, but a scarcity of life's other necessities. Willie, on such occasions, drew on his own resources, cooked his own food, frequently after the inmates of the house had retired for the night. At such times he would eat voraciously. In one of his rounds he came to Bal-na-h-eaglais (Kirkton), Strath Halladale, which by reason of its fine trees, had attracted a colony of rooks, and being rook-shooting time, one of them was given to Willie, which he accepted, and carried to "his house of peace and scarcity." However much he may have benefited by his wandering experiences, and his ample opportunities of observation, he had not acquired any knowledge of the art of cookery. No sooner did he enter this house, and see that there was at least a good fire, than Willie pushed his young rook, feathers and all, into the blazing embers. Patience not being one of his virtues, and probably prompted by a good appetite,—a very good sauce to an empty stomach,—Willie, before the bird was half broiled, took it out and devoured it. He

soon found, to his utter astonishment, that half raw food was not easily digested. His stomach revolted at such an unusual provision for its requirements, and soon made its grievances known and felt in a way peculiarly its own, causing Willie to be very uncomfortable, inflicting upon him at intervals pains to which he was not accustomed. These were not continuous, giving Willie relaxation to consider what might have been the cause of all this unexpected disturbance within. He came to the correct conclusion, saying aloud, "Gabh sin Uilleam bhoichd, cha robh gnothaich agad an t-ianan salach breoite bha'n sud, ith" ("Take that, poor Willie, you had no business to eat yon dirty, rotten bird").

The late Joseph Mackay, soldier, true Christian man, and nature's gentleman, lived at this time on Strath Halladale. His house in the strath was one of William's favourite resorts, where "abundance with peace" was the rule, and not the exception. Joseph's house was one

"Far am faigheadh coigreach baigh,  
Agus an t-anrach bochd a lòn."

("Where the stranger would find kindness, and the poor wanderer his food.")

Joseph, one afternoon, observed Willie trudging wearily under his load of bags and wallets, towards his house. Imagining that Willie might be "an hungered," the sympathetic Joseph went at once to prepare something for Willie. What could be readier in a Highland home than oat

or barley cakes, butter, and gruitheam (curds), — a dainty “ceapair,”—combined with the invigorating atmosphere of the “north countrie,” and a modicum of its native beverage to wash it “doon”! They were hunger-allaying, health-giving, and productive of an exuberance of cheerful feeling. On Willie’s arrival the hospitable Joseph had a “ceapair” prepared. When Willie had divested himself of his curious surroundings, and composed himself in his chair by the fireside of his genial clansman, he was offered the “ceapair.” Willie was not loth to receive so acceptable a gift, and immediately began to test its palatable qualities. Before it was half consumed, a dog, lying at the fireside, scented what Willie was partaking of, and wagging his tail, approached him with wistful eyes. Willie tore a slice off the “ceapair,” and gave it to the dog. This generous act did not escape the notice of Joseph, who said, “Ud! ud! Uilleam, c’ar son tha thu tabhairt sin do’n chu?” (“Ud! ud! William, why dost thou give that to the dog?”) Willie at once replied, “Cha chuala sinn riamh a dhroch fhacal air ’ur cul” (“We never heard his bad word behind our back”). The dog was no “back-biter,” and, like many of Willie’s sayings, the rejoinder was significant of several applications. It might have been what is termed in society a “*double entendre*.”

From the following anecdote, it may be

assumed that Willie had a liking for dogs,—nay, even an affection,—at any rate, it goes to show that he entertained no dread or dislike of them. Arriving one day near a house, one of his ordinary resorts, the house dog did not receive him kindly; but barked at him furiously. Willie passed regardless of the dog's inhospitality and churlishness, addressing him thus: "Bhiast dhona, cha'n fhiach dhuit an t-saothair airson an fheadh bhithis tu" ("Vile beast, it is not worth thy trouble for the time thou wilt be"), no doubt referring to the dog's age, and short span of life.

Notwithstanding the sad, very sad, mental deterioration into which he had, unfortunately for himself and others, fallen, William evinced a regard and respect for the Sabbath Day, for which the population of the Reay country — and indeed all Sutherland — was famed. In the darkest day of the mental gloom that had fallen upon him, regard for the day of worldly rest continued with him, and prevailed, whatever may have been his ideas of divinity and the sanctity of the day. He carried with him a fear, a respect for his Creator and the institution of the Sabbath, as exemplified in the following well-authenticated anecdotes.

Being one Sunday afternoon in Melvich, resting himself by a dyke side, he was espied by a lot of boys, who came towards him. Willie watched their movements and approach in per-



fect silence, which emboldened them to come nearer, each lad pushing his mate on towards the ogre upon whom they no doubt wished to play some pranks that would afford them much diversion. When they had approached as near as they dared, Willie rose up, looked at them, closed his fist, shook it at them, and in a solemn and vehement tone of voice, shouted, "Tha Diana Sàbaid diombach oirbh" ("The God of the Sabbath is displeased with you"). The solemnity of the tone of his voice, the vehemence of expressing the rebuke, had an immediate and magical effect. The lads turned away crest-fallen; they came in quest of derision, they returned self-reproached at the unique rebuke given. One of the lads present was frequently afterwards heard to say that he never felt a keener sense of shame and self-reproach. The reproof went to their hearts like an arrow; all were wounded by it.

From this simple and well-authenticated anecdote it may be inferred—indeed, it may be taken—as a proof of the high sense of morality, and the spirit of the religious feeling inculcated and then obtaining in the Reay country, when the young and the thoughtless were so influenced by a rebuke of this kind by such a man on such a day. A minister of the gospel, who knew them well, who still lives, and knows them, said, "That the Strathnaver men in Sutherland occupied the first place in war and in

peace, and for several generations the very first place in moral excellence, in the fear of God, and in respect for man,"—a high and true compliment. This respect and regard for the observance of the fourth clause of the "moral law" was supreme in Sutherland, and in no part of it more so than in the Reay country. The sturdy sons of Scotland were remarkable in this respect, and gave rise to the saying, "A Scot will keep the Sabbath, and all he can get besides."

Here is another anecdote of Willie Aberach's notion of the Sabbath. Whether it was a work of necessity for him to travel on this very day must be left to the judgment of others. Anyway, he gave a good reason and a good excuse for the breach of its strict observance, for which he was brought to "book" by one of the "men." Willie was met one Sabbath morning on the tramp by one of the "men," an elder in the church, who expostulated with him upon the sinfulness of the deed, saying, "Uilleam, Uilleam, shaoil mi nach deanadh tu turas air lath' an Tighearn" ("William, William, I thought thou wouldst not travel on the Lord's Day"). There was mist on the previous day; poor William lost his way. Making this his excuse, he asked the "good man," "Ma chuir an Tighearn mearachd sinn an dé, c'arson bhiodh e feargach ruinn le feum dheanadh deth latha na fois, gu'r cur ceart an diugh?" ("If the Lord put us wrong yesterday, why should He be angry with us for

making use of the day of rest to put us right to-day?" )

While Willie was soliloquising one day, Adam Bain of the Crask came upon him, and asked him his reason for such a habit. Willie replied that the Creator owed him one hundred pounds. Adam rejoined, "'S math an urras th' agad, Uilleam" (" You have a good surety, William"). But Willie replied, "Tog dheth na sin a dhuine, 'se an urras, an urras a phaidheas" (" Don't say so, man, the surety is the surety who pays"). Willie's replies, like many of his sayings, might have a double meaning in it. Leaving Willie's religious aphorisms to be impartially judged of by others, we turn to give a few more samples of his ready wit in repartee.

Passing through Erriboll, when Major Donald Mackay of the Aberach branch of the clan held the Erriboll farm from Lord Reay, there were at the same time several crofters of the same name, holding under the Major, who was an open-handed, large-hearted man, his house open to all who came the way. One of these crofters was, like the Major and Willie, an Aberach. The Major, like many other gentlemen of his class at that time, was a cattle-dealer, bought cattle all round about, and sold them at the fairs and markets of the south. Willie was well received by the Major. When he regaled himself with all the good things set before him, and was on the point of taking his de-

parture, the Major asked him, "Nach eil thu dol a shealtain air Domhnuil Aberach do bhrathair?" ("Art thou not going to see Donald Aberach, thy brother?") Willie promptly replied, "Mur biodh ceannach saor, is reic daor, bhiodh Domhnuil Aberach eile an Erribol" ("Were it not for cheap purchasing and dear selling, there would be another Donald Aberach in Erriboll")—meaning that otherwise the Major himself would be simply a Donald Aberach.

Introduced one day to a certain sheep-farmer, Willie looked at him, half-benevolently, half-regretfully, and observed, "Chreutair, 's beag a b'fheard sinn' na chunnaic sinn de da leithid-sa" ("Poor fellow, little are we the better of what we saw of thy sort"). This carries its own application on the face of it, demonstrating how much Willie, in his demented condition, felt and sympathised with the condition to which his people had been reduced by the new order of things,—in the introduction into the county of sheep, and the consolidation that took place by the advent of large pastoral farmers.

Instead of remaining in Tongue, looking after the affairs of his estate, Eric, Lord Reay, spent his time in London, Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland, Marchioness of Stafford, supplying him with money. A verse of a song composed at the time shows this clearly:—

"'Nuair bu choir duit bhi'n Tunga,  
'Sann a' cunntadh 'sa paidheadh;  
'Sann gheabht' thu an Lunnainn,  
'Sa chuid bu chumant de'n sraidibh.'

But a few days ago—May 1889—we were told by a clergyman, who remembered him well, that, if not on more than one occasion, William Aberach was once at least in London,—very probably after leaving Edinburgh, and before he returned to his native county. Trudging along one of the streets with his burden of bags and “brat,” he was espied by Lord Reay, who went to him and put the question, “Bhuil, Uilleam, de do naigheachd a Duthaich MhicAoidh?” (“Well, William, what is thy news from the Mackay country?”) William gave a side withering glance at his querist, and said, “Sin an duthaich nach ’eil ann a nis” (“Such a country does not now exist”). He then trudged along. Lord Reay often referred to it as characteristic of William.

Entering a house, in one of his rounds, in which a death had that day taken place, one of the inmates quietly said to him, “Rach a mach, Uilleam, tha’m Bas ann so” (“Go out, William, Death is here”). “O cha teid,” replied Willie, “bha e ’n so, rinn e gnothaich, agus d’fhalbh e mu’n tainig sinne a steach” (“No, he was here, he did his work, and retired before we entered”).

Once, after wading a river, forgetting that a bridge of some kind had been recently erected over it at no great distance, but recollecting the circumstance the moment he had crossed, he stood, looked the bridge, recrossed the river, saying to himself, “Theid sinn air ais, chum gu’n d’thig sinn null ceart” (“We’ll go back,

that we may come across in the proper manner"). On being asked why he did so, he at once acknowledged his reason for it. This is quite in keeping with his practice in entering a house, should his wallets strike the door-posts.

One day, in Thurso, boys annoyed him very much by pushing a barrow too closely upon him. Turning his head half round, as if he did not know whether the power that pushed the barrow was in itself, or in the boys, Willie exclaimed, "Bheireadh sinn dhuibh, 'ghiullanan an saoghail ma'n iadh a ghrian, na'n leigeadh sibh leis, ach am faiceadh sibh ciod a dheanamh e fein" ("We would give the world that is surrounded by the sun, boys, if you would let the wheel-barrow alone, that you might see what it would do by itself").

