

THE HIGHLAND CEILIDH.

BY ALASTAIR OG.

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[CONTINUED.]

"WELL done, *Alastair Sealgair*, a capital story, and true, too. I often heard it before," said a young woman—a relative of *Alastair Eachainn Duibh*—who was on a visit in the bard's house, "I don't care if I tell you a story I heard on a recent visit to Skye, about

GILLESPIE, THE GAUGER, AND EACHAINN CEANN-DEARG.

About one hundred and fifty years ago, there lived in Dumfries a worthy man of the name of Gillespie, who followed the honest, though highly unpopular, occupation of Excise officer or Gauger. At the time my story begins, he had just been appointed to a new district in the Highlands, and it is while on his journey there that I first make his acquaintance. Behold him then, a tall, thin, ungainly figure, with a consequential, self-important air, dressed in a coat of bottle green cloth with large silver-gilt buttons, a striped yellow waistcoat, corduroy breeches, and top boots. A tall peaked hat, with narrow brim, a large drab overcoat, and a sword-stick, completed his costume. He was mounted on a small shaggy pony, or *gearran*, with neither shoes, bit, nor saddle; his head was secured by the *taod*, or Highland bridle, made of horse hair, and in lieu of a saddle was a housing of straw mat, on which was placed a wooden pack-saddle, called a *strathair*, having two projections like horns on which was hung the luggage of the rider. This *strathair* was kept in position by girths of straw rope, and was prevented from going too far forward by an antique kind of crupper, consisting of a stick passing under the animal's tail, and braced at each end to the *strathair*. Having jogged along for some considerable time through a lonely moor, without meeting any sign of human habitations, it occurred to Mr Gillespie that he had lost his way. While staring about for something to guide him, he was nearly dismounted by the sudden starting of the pony, and on pulling up, he discovered that he had almost ridden over a young red-headed Highlander, who was lying among the heather, indolently supporting his head on one hand, while with the other he leisurely picked the blaeberrries that grew so plentifully around him. On seeing what he considered a *Duine-uasal*, the lad started to his feet, and grasping a forelock of his curly hair, made a profound bow.

The equestrian stared a moment at the bare-legged, bare-footed, bare-headed figure who had so suddenly appeared, and after stiffly returning his curtsy, enquired how far it was to Dunvegan? The other, shaking his head, replied, "*Chan 'eil Beurla agam*" (I have no English).

Now this was certainly very awkward, as the stranger did not know Gaelic, but it is surprising what people will do in desperate circumstances, so with the aid of nods and signs, and a little English that Eachainn had managed to pick up while at school, they made shift to understand one another.

"Is it to Dunvegan, then, you'll want to be going, sir?" enquired Eachainn.

"Yes, and I am afraid I shall not be able to find my way there without your assistance," responded Gillespie.

"And may be you'll be stopping there for some time?" proposed the lad, scratching one bare knee with his sharp, uncut nails, as he spoke.

"What does it matter to you, my lad, whether my stay there will be long or short? All I want just now is to get there."

"Is it far you'll be coming the day, sir?" enquired the other, with an air of respectful deference, strangely inconsistent with the apparent bluntness of the question.

"What business is that of yours? Is it necessary for your showing me the road that I should tell you all my history?"

"May be you'll be coming from the change-house of Loch-Easkin?" pursued Eachainn, without appearing to notice the rebuke of the stranger's reply.

"May be I did," rejoined the gauger dryly, giving a hard blow to the poor *gearran*.

"*Beannachd-leibh*" (Good-bye to you), said the young man, pulling his forelock and bowing as before.

"Why are you in such a hurry to be off all at once, before you have shown me the way?"

"I'm no in a hurry, sir; I just be doing my work, minding my mother's cow and calf," answered the lad, lying down again, and commencing to pick more blaeberrics. "But," he added, "it was no to offend you I was meaning."

"Offend me, man! for what? I am sure I have taken no offence."

"Haven't you, sir," exclaimed the other, jumping up; "I thoct you had, for you didn't seem pleased when I was asking what could I be doing for you."

"My good lad," answered Gillespie, "I see customs differ, and what may be considered ill manners on the streets of Dumfries is perhaps a different thing on a Highland moor, and I shall be very glad of your company and assistance."

"Then you must tell me where is it you'll be wanting to go to."

"Man alive! Have I not told you already I want to reach Dunvegan?"

"But I'm no sure if you're fit to do it before night, if you don't tell me where you came from the day."

"There is some reason in that," said the gauger; "and yet," he muttered, "it is a sly way of demonstrating the necessity of his endless questions."

After going some distance in silence, Eachainn, thinking himself bound to say something, began with, "You'll be a stranger to this country, sir?"

"You may say that, man; but what sort of a place is this Dunvegan?"

"It's a bonny place eneuch, and no want of what's right, and the Uisge-beatha is plenty, and she's rail goot; but I doubt it'll no be so goot and so plenty now, for they say that a *sgimilear* of a gauger is coming to live among us; I hope he may break his neck on the way."

Here Mr Gillespie suddenly saw something amiss with the bridle, which necessitated his bending down for a moment or two, and no doubt this accounted for his face being slightly flushed when he raised his head, and giving the unconscious Eachainn an indignant look, said, "Hem-a-hem ! what right has a mere lad like you to speak so disrespectfully of one you never saw, and who never harmed you."

"May his gallows be high and his halter tight !" was the laconic but emphatic reply.

"You young heathen, how dare you say so of a stranger, and without any reason either ?"

"Reason in plenty. Is he not coming to stop us from making our whusky ? and there is my uncle Donald has a still in *Craig-bheatha*, and my mother helps him to make the malt, and gets a piggie (jar) for herself at the New Year ; and there's *Somhairle Dubh*, at the change house, has a still in his barn-yard near the——"

"Hush friend !" interrupted Gillespie, clapping his hand on the Highlander's mouth, "Dinna betray secrets so." He then added with great dignity, "Young man, you have abused me, and called me vile names to my face, but for that I forgive you, as it was done in ignorance, but you should be more respectful in referring to His Majesty's revenue service, for I am that very excise officer, or gauger, as you call me, who am appointed by my king and country to watch over the interests of the revenue in this most outlandish corner of his dominions. Heaven help me withal ! Now, friend, understand me, I will do my duty without fear, favour, or affection ; yes," he continued, rising into energy as he spoke, and, to Eachainn's consternation, drawing his sword and flourishing it over his head, "yes, I will do so even unto death ; but," he added after a pause, "I am no hunter after unguarded information, and God forbid the poor should want their New Year whisky because I am in the parish. But be more discreet in future, for assuredly I must do my duty, and grasp, seize, capture, and retain unlawful liquor and implements of its manufacture, whenever I find them, for I am sworn to do this ; but," he concluded, with a bow to his pack-saddle, "I will always strive to do my duty like a gentleman."

Eachainn's emotions during this oration were of a mingled character. At first pure shame was uppermost, for having, as he unwittingly discovered he had done, insulted a *Duine-uasal*. Accordingly an honest blush spread over his sun-freckled face, and he hung down his head. Then came concern for having, as he apprehended, betrayed the private affairs of his uncle, and *Somhairle Dubh*, to the hands of the spoiler. When the gauger flourished his sword, Eachainn thought it was all over with him ; but when he heard the conclusion of the speech, which he tried hard to comprehend, it was with a feeling of great respect that he replied, repeating his bow, "I thocht you was a *Duine-uasal* from the first, sir ; and I beg your pardon a thousand times for foolish words spoke without thinkin', and I could cut my tongue off for having spoke."

"Friend, that would not be right ; no man has a right to maim himself," said the gauger, as he pulled out of an enormous pocket of his greatcoat a box that looked like a large flute case, which he opened, and

to the admiration of Eachainn, took out of it, first the stock, and then the tube, of a short, single-barrelled fowling-piece, which, after duly joining together, he went through the process of priming and loading. These preparations were apparently caused by a curlew alighting at a little distance, but which, as if aware that evil was not far away, resumed its flight, and soon disappeared.

"She's a very pretty gun indeed, sir," began Eachainn, anxious to renew the conversation on a more agreeable topic than the last. "By your leave, may I ask where you got her."

