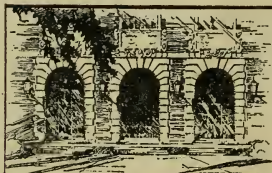




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THE
HIGHLAND SMUGGLERS.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF "ADVENTURES OF A KUZZILBASH,"
"PERSIAN ADVENTURER," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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INTRODUCTION.

EVEN such readers as "hate prefaces," need not be startled by the appearance of these few preliminary observations: they have no pretension to so alarming an appellation. The work before them is strictly a Highland tale; descriptive partly, as its title imports, of the habits and manners of a class of people, who not very long ago abounded throughout the Highlands, and who, in spite of every attempt at controul, or legislative enactment on the part of government, are still to be found there. That it was the author's original intention to turn the interest of the story more exclusively upon smuggling adventures, will account for the introduction of certain discussions on the subject of illicit distillation at greater length than may, by some

readers, be deemed suitable to a work of this nature.

Another principal object of the author being to depict Highland scenery and manners in general, he trusts to be held excused, even by those who delight in “stirring adventure” alone, should local descriptions appear at first to predominate more than may be to their taste: they will find, as the narrative proceeds, that these give place to an increased variety of incident and action, which he flatters himself will not be thought deficient in interest or excitement.

A few words regarding the language, or rather the *dialect*, put into the mouths of the lower characters. There is no point, perhaps, in which the ablest and most admired Authors have been so little successful, as in conveying to their readers a correct idea of Highland dialect and accent. It differs essentially both in pronunciation and idiom from the Lowland Scotch, which has been usually but erroneously attributed to Highlanders. Its chief points of dissimilarity from English are to be found in its periphrastic phraseology and strong guttural, aspirated accent. A Highlander, even when he *speaks* English, seems to *think* in his own language: hence, his conversa-

tion in that tongue is, in fact, a translation from Gaelic, while the long drawn aspirates of the Celtic enunciation infect and disguise his words to a degree extremely offensive to an English ear. To describe in writing a peculiarity, which chiefly consists in the inflections of that inexpressible thing *accent*, is very difficult. Should we wish, for instance, to convey to an English reader, the true sound of such common expressions as, “It’s a fine day!”—or “trouth,” (in-truth)—“I’m no weel at all the day,” as uttered by a Highlander,—the English alphabet affords no combination of letters that will approach nearer the truth than those we have made use of. How is that long nasal drawl, with which the Highlander would enunciate the words, to be expressed?

Again, the letter *a* is generally sounded broad by the Lowlander, who frequently substitutes its sound for that of the vowel *o*, as in *auld*, *cauld*, for *old* and *cold*. The Highlander preserves the vowel, but adds to it a long drawling *u*, making the words *ould* and *could*. The Lowlander pronounces the word *good* as *gude*, or *giud*; in the mouth of a Highlander it scarcely differs from the same word in English. The *lad*, or rather *laud*, of the former, bears but little resemblance to the interminable *laaad* of the Celt.

We do not, however, mean to write a treatise on Highland orthoepy; enough has been said to explain the reason of any variation that may be observed between the language used in this work, and the dialect commonly put in the mouths of Highlanders. But, as in portrait painting, it has been found that slight deviations from truth will rather add to than detract from a likeness; and as the judicious artist will rather reject such particulars as tend to diminish the general good effect of his work, than embarrass himself with unprofitable details; so has the Author in this case deemed it expedient to deviate occasionally from the rules he has laid down; and in order to maintain a suitable verisimilitude, when an expression or sentence might otherwise have appeared unnaturally *English* in the mouth of a Highlander of the lower classes, he has ventured to throw in a sprinkling of words, which in strictness belong to Lowland Scotch.

With regard to the localities and incidents of his story, the Author has little to remark. He has described but what he saw, and what he knows; and although there may be certain peculiarities of scene and of fact that will appear strange to some of his southern readers, he feels assured that the

general truth of his delineations can be attested by many of the sons and daughters of "Merry England," as well as by those of the "Land of the Mountain and the Flood." To them he appeals with confidence for their favourable testimony, and to the public at large for that liberal encouragement which is seldom withheld from those who have at least the merit of good intentions to plead in behalf of their efforts.

THE
HIGHLAND SMUGGLERS.

CHAPTER I.

A HIGHLAND GLEN.

From distant isles a chieftain came,
The joys of Ronald's halls to find ;
To chase with him the dark brown game,
That bound o'er Albion's hills of wind.

“ WELL, Tresham, what say you? Holds your resolution firm, to stake wind and manhood on a day's deer-stalking, after our Highland fashion? I promise you it will try your mettle, however well you may have proved it at Eton or Oxford ; aye, or in the Peninsula, where your prudent father sent you to sow your wild oats: a plentiful crop they were too, or you are sorely belied.”

Such was the address of the young Laird of Glenvallich to his friend and college chum, Henry

Tresham, a young officer of good family and fortune, as they sipped their wine after dinner on a lovely evening of July. Tresham, after several years of hard service, and some ill health, had obtained leave of absence from his regiment, and quitting his paternal mansion in merry England, proceeded to beat up the quarters of his ancient ally at the family seat of Inverallich, in the hopes of enjoying a few weeks grouse-shooting, on his extensive moors in the vicinity of that place. Once before only, and but for a very short period, had Tresham visited his friend, and experienced the delight of putting sundry brace of muir-fowl to death on their own wild hills ; but it was a short and imperfect enjoyment, and he looked forward with anxiety to a more complete and prolonged fruition, when time and opportunity should serve. The more serious pursuits of manhood, and the duties of a profession which he loved, for some years superseded all lighter occupations ; but he failed not to seize the first occasion which presented itself, of gratifying a taste which had increased rather than diminished by long privation.

A tedious while had still to elapse before the commencement of the grouse season ; and Tresham having heard the laird expatiate with enthusiasm on the delights of the noble sport of deer-stalking,

had conceived a wish to participate in them. He supposed it to be of a nature quite similar to the pursuit he was already acquainted with, and anticipating neither more fatigue nor inconvenience in the one than in the other, he proposed accompanying his friend in his next expedition to the wild glen, which the large property of Glenvallich enabled him to maintain as a deer forest, where he could enjoy, without disturbance or control, his favourite sport.

“ Infinitely indebted to your good opinion, Charles,” was the reply of Tresham to the address which commences our chapter ; “ but the charge of wildness I utterly repudiate, as foreign to my nature ; witness my sober visit to your sober and moral country, at a time when Bond Street and St. James’s still swarm with gentlemen of my cloth—the gay and the dissipated of the land ;—but touching this challenge of yours, I say yes, certainly ; I do wish to witness this fascinating sport, which disturbs gravity like yours, and unhinges your prudence so completely, as to reconcile it to the loss of fair three hundred pounds a year, besides heaven knows how much extra expense, in foresters, game-keepers, dogs, bothys, and the like, that your worship may kill deer, as others shoot pheasants, or rabbits, by the hundred head. And don’t suppose you’ll find me such a

chicken at a walk, as to be blown or fagged by what you and your ragged gillies can do with ease. It's a long time since to be sure ; but do you remember a certain twelfth of August, when I fired my first shot at grouse, and killed my fifteen brace, and was on my feet from four in the morning till near seven at night?"

" Yes, Hal, I remember it well, and I think you had enough of it that day."

" Well, perhaps I had ; and I slept pretty sound that night in consequence."

" Yes, and next morning too, Harry."

" Well, and you were off to the muir again by six, you would say ; why, it was but a brag of yours—I could have done it myself, and easily too, had you thought fit to summon me in time, when you chose to start alone."

" I had more compassion, Harry, than to commit such a piece of cruelty : why man, you looked as lean and haggard as a drawn weasel when we came home ; you did not feed like a man fit for work."

" Ah ! so you are pleased to say ; but besides, I was scarcely more than a boy in those days ; I'm tougher and stronger now, and that you'll find."

" Well, as you are resolved to try your powers of endurance, have at you. To-morrow I'm off to Glenochree, where I have some business to settle,

and I mean to kill a fat stag if possible, before I return. I want to send a haunch to Lady Pember-ton, to let her see what good red deer venison is. She scorned it the other day—called it meat scarce fit for a gentleman's table—only good for soups and stocks, and such like stuffs. She shall recant ; so make ready your traps, you won't want much. I will arm you : you shall have my Manton rifle, and a pony that will carry you where any four uncloven hoofs can go, and never miss a step."

"What ! you ride on this deer-stalking business, then, do you ? I'm not sorry for that."

"Ride a deer-stalking ! O Fingal ! O Ossian ! Oscar, and Toscar ! and all ye spirits of the mighty hunters of old, hear him, and veil your faces in wrath ! Ride in the forest of Glenochree !—ride along the side of Scoore-vialach !—ride up the Corry Dhu !—faith, you would need a better steed than I can give you : that of the wild huntsman of the Black Forest at least, for no horse of mortal mould could carry you ten yards distance. We shall have you next looking for a painted and papered drawing-room, with damask couches and window-curtains, in my hunting bothy."

"Scarcely that, friend Charles ; for I have not quite lost remembrance of a certain shooting bothy, which must be own brother, one might

presume, to that dedicated to so similar a sport."

"Hum!—must it, indeed?—*similar* sport!—well, you shall see."

"Well, so I shall, please the fates! and as for my mistake about riding, why spoke you of ponies, if we are not to ride?"

"Hah! my dear Hal, I doubt not that you are well acquainted with the nature of a Spanish sierra, or a posada; you may have climbed the one on the back of a mule, and have been bitten half to death the live long night in the other; but take my word for it, you know little indeed of a Highland deer-forest, or a black Highland bothy,—how indeed should you? Why, we require these admirable sure-footed little steeds to carry us fresh to this same bothy, of which you shall judge when you see it. You would not choose to walk eight-and-twenty long miles, I presume? and so far, at the least, is the bothy distant from this place."

"Eight-and-twenty miles!—you take away my breath! What! ride eight-and-twenty miles on your own property? Why man, it's a dukedom—a principality—you're not a laird, but a king!"

"Such, however, is the fact; but when you shall have seen the nature of a great part of this

same principality, your conceptions of its importance may come to be lowered : you may possibly form a fairer estimate of its value. Extent, certainly it has, and that," added he, while a pardonable emotion of pride slightly swelled his chest, and heightened the colour of his cheek, " that is something, doubtless !"

" Something ! aye, and quite enough to excuse a pretty strong dose of Highland pride, although you would fain amuse us with a specimen of Highland humility. Well, after all, a few hundreds of fat English acres are no bad thing : they don't tell so well in numbers as your hundreds of thousands, but count by rent well paid, and they make no bad figure."

" No, Hal ; but there is no deer-stalking there : and, as we should be early on foot to-morrow, what say you to making our arrangements to-night ? I see you take no wine ; suppose we have coffee in the other room, and then set to work ?"

" By all means : *allons !*"

The morning was as lovely as could be desired ; not one of those bright cloudless effects, the brilliant sunshine and dark shadow of which foretells a speedy overcast ; but having its radiance mellowed by a soft haze, which betokened a continuance of the delicious weather they had for some time enjoyed, and which threw a tone of almost magical

beauty over hill and wood and dale. After an early and substantial breakfast, the two friends set off, not on their highland garrons, but in a very stylish phaeton and pair, in which they drove for several miles.

“A pretty fellow you are, Mr. Glenvallich, humbugging your raw southeron friends with such dire accounts of savage glens, roaring torrents, and diabolical roads. I am by no means nice I find; this road will do well enough for me; nor am I at all disposed to quarrel with this well-hung phaeton, and these *ponies*, if such your modesty chooses to style them—sixteen hands high if they’re an inch; and, upon my word, this is a very beautiful valley—or glen, if you prefer that appellation—with its sloping sides and rounded knolls, covered with oak and birch—not very majestic indeed, but yet a very pretty fringe of wood they make—and these rocks that rise above, too, with the green patches among them—very pastoral and sweet;—what a fine stream too, brawling and twisting among its stones, and these ledges of black and white stained rock. Good trout in these pools too, I dare say—I must throw a fly there when I return.”

“Aye, you may find sport there, but you must learn to fish for salmon; the trouts of the lochs are better than those of our rivers.”

“ Well, we shall look at them in due season.— By Jove ! what crops on these small fields— would not disgrace Norfolk—hedges, to be sure, would make handsomer divisions than vile walls, or rather long heaps of stones, all toppling down among the fox-glove and fern ; but the little coppice scattered here and there, has a good effect.— Well, hang me, but you’re a pretty fellow to keep all those sweet valleys snugly to yourself, and call them wild and savage *glens*, forsooth, to keep timid southerons out of them.”

“ I am glad they please you, my friend, but I assure you it forms no part of my policy to keep this glen, which is one of the prettiest in this part of the country, to myself, as you suppose : but have patience awhile, you will see before we are done, whether or no I have been *humbugging* you : in the meantime we are just approaching a scene which I would recommend to your attention as a lover of the picturesque.”

The hills, at the point they were now approaching, rose somewhat suddenly to great elevation, and overhung the glen so closely, that it scarcely afforded room at bottom for the river, or *water* as it was called, to twist through the profound chasm which it had hollowed out for itself in the living rock. A noise arose from below, like the

rush of many streams, and the craggy banks ascended, most exquisitely clothed with birch and oak, mountain-ash, hazel, and other native trees, under which spread a plentiful carpet of fern and wild flowers, leaving the black rock bare and stained with a coat of lichens where it was too precipitous to receive a richer covering.

The road cut out of one of these precipitous banks, overhung the stream which roared near two hundred feet below ; and although its breadth, parapet walls, and excellent condition, precluded all reasonable idea of hazard, a stranger could scarcely repress a shudder of horror as he whirled past the black abyss.

“ You did well to prepare me, Charles,” said his companion, “ although to point out the beauties of this place is unnecessary ; they are most striking and palpable, certainly — what noble rocks and hills—and what wood too !—look at these magnificent birches, and that rich delicious honeysuckle !—What the devil did that surly pedant Johnson mean by saying there were no trees in Scotland ? I owe him a grudge for his narrow-minded prejudice ; it seems to impugn the liberality of the nation he belonged to.”

“ Why, certainly, Johnson was prejudiced, but he was not always happy in the routes he took ;

and being accustomed to so very rich and well-wooded a country, he might well be disappointed at the barrenness he did witness."

"Ah, don't defend him; he deserves—but what mist is that, rising there?—God bless me! it's a cascade, I declare!—Grand! grand and beautiful, by Jove!" And his companion drew up at a particular point, where a full view was obtained of the rushing cataract, swelled by a heavy fall of rain on the hill, as if to show off the grandeur of the scene, and to gratify both host and guest.

The enraptured silence of that guest as he gazed upon the sublime scenery before him, was more expressive of his feelings than the most laboured encomiums in words, and certainly more gratifying to his friend. But Tresham's surprise and delight were not yet complete. A succession of pools and rapids above the fall, soon raised the upward course of the river to a height little lower than the level of the road on which they were driving; and stream and road winding their way between two craggy and wooded knolls which rose in front, introduced the travellers to a change of scene not less unexpected than pleasing. The abrupt and contracted mountains which formed the pass, opened suddenly to the right and left, yet still preserving an imposing altitude, and formed a basin of considerable size. The bottom

of this was occupied by a silver lake of nearly two miles in length, leaving an irregular but not inconsiderable space between the margin of the water and the slope of the hills, well cultivated, and dotted with cottages. Among these might be detected several white-walled houses of a description superior to the rest, which communicated to the scene an air of comfort and civilization which could not fail to please the eye of a stranger. The hills were partially covered with wood, chiefly birch, which crept up and dotted their sides in a manner more graceful by far, than could have been effected by the most tasteful hand; and the fields in all their luxuriance of crop, were naturally divided by copse-wood and scattered trees, which produced all the rich effect of hedgerow foliage, without its formality. The summits of the hills were varied with grey rock and purple heather, and further on, towards the head of the valley, the eye caught the blue picturesque forms of yet more distant and more important mountains.

“Upon my soul, Charles,” exclaimed Tresham, “this is fairy land; I positively don’t recollect anything more lovely!”

“What! not even in your favourite Spain?”

“Spain! pshah! a waste of black rocks and brown plains. Italy, Switzerland has nothing more delicious.”

“ Well, Harry, I am glad you like it—enjoy it while you may, for your fairy land, like fairy gifts, is fast fading away. See you yon blue peak ?”

“ Which?—that with the greyish lump on the north end ?”

“ Poh, no—I mean yon distant one, which makes, almost like a carpenter’s centre-bit, a high sharp peak in the middle, with a lower one at each side, and one of them more spread out than the other.”

“ Well ; I see it.”

“ Well, in that mountain is the forest.”

“ In that mountain ? why, God bless me, that’s fifty miles off, if it’s a yard.”

“ No, no, it is no such thing, and you will soon see it enlarge upon the eye. But here our good road terminates. The phaeton can go no further, and here are our little highland steeds. Let us mount and be off—we have no time to lose.”

Two little shaggy animals were now brought forth by a smart young man, clad in the phelibeg and plaid, from a black hut, at the upper end of the basin of which we have spoken : they were saddled and bridled for immediate use ; but looked as if their backs had for the first time been made acquainted with such appurtenances. A pound of hair hung at each heel, their manes and forehead

would have furnished stuffing for a respectable mattrass, and a Turkish Pashah would have thought himself a happy man to have got hold of their tails. Nevertheless, wild and rough as they were, their small and well-shaped heads, round quarters, and clean made limbs, indicated a degree of blood and breeding, which their action and powers of endurance did not belie. No sooner had the gentlemen mounted, than the diminutive steeds set off at a swift and easy trot, which they maintained, even when the increasing badness of the road would have rendered a slower rate of motion fully as agreeable to the young Englishman.

In fact, upon leaving the farm where they took to their horses, the regular road, which stopped at that point, was succeeded first by a very indifferent cart road ; this soon degenerated into such a track as is formed in highland districts by their miserable peat carts, some of which consist merely of a large inverted cone, formed of birch branches, interwoven with twigs, and set upon two shafts, as on a sledge, guiltless of axle or wheels, and which are dragged over the rough ground by a wretched garron. Even this poor evidence of human industry and human presence disappeared after a time, nothing remained to direct the steps of the travellers, but a devious track, undeserving even the name of a bridle path, formed principally by foot

passengers and cattle, who passed these wilds in the way to and from the western coast of the island.

There was also a gradual, but not less remarkable change in the scenery, as the travellers increased their distance from the lower glen. The mountains, it is true, continued to be clothed with birch, though less abundantly, and of more stunted growth; but the skirts of the hills, and the gravelly knolls on either side the road, were thickly covered with broom, interspersed with patches of brown heather and fine green velvet turf. A few cultivated patches occurred, bearing scanty crops of black oats or rye, or a wretched mixture of both; and sundry plots of stunted potatoes already bore evidence of the action of frost. The huts of the owners partook in the deterioration of the country, becoming more and more miserable, until the only dwellings to be seen were mere heaps of black turf, partially covered with growing grass. But one opening was to be seen in these, by which the inhabitants might obtain entrance; and the smoke, after circling in volumes through the whole interior, at length found its sluggish exit to the upper air through the same vent.

As they proceeded, even the stunted birch became more rare; rock and dark peat-moss occupied its place on the hill-sides, which rose in

lumpy ignoble shapes, cut into innumerable stony ravines, by the torrents that often rushed from their summits. Still, however, as a glen or chasm of greater depth would open among them, rocks and peaks of grander dimensions and nobler forms appeared in the distance, affording evidence that the travellers had in truth penetrated into the more remote and loftier regions of the Highlands.

“Your fairy land is fled, Tresham, I fear; how like you this change?”

“Hum—not of the most agreeable, certainly, but after what we have seen, I were a beast to complain. Your dwellings here are, indeed, not magnificent, nor are your crops so rich as some we have passed; but I espy some good-looking grouse ground, which some day or other I hope to beat; and that green meadow, that borders the river, with its few birches and alders, and its stream rushing from pool to pool, has no small amenity to recommend it—there must be good trouting there too.”

“Why, Tresham, you would be for ever at the trouts or the grouse; and truly the poor birds do afford fair sport in their way, when no nobler game can be had; but wait, my friend, till you see a deer shot. As to these hills; you would find poor amusement there. The day has been, to be sure, when a good shot might have bagged his twen-

ty brace a-day on them with ease; but now, from some cause or other, sheep, muir-burning, and dogs—perhaps, too, from modern improvements in the art of killing game, and the gradual progress of cultivation, the birds have ceased to breed in the low muirs, so that where a dozen of packs might formerly have been seen, you can now scarcely find a single brood.”

“Not being a Highland laird,” replied Tresham, I can’t say I approve of the change; but cultivation rather leads to increase game in the south—how has it so different an effect here?”

“You forget the different habits of the bird from those of pheasants or partridges; grouse dislike molestation. Since the introduction of sheep, for one set of hoofs that paced over the muirs, when they were only under black cattle, there are now a hundred, besides the infinitely increased number of dogs, which feed luxuriously upon the eggs and young birds in their seasons: you will see at once how such an increase of enemies must lead to the decrease of the game. But come—we approach another stage of our journey, and another change in the character of our scenery.”

In truth, Tresham had begun to weary of the eternal recurrence of low unpicturesque hills, over which at length the road, leaving the margin of the river, began to ascend through tracks of gra-

velly heights, covered but partially with dark stunted heather, that told full plainly the extreme poverty of the soil.

“Come,” said the young Englishman, as certain dark purple peaks and ridges rose into view over the insipid slope on which they were riding; “here is something, at least, which promises a taste of the wild and grand, if not the beautiful. These hills are assuming a more imposing character—this may do.”

They soon reached the summit of the rocky ridge which they had for some time been gradually ascending, and which ran abruptly across the glen, forming a species of natural barrier between its more accessible parts and those more wild and remote:—and wild and striking, of a truth, was the scene which from this height presented itself to the eyes of the sportsmen.

A massy mountain, whose huge members stretched far in all directions—some in ridges that descended to the river bed, others verging off into separate and distant valleys, rose upon the right to a majestic height, presenting a summit divided into three rocky peaks of unequal magnitude, connected together by a serrated ridge of crags. The skirts of this noble mountain, themselves riven into a world of less important hills, exhibited a striking intermixture of grey rock and

dark wood, varied with heather and fern in profusion. At their feet, the river, of a deep mossy hue, streaked and mottled with white foam, chafed in many a petty fall and sharp rapid against the rocks and stones of its bed, the banks of which were fringed with shaggy wood. On the left arose a hill, less lofty but more precipitous, and still more thickly covered with wood, in which the dark hue of the native pine was conspicuously predominant; and behind it might be seen several towering peaks and huge shoulders, belonging to other ranges, of which itself was probably but a spur or offset.

These were the principal features of the coup-d'œil; but beyond them a long succession of mountains threw their vast masses athwart the glen in an infinite variety of form and hue, while dark blue peaks closed up the long perspective. If to the picture we have thus faintly attempted to sketch, be added the magic influence of light and shadow, flitting and changing with every cloud of a summer's forenoon, sometimes shrouding the giant shapes in deep purple gloom, and then again letting in upon their bosoms a rich stream of sunshine,—like the light of science revealing the secrets of nature—while the mysterious veil would slowly roll on, to envelope some other feature of the landscape—if such a combination of scenery

be conceived, the rapturous exclamations of Henry Tresham, as he slowly ascended the height of which we have spoken, and the whole landscape rose gradually into existence before him, may find both excuse and sympathy.

“ This,” said he at length, after his first burst of astonishment was past, “ this is in very deed a scene for which I was not prepared ! If you had let me leave the country without showing me what I now see, Charles, I never could have forgiven you. Switzerland may afford more astounding variety of feature—the Pyrenees, too, are no doubt far more rich in rock and wood ; nor do I venture to assert, that many landscapes more astonishing, nay, more beautiful than that before us, might not be selected in either country ; but I will say, that I can scarcely remember ever to have been more highly delighted by natural scenery, than I am at this moment.”

“ You gratify me much by saying so, Harry, for I am quite certain you speak as you feel. It was always my plan to give you this surprise, but I thought it best to time it so as to embrace some other object.”

“ But what mountains are these ? and how do you call this most primitive and magnificent valley or glen, or what else it may be termed ?”

“The glen before you,” replied his friend, “is Glenochree, and the river is the Ochree, which has its source in a little mountain lake, some fifteen or eighteen miles hence. It has feeders also, nearly as large as itself, which take their rise in the mountains around you, either from lochs or numerous springs. As for the mountains themselves, each peak and separate mass has its distinct name, although the range of hill country is known by the general appellation of *Monadh-na-feh*—sounded shortly *Monehfeh*—the hills of the deer, *par excellence*, from the number and size of the deer they used to produce—a characteristic which, you shall have proof, they have not yet forfeited. This dark brown hill on our right is Ben-dourich; that round black lumpish mass which protrudes so far into the glen, has acquired the name of Strone-muich, or the hog’s nose, from some fanciful resemblance it is thought to bear to that animal. And that distant peak which shuts in the left side of the vista, is Scoore-vialach, with which you may probably become better acquainted ere long, if legs and wind hold good.”

“*A la bonne heure*, when the time comes;—meanwhile, how are we to descend from our altitudes—I suppose we have still some distance to go?”

“Aye, verily—so this way. Come, follow me.”

“How? down that torrent’s bed?—Why don’t we keep the road, man?”

“Because there is none better to keep: this is the only path, the use of which, as you may perceive, is disputed by man and the elements; for down the track, first perhaps formed by him or other animals, *feræ naturæ*, the rains and floods of winter have found their way in torrents, so that his feeble traces have been pretty nigh effaced.”

“Pretty nigh! egad, the last thing I should have imagined would be that he ever had a share in it at all;—why, man, you’ll be down the hill by the run—the horses can’t hold on there, surely? If we had mules, indeed——”

“Take my advice, Harry; give your pony its head, and trust its sureness of foot. But if you like rather to trust to your feet than your head, dismount, and give the pony to Angus here.”

“And faith, so I will—my own legs are well-tried servants, the pony’s are strangers—so here, Angus, take hold, and let us go on.—Egad! it is no joke even on foot.”

“So think I,” said Glenvallich, “and therefore I prefer keeping on those of *Bodach-ruah*.—Come, I’ll show you the way;” and giving the little animal its full head, together with a gentle hint from the switch, away went *Bodach-ruah*

with the laird, steadily and securely, while his friend followed, with extreme caution, over slippery shelving rocks and gravel beds, that sometimes, to his no small discomposure, gave way under his feet, and slid down with him several yards.

The pony, when it reached any of these gravel slips, would gather itself together, throw forward its fore-feet, leaning backwards with its haunches until they nearly touched the stones behind; and thus prepared, it would slide securely to the bottom of the broken ground. On the other hand, when a rocky shelf occurred, it was wonderful to see the caution with which it took advantage of every ledge, inclining its body to the brae face, and pressing against every rough edge of the stone to secure a footing for its little hoofs; nor would it venture to lift a second foot until the first was surely disposed of.

Having safely reached the bottom of this *bealach*, or pass, they pursued their way through the rough and broken ground upon the lip of the river bank, sometimes dipping almost into its stream, at others, rising high to avoid the craggy promontories among rough and scattering wood; or passing along the face of rocky precipices, under which the black boiling water roared and foamed along with a fearful rapidity. At such places, Tresham would

invariably dismount, although his friend continued on his pony, unless when the ledge became so narrow that an incautious swerve or an accidental jerk might have thrown the little animal off its balance, and sent horse and rider to the bottom.

“A pretty ticklish sort of path, I vow,” observed Tresham, “greatly more to the taste of goats, I should opine, than of any other living creature. I have seen such, to be sure, in Spain, and their capital mules go safely enough over them; I never liked them though—but is this road, if road you insist on calling it, much travelled?”

“O, aye, a good deal by people from the other side—that is, the west-coast glens and lochs; and those also, who have cattle business among the chief inland glens. If you were to follow this glen to its head, you would see the water running to both seas from the same ridges.”

“And what may be the principal business which takes them through this glen, in defiance of such roads?”

“O various business—but chiefly droving. Cattle and sheep both go and come this way, to and from the low country markets—wool too, is carried down the glen—wood is cut and floated down the stream; and I am sorry to say that too much grain is carried into the recesses of these and other wild hills, for the purpose of illicit distillation.”

“ Ah, smuggling ; have you such work here ? I thought there was an end to all that.”

“ Far, far from it, I am concerned to say. There never perhaps was a time when more is done in that way ; and much evil does it cause in the country.”

“ Why no doubt it is a bad thing, and you as a Highland chieftain, and by consequence, a *father* of your people, are quite right to concern yourself about their morals ; but why the deuce don't you put a stop to the thing then ?”

“ Aye, why indeed—why *can't* we, you should say. Look at these mountains, these rocks and woods ; do you think it an easy or a possible matter for the eyes of chieftain laird, or exciseman, to discover what is going on at all times through their recesses ? No, no ; there is too much encouragement given to illicit distillation under present circumstances, to leave a hope of checking it.”

“ Why, what encouragements ?”

“ O it would be too long a story to enter upon at present, and perhaps you might neither be enlightened nor interested with my reasoning on the subject : we may recur to it, if you like, at some other time when amusement runs so low that a question of political economy may be bearable.”

“ Ah, with all my heart ; I am not very curious at present. But pray tell me, do these wild

mountains—these rocks I would say, yield you any return in coin? have they any inhabitants save deer and blackcock?”

“O yes; they are all under sheep.”

“Sheep! why I don’t see a fleece.”

“No; they are not allowed to come so far down the hills at this season; they are kept on the heights beyond our sight; the lower parts of the glen and the river sides are reserved for a later period of the year, when the weather becomes too severe for the animals to remain above.”

“And these sheep, or their owners, pay you a rent for the use of these same rocks.”

“Yes; besides we get timber from them.”

“Timber! of what sort?”

“Oak and fir. I could show you oak coppice which yields a very handsome return once in twenty or five-and-twenty years, and which would do greatly more if preserved from damage by animals, and if we had roads to bring it to market by.”

“And why have you not roads?”

“Because making a road of such extent in such a country, would be too gigantic an undertaking for any single proprietor, and the country gives aid only to such lines of road as are deemed widely useful; and government only countenances those which are recommended by their own officers.”

“But where grows your fir timber?”

“Where! look around you.”

“Well, I do, and see little except stunted oak, ragged birch and alder; unless those blackish green dwarfish-looking shrubs, scattered among the bushes on the other side, be fir; they look well, and contrast well with the heath and rich fern which covers the rocks—but surely you don’t call these bushes timber trees.”

“Dwarfish bushes, you call them, do you? well, move we on; you will learn to estimate heights, sizes, and distances among these mountains more justly, ere long. How far now should you conceive the opposite bank to be distant from us, as we stand?”

“How far! why, a hundred or a hundred and fifty yards perhaps.”

“I should have expected a more accurate judgment from your military eye; four hundred yards would not reach it. It is the abrupt ruggedness of these rocks and hills which disguises their height and magnitude, and misleads your eye in estimating those of objects upon them: there are many of these bushes, as you call them, that would yield a stick of three feet diameter to the saw.”

During the progress of this conversation, the pathway, leaving the immediate neighbourhood of

the river, rose once more among crags and knolls, but of a very different character from those they had left behind them. One might have imagined that the fragments of a shivered mountain of granite had been thrown and heaped confusedly together. Some vast masses which, in spite of their coat of grey lichens, still displayed the gigantic stratification of the parent rock, had their crests covered with luxuriant heather and fern; others, severed from the greater cliffs by the action of time and of the elements, reared their pointed and pyramidal forms on high, like tottering towers, while the rest lay scattered every where in shapeless blocks among the more considerable masses. All were more or less overgrown with heather, ferns, and other mountain herbage, rendered luxuriant by the constant moisture which prevails in such elevated regions—a humidity which, while it nourishes the springing vegetation, promotes the decomposition of that which falls into decay. Still, much of rock remained exposed, and many a yawning chasm—the haunt no doubt, at this time, of the fox, the badger, and the wild cat, as of old of the wolf or the wild boar—rendered clambering among the matted bushes not only painful but hazardous.

But heather or lichens were not the only productions of these rocks and mountains. The oak,

the ash, and the birch, sprung up spontaneously among them, twisting their gnarled roots among their crevices, and drawing nourishment and support apparently from the very substance of the stone: and here, in all its native wildness, might be seen the indigenous tenant of the Highland woods, the mountain pine, the gloomy Scotch fir—and who that has seen this pride of the ancient forest, in all its savage Salvator-like magnificence, flinging its thousand twisted arms abroad to the four winds of heaven—its trunk a pillar of enduring strength—its richly coloured branches covered with dense masses of dark spine-like leaves, scarcely yielding to the breeze,—could believe it to be the same tall, slender, formal shrub, which forms the bulk of many a modern plantation; or would dispute its high pre-eminence in picturesque effect among the noblest productions of the vegetable world?

In situations suited to its habits, and enjoying free scope to put forth all its vigor, the Scotch fir rises to a respectable, often to a majestic height: even when confined in a hollow, and shooting upward with a high and branchless stem, in search of air and light, its head is still picturesque and spreading; but, when enjoying a due portion of those blessings which are alike indispensable to the vegetable and animal creation, it lifts its thick,

comparatively short bole, covered with gray scabrous bark, in the most varied shapes; when its limbs issuing from the stem in bold fantastic sweeps, spread into innumerable branches of a rich orange tinge, terminating in a forest of spray: then is it seen in its glory—then is it worthy to stand beside the oak itself, an ornament suited to the noblest park.

“See, Henry,” said Glenvallich, as rounding one of these rocky knolls, they entered a hollow, the sides of which were garnished with many of these singularly characteristic trees, “look now at these fellows—what think you of them for a sample? yet I can assure you they are nothing at all compared with thousands which I could show you in this glen and its tributary corries.”

“They are most picturesque and original, as well as beautiful objects,” replied Tresham, “and are in perfect harmony with one of the most striking landscapes I ever remember to have seen; but I doubt if they would by any means come up to your description, or near it. Now, that tree yonder—that with the curious twisted bough and thick top—what a capital study for a painter, yet surely he would never be worth cutting for timber.”

“I see you must have a lesson, Hal. Come, give the gillie your pony, and let us go up to that tree and judge of its size when we reach it.”

They did so. To scale the rough crag was a task of greater difficulty than Tresham could have believed, for his eye had deceived him as to the height of this as well as of other objects. The ledges of the rock, up which he thought he could skip as on steps of stairs, turned out upon approach to be something like a giant's causeway; and although the heather afforded him a hold by which he was enabled to climb from one point to another, yet it sorely embarrassed his feet. Glenvallich stood by the tree long before the panting Tresham had reached the summit. "Well, what say you to this small specimen of forest work and forest timber?"

"Why, fair—very fair," replied Tresham, halting to recover breath; "bigger—bigger a good deal—than I could have supposed down yonder; but far, far from your estimate."

"Tut, man! come hither. What! not blown with this little burst, surely?"

"No, not blown just—but—but faith that's a sharp pull too, for a man not in training. I have not had much to do with precipices lately, you know."

"Precipices, indeed! But turn your eyes on our tree, man—what say you now?"

"Say!" exclaimed Tresham, who had now got close to the object of their attention—"why, that

I am thunderstruck ! Good heavens ! what a deception—what a tree—I am perfectly amazed ! Who would have imagined that a few yards would have made so astonishing a difference in its apparent bulk ! I confess that this is a tree fit for any thing, and yet from where we stood below, I could not have believed it twenty feet high, nor worth the cutting. Let us measure it.”

It proved to be full eight feet in girth at five feet from the ground, and in spite of its numerous branches, they calculated that it would afford at least eight-and-twenty feet in length of first-rate timber.

“That tree,” said Glenvallich, “if cut and floated down to the shipping place, would be worth at least four guineas. So much for appearances.”

“Well, my friend, this *is* a lesson, and I shall not forget it. But still I stand amazed at the facts before me.”

A succession of scenery similar in character, but so various in form and effect, as to be any thing rather than monotonous or tiresome, continued for several miles, when the glen once more opened out, and the eyes of the travellers were greeted by the dancing waves and deep blue gleam of a sheet of water, two or three miles long, which sparkled in the fervent rays of a noon-day sun.

The slopes of the receding mountains, which

formed the shores of the lake, were still plentifully sprinkled with wood; it grew more thickly still upon their skirts, but their upper regions were varied with rock and heather and green pasture, defaced with long scaurs, or slips of red or grey stones, and deeply indented with the beds of torrents; while the crests rose in craggy ridges of a dark brown hue, sometimes precipitous, in other parts round and lumpy. Towards the upper end of the loch, were now seen the mountains which had appeared so remote in the earlier part of their journey; but their gigantic features still loomed grey and indistinct from the distance that yet intervened.

The lake itself was of that dark purple hue, which is produced by the mossy water of mountain streams. Its banks were in some places closely fringed with wood; in others, the shelving rocks of the mountain came black and sheer down to the water, and fancy might continue their direction beneath its surface to a tremendous depth; a persuasion which the inky blackness of the water tended strongly to confirm. The reeds at the other end, on the contrary, denoted the shallowness of the lake in that quarter; many wild ducks, with their broods, sprung from among them as the travellers passed by, and the heron, scared from his sentinel station on some grey stone, rose heavily upon

his broad wings, and slowly soared across the loch.

“Be cautious here, Tresham,” said Glenvallich. “It may be as well to dismount; for the path across this rocky face is none of the best, and the loch is abundantly deep.”

“Both are self-evident truths, Charles, not to be disputed; and I readily embrace your hint. The loch, no doubt, would be very inconveniently deep, and although I do swim, I have no mind for such a plunge as this.”

“Faith! it were as well avoided. There have been fatal accidents here before now; and the fall of a rock from the cliffs above us, a thing of no uncommon occurrence, might startle the ponies to our discomfiture. In this very spot,” continued he, as they passed the dangerous step on foot—“in this very spot did a farmer from the West country, and his servant, returning from a cattle market one winter’s evening, perish in the gulf below us. The snow was deep, the early evening had closed in, the narrow path had been effaced by the drift, and darkness doubtless caused them to miss their footing. A dog belonging to the farmer, appearing at a house far below in the glen, attracted the notice of the inhabitants by its singular behaviour and obvious distress. It was said, indeed, that the gudewife had been disturbed by

painful dreams, which led her to suspect that something was wrong. The farmer was a distant relation, and so the gudeman and his son, with a servant, set forth, following the dog, which ran on before them, looking back ever and anon to see that they were at his heels ; and thus were they led to this spot. In the meantime, the drift had increased so much, that the place where the unfortunate men had fallen in could not have been discovered but for the dog, which, making its way down to the loch side, got hold of a corner of the farmer's plaid. The torn condition of the tartan rendered it probable that the poor animal had continued long to tug at this, before instinct led it to abandon the attempt in order to seek for more efficient aid. It was at the risk of their own lives, that the persons so strangely summoned could extricate the bodies ; and the place has ever since been held in a sort of superstitious abhorrence for no reason, that I can discover, so sufficient as its own dangerous nature."

A little above the loch, the stream had burst its way through a ridge of rocks that stretched across the glen, which at this point once more changed its rugged character for one of a more pastoral description. The stream wound along with sluggish motion, and in a very devious course, through a meadow of rich natural grass, where

cattle were feeding ; and a black hut, or shealing, just like a peat stack half grown with grass, indicated the dwelling of him who took care of them. Wood was here scanty, and the hills, covered with mingled heather and grass, evinced marks of muir-burning, and rose precipitously from the level slope at their feet.

“ We approach our ground, and our place of repose for the night,” said Glenvallich. “ I dare say you will not be sorry to examine the fare which old Martin has provided for us. See where yon black rock juts into the glen : there are a few birch trees scattered about the crags above it. Our bothy is there ; and all you see here on every side, and indeed since we passed the lower end of Loch Durich, is the deer forest. That wild-looking mountain opposite, which extends the whole way along the loch side, and which is cut into numberless little glens and corries, is the preserve—the *sanctum*—where I can at all times make sure of finding a deer. No other hoof is permitted to intrude there : sheep from the neighbouring farms are *pinded*,* goats are shot, and black cattle never go so far a-field. The ground is the very best possible for deer—plenty of wood with deep rough burns to lie in—grass in abundance—noble corries, both high and low—capital

* Or *pounded*, Scottice for *seized*.

passes to stand in for a shot, if you want to drive them—and a range of fifteen thousand acres of land.”

“Fifteen thousand acres ! You do amaze me ! You, a prudent man, give up fifteen thousand acres of land for the sake of a few deer ! What an extravagant sacrifice !”

“Not so great as you imagine, and as you will see to-morrow. The forest contains twice as much ; but the rest is not strictly preserved—it is let for sheep, and pays me rent : so that all I have to do is, to provide as much as possible against poachers, and let the deer find by experience that the preserve is a place of safety, whereto they may fly in case of being disturbed.”

One more hour's riding carried them to the point which Glenvallich had indicated. On turning it, Tresham saw a little green spot surrounded by hoary stunted birch trees, growing upon rocks as grey as themselves. Close beneath these trees stood some black huts, chiefly to be discerned by smoke which arose from the roofs of one or two among the group ; for the walls were so green, as to leave it doubtful whether they were not rather mounds of earth than habitations for men. A meadow of a full mile in breadth, which lost itself at either end, behind the overlapping shoulders of the hills, was stretched before this nest of huts.

This rich piece of pasture was intersected by the numerous windings of the stream, now diminished to a mere burn, and interspersed with patches of peat-bog and heather. On the opposite side of this meadow rose a huge mountain, the bosom of which was covered with scattered wood in all stages of luxuriance and decay ; and several chasms, black with rock and shadow, served as beds for the torrents, which, collecting on the broad surface above, were even at this time seen, like silver threads, hurrying down the steep declivity, or precipitating themselves in a series of petty cascades from ledge to ledge of the rock, which their violence had laid bare.

Above this region rose the great mass of the mountain, exhibiting a variegated expanse of rich purple heather and grey moss, interspersed with stripes and patches of green grass, indicating perennial springs ; and of peat moss, evidencing itself in black cracks and spots, which pervaded a great portion of its surface. White or grey rock stared through the surface in all quarters ; and the summit which rose in several sharp points connected with one great lumpy ridge, appeared to be formed of dark lead-coloured stones, with a few scattered blades of yellow grass.

The mountains behind the bothies were of a similar character, but still more rocky and pre-

cipitous; and at some distance further, the glen appeared to terminate in a dark mass of peaks and ridges, so jagged and confused, as to suggest the idea of a distant peep of chaos.

“Here we are at length,” said Glenvallich, springing from his pony as he approached the largest of the huts, “and time it is, perhaps you will say.”

“Why, not sorry certainly, though I must say the way has seemed anything rather than tedious,” replied his friend. “But, holla! what’s here, we did not come all this way to meet with Actæon’s fate, I hope?” There seemed to be some reason for dreading such a contingency, for as they neared the bothy, a couple of black and tan shaggy shepherd’s dogs, three rough terriers of the Skye breed, whose beauty consists in their unqualified ugliness, and as many huge wiry-haired deer-hounds, rushed like furies from the door of a neighbouring hut, with a volley of barking and howling that intimated very wrathful intentions, and made straight for the gentlemen. But the cause of alarm was only momentary; for no sooner did they observe the laird and his *gillie*,* than their angry greetings changed into whinings and yelpings of joy, and the monstrous hounds, with the force and elasticity of a spring let loose of a sudden, bounded towards

* Lad, young man, attendant.

their master, overwhelmed, and almost overset him with their uncouth caresses.

“Down, Bran! — down, Luath! — Fioun! behave, you rascal,” cried Glenvallich, extricating himself from their embraces, and the dogs crouched at his feet.

“Fine Ossianic names these truly,” said Tresham laughing, “but it is all right; the names of ancient song and story suit well with the scenes and the subjects they celebrate. I dare say there’s not a bare-legged gillie of your ‘tail’ now, but can spout Ossian, as you used to do Homer and Virgil, by the thousand lines, or as they say the Persian grooms do, who have all Hafiz and Saadee at their tongues’ end.”

“O, we have Ossianic names in abundance, and plenty of traditions of the Fingallians too, in this country. It was, we are assured, a great haunt of these heroes, and many of the mountains, rocks, and corries around you, bear their names, or appellations allusive to their attributes and customs. The very hill that rises above us is called *Dunfillan*, Fillan’s castle or fort; that rugged ridge opposite, has obtained the name of ‘*Kheime-na-Uiskar*,’ or ‘the step of Oscar.’ A great black rocky hollow, famous in all times as now, for being the resort of deer, and still more so for the nature of its passes, which are so easily commanded that

the animals once in them cannot escape, is termed ‘*Choru-Uiskar*,’ ‘Oscar’s caldron,’ from a story of some monstrous slaughter of deer committed by that worthy, who reached that place by a marvelously swift and dangerous run across the ‘step’ above. That peaked and craggy mountain in shadow at the head of the glen, is called ‘*par excellence*,’ on the ‘*Lucus a non lucendo*’ principle doubtless, ‘*Bord-na-Fionn*,’ the table of the Fin-gallians, and there is a great huge lump which you can’t see from where we are, which is dignified by the appellation of ‘*Stol-e-Ton-iosal*,’ or ‘the seat of Ton-iosal,’ a heavy-sterned hero of those days, who, though brave as a lion, was so unwieldy or lazy, that the force of an hundred men was required to get him on his legs when once he had ‘taken the chair.’

“Hah, a proper fellow, truly, and the story is no doubt as worthy of credit and attention as most of those relating to that marvellous race. But I forgot—we are on tender ground, and assuredly, when surrounded by this magnificent scenery, so well suited to these imposing names, it is not *just* the moment to sneer at Ossian or his heroes; and faith, I must say, there is something spirit-stirring and inspiring to find oneself on classic ground, as it were, on the very spot where the mighty have trod, when all around harmonizes with the ideas

conjured up by their memories. Filled with the thoughts of the swift-footed Oscar, now, I have not a doubt that I could breast a mountain after one of the dun deer, with twice the vigour I could exert without such a stimulus, and depend upon it I shall acquit myself famously to-morrow. But which way now?—which is your Highland domicile? A seat and a drop of the mountain dew—or, faith, even a glass of the less appropriate, but not unpalatable liquor 'yclept 'old madeira,' would prove exceedingly consolatory to the inward man—eh! what say you?"