Willie was not at all times so lenient, though he seldom resented such conduct, and, by an appropriate expression, turned the laugh upon the boys who tormented him, and caused them to desist. Yet when roused by wilful and persistent annoyance, his countenance assumed an air of terrible fierceness, and a very tornado of maledictions poured out, to the instant discomfiture of his tormentors.

Tales and anecdotes innumerable are related of, or attributed to, Uilleam Aberach, and another of the Reay country "notables," named "Seoras-an-Eilean." Enough has been given to show the *spirituelle* of the hero of this sketch.

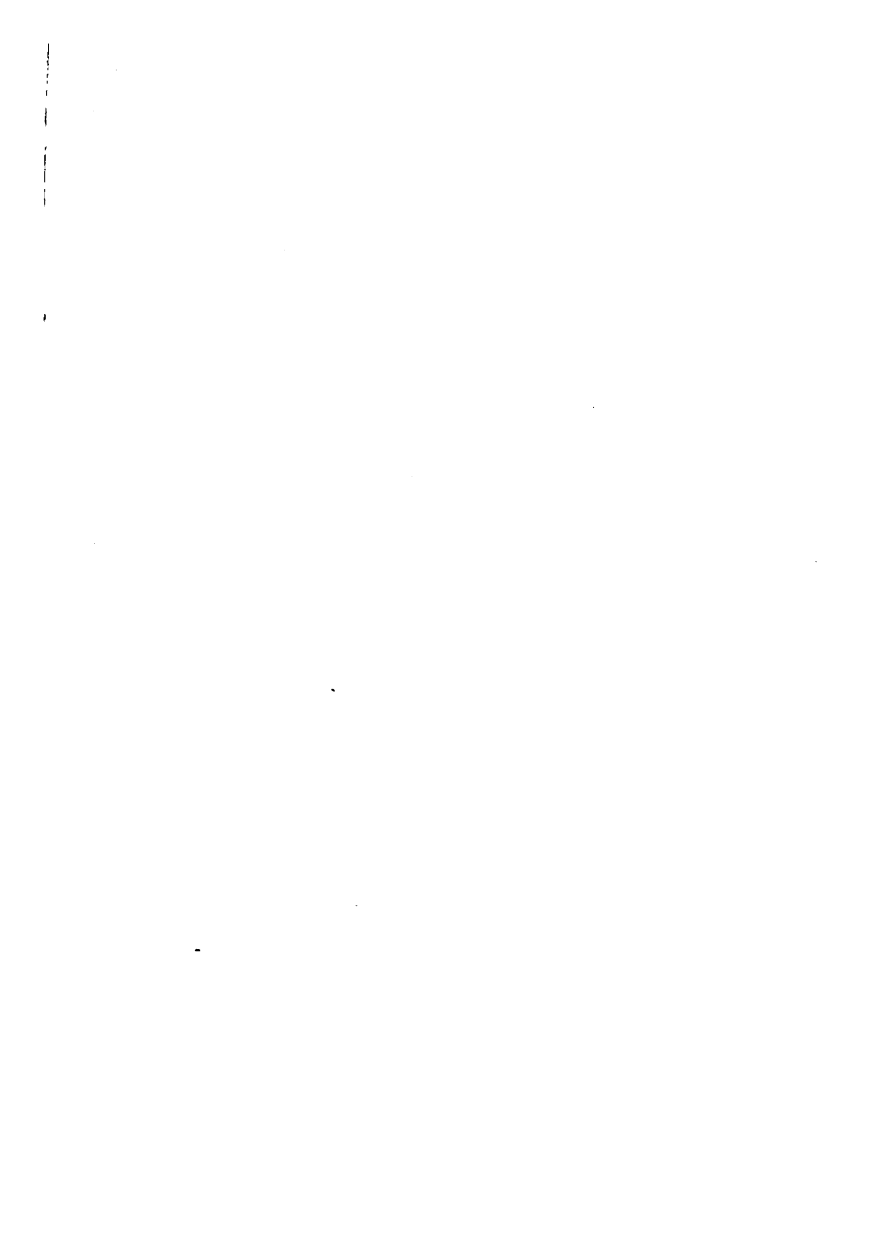
Smart sayings and repartees were much more common, much more in vogue, in the past than now.

It is said that Willie Aberach for nearly forty years wandered about the country. For the last few years of his long and weary pilgrimages, health and strength failed him, his rounds became more circumscribed, till at last he was laid up in the house of James Mackenzie, Strath Halladale. After a short illness, death laid his grasp upon poor wandering Willie. He was buried in the churchyard of Bal-na-h-Eaglais (Kirkton in Strath Halladale), Major Mackay of Bighouse, and others, paying all the funeral expenses.

Some imagined that Willie would be possessed of a large sum of money. It was not so. He was not, as we have seen, either a niggard or a miser. When he felt the end of his journeyings and wanderings near at hand, he handed his vest to one of his attendant friends to rip up, and only thirty-seven shillings were discovered in it, consisting chiefly of old coins in silver of dates anterior to 1816. He died in 1828 or 1829, probably over eighty years of age. While on his deathbed he gave directions as to the place of his interment, and resigned himself to the inevitable. His habit of soliloquising was even strong in death. He communed alone with himself, calling upon the Creator, as a personal friend, to have mercy upon him, in such expres-

sions as these :—“ Dhia dean trocair oirne, mar dean thu fein e, cha’n’eil neach eile ni e, gheall thu gu’n deanadh tu e, ’s feumaidh tu a dheanadh ” (“ God have mercy on us ; if Thou dost not, there is no other that will. Thou hast promised to do it, and Thou must do it ”). Thus departed William Aberach, who in his own humble but erratic way was a character of whom his country will have long recollections. He and Rob Donn—the latter a very different man—are the two “notables” of their country, the best remembered. Born of the people, reared amidst their native hills and glens, passing their lives amongst their own people, their doings, their sayings, remain engraven in the minds of those with whom they sojourned in an eventful period of their country’s history, and transmitted to our day by sire to son. Thus at last wandering Willie, bereft in the manhood of life of God’s greatest gift to man, by an unfortunate circumstance that he was unable to control, ceased to wander, ceased to be the butt of sport and derision of the thoughtless, the object of pity of the compassionate, the victim of misplaced affection. He sleeps the sleep of the innocent in the midst of his own people, who pitied his sad fate, who used him most charitably, and with whom his memory in the future, as in the past, will remain green, respected, regretted, — respected for his moral worth ; regretted, pitied, for the sad, the saddest of all fates, that befell him. Peace to his ashes !





## SLIOCHD IAN ABERICH.

*Traditions and Sketches relative to the supposed  
Origin of the Aberach Branch of the Mackays.*



The writer has been favoured with the following chapter on the  
Aberach sept of the Mackays, by his clansman,  
JOHN MACKAY, Esq., Hereford.



WILLIAM ABERACH, as the cognomen implies, belonged to that branch of the Mackay clan, resident in the heights of Strathnaver, called "Aberich." They were wardens of the marches between the Mackay territory and Sutherland on the south, and Caithness on the east,—the first in making forays, and always in the van in repelling them. Another cognomen was given them,—“Namhairich,” Naver men, from the fact of their residence being beside the loch and river Naver. There are various tales and traditions extant and recorded regarding the origin of the cognomen “Aberich,” one of which is, that the lady of one of the Mackay chiefs had a maid of the Cameron clan from Lochaber, particularly smart and handsome, to whom the chief paid great atten-

tion. From several matters the lady noticed, she became extremely jealous of the maid, especially for the partiality evinced by the chief for the damsel, than for any other of the domestics.

This maid, in her innocent simplicity, told Lady Mackay of a singular dream she had, which was this:—She dreamed that she was sitting on a hill opposite Altnaharra, overlooking Loch Naver, and commanding a view of the strath from its top for a long way down. As she there sat, she saw a stream issuing from near her, and increasing in volume until it flooded the whole of the strath. The volume of water at length became very grand, the like of which was never before seen. Lady Mackay, on hearing the maid's artless tale of the dream, thought it high time that she should be dismissed. Taking the opportunity of the chief being away for some weeks hunting in the great Reay deer forest, the maid was dismissed. The Aberach lassie felt greatly offended on being thus summarily sent away, without any cause being assigned. She was certain, were the chief at home, she would not be so strangely nor so cavalierly dealt with. There was, however, no help for it. Go she must, and without delay, for the lady's commands were peremptory. On the way towards Lairg she thought she should see the chief before going farther, and make her complaint and grievance known to him, so as to assuage her wounded feelings. This deter-

mination was no sooner taken than put into execution. She deflected her course to the right, towards the Reay forest, through moss and moor, right over "Bealach-na-Mearlach," hoping to fall in with her master, the chief, somewhere. Before nightfall she succeeded in finding him at the foot of Beinn Shith (mountain of silence, tranquillity, or solitude, or the mountain of the fairies). The chief, as well he might be, was astonished at seeing his lady's maid in such an out-of-the-way place, and anxiously inquired what had induced her to come so far? What had happened at Tongue House? Were all well? Was his lady well? And why she had come alone such a distance on so dreary and so perilous a journey? These were questions the chief would naturally ask. The artless, innocent maid told her master how his lady, without cause or reason assigned, had summarily dismissed her, and that she was on her way to Lochaber. The chief felt very sorry for the maid, invited her to remain with him for the night in his hunting hut, which was not far off, by the side of Loch Merkland, and recommence her journey homewards in the morning. She went and stayed with her master all night. On the morrow she resumed her journey.

In the course of time there appeared in Tongue a noble-looking youth, of fine stature, comely, and stern of countenance, swarthy of complexion, indicative of his descent from the swarthy chief

and the dark-eyed maid of the Cameron clan. He said he was the son of the Mackay chief, had come all the way from Lochaber, and that his mother was the dismissed maid. On this being told Angus Du, he ordered the lad to be brought to him, and after hearing his story, admitted the possible paternity, and eventually acknowledged him as his son.

The youth, reared amidst his mother's warrior relatives in Lochaber, was even then an expert swordsman, and excelled in athletic exercises. He soon became a great favourite with his father and his clansmen, who nicknamed him "Ian Aberach," or "John from Lochaber." As he grew in stature and in years, he evinced a bearing and mental qualities at once bold and resolute, possessing, too, great fortitude, strength of body, and a nobility of disposition, that endeared him to all ; and in his father's old age, and his elder brother's imprisonment in the Bass, became, youthful as he was, the recognised leader of the clan, and defender of his father's and his clan's territories. He was soon called upon to prove his qualities of leader and commander, and his prowess as a soldier, in resisting and defeating with a crushing effect an invasion of the Sutherland men at Druim-na-Cuiub, near Tongue, where his aged father was slain, after the victory was achieved, by a Sutherland man, who had hidden himself in a bush near the field of battle. Ian Aberach, after this victory, and his father's death,

was chosen leader of the clan, in the absence of his brother in the Bass.