"Got *her*," said the other, "why, I made *it* man. In my country we think nothing of making a gun before breakfast." As this was said with the utmost gravity, Eachainn was considerably staggered by it, for the Highlander, naturally credulous, intending none, he suspected no deception, but if a hoax was being played upon him, and he found it out, he was sure to repay it with interest, and the biter would be keenly bit.

"One before breakfast, sir! a gun like *her* made before breakfast!" he repeated, looking anxiously into the other's face, "surely the thing is just impossible?"

"No, friend," replied the other, internally chuckling at finding the youth so ductile, "I tell you, I frequently make one of a morning."

"Then," said the guide, "I suppose, sir, you'll be come to the Highlands to make a big pusness with them!"

"May be, may be, friend. I daresay there are not many such in this country; but what would still more surprise you, is to hear by whom I was taught the art of making them."

"Who she'll be, sir?"

"Why, Luno, the son of Leven, who made Fingal's famous sword, which went by his name, and every stroke of which was mortal."

"Och! yes, sir," exclaimed Eachainn, his eyes sparkling, "ye mean *Mac-an-Luinn*," and in his excitement he forgot the little English he had, and continued in his own expressive vernacular, "*that* was the sword of swords, and they say that the sound of his airvils is still heard in the silence of midnight by the wanderer of Lochlin; and his well-known giant form is at times seen crossing the heath, clad in its dark mantle of hide, with apron of the same, and the face of the apparition as dark as the mantle, and frowning fiercely, while with staff in hand, he bounds along on one leg, with the fleetness of a roe, his black mantle flap, flapping for an instant, and then vanishing, as, with a few bounds, black Luno enters his unapproachable cave."

"But are there any hereabouts who know how to use such a thing as this?" asked the gauger, putting the piece to his eye.

"Och! aye sir; there's Duncan Sealgair can hit a fox, an otter, or a sealg, at a hundred yards, easy."

"I am not speaking," said the gauger, with an air of sovereign contempt, "of otters, and foxes, and such low vermin; I ask you, man, as to shooting of game!"

"Aye, sir, a goot lot of that too. There's old Kenneth Matheson, she'll be very goot at killing a buck."

"Pshaw ! man, cannot you get your ideas above course four-footed beasts, great sprawling objects that there is no merit in killing."

Eachainn scratched his head at a loss what to answer next ; but at length, with the air of a man who thinks he has made a discovery, exclaimed, " You'll be meaning the wild goose, sir ! "

" You're a wild goose yourself ; I mean no such thing ; I am asking ye, man, about grouse, red grouse."

The guide was as puzzled as if he had heard Hebrew ; but just then, as if to relieve his embarrassment, there arose a " Ca, ca ! " kind of sound among the heather. " She'll shust be the muir-hens, sir, perhaps you'll like to have a shoot at them."

" Moor-hens ! what's that, lad ? " but further explanation was unnecessary, for the eye of the traveller caught the very red grouse he had appeared so anxious to find. The sight seemed to have a very agitating effect upon him, for he instantly stopped, dismounted, and gave his nag to the keeping of his companion ; he then crept forward a few paces, his heart beating with the greatness of the occasion. At length, when he had got closer to the birds than most sportsmen would deem quite necessary, he knelt on one knee, and took a most deliberate, riflemanlike aim. On placing his finger on the trigger, his face was turned a little to one side—perhaps to avoid the expected smoke. He at length pulled the trigger, but, instead of a report, there was merely a snap in the pan. At this, the eldest, apparently, of the birds gave a " Ca, ca ! " and peered about to see what was the matter ; and, to avoid being seen, the sportsman sunk down among the heather. Tying the *gearran* to a juniper root, the guide now cautiously crept up, and enquired in a whisper, " Has she refused, sir ? "

" Hush ! " said the other, shaking his hand for silence, " has *who* refused ? "

" I mean, sir," again whispered the guide, " has the musket refused ? "

" Which, I suppose," responded the other, " is as much as to say, has it missed fire ? Yes, certainly it has ; did you not hear the snap in the pan ? "

" Yes, sir, but there was no fire ; may be t'was the fault of the flint."

" Pish, no ; there is not a better flint on this side of the Grampians."

" But the pooder, sir ? "

" No better powder in the world, unless it has been damped by your horrid Highland mist."

" There's no a mist at all the day, sir," answered Eachainn, looking quietly down at the gun lock, and discovering, for the first time, that there was no flint at all. He smiled aside, and then turning to the would-be sportsman, who was kneeling for another attempt, pointed out the circumstance to him. The latter, on seeing it, stared, and then added, apparently recollecting himself, " Dash it, neither there is ! I recollect now, here it is, I put it in my waistcoat pocket this morning, while cleaning my gun, and forgot to fix it again." So saying, he screwed it tight into its proper place, and kneeling as before, gave a second snap in the pan.

"The primin' fell out when she first refused, sir, and you forgot to put in another."

"And ye gouck, could'n't you tell me that before?" said the wrathful gauger, as he recovered his arms for another attempt. This time, however, he was successful, for his volley levelled the cock leader and two of his family, while the remainder took flight.

"I dare say, friend bare-legs, you do not often see such shots as that in these quarters?"

"Deed, sir, I'll no say I do," returned the other with a look and manner somewhat equivocal.

"In sooth, I suppose no one hereabouts knows anything of grouse shooting; but for myself, as I have already said, give me but the birds within tolerable reach, and I am sure to hit them."

"Na doot, sir, especially if ye always make it a fashion to shoot them sittin'."

"And have ye any hereabouts that can shoot them any other gait, callant?"

"May be, sir, the young laird, and the minister's son, and the major, and——"

"Weel, sir, and pray how does the young laird find out the game? Has he any pointers?"

"Pinters, sir, what's that?" enquired his companion, affecting ignorance.

"You fool, and do you not know what a pointer is! Precious country I am come to, and perhaps to lay my bones in—not to know what a pointer is!"

"And d'ye ken, sir, what a *bochan* is?"

"Not I, friend bare-legs, nor do I care."

"My name, sir, is Eachainn, and you see there'll be some things that folks who are very clever don't know. A *bochan*, sir, is what you call in *Beurla* a hobgoblin."

"I see your drift, man, I see your drift, and care not what a *bochan* or a fiddlestick means; but a pointer is a dog of right Spanish breed, which has such instinct that he smells out the birds without seeing them, so that when he has got one in a covey within reach of his nose, he holds up his leg, and stands stock still, until his master comes up and bleezes away at them."

"Sitting, sir?" asked Eachainn, with a roguish look.

"Aye, man, sitting or standing, 'tis all the same."

"You'll may be be wanting such dogs in the low country, but they'll no be wanted in the Highlands. Here, sir," continued he, remembering the hoax about Luno and gunmaking, "Here, sir, the people can smell the game as good as your dogs."

"What's that ye say, man? D'ye think of clishmaclavering me with any of your big Hielan' lees?"

"Would you like me to smell out some muir-hens for you, sir?"

"You smell out game! smell out your grandmother! D'ye think to deceive me with such havers?"

"Do you s'pose you could hit the poor craters, sittin' to, if I had'n't smelt them out for you, sir?"

"Faith, friend, you're no blate—smell out indeed! and pray, callant, can you smell out any more of them?"

"I begin to think it's no a very thankful job."

"And do you often amuse yourself with nosing it in this way over these vile moors, through which I am so heartily tired of trudging?"

"Whenever the laird, sir, goes out after the muir-hens, I go with him to smell them out."

"Weel man, convince me of the bare fact—smell out another covey, and then I'll no gainsay your gift."

The guide, shrugging up his shoulders and scratching his head, affecting to make some difficulty, said the wind had gone down, and that the scent was dull. The sly rascal, however, having an exceedingly acute ear, continued walking over bog and heather with long strides, until at length, at a considerable distance, and a little to one side of the track, he thought he heard the "ca-ca" of a bird. He then turned to his companion and said, "If I'll be smelling out a *prasgan* for ye sir, will you let me have a shoot at them?"

"Give you a shot! weel but that passes a'. I dinna ken what you might make with a claymore, as ye ca' a braidsword; but a gun is another sort of thing altogether. What! Donald, could you hit a peatstack, man?"

"My name's Eachainn, sir; and as to shooting a peatstack, I don't know, but if ye like I'll try."