"By all means, Hal—follow me." And he led the way to the low-browed entrance of the hut before which they had been standing.

"What! there? this your bothy? this your hunting seat? it's a bothy this, with a vengeance, man!" and Tresham stopped for a moment ere he entered, to examine the exterior of his future quarters.

CHAPTER II.

A HIGHLAND FORESTER.

A blessing upon thy heart, he said,
Good fellowe, thy shooting is good,
For an' thy heart be as good as thy hand,
Thou wert better than Robin Hood.

THE bothy, to all appearance, was built precisely of the same materials and in the same fashion as other Highland huts, or shealings, (as the occasional abodes of shepherds in remote glens are generally termed,) except in as far as it was larger and more lofty than those around it. The walls, externally at least, were formed of *divots*; that is, sods cut with the heather or grass growing on them, the matted roots of which give a firmer texture to the soil of which the mass is composed.

These are built one upon another, in courses, longwise or edgewise, like bricks; and, supported by a frame work of timber, make a firm and warm

wall. The roof was formed of the same materials, laid upon small rafters, (or as they are called in the country, *kebers*,) and covered with a heather thatch; and in this manner, bating only the heather thatch, are the majority of the black huts, which form the abodes of the Highland peasantry, chiefly or entirely built, to the great injury of the ground in their neighbourhood, the surface of which becomes thus most wastefully peeled, because the lazy tenant “canna be fashed” to erect a better habitation of the stones, and wood, and heather, which are always to be found in abundance near him.

A small square pavement of pebbles placed before the doorway of this tenement, prevented the lodgment there of the water which formed pools in front of the other huts; and a small window, consisting of six panes of glass in a casement opening inwards, betokened, when it was observed, (a matter not of absolute necessity, from the thickness of the wall in which it was sunk,) a degree of refinement scarcely in unison with the materials around it.

On entering the door-way, to effect which our Englishman was forced to stoop rather lower than was agreeable, Fresham found himself in a passage formed of clay and wattle, which divided the interior into two parts. A glance in passing showed,

on the one hand, a dark space of undefined dimensions, filled with smoke, amidst which sparkled the embers of a peat fire ; several dim shapes, like ghosts hovering in their own grey mist, might be detected sitting round this dubious light, or flitting about in the thick atmosphere. A qualm of uneasiness came over the Englishman as his eye fell on this suspicious limbo-like hole ; but he yielded to the impulse of his host's arm, as he threw open the door of an opposite apartment, the appearance of which, as it broke upon him after the other, afforded infinite relief to his mind. The whole interior of that quarter of the bothy had been plastered and whitewashed ; and, illuminated by no less than *two* small glass windows and a cheerful fire, it wore an air of cleanliness and comfort far greater than might have been augured from its black exterior. It is true that the great thick *couples*, as they are called, which form the framework, at once of walls and roof, together with the cross beams, or *bauks*, which secured them near their point of junction at the upper ends, were seen projecting from the foundation to the roof far into the apartment ; and that the dark glossy japan of the smoke which had encrusted them, before the promotion of the bothy to the dignity of a hunting seat, would here and there insist upon appearing through even the densest coat of plaster.

But the offensive objects were hung with deer's horns and hunting geer; and taken *in cumulo* with other things around them, presented no very incongruous appearance. The floor was boarded: a fireplace, which did *not* smoke, at least at the time, was furnished with a few bars of iron, so placed as to favour the arrangement and combustion of the wood and peats which were used for fuel; and a table or two of deal, with three or four wooden chairs, and some shelves on which lay a few books, completed the furniture of the *public* apartment of the bothy.

“ Well, Harry, welcome to the bothy of Auchonrui; how like you its interior? behold parlour, drawing-room, and library, all in one.”

“ Why, faith, Charles, the sight relieves me from some troublesome apprehensions; the look of that horrid, black, smoke-drying hole at the other end, put me into a terrible fright; not only bleared eyes and suffocation stared me in the face, but visions of a more fearful fate; of falling, ignobly, the sacrifice of unseen enemies, rose in the dim perspective: in plain terms, I expected to be bitten to death—devoured alive—dying a death worse than that of Herod—horrible! but this clean little shop promises at least exemption from so fearful a catastrophe!”

“ It does so; and truly, as I hope you will find

—but to complete the restoration of your equanimity, let me act as groom of the chambers, and introduce you to the dormitories of the mansion.”

Opening a door on one side the fire-place, Glenvallich ushered his guest into another apartment, filled up much as the first, except that, in place of tables, two small bedsteads occupied each a corner, and camp-stools formed substitutes for chairs. Basins and ewers stood on little shelves, for the offices of the toilet; and there was even the luxury of a small mirror hung near the little window, for the use of such Jemmy Jessamy's as might be unable to shave without its assistance.

Small mattresses, laid upon fresh cut heather, packed with the flowery tops uppermost, in the little bedsteads, formed a fragrant and springy couch, and light warm blankets, with snow-white bed-linen, completed the comforts of the sleeping establishment.

“These are not just such quarters as I was happy to bid you welcome to at *Loupriach*, when you first burned powder against grouse, but they serve my purpose and that of the very few friends who have spirit enough to embark on the perilous adventure which you are now *boon* for. It is a far and a difficult way to bring building materials, so I just took possession of this bothy, which, as you see, is larger than common. It had given

shelter to the shepherds of one of my farmers, who quitted the glen, and I had but to repair and fit it up as you see. Hereafter, perhaps, I may put something better in its room; at present it must serve our turn, and such as it is I bid you a Highland welcome to it—‘the farther ben, the welcomer,’ you know.”

“Yes; I have heard—and faith, Charles, I should be hard to please, if this snug little room did not content me: and now—O for a glass of wine to restore exhausted nature!”

“*A la bonne heure*—here it is,” said Glenvallich, opening a cupboard which occupied a place between two of the large couples, and which seemed full of crockery, glass ware, and stores,—“for my part I seldom use any cordial but native whiskey, on this side of Loch Durich, and little even of that; but in compassion to vitiated tastes, who cannot relish the ‘mountain dew,’ I keep a supply of old sherry and port, which I hope you will not find contemptible. Beyond that, I go not; for claret and champagne you must look to the shooting-box at Loupriach, or to Innerallich. But it is time to see the forester and hear his report.—Angus, is Duncan Maccombich here?”

“Aye, Sir, he’s just come in from the hill—he’s gone to put on his things, and he’ll be wi’ your honour in a moment.”

“ Send him here, when he’s ready,” was the reply, and the gillie retired.

“ A good specimen of the true Highland deer-stalker, you will see in Maccombich,” continued the laird, “ one that will detect the horns of a lying stag, stalk him, and shoot him afterwards, with any man in Scotland ; and faith, he who can keep up with Duncan, when he has once marked his game, and sets off to gain the wind of him, may fairly boast of firm foot, and sound wind. It would do you good to see the fellow crouching with his cat-like pace under the crest of a hill, or rapidly rounding a point of rock to gain a few yards upon his victim ; he was born for a poacher or game-keeper ;—but here comes the man to answer for himself.”

A tall Highlander, of an imposing presence, now entered the room, clad in the dress of his country, which well became his figure. A tartan jacket, in which green and purple predominated, covered his broad shoulders, its skirts terminating in narrow tails, a little below the small of his back. A full and handsome phelibeg of the same stuff was bound around his waist, by a black leather belt, and reached to within three or four inches of his bare and sinewy knee. His legs were clad in hose checked of red and green, gartered with scarlet ribbon:—and such limbs ! for straightness,

form, and muscle, rivalling those of any ancient statue; strength and agility was written on every swelling vein and working muscle. His whole frame, indeed, rising but little above the common height, but firm, compact, and admirably proportioned, denoted the highest degree of activity and robustness, combined with powers of endurance to an extent seldom to be found in the same individual. The head, small in proportion to his bulk, was set loftily upon his broad but falling shoulders, and his countenance, which evidently had braved the Highland storms for forty years, confirmed the impression made upon the beholder by his figure, being stamped with the marks of steady caution, firm decision, and insuperable fortitude. And although that intellectual radiance, which cultivation of mind alone can lend to the human countenance, would have been sought for in vain in the features of the forester, a close observer could not have failed to detect, in the quick glance of his deep set eye, much native intelligence, acuteness, and sagacity.

On his head he wore the small smart bonnet of the country, and his plaid, differing from the rest of his tartans, being of a small grey and black check, was tightly swathed across his breast and over his left shoulder, leaving the right arm free for action. Such was the forester of Glenochree,

and striking as his exterior and more obvious qualifications were to the eyes of the stranger, Maccombich was only a fair sample of a race of men, now wearing scarce in the north, but who once filled the ranks of those fine regiments which the Highlands sent forth against the foes of Britain, and who, most of them, have sealed their loyalty and their devotion with their blood, on foreign shores. Such were the men, sedate, orderly, and temperate in peace; patient, firm, zealous, and intrepid in war, who, with others of their countrymen left their bones to whiten on the plains of Maida, and of Egypt, of Portugal, of Spain, and of bloody Waterloo—but the race is fast declining, for the march of improvement is rapidly changing the circumstances of the land which bred them, and the habits which form them are wearing out apace. Riches and population, the usual *indices* of prosperity, may be increasing throughout the Highlands, but the hardy race of mountaineers, that were scattered over its rugged surface, that followed their chiefs to war, and fought their country's battles, are gone, and cannot be replaced.

“ Well, Duncan, how are you to-day? what news from the hill?” said the laird, accosting the forester with a cheerful voice and gracious smile.

“ A good day to your honour,” responded

D 2

Duncan, in slow earnest tones, uttered with a strong Highland accent, "it's plaised we are to see ye at the bothy again; ther's little news but good news that I hear o' in the hill."

"Well, but what say you of the deer? are they as thlick as usual?"

"Ou aye, they're no' scarece, that's sure; but the hill's wide, ye'll no' see that many aye."

"Well, but to day, then, what did you see? Have you lodged any?"

"Hum!" replied the forester, musing and counting on his fingers, as he slowly proceeded with his enumeration, "I seed two staigs and four hinds wi' their calves the day, in the Corry Dhu, just as ye come ow'r the shouther o' Scoorevialach; and another staig wi' two hinds and a yell one, on the briest going up to Craigtjerragh. Then there was three staigs and eight or nine hinds, some o' them wi' calves, in the wud o' Cailifusech, below the black brae thonder; but the laad says something started them, an' they left the wud, and crossed the Truibec burn, and up thro' the heather hags to the hill—they'll be in Corryskiach the nicht for certain—and there's more—ou, plenty sure enugh."

"Well, that's all good; but have you lodged any of them for the night, and in places where we may have a good chance of a shot, in the morning?"

Here's my friend, Mr. Tresham, an Englishman, (here the forester cast a keen and curious eye over Tresham's person, bowing slightly but respectfully at the same time,) we must try to show him a little of our Highland sport."

"Ou, aye; very right, very right; and no fear o' sport—we canna miss o' deer; but it's best to mak' shure, and there's a hale herd o' fifteen, an' five staigs among them, one o' them wi' ten branches, lying in the black hollow wast o' Caillifusech; I seed them from *Meal-e-Keaunegoo*,* they were feeding about the black rocks on the wast side, and they'll no' go out o' that the nicht—if they do it 'ill be into Choru Uiskar, and that'll be better still. That's our best chance, Glenvallich, but it 'ill be a gay bit pull for the gentleman, sure enugh."

"Why, yes, Maccombich, you have cut us out a pretty tight day's job; but I dare say you have chosen the best ground, and our best chance. As for Mr. Tresham, he's a capital fag—eh, Charles? but suppose we try the wood of Fiusech first, for those stags you speak of; you and Kenneth, and the shepherd's lad, can go through it softly, and Mr. Tresham and I will stand at the two best passes—by the black stump, you know, and in the hollow of the burn at the top of the wood:—

* The dog's head height, or promontory.

if we get no shot, then we can try the black hollow you speak of. But we'll need to start early."

"Ou, aye, we canna be ow'r soon in the hill—we should leave this at three a'clock, surely, or the deer will be done feeding, and it's ill, whiles, to see a lying deer."

"Hear you that, Tresham? will three o'clock in the morning suit you?"

"Whew! what a tramontane hour—better remain under arms all night, I think, than beat the *generale* so early: faith, the affair begins to assume a serious aspect; but I'm under orders, and ready to obey—three o'clock be it."

"Well, Maccombich, have all ready at the time you speak of, we shall be so too; take Bran and Luath, we may want them for a wounded deer. Stay, here's a dram for you, man; you'll be the better of it after your drenching in the hill—very wet, I suppose?"

"Ou, very sir, heavy showers—one that lasted an hour an' a half, but it looks weel the nicht. *Deoch slaintj*, gentlemen, here's 'luck the morn.'"

"Gad, that's a fine fellow," said Tresham, as the tall form of the forester left the room. "A powerful, active fellow, indeed. What a soldier he would have made! And yet I have seen whole companies of such as he, mowed down by shot like corn before the reaper!"

“Yes, and you would have this poor fellow expended too, I hope: better as he is, both for himself and for me—he made a good escape from the soldiering trade. This Duncan Maccombich, who was born on another part of the property, in the days of my grandfather, was, like most other Highland children of his days, suffered to run wild in idleness and mischief, his ostensible occupation being to herd a cow, while, in reality, he passed his time in robbing nests, scrambling for hazel nuts, paddling in the burns for trout, and making one in every mischievous play set on foot by the elder lads of the village, or *toun*, (as it was called,) where his parents lived. These parents dying, left Duncan destitute, and my grandfather, out of charity, took the boy into his kitchen, where he had the run of the place, and a few clothes, and soon became the fag and humble companion of the young folks. He followed them in their fishing and shooting expeditions, carried the game, helped to row the boat and clean the guns, and took such share as pleased himself of the stable and kennel work. But as Duncan grew up, his indolence, or rather his dislike to work—for in matters which he liked, his activity was indefatigable—revolted at the increased labour which was required of him, and he accepted an offer made him by my poor uncle Robert, who was then raising re-

cruits, to enter his company, and follow him as his servant to Ireland. There did Duncan continue for some time with his regiment; but, unfortunately for him, he was quartered with a detachment in the neighbourhood of Derry, where he fell in with a set of jolly paddies, who were manufacturers of that fascinating liquor, known in the green isle by the appellations of *poteen* or *innishowen*,—in our own kindly highlands, by that of *Ferintosh*, *Glenlivat*, &c., according to the name of the glen or district which becomes celebrated for the best *uisk-a-beh*.* Well did Duncan know how much this manufacture was encouraged and prosecuted in his native glen, and all those in its vicinity. And although the servant of his majesty, bound of course to support the laws of the realm, and not ignorant of the illegality of the practice, he could not bring himself to abandon the society of the frank-hearted, good-humoured Irish boys—far less, to betray them to the sneaking dogs of revenue officers.

“There were persons, however, dull enough not to appreciate the purity of poor Maccombich’s motives; who, on the other hand, were so unreasonable as to impute blame to him for his conduct in the business. The consequences threatened to be serious; so my uncle, only a little while

* Water of Life—unde, *whiskey*.

before his death, in order to withdraw him alike from present punishment and future temptation, exerted his influence to procure the discharge of his servant, whose health (it was averred) required renovation in the air of his native glen.

“ Thus thrown in some measure on his own resources, Maccombich, who had by this time discovered from experience that a man must work to live, and whose native energy had been aroused by collision with the world, cast about him for an occupation, and having an offer of a small farm from my grandfather, who loved him for his attachment to his son, he set himself down as a farmer on his little croft, and continued for several years to live respectably, and in good repute with all his neighbours. The next period of Duncan’s life I am little acquainted with, for it is one on which he seems unwilling to dwell ; and I have never pressed him to disclose what seems to give him pain. There was, I believe, some unhappy love affair, the event of which unsettled his mind for awhile, and ruined his worldly affairs. His next attempt was in the droving line. He joined a person of some substance, in the cattle trade, between England and Scotland, first as a servant, and afterwards as a partner. This did well enough for a few years, but his partner dying, I believe, and the profits of trade falling sadly off,

Maccombich was forced to abandon it, and thought himself lucky to escape the consequences of debt, by a sacrifice of all he possessed.

“Once more adrift, poor Duncan seems to have grown desperate or reckless. How he subsisted for several years, hardly himself can tell—sometimes it was by poaching, sometimes probably by smuggling. That he was well acquainted at one time with persons largely concerned in illicit distillation is well known; and that his acknowledged activity and shrewdness, and the experience he had gained in his Irish campaign, made his assistance a very desirable acquisition to the free traders, is equally certain; but Maccombich himself denies that at this time, or for many years past, he has had any thing to do with the business, and I certainly have no proof that he has so, although many will tell you that to this day he continues in habits with his old associates, and retains considerable influence over them.

“It was while he led this bootless and wandering sort of life, not to use a harsher term, that chance led me to the knowledge of his existence and distress. I had known but little of Maccombich personally, for my English education kept me out of the country while he continued a settled house-keeper in it; but I was well acquainted with his character; for not only did I remember the kind-

ness with which my grandfather used often to speak of him, but many of the old servants would talk in the highest terms of the poor fellow's attachment to my uncle, and the distraction of soul with which he received the news of his illness and death. I knew that he had at least the highland qualities of fidelity and feudal attachment; and having at that time, about seven years ago, resolved upon reviving and preserving the original deer forest which had existed for many a year in this glen, I conceived the idea of giving the care of it, and the situation of forester, to Maccombich. There was none that I could hear of better calculated, from early habits and native tastes, for the trust, and I hoped that the confidence reposed in him would prove a stimulus to exertion and good behaviour. I must say that he has not disappointed me. The promise which I exacted that he would break with his evil companions, and renounce all irregular habits, I am inclined to think he has kept. There are ill wishers of his who whisper the contrary, but I have never been able to discover any grounds for the accusation. It is remarkable that Maccombich, though fond of the excitement which characterizes the life of a smuggler and poacher, and of course frequently involved in the dissipation incident to such a life, was never habitually in-

temperate—he never was fond of liquor for its own sake, and, separated from his lawless companions, he is really a sober and peaceable man. In fine, since he has been my forester, now seven years, I have had no cause whatever to repent my choice.”

“ I am rejoiced to hear you say so,” said Tresham, as his friend concluded this sketch of the forester’s history. “ The appearance of your friend Duncan has interested me ; and I am really glad to find him so worthy a character at bottom as you make him out to be—for as to his smuggling a bit, really these people seem brought up with an idea that breaking the law in this respect is neither criminal nor disgraceful—so we must not judge him too severely ; but it does appear to me a singular thing that this same crime should be suffered to flourish, unchecked, as it does, in the moral Highlands of Scotland !”—

“ Unchecked ? by no means ; but certainly unrepressed, and likely to remain so, in the present state of the law.”

“ Why, what do you allude to—what ails the law ?”

“ It would be tedious to explain it ; but while legal distilleries are fettered with regulations that set quantity and quality at variance, so that they produce no spirit which whiskey-drinkers can bear

to use, and when duties and restrictions are so high as to fritter away all profit, or force them to raise the price of their goods to an extravagant rate, what can be expected by any reasonable man, but that those who love good and cheap spirits will go to the smugglers—to the illicit stills where it is made at a very moderate price, and in high perfection?”

“ Do you then think that lowering the duties upon legally distilled spirit, would put an end to smuggling?”

“ That would be saying too much perhaps. That such a measure would have a tendency to do so, is self-evident; but to strike at the root of illicit distillation will require time and patience; and great and persevering attention must be paid to the effect of such regulations as may from time to time be framed for the purpose.”

“ What—do you not think that by a reduction of the duties, the legal distiller would be placed upon a par with the smuggler, as to profit? And if profit were done away, would not that destroy smuggling?”

“ Why, I could scarcely venture to predict that it would. It is not profit alone that induces the smuggler to engage in the hazards of his profession. It is the pleasure of meeting secretly in remote places, at night, and in darkness; the ex-

citement and interest of a hazardous employment, conducted with necessary mystery—the hilarity and enjoyment promoted by such occupations; and, above all, perhaps the triumph of success—of outwitting severe, and, as they consider them, tyrannical and oppressive laws: laws which would restrain them from the exercise of what they conceive a natural and inherent privilege—that of making what use they please of their own property. It is these things, I suspect, that invest smuggling with a charm in the eyes of most Highlanders, which profit alone would never lend it; but soft—in good time to shut my mouth, lo! where Martin comes with dinner, such as it may be. I hope you left all your epicurean fastidiousness on the other side of Loch Durich; depend upon it you will look in vain for rich sauces or high culinary art here.”

“ O never fear me! our day’s exercise has only left one desire, that of filling the craving void it has occasioned; and it has provided a sauce to suit the daintiest palate. I am far more disposed to practical conclusions than to gastronomic criticism.”

The dinner proved excellent—the whiskey toddy superior; and the two gentlemen, after passing the evening in conversation, which chiefly turned on the expected sport of the morrow, retired to

prepare themselves by sleep for the early rising and anticipated fatigues of the ensuing day.

“ And who, after all, then, are this pair of friends, this Glenvallich and this Tresham, with whom we have been forced to travel through the tedious longitude of a Highland glen, to a resting place which promises so little either of comfort or amusement?”—the reader will possibly at this place exclaim, if he has not already done so: the information required is reasonable, and we shall take the present opportunity of supplying it as concisely as possible.

CHAPTER III.

A HIGHLAND LAIRD OF MODERN TIMES, AND
HIS GUEST.

—Every good his native wilds impart,
Imprints the patriot passion on his heart,
And even those hills that round his mansion rise,
Enhance the bliss his liberal hand supplies.

He was come of gentlemen,
In simple state was he then,
His father was a manlie knight,
His mother was a lady bright,
He was gotten and born in marriage,
And his eldest brother had the heritage.

OLD BALLAD.

CHARLES JAMES MAC ALPINE—we make choice of this patronymic, or rather surname, that all offence may be avoided to the mighty ones of the north—the Mackintoshes and Mac Phersons, the Mac Donalds and the Mac Donnel's, the Mac Leods and Mac Kenzies, the Campbells, the Camerons, the Frasers, Grants, Gordons, &c. &c. &c.,

who might not only be surprised, but displeased, to find a gentleman of such considerable pretensions springing up in the heart of their countries, and unauthorizedly usurping their names, their property, or attributes: of all such undue presumption we shall do our best to beware.

Charles James Mac Alpine, then, was the descendant and representative of an ancient, and at one time a noble Highland family of very extensive landed property, and great local influence; but who having, unfortunately for themselves, adhered to the losing side in the rebellion of 1715, had forfeited both rank and property, and were forced into a long and painful exile. The clemency or justice of the third George restored to the unoffending grandchild the forfeited property of his forefathers; their title was lost for ever.

Robert Mac Alpine, restored by the royal grace to favour and to fortune, took possession of the family estates, to the great joy of a numerous, and at that time a respectable tenantry; who, with a devoted attachment to their unfortunate landlord, which more prosperous circumstances might not have elicited, and which overleaped all legal restraints, had remitted to the exile in secret much of those rents which the commissioners of the crown in vain attempted to levy from them. This disinterested conduct was not lost upon the

restored laird. He returned to his Highland estates, with a resolution to spend his life and his means among those who had so generously assisted his necessities when in distress, to promote their welfare, and to vigilate over the noble property thus recovered to his family. It was a pledge which he amply redeemed. Many marks of favour were bestowed upon the deserving, and some on those who little merited it. Leases were renewed or extended upon favourable terms: new farms were granted, and every judicious encouragement held forth for improvement. A wise and sensible system of conciliation was in general adopted; which, by augmenting the popularity and influence of the landlord, increased his power of doing good. And he did good—much good; and the prosperity of tenants and landlord was essentially promoted by his benevolent and judicious management.

These were not the only means by which the Glenvallich estates were increased. A wife was essential to the laird's plans of comfort and improvement, and he sought and won the hand of a neighbouring heiress, whose dower added to his already extensive domains sundry coterminous glens, and a considerable further extent of brown heathy pasture and rocky hills. By this lady, who did not live long to contribute to his hap-

piness, the laird of Glenvallich had three sons, the second of which died in boyhood. Of the others, James and Robert, the first and eldest born was father of the subject of our present consideration : the latter was the uncle to whom he had alluded as the patron of the forester Maccombich.

But the Good Macgilliecullach*—such was the distinctive patronymic of his family, from the name of its reputed founder, and such the adjunct which his worth and benevolence had procured for him in the country—the Good Macgilliecullach, like other mortals, was doomed to taste the bitters as well as the sweets of this sublunary state. His eldest son, a young man who gave promise of being a worthy successor to the virtues of his father, had married a lady of good family, and as amiable in disposition as lovely in her person; and the old gentleman looked forward with reasonable hope to the delight of seeing a young and happy family rise around him, to comfort his declining years. But this fair hope was miserably blighted. The birth of a son had spread a general gladness

* *Cullach*, in Gaelic, signifies a *boar*. Macgilliecullach, “the son of the Lad of the Boar,” doubtless from some traditional incident connected with one of these animals. Most families of consideration in the Highlands have some such distinctive patronymic, and they often refer to some remarkable exploit of an ancestor.

throughout the wide domain; but scarce had the customary bonfires announced the fortunate event from all the hills around, when the sounds of joy were untimely hushed, and the young mother's thrill of exultation gave way to deep anxiety; for on the very night of these rejoicings, her husband, by incautious exposure, received the seeds of an illness from which he never recovered. In three months Glenvallich followed to the grave the body of his first-born son, and the infant which she clasped to her breast was all that remained to the bereaved widow of a husband whom she had loved with the devotion of a first and fond attachment.

But this was not the only shock which assailed the worthy laird. His son Robert, his youngest, and his favourite, who had accepted of a captain's commission in a Highland regiment at that time raising, was seized with a violent fever in Ireland, where he was on duty with his corps, and died, before any of his friends could reach him. This last blow fell upon the old gentleman with stunning violence. Deprived of all the objects of his love and pride, the spring of his mind and of his health gave way together, as it seemed, under its weight. It was remarked by his friends and confidential attendants, that nothing ever afterwards yielded him any enjoyment. Even the

sight of his little grandchild, for a while, appeared to excite more of pain than of pleasure in his mind; and if at any time he smiled, it was in such a sort as betrayed that mirth and he were no longer for each other.

His widowed daughter-in-law continued to live with the old man, and rousing herself from the absorbing influence of her own grief, endeavoured with the most persevering tenderness to sooth his yet more overwhelming sorrow. The effort was of service both to herself and to that child to whom she resolved to devote her future life. It roused her to beneficial exertion: her infant throve even to a mother's wish, and the old laird, won at length by the sweet and patient devotion of the widow of his son, became gradually so much attached to her and to her child, that he would never suffer either to be long out of his sight. It was the attachment of a kind but broken heart—the fondness of imbecility—the blow had been struck, and in the course of four years from the death of his last son, the good Macgillieculloch laid down a life which had long ceased to have any charms for him, and followed his three children to the grave.

The estate of Glenvallich, the greater part of which had been entailed by himself, descended by that disposition to his grandchild; and before his

death, able and efficient guardians were nominated to vigilate over the interests of the boy whose minority was by the deed of trust appointed to terminate at the age of eighteen, unless his guardians should see good reason for continuing it until the customary legal period.

Of these guardians, the widow whose solemn pledge to devote herself to the care and education of her son, and whose conduct from the period of her husband's death had deservedly exalted her in the old gentleman's esteem, was appointed one; and well did she redeem her pledge and discharge her trust.

The impossibility of bestowing upon the boy a suitable education in the Highlands was sufficiently obvious. With the approbation therefore of the other guardians, Mrs. Mac Alpine determined to remove to England, and give the future laird the full advantage of the best education which that country could afford; still however maintaining his Highland associations and attachments by occasional visits to Inverallich. The large overplus of rents and produce from the estates, were in the mean time suffered to accumulate as a fund to supply such expenses as might be required when the minor should come of age, and especially for the purpose of improving his resi-

dence, which was by no means commensurate either in convenience or accommodation, with the property to which it belonged.

This judicious arrangement was more judiciously and conscientiously fulfilled than is often the case in such circumstances; and the young Glenvallich, at the prescribed period of his majority, entered into possession of a clear estate of full ten thousand a year, well paid rental, together with a sum of ready cash which of itself might have been deemed a handsome fortune. In the mean time he had received and profited by the valuable opportunities of instruction which had been afforded him both at Eton and Oxford; he had distinguished himself at both these places, and in order to complete the course of study and improvement which had been traced out for him, he remained two years longer at the latter place.

It was during the earlier part of his Oxonian career that he became acquainted with Henry Tresham; and the friendship which sprung up between the two young men, in these their early days, not only stood the test of absence and of change, but increased in firmness with increase of intimacy, until the period of which we treat.

When Glenvallich became of age, he repaired, in company with his mother, to the family residence of Inverallich castle, in order to visit his

estates and renew his acquaintance with his neighbours and tenantry. On this occasion, with the advice of an able architect, he made such additions and improvements to the old castellated tenement, as the advancing notions of the times, on points of comfort and accommodations demanded, and converted a rambling old Highland fortalice into a handsome and commodious mansion, retaining or improving the original style of architecture as harmonizing better than any other with the character of the scenery around it.

Inverallich, commonly pronounced Innerallich, was most happily and picturesquely situated upon a natural terrace of great beauty, at the mouth of a noble mountain glen, which opened upon a Highland loch of considerable magnitude. Behind it lay a large extent of level or undulating land which rose gradually on the slope of the hills on either side, and was plentifully clothed and studded with ancient timber trees of noble size, so as to form a handsome park. This extensive mass of wood, which had rather been increased than diminished by the late Glenvallich, embosomed the castle on all sides except in front, where a fine lawn opened out to the river, and uniting with the natural growth which clothed the sides of the hills and the valley itself to a great distance above the park, imparted to the whole scene a richness of

effect, which probably few Highland straths can be found to afford.

The glen itself, which gave its name to the property, at the distance of a few miles above the castle divided into two parts, one of which retained its original appellation, the other coming from a different district of mountains, and passing through the valley with which the reader is already acquainted by the name of Glenochree, conveyed its tribute of water to the river which flowed under the castle terrace.

In this handsome mansion, and on his own noble property, did Glenvallich, after travelling for a time through such countries as the political state of Europe, at the time rendered pervious to a subject of Great Britain, take up his abode, resolved to follow the example of his worthy grandfather—to live among his own people, to gain their confidence, increase their comforts, improve their condition, and thus take the most generous and rational method of increasing the real value of his family property. The good natural sense and feeling of his excellent mother tended greatly to promote these views, and to aid their execution. She had consented, at the earnest request of her son, to take the management of his household, until that charge should naturally devolve on some one worthy to be entrusted also

with the more important trust—his happiness; and she exercised the office with an affectionate zeal and jealous anxiety both for his honour and his interest, which corresponded with the judicious and blameless character of her administration as his guardian. So delightful, indeed, did her arrangements for his comfort and amusement render his home, that it appeared as if he felt no further want; and some of the busy gossips around would remark, that “the old lady of Glenvallich found the nest too warm to seek to quit it, and *that* the young laird would find.” But no such selfish motive found place in the bosom of the object of their ill-natured sneers. Her son’s happiness and interest were all she had in view; and she would have rejoiced to be called upon to surrender the keeping of both into hands worthy of the trust, though at the expense of abandoning along with them, the almost exclusive place she had preserved in his affections. For more than five years, however, had that son made Inverallich his constant residence, and no change, of a nature calculated to interfere with either his or her arrangements, had occurred, or seemed likely so to do.

For the greater part of the year the young man employed himself in active superintendence of his estates, or in the rural sports of which he was na-

turally fond. During the summer and autumn, a succession of company from various quarters enlivened his abode; the earlier part of winter had its duties and its pleasures among his tenantry and neighbours; and in spring he frequently repaired to London to rub off the rust contracted in a country residence, to revive his acquaintance with the world, and to keep pace, as far as a man sufficiently occupied at home may do, with the current of events in the political, the literary, and the fashionable circles of society. Such was the life of the laird of Glenvallich at the time when we have thought fit to present him to the notice of our readers: his friend need not detain us so long.

Henry Basset Tresham was the second son of Sir Richard Tresham, Baronet, a gentleman of good old family, in possession of an estate of eight thousand pounds a year in ——shire; of sons and daughters amounting to seven in number, only three of the former, and one of the latter at this time remained alive. The eldest son, a young man of very amiable disposition and high talents, but of a feeble constitution, had in consequence of ill health been forced to fly from the damp uncertain climate of Britain, to the milder air of a more southern latitude, and, somewhat imprudently, sought rather to gratify his taste for information, and thirst of knowledge,

by travelling through the then less well-known regions of Greece and Asia Minor, than to renovate his exhausted and weakly frame by a quiet residence in a genial climate.

Henry, the second son, and the subject of our present consideration, was a youth of talents and observation, great animal spirits, and dispositions not less amiable than those of his elder brother. Though too volatile to be systematically studious, his quick genius and excellent capacity enabled him to gain a distinguished rank among his companions, both at school and college, with infinitely less labour than many of them would have expended in maintaining a very moderate character as a scholar. So flattering, indeed, were the accounts of his progress which reached his father, that they decided the worthy baronet's mind, regarding a measure which he had long contemplated as a means of providing for one of his sons.

The family was not only possessed of considerable church patronage itself, but, through its various branches and connexions, could command high interest in the way of clerical preferment; so that Sir Richard, who had long resolved that one of his sons should study for orders, now resolved that Henry, already distinguished for literary attainments, should be that son.

But, alas ! how often are our best devised projects frustrated !—how often does the perversity or heedlessness of youth overthrow the calculations, and thwart the wisest schemes of age ! Far from being gratified at the prospect of luxurious affluence and undisturbed repose thus opened to his view, Henry Tresham's active mind revolted at the idea of a career so placid, so unruffled, so unmarked, as he conceived it to be, with incident and interest, as that of a beneficed clergyman of the established church. “What !” exclaimed he, with cheeks kindling indignantly, as the plan was first propounded to him, “*I waste my days in a repose so inglorious ?—I consent to turn my brains into prosy sermons and dull homilies, or expose myself, in a black gown and white band, to tickle the ears of a set of country clowns ? Sooner would I burn every book I have, and follow the first recruiting drum and fife that passes by !*”

Furiously wroth was the worthy baronet when his son's speech and behaviour on this occasion were (as care was taken they should be) duly reported to him. It would have been hard to say whether anger or disappointment predominated ; but he swore, that unless Harry should own, with the humblest contrition, his unseemly folly, and should implicitly subscribe to all such arrangements as he, his sire, might condescend to dictate,

he might follow his own course, and make or mar his own fortune, at his own pleasure ; for, that one shilling of his money should never go to foster arrogance and rebellion. “ What ! reject a provision which many a peer of the realm, with ten times his fortune, would catch at for a younger son ! No—never would he speak to—never see the culprit again, until, with humble penitence, he came to ask forgiveness for his folly and presumption.”

Such language was but indifferently calculated to effect the object it aimed at—if other aim it had than to vent the speaker’s wrath. The spirit of Henry was roused ; mildness might at least have made him pause in the course of disobedience ; but “ so despotic and tyrannical a denunciation,” as he termed it, only rendered him obstinate in his fault. He proudly accepted the alternative ; he would be the fashioner of his own fate and fortune, without being beholden even to a father, who could seek so to browbeat his son into a profession he detested.

All hopes of conciliation, had any ever existed, were now, for the time at least, at an end ; and, for a while, matters went on disagreeably enough between the offending party and his father. But Henry’s heart was too good, and his dispositions far too amiable, to persist long in rebellion. Fain would he have

cast himself at his father's feet, and said, "Father, I have sinned;" but pride, that ally of the wicked one in the heart of man, forbade the humiliation, and whispered, "How do I know but my penitence may be rejected?" The father too, on his side, began to doubt whether he had gone the wisest way to work for compassing his purpose; and without making any actual concession, he permitted a friend of his, General Masham, to see the youth and endeavour to bring him to reason, and to report the state of mind in which he should be found.

The general was a sensible and judicious man, acquainted with the world, and accustomed to the study of the human character. That of Henry was not difficult to read, for it stood open and undisguised before him. His visit was well-timed too: he found the youth smarting keenly under the painful and unwonted feeling of parental estrangement, and willing to do any thing to conciliate—except to obey the obnoxious command. Nor could the general discover the necessity or good sense of enforcing it; on the contrary, the whole tenor of his conversation with Henry, convinced him that it would be the height, not only of cruelty but of imprudence, to do so. "You may make a bad parson of your son if you like," said he to his friend the baronet, when he reported

to him the result of his embassy ; “ but you will spoil a capital soldier ;—take my word for it, black will never sit well on that young man. His head is full of guns, and drums, and trumpets already, and he’s all agog for military adventure : and though he is meek and low enough just now, poor boy, and pants to be taken into favour again, hang me, if I should like to answer for the consequences of persisting in your intentions !”

Sir Richard, when not in a passion, was by no means an unreasonable man. Besides he remembered that he had still another son, a quiet sedate boy, by far more likely to suit the peaceful profession of a minister of the gospel, than his more spirited and mercurial brother : so after a due display of grave displeasure, in order to avoid the appearance of a too easy acquiescence, the penitent Henry was informed, that his assumption of gown and band would be dispensed with, and that after completing such a course of studies as were calculated to fit him for the society of gentlemen in the world, a sash and gorget might be substituted in their room.

Stimulated by a prospect congenial to his wishes, Henry Tresham certainly did not relax in his efforts ; and his proficiency in his studies was in due time rewarded by emancipation from all collegiate restraints, and the commission which

had so long been the object of his ambition ;—the ready means, as he fondly hoped, of securing both fame and fortune to himself.

Henry was now an officer, and his own master ; but his constitutional high spirits frequently were at war with, and prevailed over, his better feelings as well as his sounder judgment. Certain youthful excesses, which led to pecuniary difficulties, once more excited the displeasure of his father ; and it was in order to withdraw his son from such temptations, as well as to afford him opportunities for gaining professional and worldly experience, that Sir Richard, by the advice and with the aid of his friend the general, procured the young man's exchange into a regiment embarking for the Peninsula. Thither he accordingly went, under the surveillance of a friend of that gentleman's, to gather wisdom and discretion, and laurels, if they were to be found, in the field of actual service.

We have stated that Sir Richard Tresham possessed a good estate ; but he lived in handsome style, so that of his eight thousand a year, little was left to accumulate for young children. It was a maxim of his, that the eldest son of an old family should always inherit the family estate, leaving the younger branches, if necessary, to make their way through life in their respective professions, aided in their own exertions only by the interest of

their connexions. He was anxious, too, that *his* son should succeed to the property unencumbered: thus, when he died, the younger branches of his family would have found themselves but slenderly provided for, had their provision depended entirely upon their father. Fortunately for them, this was not the case.

An uncle of Lady Tresham's, a Mr. Basset, whose name Henry bore in addition to his own, and who had also stood godfather to the youngest girl Maria, left by will a sum to each of the younger children of his niece, which, together with the pittance found on the death of their father to accrue to each, amounted to about twelve thousand pounds a-piece. This and his commission—he was at this time a captain—formed the whole of Tresham's fortune; for although thoroughly reconciled to his father before the death of the latter, the old gentleman had omitted to give any substantial proof of the fact by a further remembrance of the young man in his will. His brother Richard, the clergyman, was amply provided for; and Sir Thomas, the young baronet, who was still abroad at the time of his father's decease, when made aware of that gentleman's testamentary dispositions, immediately increased by deed of gift, in the hands of trustees, the portion of his (now only remaining) sister to twenty thou-

sand pounds ; at the same time, entreating his brother Henry, whenever money might be needed for promoting his professional views, to use the credit which he had lodged for him with his banker's, instead of infringing upon his own small funds.

In the absence of the young baronet from his native country, the family seat of Mitchley, in ——shire, was occupied by his mother and sister, to whom Tresham, on his return from the Continent, had, as we have already remarked, paid a visit of some length before accepting the invitation of his Highland friend.

CHAPTER IV.

DEER STALKING.

Sweet, sweet upon the mountain
Sinks the setting sun ;
The coursers fleet scarce drag their feet—
The weary chase is done.
Where's the antler'd king, that late
Ranged the wood in fearless state—
Alas! alas! upon the grass,
Which his best life's blood dyes,
The bleeding monarch lies !

THE first light of morning had just peeped through the little window of the sleeping apartment in the bothy of Auchonrui, when Tresham was roused from a sound sleep by the voice of his host. “What, Henry, man, hey! Up! up! it is almost three. There's Maccombich has been stalking about, like the Bodach Glass in the gloaming, for this half hour past; and I smell the chops

and broiled chickens already. Up, man ! we have not a moment to lose."

"Yauh—au—ah !—God bless me ! why, what already ? I don't think I'm an hour yet in bed :—but never mind, here goes." And after a yawn and a stretch or two, he sprung out of bed, and soon joined his friend in the next room, where a pretty solid breakfast smoked upon the table and invited their attack.

"Upon my word, all very comfortable and inviting, indeed," said Tresham, as he commenced a serious assault upon the viands. "But what the deuce ! Charles, my good fellow, what masquerading fancy is this ? Do you shoot deer in uniform ? What a rum figure you have made of yourself."

This was said on his observing, for the first time, that his friend had changed his dress of the day before, and now wore a short jacket and loose trousers of dark grey tartan, with a grey cap of the same material upon his head.

"Why, not exactly so," replied Glenvallich ; "but I wear this dress because it is the lightest, the most convenient, and the least distinguishable of all others in the hill. And, by-the-bye, my friend, I must tell you that your costume is far from being the best calculated either for comfort or concealment."

"Why, what ails it ?"

“Faith! you will soon find that if you persist in going so clad; that knowing velveteen jacket is tolerably well as to colour—too dark though; but, heavens, man! its weight would knock you up in a couple of hours. Your trousers are too white by half; and as for that smart blue foraging cap, with its gay golden band, if you desire sport, by all means discard it. Why, man, a deer with half an eye would catch the glitter of it at two miles distance, the moment it rose above a heather hag.”

“O as to the velveteen,” replied Tresham, “it is an old friend—I’m used to it—no fear of me. But I can change the trousers for a pair of greys; and the cap I abandon to your worship, providing you can supply me with any thing better.”

“Well, we shall see; for Duncan would to a certainty protest against that. But take your breakfast just now.”

The attack now became warm: excellent mutton chops, broiled chickens, eggs, mutton, ham, &c. &c., together with tea, coffee, rich cream, and the best butter possible, composed a breakfast which did not disgrace the name which the Highlands have deservedly acquired for that meal; and after making due provision for a solid luncheon, in the shape of sandwiches, biscuits, and the like, the whis-

key flasks being replenished, and the shooting tackle overhauled, a summons was issued for the attendance of Duncan Maccombich.

The forester soon made his appearance ; but he was no longer clad in the smart tartans of the night before. He now wore a rough jacket of grey frieze, with a waistcoat of the same, a good deal the worse for wear ; a dingy-coloured kilt, formed of a single fold of checked tartan wrapped simply round his waist, and reaching barely to within five inches of his knee, supplied the handsome well-pleated phelibeg ; short grey stockings were gartered far below the knee, and his head was covered with a cap of grey badger skin. His whole person, tall and imposing in its character, and clad in its universal grey, might very well have represented in the dim twilight the shadowy spirit, to which Glenvallich had not unaptly likened it.

“ Well, Duncan,” began the laird, “ how looks the morning, and how’s the wind ? ”

“ Ou, the morning’s fine, sir ; and the wind’s richt doon the glen.”

“ We must begin at the lower end of Fiusech, then, I suppose, eh ? and tend westward ? ”

“ Aye, aye,—just, just. But Lord ! what’s you ! ” And although the objects which had caught his eye were full three miles distant, the forester, with the habitual caution of a deer

stalker, stopped short mechanically, and drawing his person within the door-way at which he had been standing, drew forth his glass and pointed it at the opposite hill. Long and keenly did he gaze through the instrument, "Aye, aye," said he, at length, "there they go—a fine staig he is, and fowr hindes wi' their calves, and two yell ones, right up yon green face "

"Hah! faith you've got good eyes, Maccombich," said Glenvallich, "I can see nothing yet."

"Ou, I just got a glisk o' their broun hides, crossing yon green spot. I first thought it was cattle, but they're deer—they're deer."

"And where may they be from, think you?—from Fiusech?"

"Ou no, sir, not at all; they'll be from the east—from Torrebuy, I'm thinking; I'se warrant they'll be in Corry Dhu afore long. But we shud na lose time, sir—we shud na lose time," said he, fidgetting on his feet; "if ye're ready, we'se be off."

"All ready, Maccombich. Tresham, you should be a rifle shot—here's a tool that won't fail you, if you measure your distance well, use the proper sights, and hold straight. I've seen four balls running put in the space of half a card, at a hundred and fifty paces, with this very piece. But

won't you take this light jacket instead of your own heavy affair?"

"O, no need."

"Well, one of the gillies shall take it for you ; you may be thankful for it yet. *Allons !*"

Accompanied by their assistants in the chace, the sportsmen now set out. These consisted, besides the forester of Kerneth, an under-keeper, a stout, short, active, good-humoured fellow, to whom a day after, the deer was meet and drink for a fortnight ; the shepherd's boy, and a tall, long, red-shanked, barefooted gillie, with nothing on his head but his own unkem't matted locks, and little to cover his nakedness save a very tattered kilt and a sort of non-descript half-shirt, half-jacket kind of habiliment, formed of sundry shreds and patches, retained about his gaunt figure by some secret sympathy or tie, which the eye could not detect. The last pair of worthies held each in leash a dog, which seemed by far the nobler animal of the two ; and Tresham recognized in them a brace of the gallant deer-hounds which had been the foremost to welcome them on the preceding evening. It is a race now becoming rare in Scotland, but which, were it only for the grand appearance of the animal and its noble nature, as well as for ancient recollections, deserves well to be maintained by such as have the power to do so. Deep

in the chest, arched in the back, with loins of iron, sharp muzzle, and eyes of fire, what can compare with the ancient Highland deer-hound? Who but the minstrel of the north can fitly describe his beauty and his prowess; who can paint him but Landseer!