The chief men, or heads of the septs of the clan, endeavoured to induce him to become the chief, as they did not know whether the elder son, imprisoned in the Bass, was dead or alive. Ian Aberach pointedly refused the proffered honour. He maintained that his brother Neil would yet return, and assume the chiefship, which was his right, and *his* only ; that, in the absence of him who was the rightful heir to the title and its honours, he would lead the clan, defend its honour, and protect the country against all enemies. Possessed of every quality requisite in a leader, and excelling in social virtues, he administered the affairs of his clan wisely and well, ensured peace, no one, aware of his prowess and abilities, daring to provoke him, or give him any cause for retaliation.

On his brother's return home, after seven years' imprisonment in the Bass, Ian Aberach resigned everything into his elder brother's hands, soliciting no favour or reward. His brother, having assumed the chiefship, and learning how wisely and prudently Ian had managed and acted during his guardianship, bestowed upon him and his heirs in fee the whole of the heights of Strathnaver and Brae Chat, from Mudale to Rossal, both sides of Loch Naver, the chief seat being at Achness. Ian Aberach, and his descendants and retainers, multiplied, and flooded the land, and

thus was fulfilled the Aberach maid's dream. The descendants of "Ian Aberach," still called "Aberich," became famous in the land for prowess in peace and war. For centuries they were the wardens of the marches, as formidable in forays as in repelling them, like the Scotts, the Elliots, the Armstrongs on the Borders. The lands the bravest of the brave once possessed in Sutherlandshire they possess no more, but their name, their fame, remain, and their place of sepulture, near the shore of Loch Naver, below Grumbeg, walled round eight feet below and six feet above ground, remains.

Tradition says it was from the above incident of the Lochaber maid and Ian, her son, born and reared in Lochaber, that the *sobriquet* of "Aberach" took its rise. It is beyond doubt that Ian Aberach was reared and fostered in Lochaber, his first wife being a daughter of the Mackintosh chief, seems to be a collateral proof; but whether he was a legitimate or natural son of Angus Du, is rather doubtful, for authorities differ, and traditions are unreliable.

The historian of the clan Mackay merely states that "John was distinguished by the appellation 'Abrach,' or 'Aberigh,' some say from his having in his youth resided for some time with relatives of his in Lochaber, and others from his bold and resolute disposition; but the former is by far the most common and probable opinion." Another tradition in regard

to the cognomen "Aberach" is, that the locality of this sept of the Mackays, to whom the appellation was applied, had the credit of being its real origin, from the fact of their dwelling round about Loch Naver, in Gaelic "Loch-Namhair," that is, Loch-an-Fhamhair, or Loch-na-Famhair (Lake of the Giant, or Lake of the Giants). Hence that the lake so named gave its own name to the river issuing from it, and both of these names were applied to the people dwelling near them,—a very common custom in many quarters. The name of the lake is Loch-Namhair, the strath is Stra-Namhair, in the vernacular. The inhabitants were called "Namhairich," or "Naverich." The transition from "Naverich" or "Namhairich" to "Aberich," is easy, and in process of time natural enough in the language of the country, then unwritten. In corroboration of this conjecture of the traditional kind, it has been remarked that there are still to be seen on each side of Loch Naver below Grumbmore, and nearly opposite to each other, two brochs, or their remains, in each of which lived a giant; that the lake was so named from the residences of these giants living on its shores.\* The true definition of the word

\* In addition to this tradition, there are other evidences which go to prove that giants actually lived there. At some distance lower down, on the margin of the loch, and on each side of it, are two large boulders, each upwards of twenty tons in weight, which, it is said, those fellows were in the habit of amusing themselves by throwing across the loch—



"Naver" is from the Norse word "Naefer" (birch bark, or birch wood), which grows luxuriantly on both sides of the lake. The lake gives its name to the river, the river to the strath.

Although there is no authoritative proof that John Aberach was not a legitimate son of Angus Du, a tradition exists to the effect that, when Lady Mackay, Angus's wife, had heard that the Lochaber maid was in the family way to her husband, she got a "spae-woman" to knit a garter, which, while she wore it, the Lochaber woman would not be delivered. Her husband, Angus Du, must have known this. One day, when he was walking some distance from his house at Tongue, he espied a man, in the guise of a travelling mendicant, making for the house. He intercepted the traveller, who, it would seem, was not a mendicant, but a spy. At any rate, Mackay, after some conversation with the man, directed him to the kitchen, where he was to act according to the instructions given to him. To the kitchen the mendicant went, where he was provided with food. The female servants, like those of our own day, were inquisitive, and when it became known that he came from Lochaber, word was sent to

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"putting-stone" fashion. The giant on the north side, it would appear, was the more powerful one, for he at length had been able to throw his boulder a considerable distance from the border of the loch, whereas the other had only been able to throw his clear of the margin. The loch is about a mile in breadth there.

Mackay's wife, who lost no time in coming to the kitchen to see the stranger, and to ascertain the news from Lochaber. Did he know such a woman? He did. What did he know about her? He knew that she was delivered of a male child the day before he left Lochaber. When Lady Mackay heard this, she at once tore the garter off her leg in a passion, saying it was no use listening to or believing in witchcraft any longer, and threw it into the fire, scattering it in every direction, and making a terrific noise. At that moment the Lochaber woman was delivered of a boy. Whether or not there be any truth in the tradition, it is given for what it is worth.

The "Chronicles" of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries relate that Angus Du Mackay, John Aberach's father, the leader of four thousand men, had four sons, but the names of only two of them have been recorded,—Neil of the Bass and John Aberach. Sir Robert Gordon, in his "History of the Genealogy of the Earldom and House of Sutherland" (page 303), states that "Donald of the Isles (after defeating Angus Du and the men of Ross at Dingwall, and taking him prisoner), having detained him awhile in captivity, released him, and gave him his *daughter* in marriage, whom Angus Du carried home with him to Strathnaver, and had a son by her, called Neil Wass (Neil of the Bass), so named because he was imprisoned in the Bass." Here he makes no mention of any other

sons, but in his description of the battle of Druim-na-Coub, he states that Angus Du made his son John commander of his forces.

Skene, in "The Highlanders of Scotland," states that the Lady Macdonald, who became the wife of Angus Du, was the *sister*, not the daughter, of Donald, Lord of the Isles, and in support quotes the words of a charter, dated October 1415, four years after the recorded date of the battle of Dingwall, conveying to Angus Du, and his eldest son Neil, begotten by him, and Elizabeth, *his sister*, large grants of territory. Sir Robert Gordon made a mistake in this, as he did in many other instances, when treating of the Mackays and Sinclairs.

In the history of the clan MacDonald it is recorded that Angus Du, after the Dingwall defeat, was imprisoned in Castle Tirrim, in Lochaber, under the care of Alastair Carrach, Donald's younger brother, whose daughter he married.

In the history of the Keppoch branch of the MacDonalds this is confirmed. "Alastair Carrach had by his wife, a son, who succeeded him, and a daughter, who married Mackay of Strathnaver." This Alastair Carrach was the first chief of the Keppoch MacDonalds. He probably assisted his brother Donald of the Isles in the battle of Dingwall.

Hugh MacDonald, the seanachie of the clan, in describing the battle of Inverlochry, fought in

1433 between the Royal forces, commanded by the Earls of Mar, Huntly, and Caithness, and Donald Balloch MacDonald, says, "Hugh Mackay of Strathnaver was taken prisoner, and he married a daughter of Alexander MacDonald of Keppoch (Alastair Carrach), of whom descended the race of the Mackays, called Slioc Ean Abrech."

At this period there was no Hugh Mackay of Strathnaver. There was a Hugh, uncle of Angus Du, who governed the clan during his nephew's minority to 1380. He would be too aged to lead the clan in the Royal side at Inverlochy, or to marry Keppoch's daughter.

Between the many conflicting statements, it is difficult to decide whose daughter became the wife of Angus Du, or who was the mother of John Aberach; but the charter of the 8th October 1415 seems to be decisive of Elizabeth, sister (not daughter) of Donald of the Isles, being the wife of Angus Du. She was the daughter of John, first Lord of the Isles, yet this is not decisive of her being the mother of Ian Aberach.

It would seem that there is a confusion of dates as to the year in which the battle of Dingwall was fought. If, as is generally supposed, it was fought in the same year as the battle of Harlaw, 1411, and that Angus Du, after being released, and having married the Lady MacDonald, the eldest son Neil could not

have been born before 1412, and supposing John was born the following year, 1413, he would only be sixteen when he commanded at Druim-na-Coub. It is somewhat unlikely that a youth of sixteen should be entrusted with so important a command to resist so formidable an invasion. The probability is that the Dingwall battle was fought several years previous to the day of Harlaw, when Donald of the Isles began to assert his right to the Earldom of Ross, in virtue of his wife being the only daughter of the Countess of Ross, invading Ross to subdue clans who were inimical to his claims.

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# NAOGHAS DU, AN DUNCANAICH

(DUNCAN'S BLACK ANGUS).



“Few words, but to effect.”—KING LEAR.

NAOGHAS DU (Black Angus) was a native of the parish of Farr. Of Angus's father we have no record, but his mother was said to be a sister of Adam Bain, Crask, a man well known in the district. If he was a nephew of Adam's, he must have been somewhat older than the uncle, for Adam Bain died in 1834, aged eighty or more, and our first recollection of Naoghas Du was in 1839, when he would be close upon ninety years of age. Though weak and tottering, his hair was almost as raven black and entire as it had been half a century previously.

He acquired the appellation of Naoghas Du, an Duncanaich, from the colour of his hair, and being brought up from childhood in the family of a man of the name of Duncan, a water-bailiff residing in the hamlet of Naver—a man of irregular habits, though good-natured and warm-hearted. Angus seemed to have been tinged in no small degree with the habits and manners of his foster-parent, who was not a

native, and did not fall in with the habits and customs of the people amongst whom he lived.

It was an established custom in every hamlet to help each other when work had to be done in a given time. Money payment was not thought of, return in kind was the rule. Winter over, and gentle "spring returning," every one was seen in the field preparing for seed sowing. Husband, wife, and children, each doing their best, ploughing, delving, manuring, sowing, harrowing; the careful wife bringing her "weel-hain'd kebbucks," her preserved meats, to cheer the extra toil.

This done, the fuel for the ensuing winter had to be thought of, and the peat moss—the coal-pit of the Highlands—attracted attention. Then it was seen how neighbours helped neighbours, and how they can do it, proving the moral of the adage, "Where there's a will, there's a way." Then it was seen how cheerfulness and goodwill lighten labour, and how co-operation makes short work of it,—the fuel for a whole township cut and spread to dry, in less than a fortnight; and we who have taken a part in this work, though 'tis "sixty years since," still love to recall the joyous time. Young men and young women, working hard from early morn to sunset at the operation, their exuberant and mirth-fulness controlled by the wiser and older men amongst them, the energies of young and old sustained by the everflowing mirth and jollity

of the workers, the drollery of the grey-beards who controlled, and the superabundance of the food for the occasion, with an occasional glass of aqua vitæ, during the long day of vigorous toil, that closed with a reel or two on the green to the music of that instrument so fondly cherished by the Highland people. Thus it was, from day to day, till the fuel for the whole township was cut and spread out to dry. "Latha buain na moine" ("the peat-cutting day") was not only a day of hard work, it was a festive occasion, an epoch in the revolution of the year, next to "Latha na bliadh'n' ùr" ("New Year's Day").