"Weel Donald, or Eachainn, or whatever your name is, I don't care if I indulge you, so there's the gun—but mind, when you aim, you turn the barrel away, and the stock to yourself. Now you may bleeze awa' at any thing but me and the pony. The guide, having by this time a shrewd guess where the birds were to be found, went on several paces cautiously, and pretending to scent something. At length he made a stand, cocking up one leg, while he beckoned to the stranger, who was some little distance in the rear, to dismount and come up.

The latter accordingly did so, and there were the birds sure enough. The stranger, whose less practised eye and ear were not aware of the trick, now not doubting the truth of the Highlander's gift, uttered his admiration in whispers, "Weel, but yon's quite extraordinar'; all real birds too, and no glamour; I doot its nae canny."

The Gael, not being such a desperate pot hunter as his comrade, gave a "Hurrah!" which raised the birds at once, then taking a good aim, brought down two, and wounded one or two more, which flew quacking away.

The Highlander, anxious to secure the wounded birds, went bounding in the direction in which they had flown. As he hastily stepped forward he did not perceive that a viper was directly in his path, and before he was aware of its being near him, the reptile had bitten his bare foot. Striking it off with the point of the barrel, he uttered not a word, but giving one glance round, as if looking for something, he took to his heels with a swiftness not unworthy of Luno himself.

(To be Continued.)

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THE gauger, seeing his fowling-piece in Eachainn's possession, who was running as if a lion were at his heels, naturally concluded that he had run off with it.

"Stop, thief!" shouted he, at the top of his voice, "stop, ye confounded Hielan' cateran! how fast the vagabond runs; gude's me, he is already out of sight. Haud there, ye scamp, ye traitorous reever ye!"

Out of breath with his own indignant exertions, Gillespie turned to mount his *gearran*. That sagacious beast, however, considered the whole thing as an arrangement for his own especial benefit, and whenever his would-be rider approached to mount, would edge off, and trot to a little distance, and then quietly graze, until poor Gillespie would again get close to him, when the same little performance would be repeated. All this was naturally very provoking, and added intense bitterness to the gauger's other reflections.

He now eagerly followed Eachainn on foot, but in such a chase he was no match for the fleet-footed Highlander.

The day was hot, the moor boggy, and his great-coat, which he still clung to, as if it were a part of his nature, was very heavy. "The scoundrel!" he muttered, as he plodded wearily along, "the bare-legged rascal, to rob me of my gun in open day on the King's highway; but I'll have him by the heels for it, as sure as there's letters of horning and caption to be had in Scotland; aye, he shall hang as high as Haman, if there's a tree in all the island—but I doot there's nane. It's ower vile for even a tree to make a gallows of to grow in it. Then I doot after a' if the law can make much of the case, seeing that this canna be said to be the highway. The rascal has not absolutely put me in bodily fear either, except fear of losing my gun. No, I doot I canna hang him, and to transport him from such a slough of despond, would only be conferring an acceptable obligation on the young thief."

Thus he hurried on, lamenting his loss, until his further progress was interrupted by a stream, or burn, that ran gurgling between mossy banks fringed with junipers and dwarf rowans. There the worthy man stood panting and blowing for about a minute, when some yards below him, at a shallower part of the burn, kneeling at the water's edge, and gulping in the pure element, he beheld the runaway Highlander.

The gauger's anger was, however, considerably mollified on seeing no effort on the part of Eachainn to continue his flight, and also by seeing his gun lying safely on a dried part of the bank. "Ye villain," he exclaimed, clutching his fowling-piece, "and have I caught you at last!"

The Highlander, without answering, took another copious draught of the limpid stream, then washed his wounded foot, on which was distinctly visible, the marks of the viper's fangs.

Gillespie, too, observed that notwithstanding his warm race, the lad looked deadly pale. The latter, now slowly rising, expressed with rueful tone and looks his hope "that he had got to the water before her."

"Before me ! faith, that ye did ; and you deserve to be hanged for it too, ye thieving loon. Why did you run awa' that gait !"

"Och, sir !" groaned the other, "can you be telling me where the baiste is ?"

"Beast ? what beast, ye idiot ? I ken only one on the moor besides yon brute that is now feeding up there. I should'nt wonder if he took it into his head to run off with the rest of my property."

"No, no, sir ; the *nathair* ! the *nathair* ! we'll shust be going back to be look for her."

"Gude's me, but I begin to think after a' that the puir chiel's demented," observed the other, with a look of pity.

At length, with an appearance of great anxiety, the lad, accompanied by the exciseman, returned to the spot from which they had started, where, writhing in the agonies of death, from the blow the former had instinctively, but almost unconsciously, given it, lay the snake or *nathair*. It was only now that the gauger began to comprehend what had happened to his guide. When Eachainn saw the snake on the spot where he had left it, now quite dead, his joy became as great as previously had been his dejection.

"Ah, sir !" he said, turning to the other, "its all right, and I'm shust quite safe."

"Pray how is that ?" returned the stranger, "I should like to know by what process of reasoning ye make that out ?"

"I'll shust be telling you, sir. You see if a body will be stung by a *nathair*, and if they'll be clever to the water, and drink of it before the *nathair* (and she'll be very clever at running herself too), the mans will be quite better, and the *nathair* will die and burst ; but if the *nathair* will be get to the water first, then the mans will die and burst."

"And do you believe all this nonsense ?"

"It's shust quite true, sir ; and I'll be always believing it ; and may be I'll be forgiven, I hope t'was not for joking you about my smelling out the birds, that this judgment was coming on me ; but as you was mocking me about making the guns, I thoct it was no harm to mock you too."

"And so that was all a sham, about your pointing at the birds, was it ?"

"Yes, sir," said Eachainn, with an abashed look.

"But ye dinna think I was such a fule as to believe you, eh ?"

"I cannot tell that, sir," replied the other, a smile stealing over his lips, though he tried to prevent it.

"Hout, man !" said the gauger, but not without a *leetle* twinge of conscience, "I saw through the trick the whole time, but I had a mind to humour you, just to see how far you would go. But, friend, was it your belief in havers about vipers bursting, and a' that sort of stuff, that sent you scouring awa' to the burn's side in sic' haste ?"

"Surely, sir; I'll be running for my life when the baiste will stung me."

"Hoot, toot, man, but you need not have taken my gun with you; *that* hadna been stung, and wouldna have bursted had the beast, as you call it, drank all the water in Coruig."

"Och! sir, I was shust forgot the gun, I'll be so frightened, but the running saved my life, for the *nathair* is shust quite dead."

"Yes, man, but it is not bursted."

"But she'll burst by and bye, and she'll be making a noise as big as your gun, so peoples say, but I'll never was hearing her myself."

"Weel, weel, friend, I'll believe a' the rest of your story when the reptile bursts, but not till then. As for the creature's death, I daur to say you gave it a good clout over the head with the gun, which you had in your hand, for it does not take much, I believe, to kill them."

"I'll not be doing that at all, that I know of," said Eachainn, "and may be if I had, it'll be the worst for me and for you as well."

"How so, man?"

"'Cause I might shust struck her on the tail instead of her head, and then she'd jump up ever so high, and then she'll be come down, more deadly than she'll be before. Ye need not be shaking your head, sir; its shust quite true; but we must be clever, for we'll be having a long way to go before we'll come to Dunvegan. I must do shust one thing first, if you please."

So saying, Eachainn pulled out his clasp knife, and proceeded with great deliberation to cut off the head of the viper, and then he divided the body into five equal parts.

"I doot," muttered the ganger, with a look of disgust, "I doot he is going to cook it! Ugh, it's quite awfu'."

The honest man's apprehensions were, however, somewhat premature, for after hewing the reptile to pieces, as described, Eachainn cut with his knife six holes in the turf, into each of which he put a bit of the snake, and filling up the hole again, stamped down these viperine graves with his heel.

"Indeed, friend, I think you have taken a good deal of unnecessary trouble in giving that reptile Christian burial."

"No, no," answered Eachainn, "I'll be thinking of the lives of other peoples, and their hells too."

"And what can your hacking away at yon reptile have to do with the health or lives of others, friend Donald?"

"I tell you again, sir, my name is Eachainn, and no Donald, and I'll no be wondering that you don't know about this, for the southeron *Duine-uasal*, she'll often not be knowing the things that the poor Highlander herself'll be knowing all about."

"And prythee what good is there in your wasting twenty minutes in cutting up and burying a snake?"