“What a lovely morning! what a delicious air! what a splendid scene altogether!” exclaimed Tresham, as issuing finally from the bothy, they emerged into the open air. The scene indeed was splendid—the sky of a pure azure, deepening as it reached the zenith, and flecked here and there with light fleecy clouds of a pale orange hue, was brightly illuminated towards the eastern horizon by the beams of the rising sun; while the whole of the valley and its surrounding mountains slept in perfect shadow and tranquillity, their grey outline sharply yet softly defined against the pure ether. On the lofty peak of Scoore-vialach alone there hung a wreath of mist, like a crown of glory, tinged as was the peak itself with the first red sunbeam of morning. Grey clouds rested in fantastic shapes on many a shoulder of the mountains, filling up and revealing the hollows which would else have remained undetected on their rugged breasts. Light filmy vapours exhaling from the stream and morasses, floated here and there over the valley. The dew lay heavy upon bush and herb, and

the birch-trees around the bothy shed from their leaves and buds a balmy fragrance which perfumed the whole atmosphere.

“ This is truly exhilarating,” continued Tresham ; “ I feel, at this moment, just as if neither strength nor spirits could ever fail me. Often have I thus felt the reviving influence of morning ; often, after a hot and restless night spent in a comfortless bivouac, or on a weary anxious watch, have I hailed the approach of dawn, and blessed its dewy freshness, even when I knew that the returning light might be but the harbinger of carnage and death ;—but the unmingled delight of such a morning as this, in such a scene, is only to be tasted in the tranquil security of our own happy land.”

“ Aye, Hal, and few can well appreciate the value of that security save those who have known the want of it.—But move we on.”

They crossed the valley, and taking a slight track, made probably by the cattle, among a number of heathery knolls, they followed it for a couple of miles up the glen, until the ragged wood which crept irregularly up the mountain, became more dense and continuous. Here, near the top of a little height, Glenvallich halted. “ This,” said he, “ is one of our reconnoitering points ; sit down until we examine the forest, and opposite hill.”

Cautiously creeping up the little hillock until their eyes could just peer above the topmost heather, Glenvallich and the forester, throwing themselves upon their faces, scrutinized with their glasses the brown expanse before them: nor was it until more than a quarter of an hour had elapsed in the inquiry, that they arose from their recumbent position. “Nothing is stirring, or in sight, so far as we can make out,” said Glenvallich—let us move forward. Remember, Tresham, we shoot at nothing but stags. The hinds, with calves at their foot, are not in condition; and the *yell* hinds, as they are called—those, that is, which have either had no calves or have lost them, your eye is not practised enough to distinguish from the others. You may see plenty of roe-deer too, here, for the wood is full of them; but don’t shoot at them, for you might disturb and lose a stag worth fifty roe, who might be lying within a few yards of us.”

“What! let a roebuck pass?—faith, that will require some forbearance too.”

“O! if you are so hot, then, and should see a roebuck, after the deer have all probably passed, fire if you like. You will know the buck by his horns—fire at nothing which has not horns—that’s your best rule.”

“Well, I’ll try to remember your orders.—Anything else?”

“ Yes, one thing—black-cock abound here ; you may sometimes see them flying about in dozens ; but I need scarce remind you to let them alone. In the first place, this is not the season for shooting them ; and then, always remember the nobler game we have in view—so now you know all you have to attend to. Let us move on, and in silence, for we are now on our ground, and deer may be within ten yards of us at any time.”

The forester then taking the lead, proceeded, indicating by signs, when required, the direction to be taken. Ascending one height, and winding round another, the sportsmen soon found themselves entering the wood, and gradually gaining an elevation which enabled them to overlook the valley below. Alder and birch-trees, with here and there an old fir, studded the knolls ; and ere long they plunged into a thicket of such trees, tangled with underwood of fern and thorns, through which, as they made their way with difficulty, the dew-drops fell in heavy showers upon them from the branches. This was the true commencement of their ascent ; and an arduous one did the young Englishman find it to be.

The steep mountain side, cleft as it was into numberless irregularities, was every where thickly covered with wood of that unequal growth which characterizes natural forests. Clumps of birch-

trees, with gnarled and twisted stems like aged oak stumps, arose from a thicket of thorn and fern, which covered a heap of grey stones, only less ancient than the hills of which they were the ruins; and single trees of the same species, but of great antiquity, might be seen scattered here and there amongst a grove of pines of all ages and sizes, from the three years seedling to the veteran of centuries. A space more open would not unfrequently occur, occupied by some enormous fir-tree, which rejoicing in the free air and room, would throw its vast arms abroad, as in a domain over which it held a rightful supremacy.

Hundreds of such noble trees lay strewed upon the earth, encumbering its surface with their remains; or, like sturdy patriots, preserving in death and in decay the same unbending aspect which, when alive, they had maintained, still reared aloft their bleached stems and naked branches like skeletons of giants. Heather, the growth of ages, ferns of enormous height, blackberry, cranberry, and crowberry bushes, with other luxuriant herbage, formed an underwood to this primæval forest, so thick, so high and closely matted, that no progress could be made among it without the most vigorous exertions. The surface of the ground, too, every where steep and shelving, was moreover furrowed into deep holes and chasms by the action

of petty streams which made their way beneath this tangled carpet in the mossy soil. If to these impediments be added the multitude of sharp rocky fragments which studded the mountain side, overgrown by the rank vegetation, and thus concealed from the eye until detected by the stumbling, and perhaps wounded foot,—some notion may be formed of the toil and painfulness of an ascent on such ground to an unpractised traveller.

Through this woody wilderness, however, did Duncan Maccombich pursue his course, striding along without check or halt, as in a familiar element: his sinewy limbs brushed aside the thick branches, or divided the tangled herbage, as if it had been the gossamer that floated around him, heavy with the morning dew,—and bore him from hag to hag, and rock to rock with the elastic lightness of the animal which he loved to pursue. His master followed in the same track with an alertness and ease, which youth and practice, combined with native strength, could alone have supplied. But it was far otherwise with the young Englishman. Strong and active as he was by constitution, his pedestrian powers had never been put to trial in such ground, and certainly had never been so severely taxed. His breath came hard, and already was he sensible of a suspicious trembling of the limbs. Supported, however, by

a stout heart, he persevered, although mortified to find the effort which seemed so easy to his companions, so painful to him.

“Take it easy, Tresham,” said Glenvallich, at length, taking pity on his evident distress as he looked back. “Don’t blow yourself, man, we have day enough before us; softly—softly, Maccombich. Here, Hal, don’t trail that heavy rifle with you till you need it; Kenneth, there, will carry it—take his stick, it will help you in this rough ground.” Sensible though he was, that the proposed relief would be of great service, yet half-ashamed to avail himself of it, Tresham hesitated for a while; but at length he complied, and walked with much greater ease. Still his inexperience, and the excessive inequality of the ground, subjected him to a world of slips and tumbles; and so treacherous was the surface, that one and all of the party, not excepting the practised forester himself, sunk frequently up to the middle in muddy holes, and tumbled head foremost into the ruts and hollows of the subterranean streamlets.

“Stop a little here,” said Glenvallich, partly perhaps in pity to his friend, as they reached a darkly wooded dingle through which a rivulet brawled; “this is a likely spot—we must search this burn inch by inch—seldom does it want a deer.”

They quested it thoroughly, spreading out in different directions, but without success. "Nothing here, at all events," said Tresham, as they met again. "If there was, we must have seen it."

"Not so sure of that," said his friend; "I have known a deer in this same wood, to be within ten yards of three men who were in search of him, yet get off unseen of them all; but we have now to make our way alone—Duncan and his myrmidons must drive the wood. It will take them near an hour to get to the other end, so we may take a peep into the corry above, before going to our posts. Away with you, Maccombich."

"Aye, aye, sir, we'll be off; but mind* and look ye weel among the black burns, above thonder—and dinna forget the pass under the fall in the westermost burn, sir—and see what tracks ye can find, sir—ye ken them as weel's mysel—and dinna hurry, sir, the day's long—tak yere time."

With these cautions very earnestly uttered, away went Duncan and his troops; and Glenvallich saying, "Follow me, Tresham, I must act stalker for the nonce—up this way,"—took his course up the hill.

The difficulty of the ground seemed, if possible, to increase as they resumed their course. It was

* Mind—remember,—so used in Highland English.

by aid of hands as well as feet that they scrambled up the steep brae, still thickly tangled as before; and the number of dead trees which had fallen among the tall brushwood, formed barricades, which it was equally difficult to scramble over or to pass through. "What trees these are!" exclaimed Tresham, pausing for breath beside a pine of monstrous girth, and a multitude of branches, although of height inferior to many near it. "What a pyramid of colossal strength!—and look at this huge, decayed trunk, close to it. Decayed, did I say? not at all, faith; I see it is fresh as the day it was cut."

"And yet," remarked his friend, "it cannot have been cut—or burnt down, as is more probable—within these forty years: wood of such growth as that will last undecayed for ages. See these jagged looking fellows, that have lived their life and died where they stood—look how they stare up on all sides, like the ribs of some monstrous wreck. How they have been twisted by the winds, and how they toss their huge grey limbs about—who can tell when they departed this life? like the grey stones of Ossian, they tell of other days."

"Assuredly this forest scenery is most striking and peculiar—grand and Salvator-like indeed!—what a lovely green, too, these bilberry bushes

have, and that gigantic fern—how well it contrasts with these grey stumps and dark firs—and how rich the blossom of the heath is! And faith! it is no trifling relief to stand still a moment and look at it all, and to dwell a little upon that magnificent chaos of hills and glens, which our elevation now permits us to overlook.”

“Aye, it is a splendid scene, truly,” said Glenvallich, smiling; “but nevertheless, we must bid it adieu, and proceed.”

Scarcely had they advanced many yards, when Glenvallich stopped short among a brake of ferns. “Hush—stop! a deer’s track—fresh,” whispered he; “see here, where the dew has been brushed off—and look, here is the foot mark. He has crossed the burn at the pass, and may be close to us at this moment.” Passing onwards in quest, the sportsmen came to one of those green, mossy spots, which indicates and surrounds a spring upon the face of a hill. “See—further traces,” said Glenvallich; “only look how he has scampered up the moss—ah—it’s only a roe; see where he has been scraping—he won’t do for us; come along, we pass the burn here.”

They were approaching a brake of birch and bog-myrtle, as Glenvallich said this, and scarce had they entered it, when Tresham, hearing a slight rustling, turned round, and saw a beautiful

animal bounding past him. In a moment his rifle was at his shoulder, and his finger on the trigger; but another glance stopped its pressure, for he saw that the creature's head was ungraced by antlers. "See, Charles, see!" said he, as he lowered the muzzle of his piece.

"Hah!" exclaimed his friend, turning short, and rapidly levelling his uncocked rifle. "How easily could I check these graceful and rapid boundings; but go, poor beast—thou art safe. A roe, Harry, a roe! and see her young one following at a short distance, in its mother's wake; it is her tracks we have seen—*allons!*"

Instead of abruptly ascending further, they now slanted along the face of the hill till they reached the water-course; a deep gash, worn by a rapid and perennial torrent, quite through the soil into the living rock of the mountain side. The rugged banks were covered with dense thickets of the trees common to such situations, which overhung the stream, or interrupted its course with their fallen and withered boughs. The torrent itself, dark, foaming, and impetuous, leapt from rock to rock, and ledge to ledge, in many a petty fall, and sometimes in cascades of considerable height and grandeur. The pass led by a pool between two of these falls; a deeply furrowed ledge of rock afforded stepping stones, when the

stream was low, by which an active man might spring across. Having overleapt this obstacle, they soon emerged from the wood upon the more open hill, where the heather, although still long and thick, was less tangled than in the forest; and the more solid and less broken ground afforded firmer footing. The change was very comfortable to Tresham, who now soon recovered his failing wind, and felt his sinews recover a firmer tone—and they cautiously approached the crest of the height to which they had won their way with so much toil.

Glenvallich now stealing forwards, began with curious and jealous eye to scan through his glass the broad hollow which rose gradually above them. After continuing this survey for some minutes in silence, he beckoned Tresham to his side.

“Antlers, by Jove!” said he, in a half whisper; “I have them, and in no bad place neither; this will be our game, or I’m mistaken. See—take the glass; look to the left of that white stump below the rock there, close to a small single white stone. There he lies, I can see him with the naked eye.”

“And I can’t catch him even with the glass,” replied Tresham, after peering for some time through the telescope, “I see nothing, Charles.”

“What, don’t you see that brown spot? you can’t have found the place. By heavens, there’s more of them; give me the glass;—yes, faith, there are—one, two, three hinds feeding; and their calves too—see, look again.”

But it was in vain that Tresham’s unpractised eye wandered over the brown waste, until, as by chance the field of the telescope traversed the place, a slight movement in what he had taken for the withered branch of some decayed tree caught his eye.

“Ah! I have him now, by Jove! God bless me! what a grand fellow! how beautiful he looks!—and he’s lying too—and there are the hinds—I see them also; but how shall we get at him?”

“Why, he’ll cost us a scramble and a good blow, no doubt. Perhaps we may have to climb the shoulder of Scoore-vialach, and round by his top, that high peak yonder.”

“The devil! that will be a job—but never mind; any thing for a shot at that noble fellow.”

“Well, he and his ladies are quiet where they are, for the day; and the men must by this time have got to their posts; let us go and attend the passes. You see that black stump on the brow below us; take your station there, it commands the whole face below, within rifle shot. I will go nearer the burn. If you see any thing pass,

that makes rather for me than for you, put your cap on the muzzle of your rifle thus—I will do the same. Good luck to you, and ‘hold straight.’”

The loss of half an hour, and some trial of patience was the sole result of this arrangement. One or two roes passed the sportsmen, and several black cock, the sight of which tempted Tresham sorely to exercise his skill at a flying shot; but if there were any deer in the wood, they took other passes than those watched by the two gentlemen.

The forester now came up, and Glenvallich informed him of the stag and hinds he had seen. The methods of best approaching them unobserved were eagerly discussed; and having decided that it was at all events advisable to reconnoitre them from a shoulder of the hill above them, the party set their faces boldly to the brae, and began to breast it straight up. And now once more was Tresham made sensible of his own deficiency, and of the superior vigour of his companions: pride and “pluck,” however, bore him on, though his knees bent under him, and his head swam, with the sustained exertion. The signal to halt and reconnoitre was at the moment as gratifying an intimation as he could have received. Five hinds, with their calves, and two stags, were now distinctly visible, full eight hundred feet beneath them, as they stood, or rather

lay perched upon the brink of a giddy precipice which rose above the hollow.

“ Well, Maccombich, what’s next to be done? must we climb the hill, and go round the scour?”

“ Aye, ’deed that ye most,” responded the forrester. “ See,” continued he, throwing some light particles of grass into the air, “ the wun’s a’ up the hill, and there’s no a burn or corry that ’ll hide us. It’s doon yon burn, below *Craig-caillichdhu*, we must go, and tak’ the hollow a’ the way to thon bit hillock; and then we’ll get at them easy: they wunna stir the day any how—we’re sure o’ that.”

As Duncan made these observations, he was cautiously retreating from the brink of the rock, from whence he had been observing the deer, when all at once his person became fixed in an attitude of eager attention, which might have supplied the sculptor with an admirable study, and straining his eyes towards the upper extremity of the corry, he exclaimed, in an earnest whisper,

“ O Glenvallich! we’re in luck the day! there *he* is! there’s the very staig your honour was after the last time ye cam’ up; him that ye touched on the side, an’ we could na get sight o’ again! I’ve seen him twice since yon, and a grand one he is. O *Trochconuilorst*!* but we’ll have you the

* Literally “ Bad advice to you,” a gaelic malediction.

day, or the mischief's in't; we most go clean round the scour noo, any how, for we'll hae to come down the *Glaig-na-gawr** on him."

This information set the party into instant motion. Off they started in high spirits, leaving Kenneth to watch the deer below them, lest any accident should startle them, or lest they should feed away from the spot. The ascent proved most arduous, for they had to pass round the peak of one of the loftiest mountains in Scotland, at a height scarcely two hundred feet below the summit. Tresham was once more forced to abandon his rifle to the gillie, and still he found himself lagging behind; for Maccombich, stimulated by a sight of the animals he loved, forgot the inability of others, and glided up the hill with the swiftness and sure-footedness of a goat. Even Glenvallich at length found it expedient to call upon him to slacken his speed, and Tresham, breathless and reeling, was absolutely forced to make frequent halts. Youth and spirits, and good English bottom themselves, failed at length, and the young man came to a stand still.

"You were right," said he, "about this cursed jacket, it *is* too heavy for such work—by the Lord, man! a fellow, to climb this mountain, should go in *cuerpo*: the kilt's your only—to the devil

* The goat's dell.

with the velveteen!" and he threw it from him, remaining in his shirt-sleeves and waistcoat.

"Stay, stay, Harry! those white arms will never do; they would give the alarm at two miles distance,—here, here's the jacket you despised in the morning."

"Thank you,—this is a relief: and now have at it once more."

The highest point was reached at length, and a descent, little better than a precipice, lay before them. But though Tresham, in cooler moments, might have shuddered at the danger he ran, his mind was at this time too highly excited to scruple at following his daring companions, who bounded downwards at a rate which soon carried them to the bottom.

"Now for it, Harry; now, for it in earnest," said Glenvallich, after a moment's halt, to recover breath. "Double quick, while we may—we shall soon have to go slow enough;" and entering the body of a shallow water-course, they descended its rough bed at a rapid pace. The waft of a hand from Duncan, who led, stopped the party; and crouching low, they changed their quick step for a stealthy pace, with which they rounded a height, and under its shelter remained, until their exact position, with regard to the object of their quest, should be ascertained.

“Look here,” whispered Glenvallich, taking Tresham by the arm, after having made a short examination himself, “what think you of Duncan for a pilot?”

Raising his eyes to a level with the heather top, Tresham could see, at the distance of not more than three hundred yards, the horns of a noble stag just rising between two hags. No other part of the animal was visible; but the movement of the antlers, which slowly turned from side to side, proved sufficiently that he maintained a vigilant look out after his own safety.

“We’ll match him yet, I think,” said Glenvallich.

Retreating a few yards, to get further under cover of the rising ground, Maccombich, followed by the rest of the party, crept on all fours from the water course, across thirty or forty yards of long heather-covered muir, until they reached a maze of peat-bog cracks, of little depth, but sufficient to cover a man creeping flat upon his belly. This, although the moss was moist and muddy, they were forced to submit to, as the only way of crossing unseen by their intended victim, and in this manner they gained about a hundred and fifty yards more upon the deer’s position.

The forester, alone, was now sent on to ascertain the means of further progress: and after an absence of more than ten minutes, which to the

sportsmen seemed a full hour, he returned creeping like a worm, and beckoning the party to follow in the same manner. This they did, and at length, keeping along the peat-cracks, got a chasm deep enough to afford sufficient cover for the whole body.

“He’s no a hunder’ yards from you this moment, Glenvallich,” whispered the forester, in scarcely audible accents, “and the wind is strong from him. Ye most climb this know; if you can get him within eighty yards, dinna seek to get nearer, for he’s in a wide green heuch, and he’s very jealous. I dinna think ye’ll mak’ muckle better o’ it; but ochone! sir, tak’ time and be canny—I wudna for ten pund he got awa!”

“Never fear me, man; but here’s Mr. Tresham must take the first chance—I’ll fire only if he misses. Come along, Harry.”

The forester cast a look of mingled disappointment and remonstrance at his master, but it was disregarded. Tresham also, who still shook from head to foot, with recent exertion and present excitement, would have excused himself from interfering with the anterior rights of his friend in this particular animal; but Glenvallich would not listen to him.

“Have done with this debating,” said he, “we shall lose the deer—follow me, Tresham.”

Cautiously, like a cat stealing on its prey, foot by foot, and inch by inch, did Glenvallich, grovelling in the heather, advance towards the crest of the knoll in front of him ; when the deer's antlers moved, he was still,—when they took their natural position, he moved forwards. Tresham followed in his track, stopping or advancing as he did, until they had reached some twenty paces onwards from the ravine. Glenvallich then signed to him to raise his head with caution. He did so, and saw, with a sensation of eager delight which increased his agitation to a painful pitch, the noble stag lying among some rushy grass, apparently in the most unsuspecting tranquillity, occasionally scratching a part of his hide with a fork of his antlers, and driving away the insects which appeared grievously to torment him.

“ Take him as he lies, Harry ; aim low, at the shoulder,” whispered Glenvallich. The heart of Tresham beat more audibly than ever it had done on going into action, as he carefully extended and levelled his rifle. Whether it was the slight click of cocking, or some movement made in the heather, as he stretched out the piece to take aim, is uncertain, but the stag started, and made a movement as if about to rise, just at the moment when Tresham was pressing the trigger. The circumstance,

probably, unsettled his aim, for the rifle exploded, but the ball flew over its intended object.

But not thus was the unfortunate animal to escape; for scarce had the report of Tresham's shot made him start from his lair, when the rifle of Glenvallich gave forth its fatal contents, and the stag making one high bound from the earth tumbled headlong forwards, and lay struggling in the agonies of death. He had anticipated the possibility of his friend's failure, and prepared to remedy it—which he did effectually, for the ball had struck the animal just behind the shoulder, and went clean through its heart.

“ Hurrah ! capital ! grand ! by Jove he has got it,” shouted Tresham, starting up : but the arm of Glenvallich pulled him down again.

“ Hush !—be quiet,” whispered he ; “ never do so—there may be twenty more deer near us, of which we yet know nothing—such a halloo would send them all off. Load your piece—load quickly.”

While they were performing this necessary operation, Maccombich, who had joined them, and was keeping watch around them, touched his arm, and pointing with one hand, showed him three fine stags moving off to the further hill, alarmed, no doubt, by the reports of

the rifles, and probably by the exclamation of Tresham. "God bless me!" said the mortified young man, "this is a lesson I shall not forget; but who could have imagined it?"

A little further scrutiny by the practised eye of Maccombich, was sufficient to convince the party that there was no more game near them, at least in view; so the hunters advanced to *break* the deer, as it is called, by cutting the throat, and disembowelling it; and while Maccombich was performing this sportsmanlike duty, it was amusing to watch the rapture to which, when unrestrained by habitual caution, he now gave full way on the glad occasion of a successful shot. Apostrophizing it in Gaelic, he addressed to it every reproachful epithet he could think of, as a villain which had so often baffled their murderous efforts: it was a scoundrel, and a rascal, and a devil, to whom he wished a bad end, and whose soul, heart, and liver, he gave to the devil: then changing his tone, he lavished upon it every expression of endearment in which his language is so fruitful, but which, when translated, often sounds strangely enough to English ears. It was his dear, his darling, his bonny beast, his cattle, his love. He seemed to abandon himself to the very intoxication of delight, and it was singular to see a man habitually

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grave and reserved, acting as if for the time he had actually been deprived of reason.

“Come, this is well enough,” said Glenvallich after a while; “but you must have another chance yet, Harry. I want two more haunches at least. What say you, Maccombich? I fear the deer we lodged lower down may be off on hearing our shots.”

“I dinna ken that, sir,” responded Duncan, who now sheathing his skeau-dhu, after performing his duty, had resumed his habitual composure; “thou three staigs that’s off, are no the ones that Kenneth’s watching; but what’s the lad about? Ou, deel abit but they’re there yet—see till him wafting us.”

They turned their eyes to the point where their sentinel was perched above them, like a bird on the ledge of a rock. He had now risen and retired a few paces back from the edge of the precipice, where he stood making signals, which they soon discovered to relate to the animals he was watching, and the sportsmen accordingly recommenced their approaches in form. These so entirely resembled their first proceedings, that the detail may be spared. The herd were soon to be perceived, some lying down, some feeding about, and a ridge of rock, about a hundred yards dis-

tant from the spot, gave the sportsmen comparatively easy means of approach. Ascending with proper caution among the crags, they found themselves about the distance we have mentioned, gazing down upon their destined victims, themselves safe the while from all risk of observation. Three of the hinds were quietly lying down, a toss of their heads to shake off the flies being the only indication of motion which they gave. Two were feeding in all security at a considerable distance; but there were other two, a stag and a hind, which appeared quite upon the alert, seldom putting down their heads to crop the grass, and staring around them with a vigilant glance, which was the more remarkable, when contrasted with the careless security of the rest of the herd.

“Is he within fair shot?” whispered Tresham, as they gazed on this interesting scene. “He’ll be off, I fear, if we don’t take him now.”

“Hush—be quiet—he is not our mark—wait awhile.”

During this time the forester, who had taken a different direction, had gained the crest of the rocks at a point nearer the precipice. He was now seen creeping back from his position like a knowing old pointer, who, having found game at a distance, comes back to tell his master.

“We must join him,” whispered Glenvallich,

as they observed his slight but earnest gesture; and they also, retrograding in the same vermicular fashion, crept down the descent and joined their guide.

“ He ’s there, sir, just under the nose o’ that black craig—and feggs ! but he ’s a grand one. I ken that chap weel ; he ’s a staig o’ ten branches, and there’s a broken knob on his right horn.—He ’s as fat as butter. This way, sir, up that slap in the brae, and creep forward till yon bit grey heather—ye’ll get within sixty yards o’ the fellow—ye can just put the rifle o’wr it, an’ ye canna miss him.”

Following these directions they crept forward, and by dint of writhing and crawling, they reached the tuft of heather. “ Now, Harry, stop and take breath ; be cool, and take good aim—you may’nt get such a chance as this in a whole six weeks’ stalking.” Such was Glenvallich’s whispered warning to his friend, as he cautiously raised his head to spy the deer. “ Look at the lazy scoundrel,” continued he, in the same scarcely audible accents ; “ there he lies like a mighty Don, while his followers are forced to keep watch and ward for his safety—but it ’s the way with his betters.”

Tresham raising his head, saw the mighty stag lying like a dead thing at full length on his side,

basking in the sunshine; an indolent shudder, when a troublesome fly would tickle his hide, being the only symptom of remaining animation.

“ Rouse the lazy rascal with a rifle ball,” whispered Glenvallich; “ take him just behind the shoulder; but as you are above him, aim rather low. Stop—you’ve got the middle sight up; take the point blank one—he’s not sixty yards off.”

“ By heaven ! it’s almost a shame to do it while he lies so—it’s almost like treachery,” returned Tresham, still trembling with eagerness, as he complied with the directions of his friend; “ but here goes !”

His eye and hand were this time more true: the flash of the rifle was instantly followed, or almost accompanied, by a wince of the prostrate stag, which, however, in another second bounded up with the speed of light, ran a few paces, and then stood gazing about him. The rest of the herd, alarmed by the crack of the rifle, had also started up, ran together and stood gazing in a group upon a little height, looking round as if in search of their leader.

But that leader seemed in no condition to join them, for he was obviously severely wounded. “ That was not a bad shot,” said the forester, calmly examining the animal through his glass, as

it stood sick and panting. “It’s a wee bit o’wr far behind; but it’s through him. I see the blood dropping fast. He canna go long, that one—if he’ll once lie down, he’ll no get up again.”

While this was passing, the party had lain perfectly still behind the tuft of heather, watching the movements of the wounded deer. It now moved slowly after the herd, who were trotting down the corry, stopping every now and then to gaze backwards, and discover the cause of their alarm.

“He’ll need another shot, I fear, after all,” said Glenvallich, “and he is too far off for it now. Duncan, I wish we had not left the dogs behind. Better you run down by yon burn, and try to turn him back this way, and waft to Allan when you see him, to come up with Luath; if he casts wrong, we’ll try the dog at all events.”

Away ran Duncan like a deer-hound on the view, and soon succeeded in gaining a point between the retreating herd and the wounded stag; while Kenneth, who had sat watching on the top of the precipice above the corry, motionless as one of its own grey stones, no sooner saw the game roused, than heedless of the imminent risk, he bounded down its craggy face, availing himself of every ledge, springing from point to point, swinging himself down the smoother faces by the shaggy

tufts of heather in their crevices, and slipping or sliding, and sometimes rolling down the soft grassy slopes, until, in a time incredibly short, and miraculously with whole limbs, he reached the rougher but less precipitous ground of the corry-side, from whence he set off at full speed to co-operate with his principal, Maccombich. But the stag, probably scenting the latter, who had now got to windward of him, started off at a rate unexpectedly swift, and eluding both the sportsmen and their assistants, dashed into the rough ground towards the bottom of the corry, and made after the herd, which had likewise taken that direction.

Away went Duncan after him at incredible speed, waving his bonnet for the rest to follow; and Kenneth started off to a height, and signalled to Allan, who had been placed in a hollow out of sight, with the hound; while Glenvallich and Tresham, (whose vigour had become quite restored by the excitement of the scene,) followed as each best could make his way in the direction taken by the Maccombich and the stag.

Panting and out-breathed, in less than twenty minutes, they attained a bare height, which formed the top of a steep brae, sprinkled with scattered wood and thickets. It was round the base of this knoll that the forester had disappeared in pursuit

of the stag, and scarcely had they reached its summit, when they saw that worthy personage appear below, bare-headed, and wafting with his bonnet to hasten their advance. The perspiration was pouring down his face, and his breast was still heaving with thick sobs, even when they joined him, so that it was some seconds before he could articulate, "He's there, sir!" at length he said, "I have him safe—he's in the burn—ye'll get him without the doug. See that dead fir tree, wi' the green birk aside it; I watched him intil that very bush, and out o' it he's no gone yet."

"Come on, Tresham," then said Glenvallich; "you must finish your work; follow us, Maccombich."

A cautious approach soon brought them within shot of the bush, but no deer was to be seen; and some time was spent in anxious examination. A slight movement, however, in what might have passed for the branch of a dead tree, at length caught Glenvallich's eye. "There's his head," said he; "now a quick eye and a steady hand, and the job is done."

But the hand, it appeared, was not steady. That the animal was hit again was evident; for it stumbled almost to falling, and sunk out of sight in the thicket. But that even this second wound was not fatal became soon as clear;

for the sound of its course passing through the underwood below was heard immediately after, and a glimpse of the animal itself was caught by the sportsmen, as it dashed through a brake of fern just beyond them. Quick as the bound of the stag, did the report of Glenvallich's rifle follow its appearance; but the steadiness of his hand did not second the keenness of his sight, for the deer was seen immediately after cantering slowly along the brae face towards the denser forest beyond.

"Loose the dog!" shouted Glenvallich; and Allan, as soon as the hound saw the game, slipt the collar. Away bounded Luath, and up hurried all who were able, to the height from which they had descended. It was in truth a beautiful sight. The wounded but gallant stag, aroused to fresh energy by the sight of a new and terrible enemy, dashed onwards with a speed which seemed to defy both suffering and pursuit, followed by the no less noble dog, at a rate which promised soon to lessen the distance which had been between them at first starting.

"Who would believe that animal to be wounded!" exclaimed Tresham; "what bounds he makes!—but the hound gains on him."

"I'll awa' up to the craig th'onder, and look what way they go," said the forester; "the doug'll may be turn him, and he'll be coming up the hol-

low there: one o'the guns should be there;" but Duncan had miscalculated for once.

At the distance of three or four hundred yards below where they stood, the brae face terminated in a chaotic mass of stony fragments, half covered with heather, long and shaggy, and full of stunted birch, and roots of half burnt fir-trees. The little soil which time had formed among them, had been furrowed and torn up by the torrents of winter, so that the whole surface, naturally rough, was intersected by a multitude of petty ravines with sharp strong edges. These, after many intricate intersections, ended in a deep rocky hollow, which formed the issue to a rapid torrent.

To this dangerous point did the stag, either disabled by his wounds from facing the hill, or sensible of the advantage which such ground would give him over his pursuers, bend his course with headlong rapidity, and fast upon his haunches followed the no less eager hound. Scarcely could the eye follow their movements, as flashing through bush and brake, over heights and hollows, they alternately appeared and disappeared from the view. "This will never do, Kenneth," said Glenvallich; "try, man, if ye can get down to turn the deer from that black hole; the dog may hold way for a while above, but if once they get into that wild corry, both will be lost."

Away went Kenneth again like a wild goat, bounding and scrambling, and tumbling down the brae; but ere he reached the point in question, the chase was brought to a speedy termination; for the unfortunate Luath, less acquainted than the game he pursued with the nature of the ground, while throwing himself boldly over the treacherous surface, plunged into a rocky hole, against the opposite side of which he struck his breast and shoulder with so much violence, that he lay stunned and motionless on the spot.

“Diaoul!” exclaimed Maccombich, as he witnessed this catastrophe from the height; but de’el be in my fut then, if ye get off that way yet!” With these words he started off at speed, and taking right across the bosom of the hollow above, diving down the small ravines which occurred in his course, and swiftly breasting up the opposite hill, he gained an elevated point, which commanded a full view of the wild corry to which the deer was tending, as also of the other side, far downwards into the glen below.

The stag in the meantime, exhausted probably by its exertions, and as if aware of the fate of its worst enemy, now changed its course, and avoiding the dangerous and precipitous torrent-bed, trotted quietly onwards to the ragged wood that skirted for some distance its right bank. This movement

of the stag was necessarily unseen by the sportsmen, who giving up their game as lost for the time, descended to ascertain the condition of poor Luath. . They found him miserably bruised, and with feet dreadfully cut, lying where the violence of the fall had thrown him. They had just raised him up, and after examining his hurts, were consigning him to the care of Allan to be conveyed to the bothy, when their attention was directed by a shrill whistle to the height from which Duncan was once more waving them to come on.

“ He has him, depend upon it, sir,” said Allen who first saw the forester; “ he has the deer surely—leave the doug wi’ me and be after him.”

“ Ah ! what say you, Harry ? are you done up yet, or have you as much life left as will serve for another fag—it will be no joke, I promise you.”

“ Faith, I hardly know,” replied Tresham ; “ if you thought there was a fair chance, I should be loth. I would fain have that fellow, certainly—what think you ?”

“ Why, you know as much as I do, that Maccombich has got sight of him, I am satisfied of. The fellow has the eye of a falcon, but as to getting the beast, that may depend on ourselves, as you know ”

“ Well, I’ll try to see it out—have on.”

When the forester saw the sportsmen fairly on the way, he slid down the height, crossed the corry and soon came up with them.

“ I ken the very bush he’s in, sir ; but he’s restless, very restless—weel does he ken that if he once lies down he’ll never rise, an’ he’s aye on the move ; go ye on, sir, to the end of the wud, an’ Glenvallich, ye’ll go straight down to thon aller bush—one of you’ll be sure to have him.”

A painful and rapid descent now commenced, in the course of which many headlong tumbles were received by each of the party from the horizontal roots of the heather, on which the feet slipped like glass, and when they reached their respective stations, they had the mortification to see the wounded stag moving leisurely across the bottom of the glen to the opposite side. “ Thannumundiaoul ! ”* exclaimed Duncan, surprised out of all patience and propriety, “ but, however, that chiel canna go far—that’s a pace that canna last. Glenvallich, if ye’re tired gi’ me the gun and I’ll follow him mysel’.”

“ No, no ; we’ll try him yet once more—he can’t go far ; I think I could almost catch him by speed of foot, he gets on so poorly.”

“ Na, na,” said the forester, “ there’s a run in

* A tolerably energetic Gaelic execration.

him yet, and that we may find—but we must see and turn him—if he gets to Loch Lubrich, and that's no over three miles off, it's only the gleds and corbies that 'ill see the rest o' him."

"Three miles!" exclaimed Glenvallich, "six good, if it's a yard, but we'll stop his progress before he gets half way."

They never were more mistaken in their lives. The deer crossing the valley and the stream entered an opposite glen, in which lay Loch Lubrich; and though its pace seemed slow, the sportsmen found, that though they contrived to 'keep it in view, toiling over one height after another, they never neared it an inch. At length faint and weary they began to despair, when the forester observing it tending towards a deep and rugged hollow on one side of the glen, with a powerful effort ran forward, succeeded in cutting it off, and turned it downwards in face and reach of the rifles.

Glenvallich, resolved to lose no opportunity, fired at a great distance, and hit the animal, which fell, but got once more upon its legs, and crossing the last height in their front, staggered down the brae to a promontory which projected into Loch Lubrich, now broad before them in the hollow below. "That deer can never swim," observed Glenvallich, "he's ours now to a certainty;" and

mustering their remaining strength, they pressed forward to cut off his retreat from the promontory.

The chase now drew in earnest to a close. When they came up, the persecuted stag was standing on the margin of the lake streaming with blood, hesitating to enter the water, as if aware of his failing strength. But the sight of his pursuers determined him; he plunged in and attempted to swim from the shore. A shot from Tresham, aimed at the head, the only part above the water, struck one of his horns, and stunned him as it appeared, for turning in the water, he swam right back to the beach, where a ball from the second barrel of Glenvallich put an end to his life and his misery together.

Successful as was the result of their chase, and highly exciting as it had been throughout, such was the exhausted state of the two young sportsmen when it terminated, and so painful and bloody had been its close, that their triumph and exultation were sobered almost to sadness; they threw themselves upon a heathy knoll, and gazed for some time in silence upon the slaughtered animal. "A savage and butcherly job, it has been after all," said Tresham at length; "poor brute! ye died hard, and have been most foully slain! I'm half sorry for ye!"

“Poh, nonsense man,” said his friend, forcing a smile, “it’s your rawness at the work, you’re not well blooded yet—but I own we’ve done it in a slovenly manner enough. I don’t think I ever saw one deer take so much shooting—eh, Duncan?”

“Trowth, no, sir, nor I,” responded the forester. “But this gentleman ’ill be a good hand yet—he has a quick eye, for a first trial, and faith his wind is no that bad if he had practice; thon scurry up the last brae and down to the loch, was a gay an’ tight one after the day’s work—but ye’ll be for home noo, surely—it’s wearing late, and the bothy’s ten miles off if it’s a yard.”

“A good finish to a hard day’s work,” said Glenvallich laughing, “what say you, Harry? but after so respectable a report from Maccombich on your first field-day, pride should keep you up, if you knew but all; for it’s not a little, I assure you, that could wring so much from him, and to a *Sassenach* too—but come, leave we this poor fellow to the gillies, and I’ll see if we can’t find a better path home than the way we came—there’s a track from the loch side all down the glen.”

With these words, throwing their rifles across their shoulders, the young men took the beach of

the loch with resolved feet, and soon fell into the track; but night had thrown her veil over the whole valley before they caught the welcome sight of the lights which shone from the windows of their bothy.

CHAPTER V.

AN ADVENTURE.

Thou hadst not best buffet me, quoth Robin Hood,
For though I am forlorn,
Yet I have those will take my part,
If I do blow my horn.

For evil seemed that old man's eye,
Dark and designing, fierce yet shy.

THERE be degrees of comparison in all things. To angle for trout, for instance, on a fine summer's day, by the side of a pleasant stream, or seated in a boat on a Highland loch, with a westerly breeze strong enough to produce a fine curl on the blue water, and a due portion of cloud and sunshine to suit the caprice of the finny tribe, such pastime is not without its charms, particularly when every two or three minutes you pull out a fine yellow-sided rogue of something like a pound in weight.

But who that has experienced the ecstasy of hooking, playing, and landing upon the pebbly beech of a deep pool with a fine sharp stream at its throat, a *fifteen pound* salmon—aye, or a fat lively grilse of half that weight—who has felt in every nerve his vigorous runs and shudders, and seen him leap yards out of the water in his struggles to free himself from the fatal hook—who has gloated over the silver whiteness of his upturned side as he lay gasping at his feet after the deadly tussle—who, we ask, that has known the keen delight of such a moment as this, could return with any zest to petty warfare with the small fry of the brook?

To follow a clever pack of beagles after the timid hare, has charms for many, until their taste for the tamer amusement is destroyed by experiencing the animating toil of a spirited fox hunt; and even the noble sport of grouse shooting, with all its inimitable variety of interest, is found insipid after the powerful excitement of a successful deer stalking party.

There is no describing the irresistible fascination of this pursuit to the true bred Highlander. Day after day will he traverse the haunts of these noble animals, or sit with inexhaustible patience, wrapped in his plaid, behind a grey stone upon some well-known commanding height, watching for a sight of them; or creep for miles together on his

belly like a worm, to approach them undiscovered. The lapse of time, and the severity of the weather, are alike unheeded ; he only thinks of how to circumvent his wary prey. If successful, he is richly repaid—if he fails, it is but to renew the tedious and toilsome quest, until his perseverance is at length rewarded.

A portion of this infatuating zeal was speedily imbibed by Tresham, after his first successful expedition, which we have just described. An important engagement prevented his friend Glenvallich from remaining any longer in the forest at this time, and Tresham, in fact, rose on the morrow too much fatigued with his exertions of the previous day to dream of invading the hill immediately again. He therefore returned with his friend to Inverallich, and occupied himself for a day or two in sorely unsuccessful attempts upon the fish of the lake and of the river. As his weariness wore off, however, visions of greater glory arose on his soul—to chase the dun deer on their native hills became again the object of his ambition ; and the consequence was, a fresh trip to the forest of Glenochree.

“Practice maketh perfect,” and “use lightens labour,” sayeth the well-worn proverb of many lands and languages ; nor was it falsified in the case of Henry Tresham. The toilsome and vio-

lent exercise of deer stalking, became by use a delightful and invigorating sport, and he pursued it with all the eagerness of an ardent temperament. The elegant luxury and cultivated refinements of Inverallich Castle were neglected, and the bothy at Auchonrui, became for sometime his almost constant residence.

The forest was amply stocked with deer; the friends and neighbours of his friend had no objection to venison, and Tresham supplied them as well as the castle with it in abundance. His skill and knowledge increasing with experience, gave him a respectability even in the eyes of the somewhat fastidious Duncan Maccombich. This worthy personage, gratified with the young Englishman's perseverance in a pursuit which to him appeared one of the noblest and most important in life, was graciously pleased to overlook the misfortune of his country and parentage, in favour of his good qualities, and extended to him a degree of regard which increased day by day, to an extent scarcely suspected by the honest forester himself.

In truth, the case could not have been otherwise, without a degree of ingratitude on the part of the good Duncan, very foreign to his nature; for the generosity of Tresham had been largely extended both to him and the other attendants connected with the forest; nor was the frank,

good-humoured condescension with which he always addressed them, listened to their long stories, and questioned them regarding all that traditional lore, which Highlanders of the old school so much delight in, without its effect upon his humble companions. They one and all agreed, that “Maister Traisham was no’ the least proud—de’il a bit—he wud as soon spaik till a poor body, and tak’ a sneeshan from their horn mull, as he wud from the laird’s gold box—aye, and gie them a something to fill it wi’ too—God bless him!”

It might be nearly three weeks after the initiation of Tresham into the mysteries of deer stalking, and about the beginning of the month of August, that he paid what was likely to be his last visit for some months to the bothy, as the approaching commencement of grouse-shooting would probably engage the attention of sportsmen in other quarters: and Glenvallich had requested him to be his provider for certain friends to whom he wished to send a specimen of red deer venison. On the morning after he reached the forest, he started at an early hour, taking Duncan and Kenneth, with a slow hound, to track such deer as might be wounded, and resolved to spare neither toil nor pains in seeking out and bringing down the finest pair of antlers in the forest.

One deer had already fallen a victim to the

quickness of his eye, and the trueness of his hand ; and Maccombich had remained behind to “do the needful” with the animal, while Tresham, with Kenneth, went on in pursuit of a still finer stag, which had been observed from a neighbouring height, moving slowly towards a hill, where they supposed he might possibly take up his quarters for the day.

They were disappointed of the object of their search ; but having ascended a height beyond the dell which they had reached, and reconnoitered the opposite hills through their glasses, their eyes were greeted by the sight of a little grove of antlers, bristling on the shoulder of a ridge at a considerable way off. Regardless of distance, and intent only upon coming up with their game, away started the hunters at full stretch, to gain the wind of this fine herd. To effect this, several hours were expended, for the deer, feeding onwards, led their pursuers necessarily over a greater space of ground than they had at all anticipated.

Their perseverance, however, was at length rewarded. They had rounded the summit of a rocky *scoor*, from whence they expected to look down upon the herd in a hollow below, and were panting at the entrance of a black cleft, where they had halted to recover their wind and steady

their nerves, before moving on to the attack; when all at once their ears were assailed by a rumbling like that of distant thunder. "The deer! the deer!" cried Kenneth; "stay where you are, sir, till I'll see where they're like to break;" and with the agility of a roebuck, up darted Kenneth to the top of a crag which overlooked the corry. In a moment Tresham saw him waving his cap, and pointing to the black cleft near which he stood. The rumbling increased, and scarce had he time to throw forward and cock his rifle, when the whole herd, full fifty in number, headed by a dozen of noble stags, came trotting up the cleft, and made their appearance at its gorge, within less than thirty yards of him.

Practised as Tresham had been of late, the sudden and overwhelming sight for a moment robbed him of his presence of mind, and actually took away his breath. In another instant the crack of the rifle was heard. The foremost stags had already gone by, but a very fine one which followed, sprung upwards from the ground—stumbled and fell—then rose, and went off after the rest of the herd. "Let loose the dog, Kenneth—let it loose—that's a dead beast," exclaimed Tresham, and Kenneth, who had dragged the

hound after him up the rock, slipped the leash, and bounded himself down to the place where Henry stood.

The dog, true to its instinct, on scenting the blood, started off upon the traces of the wounded stag. But, as the rest scattered right and left, and the dust of their trampling blew away, the hunters became aware of yet another victim. The bullet, which had perforated the body of the stag, and passed beyond him, without causing immediate death, had taken more decisive effect upon a poor hind, which was trotting unsuspiciously on upon his other side, and she now lay before them, writhing in the agonies of death.

“Be after the doug, Mr. Tresham!” said Kenneth, hastily, when he was aware of the circumstance; “the staig canna go far—I’ll see till this baist mysel. Oich! oich! how will we ever get her out o’ this the nicht!”

Away scoured Tresham accordingly, rapidly loading his rifle, and leaving Kenneth to deal with the fallen hind, while he should endeavour to keep the wounded stag in view.