“Remembrance wakes, with all her busy train,  
 Swells at the breast, and turns the past to pain;  
 . . . . . Sports like these,  
 With sweet succession, taught even toil to please;  
 These, round the hamlets, their cheerful influence shed,  
 These were your charms,—but all those charms are fled.”

The bailiff Duncan, from some reason of his own, could not be prevailed upon to chime in with his neighbours, or to adopt their customs; indeed he was not known to be at the trouble to cut any peats, yet he did not fail to have some as long as his neighbours had any remaining on the moors. When Angus Du grew up, his task was to be peat provider and peat carrier. Towards the end of spring, when peats generally became scarce, Angus experienced great difficulty in supplying Duncan's house with fuel. One day when the stock of fuel was almost run



out, Duncan ordered Angus to go to the moss for a load of peats. Angus demurred, stating he did not know where to get any. Duncan was inflexible, and authoritatively commanded him to go and procure some, though it were from the d—l. Angus obeyed, took up the "creel" with which he used to carry peats, and went off in the direction of the moss. He absented himself for the remainder of the day, and returned in the evening with the creel, but without peats. His foster-father seeing this, asked Angus, in not the most refined terms, how it happened that he had returned without the needed fuel. Angus coolly replied, that the "gentleman" to whom he was referred as a last resort, declared that not a single peat would be given till Duncan himself came for them.

Dread of brownies and bogles, ghosts, fairies, and the many other supernatural forms and sights which were a terror to people at night, never seems to have impressed Angus. Though peculiar in many ways, he was very obliging. In the darkest hour of night, if occasion required it, he would undertake a journey. When asked if he were afraid, his reply would be, "Yes, I am afraid of stumbling and breaking my bones." He was very taciturn, but a keen observer, and when questioned on any subject seldom vouchsafed a direct reply. He had a habit of speaking aloud when travelling alone at night, which caused many to believe that he was in com-

munication with the evil one. His fearlessness, save what he termed "the fear of stumbling and breaking his bones," became a proverb thus, "Cha' n' eil eagail orm, ach eagail 'Naoghais Duibh" ("No fear have I, but the fear Angus Du had"), yet such was not the case with many who repeated the saying.

At the time of which we write the only coffin-maker in the district was a miller at Dal-na-drochaid (Bridge-dale), near Skelpick, Strathnaver. Previous to his day the "cist chaoil" (wicker coffin) was the covering of the dead when laid in mother earth. When wooden coffins came to supersede these, they had to be procured from Thurso. Long before the inhabitants of "bonnie Strathnaver" were expelled, their houses burnt, and the whole strath made desolate, there lived in Dal-na-drochaid a miller of the name of Munro, at whose house people carrying coffins from Thurso westward put up for the night. The miller was a handy man, and was vexed at seeing so much money passing his own door to enrich Thurso, which he considered might as well be in his own pocket if he could manage it. The miller laid his plans and waited, till one evening in winter a man carrying a coffin from Thurso came to his house to pass the night. The coffin was placed in the mill; the man being fatigued, and having to make an early start, went early to bed. The miller then examined the coffin, killed a fowl, and daubed the inside of the

coffin with its blood. He then placed a roller underneath it, put a black cat into it, and fixed the lid as it previously was. He knew the man would be early astir, and off on his way by dawn. He told his wife that he would be in no hurry to get up next morning, and to be sure not to permit the stranger to leave without breakfast. This was attended to. The man having breakfasted, went to the mill to get the coffin, and opened the mill door. The noise made by the opening of the door startled the imprisoned pussy. Not being accustomed to confinement, pussy ran for liberty from end to end of her prison, causing the coffin to swing up and down on the roller, in such a way that the man was almost distracted with dread at the sound of the coffin moving up and down. He ran into the house in terrible trepidation, and for a time was unable to speak. The miller's wife at length understood that something serious had happened, and aroused her husband. He and the man went into the mill to see what was the matter. Seeing how the affair stood, the miller shook his head, saying it was really something unnatural. After surveying the scene for a time, and neither of the two showing courage enough to approach it, the coffin man took up a stone and hurled it at the lid. The lid was broken in splinters, and out sprang the imprisoned black cat, her eyes glaring with fear and fury, and darted out of the mill with lightning speed. This could

be nothing other than the evil one himself, in the shape of a cat, which it was generally said he was wont to assume. At last so much courage was regained as to enable them to examine the coffin, and seeing the condition of its inside they were at a loss how to act. The coffin carrier wanted to break it up, and return to Thurso for another. The miller said that was out of the question; time would not permit of it, as the distance to go and return was too great. Something had to be done. The miller said he had boards, he had tools too, and would at once go to work to make a coffin to pattern. This relieved the perturbed mind of the coffin carrier. The miller set to work, and sooner than could have been expected the coffin was made, and the carrier went away rejoicing with his "gruesome" burden. From that time forth, and down to within modern recollection, miller Monro and his descendants had the monopoly of coffin making in the parish and adjoining districts.

To return to Angus Du. The miller on one occasion in winter had an order for a coffin from Torrisdale, some miles distant, and to reach which one of the most rugged ridges in the county had to be crossed. Night fell before the coffin was finished, and how to get it sent to its destination that night was a difficulty not easily overcome, if undertaken. It occurred to some one that Angus Du was the man, if his services could be secured, remuneration given, and along

with it a good charge of the "mountain dew," to which Angus was known to be partial. He was found, undertook the job, and having got a good allowance of liquor, and the coffin strapped on his back, he was soon on his way. The night was pitch dark, a stormy one, with wind and rain.

"And sic a night he took the road in,  
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in."

On getting as far as Naver, Angus became very thirsty. He went to one of the houses there, unslung the coffin, and set it up on end against the wall near the door. He went in and asked for a drink of water. No drinking water being in the house, one of the daughters went to the well for some. On her return, as she was entering the door, the coffin was observed by her. A shriek was heard, she fainted and fell, and lay motionless for some time. There was no small commotion in the house, but Angus quite coolly remarked, "Tha mi creidsinn gur e am bosdan dh'fhag mis aig an doruis, chur eagal orr'" ("I believe it was the box I left at the door that frightened her"), walked out, shouldered his burden, and went on his way. For some distance along the river Naver 'it was easy enough walking, but when opposite "Ath mor" (the big ford) he had to climb a high steep hill, with large boulders and loose sand, making the ascent a difficult task in the dark dreary night.

"The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last,  
The rattling show'rs rose on the blast."

Showers of rough sand and shingle came from the heights above him, striking the coffin with great force; the noise sounded on Angus's ears as something supernatural. Fearless and stout of heart as he was, it caused him to quake. He persevered; but the pelting on the coffin continuing, Angus at last declared to himself, that "tho' seven devils were to go into it, he would have the boards." On gaining the summit he took to his heels, and was soon on the descent on the other side; but, through terror, darkness, the slippery rough path, and probably through the effects of the too strong dose of whisky given him, Angus met with many a stumble; and, sure enough, on reaching his destination, he had the "boards" snugly tied up with ropes. The conclusion come to, at Angus's mishap, was that "Auld Hornie" himself was out, and broke the coffin that night.

It was mentioned that Angus was partial to "mountain dew." This was nothing uncommon in his day. Illicit distillation of whisky was then widespread. Half a century ago scarce a mountain stream running through a sheltered hollow, or *geo* in the rocky sea-coast into which a stream of water ran, but had its "black bothy." This soon ceased, and those engaged in the demoralising trade turned their attention to a more useful pursuit—herring-fishing. On its being known to Angus that two Naver men were distilling in the neighbourhood, he paid

them a visit one night. He was given a hornful of newly distilled "dew." He drank it, sat on a stone near the bothy door, and was for some time silent, looking out into the darkness. At length he murmured, in the nasal tone usual with him, "S-g-r-i-os o-i-r-b-h" ("Ruin on you"). Said one of the men, "On whom do you wish that now?" Angus replied, "Air mo chaolann, tha iad carraid mu'n drapag ud" ("In my bowels they are fighting about yon drop"), a reply characteristic of the man, and an indirect hint to be supplied with "another of the same."

The next glimpse we get of Angus is as servant in the manse of Farr, then occupied by the Rev. Mr Dingwall. He did not remain long in the minister's service. It would appear that Mrs Dingwall and he could not agree very well. It was a custom then with parents and heads of families, in the manse and in the cottage, to have their families, children and servants, around them twice a day for family worship. On Sabbath evenings this gathering was, if possible, made more solemn and instructive by the head of the family causing every member of it to repeat the "answers" to the various "questions" in the Shorter Catechism, in Gaelic. To teach these in English was confided to the parish schoolmaster. Gaelic was the language of the family round the family hearth, understood by all. Not only were these "answers" repeated, but each member of the family circle was ex-

amined as to his knowledge and understanding of the doctrine conveyed and implied by the "answers." To the thoughtless this examination was a source of terror, especially under the hand of the minister, or a severe head of a family. Many were known to shirk the ordeal by every plausible excuse, and Angus was one of these. He generally managed to evade the dreaded task, but one Sabbath evening the minister was one too many for the defaulter. The first question put to Angus was, "How many commandments are there?" Angus readily replied, "On this side of the river Naver there are ten, but in a certain hamlet on the other side there were eleven practised." "Indeed," said the minister, "and what may the eleventh be?" The reply given by Angus need not be mentioned here, but it was frank, pointed, and without irreverence, and its effect was that Angus was not afterwards questioned by his reverence.

Owing to some disagreement between Mrs Dingwall and Angus, she did not speak to him for days. Meeting her one day as she was coming out of the front door, he addressed her with the uncomplimentary salutation, "Gu'n gabh an Donais thu" ("May the evil one have thee"). "May the Lord protect me," was her rejoinder. "Ah!" said Angus, "I knew thou wouldst speak when thou wouldst hear thy master's name mentioned."

Leaving Mr Dingwall's service, Angus took to



the trade of shoemaking, which it would appear had become very general, for in the "Old Statistical Account of Scotland" it was estimated that there were thirty shoemakers in the parish of Farr; and probably enough Angus was one of the thirty enumerated, and for many years he was considered one of the deftest and best of them. Shoemakers, like the tailors of that day, were itinerant, going from house to house to work, and Angus was called upon to work for the principal families in the district.

One winter's night Angus was thus occupied at his trade in a house in Strathy. When the household were about retiring for the night, he said "he was afraid all was not right with his foster-father Duncan, at Naver, and he would need go and see." The people of the house were surprised at the sudden resolve, more so as it was then late, the night dark, and the way rough and long. There were no made roads then in the district; what there were were mere tracks, and the distance was about twelve miles. They tried to dissuade him from going, but to no purpose. He left, and arrived at Naver long before daylight, making inquiry about Duncan. He ascertained he had left the day previous for Torrisdale, and had not returned. Angus, without delay, started for Torrisdale, and was there informed that Duncan had left the previous night for home (rumour said somewhat in drink). Without any more ado Angus retraced his steps

by the sands on the seashore, and when about half way to Naver came upon the body of his foster-father—lifeless. He had apparently fallen, or lain down, and was drowned on the return of the tide. Ever after this event Angus was credited with the possession of the “second sight.”