"As you'll be a stranger, sir," said Eachainn, after he had succeeded in catching the traveller's nag for him, which the other mounted, and

trotted on in the path pointed out to him, "as you'll be a stranger, sir, I must be of good manners, and shust be telling you the things you'll not know yourself. I may tell you that if you'll not be cutting a *nathair* in five pieces, besides her head, she'll be sure to come alive again, and bigger and more stronger than she'll was before, and if you'll be leaving the pieces on the ground, they'll shust be creeping together again and join. Sometimes her head will join where her tail was before, and her tail in the place her head was before, and then she'll be shust awful, worst than she'll be before twenty times. But that'll not be all we'll be burying them for. If the bits of the *nathair* will be left on the ground, in the sun and in the moonlight, they'll turn into awful bad and great big flies, dark green and yellow, with spots like the *nathair* herself, and they'll be so poison that when they touch a mans or a baiste, there will come a cancer, which no doctor can cure."

While thus speaking, Eachainn began to grow very pale, his voice trembled, and at last, sitting down on the heather, he groaned aloud.

"Why, my poor fellow, what's the matter with you?" kindly enquired the exciseman.

"I doot, sir," said Eachainn in a feeble tone, "I doot, sir, the sting of the *nathair* has been stronger on me than I'll be thinking, I'm shust crippled, sir, and my leg is stiff and sore like, and I'm sick, sick at my heart." Poor Eachainn, in finishing these words, attempted to rise, but immediately staggered, and fell down insensible.

The gauger, greatly disconcerted, threw himself from his steed with such alacrity that he almost overturned the *gearran*, as well as himself. "What!" he exclaimed. "Hoot, toot, man, never give way; 'tis but a dwam, pur fellow, pur fellow! His jaw drops just like Fraser, the supervisor, when Red Chisholm, the smuggler, stuck his dirk into his doup. If the lad should die here, and no one but me with him, why what would folk say? Gude save us! how swelled his leg is, and all black and green; 'tis fearsome; would to heaven I were weel out o' the scrape, or had never entered the vile country!" Here, however, a bright idea struck the alarmed traveller, and hastily going to the bundle suspended from the right horn of the *strathair*, he hurriedly turned over its miscellaneous contents, until he found his whisky flask, which he uncorked, and poured with a trembling hand, for fear of the remedy being too late, a good portion of the liquor down the throat of the unconscious Highlander. The stimulus was powerful. The fainting man, in spite of himself, gave a desperate gulp, which caused some of the spirit to enter his windpipe, consequently the first symptoms of returning animation on the part of Eachainn was a succession of hideous gasping. For fully two minutes he chocked and coughed, until the bewildered gauger feared he had done for him in earnest. At length, to his unspeakable relief, Eachainn opened his eyes, and getting the use of his tongue once more, he most zealously and piously recommended the Southron to the good offices of his Majesty, *Domhnall Dubh*. As he, however, spoke in his native tongue, Gillespie could not appreciate the extent of the kindness intended for him. The first use Eachainn made of his hands was, with the left he gently scratched the bitten foot, and with the right he took the flask

from the still confused gauger, and taking a good pull at the contents, again attempted to rise, but found he was unable to walk. On perceiving this, the gauger insisted on his mounting behind him. The *gearran*, however, apparently resenting that *his* consent had not been asked to the new arrangement, gave a sharp smarting neigh, and commenced to back. These hostile demonstrations on the part of the pony were not at all displeasing to Eachainn, who thought that if the *gearran* continued restive, he might have him all to himself. He accordingly kept giving sly kicks with his uninjured foot in the animal's groin. The consequence was that every moment the pony became more indignant and unmanageable; but the gauger, recollecting that he was in his Majesty's service, strove to maintain his position with the becoming dignity due to that office. He pulled hard at the *taod*, but finding that of no use, he followed the example of honest John Gilpin, and grasped the animal's mane with both hands, receiving, through every kick-up of the pony, sore thumps from the *strathair*, which caused him much uneasiness. Eachainn, holding on "like grim death," continued teasing the *gearran*, at the same time pretending to coax him by saying "Sheo! sheo!" The pony heeded neither that, nor the "Huish! huish!" of the exciseman, but kept kicking, prancing, and rearing with a zeal and energy worthy of a better cause. The commotion at length ended by the gauger tumbling over the animal's head.

Eachainn, beginning to think that he had carried the joke too far, dismounted, and seeing the discomfited Southeron lying at full length without moving, in his turn became frightened. At this trying moment he bethought him of the specific, which had proved so useful in his own case. He had no difficulty in finding the flask, and was about to administer a dose, when the gauger, who had been only a little confused at his sudden fall, got on his feet, but nothing would induce him to remount, so Eachainn rode at his ease, while the annoyed gauger stalked along with long strides, cordially abusing the country, its moors, its *gearrans*, and its whisky. The shades of evening began to lengthen, and the scene gradually changed, our travellers began to leave the heathery moor behind, and enter on arable land, with patches here and there under cultivation, chiefly oats and potatoes, while an occasional cow grazing, or horse tethered, showed them that they were approaching their journey's end.

All at once they heard the peculiar note of the corn-crake, or, as it is called in Gaelic, *trian-ri-trian*. The gauger, always anxious to show off his skill as a marksman, began to handle his fowling-piece. Eachainn looked on with evident uneasiness, and at last said "Surely, surely, sir, you'll not be going to shoot *her*?"

"And why not, my friend?"

"What, sir! shot a *trian-ri-trian*! it's shust awful to think on."

"And what is the great harm of shooting such a blethering, craiking thing as that?"

"The harm, sir! why, she'll be a sacred bird; I'd as soon think of shooting a cuckoo herself, as to be doing the *trian-ri-trian* any hurt! She'll be different to any other bird, and when she'll cry, she'll be lying on her back, with her feet lifted up to the sky, and the sky would fall down if she'll not be doing that."

"Well, I must have a shot at him, even if the firmament were to come about our ears in consequence," and so saying, our sportsman took his usual kneeling shot, and getting a good and near level, fired, when a handful of flying feathers evinced the success of the shot.

The gauger ran to the spot, and Eachainn on the pony trotted after him, but on coming up they could see no bird, or no evidence of the shot having taken effect. Eachainn looked suddenly aghast.

"What can the gommeril be staring at now?" exclaimed the disappointed gauger.

"Och! sir," groaned Eachainn, in great agitation, "the *Tàsg*! the *Tàsg*!"

"The what? you dumb-founded idiot!"

"I'll tell you, sir," replied the Highlander, with great solemnity, "the *Tàsg*, she'll shust be a death bird, and the warning 'll never fail to come true—'tis awful, 'tis shust awful!"

"Weel, confound me," said Gillespie, who was now tired and heated, and panting with his exercise, "confound me if I can make out the creature. He's no wanting in gumption either, but what havers are these he has got in his noddle?" Then addressing his companion, he said, "Weel, now, I have listened to all your nonsense, and now you must tell me in plain words what you mean by all this blether and talk about your *trian-ri-trian*, and your *Tàsg*."

To this appeal Eachainn did not reply for some minutes, but dismounting, he hobbled up the best way he could to the very spot where the bird had stood when shot at, and picking up the few feathers that had been started, stood looking at them with an anxious expression, amounting almost to horror. Then turning to the gauger, he replied, in a voice broken with agitation:—"I thocht, sir, that everybody know that the *Tàsg* is a spirit bird, and she'll always be coming to the mans when they'll be going to die. She'll come different to peoples. Old Murdo Urquhart, the fisherman, saw her shust like a grey gull, and that very night he took ill, and died in two or three days. And Barabal N'ic Ivor, she'll be the bonniest lassie in the place, saw the *Tàsg* shust like a beautiful white dove, and surely poor Barabal she'll knew she'll be going to die, so she made her death shift, and indeed it was very soon she was wearing it. The *Tàsg* 'll always be coming in the gloamin', she'll fly low and slow like, and she'll no make any noise with her wings, but if you'll shoot at her, you'll shust get nothing but a small handful of feathers." Here the guide paused a moment, and looking first at the feathers he held in his hand, and then in the face of the gauger, he continued, "I'll be thinking, sir, that you'll no be living very long. I am shust afraid the *Tàsg* will be coming to you like a *Trian-ri-trian*. Oh, sir! indeed I'll be very sorry for you, surely, surely."