In the meantime, all the deer had disappeared down the grey stony slope of the hill; and when Tresham reached the shoulder, following the course they had taken, not one of them was in view: but after some loss of time in searching

with his eyes on every hill side within his ken, he saw the wounded stag toiling with effort, but great speed, up an opposite ascent, while the hound, far behind, followed eagerly on his traces.

“By heavens we shall lose him at this rate,” shouted the young man, mechanically, although there was none to hear him, and throwing himself down the steep brae face he soon reached the bottom. The ascent checked his speed; but he had noted the gray cairn by which the deer had passed, and in that direction he kept. Traces of blood were distinctly visible upon some of the white lichens which covered the stones, so that he was satisfied, so far, that he was right; but on ascending the height over which the chase had disappeared, neither dog nor deer were to be seen; and neither his lately-earned experience, nor his fancied sagacity, enabled him to judge in what direction he should pursue them.

A long undulating slope lay now before him; at its foot stretched a great extent of grey moss, streaked with dark peat-cracks and dotted with little pools of black water; beyond, lay another bare hill-shoulder, rising gradually to some gloomy lumpy *Bein* which frowned under the shadow of a thick grey cloud.

His quick eye at length detected the movement of an animal of some sort, in the grey moss below

him—what could this be but the wounded deer? and with renewed hope and strength, again he sprung down the slope, nor stopped until he became thoroughly entangled in the masses of the quaggy moss. All trace of deer or hound were now utterly lost, and Tresham, with a rising feeling of anxiety, began to look around for Kenneth. But he had now descended so low that he no longer recognised a single land-mark: all those with which he was hitherto familiar had been left far behind, and he had never thought of looking for others. Several high ranges of hills assuredly intervened between him and his usual ground—all of which had been traversed and passed by, in the continued ardour of pursuit, and he looked around in vain to determine the direction which he had pursued so far. To add to his perplexity, the sky was covered with dense, although not threatening clouds, and almost every height around him was fast putting on its own diadem of mist.

“A pretty business this,” said he to himself; “where the deuce may I have got to now? and what is to be done?” He now first took note of the great space of time which had elapsed, since they had parted from Maccombich, and saw that the afternoon was fast waning into evening. “It is worse than useless to remain in this bog,”

thought Tresham. "Surely this low ground must have some shealing attached to it: they say in the hill, follow a burn, when you lose your way, and it will guide you to house and home: but where is there a burn here?—we must seek one."

Striding onwards with long and determined steps, but no longer with the alert pace of excited hope, Tresham still held on across the moss, tending towards a point where there seemed to be a sinking of the ground: but its irregularity and difficulty bewildered him so much, that in utter despair he lost sight of all plan or direction, and advanced at random. The ground, however, did upon the whole decline; and after a weary time, and many a weary mile, the jaded hunter at length became sensible that this interminable moss was in fact, the receptacle of many streams flowing from a number of lofty eminences which bordered it on all sides. These entering it from various directions, tended by almost imperceptible courses to one or two principal channels, and as good luck would have it, with one of these did Tresham fortunately fall in.

Speedily changing his course, he followed the petty runlet, which in no long space was joined by others. He found that it gradually made its way towards a chasm, obviously the outlet into some

greater valley : what that valley might be he had no means of determining, for dark jutting eminences shut in the cleft below him, while above them nothing caught the eye but a succession of such country as he had for some hours been traversing. On one hand only, he could distinguish dark grey and purple peaks of nobler and more fantastic shapes, which seemed to tower to a great height out of this extensive bog.

The cleft or chasm by which he was thus induced to descend, proved to be of a singularly wild and forbidding character. Its sides of black rock and abrupt gravelly scoors, became soon fringed with scraggy birch and grey stunted fir-trees, rising reluctantly from an equally ragged undergrowth of tangled heather, bilberries, and other mountain shrubs. A black stream murmured deep beneath, flinging itself over many petty, but often picturesque cascades. The murmur of little rills rolling underground, in channels worn through the deep black peat earth, frequently deceived the ear into the belief that thunder was muttering at a great distance ; and more than once did Tresham slip almost up to the middle among the deep bogs through which he was often forced to pick his way, in order to avoid the precipices that bordered the burn.

He had pursued this description of path for

a considerable time, rapidly descending, when the scene at length began to assume a new and different character. The dell opened out into a basin, to which the eye at first perceived no outlet, for black rocks, sprinkled with birch and oak, protruded from either side, and met in a manner which appeared to terminate it in his view. The sides of this basin were very precipitous, hung with shaggy wood, and descended sheer to a little green bottom through which the stream brawled away, after falling into a black chasm, where it boiled and seethed as in a caldron. This retired spot was plentifully embellished with oak and ash and birch, but beyond it, when once reached, nothing further was to be seen.

The steps of Tresham were arrested on the heathery brow which overlooked this singular place, by the extreme difficulty of further progress, and he, for a while, looked about in vain for any mode of descending. At his feet was a precipice, which on the one hand stretched to the channel of the burn, and on the other, to a smaller, but not less precipitous cleft, which poured its insignificant tribute into the reservoir of its neighbour.

While the young Englishman stood thus somewhat perplexed by the obstacles which had uprisen in his path, a slight filmy vapour ascended from a

nook of the basin beneath. "It is the mists of evening, already called forth from their secret places by the chill air," said he, mentally, and a shiver crept through his frame at the uncomfortable prospect for the night, thus forcibly brought to his notice. Another glance arrested his attention more strongly, for the connected upright eddies in which the vapour continued to arise, suggested rather the idea of smoke than of mist. "Can there be a habitation here?" thought he. "Some shepherd, perhaps, making his fire under a rock, to warm his night's quarters: let us try to find him out, at all events." And casting about more narrowly, his eye, did by some lucky chance, hit upon a slight track, like that made by sheep or goats, which led by a difficult and perilous course along the ledges of rock to a certain point, and from thence, by a series of imperfect and tortuous steps, descended into the dell.

Pursuing his way with a caution proportioned to his ignorance of the place and its apparent danger, and holding on by heather roots and stunted birch, Tresham at length reached the bottom. He now found himself in a very narrow and dark chasm, cut as it appeared by the torrent, out of the solid rock. The vegetation here was of that rank but sparse character which moisture and rich soil produces in places excluded from much

light or air; a small but clear and sparkling stream stole along the pebbles at its bottom. Following its course but for a few yards, he reached a spot occupied almost entirely by a deep pool, nearly hid from view by overarching trees, around one edge of which the path wound by means of stepping stones. The bottom of this pool, where it could be distinguished, was formed of round pebbles and white gravel, over which, at the lower end, the water broke away with a gentle ripple.

While gazing around him and cautiously picking his way along the stepping stones which had evidently been placed there by the hand of man, his eye fell on certain substances huddled together under the surface of the water, of a singular and suspicious appearance—but the thrill of doubt and almost of alarm which agitated his mind for a moment, as quickly subsided, although the sense of curiosity remained unabated, on perceiving that the objects in question were *sacks* thrown together in a corner of the pool. He was about to make some further investigation into this to him unaccountable phenomenon, when the smothered growl of a dog, at no great distance, saluted his ear, and he resumed his way in order to discover where the animal might be.

A few more steps carried him to the mouth of

the chasm, and no sooner had he reached it than he became aware of the same thin column of grey smoke which he had seen from above, ascending from a point in the green turf, but a few yards below him. "Ah, it is as I thought," muttered he—a shepherd—where can the fellow be?" and he stepped forward to a slightly elevated point in order to look about him.

The stream found its tortuous way by the bottom of the rock, which rose but a few feet distant in its front; and while his glance wandered over its rugged surface, the bright reflection of an evening cloud sent a faint gleam even down into this recess. It fell upon a small glittering point, thus rendered visible in the brown expanse, and Tresham actually detected the twinkle of a human eye which seemed to peer out from the rock itself.

Starting at this apparition, our hunter directed a keener look at the spot, and his own optics becoming now more habituated to the darkness of the place, were enabled to trace, first, the outline of a human face, grievously begrimed with dirt; and then the person of its owner, an urchin in dingy-green and purple tartans, who sat inscensed in a hollow of the rock, and who followed every movement of the stranger with an eye that was fixed on his.

"Soho, my little fellow!" exclaimed Tre-

sham, as soon as he had satisfied himself of this discovery, “here with you!—What the devil are you after there?” But the creature, without moving a muscle, gave utterance to a shrill whistle, and continued still gazing on the intruder. Tresham now stepped down from the height he had occupied, in order to enforce a reply to his appeal; but just as he reached the lower level of the ground, a fresh growl, terminating in a loud angry bark, arose from behind, and in another moment the animal which uttered it burst forth from what appeared to be the mouth of a cavern, followed by a stout young Highlander.

The stranger, though scarcely above the middle size, possessed so active and well-knit a form, that he appeared taller than he really was. The fairness of his complexion, his freckled skin, and curling yellow locks falling from under his smart blue bonnet, might have suggested the idea of simplicity if not of silliness, had not the speaking keenness of his deep blue eye, and the spirit of intelligence which animated his high features, contradicted the injurious impression. He wore the phelibeg and hose, and the dark green and purple plaid which was wrapped around his chest and over his left shoulder, increased to formidable proportions the apparent bulk of his figure.

“ ‘*Cuthe-u-neish Stumah?*’ What now,

Stumah," said the young man in Gaelic, casting an inquiring glance around, which was succeeded by an expression of suspicion and alarm, as the person of Tresham caught his eye. He started, grasped mechanically the strong oaken cudgel which he held in his hand, and fell back a step towards the place from whence he issued, while he scanned the intruder with jealous look. The result of his scrutiny was probably not unfavourable: for before Tresham, who had been taken somewhat by surprise, had exactly made up his mind as to the manner in which he should address this unexpected apparition, the Highlander, in the strong guttural accent of his language, enunciated that pithy proposition with which his countrymen generally open the trenches of conversation with all strangers.

"It's a fine nicht!"

"Good evening, friend," replied Tresham. Yes; the night is well enough—a little cold for the season."

"Aye, could," repeated the other, suiting the action to the word, by a shrug and a wriggle with his shoulders.

"So cold," reiterated Tresham, "that I should like much to be at home.—Pray, my friend, can you tell me where I've got to, and how I am to get out of this place?"

"*Bel Gaelic akee?* Have you any Gaelic?" responded the Celt with a question, as usual.

"No, no no Gaelic," said Tresham, shaking his head. "But you have English, my friend, plenty to serve my turn."

"*Ou, ha'niel accum*—O, I have none!" and the assertion was accompanied with another shrug, and an emphatic shake of the head.

Tresham was about to urge his inquiries in a more distinct and earnest manner, when he was interrupted by the appearance of another person upon this singular scene: it was a young woman, who half issuing from the opening of the den, remained still partially concealed within its jaws. The increasing gloom, as well as her retiring posture, rendered it impossible to distinguish either form or feature; but Tresham felt disposed to judge favourably of both from the musical tones of her voice, as she addressed a few words to the young Highlander. Perhaps the romantic nature of the adventure might have inclined him to invest any female who should appear to take a part in it, with extraordinary attributes.

"*Tcheerach tcheerach! Eachan Horrenareh!*—Be quiet, Hector!—take care! that's a gentleman!"

The tone, rather than the words, conveyed to the Englishman's apprehension the conciliatory

character of the girl's address; and Eachan, or Hector, the name, as it seemed of the young man, assumed a more courteous aspect; while he relaxed his cautious reserve, and inquired, "What wud the gentleman be pleased to want?"

"I want," replied Tresham, "in the first place, to understand where I have got to; and then, how I am to get away to some house of entertainment, if such there be near."

"And whare from 'ill the gentleman be the day?" demanded the Highlander, replying, after the fashion of his countrymen to one question, by propounding another.

"Why, I have come from Glenochree this morning, and I want to get back there; but I've lost my way in the hill."

The young man opened wide his eyes at the mention of Glenochree, and after a moment's pause he continued his inquisitorial examination. "Ye'll no be young Macgilliecullach, I'm thinking," was the next query.

"No;—Im not young Macgilliecullach."

"Où, then may be ye'll be the laird o' Drynoch—they say he'll be whiles in the hill."

"No, my friend, I am none of these;—but pray tell me how far I may be from Glenochree?"

"Ye'll be frae the south for certain, then?"

"Yes, I am from the south;—but what is that

to the purpose? Can you, or can you not, show me the way to Auchonrui, in Glenochree?"

"Glenochree?—ou she's a long bit awa'—And ye left Glenochree the day?"

"Yes, I tell you again, I left the bothy at Auchonrui, in Glenochree—Mr. Mac—pshah—*Glenvallich's* hunting bothy, this morning, and I lost my way in chase of a deer," replied Tresham, whose patience was almost exhausted, but who saw no chance of obtaining the information he wanted except by humouring his inquisitive friend. "Aye—it's *Glenvallichs*, Glenochree—ou, ye're come a long way about—yon's a far way off;" and after a pause of some seconds, during which he examined Tresham again, but with an air rather of perplexity than of uneasiness, he turned to the young woman, who still stood at the door of the cavern, and addressed her some sentences of Gaelic. The effect was to bring her forward, and she approached with an air of modest timidity, which, however, partook in no degree of awkwardness or shyness.

"Sir," said she, in tones which, though much tinctured with the Highland brogue, or rather drawl, were musical and pleasing, "this *laad* has na muckle English, and I hae na any great things mysel; but if ye'll plaise to tell me what ye're seeking, I'll do my best to help ye."

Delighted at the unexpected appearance of a friend, who seemed likely to be more able as well as more willing to assist him at his need, Tresham explained to the girl what he had already sought to impress upon the comprehension of her companion, intimating that he would very willingly recompense any one who should guide him back to the bothy.

“Ochone, sir !” exclaimed the girl, holding up her hands in amazement, “and hae ye cum’ a’ that way the day? I dinna ken the place mysel, but it’s a long weary way from this—that’s sure, and ye must be sore tired.—But for going back to Glenochree the nicht, that’s clean unpossable—there’s no the lad in the country that wud cross the Moineboglach, or put his fut on the Slievosnaigh after the sun’s doon, and the mist’s on the hill.”

“Well, my good girl—but what am I to do? I can’t well sleep in the heather all night. Is there no place near this where I could get a bed?”

“Ochone! no, sir; there is na a house nor a bothy that ye cud put up at, nearer than twel’ mile, and the road is wild wild! and no for the like o’ you to travel at nicht.”

“All this is bad enough, my good girl; but still, what have I got for it?—Twelve Highland miles on Highland roads would certainly be no

pleasant appendix to my day's fag. Have you no place of shelter?—no heather bed, where I might rest for the night? It would not be like Highland hospitality to turn a stranger to the hill-side after night-fall; I would pay for my lodging handsomely."

"O, it's no that, sir!—we wudna want that—but—we—I dinna—I canna—*Eachan—anghlin-u?*" *—and she held another earnest dialogue with Hector.

The result seemed still unsatisfactory. "I dinna ken in the world what to do," said the young woman at length, with an expression of much perplexity: "It's no for the like o' you to get your death sleeping out on the muir this could nicht in the mist, and a'—and yet, Lord keep me! what am I to do?" and again there passed some words between her and the young man in a tone of great animation. "Weel, cum' what may, I'll venture it," said the girl at length; "I'm sure, Sir, ye're a gentleman, an' no a person to harm them who never did ill to you. Ye may see what ye shou'd na see, an' I may get blame for it; but ye sha'na hae to take the hill this nicht—ye shall hae a warm bit to lie in, if it be na a grand one; and I'll trust till ye that ye winna mak' me repent o' it—*Pesough*,* *Eachan—pesough!*—come ye this way,

* Do you hear?

† "Hush!—be quiet!"

sir; and moving towards the mouth of the cavern from whence she had made her appearance, she beckoned the young Englishman to follow.

It was not without an emotion of uneasiness, that Tresham, stooping his head, followed his conductress into the low-browed entrance of this singular domicile. Externally, the most curious inspection could scarcely have detected it from the rock against which it was built, and the turf by which it was surrounded. From a narrow strip of turf, spotted with heather tufts and bushes, which lay upon the ledge of a rock, a roof consisting of rafters thatched with green divots, had been so artificially extended to the little flat which bordered the rill of water, as to appear a continued prolongation of the bank, from the aforesaid ledge even to the edge of the stream; and so overhung was it by the birch trees and oak copse which had rooted themselves in the rocks on either side the rivulet, that had it not been for the smoke which issued from an aperture under the rock, the suspicion of Tresham, or indeed of any stranger would never have been awakened, and he would assuredly have sought to pass onwards to the glen below, without imagining that the place had ever been honoured with a human habitation of any description.

The almost palpable darkness which reigned

within the hut was no less effectual in preventing all observations on the part of Tresham, than the pungent smoke of peats or wood which pervaded the whole apartment; and which at first, after drawing from him a copious flood of tears, forced him to close his eyes. The dim gleamings of certain embers, half smothered in ashes, the remains rather than the existing substance of a fire, was all that his uncertain glances could at first discover. But his conductress, taking a piece of moss-pine, or *candle-fir* as it is called, lighted it at the embers, and in a moment, the bright blazing of the resinous wood threw a flood of red light over the uncouth and singular apartment.

For a few minutes the glare thus produced was no less blinding to the unaccustomed eyes of the stranger than the previous darkness; but, after a while, even the acrid fumes of the smoke became less intolerable, and Tresham could gaze around the place into which he had so unexpectedly been forced to intrude.

It was of small dimensions, not exceeding some sixteen feet by twelve; the walls were, as it appeared, composed of divots, or turf cut in square brick-like pieces, placed upon a low foundation of stones. Low as the roof must have been,—for near the entrance it did not afford room for a man to stand upright,—its black and smoke-japaned

rafters were concealed from view by the wreaths of thin blue smoke, which eddied among them in search of an outlet. In one corner, upon a very rude fire-place filled with ashes of peat and wood, was set a copper caldron of large size, having attached to it the worm and usual rude apparatus of a Highland whiskey still; and Tresham, for the first time, began to comprehend that he had stumbled upon a haunt of illicit distillers, and was at that very moment in company with a part of the gang.

A further examination of the place confirmed this suspicion. Small well-made casks, or *ankers* as they are called, for the reception of the spirits, lay in corners, mingled with sacks of grain or malt. *Quicks, cougs*, and "*leames*" of sorts, as the various tubs and utensils made use of in the operations of distilling, are called in the Highlands, were scattered about in "most admired disorder;" a large tub or steeping vat occupied another corner, and the murky atmosphere was loaded with the steams of "pot-ale" and whiskey.

With a countenance not a little discomposed by a consciousness of the questionable situation he had got into, and by the various nuisances which greeted his senses on all sides, Tresham turned his eyes from a survey of the premises, to an examination of the person of his conductress and of

her male companion, who had followed them into the hut. The former, at least, was not of a description either to excite his alarm or add to his disgust. A rich growth of glossy light brown hair bound round her head in the fashion of her country with a snood or ribbon of blue silk, proclaimed her to be as yet a maiden; but its exuberant length was gathered up and fastened in a knot behind, only one or two curls, escaping either by chance or by design, strayed down a cheek and neck, which for shape and polish might have vied with those of an antique statue. Her mild though dark eye was lighted up with a strong expression of sense and feeling; and if the brilliancy of her skin had suffered somewhat from exposure to the sun and the winds of her native hills, it was set off by the rich glow of her cheeks, and the cherry-like hue of a mouth that wore a perennial smile. Her person, more elegant and slender than belongs in general to persons of her rank, was habited in a short gown or jacket suited to her shape; her neck was covered with a pink checked handkerchief; and although the coarse blue woollen petticoat was but ill calculated to set off her figure to advantage, such was its natural ease and grace, as she stood holding on high the flaming torch before her guest, that Tresham thought she might have stood as a model

for the virgin priestess of some wild remote shrine, rather than for the daughter of some lawless smuggler, as in all probability she was; so foreign to the place and the occupation of its inhabitants did this maiden of the glen appear.

“ This is a wild place for the like o’you, sir,” said the girl, as she watched the perplexed expression of her guest; “ but it’s a’ we hae to offer : it’s just better than the could hill-side, or a moss-hag, and them, may be, aside you, that wud na be that canny. It’s no muckle we can gie you, but ye sha’nna want a fresh bannock, and warm milk, and a new-laid egg ; an’ welcome ye’ll be till it if it were better ; and there’s a heather bed wi’ blankets on it.—Eachan, hand the gentleman the whiskey—he’ll no’ be the worse o’ a dram after his walk.”

Tresham thought so too, and he therefore accepted the proffered hospitality from Eachan, who speedily came forward with a bottle of “ mountain dew,” and a small “ *cap*” of dark wood with two handles. He then took his seat upon a wooden bench, ancient and dirty enough, placed near the hearth ; a few peats were thrown on the fire and fanned into a blaze by the vigorous application of the young woman’s petticoat, by way of bellows ; after which she issued forth on “ hospitable thoughts intent,” to busy herself in pre-

parations for the comfort of her guest, while the young Highlander, leaning his back against one of the wooden frames of the hut, attempted a desultory and ill-sustained conversation with the stranger.

The subjects of this imperfect colloquy were of a general nature, calculated to afford little information to either party, and besides the difficulty of comprehension and expression on both sides, there was an evident constraint upon that of the young man, which made it a relief to Tresham when his hostess returned with the materials of his simple supper. This was soon served, and eaten by the young Englishman, to the great comfort of his inward man, by the light of the flaming candle-fir.

The girl then showed Tresham his intended couch, a dark suspicious looking wooden crib, in a sort of interior closet, or rather hole, the approach to which was mysteriously concealed; to which neither air nor light could reach, and where dingy yellow blankets seemed to threaten more of oppression than of warmth, and to assure him who should be rash enough to commit himself to their embraces, that he need not dread the want of *society*.

The aspect of this dormitory was so little inviting, that Tresham, notwithstanding the stiff-

ness and fatigue which now began to oppress him, felt small disposition to “tempt the dangerous gloom,” and preferred occupying his place, for a while at least, on the bench where he had hitherto sat. The hours passed on; darkness covered the earth, and Tresham, who had prevailed on his hosts to be seated, was still maintaining an occasional conversation with the maiden, when suddenly, the dog which lay before the fire at their feet, pricked up its ears, and casting a suspicious glance at the door, uttered a long uncertain growl. “What the de’il ails the doug noo?” said Eachan, following its glance with an uneasy eye; “who’ll be coming here at this time o’night?” But Stumah, as suddenly changing its note to a yell of joy, jumped up, bounded to the door, scratched at it till it flew open, and dashed forth into the darkness. Eachan and the maiden regarded each other with looks of alarmed surprise; but, before a word could be uttered, a heavy step was heard without, accompanied by the joyful whine of several dogs. “*Oh Yeah! m’aher!*—O God, my father!” exclaimed the girl, turning very pale; “what will he say?” and as she spoke, the door was pushed open, and a tall bulky looking figure entered, who cast his eyes around upon the company, and in a deep

angry voice exclaimed, “ *Thannumundiaoul! cutheh-u-shin neish, Maarie?*” *

The maiden thus roughly addressed, appeared both dismayed and distressed; but instantly rising, she approached the intruder, to whom she spoke for some time in low earnest tones in Gaelic. The man’s replies were rough, and his gestures strongly expressive of displeasure, and while this dialogue was going on, Tresham, who had risen to his feet, had time to examine his person.

He was a man of powerful frame and great stature, whose figure, spare of flesh, but bony and athletic, with shoulders of enormous breadth, indicated not only great, but long tried, bodily strength. Dark piercing eyes, gleaming from under heavy lowering brows, imparted to features, stern and strongly marked by nature, an expression of gloomy ferocity which seemed incapable of relaxing into a smile. A physiognomist would at once have pronounced, that calculating cunning, selfish malignity, and dogged obstinacy, were written in every line of his deeply furrowed countenance. His dark red, sun-burnt complexion, and bushy whiskers, changed from their original blackness to a grizzled hue, proclaimed alike the effects of time and long-continued exposure. His

* “D——n! what’s all this now, Mary?”

head was covered by a small Highland bonnet, from beneath which the dark grey hair escaped in wild profusion. A jacket of well-worn, coarse blue cloth, with a waistcoat made of deer-skin, and a dark tartan phelibeg, composed the principal part of his dress; a plaid of the same stuff was wound round his shoulders. His sinewy legs, covered, like those of an animal, with dark curly hair, and bare for some space above the knee, were cased in thick grey hose, and on his feet he wore the genuine Highland brogues. A dirk hung at his waist, the knob of a pistol peeped out from a breast-pocket of his jacket, and in his hand he carried a most formidable cudgel. Such was the person of the man who had entered the bothy with an air which at once proclaimed him as the owner of it; and Tresham could not help being impressed with the idea that he had seldom seen so truculent a looking fellow, nor one with whom he should less like to meet upon suspicious ground.

This person, after a long and energetic discussion with the maiden, whom he addressed by the name of *Maarie*, or Mary, at length turned to the young Englishman, and after a vain effort at smoothing his brows into something of a more benignant expression, cast a look at him, askance, uttering at the same time the usual form of salutation

“ Failte-oreiv’ ! Failte-oreiv’ !* Sit doon—sit doon.” *

It would be unnecessary to detail the series of questions which were now put to Tresham by the new comer, as they were substantially the same which he had already replied to from Mary and Eàchan. They were proposed by him in Gaelic ; for he either could not, or did not choose, to speak in English ; and interpreted by the daughter, who reconveyed the replies in the same language to the questioner. It appeared that the old man’s doubts, or curiosity, were at length satisfied ; he nodded somewhat surlily to the girl, muttered some words in no very cordial tone, which sent her from the room, and Tresham remarked that he then summoned the little urchin of the rock, with whom he retired for a while out of the bothy. It was a circumstance that forced itself upon his observation, because he remembered the boy—but he thought no more of it at the time—it was subsequent occurrences that brought the incident again to his recollection.

The night was now well advanced, and fatigue prevailing over disgust, had sent Tresham to his unsightly couch. He had even fallen into a sound slumber of some duration, when the noise of several persons entering the bothy, and the sound of their voices speaking in no gentle key, made him

* “ Hail to you !” pronounced “ Failtchery !”

start up in his lair and gaze around him. All was dark as pitch; he could not immediately recollect where he was; and he might have imagined that the alarm he had received was only the effect of a dream, had not the voices still continued to force themselves on his attention. They were loud and stormy; one in particular there was, which spoke with clamorous volubility. The softer voice of the maiden too was heard, in tones of entreaty and remonstrance; and the surly accents of the old man might occasionally be distinguished in the dialogue.

Moved not less by a feeling of anxiety than of curiosity, Tresham was meditating to come forth and learn the cause of the disturbance, from personal observation; but a prudent uneasiness, as to the possible consequences of a rash step, occasioned him to hesitate; and before he could determine on the best course to pursue, the door of his cell flew open, and the light of a torch flashed strongly on his face, displaying to his dazzled eyes the persons of some half-dozen fierce-looking men, who instantly advanced towards him.

“Thannum-mundiaoul! Tamnation! who the de’il’s this,” was the salute of a short squat fellow, with a head of fierce red curling hair, and a great crimson nose, clad in the rough jacket and trousers of a seaman—“an offisher? a gauger, is she?

Halloo man ! let a body ken who you are, or, tamnation ! she may get a dirk in her wame !”

Confounded at so rude an address, and still struggling with sleep, Tresham was at a loss how to reply to his insolent and impatient questioner. He gazed at the man for some seconds—then cast his eyes over the group which had gathered behind him, perhaps in search of some friendly face ; for even the constrained civility of the young Highlander, and the still more questionable forbearance of the surly old one, were preferable to the lowering faces and threatening aspects by which he was now confronted. But Tresham was not a man to be daunted by angry words or stern faces ; and soon recovering from his temporary perplexity, he returned their insolent address by a haughty look, and demanded who they were, and what they wanted with him.

“ What is the meaning of this intrusion ? what is your purpose by such rudeness ?—My name is Tresham, I am an officer in the army ; I have lost my way in the hill, while hunting, and came by mere accident to this place. I was hospitably received by those I found here, and why you should attack me thus, I cannot conceive. I neither know you, nor ever dreamt of injuring you. I am no gauger nor excise officer, if it’s that you are afraid of, and I only wait till morning to leave the place

with thanks to its owners for the kindness they have shown me."

"O tamnation!" said the same fellow, "it's fine talking, but it wunna do, man! we ken nothing o' you or your fine speeches; but out o' this ye most go this very minat—ye're ow'r long already, whare ye had no business to be; we dinna want fouk o' your stamp here, to see what they shud na' see, and tell what they shud na' tell. Up man, up wi' ye."

"And pray who may you be, fellow, who take upon you to insult another man's guest? is this Highland courtesy or hospitality? away, and let me rest," said Tresham with mingled indignation and surprise.

"Na, faith I, man; ye've had your share o' rest the night, and more ye need na seek, for ye'll no get it—what! ye want to stay here till we hae a' thon black Glenvallich's men upon us seeking after ye, *diaoul!* eh? Rise up, out o' that this minat if ye wudna hae coarse haundling, *troick-conhuil orst.*"

A forward movement of the ruffian was now anticipated by Tresham, who sprung from the crib to stand upon his guard. "What the devil do you mean? Do you intend to murder me?" exclaimed he, casting his eyes about for some weapon to defend himself

“Na, na—de’il abit, man—de’il abit. Just haud yere gab, and get ready wi’ ye, and fint a flea o’ harm will ye get; but out o’ that ye man cum’, or we most haul ye. So bear a han’ man—bear a han’, ye’ve a long way to travel afore daylight.”

“Travel? why, what the deuce are ye going to do with me then? Have a care! this is not a country where strangers can be outraged with impunity. I am the friend and guest of Mr. Mac Alpine of Glenvallich; and depend upon it, if any thing comes over me, he will not rest till he discovers the perpetrators, and you may be assured of punishment.”

“Hoot-toot—tarnation! haud yere slack, man. What’s the foolish body jawing about? Here, Callum, *creiss-orst*, (be quick,)” said he impatiently to one of the rest; and rushing forward at the word, in a moment they overpowered the struggles, disregarding the remonstrances, of Tresham, bound his arms above the elbows behind his back, tied a thick cloth or handkerchief about his eyes, and, thus pinioned and blinded, hoisted him up in a twinkling, and bore him from the closet, through the outer room of the bothy, into the open air.

As he passed through the apartment, he could distinguish in the uproar the suppressed sobs of a

female; and a voice, which he thought resembled that of the gloomy old Highlander, addressed to him these words:—"Be silent and peaceable, and you will meet with no harm. As ye love your life, attempt not to move the cloth from your eyes; and fail not to do whatever you are bid, or evil will surely befall you." The necessity of compliance had already been made apparent to the young Englishman; and he resolved to act the prudent part, to be vigilant and observant, but to avoid fruitlessly exasperating the deperadoes into whose power he had fallen, and to trust to the natural course of events for an explanation of the singular treatment he was experiencing, and a knowledge of those to whom he was indebted for it.

Immediately on passing the low doorway, through which he was rather dragged than carried, Tresham felt himself hurried along with an irregular motion, and soon perceived that his bearers were ascending a steep and rugged path. The ascent, of no great length, was succeeded by an equally rough, and even more precipitous descent; during which it was sufficiently clear, from the constant energetic exclamations and expletives in Gaelic, the frequent change of hands, the stumbling and even rude shocks and thumps which

their unlucky burthen received, that the bearers had difficulty enough in performing their task.

At length they seemed to reach a more level spot, and Tresham was placed upon his feet. An order was now impatiently given in Gaelic, by the person who had acted as principal in the abduction: the tread of a beast was heard; and Tresham felt himself very unceremoniously hoisted upon an animal, probably of the *genus equus*, covered with certain sacks or plaids by way of saddle. His feet were thrust into loops of brichen ropes or *withies*, instead of stirrups, and no sooner had his person been thus disposed of, than he heard the same officious leader utter the word, “*Pefallú—Pefallú!*”^{*} upon which the beast began to move onwards at a rapid pace, along a path which, though rough and irregular, appeared hard and practicable enough.

That the general disposition of their course was to ascend, sometimes rapidly, at others more gradually, was easily perceived by the unwilling traveller; and such did it continue for a full hour, during which little passed between his conductors, and that little in a tone scarcely above a whisper; so that Tresham, on whose eyes the bandage remained so close as effectually to prevent all

* “Go on!” or “be off with you!”

exercise of vision, was perfectly unable to guess how many of his ruffian guards continued to attend him. After that period, the young Englishman became sensible that the nature of the ground had altered. The hoofs of the animal no longer struck sharp on the hard gravel, and that they occasionally stuck deep in the soft or mossy ground over which they were passing, was very perceptible.

Advancing still further, their progress became obviously more laborious, and the way more intricate; for the little animal would occasionally stop for a space, and a struggle or a leap was necessary to extricate it from its difficult position; and at such times a few hurried sentences were commonly interchanged between his guides. On one of these occasions he felt the animal he rode sink completely under him in the bog, a fact which was not less confirmed by the execrations elicited by his conductors, than by the still more substantial proof of finding his own legs immersed in water half way to the knee. In one moment, however, he was lifted from off the floundering beast to a dry spot, where, being held securely until the steed was extricated, he was once more remounted.

Much time was consumed in this way. Sometimes their progress was rapid, at others laborious and slow, over ground which must have been ex-

ceedingly difficult and intricate. During this long and tedious march, Tresham more than once attempted to address his guides; but his appeals either met with utter inattention, or called forth a stern emphatic injunction in Gaelic, or very indifferent English, to hold his tongue, and mind his own business.

At length our traveller became aware that morning had begun to dawn: for the veil which in darkness had formed a perfectly effectual screen, was not so utterly impenetrable to the light of day; besides which, it had been partially displaced by the violent jerks and shocks which he had endured upon the journey, so that a tolerably decided glimmer contrived to make way through its thick folds. Nothing, however, could he see, beyond a glimpse of the shoulder of the animal he rode, or of the grey moss and brown heather over which they were making their way.

The approach of morning made no speedy change in the condition of Tresham. Three hours had elapsed since it dawned, and more than seven from the time of their leaving the bothy; they had climbed more than one weary height, and descended several corresponding hollows, when all at once the man who led the sheltie checked the animal, and it stood still. The words, "*Courru-vaan shin-eh*—Put him doon

there!" were heard in the voice of the principal ruffian, and the command was instantly obeyed. A few words more of Gaelic passed between his attendants, and the departing footsteps of the pony conveyed to Tresham the information that the animal was led away. The ligatures which bound his arms were next unloosed, and a voice close to his ear uttered these words in tolerable English:—"If ye want not a bullet through your brain, touch not the handkerchief on your eyes. Do not turn nor move, until you get orders to do so. If ye seek yere way home, follow your nose as soon as ye get leave, and go straight forward." All then was still, and Tresham remained for a minute motionless on the spot where he stood, as he had been bidden to do. He could endure it no longer; raising his arms, which were stiff from the numbing effects of the ligatures, he tore the bandage from his brow and gazed around him. His eyes, dazzled with the sudden glare, could scarce distinguish objects; but so far as they were to be trusted, no one was to be seen. It was after a considerable time, passed in thus gazing about, that at length he detected the motionless figure and dirty face of the urchin whose sharp black eyes had betrayed him, as he watched at the bothy on the preceding night.

"Oho! my lad—you're there! I'll have you

at least," exclaimed Tresham; and he made a spring to catch the boy. But quicker than lightning, the little statue sprung into life and motion, and bounding up the brae face like a wild cat, with a shrill cry disappeared over its brow, before his pursuer had well got to his speed. On reaching the top, Tresham threw a hasty look in the direction he had taken, but no one was visible, nor was there a single living creature of any description to be discovered among the grey crags and broken ground which covered the steep descent beneath.

Tresham rubbed his eyes in amazement—"Where in the name of wonder can they have all got to? are they bubbles of the earth or air, like the witches of Macbeth? and have they sunk into its bowels, or fled upon the wings of the wind? But where's the use of inquiring? I have got off, after all, better than I expected. It is a strange adventure, faith; well, let me see—which is my way? Follow my nose, said the fellow; well, but I have lost my bearings like a fool, in pursuing a shadow, and how am I to find them?"

He turned to look around him, and observed lying on the ground, where he had thrown it, the bandage which had covered his eyes. With greater deliberation he went up to the spot, and to his surprise, as well as his satisfaction, saw close to

the spot where he had been standing, the rifle and shooting geer, which on the preceding evening he had thrown off in the bothy, when he retired to bed. "Strange," he mentally exclaimed; "the villains are not thieves, at least—they have not even made me pay for my lodging."

On picking up the bandage he recognized it for the handkerchief which he had observed on the preceding evening round the neck of the young woman, his first hostess. He remembered her kindness, her alarm, and her distress,—for that the sounds of distress he had heard while dragged from the bothy had proceeded from her, he could not doubt—in contrast with the rough usage he had met with from the gang, with which she seemed to be so strangely connected; and with an emotion of gratitude, and even of tenderness, he folded it up and put it in his pocket. "And now for Glenochree and Auchonrui," said he, as placing himself as nearly as possible in the same position as that in which he had been left by his rude guides, he took their advice, and "followed his nose" down the hill.

The ground before him presented but the same expanse of grey moss, interspersed with ridges of dark rock and heather, which was the characteristic description of the country, and possessed no peculiar feature which might impress it on the

memory. But on crossing one of the heights in front of him, and which bounded his view in that quarter, his eyes were greeted by the appearance of certain remarkable and familiar peaks. He was still endeavouring to recall the exact lay of the country, in order to fix his own position, and by the land-marks in view to shape a homeward course, when, as with more assured steps he was beginning to descend the slope below him, he descried two persons advancing, in a direction to meet him. "Shepherds, no doubt," thought Tresham—"they will at all events tell me exactly where I am, and direct me how to proceed for the bothy of Auchonrui;" and he mended his pace, and hallooed to attract their attention as he drew nigh. His surprise and satisfaction may easily be conceived, when he recognized in the supposed shepherds, the persons of Duncan Maccombich, the forester, and his sturdy assistant, Kenneth.

Their astonishment and joy were at least equal to that of the young Englishman. "The Lord bless and preserve us a', is it your honor's sel'? Ochone, what has cum ou'r ye, sir—and whare hae ye been, for mercy's sake, a' the long nicht?" was Duncan's exclamation, articulated in tones of real emotion.

"Why, faith, my good fellow," replied Tresham, "that's more than I can tell you; it is me,

sure enough, but where I have been, or what has come over me, I really cannot exactly say." The forester looked perplexed; but habitual taciturnity and respect kept his mouth shut for awhile. "And pray, Duncan, what hill is this we're in now? Surely we're not far from Glenochree?"

"Ou no, no, sir, thon's *Beinfoineart*, we're seeing forenent us; that's where ye killed the first deer, yestreen, and this is part o' the *Mounefaisach*, that runs wast never so far; but hoo' ye cam' to be here, sir, and never a one o' us to ken o' it, passes me to understand."

"Why, faith, it's more than I can well understand myself, man; but how do *you* come here? and what became of you, last night; surely, you did not lose yourself, too?"

"It's no' in this country that I'm like to lose my way, sir," replied the forester, with a somewhat contemptuous smile, "there's no' a craig, nor a stone, nor a heather know, let abe a lump o' a hill, that I hae na the mark o', late or early, night or day. Black wud need to be the mist that wud set me wrong in the *Mounefaisach*, or the hills o' Glenochree, wide as they are. No, no; when I staid to break the deer that ye shot, sir, on the side o' *Beinfoineart*, I thocht to see you from the hill top, and to catch you, afore ye got to the moss at the bottom; but I cud na' get sicht

o' you ; and no' a craig nor a scoor in ten miles round, I'm sure, but I was at the top o' it ; but the nicht was falling fast, and nothing cud I see— an' I was sore at a loss, sir, when I met wi' Kenny, here, cum a' the way from the Slivosnaig, that's bewast the Mounefaisach, and he had lost you too. So we thocht ye most be back to the bothy, for ye wud never be out the nicht, surely ; and off we set, and black night it was 'ore we got there—but blacker still, when we did na find your honor ; and Kenny, here, was wild about what cud hae cum ow'r you —and for me, I cud na think o' sleep or rest, an' no knowing if ye was weel or ill, for there's many a moss and many a craig in thae hills that's no canny ; and I said to Kenny, I canna hae ease till I ken the worst o' it. 'Nor I neither,' says Kenny ; so off we just started, him by Scoorevialach and the black corry, and I went higher up, to cum in by Beinfoineart foot—and it's no an hour since we met on its side. God be praised, we have found ye in life, sir ; but was ye reely a' the nicht in the hill, and never a plaid to put about you ? Oh ! how did ye get through it, sir ?”

“Why, no, Duncan ; many thanks for your kind intent, but I certainly did not *sleep* in the hill—in truth, I have had very little sleep since we parted. I have a very strange story to tell

you—stranger than I ever expected to hear of in this quiet country.” And Tresham in his turn related to the foresters the whole of his adventures, from the time he parted with Kenneth. To all this Maccombich listened with an air of the keenest interest ; and little as he was in the habit of giving way to his feelings, he could not repress sundry symptoms of surprise as the young Englishman proceeded with his narrative. He put many questions, with a view to ascertain the exact course pursued by Tresham in his approach to the whiskey bothy, and to determine the time he had consumed in reaching it, from the spot where he had separated from Kenneth. The whole adventure and its result seemed utterly to confound him.

“Diaoul !” exclaimed he, half musing, “he canna surely hae been wast a’ the way to the Moineboglach, and the braes o’ Glen Shlichard ? And yet, where on this side o’ it, cud he find what he seed last nicht ?”

“Glen Shlichard !” exclaimed Kenneth, to whom this appeal seemed in some sort to have been addressed. “Lord, man ! that’s no possable ; Glen Shlichard’s thirty good miles from this bit, if it’s a yard. Ou no, that canna be.”

“Weel, but where wud he find a whiskey still like yon, nearer this way ?” retorted Duncan ; “and

weel div' I ken o' more dens than one in the braes o' Glen Shlichard like the one Mr. Tresham has tould us o'. There's one in the Aultrian, but it cudna' be that, for that's on the other side o' the glen; then there's the Slochd-uaine, that's in the Ault na feh, where the water sheds from the Moineboglach—it's just such a hole: weel did I ken it once."

"The Moineboglach?" repeated Tresham; "I think that was a place I heard named by those in the bothy—but I have no great ear for Gaelic, so I may have been mistaken. But what could be the meaning of their strange conduct to me? what could there be in my appearance to excite their suspicion? Surely they could not have supposed me an exciseman, after what I said to the contrary?"

"Weel, sir," replied Duncan, after a deliberate pause—"it's no' just easy to say what they thocht, they dinna always trust fair words; an' if they got to a houff, they dinna like to be kenned o'—, many a one there is there—they may be thocht it dangerous to let ye out wi' your eyes open. If they had thocht you an exciseman, odd they wud hae clodded ye ow'r the black linn, I doubt. But there's few of the real Glenshlichard lads that wud hae behaved yon way to the like o' you. There was one once—but the Lord only kens

whare he may be now—that wudna hae stinted nor stayed muckle, at any wild work; but surely it cudna be him. What 'n alike face, sir, did ye say the ould man had—was he a tall, black, weel-faured, fierce looking chap?”

Tresham again described the appearance of the person who had disturbed his comfort at the whiskey bothy, adding, that though tall no doubt, he stooped so much as to appear more remarkable for bulk than height; and that he was a gloomy, dogged, ill-looking villain.

The forester shook his head. “No, no,” said he, musing, “it canna be him; and yet, after all, who can tell? it’s many a year since syne—time, and trouble, and evil doings, may hae wrought sore changes. I’m muckle changed from yon time mysel. But sorely, sorely, most the lads o’ yon wild glen be altered, ’ore they wud forget their manners, an’ use a gentleman as they hae done you, sir.”

“Why, Duncan, you seem to know the place and the people wondrous well; how happens this? I thought you were a sober, well conducted man; how do you come then to know any thing about such a lawless set as you speak of?”

“Trowth, sir, ye may wonder, and it’s a long tale, and no worth the telling, may be; but sure enough I kenned them weel once; and it’s no to

say they wud na have been uncevil; but they wud hae put the best in their aught afore any stranger, forby a gentleman that chanced to come their way, unless he were a guager, or cutter's-man, or a riding offisher; and even then it wud hae been let be for let be, and a good glass of uiskabeh, no doubt, and as much pot-ale as wud set them sound a sleep. It's a new fashion this, but they're fear'd, they're fear'd—the riding offishers hae been vicious, they say, of late, and the lads are getting desperate.”

“Why, Maccombich, you're positively getting eloquent, and warm on the subject, and that is a wonder in a man of your coolness. I'm afraid we shall find you more interested than you like to confess in this business: you seem to have a strong hankering after the trade yet.”

“The Lord forbid,” replied the forester, earnestly; “it has cost me far ow'r dear already—its a trap till our feet, and a snare in our path; but I'm free o' it, thank God—I'm free o' it, longsyne.”

“It seems to have been a bad business then for you, Duncan, if I am to judge by your expressions; some time or other I must hear the story of your brewing exploits; but at present I suspect we must quicken our pace homewards.”

“Aye, sir, and it’s a long way ; an’ ye canna but want rest and meat, after such a day’s work and a nicht’s trouble.”

The subject did indeed appear to have warmed the worthy Duncan out of his habitual taciturnity ; for he was, on most occasions, grave, silent, dignified, combining in his dispositions and deportment, much of the astute and sagacious Highlander, with the orderly, respectful, and promptly obedient soldier ; of the devotion of the clansman, with the pride which characterizes the majority of his countrymen. This unnatural excitement of the forester’s was by no means lost on Tresham, who, full of his late adventure, and anxious to investigate the nature and causes of so singular a state of things in an otherwise orderly country, resolved, if possible, not only to make it a subject of inquiry, but to press into the service upon this occasion, all the information that might be gathered from the forester, whenever a fit opportunity should present itself.

CHAPTER VI.

HIGHLAND SMUGGLING.

“A rude and lawless horde.”