It was during his peregrinations as “Knight of St Crispin” that Angus fell in with his Elie (Helen, Nelly), his future life companion for the long term of sixty-four years. After sixty of these years of married life had passed, he remarked “that he had ‘put up’ with Elie for sixty years, and he would defy any other man living to do the like for other sixty.” Elie was a better partner to Angus than he to her. She was a gentle industrious wife, and throughout her married life had to bear the heavier part of its burden. In her day it was no unusual thing for young unmarried women from various districts of the Highlands to go to the Mearns and the Lothians for employment in harvest time, walk there all the way, and walk back again, being away from three to four months. Elie went to the Lothians for seven successive seasons to harvest work, walking every step of the way there from Farr, and back again. It is said that one half of the world’s population knows not, and cares less, how the other half exists or makes a living. It is true that the present generation of the population of

the Highlands, and even Great Britain, have no conception of all that their grandsires and grandmothers had to endure. There were no railways then, no roads, no bridges; walking and wading was the order of the day.

After Elie and Angus were married, they took up their abode in Newlands, near Bettyhill, Farr, and had a small lot of land, such as it was, and kept two cows. Angus preferred his itinerant roving trade to agricultural or pastoral pursuits. The home and housework was left to Elie. She had to dig and delve, sow and reap, milk the cows, make the butter and the cheese, thrash the corn and feed the cattle, send the corn to the mill and fetch home the meal. Angus was always on the "go." His ready wit, his otherwise genial conduct, and style of repartee, grotesque as it might have been, was peculiar to himself and unequalled, and made him the life and soul of every gathering; and throughout the district no party, no social gathering, was considered complete in all its sociability unless Angus Du was present. His professional itinerancy, combined with his qualities of head and heart, made him not only welcome, but courted, in every social enjoyment. Yet, with all these qualifications, Angus' in a measure neglected those duties that tend to make home a pleasure and a delight. "The home" ought to be a home, humble as it might be. Angus, as it has been shown, in pursuance of his own particular

trade, was frequently from home, and no doubt kept away from it by the pleasure it gave others to have him in their company, hence Elie, industrious, hard-working as she was, could not manage everything to perfection. Sometimes the cattle strayed away, and Elie had to go in search of them, but when they strayed on to the minister's glebe, or into the churchyard, Elie was always loathe to go for them, especially if it were after darkness had set in. On such occasions, if Angus were at home, he would be obliged to go, however unwilling he might feel. At last, this work became irksome to him. One night, coming home late, Elie informed him that the cows did not return, that she was afraid to go to look for them, and that he would need to go and find them. He flatly refused, stating, if she allowed them to go to the churchyard, she might just go for them. Persuasion and entreaty being alike unavailing, Elie had to go. Immediately she left the house, Angus took a white blanket or shirt, and taking a short cut he was in the churchyard before her, put on the white covering, and concealed himself under a tombstone close to the entrance gate. On her way out, when near the gate, he raised himself noiselessly from his hiding-place, all in white, and in a hollow moan, uttered some unearthly expression. Poor Elie turned upon her heels and ran in the direction of the manse, Angus following, but before she reached the manse,

the frightened Elie fainted and fell, and after she recovered Angus was obliged to carry her home.

In the meantime, they had a family of one son and three daughters. Angus persisted in his old ways, he paid no attention to the land or to home affairs, which were gradually going from bad to worse, till at last Elie was obliged to part with her cows, and finally to leave Newlands.

As already noted, our first recollection of Angus was in 1839. They then lived in a cottage on Strathy Point; but before this time the son and daughters had come to mature years, and shifted for themselves. Angus, then tottering and decrepit, had a hankering for the scenes of his boyhood, — Naver and Farr, which he revisited as often as he could. It was on one of these rounds that we became acquainted with him. His great wish and desire was, that his remains would be interred with those of his kindred, in the burial-ground of Farr, the "clachan churchyard." Elie died a year or two before him. Strathy burial-ground being nearer, her remains, much against Angus' wish, were there interred.

During Elie's last illness, a neighbouring woman attended on her. On a Saturday night this woman went to her own home about midnight, leaving Angus with his bed-ridden wife. Only a few hours elapsed when Elie was no more. Angus sat beside the bed till the morning was well advanced, and then went to the woman's

house. He found the inmates at breakfast, and was asked how Elie was. He replied in his ordinary curt way, that she was quiet—that she had passed the quietest night he had ever known her to do. This pleased them all but the nurse, who, knowing Angus and his ways, inquired if Elie was dead. He replied she was, which caused some sensation, and all prepared to go to his house. Angus coolly told them not to be in a hurry, that she would not move till they reached there at their ease. Angus was not understood by those he lived amongst. He was far in advance of his day. His intellectual gifts, however much misapplied, were not of the sentimental order.

Although Elie was interred at Strathy, Angus' desire to be buried in Farr became none the less. When he felt his end drawing nigh, and the youth were wont to tease him by repeating to him that his remains would be interred at Strathy beside those of his wife, he made an attempt to go to Farr, to be near the burial-ground of his ancestors. He was only able to go to Armadale, whence he was carried back to his own abode, and never after was able to go out. When on his deathbed, and unable to shave—a common practice in those days—a young lad visiting him, asked how it was that his grey beard was so long. Angus retorted, *Se tha'n gàrt a bhais* ("It is the braird of death"). A few days before his decease, William MacRob, a worthy man, called to see him, and asked

him how he felt. Angus replied, "that evidently enough he was drawing nigh the end of his earthly pilgrimage." William thereupon asked, "Am beil am bàs cur eagal ort?" ("Is death any terror to thee?") Angus rejoined, "Cha'n 'eil am bàs na chuis eagal domh, ach tha a chuir a bhitheas air taobh thall a bhais cur eagal orm" ("Death has no terror to me, but the court that will be beyond death, puts fear upon me").

When Angus died, his remains were laid beside Elie, his wife, at Strathy. He was of great mental capacity, but devoid of means. Had he had these means, his last and earnest wishes to be buried with his ancestors in the clachan of Farr, would no doubt have been carried out. To the disgrace of the Strathy youth be it recorded, that when even on his deathbed, they teased him with that which he could not bear to hear, that he would be buried at Strathy. He told them that they might lay his remains there, but that he would rise again, and go all the way to Farr; that he would be overnight in the house at Armadale, from which he was taken before. The old man's wish was strong in death, and should have been complied with. For years this non-compliance with his earnestly expressed desire to be buried with his kith and kin, was a subject of great regret, and many there were between Strathy and Farr, who would not venture out after dark for fear of meeting Naoghas Du on his way thither.

# “SEUMAS BOCHD”

(POOR JAMES).

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“Their kindness cheered his drooping soul,  
And slowly down his wrinkled cheek  
The big round tears were seen to roll,  
And told the thanks he could not speak.”

“As the unfortunate chiefly stand in need of our assistance, so there is provided in every breast a most powerful advocate in their favour,—an advocate to whose solicitation it is impossible to turn a deaf ear. The more unsophisticated a community is, the more given it is to hospitality and relief of misery.”

ANY one attempting to describe from personal knowledge, characteristics of Highland life, cannot omit mentioning a class of vagrants or wanderers, once common in the Highlands before the Poor Law banished them to the calm and soothing retreat of the poorhouse, or consigned them to the less calm and less soothing restraint of an asylum. The Highland “fool” was generally the special property of the district in which he lived. He was not considered a burden on the community, it was felt a privilege to assist him. He wandered at his own sweet will wherever he pleased, from house to house, from hamlet to hamlet, and over “the muir amang the heather,” along highways and bye-ways without let or hindrance. Every one knew



the "fool." Every house was open to him. He was too *wise* to call as a fashionable formal visitor, merely to leave his card, and depart, if his friend was "not at home." He came to pay a visit, and to remain for days, perhaps for weeks. If he was not welcomed, he was never treated uncivilly, or sent away until he chose to depart. The "fool" was quite a cosmopolitan, he wandered like a bird over a large tract of country, though he had favourite haunts and places of refuge. His selection of these was judiciously made according to the comparative merits of the treatment he received from his many friends.

As far as my knowledge extends, the treatment of these "characters" was most considerate. Any teasing or annoyance they might receive from boys, as boys, detracted but slightly, if at all, from the sum of their happiness, and caused little, if any, friction. From the maimed, the blind, and the halt, and the many indifferent characters amongst the "fools" who frequented my native parish, "Seumas Bochd" entirely differed.

In the summer of 1830, while some young women from Kirtomy were tending sheep on the hills between Kirtomy and Armadale, they observed a man wandering close to the rocks skirting the sea. Apprehending that he was a stranger, they watched his movements for some time. He seemed to them to move about with-

out any aim or object, but they fancied he was acting purposely, and suspected he was no other than a coastguardsman, watching for smugglers. On a nearer approach they were confirmed in this idea, for they observed that he was dressed in blue cloth, and on his head a cap of the same material, with glazed peak and brass buttons at the side of it, such as was then generally worn by men in that capacity. Having thus satisfied themselves as to the profession of the stranger, they crossed the hills to Armadale, and at once reported what they had seen. It would seem that the wanderer noticed the direction they took, for in the evening of the same day he was descried near the hamlet of Armadale, moving about in the same aimless manner described by the shepherdesses. Curiosity or compassion prompted one of the villagers to approach him, and speak to him in Gaelic, but to no purpose. He would not reply. He did not understand what was said to him. He was then addressed in English, which he seemed to slightly comprehend, but made no reply. He was an enigma; some foreigner from a far away country, who could not understand Gaelic or English. Who could he be? no one could divine, or even guess. Nothing could be elicited from him. But he was a stranger, and he must be taken in to have shelter and food. Stranger still it is, though he moved about and wandered in the district for upwards of thirty years, no one knew who he

was, or whence he came. No intelligence of any kind was ascertained to solve the mystery surrounding this mysterious stranger.

He remained in Armadale for a month or more, going from house to house, never staying in one house more than one night at a time. In the month of August of the same year he came to Swordly. He made it, for years after, his headquarters. The writer's recollection does not extend so far back, but he was informed that Seumas Bochd's first night in Swordly was passed in a sheep cot, a short distance from the hamlet. When he emerged in the morning from his night's quarters, he was observed by some young women tending cattle, who instantly raised the hue and cry of "duine cuthaicht" (madman). Forsaking their charge, frightened by the apparition from the sheep cot, they ran away to their homes, and reported the near approach of a "duine cuthaicht" (madman), probably not without some reason, for at the time sturdy beggars, sometimes feigning madness, went about, to the terror of the lieges, especially at the season of the year, when the manhood of the hamlet was away at the herring fishing and other avocations. The result of this innocent scare was, that "Seumas Bochd" found every door he went to closed against him, till he went to "Do'ul Sailor's" door,—a door ever and always open to the "wanderer" or the "fool," be he whom he might.

Our first recollection of "Seumas Bochr" is about the year 1834. His age then might be thirty-four to thirty-eight. Fully six feet in height, and very erect, he was gentlemanly in appearance as well as in manners. Round featured, good forehead, clear skin, black hair and beard, Roman nose, large rolling blue eyes, small chin, white set of ivories, small hands, with long tapering fingers, indicating that he had not been used to much manual labour. He was, at this time, well known in the district, and generally named, "Seumas Bochr" ("Poor James"), a term more denoting compassion than indicating poverty. He might well be termed poor harmless James, for a more harmless, inoffensive man never trod the earth. He had the power of articulation, but was never known to utter an articulate word. While in good humour, which was seldom, he would, if hard pressed for his name, mutter out, "James" or "Jamie." He would also, in the same low tone of voice, pronounce the name of any household implement placed before him. Peats he always termed or called "turf," which led to the idea that he was an "Orcadian," peats not being common throughout the Orkney Isles. What is used as a substitute is termed "turf," both of them Anglo-Saxon words, the former more generally applied to the substance when prepared for fuel; but in the Orkney Isles, and in Anglo-Saxon regions, "turf" is applied indis-

criminally, whether the substance is for fuel or not.