"Look to yourself, man. You say it is my *Tàsg*, but I don't see how you make that out; why should'nt it be your *Tàsg* as well as mine?"

"Mine, sir!" exclaimed Eachainn, "No, no; I did not shoot her. If you'll shoot her, she'll be your own *Tàsg* surely, and nobody's else, and she'll be shust like a *Duine-uasal's* *Tàsg*, a long-legged bird, and she'll

shust come like the Southeron, at certain times, and then she'll shust speak a *craik*, *craik* kind of talk, and that'll no be Gaelic ; it'll be the Gaelic that the mavis and the blackbird will be speaking. A lad like me will no get a gran' *Tàsg* like her. Oh ! no, a crow, or a duck, or a *sgarbh*, is more like what I'll be getting."

The gauger, seeing the anxiety of Eachainn to decline the honour of the *Tàsg*, was commencing to rally him about it, but in the earnestness of their conversation, they had not observed the change in the appearance of the weather which had been gradually taking place ; their attention was now, however, called to it by feeling some heavy drops of rain, and they soon saw that a severe storm was looming. They ceased talking, and used their breath and energies to better purpose by hurrying forward as fast as they could. In spite of their utmost exertions, the storm soon overtook them, and in half an hour they were both drenched to the skin. Eachainn took it very philosophically, for to the well-developed, hardy "son of the mist," an occasional shower-bath was no hardship. He was too well acquainted with nature in all her changing moods to care much when she frowned. But the poor, town-bred gauger was in a pitiable plight, as he plodded along in a most unenviable state of body and mind, vowing he should catch his death of cold. In about an hour and a half, they arrived, to the intense relief of Gillespie, at the hamlet of Dunvegan, and gladly availed themselves of the hospitality of *Somh-airle Dubh*, at the hostelry, or change house of the village.

(To be Continued.)

CELTIC LITERATURE—LOGAN'S SCOTTISH GAEL *for Half Price*.—A few copies of this learned and well-known work, published a few months ago, by Hugh Mackenzie, Inverness, in two vols., 8vo, cloth, at 28s, can now be supplied new from the *Celtic Magazine* Office at 14s, or *half price* ; by post, 15s. No library is complete without this work, which we cannot describe better than in Logan's own words, from the title page :—"The Scottish Gael ; or Celtic manners, as preserved among the Highlanders ; being an historical and descriptive account of the inhabitants, antiquities, and national peculiarities of Scotland, more particularly of the northern, or Gaelic, parts of the country, where the singular habits of the aboriginal Celts are most tenaciously retained. By James Logan, F.S.A.S." Edited with Memoir and Notes, by the Rev. Alex. Stewart of Ballachullish—the "Nether-Lochaber" correspondent of the *Inverness Courier*. This is a rare opportunity for Celtic students and others who take an interest in Highland customs and peculiarities. Application should be made at once to secure copies.

BOOKS RECEIVED.—Part III. of Mr Sinclair's "Oranaiche," or Gaelic Songster, and "Eolas agus Seoladh air son Luchd Euslainte," by Dr Black, Poolewe.

THE HIGHLAND CEILIDH.

BY ALASTAIR OG.

—o—
[CONTINUED.]

THE worthy hostess of the Dunvegan Hotel met the Gauger at the door, and dropping a courtsey, gave him a hearty welcome, while *Somhairle Dubh* told *Eachainn* to lead the pony to the stable ; but seeing the poor lad hardly able to stand, and having been told the reason, he immediately helped him into the kitchen, and seating him by the fire, called for the whisky bottle—the usual panacea in those days for all evils in the Highlands—and giving *Eachainn* a good dram, he applied the same remedy to the wounded limb, rubbing it in before the fire, while a messenger was despatched for his mother, who was noted for her skill in the use of herbs.

In the meantime Mr Gillespie had been shown to his bedroom to change his wet clothes, while his dinner was preparing. Before he began his meal, the landlord brought out his own peculiar bottle—a mixture of whisky, camomile flowers, and coriander seeds—and offered his guest a glass as an appetiser, which was gladly accepted, for he was feeling far from well. He ate but little of the good plain dinner provided for him, and soon after went to his bed. Before doing so, however, he asked for *Eachainn*, wishing to give him a trifle for his guidance, but on being told that the lad had gone home with his mother, he gave *Somhairle Dubh* a shilling to give him.

Although Gillespie was very tired, he could not sleep. He tossed and turned, and only as the day was breaking did he fall asleep, but it did not refresh him, for the incidents of his journey haunted him in his sleep. He was again riding the pony, going at a furious rate, while *Eachainn* sat at his back holding him in a grasp of iron. There arose before him the figure of the snake of gigantic proportions, which, writhing round his neck, was nearly strangling him, but instead of hissing it uttered the “*craik, craik,*” of the *Trian-ri-trian*. With an effort he awoke, and found himself stiff and feverish, and his throat very sore. In a word, the honest man was in for a bad attack of quinsey or inflammation of the throat. After a few days had elapsed, he expressed his surprise that *Eachainn* had not called to enquire for him ; but he was told the lad had gone to a village ten miles off to lay out his shilling. *Somhairle Dubh* and his goodwife became very concerned about their guest, and nothing could exceed their kindness and attention to him. They sent for the doctor, but he was away some distance and could not come at once. On the fourth day of Gillespie's illness, *Somhairle Dubh* seating himself by the sick man, with great solemnity of manner said, “Sir, we must all die. Now, sir, I am come to do to you as I would like to be done by ; for sore, sore would it be to me to think my body should not be put in the grave of my father in Kilmuir. So, sir, by your leave, where would you choose to be buried ?”

“Buried !” exclaimed the Gauger, aghast, sitting up in his bed, and staring at his host. “Buried ! surely I am not so bad as that ?”

Without noticing his emotion, the worthy man continued, “Folk

have different ways in different countries ; but you may depend upon it, sir, it's no my father's son that would suffer the corpse of a *Duine-uasal* not to be treated in every way most honourably. You shall be properly washed and stretched ; that you may be sure of, and you shall not want for the dead shirt, for by my faith, and I'll do as I promised, sir, you shall have my own dead shirt that my wife made with her own hands of real good linen, and beautifully sewed too. And we'll keep you, sir, for the seven days and seven nights, and I'll get *Ian Saor* to make as good a chest for you as ever he made, with brass-headed nails all round it, and with shining handles like silver, and you shall lie in your chest like a *Duine-uasal* should, with two large candles at your head, and two at your feet, and a plateful of salt on your breast."

Here poor Gillespie could contain himself no longer, but groaned aloud at this dismal recital of what was to be done to his corpse.

"What, sir? you're may be thinking the *Alaire*, or death feast, will not be good enough ; but ye need not trouble yourself for that, there shall be plenty whisky and plenty meat, and my wife shall make good bannocks."

"Yes, indeed I will," said the good woman, wiping her eyes with her apron as she sobbed out, "Ochan, ochan ! little does his mother know how her son is the night."

"But," continued her husband, "think what a comfort it'll be to her to hear of his being buried so decent like ; for, sir, you shall be put in my own grandfather's grave, and that's what I'd not do to many, but I'll do it to you, for though you are a gauger you're a stranger far from your own people, and I'd like to show kindness to you."

Indeed the worthy man never doubted but he had afforded Gillespie the greatest comfort in thus having settled all the particulars of his funeral ; for an intense anxiety about the proper disposal of his remains, and the complete fulfilling of all the customary ceremonies of death, is a characteristic trait of the Highlander.

It was the seventh day of Mr Gillespie's illness when Eachainn returned, and he immediately went to see the sick man, who by this time could scarcely speak. He lay pale and languid, with his eyes closed, and apparently the dews of death on his brow. The lad was greatly shocked. He expected to find him ill, but not so bad as this—not for death. "Ochan, ochan !" he exclaimed, and covering his face with his hands, he burst into tears. The Gauger on opening his eyes and seeing his visitor, smiled faintly and said, "It's all over with me, Eachainn."

"Oh no, no, sir ; don't say that, I hope you'll be better soon. And don't you be thinking of the *Tàsg*, sir, for she'll not be for you at all, sir, but for the minister's goodmother, who died last night with the fever, and his children have got it too, for it's very smitting ; but I'll no be caring. I'll just be going up to the manse, and tell the doctor to come to you."