ON the succeeding morning, Tresham, accompanied by the forester, quitted the bothy, and repaired to Inverallich castle, where his adventure, when known, produced a sensation proportioned in liveliness to the monotonous tranquillity which it interrupted. In the country, particularly in a remote Highland neighbourhood, the value of an adventure, an event, can only be properly appreciated by those who live in the dull security and sleepy comforts of such localities—who rise each morning, breakfast, dine, and sup, and go to bed at night in the same unvarying routine, uninterrupted save by a change of weather, the arrival of a letter, a periodical dinner of the neighbours, or such important domestic incidents as the entrance into this sublunary scene of a brood of

chickens ; or an addition to the dairy establishment in the birth of a calf. For two or three fleeting months of the year, indeed, tempted by the brief beauty of early autumn, the excellent roads which now pervade those tracks, heretofore impervious, and the good Highland cheer seasoned with "Highland welcome," which still distinguishes the "land of the mountain and the flood," our southern neighbours, like other migratory animals, make their periodical appearance, to taste such good things, and enjoy such amusements, as these remote regions afford. Then, no doubt, all is bustle and enjoyment. Then are all those apartments, which, useless in the solitude of winter and of spring, have long remained unconscious of human presence, opened, aired, and prepared with every attention to comfort for the reception of the expected visitants. Then comes the bustle of housewives and housekeepers ; the stores of snow white linen are produced from their crypts, the condition of the plentifully-peopled poultry yard is examined, and the fat five-year-old wedders are set apart. Alas ! that good living and hospitality should involve so much bloodshed and murder ! Then are hedges trimmed, and lawns fresh shaved ; approaches smoothed and beautified, and all immundities removed with more than ordinary jealousy, that naught but beauty and neatness

may meet the critical and practised eyes of friends and strangers from more polished regions. Then, too, is the post-bag more anxiously expected, and the eyes of all the indwellers of *castles*, and *houses*, and *seats*, and *cottages*, like those of sister Anne, are wistfully turned towards the distant road, to “see if any one is coming.”

Far be it from us, however, to insinuate that “life in the Highlands,” though for the most part calm and unvaried, is therefore of necessity either tedious or dull. To those who have a relish for rural pursuits and amusements, there is no country which affords them in greater diversity or perfection. There is something peculiarly exhilarating and elating in the interminable extent and wild picturesque variety of a large Highland property, which must be unknown to the majority of our southern neighbours. Its noble mountains and green valleys—the mysteries of its deep glens and dark woods—the fantastic forms of its rocks and precipices—its rapid torrents and majestic rivers—its bright silver lakes gleaming in the sun, or its dusky tarns, whose black water reflects back only the shaggy heath and rugged cliffs which hem them in — its rich cultivation and beautiful farms embosomed in woods of weeping birch ; even its strange looking *toons* and assemblages of black huts, scattered on the brae-face, or river’s

bank, amidst a profusion of “bonnie broom,” rich scented whins, (furze,) bramble and dog-rose bushes, potatoe patches, and crofts of black oats—all are so many points of interest to a proprietor—so many objects of regard, and motives to the exertion of an improving spirit, which may vie even with the polished beauty, the rich exuberant verdure and more perfect culture of “merry England.” And when a Highland laird wanders, staff in hand, the livelong day among his thriving plantations, views his improving farms, or traverses the wide bounds of his grazings—when, with his gun over his shoulder, he strides over a dozen miles of good grousing hill, or summons out a score of gillies to beat the side of a glen, and together with his friends, returns home loaded with woodcock, and blackcock, and hares, and roebucks—aye, and sometimes with a gallant stag, or a fat “yell hind,” across the back of a pony, we think he may be held excused if he feels a pride and exultation equal to that of the English lord or squire who can count treble his rent on a tithe of the surface, and who, from a cover of a score of acres, will drive out to slaughter some hundred head of pheasants as tame as barn-door fowls, or of hares and rabbits that scarce dream of getting out of the sportsman’s way.

If to all that has been said, be added the exten-

sive good which a Highland proprietor has it in his power to effect among the numerous small tenants and cottars, who, in spite of the "large farm system," must still exist to a considerable extent upon all large estates, and whose comparative ignorance calls loudly upon their landlord for assistance and instruction, we shall scarcely find grounds to deny that such gentlemen as do their duty to their estates and their tenantry, may find very sufficient occupation to banish the torments of ennui.

Even the females of the family may find ample and interesting employment in the performance of the several duties that will fall to their share, if they seek to be useful; and should their station in life exempt them from the more laborious details of domestic arrangements, still they never can be at a loss for objects of charity and benevolence to call forth their better feelings, or for subjects of moral improvement on which to exercise their judgment and their taste.

With all this, however, there are few so perfectly contented with their share of enjoyment, as to be insensible to the pleasure of a little extraordinary excitement. If the incident which creates it be of an agreeable nature, so much the better—if even a little of the contrary description, it is scarce altogether unwelcome. It then acts like the

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sharp gales and breezes of spring and autumn which, though they may do some little damage to our plants and flowers, or disorder for a few hours the comely dress of nature, purify an atmosphere which might otherwise become dense and foggy. It prevents that stagnation and hebetude of the mind which is the consequence of continual inaction.

The arrival of a gay young Englishman at Inverallich castle was of itself a source of no mean enjoyment; but when he became the hero of an adventure, the pleasure derived from his society was tenfold increased; and for some time after his return from the bothy on this occasion, nothing was talked of in or about the castle and its neighbourhood but the wonderful and unaccountable incident which had occurred to their Southern guest.

Engagements of an urgent nature prevented his having any particular communication with his friend the laird, until the forenoon of the day succeeding his arrival, and then only for a few moments before his taking horse to ride to a farm at some distance.

“You won’t go with me, Harry, I dare say—stay at home, amuse the ladies and recruit—I shall be back to dinner, at which I expect the company of some gentlemen who will, I am sure, be well pleased to know the particulars of your ad-

venture, and who are perhaps as well qualified as any in the country to give you the information about which you are so curious—I mean regarding our Highland smugglers, or rather illegal distillers. I shall defer hearing all particulars myself till then, although there are some things I have heard already that puzzle me extremely. Adieu, then, after dinner we shall hear all about it—till then I kiss your hands.”

The hour of dinner came, and with it the company. On Tresham's entering the drawing-room he became aware that the party was increased by the presence of four gentlemen who were unknown to him. The first of these, a fine-looking elderly man, on whose benevolent features and cheerful countenance more than sixty winters had laid a gentle hand, although the leaden grey of his curly locks did in some sort confess their influence, was introduced to the young Englishman by the name of Mr. Stewart, of Airdruthmore. The next was Captain Macaskill, of Ballytully, a gentleman, the prominent characteristics of whose outward man were an air of military pretence mingled with something of impudent assumption belonging rather to the bully than the officer ; a countenance naturally handsome, but deformed by that peculiar and repulsive cast, communicated by habitual contact with low life, and a look of assumed defiance, in-

dicating the secret uneasiness felt in unwonted society ; a person, tall, handsome, and strongly built, but impressed with the swagger of one who deems not lightly of his own consequence, and demands a like consideration from others.

Mr. Ross, the third in succession, was announced as clergyman of a neighbouring parish, who had come to assist at the “preachings” held in that where Inverallich was situated. His mild, placid, and benevolent, yet intelligent countenance, presented a contrast to that of the valiant captain, which was particularly favourable to the man of peace. The fourth was a plain country laird, as it seemed with little pretensions to any distinguishing traits ; he was a hard-featured, large-boned, tall man, with weather-beaten face and red hair, but an acute and sagacious countenance. He was introduced as Mr. Cameron, of Dunlarig, a neighbouring proprietor.

The conversation, during the time of dinner and while the ladies remained at table, was of that general and desultory character which commonly prevails under such circumstances. Considerable progress was made in the usual routine of “parish business,” as it is termed. Accurate information was sought and obtained on all parts, of the state of the crops—the forwardness of the wheat and barley harvest—of the hay crop—of the breadth of

turnips—the price of wool, mutton, and black-cattle: and the ladies were forced to listen once more to the oft-repeated “tales of the muirs”—the condition of the unconscious animals which were to afford the approaching sport—the strength of packs—the size of the young birds, &c. &c.

As soon, however, as the gentlemen had closed their ranks after the departure of the ladies, the claret having circulated, and those who preferred the less elegant beverage of “whiskey toddy” having supplied themselves to their desire, the laird of Airdruthmore, addressed the young Englishman with an air of considerable interest. “I am sorry, Mr. Tresham, to hear from my friend Glenvallich, that you have met with an ugly sort of adventure, and rather discourteous treatment among these wild hills of ours: such an affront to a stranger must affect all of us Highlanders, and I’m sure there is not one of us, but would wish to detect and bring to punishment the people that could act in a way so discreditable to themselves and their country. Would you be so kind as to let us hear what really took place?”

“That, sir,” replied Tresham, “I shall most willingly do, although I do assure you, that the last thing I should think of would be to impute any degree of blame to either the country where I have been so happy, or to the inhabitants from

whom I have received so much kindness, for the act of a few lawless banditti, for such I do believe them to have been——”

“ Aye, Mr. Tresham, but banditti are no such common cattle in the north now o’ days, the times of the Caterans are past, and even they had the grace to commit their depredations abroad—now you seem to have been insulted in the very place where you had sought shelter from the weather and the night—that’s worse than the act of a Cate-ran, sir. I would fain know who could have been guilty of it.”

“ Well, sir, of that I can say nothing; but if you please, I will tell you what happened, and you may form your own conclusions.” Tresham then related at full the whole of his adventure in the hill, from his first starting from the bothy of Auchon-rui, till the time he fell in with the two foresters on the following morning.

The whole party listened with profound and interested attention, interrupting him only to put such questions as were calculated to elicit information regarding the directions he had taken, or the character of the people amongst whom he had fallen. Airdruthmore eyed him with fixed attention, Ballytully with an air of sarcastic incredulity. “ A very strange affair, indubitably,” remarked

the former at length ; “ what think you of it yourself, Glenvallich ? ”

“ Why, truly, Airdruthmore, my friend’s adventure may very fairly be termed a *singular* affair, since, in the whole of my experience and acquaintance with the country, I never heard of any thing resembling it—nor did you, I’ll venture to say. As for the character of his scurvy enter-tainers and their den, there cannot be two opinions, I think ; I only can’t imagine who they could be, and where the deuce my friend has been, to fall in with such savages—that is what puzzles me.”

“ Faith, it will puzzle more than you I fancy, Glenvallich. Many a whiskey still have I known of and seen in the hills, but never was there one employed about them that would not rather have welcomed and aided a gentleman, than affronted him. Take my word for it, they’ve been none of our kindly Highland brewsters that Mr. Tresham has met with. It must have been some of those wild west-country, or ow’r-the-sea smugglers from France or Holland. He has fallen in with some houff of theirs, and they’ve been frightened that he was an officer or spy ; so they didn’t want him to know his way back again.”

“ Aye, faith, and strong cause of terror must they have had, and worse than common must they have been, to conduct themselves so,” re-

plied Glenvallich. "There's not one in the country better known as an enemy to their trade in all its branches, than myself; but never yet did I meet with any thing but civility when I have chanced to stumble on a still. Besides, fear of discovery is insufficient to account for so much needless brutality as Tresham met with."

"Ah, faith! these foreign rascals, and their black Highland colleagues, are sad reckless bloody rogues, they say—no saying what they might do, if they were provoked. But what think ye yourself, I ask again, Glenvallich? Where could this same houff have been?"

"Why, in spite of the distance, Airdruthmore, I'm inclined to think with Maccombich," said Glenvallich. "I do really believe that Tresham has some how or other found his way into part of the hills or braes of Glen Shlichard." As far as I can judge from his account, the direction he seems to have taken in pursuit of that last deer might have landed him there; and the young man has got light heels and good wind—a deep moss, or a steep hill, are a joke to him now. He must have made a greater progress than he suspected, in his ardour."

"I crave pardon, Glenvallich," said the laird of Ballytully, who had not yet spoken, and who had hitherto sat, listening with a contemptuous

air to what was passing: "I crave pardon, but I have yet heard no good reason to suppose the young gentleman has been near the place you think of; indeed, to me the whole affair wears so strange and incomprehensible a shape, as to afford no ground of judging where he has been, or who he may have forgathered with."

"An admirable help at hand you prove to people at fault, Ballytully," said Glenvallich, laughing; "you knock on the head our only probable conjecture, yet offer none other to stand in its place. But I dare to say you must know more of this same glen and its inmates than I can do, so I bow to your superior information."

"By no means, Glenvallich," interrupted Ballytully hastily; "I pray you attribute no such knowledge to me. In Glen Shlichard I have been, no doubt, as have most of this company, probably, in their day; but I know little more of it than that it is a fine Highland glen, with a wheen fine stout fellows in it—wild a little, but clever cheilds—by no means likely to run their heads against a wall like blind beetles, or to misuse a stranger if he came among them. They may have changed, to be sure, since I knew them."

"But pray take pity on my curiosity, gentlemen," said Tresham, who sat listening with some impatience to all this: "Tell me where this same mysterious glen with the hard name, may be, after

all—Slikard, or—how do you call it?—Every one who names it seems to do so with a holy horror, as if thereby hung a tale—as if it were some *terra incognita*, inhabited by wild barbarians—What, in the name of goodness, are its peculiarities?—What has rendered it so famous or *infamous*?”

“Why, Glen Shlichard, the pronunciation of which seems so nearly to convulse your English organs of speech,” replied Glenvallich, “is a fine extensive valley, enclosed by lofty, and in some places very rugged mountains, and it lies to the north-west of Glenochree, and the country you are acquainted with in that direction. Strange to say, it is almost what you have termed it—a *terra incognita*, even to its nearest neighbours. Not being acquainted with the place, although I have been amongst its outskirts, and though part of my property in one direction bounds with it, I cannot describe it to you more particularly. Its inaccessibility is no doubt one great cause of our ignorance regarding it, as well as of the total neglect it has hitherto sustained; for there is no tolerable road by which it may be entered. Its inhabitants, though not absolutely barbarous, are certainly but little civilized—less so, perhaps, than those of most districts in the Highlands; and the country thus offering but little

temptation either to curiosity or speculation, remains neglected, unknown, and unimproving."

"Now to me," interrupted Tresham, "the very circumstances you have mentioned—its remoteness, its neglected state, the primitive condition of its inhabitants, would all be strong inducements for visiting it."

"Well, such may be your feeling," continued Glenvallich, smiling; "but such motives would not and do not influence men of business, or mere men of pleasure. What do your tourists think of beyond their road books, or the suggestions of their friends and guides, nearly as ignorant as themselves?—And what should take a man of business—a speculator in land, for instance—to a wild glen, where he might sink his money in a peat bog, and never draw rent from it except in the shape of cranberries and heather, or deer, provided he could catch them?"

"But, God bless me!" exclaimed Tresham, "who is the proprietor of this same glen? and what is he about?—Does *he* get no rent—is *he* insensible to interest as well as to duty?"

"Perhaps," replied Glenvallich, "you have hit upon the only cause sufficient to account for the anomaly which such a state of things exhibits in a peaceable and generally well-regulated country.

It can scarce be said to have a proprietor at all. This glen formed part of a property which, having been forfeited in the forty-five, continued in the hands of the crown after the restoration of most others, because no lineal descendant of the original proprietor remained alive to claim it; and the collateral branches disputed their priority of right so long, that the greater number of them died off, leaving the question undecided. The estate thus remained in the hands of the crown commissioners, and still continues in trust for the true heir when he shall make his appearance—an event which seems of dubious probability. In the mean time, the property has been, and continues to be entirely neglected: the rents are suffered to fall into arrear, and such as may be collected go in no wise towards its improvement. The tenants, or rather cotters—for they are little more—the descendants of old holders, do just as they please, and pay what they please; for the agent, who resides in Edinburgh, seldom approaches the place. Indeed, I believe he thinks such a step would be a greater risk than he would willingly expose his precious person to; and the factor, a decent man with plenty of other work on his hands from those who pay better and require stricter service, cannot and does not give to Glen Shlichard that superintendence which such a place would re-

quire. In fact, his power and his office are little more than nominal, and consequently ineffective. He is, therefore, content to take from the tenants such payment in produce or money as they tender, and which they do rather as a premium for remaining unmolested, than as rent legally and acknowledgedly due."

"Good Heaven! what a singular state of things to exist in the island of Great Britain, and in the nineteenth century too!"

"Aye, you may well say so, and the fact may be regretted more easily than remedied; but there is Dunlarig, who can tell you much more and much better than I can about the matter, not to mention Ballytully, who seems somewhat shy of communicating his information."

"Who—I, Glenvallich? Ye seem to think—to have formed a very erroneous idea of my knowledge of Glen Shlichard, and its queer people. I can assure you, once more, they are very little of my acquaintance," said Ballytully, starting, and much displeased, as it seemed, at this remark of his host.

"O, I beg pardon, Ballytully," said he, laughing, "I meant no offence, I assure you. I had no idea the simple joke I uttered would have displeased you; but, Dunlarig, you, I believe, do not object to be recognized as one of the few who know something of this formidable place?"

“Not I faith, Glenvallich!” said the laird; “Glen Shlichard and I are old acquaintances, not ashamed to acknowledge each other; and at this moment, I am confident that I could go through every corner of it, finding a welcome from man, woman, and bairn. But as to the state of the place, there’s little to be added to what you have said yourself; and I believe you have given the true reason why the fine grazing of Glen Shlichard has been so totally neglected. What else can possibly be the fate of a property which has neither master nor factor—no one to restrain encroachments, or hold out encouragement for improvements—no one to stand up for it in public, or to manage its affairs in private; and what decent tenant would ever engage with a farm under such circumstances? In that bonny glen—for though it is wild and mountainous, it is a very bonny glen—there are more than three hundred families, who, for several following generations, have remained there unmolested tenants of the ground. Not a lease, or tack, or missive of any kind, has one of them: they just hold the land by possession—use and wont, as one may say, no one challenging their right. And they do pay a kind of rent, too; they know that the ground is not theirs, and they know, too, that they must pay something

for it ; but they seem to think that no man has any title to dispossess them—that they have a prescriptive right to sit there from father to son, and to maintain that right, they do consent, pretty regularly, to pay something ; very small certainly if compared to the value of their farms—for though they well know their advantages, and the difficulty of forcing them into more regular accomptings, they seem also to perceive that it may be dangerous to push matters too far.”*

“ But have you no kind of law in these parts,” inquired Tresham, in no small astonishment at a state of affairs that his philosophy had never dreamt of—“ are there no such things as warrants and constables, officers of justice—as distraining for rent when payment is refused ?”

“ Yes ; we have these things here, as with you, sir ; but where’s the sheriff’s officer that would venture to execute a warrant in Glen Shlichard ?” replied Dunlarig, smiling ; “ or if he did venture

* Strange and singular as it may sound, the description here given is one which actually applies to a remarkably fine glen in one of the northern Highland counties, as it was not half-a-dozen years ago, and as it probably, in some respects, is yet. The picture will, we doubt not, be recognized by many of its neighbours, who are cognizant of the facts here shadowed forth under a fictitious name.

there, and by a miracle preserved his bones whole, to what use would it be? What would he find to answer the demand?"

"What! have these people no property, no cattle, no stock, no farming instruments, no furniture, or other valuables?"

"Hah! hah! hah! Mr. Tresham, ye must have little acquaintance with Highland farms and Highland tenants, when ye ask such questions," said Airdruthmore, laughing good-humouredly. "Why, Lord bless you, whoever thought of a cart or a plough in such a place as Glen Shlich-hard? Not a tool would ye find there, except a shovel or a hoe may be, or a flaughter spade, and a graip for digging their potatoes; and as for furniture, a three-legged stool, with two or three rough benches—seldom a table—a few cougs and quaichs, some wooden dishes, and horn spoons, make up the sum and substance of their plenishing. As for cattle and stock, why the minute the scent of a suspicious character is perceived at the bottom of the glen, every hoof and horn is off to the hills in a jiffy; and even if they are caught, a thing not to be done just with a word, or a hop, step, and jump, who is to swear to the property?—who is to identify the beasts? Ye might as well think to lay salt on a plover's tail, as to put hands on the beast of one of these Highland loupers."

“Ah ! there I can easily believe you—there I am at home. I grant it can be no joke to make a search for animals of any sort, if it were elephants and mammoths themselves, in these wildernesses of *beins*, and *scoors*, and *meals*, and *knocks*, with their full complements of *corries*, and *glens*, and *glaiks*, and *slochds* ; and their wild rocks and shaggy wood, hid for half the year in mist.”

“Aye, aye, I see ye begin to understand the matter ; but woe’s me, man ! ye’re sorely behind in the *auccent*. Our *ochs*, and *uaichs*, and *adhs*, and *oibhs*, and *mhors*, come ill out of an English throat ; but a willing heart makes a light task, ye may come to in time. I should like to have the teaching of you at Airdruthmore, for some weeks or so.”

“Many thanks for your kindness. I should be proud to be your pupil, although I fear you would have little credit in me. But, in the name of goodness, how does this multitude of inhabitants, tenants, cotters—call them how you will—manage to subsist themselves, if they do not cultivate the ground, even though they do sit almost rent free ?” said Tresham, addressing himself once more to Dunlarig.

“Why, sir,” replied that gentleman, “you would scarcely credit me if I were to tell you ; but it is a short tale. They plant potatoes and

brew whiskey ; that is, in two words, the history of their life and occupation.”

“ Upon my word, equally short and strange ! And am I to understand that all this brewing is illegal—unlicensed ?”

“ Sir, I’ll drink at one draught out of this glass, every drop that ever paid the king a far-thing,” replied the laird of Dunlarig, suiting the action to the word, and taking off the last drop of toddy from his glass, as he prepared to replenish it.

“ And they purchase the necessities of life from the profits of this illicit traffic ?”

“ Exactly so ; the very limited stock of necessities which such people require—*videlicet*, meal, salt, a few trifles of hardware, and their simple apparatus for brewing and distilling. As for clothes, they spin the yarn and weave the cloth from their own wool ; and their brogues are made of the cows’ and horses’ hides, which they kill or which die among them.”

“ But don’t they sow corn to supply the grain for this illicit distillation ?”

“ Not at all. In the lower part of the glen, there may be a few bolls of barley sown, and sometimes a little black oats ; but in general they find it more to their taste, if not to their advantage, to purchase grain from other quarters. The

manure of a few cows, added to ground long suffered to lie fallow—for they frequently change the land appropriated to tillage—produces generally a tolerable potatoe crop ; and when oatmeal is scarce, they live on these roots, with a seasoning of salt or milk.”

“ And is it possible that these people obtain any regular supply of corn from without ? Will any one trust their property in the hands of such lawless beings ? or probably they deliver with one hand, receiving payment with the other—all cash business ? ”

“ By no means : cash may be preferred, and is frequently paid down ; but here, as in other cases, a traffic of this description becomes secret and confidential—the parties preserve a conscientious and inviolable faith in all such transactions, because they know that on such terms alone it can be carried on ; and as the benefit is mutual, it is contrary to the interest of either party to deceive. Such an occurrence on the part of one of the traders in that glen, is nearly as rare as a defaulter on accounting day at the Stock Exchange of London.”

“ Well, I can understand that, singular as the thing may appear,” replied Tresham ; “ but it appears still more singular that in this age of enterprize, no spirited speculator should have proposed taking

a lease of this fine glen, as a sheep farmer or cattle breeder. Surely it would pay well, and the agent, one would think, would as surely give encouragement to such an offer."

"Why, I dare say when such an offer is made, there will no difficulty arise on the agent's part. But who, think you, in his senses, would dream of risking his money, or placing his person in collision with rude ignorant people, who despise all law because they have never been made to feel its power, and who would look upon and treat him as a troublesome interloper: no prudent man, depend upon it. If he did, his stock would soon find a market, and himself something worse than a broken head. No; very different must be the condition of Glen Shlichard before it will tempt a good tenant, or yield a return to a purchaser."

"Well, I dare say you are right," said Tresham; "but pray is this same glen remarkable beyond all other for this illicit trade? Is not smuggling a general thing in the Highlands?—I think I have heard it so said."

"Sorry am I to say," replied Glenvallich, "that its prevalence is only limited by difficulty of concealment or utter want of means. Scarce a Highland glen will you find without its stills, or some connexion with those who have them. But there are always places more celebrated than others for

their produce, or better qualified by nature for the purpose. Some have even, by a legislative caprice, received the privilege of making small still whiskey; for instance, *Ferintosh* in Ross-shire, a district, the name of which was for a long time synonymous with that of the best Highland whiskey."

"And pray has this illegal traffic existed very long in the Highlands, or when did it rise to this excessive extent?"

"Why the brewing of whiskey is, I believe, as old almost as the growing of barley in the Highlands; but it is only within the last thirty or forty years, that it has reached its present height. Before that time, brandy, gin, and rum, were generally made use of by the better classes, and, as well as the wines of France and Germany, were landed in great quantities, and at very low prices, on all parts of the coast, particularly of the west country. It was then as common to have a piece of brandy or a hogshead of claret on the tap, as it is to-day to see an anker of whiskey or a barrel of ale abroach. The use of malt was in those days much more confined to ale or beer; but when smuggling by sea became hazardous in consequence of the increased vigilance of the legislature in enforcing its regulations and penalties, our Highlanders found out, not only that whiskey was a

very excellent spirit, but that their lone glens afforded the means of making it on their own terms without much danger of interruption, and that their barley might much more profitably be converted into it than into ale or beer, as formerly. The proprietors of low country properties, on their sides, soon found their advantage in the new trade, and encouraged it by all means in their power, as affording an excellent market for their corn."

"But government surely could not long be blind to the loss they thus sustained; did they not take some sort of measures for suppressing this nefarious trade?"

"Hah, hah!" exclaimed Ballytully, "by my faith, if it wasn't stopped, it was no fault of theirs! not a drop of whiskey would be brewed without leave or license by their good will, on this side of Tweed, but that they don't know how to hinder it. What can the fair weather chieles, sitting in their big chairs round their boards of green cloth, know of our Highland glens, or the lads that live in them? An exciseman may be sent to plague a parish, and the officers may look for stills till they're blind, but what good or ill will that do? How is one pair of eyes to be always on the watch over a tract of wild hills like Badenoch or Lochaber, with as many burns and corries in it as there's checks in a tartan plaid?"

“Sure enough, Ballytully,” remarked Mr. Ross, the clergyman, with a smile at the vehemence of his manner; “government is scarcely aware of the difficulty of organizing any effectual system against so profitable and fascinating a trade, in a country so wide, so intricate, and so thinly peopled as the Highlands. The very pleasure of the ploy is more than sufficient to counterbalance the slight risks they at present run; and what, as you have said, is a single officer in a district of a thousand or fifteen hundred square miles, where every soul is banded against him, as the organ of a tyrannical law? for they deem the prohibition against brewing, to be nothing better than an unjust invasion of their natural privileges and rights. And just consider how the poor officer himself is situated: set down in a remote country, among a people who hate his whole *caste*; far from efficient help or assistance to enforce his authority, or secure his seizures should he make any; upon a poor salary too, scarce sufficient for the necessities—quite inadequate to procure the comforts of life; there are just two alternatives in his offer—either to do his duty, viz. to search for, seize, prosecute, and persecute all delinquents, that is, nearly the whole population, and thereby to exasperate every neighbour he has,—to live in open war—nay, actually in personal danger; or to neglect that duty which

he is bound to execute—to wink at the proceedings he is placed there to check,—and by such means to secure for himself, not only quiet and security, but a large portion of this world's goods, in the shape of *fees*, *douceurs*, or *hush-money*, from those who benefit by his discretion : let any man of common sense and candour say which is the alternative most likely to be generally embraced.”

“Why, I do confess that probability leans against virtue and honesty. They ought to have a more liberal salary ; that would surely outweigh any petty bribes that might be offered ?”

“Would it, faith ? it would need to be a liberal one with a witness then,” said Dunlarig. “Petty bribes ! why, sir, there’s many a laird of good respect in his own place, that’s worse off than John Rankin, the exciseman, down near the Clachan yonder, if we may judge by appearances. Honest John came there a poor starved-looking creature, with a hard working wife, and plenty of ill-fed bairns ; scarce a coat had he to his back, and a pot of potatoes, or a little meal-brose was good enough to stop the mouths of his family. His salary is forty pounds a year, and he has been barely six years in the place ; yet look at him now,—he is fat, sonsy, well put on,—his wife tucked out like a lady-lauders,—his daughters sent to school to learn French and music,—and he has

taken the farm of Drumcardoch, built a good house, stocked the place, and, as I hear, has his credit with the bank of — for his good five hundred pounds. Is not that well managed now, out of forty pounds a year? Petty bribes, indeed! Half a dozen good ewes with lambs at their foot; a canny Highland cow in calf; a five—aye, and may be a *ten*-pound note to “kittle his loof;” not to speak of the good sonsy ankers of the mountain dew itself, left under a heap of litter some fine night, and the fat butter-kits, and the nice sweet milk cheeses. But John Rankin is a civil, canny, fair spoken chield, that knows fine how to hold well with both sides: there’s not a lad in the district that would hurt a hair of John’s head, nor refuse him a day’s work at hay time or harvest. And yet John can seize a still or a brewst too, but then he chooses his time; and I would not say what understanding may be between him and its owner.”

“A singular and lamentable state of things indeed,” said Tresham; “but the profits of the trade must be far beyond what I imagined.”

“Faith! they’re not small, as you may comprehend from what I have said,” replied Dunlarig. “I have known a boll of barley turn out nearly three times the value in whiskey, it would have done if sold as grain; and cent per cent is com-

mon—that is, farmer's and smuggler's profits together, and they are very often united in the same person; so that if one brewst in three were to escape seizure, they would be no losers. But after all, I'm persuaded that it's the *ploy* that is the chief temptation, as Mr. Ross said. The secret meetings, the midnight carousings, the interest of mystery and hazard, the bandings together in a sort of common cause, which the business promotes; there is no telling how powerful an effect this moral or rather *immoral* stimulus has. I do believe it would be strong enough to keep up the trade if there was no profit at all to be derived from it."

"But do not Highland proprietors see the grossness of the mischief, and exert themselves to put it down? Surely it must tend in the end to injure their interests."

"Why faith, sir, I fear Highland proprietors are not always so far-sighted: they like high rents; their little tenants could pay them none without this mode of converting their produce into cash—at least so they will tell you—and they have some feeling for their own pockets."

"Come, come, Dunlarig," said Glenvallich; "you do yourself, and all of us, injustice. Highland proprietors must see the evil of this demoralizing practice too clearly, not to desire to put

a stop to it : surely no increase of rent can compensate for the deterioration of principle in the tenantry produced by it ?”

“ Well, well, Glenvallich,” replied Dunlarig, laughing, “ I certainly sha’n’t dispute that ; it’s a very proper feeling, no doubt, especially for large proprietors, but little lairds like us must sometimes be excused for looking after our interests and getting our rents as we can. And after all, what is it to me who buys my corn, if I’m well paid for it ? A chield comes to my barn-door with a horse and cart, claps the money in my fist, and walks off with the bolls ; am I to ask where it goes, or what he does with it ?”

“ And are all the officers of government equally inefficient ?” demanded Tresham, who felt that he had touched on tender ground, and wished to change the subject ; “ do they never contrive to bring these breakers of the law to their senses ?”

“ O yes !” replied Dunlarig, “ that they do, and sometimes there’s no want of broken heads. If the lads of a glen get their horns out too far, and vex the excise, they’ll send a whole posse of riding officers and revenue cutter’s men, or perhaps a squad of soldiers to harry the glen, and search every house in it ; but sometimes I’ve known them meet their match too.”

“ Aye, by my faith, that they do !” said Bally-

tully, who seldom spoke, but who drank in every word that was said with keen attention, warming as the conversation advanced, no less from the potations of his favourite liquor, than from his interest in the subject. “Aye, the filthy cattle! they do whiles get what they deserve; for my part, I would as soon see a wolf in a Highland glen, as one of these officers or cutter’s men. But, d—n them! they sometimes catch it, as ye say, Dunlarig. I mind a splore of that kind in the braes of Glenfarrach, when they got hold of Red John Roy of Knockspeidh; it was afore your time, Glenvallich. His son Donald, poor lad! got a wicked cut in the head, he never got right the better of it. But one of the excise died of the licking he got, and there was some other bloody noses besides. John himself, poor fellow! was sent off to the plantations, for there was never a friend to speak up for him; and what became of his wife I never heard. She left the country with her two bairns to go after him, she said, but we never heard more of her.”

“Aye, Ballytully, that was a sad business, and they say John was hardly used,—I don’t know. But there was a wilder business than that, near the same part of the country, and not much longer ago neither. I’m sure ye mind of black Murphy, the Irish chap that lived at Ballenstree. He quar-

relled with Finlay Oag, a lad of Strath-Cuillich; Murphy took some liberties with a lass that Finlay was courting, and Finlay swore he would make him repent of it. Murphy, Mr. Tresham, was a mad sort of an Irishman—a cast coachman or groom, he was, of Lord ——’s, who got him a place in the Excise, just to be quit of him. He was a big stout black-looking fellow, that blustered and swore a great deal, and was the devil, they said, among the girls.

“But Finlay Oag was not the lad to be daunted either by his looks or his words. The gauger was beset one day, not very far from his own house, by two stout fellows, who, while they belaboured him with their cudgels, told him to mend his manners if he had a mind to sleep in a whole skin. Murphy had a fair guess to whom he owed the favour; he said nothing however, but set his spies, and managed to get word when Finlay was throng with a fine brewst of barley in the Glaikbui, at the head of the Strath. And off went the gauger, with three or four fellows, that he got for the purpose, from the town, to seize the stuff and the tools.

“But the boys of Strath-Cuillich were not just so easily to be caught napping; and Murphy had scarcely turned the black craggan, that’s at the foot of the Strath, when the alarm was given, and

off set two *prochahs*,* to warn every still that was going through the place. By the time they got to the Glaikbui, the whiskey and the still was off, and the people were carrying off the *lames* and some malt that had been left. ‘On them, and follow boys,’ roared Murphy, and the men started forwards to get hold of the things, and of those that were carrying them off; but Finlay himself, and one or two others, stood their ground and opposed the gaugers while the women carried off the rest of the stuff. The Excise lads did not like the job too much, it seems; and Murphy was forced to return with little profit, blackguarding his men for cowards, and swearing bloody vengeance against Finlay Oag, as a notorious smuggler, who had resisted the Excise officers in the execution of their duty. The consequence was, that a warrant was issued for apprehending him, and Murphy himself was charged with seeing it carried into effect. But Murphy knew enough of his man to be certain that this would be no easy job, so five stout seamen, from an Excise cutter, strongly armed, were placed under his charge, and with these he proceeded up the glen, in full confidence of success.

“But Finlay was a lad well liked in the Strath, and his friends determined that if the gauger and

* Boys.

his men did get hold of him, it should not be for nothing. If they had been contented with secret-ing him for a while, or if Finlay himself had been wise, the breeze might have blown by harmless, and things would have done well enough. But he was too high-spirited to skulk, and perhaps the lads of the Strath thought they might as well give Murphy a fright that would sicken him of such pranks, and keep the place free of him for the future.

“ However that was, the party did not get up to the braes of the Strath unseen or unheard of. Finlay and his friends got early word, and they prepared to receive their enemies. When they came to the bothy in Glaikbui, fin’t a thing did they find but the bare walls, and some bits of the tubs and casks that had been broken the time before. ‘The villain must be hiding further up the glaik,’ said Murphy, ‘we’ll have a search there, any how, first,’ and knowing something of the ground, he pushed at once up the dark hollow behind the bothy.

“ There was a narrow pass, a little way up, where the water came down in a number of little falls; every fall had a black pool at the bottom, and there was a great deal of ragged birch, and alder, and tall fern about. As the men were climbing up here as fast as they could, they heard a voice

calling out, 'Oho! Mr. Murphy, is that you? and what may you be wanting this way?' 'Just your own four handsome quarters, Mr. Oag,' replied Murphy, looking up and seeing that it was Finlay himself that spoke; 'so, please come down from your perch, and give us no more trouble, you'd best.' 'I'm very well as I am, Mr. Murphy,' says Finlay, 'but if you can't do without me, ye must just come and take me.' 'Aye, my lad, are you so *bould*, sure,' says Murphy; 'well, we must tame ye. I say, surrender in the king's name, and come quietly down, unless you'd rather taste a lead pill to cool your courage.' 'I'm much obliged to ye, man,' replies Finlay, 'but keep your stuff to yourself, as I don't need it; and if ye'll take my advice, be out of this as fast as ye like, for the air here's no good for your health. Leave us poor lads—aye, and lasses, too, alone, or ye may find yereself the worse of it; mind I tell ye.' I have heard them that were there say that it made their blood creep to hear these two daring randies, bully, and taunt, and curse each other, as if they were both *fey*. And so it seemed they were, for at that very time, neither of them had many minutes to live. 'B—st his eyes, give him the lead, and finish the job,' called out one of the cutter's men, in a surly voice; and at the word, Murphy, thoroughly mad, fired a pistol at Fin-

lay's person. A taunting laugh was the only reply, as he disappeared behind the brow of the bank where he had been standing; two other shots were fired as he went off, and then the whole party rushed forward to try to intercept his further flight.

“ It did not, however, appear that flight was his object, for when the first man got over the bank, and that was Murphy, he saw Finlay standing upon a rock in the bed of the burn, just above one of the little falls, with an old broadsword in one hand, and a stout staff in the other, as if he had been afraid or unable to leap the rapid stream that run between him and the other side. ‘ By the great oath ! there he is at bay,’ cried Murphy, who was near a dozen yards a-head of the rest ; ‘ seize him, boys ; five guineas for him who lays the first hand on him ;’ and he dashed forward to enforce his command. But Finlay was one of the most active lads in the country, with a step as light, and a foot as sure as ever went through a bog. He waited till Murphy was within three or four paces of him, ‘ Ye had better come on, man, and save your five guineas,’ said he, and making one spring to a small stone in the centre of the stream, the next placed him safely on the other side. Murphy, with equal boldness, but less skill and knowledge, did not hesitate to follow. ‘ Ye’ll

be the better o' a dooking, just to cool *your* courage,' said Finlay, with an eldrich laugh, and just as the gauger lighted on the round stone in the middle, he shyed the heavy staff which he held, with so good an aim, that it took Murphy right across the shins, and fairly knocked his legs from under him. Down he came by the run, with his head foremost, and away like a shot into the black linn below. The fall was of no great height, but there was many a hard sharp stone in the way, and that the gauger's head found before it got to the bottom. Finlay, perhaps, not knowing the full success of his work, gave a loud shout of triumph as Murphy fell. 'By G—d, the Highland cateran has done for Murphy,' roared one of the sailors, as he came up, and just saw the body rising to the surface of the pool below. 'Shoot him! d—n him—shoot him;' the word was instantly obeyed; three or four pistol-shots were fired across the burn, and Finlay Oag, with a leap two yards high from the rock where he stood, fell dead into the channel of the stream: he was shot clean through the heart.

“Finlay's last shout might have been a signal as well as a cry of joy, for at the moment six or eight men, some with broadswords, and some with guns, started up from among the fern and brushwood, just in time to see their comrade fall. They

gave a yell of anger, and rushed upon the cutter's men, who on their side, exasperated at the loss of their officer, turned too with their pistols and cutlasses, and a stout battle began, both parties dashing through the water to get at one another as each gave ground or advanced. The cutter-men at length were forced to fly, for even the women pelted them with large stones, and they were all wounded, one of them desperately, who was carried off by his companions. There was another of the Highlanders killed by a pistol shot, and one or two more got wipes from a cutlass.

“Poor Peggy, Finlay's sweetheart, who was along with the people of the Strath, ran shrieking to the body of her lover, and was found half-distracted, clasping it in her arms, and drenched with the blood that poured from his wound. As for the body of Murphy, it was afterwards found so disfigured, that no one could say how much had been done by the rocks and the water, and what by the exasperated Strath'smen. Finlay Oag had a grand wake, and more whiskey was drank at his burial than had been made at his three last brewings. As for Murphy, he was buried in a kind of out-shot of the parish churchyard, with just as little attention as could decently be given.

“The business made a great noise at the time; but government had something else to fash with

than the death of a gauger, who had brought the weight of it partly on himself; and recruits were greatly needed at the time, and severe measures would have been very unpopular, especially as the principal culprit was dead. So there was an examination and precognitions taken, but the thing was never carried farther. The place where the fray took place was ever since called the ‘Irishman’s step;’ and the people still look upon it with a kind of horror, and they show a red mark on some of the rocks, which they assure any one who takes the trouble to look at it, is the blood of Finlay Oag, which neither rain nor snow can wash out, nor time destroy—but that’s all nonsense, I need not tell you, Mr. Tresham.”

“Aye,” said Airdruthmore, “there would be no end to stories of *tulxies* between guagers and smugglers in the glens and at the stills. Your true Highlander entertains a natural aversion to an exciseman, as strong as a Skye terrier to a brock or a founart; and many a plisky will Donald play him, even when there’s not much anger in the case. I remember hearing once of one of that hated fraternity, a riding officer he was, who somehow or other had found his way far ben into Glen Shlichard itself. He was not long of being met with, and as soon discovered to be a stranger to the country. The good folks were wonderfully

civil; took him into a place which he supposed to be a public house, and plied him with strong whiskey so artfully and rapidly, that the man got mortal in a hurry. They then took him, tied him like a sack across his horse, drove it a little distance from the place, and then giving it a hearty skelp, left it to find its own way home. How it got through the intricacies of the path no one living can tell; but next morning it was found picking the grass near the place from whence the man had procured it, with its burthen half-dead, and still whole stupid, on its back. That fellow never scented the air of Glen Shlichard again."

"Your story puts me in mind of an incident which happened to myself not many years ago," said Glenvallich. "I was riding with a friend, who understood Gaelic, and who knew the country and its customs better than I then did, along the north bank of Loch-Ness, where the road has in some places been carried along the face of a precipice, and you see the waters of the lake just under you a great way below, black with extreme depth, and booming against the rocks. We had passed a train of shelties, each loaded with its brace of ankers, which my friend soon discovered to be 'mountain dew' on its way to Lochaber—indeed the people, who knew him, made no difficulty in admitting the fact, and laughed while

they did so. We pursued our course, and after going on a mile or two, at a very alarming part of the road, we met another party consisting of four or five persons, preceding and surrounding one individual who seemed 'very particularly drunk,' and was only kept upon his horse by the united efforts of two of the number, who rode one on each side of the horse: these were followed by another person who brought up the rear, and closed the singular procession. With this person my companion entered into conversation while I rode on. He soon rejoined me laughing, 'Who were your friends?' said I, 'they seem to be a merry set at least.' 'Why,' replied he, 'you will laugh too, in spite of your precise notions, when I tell you who and what they were. The man you saw so well attended was the guager of the district going to search for and seize the very whiskey which we met a little way behind; and his attendants are the owners of this very whiskey, with some of their neighbours, who have gone to see it safe to its destination. Some of them having heard of the guager's intended expedition, went to meet him, and waylaying him near a public-house, cooked up a plausible story, and inveigled him in, under pretence of giving him information. He, anxious to get it, fell into the snare, and in seeking to elicit intelligence, drunk so much, that a little

more made him *fou* enough. In the meantime the whiskey passed on, and they still keeping up the farce of informers, rode on with him, in the very direction their whiskey had gone in, always taking care to stop at every open door, until he became as you see. The whiskey in the course of another hour will be safe through a pass of which they know, a little on this side of Fort Augustus, and the man will then proceed on a wrong scent, if he does not lie down on the road-side to sleep off his debauch. ‘And what if his present good humour gives way,’ said I to the man, ‘before the whiskey is safe? What if the fellow should insist on pushing onwards, or become otherwise troublesome?’ ‘Ou, then,’ said the fellow, making a very significant gesture with his head towards the black water that was foaming below—‘Ou, then, *the loch’s deep*.’”

“A portentous conclusion indeed,” observed Mr. Ross; “and one I do really fear these misguided men would not have scrupled to come to, had the case seemed in their opinion to require it: and this by no means from any general indifference to the life of a human being, but purely from their habitual detestation of the whole race of excise officers, and a sort of tacit impression that no violence against the revenue or its officials is a crime. It is a state of things certainly most deeply to be la-

mented, but, considering all circumstances, scarcely to be wondered at when we take into view the ignorance and poverty of the people, and the severity of a law, which, to their unenlightened mind, appears harsh and unequal. Even the method of carrying it into effect is to them revolting; for it does not unfrequently happen that persons in reality innocent, suffer from their connexion with the guilty; and assuredly excise punishments do frequently operate in a manner very disproportioned to the moral turpitude of the offence if that were to be measured by the motives of the respective delinquents, and their opportunities of mental improvement. And how can it be otherwise, when the judges of the criminal are so often ignorant, not only of his language, but of the circumstances in which he may be placed? Besides, one common mode of punishment is by fine—in default of payment of which, whether from obstinacy or inability, he is put into gaol. In the one case he stays there till *he* is tired—in the other till *they* tire of alimentering him, wretchedly as that is done; or possibly he is liberated on condition of paying a proportion within a given time. And what is the consequence of this? Why, the moment the culprit is at liberty, he returns to the very practices for which he has just suffered, because they alone afford him a hope of being able to pay his fine, or of

recovering his losses. And so away he works double tides for double profits, while the excise officer, if he has a grain of compassion, must wink hard at a breach of law which he feels to be necessary to the poor man's existence and liberty. I myself knew a poor fellow who was personally innocent, detained for near a year in gaol, because he was caught by a party of officers in the whiskey bothy of his brother-in-law, with which, however, he had no connexion. What can such a system lead to, but further demoralization, recklessness, and despair?"

"Bad enough assuredly," said Tresham, shaking his head with an expression of seriousness, which his feelings did not belie; "but where's the remedy?"