"Seumas Bochd's" countenance always bore a sad expression, yet not gloomy. His face was occasionally observed to brighten, and a genial glow to pervade it, and a ray of happiness as it were, followed by a beautiful smile and a low chuckling laugh, that was instantly suppressed, and then it would fall back to its wonted and normal sadness and melancholy. He was very fastidious in his manner of eating. No pangs of hunger caused him to partake of his frugal fare, without at first invoking, inaudibly, a blessing upon what he was about to partake. He would then begin, never in a voracious manner, but in the gentlest and most moderate way, though upon such occasions, as hunger pressed, he would consume much more than upon ordinary occasions. He was very timid and sensitive, but he could be very stubborn. It was with great difficulty he could be prevailed upon to change ragged clothing for better, and when compelled to do so, the moment he was alone or out of sight, he would tear the better to shreds. He was as averse to water as the cat. He was never seen to wash his hands or his face. His aversion to water, and his habit of sleeping at night in what he wore during the day, left him in a filthy condition, and from that cause, his bedding, wherever he went, was straw on the clay floor by the fire-side. When the night air was

cold, and he was not inclined to sleep, he would place the straw, piece-meal, on the fire, which at that period, generally was in the middle of the room. The straw burning caused much smoke, filled the house with it, and aroused the other inmates. Poor James then came in for harsh words, and frequently got "his kail thro' the reek," and in the morning would decamp, and avoid such a house in future. It was only for such conduct that it was ever known Poor James had to be scolded, or an angry word to be said to him. High or angry words, whether or not directed to himself, frightened him, and caused him to decamp. Unless thus frightened, wherever he put up for the night, he stayed to breakfast. This meal over, he would quietly walk outside, stand for a moment, as it were in close thought, then walk away, with his over-all thrown over his arm, in a most stately style, but with a downcast look. If the weather was fine, he would choose a plain piece of green sward, pace it backwards and forwards for hours, like a captain on board ship pacing the quarter deck, his lips all the time incessantly moving, and occasionally he would glance upwards, as if giving orders to men engaged aloft. At such a time a happy smile would be seen to animate his countenance for a moment, then he would halt, relapse into melancholy, and walk away for his next favourite house.

He would occasionally disappear from Swordly

for several months at a stretch. On his return he invariably made for the "Sailor's" house. He never wore shoes or boots, yet snow storms or frost never deterred him from going his ordinary rounds if he were permitted to do it. When in the "Sailor's" house at such times, it was with the greatest difficulty he could be prevailed upon to remain indoors. Unless the "Sailor" happened to be within, he made a move for the door. If he was within, a wave of his hand, or a look even, was sufficient to cause "Seumas Bochd" to sit down and compose himself for a time. The moment the "Sailor" went outside in the daytime, "Seumas Bochd" was off like a shot from a gun. No word or threat from the "Sailor's" wife had the slightest effect to deter him. The "Sailor" being near at hand, and word sent him that James was off, he would shout to James to return. Poor James, upon that shout of a well-kenn'd voice, would stand still, look sullenly down upon the ground, and make no attempt to move away. Retrace his steps he would not, till the "Sailor" would reach him, and taking him by the shoulder, wheel him to the right-about, when he would walk back to the house, and make no further attempt to go off.

For luxuries, such as whisky, snuff, tobacco, he had no inclination or desire, but during the season he was often seen to pick and eat sorrel leaves—a bitter herb. He was never known to be ill. He was naturally strong, well-formed,

and of fine physique. On fine summer days, he would lie for hours on the grass in quiet secluded spots, till hunger compelled him to move.

The prevalent idea was, that he was a native of Orkney, but which of the islands it was not known. No doubt the idea was a mere supposition, although there were one or two circumstances tending to strengthen it.

After some years' intermittent residence in Swordly, &c., he suddenly disappeared, no one knowing whither. His sudden disappearance caused general surprise, and even anxiety. Some apprehended the poor man had come to an untimely end, but after a time, and when almost forgotten, "Poor James" reappeared, and it was afterwards ascertained he had been all the way to Canisbay, a parish in Caithness, on the coast of the Pentland Firth, in which he wandered about during his absence, gazing across the sea, for a sight of, it might be, his native land. Another circumstance was, the interest he always took in a piece of rope; when he came across a piece, he would sit a whole day teasing and neatly twisting it, then throw it away, and sigh. He was an adept at knotting, few could excel him. Horse hair was then as now the common article for fishing lines, and twisted between forefinger and thumb, forms the fishing lines (*snoddan*) of the fisherman. These "Poor James" would manipulate neatly, and in the best form. But he had to be watched, for the moment he finished



one, he would in the next moment begin to undo it, unless he had material to begin another, which seemed to indicate that he was reared where such work was a common practice. Whether or not he was an Orcadian, it was clearly evident that he was respectably connected. His appearance and general manners indicated gentle birth and upbringing. The more shame it then was, to have thrown him adrift on a rock, helpless, friendless, miles away from any habitation. He evidently had been landed near about the place where he was first seen, and to say the least of it, it was a most inhuman act on the part of those guilty of it.

Having heard that in after-years he had been supported by the parish of Farr, under the provisions of the Poor Law Act, the writer was induced to write to the Poor Law Inspector, Mr Macdougall. He, in his usual affable and prompt manner, replied as follows:—

“JAMES BOAK.

“*21st March 1887.*

“DEAR SIR,—I am in receipt of yours of the 15th inst., in regard to the above-named. I do not know that any little information I can give will be of much service for your purpose. It seems he came to this parish about 1830. There was a report that he had come from Orkney, was landed from some fishing boat on the coast about Armadale. He went about amongst the people of Armadale and Leadnagulan, who were all kind to him on account of his quiet and harmless disposition. This continued till 1845, when his name was put on the poors' roll of the parish after the passing of the Poor Law Act in August 1845. The first allowance granted for him was only 4s. a month to keep him in clothes, and was allowed to roam about as before. In 1848 he was

reported to the Board of Supervision as a harmless lunatic. Some time after this he began to wander away the length of Caithness. I had to send to bring him back more than once, but in 1851 an arrangement was entered into between this parish and the parish of Bower, and James was put under charge of a woman he was fond of staying with then. We allowed her 2s. 9d. a week for taking care of him and keeping him in a cleanly state. We provided clothes besides. This arrangement was reported to and sanctioned by the Board of Supervision. In August 1853, he returned to this parish, and was put under the care of Angus Munro, crofter, Lednaguilan, and his wife, who were very kind to him. They were allowed 4s. a week and clothes for the poor lunatic. This new arrangement was sanctioned by the Board of Lunacy after the Lunacy Act came into operation. James remained with these people till his death, which took place on 10th August 1861. He made one or two attempts to go to Caithness, but Munro took him back. We never found out where he belonged to. I never heard him speak, and his attendants told me that they never heard him speak during the time he was under their charge, though I heard it said that he could do so. He seemed to belong to a good class of people. He had small hands and feet. His age would be about sixty when he died. He was ailing for some nine months before he died.

"I visited the patient frequently during the last nine months of his life, and found him well cared for, and Dr Black, medical officer of the board, and myself, did all we could for him in the way of warm clothes and wine, &c., during his illness.—I am, Yours faithfully,

"(Signed) J. M'DOUGALL.

"Mr A. MACKAY,  
20 St Andrew Square,  
Edinburgh."

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# SLIOCHD-AN-ROIN

(OFFSPRING OF THE SEAL).



“ While here you snoring lie,  
Open-eyed conspiracy  
His time does take.  
Shake off slumber and beware ;  
No more to sea shalt thou go,  
On shore shalt thou die.”

**I**T was a prevalent idea in the writer's native parish of Farr, and all along the sea-board of the *Reay Country* district of the county of Sutherland, that the “ròn” (seal) was originally human, but, on account of some great transgression of human or divine law, was condemned to the life of amphibiousness and fatness he has since led. Forty years ago, during a sojourn of six months in one of the north isles of Orkney, he found the same idea prevalent, and for that reason the seals were permitted to go unmolested there. Indeed, we might in this connection, in proof of the liberty, the sense of immunity from danger, and the absolute freedom from fear, those harmless creatures display in their gambols on the rocks in the entrance of the bay of San Francisco, refer the reader to every writer who has passed that way.

There were two circumstances that strengthened

the ideas in the minds of Highlanders:—(1.) That the creatures retained something of the power of articulation like the human voice; and (2.) That the females had a cover over the head, somewhat like a hood, so fine as to be discernible to few. This covering was termed “Ceanna-bhreacan” (head-tartan), and if it were removed, the creature would at once resume its primary form. The first idea has often been substantiated by those who were in the habit of slaughtering them. The second is said to have been verified, in one instance at least, a few miles distant from my native hamlet, as shall be related.

Over thirty miles north of Strathy Point lie two islands, a few miles apart. The one is termed “Stack,” though known there as Suiriskil, meaning Sulair-sgeir (the solon rock), a resort of that bird in the hatching season; the other is termed “An-t-ealan-iosal,” the low island, or “Eilan-nan-Ròn” (seal island), as it is frequented by these creatures, who make their abode upon it when bringing forth their young.

When Donald the Sailor was a captive on board the Lewis smugglers in the last century, these islands lay in their track while voyaging from Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Isles, Holland, and various parts in the German Ocean, and he probably heard from his shipmates, that the “Low Island” was a haunt of seals, or he may have observed it to be so, in passing and repassing it

in these voyages. Be that as it may, Donald had no sooner returned to his native home, after receiving his discharge from the army at the close of last century, than he, with the assistance of some Armadale men, sailed away for the "Low Island," in November, being about the time seals bring forth their young, and returned with a boat load of old and young seals. The men who accompanied Donald in this expedition were unanimous in declaring that the young seals, when deprived of the way and means of escape, give utterance to doleful moans, and cries like children, *m-a-i*, *m-o-i*, which they believed to mean *mathair* (mother), confirming in their minds the idea they knew to be prevalent, that more or less articulation was common to the seal.\* For more than forty years afterwards, boats from different parts of the coast went to this island to catch seals, and on many occasions were very successful. I have personally a distinct recollection of a Kirtomy boat, with sixteen hands, going to the island in 1842, and bringing away six-score seals. I have heard some of these men declare that the peculiar cry of the young seals, and their innocent looks, affected them so much, that they failed in their determination to kill them. Others among them were not so sensitive minded.

\* Since this was written I came across a work on Alaska, in which this statement is corroborated. Its American author, who evidently did not know the language (Gaelic), said their cries resembled somewhat the bleating of sheep !

To catch a seal asleep is as rare a phenomenon as to catch a weasel asleep. In the one and the other, this no doubt arises from their sensitiveness, quickness of hearing, and rapid perception of sound. A Gaelic proverb says, "Giomach, rònach, is ròn, tri seòid a chuain" ("Lobster, mackerel, and seal, three heroes of the ocean").