"Stop," said the Gauger with difficulty, and then pointing to his fowling-piece, which stood in a corner, he continued with a faltering voice, "Keep it for my sake, for I shall never use it again."

"Oh no, sir," replied Eachainn in a broken voice, "I'll be hoping to see you use her many's the time yet. We'll be shooting the moor-hens together some day, but I must be going for the doctor quick." So saying, the lad hurried out of the room, for fear he should again break down.

In about three hours the tramping of a horse announced the arrival of the doctor, who had galloped in from the manse, while Eachainn ran and panted all the way at his horse's side. And while the doctor was entering the inn, Eachainn ran to his mother's, and told her to get her herbs ready, for perhaps she would be able to do more good than the doctor, after all their hastening back. He was in the sick-room as soon as the doctor, who, having examined his patient in silence for a few minutes, began the following harangue with a pompous voice and manner:—"You see, sir, you are labouring under what is commonly called a quincy, but which, professionally, we denominate *Cynanche*, to which may be added in your case the adjective noun *maligna*. I regret to say that your case is exceedingly desperate. Had I been able to have seen you earlier I should have followed Celsus' excellent advice in these cases, but I am sorry to say that the Celsian treatment is now entirely out of the question. There can now be no doubt that the opening into the trachea is very nearly closed up by the phlegmon or inflammation, when death by asphyxia must ensue. There is here, then, but one course. Here,"—taking a small case of instruments out of his pocket—"here, you see, is a fine sharp-pointed knife or scalpel, with which an incision being made into your trachea, I shall insert a small tube so as to keep up the communication between the atmosphere and the lungs, to obviate what would otherwise be the fatal closing of the glottis." With that the doctor arranged his instruments at the bedside, and was preparing to operate at once, when a dim sense of his intentions began to break in upon the minds of the spectators.

"And where do you mean to cut, sir?" asked *Somhairle Dubh*, first breaking silence.

"Here, exactly here," replied the doctor, placing his finger on Mr Gillespie's throat a little below the chin.

"And have you no other cure but that, Doctor?"

"None whatever," answered he, shaking his head, and taking up the scalpel, at the sight of which the sick man shrunk to the other side of bed with a look of pitiable despair.

"No other cure than to cut the *Duine-uasal's* throat," screamed Eachainn, coming forward, with a face blanched with horror; "No, no, sir," he continued, "you'll shust have to cut my throat first. If you'll no be doing better than that, I could be doing as good myself with the *corran* yonder, and not to trouble you to be coming with them awful knives, shust enough to frighten a body."

On hearing this, the poor Gauger smiled gratefully on Eachainn, and pressed his hand between both his own.

"Sir!" exclaimed the doctor, hoarse with passion, "what is the meaning of this? am I to perform the operation or not?"

"No, sir," replied the sick man in a scarcely articulate voice. "I throw myself upon the mercy of God. I can but die."

"Then die, sir," said the enraged doctor, "and your blood be upon your own head;" and hastily packing up his instruments, he turned to leave the room just as Eachainn's mother (a descendant of *Fearchair Lighiche*) entered. She gave him a respectful greeting, which, however, was very ungraciously received, and soon the sounds of his horse's hoofs was

heard as he galloped away, Eachainn muttering something about the *Diabhul* going along with him.

Eachainn's mother now took up the case, and having tenderly examined the throat, called for a pot and boiling water, into which she cast some herbs and boiled them over the fire. The decoction she ordered to be applied on flannels, as hot as he could bear it, to the sick man's throat, while he inhaled the hot steam of the same from the spout of a teapot. The good woman then called for a skellet, into which she measured two or three cups of water; she then threw into the water some dried herbs and fresh roots. When the mixture was hot it threw up a green scum, which she skimmed off. She then poured some of the potion into a tumbler, and approaching the patient, said in Gaelic, "Try, my dear, and swallow this; I know it is very painful for you to do it, but life is precious, and for your mother's sake, if you have one, make the attempt."

On her wishes being explained to Gillespie, he grasped the tumbler, and with a great effort slowly but painfully drained it. In about half-an-hour after he had taken it, his face became of a ghastly green shade; he stretched himself out at his full length; his pulse seemed to fail; he heaved deep sighs; and at length began to retch violently. It now appeared a struggle between life and death, but at length the imposthume burst, and the poor man swooned away. The spectators now thought all was over with the gauger, but Eachainn's mother knew better. She held his head with one hand, while with the other she chafed his temples, calling to her son to throw some water in the patient's face, and telling the landlord to bring some red wine, if he had any in the house. Her orders being promptly carried out, the sick man soon opened his eyes, and in a little while was able to speak, when he expressed his gratitude to the worthy woman for the great relief she had afforded him.

From this time Gillespie mended fast, but necessarily was obliged to keep his bed for several days, and finding the time hang heavy, he would keep Eachainn by him for hours together, as he had taken a great liking to the lad, besides being under such an obligation to his mother, of whose skill and the wonderful cures she had effected her son was never tired of talking about.

"But how did your mother gain all the knowledge?" said the Gauger.

"Well, sir, you must know my mother is descended from the famous man *Fearchair Lighiche*."

"And who may he be?" enquired Gillespie.

"Ah, sir, it was him that was the clever man. He could cure every disease in the shutting of a *Taibhshear's* eye, and knew every herb and plant, every tree and root, every bird and beast. And there's something more wonderful yet," continued Eachainn in an awe-struck tone.

"And what is that?" asked Gillespie.

"Well, sir, maybe you'll no be believing it, but it's true all the same, that *Fearchair Lighiche* had the gift to know what the birds would be saying to each other."

The Gauger threw a quick glance at his companion, thinking he was trying to gull him, but seeing that Eachainn spoke in all sincerity, and even with a certain amount of awe in his manner, Gillespie did not interrupt him, merely remarking, "That was a gift indeed, if he made good use of it."

"That he did, sir, for he was a real good man, and a blessing was on all he did."

"Well," said the Gauger, with an air of incredulity, "tell me now of some instance where this gift was shown by your wonderful relative, Farquhar Lick, or whatever his name was?"

"By your leave, sir, his name is not Lick, but *Lighiche*, and that means 'Healer.' The people will be calling him that because of the cures he did. But his own right name was Beaton, and I could be telling you lots of stories about him. One time, on a beautiful summer morning, he was walking by the seaside, and he met old Colin Macrae and his two sons going to their boat to go to Skerry-Rona to cut sea ware, when they spoke to the seer. He looked to the north and to the south, with a face full of trouble, and just then a raven flew over their heads, and gave a hollow croaking kind of sound."

"So do all ravens, man," interrupted the Gauger.

Without noticing the interruption, Eachainn continued, "And then, sir, when *Fearchair Lighiche* heard the raven, he turned to the old man and commanded him and his sons not to enter the boat or put to sea that day, for, said he, 'I have it from them that never deceive that evil will come to a boat from Harlosh coast this day.'"

"And did they take notice of the warning?"

"The old man, sir, was minded to stay, but the young lads laughed, and said they did not care for all the ravens between the point of Uishinish and the Coolin Hills, so they set off. But the wise man stood looking after them with a sad face, and then the raven flew past again; and when *Fearchair* heard the croak of the bird, he clasped his hands, and looking up he cried out, 'Lost! lost! lost!'"

"And what became of the men?" enquired Gillespie, interested, in spite of his unbelief.

"I'll tell you, sir, about the middle of the day there was a thick fog, which covered the sea and the land, and when the night came on there was a dreadful storm, so that no boat could live. The people will be blaming old Meg Mackintosh, the witch of Glen Dubh, for it, for she met the men that very morning, just after they'll be finding a dead door-mouse, and that is just always a sign of death. Well, when the night was come, the house of John Mac John Mac Kenneth was all cheerless and dark, for they that went out in the morning had never come back; and the poor wife sat all her lone, on a three-legged stool by the side of the fire, crying bitterly for her man and her sons, whose three stools stood empty opposite her on the other side. Her dog lay at her feet, and the poor brute kept licking her hand, for he knew she was in trouble; and when her sobs became more convulsively audible, he would raise a low whine in sympathy. Well, sir, it'll just be about the middle of the night, when in a distracted state the woman exclaimed, 'Oh, this fearful suspense! it is worse than the worst reality. Would to heaven I were certain whether they are dead or alive.' She had scarcely left off speaking, when she'll hear a queer-like sound, and the dog she'll hear it too, for she'll growl and go close to the wife's side, and then she'll see three shivering figures sitting before her on the stools that were previously empty, all wet, pale, and with the death-look on them. You may be sure she

was awful frightened. She daren't speak; but she shust held out her arms to embrace them, but she could not lay hold of them, for with a soundless tread they glided away and vanished, while she heard pronounced these words, '*Cha till, cha till, cha till, sinn tuille*' (We return, return, return no more). Then she gave a great skirl and fell down, and she was found in the morning just quite senseless, with the poor beastie of a dog watching her."