"I fear," said Mr. Ross, "the remedy must depend upon a combination of means which cannot be all at once called into operation: the progress of education will do much, for it will open the eyes of the people to the moral guilt of their ideas upon the subject, and this object should be had in view both in the schools and from the pulpit. The influential proprietors of the country should exert their power towards the same object; but, above all, government should seek, by a wise modification of its excise laws, to put a stop to the illegal trade, in the only efficient

way that can be adopted—that of encouraging the legal distillers to make such a spirit as will suit the market, and enabling them to sell it at a price which will drive the smugglers out of it. And till this be done, penalties and restrictions are vain. No whiskey drinker will taste that harsh, nauseous spirit, which is made in the large stills, while he can get the small-still whiskey—a pure, wholesome, aromatic spirit, which at present has the additional advantage of being as much cheaper as it is better than the other.”

But, gentle reader, we fear that we have already trespassed on your patience too far, in recording so much of a conversation which may seem better suited to the pages of a treatise on political economy, than to those of such a tale as we may have given thee reason to look for. We would remind thee, however, of the objects we fairly professed to have in view in this delectable work, and which would, we conceive, entitle us to inflict on thee a much more elaborate and lengthy discussion, had such been deemed expedient to our purpose. But we scorn to use our advantage; and therefore, having enlightened thee in some degree as to the condition of the country in which our scene has been laid, we will spare thee the remainder of the colloquy in question, together with our own profound remarks and deductions therefrom, reserv-

ing them to form the groundwork of a very learned and very interesting memoir intended for the consideration of the chancellor of his majesty's exchequer, by whom, we doubt not, its merits will be duly appreciated.

CHAPTER VII.

A HIGHLAND "PREACHING."

"The plainest roof that piety can raise,
And only vocal with its Maker's praise."

"You will attend our parish church to-day, I hope, Mr. Tresham;" said Mrs. Mac Alpine, as the party sat at breakfast on the Sunday after the conversation so faithfully detailed in our last chapter. "It is our sacrament Sunday, and independent of the more solemn duties of the day, you will witness a spectacle, which, if you never saw a Highland congregation on such an occasion, you will allow, I think, to be both novel and pleasing."

"Certainly," replied Tresham; "I should wish to accompany you, madam, were there no other inducement than the simple service of the Scottish church, which, though strangely shorn of

its honours, I own pleases me from its primitive solemnity. You go of course?"

"I do. Although by birth and education of the church of England communion, there appears to me so little fundamental difference in spirit or in doctrine between the two modes of worship, that I never dreamt of hesitating to attend in the same place of worship where my husband and his family offered up their prayers to their Maker."

"But is this any particular occasion, that you seem to expect an extraordinary congregation?"

"Why, it is in so far an extraordinary occasion, that it occurs but twice in the year. The 'preachings' or *sacrament*, as it is emphatically called in this country, is administered only so often in each year in the Scottish Presbyterian church, and consequently great numbers assemble at such times to witness or partake of it."

"Why, yes," observed Glenvallich, "the assemblies are certainly large; for not contented with attending at the times appointed by the kirk and presbyteries in their respective parishes, and which doubtless are by these authorities deemed sufficient for the celebration of this sacred institution, the great bulk of the people hold it their duty, or make it their pleasure, to flock to every sacrament, not only at home, but at every parish far and near

within reach : and as these are commonly arranged on sequent sabbaths, for a full month and more, nothing goes on during that time but attending of ‘preachings.’”

“ My son,” replied his mother, “ you would not surely deprive the poor creatures of the greatest delight and solace of their lives? Think how hard they work at other times, and how grateful a few days of rest and instruction must be to them.”

“ No mother,” replied Glenvallich ; “ far be it from me to deprive or seek to stint them of the smallest portion of true religious comfort. If I could believe this wandering on the highways, and flocking to the churchyards, was beneficial either to the souls or bodies of these poor creatures, I should be the last to raise my voice or my opinion against it. It is because I see these holy meetings made little better than *ploys* of, and religion in so many cases made the cloak for idleness and amusement—aye, for licentiousness and debauchery, that I would, if possible, put a stop to the abuse, and call upon those who feel the same to act in like manner.”

“ I am aware of your sentiments on this subject, my son,” replied his mother ; “ but I cannot altogether agree with them. I cannot bring myself to believe that these poor people have any

other than good motives for their attendance upon a religious institution, however frequent."

"It is not in your nature, my dear mother, to believe other than good of your fellow creatures. Nevertheless, were the secret motives of many of them laid open, I fear you would see cause to alter your opinion on this subject. If people attended the sacred institutions in question, solely with the devout purpose of making public profession of the faith they hold, of their sense of their own sinfulness, their trust in their Saviour, and the resolution to amend their lives for the future, it would be only a fitting and proper discharge of a portion of their Christian duty; and though unnecessary to repeat these declarations from parish to parish, the act would at least be innocent, if not absolutely praiseworthy. But what is the true state of the case? Of the multitude that attend the 'preachings,' as they are called, or rather who come drest in their gayest apparel, to sit upon the tombstones, or lounge about the churchyard, how few ever dream of approaching the sacred table? On the contrary, how many are there who have no other object in view than to be entertained as they would expect to be at any other gay meeting—to see and to be seen? How many, as we hear of the Hindoos at their fairs, resort to this assembly for purposes of amusement and merry-meeting, if not of trade and

business, fully as much as of piety and religious duty ! How many go even yet further, and waste time, and health, and substance, in the loose company and dissipation which abound in the vicinity, attracted by the promiscuous crowd ! Nay, of those who believe themselves to be honestly following the impulse of religious feeling, how many are there among the multitude, who, unable to approach either pulpit or tent, remain beyond all reach of hearing, patiently sitting in wind or rain, to the infinite detriment of their body, and certainly receiving no spiritual advantage whatever. Even if they should hear, and understand every word that is said—can we imagine them to receive much mental benefit from the repetition, day after day, for a whole consecutive season, of the same discourses, uttered with little variation in every neighbouring parish ? I will refrain from making any observation on the ill consequences of so long an interruption of the common business of life, as is frequently caused by attending the continued succession of these preachings—which occur sometimes at most critical seasons of the year—because it might savour too much of mingling sordid motives with the pure and disinterested considerations which alone should influence our thoughts on such a subject. Yet surely it is blameable to treat with indifference the bounty of the Almighty ;

nor is the indiscreet zeal to be commended, which even for the purpose of praising the giver, neglects the gifts; and have we not frequently seen the precious harvest time lost, and the food of the people suffered to go waste while they were engaged in the way we speak of?"

"I would not interrupt you, my son," replied his mother, "for I fear there is unfortunately too much truth in a great part of what you have alleged. But though I must admit the frivolous or unworthy motives of many, the censure chiefly applies to the young and thoughtless; we cannot upon any similar principle account for the abstinence of the pious and the aged from the holy rite; and yet it is not less a fact, that such do equally with the less worthy, decline approaching the table. This is a singular and lamentable fact. The Highlanders are generally a serious and religious people. I have talked with many of them on this subject, and while grieving over their ignorance and misconceptions, I could not help respecting their sincerity and humility. It is not that they entertain any doubts either regarding the tenets of that faith which they profess, or of the propriety and even efficacy of the solemn rite to which they are invited; it is, I assure you, my dear son, entirely from a dread of their own unworthiness, that they do not dare approach the

holy table. Their imaginations are more impressed by the awful and majestic attributes of the Almighty than by his goodness and mercies ; and it is a task of inconceivable difficulty to open their eyes to the truth ; to convince them, that the lowliest and humblest of mankind have an equal interest in the blessings of salvation with the mightiest and most prosperous—that our Saviour died to save the most sinful as well as the most righteous, provided they are sincere in their penitence and their trust in him. It is not by addressing the poor and ignorant once a week from the pulpit, or even by the more pointed and occasional discourses which are delivered before administering the sacrament, that such errors are to be rectified, and a suitable confidence in the divine grace and mercy inspired. It is only by entering their secret councils, by detecting the anxieties, the doubts, or the ignorances which cloud their reason or harass their minds, that results so desirable are to be attained ; and blessed is the pastor who avails himself of his privilege to lighten their darkness, and pour the radiance of gospel truth upon their souls, to seek the remote and desolate dwellings of the poor, and to comfort them with the glad tidings of salvation.”

“And most sincerely, mother, do I wish that such pastors abounded even more than they do—

for that many such exist it were most unjust as well as most uncharitable to doubt. We shall at all events attend you to-day, in love and charity with all mankind; my friend will, I doubt not, hear an excellent discourse; and the sight itself can scarcely fail of pleasing him."

To church accordingly they went. It was situated about six miles from Inverallich, in a little glen which opened on the lake, and upon a promontory, the foot of which was washed by a copious burn. High rocky hills arose on either hand, whose skirts were sprinkled with oak copse, and weeping birch. The church itself was one of those antique reliques of Catholicism, of which there are few now extant in Scotland; and which probably owed its preservation from the fury of bigotry, not less to the prevalence of the persecuted religion in that part of the country, than to its remote situation, at a time when so many nobler fabrics, crumbled into ashes before the frantic breath of the reformers.

It occupied a rocky knoll, higher than the rest of the promontory above spoken of, and was built in the form of a cross. It was neither lofty nor spacious; but its grey walls, and greyer roof, speckled with lichens of a bright yellow—its old-fashioned spire rising from the centre—its curious gothic buttresses and narrow lancet-shaped win-

dows, and above all, the two magnificent trees, an ash and a sycamore, which almost overshadowed the whole fabric with a canopy of boughs, gave it an air of venerable seclusion, which could not fail of attracting the attention of every passer by.

The churchyard which surrounded it, and which occupied the remainder of the promontory, was in perfect harmony with the building itself. It was adorned by many noble trees of the same hardy sorts; and one corner in particular, overhanging a precipice above the burn, was tenanted by a group of three old Scotch firs, which threw their aged and twisted, but vigorous arms, about in uncontrolled magnificence. A colony of rooks had from time immemorial taken up their abode in these trees, and would impudently mingle their ceaseless cawing with the exhortations of the good minister to his parishioners within doors, as if to dispute with him the palm of garrulity.

The area of the inclosure was of itself highly picturesque from its variety of surface, its old grey wall, overgrown with moss and houseleek, and its curious old cemeteries, and monuments of the families who, for ages past, had there interred their dead. Heavy fabrics were to be seen, with their balustraded walls, and half-rotten gateways, within which the broad moss-grown slabs of freestone on their high supports, stood smothered among

weeds and nettles, emblematic, alas ! of the sorrows and calamities which had overwhelmed the race whose bones lay there decaying. Near, as if in contrast, if not in mockery, of these tokens of decay, rose the trim polished walls and spruce iron railing of a far more modern cemetery. Its state of perfect repair, the greater portion of unoccupied ground which it contained, and the less rank vegetation of its soil, proclaimed it as the chosen resting place of some new and rising family, whose ranks had not as yet been thinned by the shafts of the destroyer ; yet the sable characters, engraved on one fair marble tablet, told of a tale of recent sorrow, and reminded the beholder that worldly prosperity is no safeguard against the stroke of fate.

Antique urns of ponderous stone—slabs of massy size, adorned with deaths' heads and duck-winged cherubims in abundance—the pride, no doubt, of some rural sculptor of ancient days, reared themselves in vain above the rank grass, to tell the passer by what a half-effaced inscription could no longer declare—the sorrow of some father, or some husband, or some bereaved widow long since at rest, for the wife, or child, or husband they had lost—and soon followed to their common home. Close by these venerable monuments appeared the head-stones that commemorated more

recent departures—memorials of those who, like their forefathers, had ceased from their labours, to give way to others, who in their turn would soon also depart. Green hillocks in irregular profusion rose on either side the pathway which led to the church door, and were thickly spread over every unappropriated space, telling in emphatic language how busy death had been among the habitations of the poor: and many a fresh laid sod betrayed where the ripe fruit as well as the fresh blossom had been torn from the bough. The grazing of some privileged cows sufficed to keep short the turf over a great part of the churchyard; but in some places the rank weeds of the soil had asserted their right of possession, and occupied all the more retired corners.

Altogether it was an impressive scene, a spot which breathed the very soul of seclusion and religious retirement. Even the cawing of the rooks, and the unceasing rush of the waters, were sounds to soothe by their monotony, rather than offend the contemplative mind; and the deep shadow with which the thick foliage of the sycamores and dark pine trees chequered the ground, throwing some of the tombs into an ominous gloom, while others started out in a wild prominence of light, invested the place with a character of peculiar solemnity.

At the time of which we speak, however, it wore another aspect. For miles around on either side the roads leading to the church were crowded with men, women, and children, and every sort of vehicle to be met with in a Highland district. Carts, coups, and one-horse carriages of many a strange form and rude construction, with horses, shelties, garrons, and every description of that useful quadruped, which the country supplies for the use or the abuse of man, streamed along each lane and alley towards the church, like radii to their centre. And strange and various as their grotesque equipages, were the groups which they contained. Even frequency of repetition cannot destroy the charm which such living pictures possess for the thinking mind ; to a stranger, disposed to view them with an eye of something more than curiosity, they were still more interesting ; and as the Inverallich party approached the church, the attention of Tresham was strongly arrested by the various parties, who in their turn, with upcast eyes and mouth agape, bestowed a stare of lengthened admiration on the gay equipage as it slowly past along.

In one cart of coarse but solid workmanship, drawn by a stout cross made Highland garron, with a pound of hair at each heel, sat a group of four persons. At the end next the

horses' tail, and upon a truss of the straw with which the cart was half filled, sat bolt upright a man whose hard austere features had born the blasts of full three score and five winters, or more. The unbending rigidity of his weather-beaten countenance—the formidable nose—the large cheek-bones rendered more prominent by the deep sunk furrows in his cheeks, his brow, and around his grim mouth—the smooth grizzled locks flowing even to his shoulders from under a huge broad-brimmed blue bonnet—the firmly constructed and heavy brows, which yielded not even to the influence of the Highland courtesy which prompted a stiff salute to the party as they passed him;—all these formed a striking sketch of the formal and stern but honest old presbyterian. A thin white band encircled his shrivelled neck: a coarse blue great coat hung over his shoulders, but so loosely as to give to view the plain but good fresh suit of the same homely material which he wore beneath.

Beside him, with equal stiffness, sat an aged female—out of all question his wife; for in her harsh forbidding features might be traced the reflection of her good man's downright sternness. And yet there was about the aged couple somewhat of decent sobriety which betokened worth and honesty, however deformed by harshness and

austerity. She wore the stiff starched Highland *toy* upon her head, and a blue duffle cloke enveloped her bony person.

The two remaining figures wore a less ungainly aspect. At the feet of the man sat a young woman of staid but pleasing features, wearing her head covered after the fashion of matrons, and bearing in her arms a further pledge of the connubial state, in a young child which she held wrapped up in the checked cloke that covered her own shoulders. On the other side, beneath the grim female, a young girl whose round but modest face and timid glances betrayed the awe in which she stood of the stiff and motionless figures at the top of the cart, shrunk cowering amongst the straw. A well looking man of some thirty odd years of age, whose dress displayed a mixture of the Highland and Lowland costume, with a grey plaid thrown over his shoulders, walked by the side of the horse, acting the part of driver to the vehicle. The looks which ever and anon he threw back towards its contents, rather than any word which passed, might indicate some peculiar interest he took in its contents.

“ You remarked that old man ?” said Glenvallich to his friend, as they passed the cart—“ there goes a true blue Cameronian of the ancient school, who would have made an active and valuable in-

strument in the hands of John Knox, or the worthy Richard Cameron himself. John Macalvore, or rather Grant, for the other is but a patronymic, is elder of a neighbouring parish, and of course, a most regular attendant upon all preachings within his reach—I marvel how he happens to be so late to-day. He is the strictest of the strict, in all matters pertaining to religious observance; truly ‘the Presbyterian sour;’ but nevertheless a very worthy honest man; does his duty to his neighbour and family, and is charitable, good hearted, and even kind, after a fashion, though so stern and disagreeable. John, though born and living in the Highlands, entertains somewhat of a dislike to the people of the country, which may be almost termed hereditary, as the persecutors, in old times, of his sect and their doctrines. He considers himself as still half a Lowlander, and will not, as you see, condescend to wear the garb of the country, nor permit his family to do so. I believe he even quarrels with the shape and former uses of our ancient and picturesque church, and regrets that the old reformers never got near to give it a touch of their improving hands; he would greatly prefer one of the plain ugly barn-like buildings with which the taste of modern heritors have replaced the ruins of the old places of worship. But here comes a party of a very different character.”

They were at this time within a few yards of a point, where a cart-track that might be seen winding for a long way up the bare hill side, fell into the main road. Like the rest, it was sprinkled with human figures, and one large groupe was just entering the road. "We will let these people go forward," said Glenvallich, "look at them, Tresham, as they pass on." The party consisted of some eight or ten persons, some on horseback, others on foot, and a few in a strange, nondescript species of cart. The principal person was a man whose appearance denoted very great age. His hair as white as snow, blew from under a Highland bonnet, around a countenance still fresh and hale in colour, although the numerous wrinkles which furrowed it, bore witness to the many years of its owner. He was clad from top to toe in gay tartans; an ample plaid gave breadth and importance to his upper man, but instead of the phelibeg, he wore a species of trews, and the purse and the drik which hung at his waist, denoted his strict adherence to the ancient Highland costume. He was mounted on a small shaggy *sheltie*, or pony, the furniture of which was as primitive as the appearance of the animal itself or its rider; for the saddle was a crook-saddle, formed of birch branches, over which they had cast an old blanket; in place of bridle there was only a halter of twisted

birch withies to direct its steps, and the stirrups were made of the same material. The old man bestrode his little nag with an air of considerable ease; and though age had bent his form, it still retained something of a military cast. But his strength, perhaps, did not wholly correspond with the vigour of his spirit, for a little boy, as wild as the animal, with feet guiltless of hose or shoon, ran at its head, and led it over the dangerous steps.

On either side of this remarkable figure, with stately step and cocked bonnets, walked one or two young men in full Highland costume of tartans corresponding with those of the old man. These were followed by several other rough-looking fellows with matted carrotty locks, kilts and plaids, but far worse set on than the others, and having neither shoes nor stockings, except a sandal of rough cow-hide, which some of them had tied on. The wildness of their gaze and uncouthness of their general appearance, betrayed how much out of their element they were, so far down the glen. Next came five or six women, all clad in the most primitive fashion of the Highlands; the married with close mutch-caps, covered by the plaid or blanket, which, descending on the shoulders, was skewered across the breast; the unmarried with their long red locks, smoothed down as best might

be, and bound round with the maidenly snood of blue or red worsted—and all with bare feet. Last of all came the cart; such a vehicle! we scarce dare attempt the description! From head to tail it was constructed of birch branches, framed and woven like wicker work, guiltless of one atom of iron in its whole crasis. Its coarse crooked shafts were placed upon a wooden axle, around which revolved two wheels like thin cheeses, made out of solid slabs of birch-wood, bolted together with wooden pins, and cut into figures more approaching that of the polygon than of the circle. The holes through which the axles passed, having been widened by constant friction, the wheels waddled and straddled as the frail engine progressed, now separating and now approaching, in oblique angular lines at every revolution, with a creaking noise that was audible a mile off: and one of the slabs having somehow been knocked off, the wheel was reduced to the larger segment of a circle, which ever and anon came bump to the ground on its flat side, with a blow like that of a sledge hammer, to the great delectation, no doubt, of the inside passengers, as well as to the benefit of the machine itself. If to this be added the infinite variety of ground which occurs on such a Highland road, the multitude of stones of all shapes and sizes scattered over its surface, the earth-fast

rocks, the deep ruts, the sloughs, the bogs and the burns, we shall be qualified to form some idea of the quantum of comfort enjoyed by the individuals who committed their persons to this primitive chariot.

Yet it was age and infirmity that had submitted themselves to so rude a discipline. The cart contained two women who, if appearances were to be trusted, could neither of them have seen less than three score and ten years. They were clad like the rest of the party, in the Highland garb; but one of them was well wrapped up in her white tartan plaid, which was fastened across her breast by a silver brooch as broad as a small plate: a blanket covered the heather bunch on which she was seated, and her wrinkled countenance was not deficient in intelligence. The other cowered under the remnant of an old tattered plaid, which could hardly hide the rags beneath it, as she sat at the lower end of the cart; and her dirty, haggard, sluggish countenance—the vacant eye and dropping under-lip, betrayed the mental absence which reigned within. Three or four half-naked and ragged boys and girls surrounded the vehicle, and drove on the miserable beast which dragged it, endeavouring to keep it up as nearly as possible with the party to which it belonged.

“*Failthery Macgilliecullach! Failthery agus*

peanuichshee Bhaintearn Glenvallich ;”* said the old man with a cheerful though tremulous voice, and taking off his bonnet as the phaeton passed his party.

“ *Failthery Alaister Failthery !*” replied Glenvallich, as he returned the salute. “ There goes a true old Highlander of the ancient breed,” continued he, “ you will not see many like him. That fine old fellow, Tresham, who is now near ninety years of age. Alaister Roy Breacach, as they call him, was at the battle of Culloden—on the losing side as you may guess ; but he was one of those who had the wit and the luck to get off, and he returned to his own wild home in the hills, about ten miles away from hence, where, like his fathers, he has since passed the whole of his days on a miserable croft upon a bleak black muir with grazing for a few black cattle and sheep, surrounded by a whole colony of his own progeny and kinsmen, whose king, priest, and prophet almost, he is. How, in the rage for sheep and innovation, old Alaister contrived to hold his ground, I hardly can tell ; but he is patriarch of as pretty a swarm of black bothies and wild Highland *cearnachs* as you can see on a wild hill between this and Cape Wrath.

“ Alaister Roy Breacach was never much of a

* “ Health to Mac Gilliecallum ! Health and blessings on the wife of Glenvallich !”

wanderer from his own place, and his age now keeps him still more at home, so that it is only on great occasions he visits the *low country*, as he calls this. Yet for all his appearance here to day, it has been shrewdly suspected that Alaister adheres in his heart to the Catholic faith which he was born in; although for reasons strong and cogent he long ago became ostensibly a Presbyterian. When he does 'descend from his mountains' it's never without a '*tail*' such as you see, of his rabble of descendants—for the old man is not without vanity, and speaks with no small pride of the number of 'pretty lads' that turn out from the *toon* of Blairdhu. It is said, that the very dress he wears to-day is the same he wore when paraded with his clan before the Prince, previous to that fatal battle. He wears it only on great occasions, and says it shall be his burying sheet. As for the contents of his equipage, they consist of his wife—his *third* by-the-bye—and a poor old decrepit creature who subsists on his charity and that of the family, and who insists on coming to all the 'preachings;' she is unable to walk, and therefore he gives her a cast with his spouse in that primitive vehicle."

"But soft—here is something of higher pretence than ordinary," said Tresham, pointing to a smart green tilt-cart on wooden springs, and occupied by a gay groupe. "What have we here?"

On my word, shawls, bonnets, ribbons as gay as May-day, and a gallant black steed too; and what a pace they come at—why this must be some ‘mighty don,’ surely.”

“Aye, a mighty don in verity, as some have cause to know,” replied Glenvallich; “that is no less a person than ‘honest John Rankin,’ the exciseman, and his family, of whom you heard such honourable mention made but the other day. That is an equipage of no mean sort, sir, I assure you, in a remote place like this; and faith, I almost wonder honest John does not keep his somewhat extraordinary prosperity more out of public view, as they say the subjects of eastern kings are wont to do, lest their show and state should excite the suspicions of their sovereign, and provoke a squeeze of their money-bags from the ‘king of kings.’”

Endless was the succession of groups and of parties through which the carriage rolled slowly on, the crowd increasing as they neared the church. But while yet they gazed upon the thronged churchyard, sparkling with an infinity of gay colours, the restless mass of human beings settled gradually into a state of repose, until it retained but that flickering movement which is seen in a swarm of bees as they cluster on a bough, or in the brilliant plumage of a bird who rustles his

gay feathers as he prunes and trims them. In a few minutes more a sound arose upon the calm air, and swelled gradually upon the ear, until it became as the voice of a great multitude mellowed and sweetened by distance. "It is the first psalm," said Mrs. Mac Alpine; "listen, how sweet it sounds from hence, how well the voices all arise and swell together! such is the magic of distance, which, like Christian charity, covereth or overlooketh a multitude of imperfections. It would be well if we all took a lesson somewhat oftener than is done, from the book of nature, which is always open before us," added she, smiling.

They entered the churchyard; and then Tresham did confess that the spectacle which awaited them was well worthy of his attention. The whole area of the picturesque spot which we have attempted to describe, was almost filled with people, men, women, and children, crowded together, principally in one large mass, but also partially clustered in lesser groupings, upon every wall, and monument, and eminence around, to which their gay dresses of tartan, and scarlet, and white, predominating over the graver colours, communicated an air of infinite liveliness and animation.

The windows of the church, which on account of the heat were thrown open, were thronged with

persons, who being unable to procure admittance to the interior, still preferred listening at these apertures, to encountering the greater crowd which surrounded the preacher without. The doorways and entrances were yet more beset; and so dense was the mass of heads which occupied the passages as to render it next to impossible even for privileged people to obtain access.

But the character and arrangements of the outdoor congregation formed by far the most striking feature of the *coup d'œil*. Under a mighty sycamore tree, which formed an almost impervious shade against sun and rain, a temporary pulpit had been erected, in which sat a respectable looking clergyman, waiting for the termination of the psalm he had just given out; and this psalm was repeated, line after line, by a *precentor* beneath him, for the benefit of those among the congregation who might not be able to read. On a form or bench in front of this pulpit sat several elders of this and other parishes, grave, sour-looking, hard-featured men, and aged, as the appellation implies. Benches and stools as well from all the neighbouring hamlets as from the stores kept for such occasions, were eked out with planks and boards collected from all parts, and ranged in many rows on either side, stretching far in front of the pulpit, until stopped by the irregularity of the ground; and on these were seated all who were able to avail

themselves of the accommodation. An old Highland crone or two might here and there be seen tottering from the nearer dwellings under the incumbrance of her well-worn chair, while behind followed a curly-headed grandchild carrying its little *creepy*, and taking advantage of the courtesy paid to age, to press forward in her wake, to get, if possible, a peep at "the minister."

The greater mass of auditors, however, stood clustering round the sitters, or perched on the more elevated grave-stones, or in trees, or on the walls, taking advantage of every little height, that might enable them to overlook their neighbours or hear the voice of the preacher, an object of no easy attainment although the reverend gentleman certainly did not fail in raising it to its utmost pitch.

But to listen to the preacher did not, it must be confessed, as Glenvallich had more than hinted, appear to be the object of all in that crowd. Numbers stood altogether aloof in little groupings, conversing with a reckless animation which scarcely accorded with the occasion and its solemn duties. The lover might be easily noted, as he seized the long-expected opportunity of pressing his rustic gallantries upon the lass of his affections; and a curious observer might guess that the meeting was neither unexpected nor unwelcome, as she stood in

tartan screen and snooded hair, listening with half averted face to the pleasant and flattering tale.

The ill-suppressed giggle, bursting often into an undisguised laugh, made the heart glad in spite of decorum, as the eye fell upon a groupe of four or five young lasses, who, acquaintances no doubt from various parts of the country, now met after a long absence, and, regardless of time and place, greeted each other with hearty affection, told their little tales and adventures, and laughed in the gaiety of their hearts, at jokes which might have little moved the risibility of others. But not unnoticed did they thus amuse themselves; for near them might be seen standing a knot of "braw lads," who eyed the merry sisterhood with looks of interest and longing. Perhaps among them stood some unacknowledged sweetheart—perhaps some rejected suitor;—and the possibility seemed confirmed by the furtive glances which soon began to pass "*de part et d'autre*."

The earnest confabulation of a graver party at no great distance, argued attention to more important subjects; yet it was not the serious solemnity which attends religious converse: it was rather the keenness that characterizes more secular pursuits; and, as they stood, some holding their beasts by the bridles, as just dismounted, others with staff in hand as just arrived, it was plain that

their discourse did not altogether refer to the duties of the day. Groupes of children were playing tumultuously at hide and seek among the grave-stones, and round the various vehicles of those who were better engaged, in spite of the threats or remonstrances of their elders, aided sometimes by a hearty cuff or skelp, that for a time would spoil their mirth: they squatted themselves among the straw of the coups and carts, sprung over them, balanced themselves on the backs and upturned shafts, and played all manner of antics in the very spot where fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, and kindred lay mouldering under their feet—where, at no distant period, perhaps, many of themselves would be laid at rest!—

“Alas! unmindful of their doom,
The little victims play!”

Horses, ponies, and garrons were disposed of also in the churchyard, or the little space around its gates. Some left carelessly in the charge of younglings of either sex, with bridle on neck, and loosed girths, had already trampled girth and gear under foot, and were well on their way homewards, while the thoughtless guardian was at furious play with his fellows; others, more prudently hapshackled, cropped a mouthful of grass among the graves; while others again, less fortu-

nate, were constrained to bear the weight of some wicked little urchin, who, like a monkey on a bear, took the opportunity of the owner's absence to get astride his beast, and who kicked and battered at the sluggish animal, if vainly he sought to crop a morsel of the sweet green turf beneath its feet.

Every grave-stone had its occupant, every green hillock its living burthen; for many a one was there, who, without any lighter or less worthy motive than meeting with their friends either male and female, sat down with them to welcome and discuss their mutual news before engaging in more serious duties.

The Highlanders can scarcely be termed a *comely* race, even by their most zealous admirers, and their women of the lower orders are by no means generally well-favoured. Hard work and exposure, with indifferent food and peat-smoke, too often evince their effects in a hardness of feature and shrivelling of the skin, which destroys all pretensions to beauty at a very early period. Still there are exceptions, and such meetings as we are describing are the occasions when such are to be seen. The Highland costume is not perhaps the most favourable of all others to display the female figure to advantage; but when, as in the present case, every one made an exertion to *busk*

herself in her “best and brawest,” the general effect produced was exceedingly agreeable.

The head-dress was, at the time in question, the chief object of attention among Highland women; we say at that time, because since then, within a very few years, the increase of resort to the remotest parts of the country, and the excessive cheapness of manufactures, both cotton and silk, has wrought a marvellous change in the dress of both men and women. At the period in question, then, married women, as of old, were alone privileged to wear the head covered; and the *curtch*, and *mutch*, and *toy*, were matters of no slight consequence in the economy of their toilet. As some of our readers may not be aware of the nature of the pieces of dress intended to be designated by these terms, we shall inform them that the *curtch* was a triangular piece of lawn or linen, wrapped close round the head, over which was usually bound a ribbon of some gay colour. Above this was placed the *mutch*, a superstructure of thin clear muslin, in the shape of a mob-cap, high in the crown, and platted neatly round the face, and through which the ribbon aforesaid shone with softened brilliancy. The *toy* differs somewhat from the *mutch* in shape, but particularly in having two long lappets hanging down behind, one on each shoulder.

Tartan plaids of various patterns, cloaks of scarlet, blue or grey, the former usually fastened on the breast by a huge silver brooch—some heirloom of the family,—and both falling in picturesque and graceful drapery over the shoulders and person, till they nearly concealed the full short red or blue petticoat, completed for the most part the exterior costume of the Highland matron.

The maiden on the other hand wore, and still for the most part wears, the head uncovered. The only ornament, the snood, which has more than once been alluded to, is a simple ribbon bound round the head, and confining the hair, which, shaded on the forehead, falls in thick shining clusters on the shoulders, or is fastened up in a knot behind, leaving a ringlet or two to wander about the face or neck. Gay-coloured handkerchiefs, and gowns of gaudy chintzes did not unfrequently contribute to the variety of their garb, mingling among the russet brown and coarser fabrics, which for the most part forms even the holiday apparel of the mountain maidens. On the whole the scene was animated and pleasing. If the more refined and fastidious eye of the professed beauty-hunter might not in the churchyard of Kilrannoch, detect much of that softness of complexion and regularity of feature which distin-

guishes the maidens of England, there was still abundance of health and good-humour to be seen in the florid cheeks, the smiling lips, and down-cast eyes of the Highland lasses around. Even the children, chubby shy-looking creatures, were perked out in their new kilts and jackets, although their legs and feet were unconscious of shoe or stocking, and their bare heads had been bleached to a dingy or a flaxen hue, by exposure to the sun and to the winds of heaven.

While Tresham paused to contemplate this picture, the psalm had ceased, and the minister rising in the pulpit to commence his prayer, the whole seated multitude arose as one man; when, to the mighty swell which had so lately filled the air, succeeded a silence so profound, that a whisper might be heard,—and one slow solemn voice alone ascended on high, to solicit from their heavenly Father those blessings which are the life and support of all his creatures—those mercies, without which their existence could not for a moment endure.

It was a striking, impressive spectacle; nor was it a moment to think of those abuses, or to look for those improprieties which his friend Glenvallich had reprobated. In a happy frame of mind he had followed his party into the church, where having with great difficulty made their way to

the family seat, they listened to an excellent sermon by Mr. Ross, the gentleman with whom he had already become acquainted, and whom he was fully prepared to respect and esteem.

We shall not abuse our power over the reader, so far as to inflict on him a recapitulation of the heads of this discourse, or to dilate upon the excellent doctrines it inculcated. We shall only say, that those who did not profit by it, ought assuredly to have done so, and that our friend Tresham returned home very powerfully impressed by all he had seen and heard that day.

On the following morning, the laird of Airdruthmore, who had till then continued at Inverallich, took leave of his hospitable entertainer, and seized an opportunity of renewing to Tresham the invitation which he had more than once given, urging him to let no long time elapse before he should put it in his power to present him to his daughter at Airdruthmore.

“I think you will like Belle, Mr. Tresham, and that Belle will like you,” said the old gentleman, “for I see plainly that many of your tastes are alike; so come along and let us see you, and Belle shall show you her walks, and her glens, and her cottages, and fancies; and Ballytully here shall show you the game. I’m too old for such pranks myself.”

Ballytully, to this appeal of the honest old laird, made answer only by a stiff bow, which could not hide the scowl that brooded over his features as he listened to the cordial invitation bestowed upon Tresham by his friend. It passed unobserved, however, by Tresham himself; for occupied with the good old gentleman, whose frank kindness had already almost won his heart, he was proffering a willing acceptance of the hospitable challenge he had received—a pledge which it was his full intention to redeem so soon as circumstances should place it in his power to do so.

CHAPTER VIII.

PTARMIGAN SHOOTING—A BAD FALL AND A GOOD
LAND-FALL.

The Caipercaillie and Tarmaghan
Crow'd crouse on hill and muir,
But mony a gory wing'or een,
Shaw'd Kenneth's flane was sure.

OLD BALLAD.

PLEASANTLY did the first days of August flit away at the castle of Inverallich, in occupations suited to the season and the weather. But rides and drives, and long charming strolls in the noble woods, and through the never-ending walks on banks of lake and river, at length failed to please. Repeated and pertinacious, though vain attempts upon the liberty of the stately salmon and active grilse which tantalized the anglers by leaping at every fly upon the waters but theirs, grew stale, flat, and unprofitable—for these and all other

occupations were at length lost and absorbed in the bustle and note of preparation which now commenced, for that great important day which is "big with the fate" of thousands of the feathered tenants of the muirs. The destined party had arrived at Inverallich, together with a little arsenal of guns of every maker, from Knock and Mortimer, to Smith and Manton;* and all the new inventions of powder-horns and shot-belts, which the season had given birth to. Dogs of every description, rough and smooth, pointers and setters, and retrievers, of the most celebrated breeds of England, Scotland, and Ireland, were produced and paraded, and duly exercised, in order to ascertain their respective qualities and merits. The conversation now became strictly technical and professional. The high travel of one favourite dog, the superb nose of another, the close questing of a third, the fine style in which a fourth quartered his ground, were all set forth in glowing language, by the respective proprietors of the animals, backed with due energy by the obsequious keepers.

"Hang me, but I'll back old Carlo, here, against the whole kennel of them, for finding

* We need not remark that this was before the days of Purdie, and even before the admirable invention of copper caps had come into approved use.

game," said one, "I'll trouble any gentleman to find a bird upon the ground he has gone over."

"Aye, aye, that may be," said another, "but give me Don, there, for a long day's work; Don will work you fourteen hours on end, and go out as far and hunt as high the last hour as the first; aye, and just wash his feet with a little salt and water, and *soos* him well, and he'll be as ready for the hill next morning, as if he had not gone a mile; he'll work you four days a-week, hard fagging, will Don—what say you, Williams? you have seen the dog work in Yorkshire."

"Aye, aye, your honour, Don will do his work, never fear him; but to my mind, here's Fan will take the shine out on him, if so be she lives. I never seed a bitch hunt like Fan, in my born days—and see how she carries her nose; never pokes it into the earth like a lurcher, but breast-high she goes, like a thorough-bred as she is. I'll take my oath she nosed an old hen and her brood half-a-mile off t'other day, and she trotted up to them in such style as I never seed. I was afeard she was agoing to be rash, but I let her alone, and she carried me right up within eighty or hundred yards of her game, and then drew on as *bootiful*! O she's a prime bitch; if she were mine, I wou'dn't take fifty guineas in hand for her." &c. &c. &c.

Then there were the arrangements—the quarter

master's and commissariat departments to be seen after—the sending off of kitchen utensils and bedding, and of men to prepare heather, luxurious heather, with its fragrance and elasticity, to be put under the mattresses—superior to all the straw palliasses in the world ; and to secure abundance of that most indispensable article, fuel, for cooking and for fire. Then the “ provant ” of all sorts—for the hill is, after all, the place to enjoy good living in ;—one walks for it,—and the air is so pure and elastic ; and then, in a hard day's fag, there is so much expense of “ radical moisture,” and of solid substance, which it is so grateful to supply, sitting at one's ease around a well plenished table, and by a clear rousing peat-fire. Then there were the instruments of slaughter to be dispatched in safety, and ammunition—enough to store a little garrison for a season—to be packed and sent off. In short, there were the thousand important concerns and pleasing cares which occupy young sportsmen on the eve of a shooting campaign : preparatives, alas ! which like those for many a loftier project, prove far, far more delightful than the reality, even when that reality involves success. We once were young ourselves ; even yet, thank Heaven, we are not “ dead old ;” and well do we remember—nay we yet can feel something of the stirring excitement, the supreme bliss of such an-

ticipations ; and surely never did the event of the most successful day equal the sanguine hopes, the buoyant and delicious eagerness, with which we issue in the dewy morning from the bothy, breast the hill on whose summit we expect the “first point,” walk up with breathless earnestness to the fixed and rigid dogs, and gaily, remorselessly, bag the first fluttering victim of the season.

Among the numerous advantages and privileges of a Highland chieftain, there is none perhaps more prized now-a-days, nor more jealously guarded, than his power of shooting game over an extensive range of country ; and assuredly there is none which, judiciously employed, may contribute in a greater degree to render him popular and beloved in his own domains. “The man,” says Shakspeare, “who has not music in his soul, is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils.” It is a strong denunciation certainly, but we confess that we should be very apt at least to insult with our pity, if not to anathematize, that man who has not, in some shape or other, felt sympathy for the delights of field sports. If an English nobleman or squire experiences a high satisfaction in keeping a pack of hounds, for the amusement of a county, what degree of pride and exultation may that Highland chief be permitted to feel, who can send out his clansmen to drive his country, carry his

friends into a noble glen, and gratify their eyes by the sight of two or three thousand head of magnificent red deer, collected to afford them sport. Such a spectacle reminds one of tales of the times of old—of the grand *chasses* of Germany and Hungary—of the warlike hunting campaigns of Ghenghiz or of Timour—it is the very chivalry of sport.

Few, no doubt, have it in their power to do things on so grand a scale; but how many are there who possess the means of affording very extensive enjoyment to themselves and to others—who are the lords of almost interminable tracks, abounding with various sorts of game—and how can this be better employed than in gratifying those neighbours and friends who may be unprovided with such means of healthful amusement; many of whom, probably, even in these days, look up to him as their feudal superior, and whose ancestors in former times were wont to aid him with their hearts and hands in the day of need.

There was a time, nor is it yet very distant, when game, no doubt, was more abundant than at present—sportsmen less numerous and less skilful—ere modern improvements had increased the scale of slaughter and appetite for carnage—before bets and battues were known in the Highlands—when the pleasure of shooting consisted less in the quantity of game destroyed than in the amount

of social enjoyment it produced,—when Manton and Purdie were names unknown, and ere the merits of *copper caps* or *tubes*, of *concave wadding* or *cartridges*, were discussed or even heard of. In those rude and patriarchal, but pleasant old times, restraints upon sporting were unknown in the Highlands. A gentleman might then have wandered “from Dan to Beershebah”—from Aberdeen to Lochaber—from the mull of Cantyre to John o’ Groat’s house—from the Ord of Caithness to the Croe of Kintail, gun in hand, and dog at heel, without annoyance given or question asked. Or if the laird, on whose lands he happened to be passing, did chance to meet him, it was but to salute him with a “What sport?” or a “Good speed!” and probably an invitation to partake of the day’s fare and a night’s rest at his house.

But these days are past—“*tempora mutantur!*” and we are neither so old nor so prejudiced as to fail of perceiving that they never can return. The state of society has changed as completely as the times, and we daily see things occur of which in our youth we dreamt not. The pleasures of sport in the Highlands have become subjects of purchase like any other luxury, and the privilege which was once freely bestowed and scarcely deemed a favour, is now too valuable to be enjoyed by any but the rich. Nay, even were this not so, it

is obvious that such a privilege would, in the present times, be liable to so much abuse, that to grant it almost indiscriminately, as formerly, would be absurd and impracticable.

Still there are many who not only possess the power, but the will to dispense satisfaction around them; and of this number was Glenvallich. His shooting quarters were in a different part of his extensive property from that where the deer forest lay. The country was equally wild, but less remote and inaccessible. It was amply stocked with game, and consisted of a range of hill capable of affording separate and extensive beats to a large party: and the liberal hospitality of the laird disposed him to carry with him in the season as many as the bothy would accommodate, independently of all other permissions which were granted to his neighbours and friends in other quarters.

The party on this occasion consisted of four gentlemen beside Tresham and himself; and if good sport, good living, and pleasant society, could make man happy, the inmates of the bothy of Loupriach had ample means of being so. To detail the progress and amount of slaughter; the feats of dogs and men; the formation and decision of bets; and the general exercise of ingenuity in gastronomic research, which marked the swift lapse of time upon this expedition, is not

only foreign to our purpose, but might possibly fatigue the patience of our fair readers, who no doubt are wearying to come at the *interesting* matter—the kernel of this history—*videlicet*, the *love*, if any such there be. Fear not, fair dames, it will come, and that shortly : but whether it may prove a love to *your* tastes, remains to be seen. In the meantime, *allons !*

“I should like to shoot a ptarmighan, too,” said Captain Bently, as the party lounged one evening over their whiskey toddy—a tippie which had driven claret and madeira from the field that is, from the stout deal table on which the evening’s repast was duly set forth at seven P. M. : an hour chosen that all might have time to return home from their respective beats, and make themselves comfortable for the night, before attempting to refresh the inward man—“I should like to shoot a ptarmighan ; but then its such a deuced long way to that Ben-i-skiah,—or how do you call it?—that the whole day is lost for the chance of a shot—a mere uncertainty after all your fag.”

“How far may it be to that same Ben—which Bently spoke of, Glenvallich?” inquired Tresham, carelessly.

“Why, as to its distance in measured miles,” replied the laird, “it might be hard to say ; but, as the crow flies, I don’t think you can reckon it

less than fifteen miles—twenty, I dare say, by the shortest way you can make it.”

“And what are our chances of game, if I were to go there, think you? I should like, with your permission, to send a few brace of these beautiful birds to Colonel Lethbridge, if they were to be had.”

“O if the weather holds favourable, there’s little doubt of your finding ptarmighan on Ben-i-skiah. If it’s a fine calm day, you may pass them within five yards and not observe them—they lie then like stones. If windy, they will probably be shy, and baffle you; if misty, there’s no saying how they may be. I have seen them in mist as tame as barn door fowls, and sometimes as wild as hawks; but beware of Ben-i-skiah in a mist—its very name is ominous. If a cloud once gathers on its head—if once it puts on its nightcap, there’s an end of the business for the day: you have only to cut and run down hill as fast as you can, or you may have to pass the night among the grey stones; for to move on Ben-i-skiah when it is dark with mist, would be as dangerous as

‘To cross a torrent roaring wide,
Upon the uncertain footing of a spear.’

A single step might make you eagle’s meat on one of the precipices.”

“ Well, I have a great mind to the adventure. If the morning turns out fair and promising, I do think I ’ll attempt it. I ’m in capital wind, a walk will do me good ; and variety won’t be amiss. So *corragio!* and hey for Ben-i-skiah !”

“ Very well ; then, Bently, will you go with Tresham ?”

“ Much obliged ; no, I shall be contented with some less glorious enterprize.”

“ O then you can take the Corry Dourach beat with Atkins ; and, Tresham, take your old friend Kenny with you—he knows every foot of the hill, and it must be a black mist out of which he ’ll not take you.”

• Arrangements to this effect were accordingly made ; and at four the next morning, Tresham having started, with Kenny and a gillie, held a south-western course towards Ben-i-skiah.

Although Tresham’s express object was to look for those beautiful birds, which are only to be found on the bare stony summits of the highest mountains in the Highlands ; and though with this in view he should have proceeded direct to the point of his destination, he could not withstand the temptation of the noble packs of grouse which started at his foot, nor avoid taking a shot at them ; and in this manner no small time was frittered away in the very best part of the day.

Many a mile of heavy grey moss and deep peat bog—many a weary track of the tiresome, baffling *Keaun-kinoich* * spread their interminable length to weary and blow the sportsmen, but they still persevered; and by the hour of noon they had reached the elevated shoulder of a mighty mountain, that towered among his fellows, and found themselves at the foot of a huge dark grey mass of rocks and lichens which rose a full thousand feet above them.

“Here we are at last, sir,” said Kenny; “we’re on Ben-i-skiah, and there’s his top, but I dinna like yon;” and looking in the direction of his finger as he pointed upwards, Tresham observed a thin grey vapour curling around the summit, so faint as scarcely to be discernible from the deep blue of the sky, and barely softening without obscuring the outline of the hill on which it rested.

“That!” said Tresham, contemptuously—“pshah, man—that’s nothing—you don’t call that a *mist*, surely? Why, your Highland hills are never without some little adumbration of that sort, just to cool us sportsmen when we’re breasting them up.”