Tradition has it, that a young man of Torrisdale, parish of Tongue, when crossing the sands, had observed an object, which he correctly concluded to be a seal asleep. Creeping stealthily and noiselessly along the sands he was enabled, ere it awoke, to grasp, and take the "ceanna-bhreacan" off its head, when to his astonishment, and no less amazement, lo, and behold! a transformation scene! Unveiled to his wondering gaze was a young woman of very fine appearance and elegant form. Whether or not he was in any way prepared for the spectacle, has not been recorded, but he was in possession of the "ceanna-bhreacan," and he kept it. Turning with his trophy to go to his father's house, the young woman without any ado followed him, till they both landed in the house situated close by the banks of the river Borgie.

The young stranger seemed to be of a very amiable disposition, made herself contented in her new abode, and became very handy in everything she had to do, excelling many maidens in household duties. The young man became enamoured of the sea-maiden. She returned his affection. They were married, and in a few

years she became the mother of several children. During this period, a seal was frequently seen in front of the house when the tide was full. When the tide ebbed, a prime salmon was always found lying dead on the sand. This occurring every time the seal made his appearance, his visits were hailed with delight. They were, however, destined to have their dark side for the doting husband, for he had noticed that after every visit of the seal his partner became gloomy, moody, restless, dissatisfied, casting stolen glances, frequently loving looks after the seal, now esteemed a benefactor.

On one occasion, in the spring of the year, the young husband had to go some distance from home. During his absence, the seal made his appearance in the river, as on former occasions, which created no surprise, as it did not in any way seem unusual,—in fact, his visits were looked to with pleasure, as it left behind it a fish each time.

In one end of the barn was stored up for spring consumption the rough coarse hay of the country, and in this hay was concealed the “ceanna-bhreacan.” Whether the young wife suspected this to be the case, or whether she had gone to the barn to get hay to feed the cattle, and by chance came upon her long-lost hood, none can say; but it may be surmised, that having found it, and her natural instincts returning, she did not long hesitate to don it, and to hasten to the river, into which she plunged, and in an instant



joined her old mate, the seal. The pair were seen to make off for the sea. Their joy seemed to be great. The people who observed them declared they went so fast and furious down the river, as to whiten its surface with foam all the way to its confluence with the sea.

When the young man returned home soon after his faithless partner had left, he found everything as usual, in good order, the youngest child in the cradle, and a bunch of keys suspended at its side. Seeing this state of affairs, and the absence of the mother, he began to suspect that something was out of joint. He went to the barn, no one was there. He looked if the "ceanna-bhreacan" was in its place. It was gone. The seal never again visited the river, but "Sliochd-an-Roin," the offspring of the marriage related, were well known for generations in that part of the Reay country. They were a fat, short, dumpy race, and said to have large-sized hands. The epithet Sliochd-an-Roin was invariably applied to them, especially when differences arose, and hard words were bandied, frequently causing serious quarrels, fights, and bloodshed. It was one of these quarrels that led to the composing of a song often sung in my boyhood, one stanza of which ran thus:—

"Tha sliochd-an-roin cho bagaireach  
'S nach fuiling iad a chlaistinn,  
Gu'm bè Siol nan daoine foghainteach  
A ghabhadh air a maischinn."

# GOBHA-NAN-CEATHRAINN

(SMITH OF THE QUARTERS).



“Stay, illusion !  
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,  
Speak to me.”

—SHAKESPEARE.

A PART from the guilt and horror felt from taking human life, no crime was considered so dreadful by our faithful and honest forefathers in Sutherland as that of perjury (*mionnan éithich*), and any individual known, or even suspected, to be guilty of such a gross violation of the moral law, was ever after shunned, and held in utter contempt. Not only so, but it was maintained that after death, the spirit of such an individual could find no rest, but prowl about and haunt—in bodily shape—its former place of abode, until such time as some one could be found bold enough to question it, as to the cause of its unrest and re-appearance, when, it was said, it would disclose all, and if it were possible, ask for redress to be made. The following is a case in point:—

Gobha, or Gobhainn-nan-Ceathrainn (Smith

of the Quarters), who acted as such to the Wadsetter of the Ceathrainn, was a farrier and "bo-man" too. For his services in these capacities he had a house, and a piece of land, &c., from his employer. In those days, when mountain grazing was unrestricted, the steer cattle (yeld), Crodh Seasg, were turned out upon the hills early in summer, and allowed to roam at will, until the end of October. One day, a bullock belonging to a man at some distance from the Ceathrainn, strayed from the herd, and followed those of the Ceathrainn, till they were turned into the fold. As the animal had no herd mark, Fear-nan-Ceathrainn (the man of the Quarters) put his own mark upon it and retained it. The owner of the bullock, on missing it, made inquiry as to its whereabouts, and having received information, naturally enough claimed it. Fear-nan-Ceathrainn disputed the claim, and maintained it was his own. Its proper owner, however, was not to be denied. He appealed to the law. When the day of trial came, the smith, as principal witness, swore the bullock was his master's property, and the verdict was given accordingly. Whether or not it became known in the neighbourhood how the smith had acted in the suit, has not been told, but conscience felt and spoke. From that day forth the smith was an altered man. He pined away, and in little more than a year died, a comparatively young man, leaving a widow and a

number of young children to lament his untimely death.

A few evenings after the interment—it was spring time—before retiring for the night, the widow went to the door, when, to her surprise and horror, she observed the apparition of her husband leaning against the wall of the house close to the door. She immediately closed the door, and put the children to bed, but to them she made no mention of what she had seen. About the same time on the following evening, the apparition entered the house, and took its position at the fireside in the middle of the house, its usual place when in life. On sight of it, the children screamed in chorus, and crept close to their mother. Being overcome with fright, the whole of them remained in the same position till the cock crew, when the apparition vanished. These visits being continued nightly, the widow was on the verge of distraction, and would fain abandon the house, did she only know where to shelter. For a time she had some faint hopes that the visits would cease, and that no one would hear anything of the extraordinary matter. It became more than she could bear. She told the whole affair to some one of her confidants, who advised her to state the case to a member of the kirk-session. She acted on the hint given her. A meeting of the kirk-session was convened. The extraordinary incident was seriously discussed. The decision

arrived at was, that two of their number, men well known for nerve and piety, should visit the house on an evening, and if the apparition presented itself, to question it as to its visits. An evening being appointed, the two men met at the house, not without some misgivings as to what might happen. After divine exercises, they sat silent for a time, with the Bible open on a table beside them. Darkness had by this time set in. One of the "men" asked the widow if it was about the usual time the apparition had been in the habit of presenting itself, and taking its position at the fireside as formerly; but ere he could get a reply, it was in its usual place. For a time all were silent, not a word was uttered, for the men evidently felt the gravity of the position, and would prefer shirking the task they had undertaken to perform. At length, one of them put the question: "What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?" The phantom shuddered, and replied in a sepulchral tone, "I have not been so fortunate as to be a partaker of these benefits." "And what," said the querist, "causes thee to haunt thy former abode?" "It is," it replied, "on account of having falsely sworn regarding the bullock my employer unjustly kept; let the animal be restored to its rightful owner, and I shall never trouble this earth again." The hint was acted on. The apparition was never again seen, but the good man who was the spokesman did not

survive long. It invariably happened that one who spoke to or questioned such apparitions, did not long survive the ordeal.

Hector Macdonald, who died some years ago, at upwards of eighty years of age, told the writer, that when a boy, he had seen a son, either of the smith or the spokesman, he could not recollect which. This would tend to prove that the story was common at the time, and generally known throughout the country. It is now over fifty years since the writer heard this story from his mother.

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# HIGHLAND PASTIMES.

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## SHINTY MATCHES.

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THIS game has been, for ages, a favourite one with Highlanders, on Christmas Day and about the New Year time. It was a favourite one with all school lads, wherever they could find a meadow upon which to play till they were ordered off about the beginning of April, when grass began to grow. On the north coast of Sutherland there were two famous localities, Durness and Farr Sands, along the sea-shore. Any even numbers on each side could take part in the play. If the players came from two different hamlets, or from two different parishes, the lads and men from one hamlet or parish were pitted against those from the other. If this was not the case, and sides had to be chosen, the clubs of all those who desired to play were placed in a heap, and one of the players was blind-folded. He then knelt down, and taking a club in his left hand, another in his right, he threw them away to the left and right, till he had distributed the lot. The owners of the clubs ranged themselves on either side, as the club happened to be cast.



The following graphic account of shinty play on the sand of Durness, is from the pen of a lady eye-witness. We give it in her own words:—

“As this game is still played upon the fine sands of Balna Cill (though not with the vigour of olden times), it may not be uninteresting to describe the distinguishing features of the two principal holidays of the year.

“At eleven o'clock of the day, the players arrive in groups. The shinty is thrown down, and boys, lads, and men play merrily for half an-hour, without drawing sides, like the first flourish of fencers before beginning in earnest. The crowd thickens, old men appear on the ground, and young wives and maidens, as spectators, come dressed in their best attire. A murmur goes round that it is time to begin; it gets louder, and they collect in a group. The company having assembled, it was proposed and unanimously carried that the game be commenced in earnest. Retiring to the middle of the sands, two persons are chosen to draw sides, and a club is tossed in the air for the first call. The chosen one standing out in the ring looks around for his companion at arms, who modestly holds back until called by name, when he advances, not unconscious of the honour conferred upon him, but with affected humility, perhaps finding fault with his principal for having made such a bad choice. His opponent selects his man, and so they proceed, at first

cautiously, each party consulting together as to whom they would choose. At times both call out a favourite player simultaneously, and then the battle of words wages long and loud. But they soon get impatient, and the names are now called out still faster, until none are left save a few half-grown boys, too young to join in the strife of heroes, and too old for entering the battle of pigmies. A hole is then made in the sand, and the ball is dropped into it. Men are seen stripping; shoes, stockings, hats, bonnets, and clothes, are left in the custody of some daughter, or fair favourite, or upon a sand hillock. Two field-m Marshals are appointed, who take their station; the ball is tossed out of the hole, each man firmly grasps his club, each eye is on the alert, up it ascends, and then begins the fight of heroes. All else is forgotten. Brother comes against brother, father against son, for their blood is up. Now they seem all in a knot, the next instant they separate, they press in a body upon one end and then they diverge like mountain streams, but though many they are one, for they have a common object, though it is only a piece of wood, three inches in diameter. The fair ones, gentle and simple, group along the shore, while many a loving look is exchanged, no doubt stimulating some to greater exertion. The running of one is beautiful, another's playing is awkward, that of a third superb, and of a fourth ludicrous. The masculine exhibition on that sea-

shore is really fine. What flashes from that young man's eyes as he strikes forward the ball! What a proud step after he has done it! What attitudes that field-marshal puts himself into as the ball is deliberately fixed on a fulcrum of sand before him! Conscious of the gaze of a thousand eyes, he retreats a few steps, and, measuring the object with the eye, clenches more firmly the club, and comes down with a circular sweep, hitting the ball beautifully, and following with his eye as it rises in the blue sky.