"That is certainly a very strange story, Eachainn."

"Yes, sir; and there's plenty more I could be telling you, if you like. Once the laird was taken ill all of a sudden with a bad pain in his chest, when he was walking near some rocks where the fairies lived. Some say he was struck by an elf-bolt, as one was picked up near the spot the next day. So he sent to *Fearchair Lighiche* to come to heal him. It was a long way to go, and when *Fearchair* and the man that was fetching him got to about five miles from the laird's house a *gobhar-athair* flew over them, and when *Fearchair* heard the cry of the bird he stopped, and told the man it was no use to go any further, for his master was dead, and so he turned back. When the man got home, he found that his master had died just at the very time they heard the *gobhar-athair*. Sometimes he would fall into a trance, when he would be seeing most beautiful things. One day he was travelling with his nephew and his foster-brother, who always carried his herb-box and his Hebrew Bible, and they came to a place where a great battle was fought long ago. And there's a big cairn there over the bones of the men who were killed, and people will be seeing the spirits of them if they go that way at night. *Fearchair* said to his nephew that he was going to lie down and sleep, and that they were to be sure not to wake him, nor even touch him. Well, sir, he went to sleep, and at first he was breathing very hard, and his face was full of trouble, but after a little he did not breathe at all, and his face got as white as snow, and he looked just if he was dead. His nephew got so frightened when he saw him, that he jumped up to wake him, but the other held him back and whispered, 'For your life, move not, speak not, touch not;' and they then saw coming out of the mouth of the sleeping man a tiny, tiny, wee thing like a beautiful butterfly. When the nephew saw it, he made as if he would catch it, but the other man called out, 'For any sake, don't touch it, for there's something awful in it,' so they looked and saw it go into the cairn. The night had well nigh fallen before they saw the beautiful wee creature coming out of the cairn and going back into the mouth of *Fearchair*. Then he woke up and sneezed three times, and said, 'Tis well; let's on, let's on.' He didn't speak again for a long time, but once they heard him say like to himself in Gaelic, '*Eternal! eternal! eternal!*'"

"And what did the people think of all this?" asked Gillespie.

"Oh, sir, they say that when he'll be in a trance his spirit would come from his body, and go to the spiritual worlds, or anywhere he liked. There was only three men on earth to whom he told what it was that he'll be seeing at such times, and they dared only each tell it to one other, their nearest relatives when they arrived at the age of twenty-nine.

(To be Continued.)

THE HIGHLAND CEILIDH.

BY ALASTAIR OG.



[CONTINUED.]

WHEN Eachainn had finished the last story, he left Gillespie to himself—who was now fast recovering under the kind treatment of *Somhairle Dubh* and his excellent wife. The host was in the Gauger's room, as often as he could, relating such stories as he knew; and thus enabled the patient to pass away the time more agreeably. I heard several of them, but the one about the *Each Uisg*, or the Water Horse, is the only one I can at present remember. *Somhairle Dubh* related it thus:—

When I was a little boy, I would sit for hours by the kitchen fire, listening to my grandfather, who used to while away the long winter evenings by telling us stories about witches and warlocks, ghosts and fairies, of which he had an inexhaustible stock. A very favourite one with me was the tale of the *Each Uisg*, or the Water Horse, a fearful demon in the likeness of a big, black horse, who inhabited Loch-Dorch, and woe to any one who ventured near the loch after night-fall; for the *Each Uisg* was always on the watch, and would rise out of the water, seize any intruders, and drag them to the bottom, to be devoured by him at his leisure. Sometimes he would assume other shapes, and try to lure people away to the water. One Hallowe'en night there was a party of young people gathered round the fire in the house of Duncan the weaver, burning nuts and ducking for apples, when Duncan's daughter, bonnie Catriana, proposed to go and dip her sleeve in the burn, to try if her sweetheart was true. None of her companions would go, for fear of the *Each Uisg*, and tried in vain to dissuade Catriana from her venturesome purpose, but laughing at their fears, she threw her plaid over her head, and ran off to the burn.

In a little they were startled by hearing a loud wailing shriek, and fearing some accident had happened to their favourite Catriana, rushed out of the house to look after her, but no trace could they find of the poor, wilful lassie. Her father and the lads were searching the whole night, and at the dawn of day they found her plaid at the side of the dreaded Loch-Dorch, and near it, in the clay, the mark of an unearthly hoof, which proved, beyond doubt, that she had fallen a victim to the monster water-horse.

Then there was young Allan MacSheumais, who, coming home in the dusk, after spending the day hunting the deer, heard a tramping sound which he soon found to proceed from the water-horse, which he could see rapidly galloping up to him. Poor Allan, though in a dreadful fright, did not lose his presence of mind, and knowing full well that ordinary shot would have no effect upon the demon, he rapidly loaded his gun with a small, crooked silver sixpence—that blessed metal from a cup of which the Saviour drank his last draught on earth—and exclaiming,

"The cross be betwixt me and thee," fired with a steady aim, while the cold sweat stood on his brow.

The *Each Uisg* gave one yelling neigh, so shrill, so dismal, and unearthly, that the cattle which had lain down to rest on the heath started up in terror ; the dogs of the hamlet heard it, and, ceasing their gambols, ran cowering and trembling to the fireside ; the roosted cock heard it, and essayed to crow, but could only scream. Never will those who heard that terrific cry forget it ; but it had scarcely ceased ere the demon steed had sprung into the midst of Loch-Dorch, and as the water closed over him, a sound, as of a sarcastic, unearthly laugh, was heard from the middle of the loch, and then all was silent.

Yet notwithstanding all this, Lachlan Buachaille, the cow-herd, who was a wild, reckless fellow, would never believe the stories he heard about this dreadful being, and laughingly suggested that Allan had only been frightened by Rorie Mor's *gearran* broken loose from his tether ; and bragged that *he* had never seen the *Each Uisg*, although he had lived for some years near the Raven's Peak, close to the haunted loch.

"And would ye wish to see him?" asked old Janet, as he sat by her fireside one evening ; "would ye really wish to see that fearsome thing, Lachlan?"

"May I never taste oatcake or whisky again!" said Lachlan impetuously, "but I wish to see the beast, if there's one in it, and the sooner the better."

It was a gusty, rainy autumn night. Lachlan sat alone in his bothie, busily employed in twisting his oat straw *shiaman*, humming to himself, and listening to the sound of the torrent as it dashed over the rocks, the pattering of the heavy rain, and the sheughs of the north-west wind, moaning as it passed along, all of which only served to increase his sense of comfort as he drew his three-legged stool nearer to the bright peat fire.

He was just thinking of retiring for the night, when he heard a gentle knocking at the door. "Who is there at this time of night?" asked he, to which a feeble voice replied, "I am a poor old woman who lost my way this wild night; pray let me in, or I shall perish with cold and fatigue." Lachlan muttered anything but blessings on the old body's head for thus disturbing him, for he had a particular objection to *old* women. "Bad luck to her; were it a young one, or even an old man, I should not care," he grumbled; "but an old hag to come sorning on me, as I was about to step into my quiet bed." Then raising his voice, he said, "Wait, wait, carlin, I'll be with you directly, let me wind up my *shiaman* first; the *Diabhul* take you, have more patience, and don't keep croaking there with your ill-omened voice;" and, unfastening the latch, he continued, "There, enter now, and curses on you." However, with all his roughness, Lachlan was not a bad-natured fellow, and regretted his inhospitality, when he saw stepping in a poor, wretched, little, old woman, bent double with age and misery; she wore a dun cloak drawn tightly round her figure, with a kind of red hood attached to it, marked with strange characters, which quite covered her head, and shaded her face. She gave no salutation, good or bad, and as she crawled rather than walked up to the fire, it emitted a vivid spark, which hissed as it fell on the dripping clothes of the old dame; a hen on the roost

crowed discordantly, and a little mouse poked its head out of a hole and squeaked loudly. The old woman, noticing this, gave a queer kind of laugh, so grating in its sound that Lachlan turned quickly round and stared at her; but she met his gaze sharply, and with a peculiarity of expression which Lachlan felt, without knowing why, to be very unpleasant.