“Aye, weel, sir, may be,” replied Kenny, in

* Literally, “heads without necks,”—the tufts of grass or heather found in bogs, almost undermined by the water, and which shake and tremble under the foot of the traveller.

some doubt as to his meaning ; “ but yon’s another sign that hunter or shepherd never scorns ;” and he pointed to a little low-spread bank of cloud which lay upon the top of another very distant hill, and which, though there was scarce a speck of vapour in the sky, appeared to gather bulk rapidly from the surrounding atmosphere itself. Tresham gave it a hasty glance. “ Well, well,” said he, “ we’ll take a scurry to the top, now we are here ; I shall have bagged my six or eight brace before that fellow can come to any thing serious, eh ?”

“ ’Od, sir, I’m the last that wud spoil sport, sure eneugh,” replied Kenny ; “ an’ no one can tell what may happen—but we most mak’ the better haste any way. I dinna like yon grey cluds—see how they’re rising, fast fast in the east, thonder.”

Tresham saw it too, and marked with astonishment the rapid accumulation of a filmy fleece over a portion of the eastern sky, which but a few minutes before had exhibited a spotless expanse of blue ; but resolved not to throw away the chance which he had worked so hard to obtain, he set his breast to the mountain and began vigorously to ascend. It proved a severer task than he anticipated : shoulder after shoulder, and ridge after ridge, appeared, and was surmounted, till at last the grey moss and thin yellow grass, mingled

with black peat cracks, disappeared, and gave way to high scoors and precipices of grey stone.

It was on reaching a ledge of this rock, over which the vapour was fast stealing, that Kenny sprung forward and touched the arm of Tresham, who was eagerly pressing upwards. "See—look!" said he—"there they are."

"What are there?" demanded Tresham, following in vain with his eye the direction of the keeper's finger, which was stretched towards a point already half hid in the mist. "O! dinna ye see them?" repeated the man with earnestness. But Tresham could discover nothing, except a great flat blue stone which rose from among a whole cairn of lesser fragments.

"What is it, man? I see nothing."

"O, sir! the ptarmighan!"

At that moment a sort of rustling flutter upon the face of the blue stone caught the eye of Tresham—quick as thought was his Maulon cocked, and at his shoulder. The usual delicacy of sportsmen is never observed with ptarmighan, a rare and capricious bird, which, if the first chance be not taken, may escape altogether after the most fatiguing chase. So slap went the first barrel at the unsuspecting victims as they sat all nestling together—bang went the second at the few that rose. Seven birds lay fluttering in their blood upon the

rock, while three or four more made their retreat, probably maimed and wounded, and were lost in the mist.

“Pick up these chaps, Kenny, while I load,” said Tresham: “I must have the rest—they’ll not go far.”

“That’s more than I can tell, sir,” responded Kenneth; “ptarmighan’s will sometimes fly far enough in mist—but may be they’re no past the next know.”

On they pressed in the direction which the birds had taken; but after a few minutes’ walk, their progress was arrested by a dark bluff rock which rose plump in their front, scarcely visible for the thick grey mist which had by that time completely enveloped them.

“Diaoul!” exclaimed Kenneth; “a pretty way we’re in now—I thocht as much when I seed yon bonnet on the top o’ Benhowmenah.”

“Umph! pleasant business, faith. Well, and what are we to do, then?”

“Ou, ye’ll just follow me, sir, and I’ll go cannie on—the mist’s no so thick yet but we may find the way doon. If we were once out o’ the hill we micht do weel enough, for may be the mist’s no on the moss yet—but it’s a far way to Loupriach, sure enough.”

Without more ado, for there was no time for he-

sitation, on went Kenneth, picking his way with extreme caution along the ledges of the very rocks and over the very stones they had just ascended, but which it was no longer possible to recognize with certainty. As they advanced, the mist thickened, so that they could not see even two yards before them, and Kenneth had to feel his way with his staff as they held downwards along the weather-worn channels, to ascertain a resting-place for the next foot before he lifted it from the ground on which it stood, lest he might be hovering on the verge of some dangerous precipice.

“This is na’ bairn’s play, Mr. Traisham,” said he at length, after they had proceeded thus darkling and anxiously for nearly half an hour. “Who can tell whether we have keepit the richt way or no? —’Od, sir, Ben-i-skiah’s no just the best place for a foul mist or a dark nicht—there’s a black loch on one side o’ her, so deep that they say it canna be sounded, and the hill rises above it like a wall five hundred feet high.—Lord keep us from that wild bit !”

“Amen, I say to that, Kenny ;” but how then would you advise us to do ?”

“We’ll, sir, I’m sure we’ll better bide awee where we are, till we see if the mist ’ll lift a bit, than clod ourselves, may be, over a brae face, an’ break oor necks.”

They halted accordingly, and sat, as Kenny said, "like craws in a mist" on the cold stones, with volumes of dense, and almost palpable vapour eddying and wheeling around them, till their garments were dank and wet as after a heavy shower. Sometimes their eyes were tantalized by a glimpse of the clear blue sky appearing over head, and again an opening as transient would break beneath them to close again, ere any useful observation could be made. In this way passed a weary anxious hour, the dread of being benighted in the hill, far, far from any human habitation, being counterbalanced by the danger of making a false step on the brink of a precipice, or of lighting in the bottomless loch should they move from their present secure, though comfortless position.

"And how long are these mists apt to continue commonly at this time of year, Kenny?" inquired Tresham, as much to pass the time and hide his growing apprehension, as in the hope of receiving any comfortable information.

"Ou ! that's just as the weather sets, sir—sometimes they'll last for two, three, or four days ; sometimes, again, it 'll be on for an afternoon, and the next morning it ill be clean awa'—we've sometimes been a hale week at the bothy, an' never seen the top o' Ben-i-skiah."

"Pleasant, by Jove !—a week's seat here would

just suit me—a brilliant incident in a sportsman's life.—And pray what do you augur from appearances to-day ?”

“ A weel, sir, it's hard to say ; but the wun's been in the wast for this week past and more—an' ye see it's round to the east this morn, and that's a bad airt. It's like to be a wild night in the hill, I'm fear'd.”

Well did Tresham know what was meant by a *wild* night ; rain, and wind, and cold, and darkness, were all implied in that little word, and much would he have given at that moment for the good grey plaid and strong iron frame of one of the numerous shepherds that doubtless were to be found thus exposed in the wide extent of hill and muir below them. When they left the bothy in the morning, both Tresham and his attendants, thinking only of the long stretch of hill that lay before them, and the expediency of going at it as unincumbered as possible, had clothed themselves very lightly, and were consequently extremely ill prepared to encounter the expected *wildness* of the night. They were already completely drenched, chilled and comfortless, when all at once the cloud separated, and blew away from around them, as if it had been swallowed up by the genius of the storm, leaving the whole summit of the mountain dark and frowning, but free from mist, and sharply

relieved upon the thick grey sky. "Thank God, thank God!" exclaimed Kenneth; "now's our time—now follow me close, sir, we'll get the worst o't ow'r, 'ore it closes again, please God."

There was no need of repeating the exhortation: downwards they sprung, and slid, and run; but scarcely had they reached the less dangerous and precipitous ground below the immediate rise of the summit, when the grey cloud once more enveloped them, and all was uncertainty, if not utter darkness again. "The deevil's in the mist then," said Kenneth, "it 'ill do us yet; but I'm thinking we may manage at the least to get out o' the hill; as for the bothy, its twenty long miles across thon wild moss, and thae weary hills, and it's useless, and worse than useless, to seek our way there the nicht, if this mist last—but we'll find some glen or other surely, an' get put up in some bothy wi' one o' the shepherd lads for the nicht."

"Aye, but how are we to get to this same glen, Kenny—how are you sure we may not wander all the night in the moss—that is, if we don't get smothered in it before morning?"

"O! no fear o' that, sir; Ise warrant we'll get to a glen, now we're out from the rocks; we'll follow the first water we fall in wi'; a water's aye sure to bring us out o' the hill someway."

But long did they wander before they found any

other water than black peat-pots, and dismal stagnant lochs among the hills and ridges, and sluggish boggy swamps in the hollows, when not the smallest current could be traced so as to lead to its outlet. For hours they wandered thus, unwilling to sit down in their cold, drenched clothes, and still more so to abandon the hope of extricating themselves from their unpleasant dilemma, but quite uncertain of their course.

At length the water which collected from the drizzling rain into the deep peat-cracks, began to run with a positive current; the peat-cracks themselves enlarged to little ravines, and their united streams flowed in a single channel. Following this as their guide, it led them by a very tortuous course along a flat track, in which it sometimes became almost stagnant again, at others, cutting through the black earth, down even to the granite rock, it foamed away, brown as Whitbread's best, among the fragments it had torn from the sides. After awhile its course became more rapid, its banks deeper, and in the occasional breakings of the mist, they could distinguish hills towering on either side, more lofty to the eye from the dense medium through which they were seen. By degrees the torrent cut deeper into the substance of the mountain; gravelly scours seamed the braes which formed its banks; and its waters

leaped from rock to pool, and foamed along with accumulating rapidity. For some space these banks were covered only with long, shaggy heather, great patches of which had been burnt black and bare, and grey stones, like the dim ghosts of Ossian, stared through the soil. The faint glimmer of a mountain loch was next seen through the hovering vapour; the sides of which, as well as the rocky breasts of the hills around it, were scantily sprinkled with birch and alder, and a few trees of native fir. A remarkable bluff promontary jutting into the water near the point where the stream entered it, caught the eye of the keeper as they approached—for the mist had lifted a little, and was clinging more around the loftier hills. “God be praised,” said he, “we shall do now; and it’s his mercy that has brought us safe—no’ any skill o’ our’s—for who could tell where they were going for the last four hours—the burn has done it’s work weel!”

“And where in the name of Heaven has it taken us to, after all?” demanded Tresham.

“This is loch Tarnechasag, and the water that runs out o’ it falls into Strath-Einort, five miles from this, and Airdruthmore is five miles more down the strath from that again: to think that we have been making all this time for Strath-Einort, when I thought we wud hae broke down on

the side o' Glen Farrigh—but mist and moss together is more than the skill o'man can feight wi'."

"But what said you, Kenny? Airdruthmore, Mr. Steward of Airdruthmore? the stout, good-looking old gentleman who was at Inverallich during the preaching week?"

"Aye, sir, just the same; if we get there he'll be weel pleased to see your honour."

"Aye, faith, and my honour to see him, the fine old cock. A better land-fall after a foul day could not have been made—but ten miles yet? by Jove! a pretty sharp winding-up to such a day's fag—better than the top of Ben-i-skiah though—so here goes, here goes for the performance of my promise, and a draft on the old gentleman's hospitality," muttered Tresham to himself. I'm a little before my time, however—*n'importe*.

The way was rough, as pathless banks of Highland lochs and burns are wont to be. Huge blocks of stone, half smothered in deceitful heather, and rotten earth, formed so many traps for the legs of the weary travellers. They had to climb several round and steep hills of gravel, just as it seemed for the plague of descending them on the opposite side. Then the steepness of the banks forced them to keep in the rough bed of the stream, and pick their painful way along the stones of its sides and bottom. The occurrence of a sheep-track

was a rare luxury ; and it was not until they were within a mile of the strath that they were favoured with a regular pathway.

The rain, which had perplexed them more or less for the whole day, had now increased from a mere "Scotch mist," to a close, continuous, sharp drift, which aggravated the discomfort of their progress ; and just as they had reached the aforementioned path, Tresham, by that time much fatigued, in carelessly going down a steep bit, made a false step, in which his foot turned under him, and he came in no gentle manner to the ground, with a severely strained ancle. This put the finishing stroke to their distress. "Ochone, ochone ! what will we do now in the world?" exclaimed Kenny, as the young man rose with pain and difficulty, and limped to a stone near him.

Sick with the wrench and the shock, it was some time ere he could reply ; but when the first thrill of pain was over, he declared it was nothing—he was better—well enough to attempt getting forward, "though this is not just the best way," said he, "of shortening a long road, or lightening a hard day's work."

He had overrated his powers, however. It was with great pain and difficulty, that, supported by Kenneth and the gillie, he reached the strath, where an indifferent cart-road seemed to announce

that he had arrived at a more frequented country. Bad as it was, it presented fewer obstacles than the rough path they had till then been forced to use; and while the hurt was still fresh, and the limb supple, the unfortunate sportsman contrived to hobble on for a mile or two further; and just as he was almost utterly exhausted, a Highland cart passing down the strath, overtook the drench-and-forlorn party, and was immediately engaged to carry the disabled Englishman to Airdruthmore.

Night had closed in before they reached their destination, so that between darkness and discomfort, Tresham could see little of the place to which he was thus so strangely about to be introduced. He only remarked that the cart crossed a wooden bridge not far from the house, then entered among trees, through which it drove for a little distance, and then swept round to the front of a mansion of considerable size, from the windows of which lights were gleaming with a hospitable brightness that promised a kind and hearty welcome. It was a promise never broken to the hope or to the sense by the inmates of Airdruthmore.

The sound of wheels speedily brought a servant to the door, and scarce had he delivered the message that had been given in reply to his inquiries, when out rushed the honest laird himself, with his

white locks flowing in the night breeze, and his face beaming with kindness and concern. "God bless my soul, is this you, Mr. Tresham?" exclaimed he, eagerly; "what's this has happened? Are ye much hurt? I'm grieved to see ye in such a way, man!" Tresham endeavoured to meet the old gentleman's kindness with a smile, and reminded him, half jokingly, of his promise to be soon at Airdruthmore. "Aye, aye, my good young friend, I did hope to see ye, and soon too—but no' in such a condition—no, nor in such a night—I hope it's no much, after all; ye've had a wild afternoon—but it's an ill wind, they say, that blows no one good. I am proud and happy to see you at Airdruthmore, any how, and we'll soon have you on your legs again, no fear. Softly—softly, canny, man," continued he, as he assisted Tresham out of the cart. "The foot's no broke, I hope—we'll have a lad off for the doctor in a minute—so—can ye put it to the ground? that's it. Ah, it's no' so bad—ye'll do yet."

Tresham, writhing with pain, for his ankle had become stiff and swelled, but reluctant to give trouble, endeavoured to assure his worthy host that it was only a slight sprain—that next morning he should be perfectly well—no need whatever of a doctor. But his feelings at the instant gave the

lie to the assertion, for while he spoke his very heart grew sick, his eyes reeled, and had it not been for the laird and Kenny, who supported him, he would have fallen to the ground. "Odds mercies, man," this is a bad job, said the old gentleman," now much alarmed. "Here, lads, carry him in carefully. Belle--Belle, lassie! where are ye?"

"Here, father," uttered a silver-toned voice, in accents so different from those around him, that ill as he was, they reached the ear of Tresham, and possibly had some share in recalling him to himself.

"Belle, my dear, see and get the bed ready in the blue room—it's warm, and easy got at—we'll get Mr. Tresham carried there—we'll put him to his bed at once—he's no' fit to come amongst us the night, I'm afraid. And stay, tell old Grizzy to get some mulled wine ready—he's dripping wet—he'll get his death of cold; and see, darling, tell them to get the hotchpotch warmed up—and a slice of the broiled salmon—and—and any thing else ye think of—the lad's been all day in the hill—he must be starving of hunger."

While the old gentleman was bustling about and issuing these hospitable mandates, Tresham, by his help, and that of the servants, was carried into a comfortable parlour, or dining-room rather,

for the table, still covered with glasses and plates, and the remains of fruit, betokened its use. A glass of wine was tendered and gratefully received; but the young man resisted every proposal to undress him where he was, as his energetic host would have insisted on, "Just to get the chill off him; what should he be waiting for, and standing on ceremony, where there was no need of it, and him as wet as if he had been hauled through the river?" In a very little time, however, the active efforts of "Belle," and the housekeeper, had prepared the "blue room," and the same silver tones announced Mr. Tresham's apartment to be quite ready. The young man, starting at the sound, turned his head with quickness, and just caught a glimpse of the white garments of a female form, which his ardent imagination, "unchilled by the rain," and unchecked by his anguish, instantly gifted with all the charms appropriate to so melodious a voice. But the glimpse was too momentary for more; and Tresham was immediately transported with the tenderest care to a very comfortable apartment, where a glowing fire of wood and peats blazed in the chimney, and an easy chair invited his weary limbs to repose.

Not until he had seen his guest stripped of every wet habiliment, and clothed in a comfortable wrapping gown of his own, would the kind old laird

consent to quit his young guest for a moment. Then, having bestowed the injured, and by that time much swollen limb, upon a low stool with abundance of cushions, he departed to provide for the further refection and comfort of his new inmate. It is true, that Tresham protested in strong terms against the alarming preparatives in the line of “provant” which his host had been overheard to order; but in spite of pain and fatigue, he did not fail to dispose of a reasonable portion of that admirable *hotchpotch*, the existence of which has been made known to the reader, together with some further “light food” in the shape of a slice of broiled salmon, half a *howtowsdy*, and a few other trifles. What would the worthy Dr. Abernethy have said to such a dinner for a wounded man!—but “hunger is a good sauce,” and Tresham had no Dr. Pedro Positive, of Snatchaway,* at his elbow to spirit away each dish ere its odour had well reached his nostrils.

An aged matron, Grizzy Mac Farlane by name, a right good specimen of the ancient Highland housekeeper, now made her appearance, armed with a whole cargo of lotions and decoctions and fomentations and infallible charms, together with

* The reader cannot fail to remember the distress of the worthy Sancho Panza in his government of Baratania from this source.

flannels, bandages, plaisters, and lint, and all the formidable apparatus of domestic surgery, and animated with the benevolent dispositions of half-a-dozen Lady Bountifuls. A snow-white toy, with lappets in the usual Highland fashion, and but little more ornamented, covered the locks of this respectable matron, whose mild grey eyes, fair round cheeks, and good-humoured mouth, wore the habitual smile of active benevolence and unaffected kind-heartedness. She was stout and short, but trotted about the house with indefatigable industry in the discharge of her multifarious duties, while the clanking of a monstrous bunch of keys sufficiently proclaimed her approach, and marked her progress through the establishment which she superintended.

Drawing near her patient with numberless smiles and curtseys, she commenced in a strong Highland accent to condole with him, and to inquire into the state of his case. “ Ohoni-ohone ! if it’s no’ a’ swalled up like a white pudding !” exclaimed she in a tone of infinite commiseration, as soon as Tresham had uncovered the injured limb ; “ Whisht noo’ Meithal,* wait ye awee—I’ll no hurt it the laest—Ouve-ouve—it’s baadly hurt—but dinna be fear’t, we’ll sune put it a’richt ;” and while she uttered these disjointed words in a low compassion-

* An expression of great endearment.

ate *croon*, with a hand as gentle as that of the most experienced surgeon, she commenced first to touch, and by degrees to rub it gently. The first touch was almost torture to the injured part, but after a few ahs! and ohs! and setting his teeth to endure the worst, he found the treatment become more tolerable, and could more easily endure the next operation, which was fomenting the strained and rigid muscles with some decoction held in a basin by her assistant. He was astonished, after a while, at the relief he began to experience.

“ You seem quite up to this sort of work, my good lady,” said he, as she proceeded. “ I really think you are already doing it good.”

“ Ou, what then, my dear?” returned Grizzie, “ What wud ail me? Is na it the best o’ blessed vervain that’s in’t; that was gathered the very meenat o’ the full moon by mysel’—an’ was na the water that it’s bil’d in, brought a’ the way frae St. Magnus’ wall, an’ never a word said the hail time by her that brought it, an’ she a maiden too—it’s certain sure to salve all it touches.”

“ Well, I hope it will not fail in the present case; I’m sure, if skill will aid it, you seem to have it. I dare say you have a good deal of practice here?”

“ Ochone! sir; and it’s me that wud need to ken something o’ the work, an’ no a doctor within

twal' mile o' the town, an' the laad's eye coming in wi' cuts and bruises and broken bones—but it's the Lord's pleasure to bless what a poor ould wife like me 'ill be doing," continued Grizzie with somewhat of the humility of conscious merit.

"Aye, aye," interrupted the cheerful voice of the laird, who just then entered the room to learn how his guest came on. "Grizzie's the woman for ye.—Skill!—Odds, man, Grizzie will set ye to rights before ye're two days older.—What say you, Grizzie?"

"Ou, 'deed Airdruthmore, Grizzie 'll do her best, and that's a' she can do, ye ken; but there's no use in false tales. We'll see the morn's morn—if the swelling fa's then, I'm thinking a week's rest may gie the young gentleman some use o' his fut again."

"A week!—my good lady! you don't mean to condemn me to a week's confinement for this paltry accident, I hope."

"Ou—is it me, your honour? far be it frae me to confine you," said Grizzie, somewhat startled, and perhaps hurt a little at the young gentleman's impetuosity; "it's the Lord's will, and no Grizzie Mac Farlane's, that 'll mak' the time long or short—but 'long ill's sunest weel,' they say."

"Well, well, my good lady; I'm sure it will not be your fault if I don't get soon over it. But

I cannot think of trespassing on Airdruthmore's kindness, by intruding for such an age as you hint at—the day after to-morrow, I hope.”

“Day after to-morrow!” re-echoed the laird—
“day after Christmas say!—De’el be in us both, lad, if it’s a week or a fortnight either, that shall part us now we’ve got ye—ye’re no so easy to catch, my young man; and now we have a hold of ye, out of Strath Einort, de’el a foot shall ye budge till ye know a little more of us.—What, man!—we have grouse and ptarmighan and black game and partridge, as well as Glenvallich, and there’s enough to see in this poor country of ours even for you, wonder-hunting *Sassenachs*. Hav’nt we the old castle of Drumspinie, and the vitrified fort of Dunvreakan, that some vilify by calling it an old ruined sheep-fauk? And isn’t there the disputed Roman camp on the Mealmore, that caused the great cast-out between the two famous antiquarians, Dr. Mac Gudgeon, and Mr. Silvester Tregothus, the LL.D. and A.S.S.?—I expect you will act oversman between them, and settle the question.—Why, we have enough within fifteen miles of Airdruthmore to keep an enthusiast as you are, or ought to be, agape for a month—not to speak of the beauties of our own glen just behind the house.—But that I leave to Belle—my

daughter Isabelle—who will match you for your life in the true poetic fury and romance.”

The good laird, having run himself out of breath by this sudden burst, his guest had now time to edge in a word, and but a word. “Indeed, my good sir, I would not by any means be ungrateful for your hospitable invitation, but—”

“But fiddlesticks, man.—Don’t be ungrateful, then, but accept it frankly as it is given. Stay with us—nay, I’ll hear nothing more to-night positively. God forbid that you should be tied by the leg, as old Grizzie there threatens, but tied by the *will*, and desire to do a kindness to an old Highlander like me, I hope you will be, even for a longer time than Grizzie’s threatened embargo.”

What could Tresham do or say to all this, but reiterate his thanks and hopes that the trouble he must inevitably give might be of no very long duration.

“Aye, aye,” said Grizzie, with a most sententious shake of the head, as after finishing her fomentations, and binding up the leg, she prepared to retire: “Mind ye what I said afore, laird—‘langest ill, sunest weel;’ dinna let this bonnie young gentleman mak’ a fule’s flitting and be off ’ore he’s fit for’t.”

“Trust me for that, Grizzie,” replied the laird,

returning her sagacious shake by a knowing nod ;
“ but in the mean time, here’s Thomas and Kenny
come to put him to-bed.—So God bless you, Tre-
sham, sleep sound, and wake well, my boy ;” and
with these words the worthy old gentleman quitted
the apartment.

CHAPTER IX.

AN INTRODUCTION.

O beautie, syren ! fair, enchanting, good !
Soft, silent rhetoreck of perswading eyes !
Dumb eloquence ! whose power doth move the blood
More than the works or wonders of the wise !

THE surgical operations of Mrs. Grizzie Mac Farlane were attended with all the success that could reasonably have been expected ; for after a night of very tolerable repose, Tresham awoke on the morrow free from actual pain. A considerable degree of tension still remained, however, and upon attempting to put his foot to the ground he received a hint of its powerlessness, which speedily induced him to resume the horizontal posture he had somewhat rashly quitted, and which went far to convince him of the accuracy of the old lady's alarming prediction. A zealous perseverance in her sanative method of treatment throughout the day, however, produced such beneficial effects,

that in the evening Tresham, with the help of a servant, removed from his bed to the easy chair, eat his dinner in comfort, and on the succeeding morning could scarcely be withheld from limping down to breakfast.

The united remonstrances of his worthy host, who had attended him all the time with unceasing solicitude, and of his able surgeon, Mrs. Grizzie Mac Farlane, who still persevered with her embrocations and incantations, could detain their unmanageable patient in his apartment no longer than the afternoon, when wearied with confinement, and desirous to make himself acquainted with the other inmates of the mansion, he insisted on joining the family at dinner in the dining-room. The pardonable vanity of a young and handsome man might have revolted at the thought of appearing in the presence of a female, or females, for aught he knew, either in his weather-beaten shooting-dress, or in the old laird's dressing-gown, and such a feeling might have operated more powerfully in keeping him to his chamber, than all the wise remonstrances of his friends. But the active attention of his host had spared him so distressing a dilemma, for early on the morning after his arrival, a long-legged *gillie* had been despatched across the hill to the shooting bothy with a note, informing his friends of Tresham's accident, and requesting the

presence of his own servant, together with such a supply from his wardrobe as might enable him to remain with comfort in his present abode. The note was calculated to remove all apprehensions as to consequences, but to prepare the laird of Glenyallich for an absence of some duration on the part of his friend. In this way Tresham was enabled to appear before the family of his host in a style calculated not only to do credit to his tailor and to himself, but to create a favourable impression—and every one knows the value of first impressions—on his new friends. Perhaps the circumstance of his lameness tended rather to increase than diminish this happy effect, by exciting the sympathy as well as the curiosity of the household, and we have been credibly informed that Dame Grizzie, in reply to the questions which were poured upon her by men and maids, after returning from administering to the stranger's hurts, declared “that his fut was as white as a lily and as bonnie as a leddie's, if it were na sae swell'd like—that his face was far handsomer than Ballytully's, or the young laird o' Dalrispie's—that his tongue was like a siller bell, and he spoke an' joked wi a' about him as kindly as the laird himself—God bless him!” Praise so strong, and from so authentic a quarter and so competent a judge, could not fail of having its due effect in the lower

house at least; but as Tresham was ignorant of this secret influence working in his favour, he could not, in spite of his well-bred ease and knowledge of the world, suppress a slight confusion, as supported on the arm of his host, and leaning on a stick, he limped into the drawing-room, a short time before the summons to dinner.

“ Belle, my dear,” said the old gentleman, addressing a young lady, who, with a look of much interest, rose from her seat, and advancing towards them, curtsied with an air of the most polished elegance—“ Belle, my dear, this is our *impatient* patient, my friend Mr. Tresham, of whom you have frequently heard me speak, and whom I hope you will help me to keep amongst us a good while longer than his hurt may detain him.”

“ I am most happy to see Mr. Tresham already so far recovered,” responded the same silver voice, whose tones dwelt so pleasingly upon his memory; “ and certainly nothing on our parts shall be wanting to render Airdruthmore a pleasant residence, as long as he will favour us by making it his home. But we have, I am sure, a claim on Mr. Tresham’s acquaintance which I never thought of before. I am confident, my dear father, that our guest must be brother to my friend Maria. Am I right, Mr. Tresham? Had you not a sister at Mrs. Leslie’s school?”

“ Undoubtedly I had, Miss Stewart—my only sister Maria. I am delighted at the circumstance, but I wonder Maria never said a word to me upon the subject.”

“ Ah! Maria possibly never dreamt of your penetrating so far into these distant and unknown regions; but I am not the less happy, I assure you, to welcome so near a relative of my friend’s to this place.” And with another courteous inclination the young lady resumed her seat.

The laird then proceeded to name the other guests. “ My sister, Mrs. Mac Donald, Mr. Tresham—Miss Robertson—Mr. Robertson of Balgowrie. Ballytully, you and Mr. Tresham are already acquainted. Now, sit down. I don’t think, bold as ye seem, Mr. Tresham, your legs are fit to stand on yet.”

“ A bad accident this, sir,” remarked Mr. Robertson, by way of opening the conversation; “ and happened at a bad time, too, for a sportsman. But may be you’re not well used to our hills yet—they’re rough and steep, and wearisome.”

“ Tresham not up to our hills, Balgowrie!” exclaimed the laird, “ ye little know him. Let the deer of Glenochree speak to that. I’ll back the lad against any in the country, Highland or Lowland; though these southern gentry are better

on the back of a horse after the fox hounds, or in a turnip field after a covey of partridges, than stalking the deer or ranging the muirs, as we have done in our youth, my old boy."

"Aye faith, in our youth ye may say, Aird-ruthmore; for it's long since I troubled stag, or hind, or muir-cock either; and truth to say, it would be little praise to Mr. Tresham, if he were no better than me in my best days—I never was any great Nimrod. As for you, laird, ye was a good hand once, and faith, I would na trust ye if a pair of ten tyne antlers came in sight above the hill, two miles off, and ye with brown Bess in ye're hand."

"Hah! hah! man!—think ye so? No, no; these days are over. As for young Tresham here—faith, after the scurry he made to yon strange bothy, that shall be nameless—ye mind it, Ballytully—I'll no' trust to moss or hill to stop him."

There was an expression in Ballytully's eye which had more than once come under the observation of Tresham, when allusion chanced to be made to his own involuntary visit to Glen Shlichard; or indeed to any subject connected with smuggling. It was a dark, sinister scowl, as singular as unaccountable; and Tresham could sometimes have imagined it was peculiarly directed

against himself. On the present occasion, it faded almost as soon as visible, and the announcement of dinner prevented all further discourse. "Come, come, my young friend," said the laird, observing Tresham attempting to rise, "you're in no tune for playing the gallant, I take it. Balgowrie, take charge of my sister—Ballytully, do you squire Belle—Miss Sally dear, off with you before us—I must take care of the invalid myself;"—and in this order away they all moved to the dining-room.

Tresham, in spite of his disability, would have protested against an arrangement which was calculated to infringe upon his privilege as a guest, of sitting by, and improving his acquaintance with the young lady of the mansion, in whom he had already discovered so many claims to his regard. But although the laird was absolute so far as regarded the preliminary ceremonies, he was guiltless of conceiving the injustice which the young man imputed to him. It on the contrary appeared, that the very arrangement coveted by Tresham, was the one contemplated by the old gentleman; for no sooner had the company begun to take their places than he called out, "Come here, Ballytully, I want you by myself; ye must help me with this leg of mutton. Come, take your place between Miss Sally and me. Mr. Tresham, you must be

Belle's aid-de-camp—ye can carve a turkey, if ye canna hand a lady—ye can cut up a grouse, if ye can't shoot one yet."

The alacrity with which Tresham obeyed this mandate may easily be conceived, and the satisfaction which beamed from his countenance formed a ludicrous contrast with the sullen and dogged aspect of Ballytully, as he yielded the place of honour. The expression was not unmarked by its object, and served to nourish a rising antipathy which the young Englishman had almost insensibly imbibed against the ungracious Mr. Macaskill, at a very early period of their acquaintance.

The dinner hour passed very agreeably in the opinion of Tresham; for though the duties of a courteous hostess, and an attentive aid-de-camp, precluded the possibility of much interesting or detailed conversation during the height of the attack, he enjoyed ample opportunity to remark the graceful kindness with which these duties were discharged; to observe the beaming beauty of her countenance, as it turned its animated smile towards him, or the elegant outline of her profile as she addressed his opposite neighbour. A warm admirer of beauty, Tresham was not less delighted than surprised, by the graceful loveliness and polished ease of his fair hostess, the more so, doubt-

less, that he had little expected to meet with such attractions in the wilds of the Highlands. The fascination was irresistible as unlooked for: before dinner was over he was captivated, and there is little doubt that the silent eloquence of the young lady's eyes had more effect during that short period in reconciling him to a protracted confinement, than all the hospitable entreaties of her worthy and warm-hearted father.

But enthusiasts, of whatever description, must eat like other people; and we shall not take upon ourselves to affirm that the eyes and ears of the young Englishman were the only organs employed by him on this occasion. On the contrary, there is good authority for believing that he as well as others did ample honour to the hospitable profusion of their host. The happiest hour will fleet, however, and the best dinner must come to an end. We shall therefore suppose the hotchpotch, that queen of soups, to be fairly discussed—the red loch trouts, fresh from their native element, duly disposed of—the five-year old mutton, dark of hue and rich of fat, retreating with a lamentable hiatus in its muscular substance—the delicate roasted grouse, hobbling from the fray, *winged* to some purpose—tarts, puddings, creams, and jellies, the pride of old Grizzie's culinary science, with all their fantastic forms and garnishes, quit-

ting the field in amorphous confusion and dire discomfort—the goat, and the ewe, and the rich cream cheeses, disappearing after sustaining a close and destructive attack. We shall suppose the dessert and the ladies withdrawn; the good old port and sherry—aye, and the rich-flavoured claret of the choicest vintages, imported long ere his Majesty's ministers had conceived the atrocious idea of clogging the generous beverage with invidious duties, and brought in, in purpose-like cobwebbed bottles;—we shall suppose all these inviting liquors abandoned for the still more irresistible bowl of smoking punch, or rather toddy, brewed by the laird's own cunning hands from the primest of “mountain dew;” and the gentlemen, in social mood, fairly disposed to enjoy the hour, seated round the cheerful embers of a wood fire, which the damp of an autumnal evening rendered far from unpleasant in a Highland glen.

It was our purpose, gentle reader, seeing that we have at all times thy edification in view, to have in this place recommended our labours, and increased thy delectation, by reporting duly the long and interesting conversation which on this occasion took place between the worthies we have seen so comfortably appointed. We purposed to have instructed thee in many matters of moment connected with Highland economy; to have ex-

patiated on the various agricultural systems, which obtain in these *intramontane* districts; and, in short, to have let thee into the secret of abundance of “parish business,” connected with these parts. But taking into consideration that there is an infinite variety in tastes; that, notwithstanding the weight and importance of such matters, and the engrossing interest which they would excite in many who thirst after valuable information, there may be some classes of our readers—particularly among the fair sex (God bless them!)—to whom such topics might prove less delectable; and having it greatly at heart to make our labours as acceptable as possible to all, we shall refrain from indulging in this valuable disquisition. The profound philosophy and deep research which it involves, shall, for the present, lie perdue in our literary crypts; while we accompany our friend Tresham, who, pleading the privilege of an invalid, seized the earliest occasion to escape from the punch-bowl, to the drawing-room and the tea-table.

Miss Stewart, having deputed her aunt to perform the duties of that department, was seated on a sofa, at work upon some elegant trifle. “Is it possible, Mr. Tresham,” said she smiling, as he took his seat beside her; “can you so soon have abandoned the pleasure of fighting over your

sporting campaigns, and re-slaughtering the slain, or discussing the interesting topics of Highland farming, and breeds of sheep and cattle, with which your stay in the Highlands has no doubt familiarized you? I hope we don't owe this early visit, this mark of your gallantry, to any *serious* sacrifice on your part?"

"Indeed I have no merit whatever to lay claim to, unless having the courage to follow my own inclination be such," replied Tresham; "I am little of a toper at any time, and temperance, is now," (glancing at his bandaged limb,) "more than ordinarily expedient; perhaps, too, I am scarcely so intimate with the Highlands as to relish or comprehend the subjects you allude to. If, indeed, our friends in the other room were to make Highland scenery their theme, instead of Highland farming, I might join."

"Ah, so you do admire our wild scenery?"

"I am enchanted with it, Miss Stewart. My recollections of the Highlands from a former short visit were agreeable, and I hoped that an extended acquaintance with them would interest and please me; but it has done greatly more—it has far surpassed my expectations."

"I am delighted to hear this from yourself, Mr. Tresham; my father told me you seemed

pleased, when he saw you at Inverallich. I assure you that you won your way mightily in his good graces there; he has often mentioned your name and spoken of the pleasure you promised us. Little did I then think it was the brother of my dearest friend who was in question. I hope when you see more of this place, it will not destroy your favourable opinion of Highland scenery."

"Ah, I don't think that's possible: I have seen enough already to fix my opinion."

"Nay, Mr. Tresham, you can have seen but little yet. Glenvallich's country is very fine; but we have many, O many glens and lochs and rivers that would delight you—an infinite variety of beauty and interest in this very part of the country; and as you have begun in such a hopeful strain of admiration, I trust we may have it in our power at least to maintain the high character of our scenery in your eyes, if not to increase it."

"Indeed, Miss Stewart, I am persuaded that my admiration will increase with experience; though after all, I should be sorry if its reputation were to rest on the opinion of so incompetent a judge. Besides, I am notorious for being easily pleased with whatever part of the world I may be in for the time."

"A most happy disposition indeed," said Miss

Stewart, smiling, "but surely you must have had your preferences ; what countries in the course of your travels have pleased you most ?"

"Indeed," said Tresham, smiling also, "I can hardly tell. I was astonished and delighted in Switzerland ; the sublimity of its mountains—the emerald green of its verdure—its waterfalls and lakes, and sweet romantic cottages, put me wild. Then the fairy scenes—the gorgeous cities—the pictures and palaces—the ruins and antiquities—the delicious climate and brilliant skies—the music and the taste of Italy, enchanted me while I stayed there. Then there was haughty Spain, and our ancient ally, Portugal."

"What, Mr. Tresham ? talk of Spain and Portugal, after Italy and Switzerland ? surely the change must have been any thing rather than pleasing."

"No, I assure you, not at all ; in the first place, it had the charm of novelty, and before that wore off, I really began to like the country. They are a fine proud, brave, lazy, dirty race, these same Spaniards. I liked them with all their faults ; then its lovely dark eyed women with their graceful mantillas and tantalizing veils, so piquant ; and the country with its wild sierras and extensive plains—its brown forests, and its rich orange groves and vineyards : and then the times were so

exciting, in spite of death and carnage, sickness and privations."

"Ah, how dull and tame you must have felt poor peaceful England on your return to it," said Miss Stewart, laughing at the energy of her new acquaintance.

"England dull and tame! far from it, I assure you. Beautiful, rich, happy England, with its sweet villages and superb country seats, and its hedge-rows, and its copses, and its magnificent parks of ancient timber—come Miss Stewart, you have been in England, is it not a rich, smiling, lovely country? not quite so wild and romantic and fascinating as your Highland glens—but still a noble country?"

"O, I assure you, Mr. Tresham, none is more ready to admit the beauties of England than I am, even though I do stand up a little for 'mine own romantic' land. But surely such a lover of the country and its enjoyments can never have had any enjoyment in a town—London for instance—after all your adventures and campaigns, how wearisome, dull, flat and unprofitable, must its elegancies, and comforts, and proprieties have appeared to you!"

"Hah, hah, Miss Stewart, you are laughing at me now, I see," said Tresham, laughing himself, "and I dare say I deserve it; but as for London,

excuse me, I doat on it. What a place ! what a city ! the emporium of everything rare and valuable under the sun ! Beauty and fashion, talent and science, literature and amusement, in all their various shapes ; where are they to be found accumulated, if not in London ? Look at St. James's—look at Bond-street—at the Park—the Opera ; where are such sights to be seen else ? Look at society in London—where can the like be found ? Wit sparkles there, genius dazzles and delights, and first-rate intellect and solid acquirements astonish and instruct us. When once I get into London, I do not scruple to say it, it takes a strong wrench to get me out of it ; and I was sad and sulky for more than an hour, as I drove through its fast-emptying streets, although it was to see my mother, I'm ashamed to say. The sight of the green fields and the thoughts of her joy and kindness set me up a little ; but I don't think I quite recovered my spirits till I got among the hills and mountains with my friend Glenvallich."

" Ah, Mr. Tresham, how dull at that rate would you feel a country life without some exciting pursuit ! But your spirits will serve you at least through your campaign against grouse and partridge ; at all events, until the novelty of a Highland *sejour* wears off, you wont feel its tedium."

“The tedium did you say, Miss Stewart? Nay, this is too bad really; have I been laying open my character so candidly, and setting forth the beautiful pliability and contentedness of my disposition, all to so little purpose? Why I delight in a country life, when I am in the country. I am enchanted with its employments and amusements, and I feel as if I could scarce like to live any where else. The recollections of London are pleasant, and I doubt not that when occasion calls me there again, I shall experience the same delight in town pursuits as formerly; but assuredly I do feel completely happy here; every thing seems congenial to my mind. I delight in the wild and inexhaustible variety of the scenery. I feel my spirit expand, as it were, among the pathless mountains and interminable tracks of rock, and muir, and waste; and when my foot is on the hill and my gun is in my hand, free to roam at will and unrestricted, I can conceive nothing more exhilarating, more pregnant with enjoyment. Without doors all is healthful excitement and rational recreation; within all is comfort and content: what more is wanting to happiness—what have we left at this moment to wish for? Yes; the Highlands is the country of enchantment—I know nothing more charming.”

“Always excepting London, or Lisbon, or Ma-

drid, or Italy, or whatsoever city or country may be Mr. Tresham's residence for the time," said Isabelle, laughing again; "you forget dear London."

"Ah, you wrong me—you misapprehend me totally, Miss Stewart; how can you be so malicious? I appeal to yourself now; you have seen London, you have lived in it, no doubt; did you not, I beg to ask you, feel something of a qualm, a regret, on first quitting that fascinating place, even to return to your own Highlands, to such different scenes?"

"To tell the truth, Mr. Tresham, my experience of London was too short and slight to give me any title to reply to your question. Besides, remember I was returning *home*—to my father—to the scenes of my earliest happiness—of all my youthful attachments—so that I should be an interested witness on the occasion. But never shall I forget the delight I felt on awakening the first morning at Airdruthmore, after many years' absence, during which I had been cooped up in a school, or a town, or in the comparative restraint of an English villa. I heard the birds singing—I thought that I could tell all my old friends by their note. The fragrance of the birch and honeysuckle was the same I had inhaled when a child,—the hum of the bees and the rush of the water

were all familiar sounds ; even the Highland accents of old Grizzie, as she came to bid me good-morrow, were pleasant to me.—Aye, you may laugh, Mr. Tresham, but I declare even the smell of the peat-smoke was delightful to me.”

“ O no ! I cannot laugh at that, Miss Stewart ; for upon my honour I participate in the feeling. Still, I think there are some things you might miss a little at first, even in this Arcadia. Books, for instance, and conversation—suitable companions—intellectual intercourse—which I suspect are all rare blessings in these latitudes.”

“ Ah !” replied Miss Stewart, with a suppressed sigh, “ these are blanks, I confess, not readily filled up. Books may be had—but good conversation is less easily obtained. Yes, it had been my good fortune to enjoy that enviable privilege in no common degree for some time previous to my quitting England ; and when I discovered how limited my resources in that way were likely to be during the first winter at Airdruthmore, I dare not say that the foul fiend of ennui did not sometimes flit in dim perspective before my eyes. I kept him at the stave’s end, however, very successfully.”

“ What, the winter passed off better than you anticipated ?”

“ It did, and the second better still.”

“ Well, I am happy to hear it, though I can’t quite comprehend how it could be. I should have thought it an evil likely to increase rather than diminish. Indeed I am somewhat at a loss to conceive what young ladies can do with themselves in the country, particularly in the short days and long nights of winter : unfortunately they cannot be much of Nimrods, nor can they be always working or reading.”

“ Why truly, to gentlemen who require violent excitements, the thing may well be a mystery. Cultivated society, and friends of one’s own age and tastes, would have been very desirable, certainly ; and I did, it must be owned, pine a little for these enjoyments : but the mind by proper schooling becomes reconciled to necessary privations, and by degrees I learned to substitute pleasures of a different sort from those I was deprived of, and to contrive occupations which could beguile even the tediousness of a winter’s day. There are many claims on the attention of the upper classes, if they will listen to them, in a remote place like this, to occupy one’s time and interest one’s heart ; then, besides our domestic duties, there are such things as music and drawing—these become valuable accomplishments in a lone glen.”

“ Ah, music indeed !” said Tresham, “ that is a resource.”

“ Music ; are you fond of music, Mr. Tresham ?” said the old laird, who entering at this time with the rest of the company from the dining-room, had come up to where they were sitting, and had heard the last few words. “ If you are fond of a song, Belle there will be happy, I’m sure, to find any one who can understand her favourite Italianos. Belle, my dear, go to the piano, do.”

Tresham was an enthusiast in music ; and an excellent natural taste had been improved and refined by hearing the best performers in the various countries he had visited, as well as in the English metropolis. Well knowing the usual proficiency of young lady performers, and anxious to maintain in his own breast the favourable impression already created there by his fair hostess, he remained in his seat ; for he feared the possibility of a failure which might weaken or destroy the effect of a voice so harmonious in conversation ; and he listened in no small uneasiness for the result.

Miss Stewart, perhaps in order to pitch her voice, and prepare it for greater exertions, commenced her performance with a simple Scotch air,

of few notes and small compass, but capable of considerable expression. But scarcely had she sung a few bars, than his inquietude began to abate; and, as the clear, plaintive, liquid notes swelled upon his ear, apprehension gave way to confidence, and uneasiness to delight; for he felt that not only was the songstress possessed of a rich and powerful voice, but of exquisite taste, cultivated by the best teaching. To the simple melody succeeded a more complicated and scientific piece, and next came an Italian air from a fashionable opera. In all these various performances there was not the smallest affectation or pretence; the execution of each was precisely adapted to the character of the music; nor did there appear to be the least undue exertion in producing the appropriate effect: all was chaste and harmonious.

Tresham was pleased, delighted, astonished, entranced; at length, regardless of his infirmity, he rose from his chair, and making his way to the instrument, expressed his admiration in a strain which called somewhat of a blush into the young lady's cheek, for it convinced her that while the expressions were perfectly sincere, they proceeded from one who was in every way qualified to judge of the performance he commended.

Many and reiterated were the young Englishman's entreaties to be favoured with another, and

yet another song; and Isabelle, delighted at having found a kindred taste, made no scruple of indulging him. Air after air was suggested by the one and recollected by the other. At length it was discovered that Tresham could sing a very tolerable second to many of Miss Stewart's favourite pieces and duets, and in such pleasant pastime the evening wore on to a late hour.