"No rest being allowed, the ball is at times by mistake thrown into the sea, into which, though the surge should be considerable, a dozen stalwart fellows leap, and even midst the breakers struggle for it. As a tribute to the bravery, the one who finds it is permitted to strike without molestation, a sufficient reward he considers for his ducking. But look at that group who support a fainting man. From an accidental stroke of the club on the temple, his skull is laid bare. He is deadly pale, as they carry him out of the *melée*. Women also surround him, among whom is the young man's sweetheart. Pale and trembling, she takes the handkerchief from her neck, and binds it round his head. His eyes open, that look she gave him has acted like a cordial. The warm blood once more mantles his face, he says he is quite well, and wishes again to enter the *melée*, but is kept back by a beseeching token from the

maiden, and the tears by which it is backed prove of more weight with him than the remonstrances of a thousand tongues. But we see another and a larger group, but it is difficult to wedge one's way into it. There is a ring and a loud word, and inside are two fellows, with brawny arms, pale with anger, collaring one another, while others try to hold the determined fighters back. 'Let them alone,' cries a sensible old man, and left to themselves, they see what a ridiculous figure they cut, they look at each other, shake hands, and set off once more on their pursuit. Sometimes, however, they are not so easily separated, and blood flows ere they desist from fighting. But see that poor limping dog, which has faithfully followed his master, and for his fidelity has got a broken leg. What has so suddenly dispersed that female group? The ball has effected this with as great expedition as a shell falling amongst a party of troopers. Off it goes, however. That handsome young fellow who eyed it intently had a design upon it, and now is his time. Beautifully he sends it along, never missing, and as skilfully does he out-manceuvre his adversary who meets him; he waits, strikes it, and passes him, with the ball at his foot. A false step and all would be lost, for he is hotly pursued, the whole field being in full cry at his heels.

"But he knows his power, and reserves his

strength to the last. Forward he goes, only now pursued by two or three, and out-distancing all, he is cheered by his own party, while the opposition only sullenly growl. Reaching now the goal, he strikes the ball against the rock, while a triumphant hail rises from a hundred voices and meets him gratefully as he again draws breath.

“By this time it is almost dark, and as each youth, weary with the day’s exercise, returns home in the gloaming he looks out for the girl he loves best, and engages her as his partner for the evening dance, which was continued for several hours to the music of the violin, or the pipes, with much grace, vigour, and agility, reels and strathspeys being the favourite dances, varied in form and steps to the cadence of the tune.”

Frequently a match was made by gentlemen of our parish with gentlemen of another, to bring their respective retainers to contend, for the mere honour of deciding which parish produced the best players. The Christmas or the New Year week was ordinarily the season chosen for this display. Refreshments were provided for all comers, in the shape of ale, whisky, and bread and cheese. Whatever locality was decided upon as the scene of the contest, the day caused great excitement. Old and young from near and afar, gathered to view it, and to cheer and animate the combatants. The hour of meeting drawing nigh, the music of the pipes was

heard in the distance, probably from opposite directions, which intimated that the players, with their chieftains at the head, were approaching. Each party, as they entered the field in military order, were received with ringing cheers. The preliminaries were soon adjusted; the contention of manhood and agility commenced, and was continued till the darkness of evening put an end to it, much the same as has been described previously. This game is known in England by the term "hockey," in Ireland by "hurling." Mr and Mrs Hall, in their interesting work on Ireland, allude to it in these graphic terms:—

"This great game in Kerry, and indeed throughout the south, is the game of 'hurley,' a game rather rare, though not unknown in England. It is a fine manly exercise, with enough of danger to produce excitement, and is indeed, *par excellence*, the game of the peasantry of Ireland. To be an expert hurler, a man must possess athletic powers of no ordinary character; he must have a quick eye, a ready hand, and a strong arm; he must be a good runner, a skilful wrestler, and withal patient as well as resolute.

"The forms of the game are these:—The players, sometimes to the number of fifty or sixty, being chosen for each side, they are arranged in two opposing ranks, with their hurleys crossed, to await the tossing up of the ball, the wickets or goals previously fixed at the extremities of the hurling green, which, from the nature of the

play, is necessarily a level extensive plain. Then there are two picked men chosen to keep the goal on each side, over whom the opposing party places equally tried men, as counterforce ; the duty of these goal-keepers being to arrest the ball in case of its near approach to that station, and return it back toward that of the opposite party, while those placed over them exert all their energies to drive it over the wicket. All preliminaries being arranged, the leaders take their places in the centre. A person is chosen to throw up the ball, which is done as straight as possible, when the whole party, withdrawing their hurleys, stand with them elevated, to receive and strike it in its descent. Now comes the crash of mimic war,—hurleys rattle against hurleys,—the ball is struck and restruck often for several minutes, without advancing much nearer to either goal ; and when some one is lucky enough to get a clear ‘puck’ at it, it is sent flying over the field. It is now followed by the entire party at their utmost speed ; the men grapple, wrestle, and toss each other with amazing agility, neither victor nor vanquished waiting to take breath, but following the course of the rolling and flying prize ; the best runners watch each other, and keep almost shoulder to shoulder through the play, and the best wrestlers keep as close upon them as possible to arrest or impede their progress. The ball must not be taken from the ground by

the hand ; and the tact and the skill shown in taking it on the point of the hurley, and running with it half the length of the field, and, when too closely pressed, striking it towards the goal, is a matter of astonishment to those who are but slightly acquainted with the play. At the goal is the chief brunt of the battle. The goal-keepers receive the prize, and are opposed by those set over them ; the struggle is tremendous ; every power of strength and skill is exerted, while the parties from opposite sides of the field run at full speed to support their men engaged in the conflict ; then the tossing and the straining are at their height, the men often lying in dozens side by side on the grass, while the ball is returned by some strong arm again, flying over their heads towards the other goal. Thus, for hours, has the contention been carried on, and frequently the darkness of night arrests the game without giving victory to either side. It is often attended with dangerous, and sometimes with fatal results." The description here given portrays the game as it is still played in Sutherland, and generally in the Highlands.

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## WEDDINGS.

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A WEDDING in a Sutherland hamlet was a great event. It was the delight of all ages. When a marriage was agreed upon, a contract was entered into to implement the engagement within six weeks, under a penalty of forty pounds Scots, each party to the contract finding security. The banns of marriage were then proclaimed in church for three successive Sundays. A fortnight previous to the marriage day, the bride and bridegroom went round their respective relatives, friends, and neighbours, for several miles' distance, for the purpose of inviting them to the wedding. To repay this courtesy the matrons of the invited families returned the visit within a few days, bringing with them presents of beef, mutton, hams, butter, cheese, spirits, malt, or whatever they considered necessary for the coming feast. Great preparations went on, both at the house of the bridegroom's parents, and especially at that of the bride's, for it was at hers the wedding feast was kept. The barn was always cleared and made ready for the dancing, and probably for the feast, as the guests would be

many, and the house too small to accommodate all. The marriage, to be fashionable according to custom, must take place on Friday. On Thursday evening the bridesmaids and bridesmen visited the bride, saw her feet washed, and the bride put to bed. This was called the foot-washing night. Friday morning all the young women and young men invited by the bride came to convey her to church, the young women dressed in white, the young men in their best attire. After partaking of a good breakfast, and all being now ready to march, a procession was formed, a piper leading, the parents of the bride, or her nearest male and female relatives, following; then came the bride attired in her marriage robes, next followed her bridesmaids, the first with the bridegroom's best man, the others in order as arranged; then follow relatives, female and male; then neighbours indiscriminately, female and male, two and two. The procession being thus formed, the bride's relatives in front gave the order to march. The piper struck up a lively marching tune, and off they went to the church, where at a stated hour the clergyman would be in waiting. The same ceremonies described above took place at the bridegroom's place of abode, and the two parties were supposed to arrive at the church about the same time, but it was always arranged that the bridegroom's party should be the first to arrive.

The ceremony of marriage having been gone

through, the procession was re-formed, the bridegroom now leading the bride, the best man leading the best maid, and taking their places in the procession, followed first by the bride's party, the bridegroom's taking the rear. Two pipers now in front, and the order to march being given, they struck up the wedding march, and off the long procession started for the bride's abode, but no sooner had the procession started, than the firing of guns and pistols commenced from vantage points along the route, frequently replied to by shots from the processionists who carried fire-arms. At length the bride's abode was reached, where a plentiful feast was prepared in the barn. The feast ended, the guests went outside so that the barn could be made ready for the dance. Those in the secret, or who had experience, kept near the bride. Presently a commotion was to be seen in the group. The bride's best maid was observed to place the bride's cake, cut into small bits and kept together in a napkin on the bride's head, from which it scattered all round her. Then the scramble began to get possession of a piece, for he or she who picked up the first bit, was certain to be the first married. The barn being now ready, dancing commenced to the music of the violin, occasionally varied by the pipes, the bride and bridegroom leading the first dance, with the bride's first maid and bridegroom's best man for *vis-a-vis*. Dancing was

kept up till ten at night, when the bride and her first maid were seen dancing with the bridegroom's best men. At the conclusion of this dance, the bride was seen to be taken away by her maids and the bridegroom's men, to be put to bed. The maids undressed her, the bride took off her stockings, throwing one of them over her right shoulder, the other over her left. Whoever caught it was certain of being married the first. The same ceremony was performed on the bridegroom's being put to bed. This done, the door was locked, and a guard of two men, one from each party, was placed at the bedroom door, to prevent any intrusion or abduction. The dance still went merrily on, young and old tripping on the light fantastic toe till near midnight, when the ruler of the feast, always appointed to keep order, issued his command for the dancing to cease for the night, to be resumed next day.

The houses of the neighbours round were open all night for the accommodation of the wedding guests who had come from a long distance. Next morning all the guests reassembled, and partook of a good breakfast. The weather being fine, athletic sports were indulged in, and dance competitions, varied with an adjournment to the barn, where all could partake in the dance, which was carried on till dusk, when dinner was announced. After dinner was over, the health of the bride and bridegroom was given and heartily drunk. Then the ruler of the feast was seen to

go round to receive money contributions from the male guests, to start the bride in life. Each one was expected to place a five shilling piece in the plate,—he who did not was esteemed a miser; any gentleman present gave ten shillings. The amount contributed, which frequently came to twenty pounds, was there and then handed to the bride, and so ended the feast for the night. Next day being Sunday, all the guests again assembled, partook of breakfast, and marched in procession to church, and sat together, a portion of it being bespoken beforehand, and readily given up for the day. At the conclusion of the service a collection was made for the necessities of the poor; the bride and bridegroom gave half-a-crown each, the men one shilling, the lasses sixpence, but it was the rule that the men should give one shilling, and pay their partner's sixpence. Service over, the procession formed again, and marched back to a good dinner; after partaking of which, all went to their homes or their lodgings. Monday forenoon, those who were in lodgings again breakfasted with the bride and bridegroom, and took their farewell of them, the bride and bridegroom accompanying them a short distance on their journey, and at parting, danced a round dance to the tune of the "White Cockade."

All these ceremonies were very innocent; those who had taken a part in them regarded them with feelings of respect, which indicated

not the slightest approach to rudeness, but rather a delicacy of feeling seldom met with, and no one but regrets their disuse, which followed in the train of increasing poverty consequent upon the dire evictions which have been referred to.

THE END.