"Old dame," said he, "will you take something?"

"No," she gruffly replied.

"There's a little left of the bread and fish I had for supper," said Lachlan.

"I always have plenty of fish," answered she, sharply.

"Perhaps you like flesh better then?"

"Yes," she replied, in the same uncivil manner, while a strange, sneering smile flickered round her lips.

"Will you have anything to drink then?" continued Lachlan.

"No," abruptly answered the carlin.

"What! woman; nothing to eat or drink! Then I suppose you have had your supper, but it must have been with the Fairies, for I warrant you could have got none elsewhere between this and Beinn-ard, and that is a good twelve miles off."

"Perhaps," muttered the old hag.

"Perhaps what, *cailleach*?" questioned Lachlan; and, after a pause, finding she gave no answer, "Perhaps! I am afraid, you will catch cold, unless you throw off those wet clothes; and though I have no woman's gear, you can have my great-coat, and I can spare you a blanket besides."

"I need none of your coats or blankets," answered the crone, in the same ungracious tones as before, "for water can never hurt *me*."

"Leeze me on the hag," said Lachlan to himself, "but she is easily maintained at any rate, and yet I would rather have a more expensive and social guest."

The fire burned down, and Lachlan, as he occasionally glanced at the old *cailleach*, sitting on the opposite side of the hearth, could not help thinking that there was something repulsive, if not uncanny, about her altogether. There was a strange restlessness in her manner; her hard, dark eyes seemed to look everywhere and nowhere at the same time; while she sat rocking backwards and forwards over the ashes, and her long, crooked fingers twitched about her dun cloak in an odd and unpleasant manner. Lachlan threw another peat on the fire, and, by the reviving light, he thought the carlin's eye had acquired a wilder and sterner expression, while a grim smile played round the corners of her ugly mouth. He rubbed his eyes and looked again, she seemed to have really grown larger in stature and more erect since he first saw her. Rousing himself, he kicked off his boots, lay down on his bed, which was only a few steps from the fire, and settled himself down to repose for the night.

Lachlan, however, could not sleep, and turned from one side to another, courting in vain the drowsy god. Glancing at his unwelcome visitor, he saw, with a feeling akin to dread, the old creature sitting more and more erect; and, rubbing his eyes, as if he felt that he was under the influence of a dream, he was exceedingly startled to find that it was no delusion, but that she was really growing, as it were, rapidly larger and sterner,

under his very eyes. "Hout! carlin," he exclaimed, raising himself on his elbow, "you are waxing large."

To which she replied in a hollow voice, "*Umph, umph; omhagraich, 's mi 'g eiridh ris a bhlaths*" (Itomies and atomies—expanding to the warmth!).

Getting very drowsy, Lachlan again lay down to sleep, but presently was disturbed by the mouse running out of the hole in the wall, and running squeaking into and across his bed, almost touching his chin. He again raised himself on his elbow, was struck with the increased proportions of the strange hag, and again exclaimed, "Hout, carlin! you are getting larger!"

She again replied, but in a louder and harsher tone than before, "*Umph, umph; omhagraich, 's mi 'g eiridh ris a bhlaths*" (Itomies and atomies—expanding to the warmth!).

The fire was now nearly out, the light growing gradually less, and Lachlan became more and more sleepy. At length he began to snore gently, when all at once a spark flew out of the fire and alighted smartingly on his face. Irritated by the stinging sensation, he started, and opened his eyes, and became thoroughly roused by again hearing the old hen on the cross beam above him giving a most discordant crow, though the cock uttered not a sound. He sat upright in his bed, and, in the gloom, dimly saw the stranger's figure extended to fearfully gigantic proportions, while her eyes no longer retained a trace of human expression, but glared upon him with preternatural brilliance and malignity.

It was now with a feeling as if his blood were ice, as if his flesh had been turned into creeping and crawling things, and as if his hair all stood on end, that Lachlan, in a tone which fear rendered nearly inaudible, said for the third time, "Indeed and indeed, carlin, but you have waxed very large!"

"*Umph, umph; omhagraich, 's mi 'g eiridh ris a bhlaths*" (Itomies and atomies—expanding to the warmth!), shrieked the demon in a voice so terrible that it actually frightened the very ravens in the neighbouring rocks, who flew croaking away. "*Umph, umph omhagraich 's mi 'g eiridh ris a bhlaths*" (Itomies and atomies—expanding to the warmth); and the fearful creature stood erect. She gave a horrible laugh, a snort, and a neigh of terrific sound, while the features of the hag underwent a still more appalling change. The dark-grey locks that had peeped from under her red hood, now waved a snaky mane. On the forehead of the monster was a star-like mark of bright scarlet, quivering like burning fire; the nostrils breathed, as it were, flame, whilst the eyes flashed on poor Lachlan like lightening.

His knees smote together with terror, he saw that his hour was come, and that the fearful creature, the idea of whose existence he had laughed to scorn, now stood before him. He felt that at last he did indeed behold the *Each Uisg*.

Quicker than thought Lachlan found himself snatched up in the jaws of the monster. The door flew open of itself, and at one bound the steed of Ifrinn was on the top of the dizzy precipice—the Raven's Peak. At another he dashed down the torrent fall of Rowan Linn. The cold spray of the cascade falling on his face, now for the first time recalled

Lachlan to consciousness ; and as the demon gave one gigantic rear, previous to that spring which would have engulfed him and his victim in the unfathomable depths of Loch Dorch, Lachlan remembered and pronounced aloud the Name of names that was engraved on the breast-plate of the High Priest of Israel. The shrill clarion of the cock was now heard, the demon lost all further power over his victim, and letting him drop with a mighty shudder and a neighing yell, instantly plunged into the Loch, the waters of which, for a long time after, boiled and bubbled as if it were a gigantic huntsman's kettle of the kind in which he dresses the haunch of the red deer in the corrie.

Some people passing that way early in the morning, found Lachlan, bruised and insensible, at the bottom of the Raven's Peak, on a shelf of the rock, at the very edge of the water. They tried to rouse him, and after a short time he opened his eyes, sat up, and said, "Where am I?" and recollecting everything that had passed, he at once exclaimed, in broken accents, "Blessed be *His* name, safe, safe!"

They carried him to Clachan-nan-cho, where he lived for many years, a wiser and a better man, but he never again heard the *Each Uisg* mentioned without devoutly expressing the Name that saved him, and no wonder that neither he, nor any one else, has ventured ever since to sleep a night in the cottage near Rowan-linn.

The gauger, in his weakly state, heard the story throughout without expressing any doubt as to its truthfulness, and felt much relieved to find that poor Lachlan had escaped from the fearful *Each Uisg*. In spite of himself, he began to be less sceptical. Indeed, the simple manner in which the stories were related to him, the genuine warmth of heart and kind treatment bestowed upon him by the simple Highlanders, who themselves thoroughly believed in them, induced him to think that there must be some foundation after all for these extraordinary things. The continued attentions of *Somhairle Dubh* and his kind wife brought the Gauger rapidly round. We soon find him attending to his duties, but making no great attempts to discover the local Still that supplied his kind host with the excellent *Mac na Braiche* which helped not a little to invigorate and bring Gillespie himself additional strength and vigour during the latter weeks of his illness. *Somhairle Dubh*, the gauger, and Hector became fast friends, nor was there ever any of his cloth who was less capable of doing a mean thing in procuring a conviction against his neighbours. He did his duty to his King, without being unnecessarily harsh with those against whom he was obliged to enforce the law. *Beannachd leis.*

(To be Continued.)

A GOOD AND SPIRITED GAELIC SONG will be found on another page, composed by Mary Mackellar, Bard of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, to Captain MacRa Chisholm, late of the 42d Royal Highlanders (Black Watch), on the occasion of his presiding so successfully and acceptably at the recent annual dinner of the Society. The air and the music are supplied by Wm. Mackenzie, the excellent secretary of the Society.