But "pleasures are like poppies spread!"—the sweetest joys must fade. The company began to yawn; the laird rang for candles, the guests retreated to their several chambers, and Tresham limped away, with the assistance of the laird and his servant, to his own apartment. For two full hours he lay awake, thinking of the extraordinary and unexpected perfections of Isabelle Stewart—then sunk to rest with the notes of her last air ringing in his ears—dreamt of syrens and mermaids with the face of his fair hostess—of Spanish women, whose black mantles opened to display her features—of Highland glens and caves, where she was always to be found—thought she was still singing some sweet jingling air to lull him to sleep, and woke to hear the morning bell for breakfast ringing in reality.

But while the party to which we have introduced the reader are enjoying the comforts of re-

pose, we shall take the opportunity to furnish him with some details which will make him better acquainted with those individuals among them, who are principally concerned in the events we have undertaken to record.

CHAPTER X.

A HIGHLAND LAIRD OF THE OLD SCHOOL AND A
MAN OF LAW, BUT NOT OF EQUITY.

Kind-hearted lairds in country nurse
The poor, who else were undone,
While lordlings spend their money worse,
On lust and pride in London.

Will, sneaks a scrivener, an exceeding knave.

JOHN STEWART, of Airdruthmore, succeeded to his father and long consecutive line of progenitors, in the estate of which he was at this time the proprietor, and which had at one time been of far greater extent. Pride, and a thoughtless uncalculating hospitality, had in this case, as in many others in the Highlands of Scotland, first involved the family in debt, and had subsequently forced some of Mr. Stewart's "forebears" to dispose of certain portions and pendicles of their estate, to

some of their more prudent neighbours. When, therefore, the present laird, then about the age of thirty, *served heir* to his father, (as it is termed in Scottish law,) he found, or rather his man of business informed him, that the gross rental of the estate, extensive though it was in surface, did not quite amount to one thousand pounds a-year; and that, besides the public and other burthens, there existed a mortgage on one part of the lands, amounting to five thousand pounds, leaving him, for actual expenditure and management, about six hundred a-year; or, if he desired to see a gradual diminution of debt, in prudence, not more than from three to four hundred pounds; and to restrict himself to this lesser sum was the urgent advice of this honest agent.

The advice was sound, and well would it have been for the new laird of Airdruthmore, had he followed it. But it might seem that Highland lairds are of a breed very different from the rest of their countrymen; for, instead of the cautious sagacity and habitual prudence ascribed to Scotchmen in general, this class of proprietors has too often evinced an inconsiderate recklessness of disposition in matters of economy; their hospitality is too often excessive and indiscriminate, and their expenses, with reference to their income, extravagant. The laird of Airdruthmore did not un-

happily, in these respects, differ from his neighbours. Ignorant of business, a hater of accounts, and consequently the sure prey of a whole host of underlings, it was no wonder that debt, instead of being diminished, should suffer a rapid increase, and that at the close of three years, from the period of his succession, he found himself involved and embarrassed to an extent which his worthy agent found it difficult to provide for.

Unfortunately for the laird, about this time his friendly and honest agent died; and, still more unhappily, did he become acquainted with a certain W. S.* in Edinburgh, 'yclept Thomas Macaskill, the brother of a coterminous proprietor, and a man whose character in his profession was at least as notorious for acuteness and cunning, as for candour and integrity. It was remarked that Macaskill's clients uniformly became poor, while he, in public estimation at least, waxed prosperous and rich.

"And whose fault's that?" would the laird remark, when this suspicious circumstance was urged, as a reasonable cause for demurring upon employing him as an agent; "is Tom Macaskill to be answerable for all the fortunes that fools throw

* These letters stand for "Writer to the Signet;" one of a corporate body of solicitors privileged exclusively to act as agents in the Court of Session, &c. in Edinburgh.

away? is he to find them *sense* as well as money and law? or is he bound to keep his clients in countenance, by bidding poor for their sakes?"

Unhappily, the laird did not prove the exception to the discouraging rule under which Mr. Thomas Macaskill's employers seemed to lie. At first, indeed, matters appeared to go on flourishingly; for the agent knew that there was upon the property a considerable store of capital oak and birch, and some fine old fir-wood, that was almost as good as cash. It was a resource as welcome as unexpected to Airdruthmore, who readily consented to avail himself of it, under the auspices of his friend the agent; and for some years afterwards, nothing was to be heard of but cutting, and lopping, and barking, and saw-mills going, and carting, and shipping; rafts of timber going down the Einort, and loads of bark carried off to be shipped. The manager who superintended all this work, was appointed by the agent, and he found all the inferior operatives. As for sales, and account sales, these, as well as the proceeds, rested all with the agent himself, who, whenever the laird inquired how matters were going on—a question he seldom put—was always prepared to shut his mouth with some tale of losses, and bad debts, and bankruptcies, and low prices. Nevertheless Mr. Macaskill had generally tact enough

to sweeten the pill, by a small *advance*, as he termed it, of money, swearing “by saul and body!” (his customary asseveration) that it was more than *he* ever expected to see for the goods.

Some of the laird’s friends, who saw a little more, “*au dessous des cartes*,” than the honest gentleman himself, ventured, perhaps, with more zeal than discretion, to suggest the expediency, in common prudence, of making some examination into the extensive business which had for years been going on, and which had fallen so completely into the hands of the W. S. They even went so far as to hint their suspicion of prices not being *always* so very low as that worthy gentleman’s reports would make them out to be; that good old timber of large dimensions, and capital oak-bark, were not only valuable, but very saleable articles in the hands of other people; and that both were, in fact, very fast disappearing from bank and brae, without, as it seemed, producing any corresponding effect upon the purse of their owner. But all their well-meant interference was thrown away. Airdruthmore detested accounts, as we have already said, and the thought of encountering so formidable a concern was too alarming to be endured. Its very extent increased his reluctance to grapple with it, and, void of all self-confidence, he preferred abandoning himself

and his affairs to chance, rather than attempting an exertion he believed himself unfit for. Besides, Airdruthmore was too open and upright himself to suspect the faith of others, and in reply to such remonstrances he would only shake his head, and say, "No, no, Tom Macaskill's an honest fellow, I'm satisfied of that, and he knows what he's about, which is maybe more than I should do in his place Lord knows what I should make of all these things, if he were to give up the management."

"Which there is small chance of his doing, I'll be bound, while he knows he has such a gull to deal with," muttered one of the gentlemen, who had taken in hand to speak to the laird, as he turned on his heel, and resolved thenceforward to venture no more on such tender ground.

But wood and other resources, of a limited description, at length began to run low, and Tom Macaskill had recommenced with his hints of financial difficulties, of want of ready cash, and of the absolute necessity of retrenchment. He had even ventured some obscure hints, regarding new sales or mortgages; when at the very period when the prospect was most threatening, the clouds which lowered upon the horizon of the laird's affairs were for the time dispelled by an event which promised to him the most happy and beneficial consequences.

During the lifetime of the late laird, it was thought expedient that the heir apparent of Aird-ruthmore, should receive something of the polish to be acquired by a foreign education, and for that purpose he passed some years at an English school. The advantage derived from this measure, as well as from a limited tour on the Continent, and a short residence with some of his countrymen in Paris, was estimated by his worthy parent in proportion to the pain which he felt at the absence of his only son; although there were others ill-natured, or honest enough, to declare that they saw but little difference in the young man, and that little scarcely to his advantage; and who insisted that if his foreign travelling had not spoilt his frank Highland address, and kindly Highland heart, it was all, and the best that could be said.

Be that as it may, the acquaintance he had formed with England was maintained by him after his father's death. He often visited and spent a part of his time occasionally in that country; and it was in the course of a journey to Bath, that he chanced to render a service of some consequence to a widow lady and her two daughters, who were likewise travelling the road. The consequences of this adventure were, to a certain extent, exactly what might have been anticipated,—acquaintance, intimacy, esteem, and friendship—but they went somewhat

further than a sober calculator would have ventured to predict, for the next step was love. The black eyes of the youngest Miss Marchmont penetrated the sensitive heart of the Highland laird, whose handsome, manly, though not absolutely juvenile person, together with his imperturbable good-humour, good sense, and generous disposition, failed not to create a corresponding impression on the fair object of his regard. Perhaps the circumstance of his riper years was neither an objection in the eyes of the lady, who was herself no longer within the pale of mere girlhood, nor in those of the mother, who no doubt was disposed to view him with less suspicion, as it was plain that he was no young fortune-hunter, allured by the hopes of wealth, and trusting to his own attractions for misleading the heart of a young and artless girl.

Thus, when after due precaution, he did at length venture to make known his pretensions in form, and throw himself and all his possessions at the feet of her daughter, the interesting confusion of that daughter gave no discouragement to his hopes, while the old lady assured him that should the inquiries, which as a mother she felt it her duty to institute regarding him, through her man of business, be satisfactorily answered, she should feel no scruples at intrusting so amiable and worthy

a man with the happiness and property of her child.

Little was the risk of receiving an unsatisfactory reply on such a subject, from Tom Macaskill, to whom the English solicitor in the first place applied for information respecting the property and *status* of Mr. Stewart of Airdruthmore, in his own country. The stream which flowing from Strath Einort and its tributaries, had for a long time supplied the coffers of the W. S., had of late been running inconveniently slack; what then could be more opportune, more unlooked for, than this sudden prospect of replenishment? A flaming account was speedily returned of the extent and rental and resources of the property. As for the character of the man, the agent had only to refer the friends of the ladies to the voice of the whole country, which would reply as by acclamation, to his honour, his integrity, his amiable qualities, and so forth, to say nothing of his ancient lineage; which last, however, was indisputably proved by a great genealogical tree, framed in carved ebony, which hung over the chimney in a parlour at Airdruthmore, the root of which was seen springing from the abdomen of the mighty Malcolm Keanmore himself.

It was enough—it was more than enough—it

was overwhelming. The laird was formally recognized by the mother as her future son-in-law, the young lady had made up her mind long before. The settlements were duly extended; ten thousand pounds, the lady's fortune, was settled upon the younger children in the hands of proper trustees, the life rent alone to be at the disposal of the laird or his lady, as either might survive, and to be considered in the light of a provision for the education and board of their children; and a jointure corresponding with the dower and the liberality of the husband, rather than with the income of his estate, was settled upon the lady—a vain provision which it was decreed that she should never profit by.

In the meantime, Mr. Macaskill did not neglect his own interest. Taking the moment when the worthy laird was entirely absorbed in the anticipation of his approaching happiness, he represented to him the extreme difficulty he found in providing for the accumulating interest of debt, not to speak of the money due to himself on balance of account, as could be clearly proved if he would but take the trouble to look over the accounts. He adverted to the expediency of bringing his affairs to some sort of settlement at so important a juncture; and for the purpose of promoting these objects, he suggested the expe-

dient of making over in *wadset*, redeemable in a limited number of years, a certain portion of his estate, an out-of-the-way and somewhat detached pendicle, a separate glen, to some one who should advance the sum required to set him entirely at ease—there was a friend of his would advance the money, and make the redemption easy—all he wanted was security and something like decent interest, for which he was content to take the rents of the wadset. Indeed, if he, the laird, should desire the thing, or should conceive his security or interest in the transaction to be in the least degree promoted by the use of his own (Mr. Macaskill's) *name*, he should not have the smallest objection to have it inserted as that of the lender, to whom he would then be answerable for all pecuniary arrangements; the laird might thus feel himself more in the hands of friends—it might remove any scruple he might have at placing himself in the power, as it might seem, of a stranger.

Even the good-natured laird, confiding and unsuspecting as he was, felt startled at this proposal, by which, if he complied with it, nearly one-third of his hereditary property would be little better than alienated. The hesitation* was, however, but momentary. Occupied solely with his hymeneal arrangements, and shrinking with a nervous horror from the idea of a set examination of long-

winded accounts, he preferred a blind acquiescence, to disputing the statements of his agent. "Hang it," said he, "after all, Tom, Macaskill must know what he is about better than I can. He's a clever fellow, Tom. Aye, and an honest one, too, or——" a qualm came over his soul at the doubt which some latent apprehension had mischievously conjured up; but the laird hated doubts, and could not endure a suspicion of the honesty he so stoutly upheld—far less could he bear the idea of the investigation which would be requisite to test it. So he whistled his care down the wind, signed the papers, married his wife, and brought her in triumph to the Highlands.

And good reason had he for triumph. Mrs. Stewart was an admirable woman—highly principled, and amiable, as well as lady-like, and elegant. She made it a point not only to regulate her own tastes and habits by those of her husband, and to accommodate herself to her situation; but in every respect to consult their mutual interests, and, so far as might depend upon her, to remedy rather than exaggerate the evils likely to result from his weaknesses, which she could not long be blind to. She was in truth an exemplary wife. But coming as she did from the abode of elegance and fashion, she could not fail of soon discovering, that the house which had sufficiently accommodated an old

Highlander and his dame, or a bachelor laird, was but poorly calculated for the comfort of an English lady, accustomed to the comparative luxury of her own country. Additions were speedily made to the old tenement; furniture was procured from Edinburgh or from London; the roads around the place were improved so as to admit of approaching it with safety in a carriage; and the lady herself undertook the laying out a portion of the ground about the doors.

These improvements entailed further and heavy expenses. The agent was again called upon for money—advanced—grumbled—almost threatened, but still advanced, though by mere dribblets;—a system, which must soon have come to a stand still, but for a remarkable revolution which about this time began to take place in the value of Highland property, and which threw another, though but temporary gleam of prosperity over the prospects of the Airdruthmore family.

For many years previous to the change of which we speak, the chief produce of Highland estates was black cattle, which being bred in the mountainous districts of the North, were purchased by dealers who came for that purpose to the annual fairs, and who drove them southward for the supply of the English market. But in process of time it came to be discovered that *sheep* were a

stock which would thrive as well in the Northern hills and valleys, as in the richer pastures of the more Southern counties, and which would yield far greater returns to the farmer as well as the proprietor, than the cattle in which they had hitherto dealt.

The small black-faced, which succeeded the still more ancient white-faced breeds of Highland sheep, were not nearly so valuable either in wool or carcase, as those of the Cheviot hills; but crossed by the larger and finer southern breeds, they became improved in size, and fleece, and were then found to yield an infinitely more profitable return. By degrees the stream of southern skill, wealth, and industry, assumed a northward course; many sheep farmers of capital and experience took farms in the Highland counties, at rents which were never heard of nor dreamt of before, stocked them with superior animals, and proved by success, that the value of Highland estates had hitherto been greatly underrated. So great was in some instances the rise of value occasioned by this change of system, that there are instances on record, of farms, originally under black cattle, bringing six, eight, and even ten times their former rent when let as sheep walks.*

* Instances could be adduced of Highland properties, which fifty years ago were worth but 500*l.* a year, and which

The Airdruthmore estate, among others, felt this favourable change, although the effect upon it was greatly less considerable than might have been the case had it been judiciously and honestly managed. The farms, which remained unaffected by the wadset, were let under the all-powerful influence of the agent, Mr. Tom Macaskill, who, as some did not scruple to insinuate, with motives by no means disinterested, let them upon long leases to persons who paid scarce half their value of rent for them. There were various and abundant excuses for this unlucky singularity, whenever it was remarked;—poor hill generally, all over the farm—too much loch and rock upon it, and little good grass on any part of it—indifferent wintering for *hogs**—unwholesome spots in the best pasturage, &c. &c. &c.; so that on the whole, instead of a rise of full three thousand a year, as some asserted there should have been, the laird was glad to find the rental of the land which still remained in his possession, increased to fifteen hundred pounds a year.

It is true, that some debt had accumulated—the laird did not *suppose* it could be much—for a

have since the change arisen to a rental of 7,000*l.* A re-action to a certain extent has taken place since *war* prices have ceased, but the permanent rise is still enormous.

* *Hogs*, year-old lambs.

vague idea was all he had about the matter; but then, he lived in peace and plenty, and was a happy husband, and the father of a son and a daughter, born at an interval of five years. Alas! the season of affliction was fast approaching—yea, it had already arrived. Eight years after his marriage, his wife, when near the period of her third confinement,—by one of those painful casualties which seem like the random shots of fate—although each arrow flies as surely to its destined mark, as those which are more palpably launched by the decree of Providence—in the course of her domestic duties fell and injured herself so severely, that she was carried insensible to bed. A premature labour was the consequence. In those days medical assistance was ill to be had in the Highlands, and often indifferent when obtained. The “wise woman,” who lived at a *toon* some three miles distant, made her appearance as fast as horse and pillion could carry her to the place. But her skill was as vain as the prayers and the tears of those around the bed of sorrow; and after two days of intense suffering, the laird became the father of a female infant, and a widower, nearly at the same moment.

The heart of Airdruthmore was as warm and affectionate, as his mind was open and honourable. The paroxysm of anguish with which he clasped

to his breast the cold remains of her who had been in truth his best beloved, the sweetener of his life—the partner of his joys and his sorrows, was formidable, and powerful as the frame which, for a time, it prostrated; and not one of the domestics dared to approach him, until his widowed sister, who had accepted an asylum in his house, brought the new born infant, and with the tears and the accents of deep grief, besought her brother to summon up his resolution, and exert himself for the sake of the babe which his dear wife had left him. The gesture with which at first he repelled this well-meant appeal, was stern and appalling—but it was a mood uncongenial to his mind, and could not last. The tears of the miserable widower fell upon the face of his child. “Well, well,” he said, in broken words—“take it away—take care of the poor thing. I’ll do my duty; but leave me—let me alone, e’en now. I cannot leave her yet. O God! she’ll no’ be long with me, even thus!” Another fearful burst of grief convulsed his frame, and he once more fell upon the body.

The bewildered attendants, in their perplexity, did just the best thing they could have done—they left him to himself;—the first heavy gust of passion exhausted itself, and in two hours the forlorn widower left the chamber of death, and gave place to those whose duty it was to repair thither.

Long and heavily did he feel this blow ; and though his constitutional equanimity of temper and naturally excellent spirits assisted him greatly in at length recovering from its effects, he never showed the smallest disposition to form a second union. Mrs. Macdonald, his widowed sister, who was with him at the death of his wife, from that time forward took up her abode at Airdruthmore, and superintended the domestic establishment.

A little after the sad event we have recorded, the laird received a very affectionate letter of condolence from Mrs. Ponsonby, the sister of his deceased wife, who had married an English gentleman of fortune shortly after his own marriage. In this letter, after expressing her sincere grief for their mutual loss, Mrs. Ponsonby entreated that she might be permitted to stand godmother to the infant, whom she should, if her brother-in-law would consent, hold herself bound to look upon, and educate as a real daughter ; assuring him, that the performance of such a duty would be a real consolation to her for the loss of a beloved sister. A suitable reply was returned to this affectionate and friendly proposal ; but the laird, who had by that time taken greatly to the infant, could not bring himself to part with it then. Her native air, he said, would best confirm her constitution, and he did not wish that his daughter should be

brought up in ignorance of her home and of her parent: but when the season for regular instruction should arrive, he should then with gratitude avail himself of his sister-in-law's kindness, and intrust his little Isabelle to her care.

Time passed on, and further afflictions awaited the laird of Airdruthmore. His eldest daughter, a fine young creature seven years of age, was attacked by the natural small-pox, which at that time, previous to the general introduction of vaccination, was the scourge of the Highlands: an unfortunate cold, caught when she had already been pronounced out of danger, threw her into a decline, and after languishing for some months, she was laid in the grave by her unhappy father, whose scarcely healed wounds were thus again torn open.

The little Isabelle was more fortunate: she took the distemper, but in so mild a manner as scarcely to be confined by its effects; and after a week's slight indisposition, escaped without mark or trace of that fell destroyer of beauty. After the loss of her sister, the little creature became doubly dear to its father, and it was only in consequence of the earnest remonstrances of his sister, a sensible woman, and of the representations of some other judicious friends, that when she had attained the age of eleven years, he was at length prevailed on

to comply with the repeated and urgent entreaty of his sister-in-law, and permit his daughter to receive the benefit of a more liberal education than the glens or the towns of the Highlands could at that time supply.

A visit from Mrs. Ponsonby herself, accompanied by her husband and one of their daughters, a very amiable and accomplished girl of sixteen, was probably the circumstance which overcame his lingering reluctance, and decided his mind on this interesting subject. Airdruthmore, with all his simplicity, had enough of tact and good sense to discover at a glance the immeasurable distance which existed between the elegant English girl, well-bred and accomplished,—gentle, modest, and retiring, yet neither abashed nor confused in company,—and the coarse, awkward, gauky or hoydenish lasses, ill taught and worse bred, who occasionally accompanied their mothers on a forenoon visit, or the more trying ordeal of a formal company dinner at Airdruthmore.

“No—my Isabelle must *not* be like these. Take her, my dear sister; it would be selfish and wicked in me to prefer my own gratification to her good. Take her, and make her such as your own sweet Lucy.—But O! it’s ill we’ll do without her, dear child!—What will I do when I miss her blythe little voice singing in the morning like any skylark,

and the patter of her light feet along the passage, to call papa from his room ;—and when I'll not see her bonny face and sweet dark een, so like her blessed mother's, dancing up to kiss me when I come in to my breakfast ! They'll be dull days in Airdruthmore till she'll come back—but this is all very wrong in me, my dear sister ; so I pray you forgive me, and take Isabelle along with you."

And Isabelle did go, and shared the heart and the maternal care of Mrs. Ponsonby with her own daughters. The same masters taught the girls ; the same governess watched over them ; and the same valuable results followed these judicious exertions : for Isabelle kept pace with her graceful and accomplished cousins, and Mrs. Ponsonby had the delight of restoring to her brother-in-law his daughter, who from a happy joyous child, with radiant eyes and sunny smile, had grown up into a lovely and elegant young woman.

The affairs of the laird, meanwhile, under the management of his friend Tom Macaskill, proceeded in just such a course as the reader, from what he has seen of that gentleman's integrity, might naturally anticipate. The debt already incurred experienced an annual increase, until it assumed a size so formidable as utterly to confound the worthy man. He therefore took the part of closing his eyes, ears, and understanding, entirely

to the disagreeable subject, resolving to leave every thing to his friend Tom, with some indefinite idea that the said Tom would find some royal method of arranging matters, and providing for every possible difficulty and contingency, as had hitherto been done; and in this supposition the laird was nearer the truth than he had any good grounds for imagining, or than the reader can have the means of comprehending, until we let him into the secret. The fact was, that the worthy W. S., who had made the laird his milch-cow for so long, and who, when he had sucked him dry, would not have scrupled to let the worthless carcase shift for itself, had his own private reasons for bolstering up his credit and his estate a little longer. This must be explained.

A little previous to the period at which our retrospect of the laird's history has arrived, a new character of some importance to the drama, had made his appearance upon the stage. This was no other than Mr. Roderick Macaskill, son and heir of the old idiot of Ballytully, and nephew to the W. S. who exercised so important an influence over the Airdruthmore concerns. Mr. Macaskill, of Ballytully, was a Highlander of the old school, but by no means of its best class. His hospitality, when he was hospitable, was indiscriminate, injudicious, and extravagant. The popularity he

aimed at was with the lowest orders, among whom, as cock of the roost, he was infinitely more at home than among his equals in rank and fortune, and with whom he was ever ready to join in riot and low debauchery. Deeply prejudiced and narrow-minded, he scouted all improvement either of intellect or property; and the house of Ballytully, as well as the rest of his estate, exhibited a true picture of its landlord's mind. It was ruinous, squalid, disgusting, comfortless. As to the property of Ballytully, it became involved, no one knew how, and least of all the laird; for there was no discovering how his money went. He had neither state nor finery of any sort, neither comfort at home nor respect abroad, to show for it; but go it did, faster and faster, until his difficulties increased so much that he took the alarm in good earnest, and from a reckless spendthrift he all at once became a niggardly miser, who withdrew from every sort of communication with his neighbours and former associates. Perhaps the reader may incline to the opinion of certain shrewd neighbours, who conceived the fact of his brother, the worthy Tom Macaskill, being his *doer*, or agent, was quite sufficient to account for the embarrassment of his affairs. Still, when he did take the prudent part, and seemed to be saving with might and main for several years before his death, it was generally believed that his pecuniary

difficulties must have in a great measure been relieved, and his estate disburthened.

It was not under the directions or example of such a father and such an uncle, that a youth, at best of questionable dispositions, was likely to improve. Roderick Macaskill, neglected in his childhood, and suffered in his youth to run riot with the low and dissolute frequenters of his father's house, grew up not much in the fear of either God or man. He could play at *shinty*, or football, catch a trout, spear a salmon, shoot a muirfowl, swear and curse in Gaelic, and toss off a glass of whisky, with any lad or loon in the place; but as for the adventitious accomplishments of reading and writing, not to speak of the more recondite branches of literature, which some parents deem it fit their children should be made acquainted with, Rory Macaskill had but little turn for, or knowledge of them; and had it not been for his uncle Tom, he might have lived, flourished, and gone down to the grave of his fathers, in the most blessed ignorance of all mental improvement; almost without the simple, though useful, gratification of signing his own name. But uncle Tom, not being himself a marrying man, was probably of opinion that the heir apparent of all the Macaskills might as well be instructed in the mysteries of speaking, reading, and writing his vernacular language with

sufficient accuracy to pass muster among the class of Highland lairds, with whom it would be, probably, his fate to associate. Perchance, in the shrewd cunning of the lad, he perceived something congenial; something indicative of future exaltation and worldly prosperity, which he conceived might be made available to his own special advantage and comfort. For the W. S., like many another hard-fagging man, looked forward to days of ease and enjoyment, when the weighty concerns which he had so long sustained might be devolved, in part at least, upon the shoulders of some worthy coadjutor. If these expectations regarded his nephew, he miscalculated for once; for though the hopeful youth, under suitable instruction, and through means of a ready enough wit, did contrive to pick up, along with some useful learning, no trifling portion of the crooked policy which the experienced W. S. endeavoured to instil into his mind, he betrayed an utter want of that patient, steady perseverance, that humble and pliant spirit of endurance, which are so essential in the pursuit of wealth, especially when aimed at by such means as the worthy agent was accustomed to make use of.

After a vain attempt to make his nephew of service in his own way, Mr. Thomas Macaskill submitted, however ungraciously, to the desire of the

young man himself, supported by his father's wish, that he should enter a fencible regiment where his family interest might secure him promotion. Accordingly, upon furnishing a certain number of men, as was then the practice, Mr. Roderick Macaskill received a commission in the Gordon fencibles, with which corps he did duty for some years at Gibraltar and in Ireland. It was whispered, however, that the lieutenant was neither a favourite with his commanding officer, nor with the mess. Whether it was from this or some other cause is uncertain, but the fact was, that when the regiment was ordered to the Helder, he quitted it and retired upon half-pay to Scotland. His father having by this time become a morose recluse, but little comfort was to be found in his home at Ballytully, while, on the other hand, the habits of his uncle in Edinburgh were by no means so congenial to his own, as to induce the gay lieutenant to remain with him oftener or longer than prudence or decorum might require. Lieutenant Macaskill, nevertheless, was not without his private pursuits and companions. The latter principally consisted of a set of dissolute rakes, bucks, bloods, and bullies of desperate fortunes—birds of prey, who gained a precarious existence by plucking all the unlucky pigeons whom chance throw in their way. His pursuits were worthy of such society

—drinking, gambling, and debauchery of every species. In these did the young man spend his time, his health, his own money, and every shilling he could squeeze out of his miserly father, or coax out of his politic uncle, who in spite of his disappointment, entertained for him a regard scarcely to be accounted for in a man of such selfish feelings and habits.

There were few of Mr. Thomas Macaskill's actions, as we have hinted before, which might not be traced to a selfish motive. He loved his nephew, it is true, but so far was this affection from blinding him to his own peculiar interests, that his brain was busy with a scheme of turning this very affection to his own benefit. It is a trite observation, that worldly and cautious men often become victims of the very errors which they have condemned in others; and the avoidance of which has for a long time been the cause of their prosperity. The patient and wily cunning, the persevering industry and insuperable prudence of Macaskill had been the instruments, however unworthily applied, by which he had in the course of many years secured a very considerable fortune—some said a large one. But that the thirst of gain increases by gratification is a fact to which every age and nation has borne testimony; and our W. S. with

all his prudence, was by no means doomed to form any exception to the rule.

In the course of his business, tempting bargains frequently cast up, and, forgetting the mere *agent*, Macaskill saw no good reason why he should not make himself *principal* on such occasions, and reap the profit as well as another. A recurrence of transactions savouring of the merchant rather than the writer, involved him almost insensibly in extensive speculations in produce of various kinds. Wood, bark, kelp, corn, wool, and even live stock occasionally. By degrees his concerns became complicated—opposing interests embarrassed him. Some of his speculations failed; of his bargains some turned out dead losses; others, which with due attention might have turned out well, became unprofitable from unavoidable neglect.

The consequences of these miscarriages which could not always be concealed, were more serious even than the losses themselves. Men of business, in their cautious way, hinted obscurely at the sums which had been thus imprudently thrown away. Bills with his name to a large amount were understood to be afloat, and the banks began to look shy upon them, as well as upon the W. S. himself. Tradesmen with long unpaid accounts became anxious for a settlement, and a multitude of those minor symptoms of labouring circumstances—

“straws that show which way the wind sets” — were remarked by those who watch the general course of business in the metropolis of Scotland.

Still Mr. Macaskill was known to have large possessions. The amount of wadsetts, mortgages, and purchases of land, registered in his own name was very great, and people believed that whatever his temporary embarrassments might be, he must *cut up* well in the end. However that might be, the object of their speculations appeared to have resolved on fortifying his credit by every means in his power, and on providing against any storm that might blow.

The estate of Ballytully was probably more absolutely in his hands than in those of the old and miserly laird his brother. The lands were contiguous to those of his friend and client, the laird of Airdruthmore—a noble property they would make together. Young Stewart had embraced a hazardous profession: a casualty—the lapse of a single life, would throw the whole into the lap of Miss Isabelle—and then his own wadsett—whew!—it would be a glorious estate. At all events, the girl had ten thousand pounds. “And bi my saul and body,” would the good W.S., warming with the subject, break out to himself, in his secret chambers, “that’s no bad plaister to salve a consumptive estate wi’. That

fellow Roderick might hae it, I'm sure, for the seeking; and have it he shall, or my name's no Tom Macaskill! 'Odd, it may patch me up mysel' yet. There's that purchase o' the Kirk Sonachan property, that I was harled into by that stupid ideot Mac Kechny—De'il hae me, but it smells more o' a' knave's plisky than a fule's blunder; but I'll be upsides wi' him yet. Then there's that d—d kelp affair in Skye and Uist; and Strathspey wood they say will be doon. Bi saul and body, I may need the hale o't yet. Aye! aye! Rory must get the lass, and let me alone to get the siller!"

Thus mused, and thus resolved the worthy Tom Macaskill, into whose private thoughts we have thus given a closer peep, perhaps, than strict prudence might warrant; but trusting to the discretion of our readers, we shall proceed with our story.

In conformity with this deep-laid plan, Lieutenant Macaskill, with due introductions and a suitable panegyric, was formally introduced by his uncle at Airdruthmore. The worthy old laird was not less astonished than delighted to find the son of his churlish neighbour, the rude cub whom he remembered little better than a coarse, ungainly blackguard, metamorphosed into a gay young man, with a military air, and a dash of modest assur-

ance—the only tokens of his late profession, besides his half-pay, by the way, which the lieutenant retained. This air of assumption the honest laird was willing to ascribe to the ease of a man who knew the world; and as he read the praises of the nephew in the letters of the uncle, his good sense was for a moment startled, and he almost marvelled at the change. But, thought he, with Burns—

“Aftimes a ragged cowt’s been known
To make a noble aiver.”

“The deuce is in it, if Tom does not know his own nephew—and he’s too discreet to recommend an arrogant coxcomb to the attention of a sober decent family like mine, surely.”

The simplicity of the laird of Airdruthmore, like that “My uncle Toby,” had nothing in it of weakness or of folly. It sprung from genuine goodness of heart, and a confidence in the sincerity of others, grounded upon his own integrity of purpose. It was doubtless increased by a disuetude from the world and its ways, and by an indolence of temperament which revolted from the trouble of scrutiny, and disposed him to rely upon the assurances of others without sufficient inquiry into their motives.

The lieutenant, well primed by his uncle, was

prepared to meet his man, and the art with which he concealed his evil propensities, and brought forward into view the specious points of his character, would have elicited praise from that relative himself. The old gentleman was charmed,—the more so probably that he had been so pleasantly disappointed in the character of his guest, and young Ballytully became a frequent and welcome inmate at Airdruthmore.

But the dissolute habits in which lieutenant Macaskill delighted, though concealed, were far from being abandoned. The vicinity of his father's house afforded ample means of gratification,—of a low and degrading character indeed,—but the lieutenant had parental example to plead for laxity of taste as well as of principle, and he soon became the leader and boon companion of a set of reprobates, outcasts from reputable society, or men who had never found entrance into it. Drovers and cattle-merchants of desperate fortunes, excisemen and smugglers, broken or breaking farmers, and profligates of all descriptions, flocked to the change-houses in the neighbourhood of Ballytully, to taste of the young laird's hospitality, and to contribute their share of servile flattery in return. It was even whispered by some that a still more dangerous and criminal connexion existed between him and certain individuals of the crew, but the very persons

who dared to breathe so scandalous a report disclaimed all belief in it. The sphere in which it was circulated was too remote to give it publicity in creditable society, and neither the report itself nor any part of the secret history of the young laird ever reached the family at Airdruthmore, whose very habits prevented them from being assailed with such gossip.

In course of time, the old laird of Ballytully died, and his worthy son succeeded to his property, —whatever that might amount to,—for the whole nature of the succession was preserved a solemn secret in the bosoms of the uncle and the nephew themselves. The house of Ballytully was, however repaired, the positive nuisances removed from about the doors, and some little attention was bestowed upon the bit of rough pasture about them. The cows, calves, and poultry were excluded by a rough paling from their ancient haunt under the windows, and a new road cut and roughly gravelled wound its way up to the entrance and round a circle which in time was intended to be converted into green turf. There was, however, a lazy indolence in the progress of these attempts at improvement, an imperfection in the execution, a stopping short in the middle, which argued little in favour of the spirit by which they were conducted.

In truth, the new laird was seldom at home, and when he was, his companions and intimates, it was said, were not such as to add to his respectability. The greater portion of his time was spent at Airdruthmore, where he had contrived to ingratiate himself so much with the laird as to be always a welcome guest. There is a species of regulated contact into which characters essentially dissimilar may often be brought, without the smallest interruption of harmony; in which, as in certain chemical compounds, the adverse substances, being but imperfectly mingled together, remain in a tranquil repose, which would speedily be disturbed were the union to become more close and intimate. It was thus with the laird of Airdruthmore and his friend Ballytully; they lived much together, but it was by no means in a state of unlimited intimacy, for one of the parties, at least, was fully conscious of the prudence of reserve. There were few possessed of more intuitive tact in choosing their ground, and avoiding unnecessary hazards, than Lieutenant Macaskill, and he quickly perceived how important to his objects it would be to avoid all offence against the warm and generous feelings of the laird; while on his part, Airdruthmore could discover little in the lieutenant's character or conduct to reprehend or even to regret, beyond a certain degree of *brus-*

querie—a want of refinement which he was content to lay to the score of rugged honesty and the sterling worth of an native Highlander, that scorned the artificial polish of an age perhaps too much refined.

The first occasion on which the laird of Ballytully met with the daughter of his friend was during a visit which she made while yet a girl, living in England with her aunt, to her father in the Highlands. It is probable that even at this early period the designs of the uncle had been conceived, but it was not until a subsequent period that Mr. Thomas Macaskill saw fit to break the ice and the subject to his friend and client by a distant hint. It was received as a good-enough sort of joke by the honest laird, but although the wily W. S. took special care to abstain from any thing which could be seriously laid hold of, it delighted him to observe, as he thought, that the suggestion was by no means lost upon its object,—that the arrow had hit its mark, and that though little was said upon the occasion, the old gentleman evinced no disposition adverse to the matter he had in view.

The effect thus produced was maintained by a successive variety of sly insinuations—the advantages to be contemplated from such an union were artfully touched upon, and no opportunity was

neglected for impressing upon the mind of Airdruthmore not only the expediency, but the obvious propriety of a connexion so appropriate between such near neighbours; and this was always done in a way which was calculated to work insensibly, and as it were by inference, rather than by any direct allusion to the subject.

There was, in fact, great cause for apprehension and very cogent reasons for acting cautiously; for assuredly, when the object of his friend did dawn upon the laird, he was somewhat startled. He probably called to mind the peculiar, and not very reputable, character of the late Ballytully; but he speedily released his mind from the unwonted effort of attempting to judge for itself in the teeth of his prime counsellor, or his recorded opinion, a species of treason; for which he felt the more conscience stricken, that he neither dared to acknowledge nor apologize for it in the aggrieved quarter; and the customary unction of reliance on the wisdom of his friend and agent, was once more applied to his wounded soul. "It's no' just the thing I like somehow," muttered he to himself, "and yet I have nothing to say against the lad; and Tom Macaskill would never hint at such a matter with one of doubtful character, though he were his nephew. As for the family—that's good enough; all the water in the sea would not wash the laird of Graut's blood out of his

mother's veins, if she were living—and the Macaskills of Ballytully were one of the oldest families of the name, and the lad himself is a generous, frank, free-hearted Highlander—a fine honourable fellow, no doubt—a good soldier too, they say ; and where is there a prettier man to be seen in a hundred ; and the estate's no' a bad one—the late man dipt it a little, it's said ; but then it's all in Tom Macaskill's hands, and he's a warm fellow—he won't let the old acres go flying, I'll warrant, nor yet let the roof-tree fall for want of propping. Faith, Isabelle might do worse. I have no great fancy for your great lords and lairds from the south, with proud hearts and empty purses, or what's worse, worldly heads and cold hearts ; and it's seldom the better ones come our way. I would rather have Belle set down with an honest warm-hearted lad, near myself, and in her own country, where I might get a look of her as often as I liked in my old age, and dandle my grandchildren on my knee, and aye see chearful faces when I came the way. And Ballytully's not an ugly place if it were a bit improved—a very bonnie Highland place ; and though the house is no' large, a little of Belle's money might make it big enough. Faith, if Belle liked the lad, I don't see why I should object ;—not a prime scholar, perhaps ;—but where's the good of too much learning in a Highland glen ? And look at your

French literati—what good have they done? turned the country upside down;—no, no, Roderick Mac-caskill has nothing of jacobin or democrat about him—he's a loyal subject and an honest man. Upon my faith, Belle might go farther and fare worse. But what nonsense all this is, after all: she's but a child yet: it's far too soon to think of such matters, and it's herself must be the judge whether she can like him or no. I'll have no pressing—no forcing—she shall just judge for herself."

Such and such like were the honest laird's cogitations, the workings of a mind anxious to act for the best, yet unconsciously, perhaps, influenced by misplaced confidence and by the fatal indolence which was its besetting fault: an indolence which too often counteracted all right feeling, and turned to evil that single-heartedness which was one of its owner's most amiable qualities. As for the bold lieutenant, little did he care about the lady; the solid advantages of the connexion were what swayed his mind. But no sooner had the daughter of Airdruthmore made her appearance on her return from England, to occupy her fitting place in her father's house, radiant in all the charms of feminine loveliness, than another motive was added to his anxiety for the connexion; for all of passion which a mind like his could feel, was excited to the highest pitch by the sight of so much beauty.

And well indeed might the laird of Ballytully be contented with his promised destiny; for assuredly it would have been no easy matter to discover in any one daughter of Eve a more attractive combination of bodily and mental perfections, than were united in the person of Isabelle Stewart. At the period in question she was scarcely nineteen; a time when the female form has usually attained that rich and rounded contour which is the perfection of beauty, without losing aught of the nymph-like slenderness which is so indispensable to grace. In stature she scarcely rose above the middle height; but the just proportions of her form, and the swan-like rise of her beautiful neck, lent to her person an air of loftiness and majesty, which height alone would never have bestowed.

Her features and complexion were those of her mother. Eyes of so dark and rich a hazel, fringed with such long silken lashes, as to cheat the beholders into the belief that they were black, beamed softly and timidly from under arches of their own hue. Above these rose a brow, open, calm, and dazzlingly white, in happy contrast to the rich tints of her polished cheek, where "the pure and eloquent blood" played with a varying current at every change of feeling. These, and the dark profusion of chesnut hair which clustered in glossy ringlets about her neck and forehead, belonged to the decided brunette.

It was in the frank, joyous, sunny smile that irradiated her countenance when she spoke, that the likeness and expression of her father was chiefly to be recognized. A severe critic might possibly have been disposed to blame the size of her mouth ; but the beauty of its ripe and well-formed lips, no less than the rows of pearly teeth which their smile disclosed, would have disarmed his censure, while they offered an undeniable pledge for the good-humour and kind-heartedness of their possessor. The character and disposition of Isabelle Stewart did in truth shine forth conspicuously and irrepressibly in her countenance and deportment. To an innate delicacy of sentiment, and a nice sense of propriety, she united a firmness of mind, a soundness of judgment, and a quick intuitive perception of right and wrong, which, while it derogated in no degree from true feminine gentleness, imparted to her conduct a dignified correctness rarely to be met with in one so young. Yet it was a dignity immeasurably removed from any shade of prudery or harshness ; on the contrary, there was a mild and winning courtesy in her demeanour, and in the silver tones of her voice, which exerted an irresistible influence over those whom she addressed. She moved with the elastic, buoyant, and almost bounding step of a mind happy in itself, and at peace with all around her.

Blessings from young and old followed her light and graceful form, as it passed along on errands of charity and beneficence to the poor and distressed around her ; and the old laird her father was used to declare, that he could tell the sound of his Isabelle's footsteps among a thousand, for that they went to his very heart, like the voice of joyful tidings. Such as we have faintly attempted to sketch her was Isabelle Stewart at the period of which we are now speaking ; and if we have been at all successful in our description, the reader will scarcely wonder that lieutenant Macaskill should desire, as far as in him lay, to expedite the fulfilment of that arrangement which had for its object his union with so admirable a person.

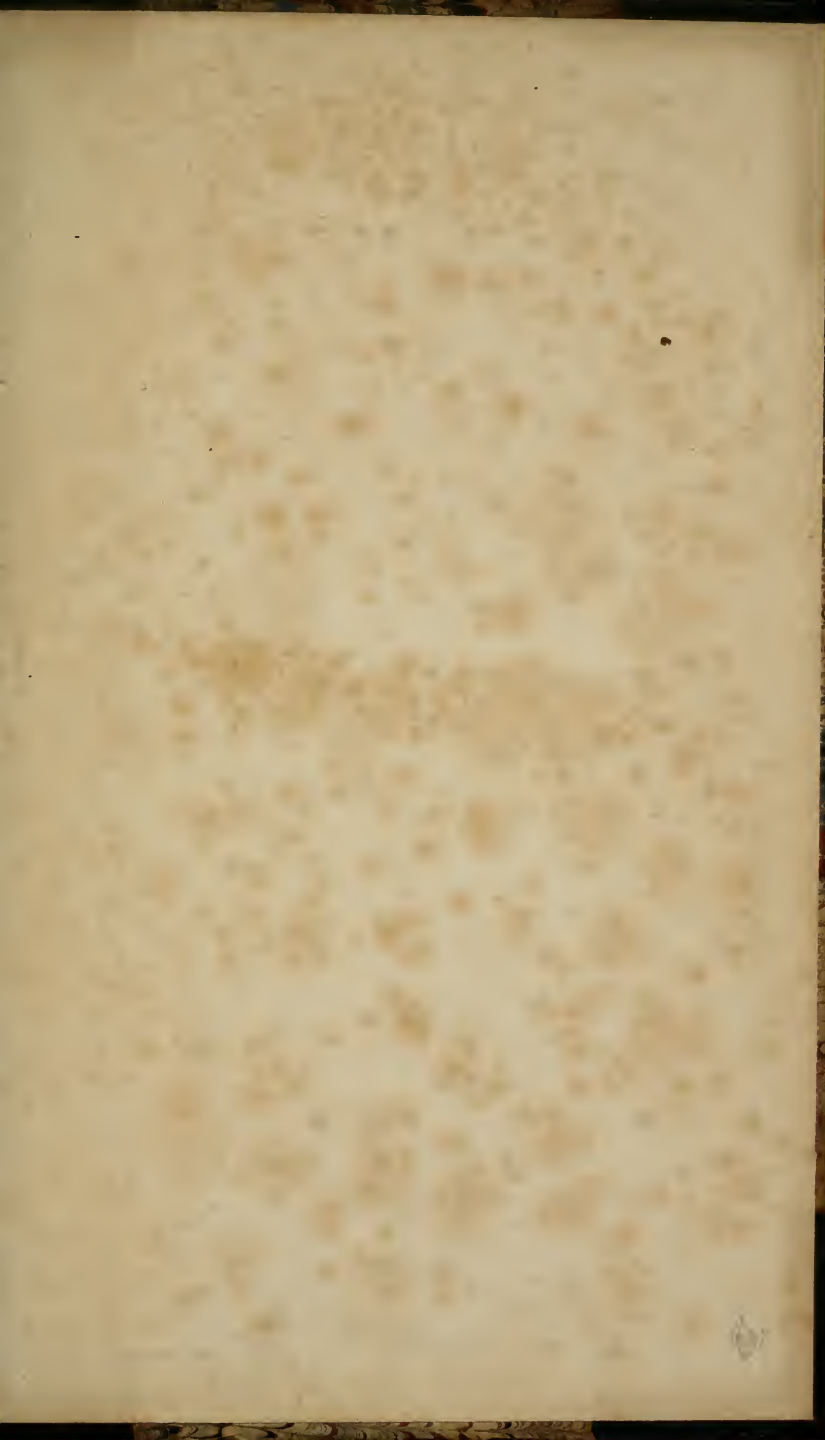
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