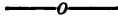


A LEGEND OF LOCH MAREE.



OF all the many beautiful places in Scotland, none can surpass Loch Maree (Loch ma righ, or the King's Loch), so called from the incidents related in the following Legend :—Some centuries ago there lived near the loch an old woman and her son. Her husband and three elder sons had been slain, their humble home burnt, and their cattle driven off, during one of the fierce clan feuds which were only too common in those days. The poor woman had fled with her youngest son to this lonely secluded spot, where they found shelter, and after a while lived comfortably enough ; for Kenneth grew a fine active lad and keen sportsman, and with his bow and arrow and fishing-rod supplied plenty food. They also possessed a small herd of goats, which rambled at will among the mountains surrounding the loch, returning to the widow's cottage at milking-time. Among them was a very beautiful dun coloured one, which gave more milk than any of the others. This, together with her docile habits, made her a great favourite with the widow. One evening Kenneth returning home laden with the spoils of the chase, met his mother at the cottage door. The good woman was carrying the milk she had just taken from the goats, wearing a very dissatisfied look on her usually placid countenance. On her son asking what was the matter, she replied tartly, "Matter enough ; see the small quantity of milk I have got to-night ; the dun goat, who used to give more than any of the others, hardly gave a spoonful, and it has been the same the last two nights. I can't make out what ails the creature." Kenneth, tired after a long day's sport, answered lightly, that perhaps the goat was ill, or that she had not received food enough. His mother made no reply ; she, however, gave the goat a double allowance of food that night, and saw that she took it well ; but the next evening not a drop of milk did she give—indeed, it was evident she had been newly milked. The old woman was at her wits' end ; and directly her son came in, she began to complain loudly. "We must do something about that dun goat, Kenneth ; not a drop of milk did she give again to-night ; I am sure the fairies suck her, and if we don't stop it, I shant be able to make a single cheese to put by for the winter. You really must help me to find out all about it. Kenneth, who began to miss his usual allowance of milk at supper-time, professed his willingness to assist his mother. "But," said he, "what can I do to prevent it ? would it not be better to tie the goat up ?" "No, no," that would never do," replied his mother, "she has never been tethered, and would not stand it. The best thing for you to do will be to follow her to-morrow, and see where she goes." To this proposal Kenneth agreed, and early next morning started off after the dun goat, who soon separated herself from the rest of the herd, and made straight for a pass between two high rocks, bleating as she went. "Oh, oh !" said Kenneth to himself, "I shouldn't wonder if she has picked up some motherless fawn, which she suckles, for I have heard of such things before, and that is more likely than the fairies that mother talks about." He found it, however, no easy matter to keep the goat in sight, and her colour being so peculiar, it was

nearly impossible to see her at a little distance. Kenneth persevered manfully, springing from rock to rock almost as nimbly as the goat herself ; but at last a sudden turn hid her for a minute from his sight, and try as he would, he could not again catch sight of her. So he had to own himself beaten ; but he determined to wait until the usual time for milking, thinking he would be sure to see where she came from, so he waited patiently, but to no purpose. Not a glimpse did he get of her until he arrived at home, and saw her taking her food among the rest. His mother was anything but pleased at his non-success, more especially as she again did not get a single spoonful of milk from her. Terribly chagrined, Kenneth vowed he would solve the mystery if it took him a week to do so. Rising with the sun next morning, and taking some provisions and his bow and arrows with him, he started off in the same direction the goat had led him the day before. When he came to the place at which he lost sight of her, he concealed himself and waited. Before long he saw her pass, and immediately followed her, but the sagacious animal seemed to know that she was being traced, and redoubled her speed ; so, in spite of Kenneth's utmost exertions, he again lost sight of her.

Heated and vexed, he threw himself on the ground, and exclaimed, " Confound the beast, I believe mother is right after all in saying the fairies have something to do with her. I'll give her up for this day." Having rested a while and taken some food, he strung his bow, for, said he, " 'Twill never do to go home empty handed a second day." He spent the day among the hills with fair success, and was turning towards home, when, endeavouring to recover a bird he had shot, he scrambled on to a small grass-covered platform in front of a natural cave in the rock, and much was his astonishment to see the lost goat standing at the entrance of the cave. He called her, and held out his hand, but instead of running to him and licking his hand as usual, she stamped with her feet, and, lowering her head, stood in a state of defence. Convinced there was something in the cave, Kenneth tried to enter, but the goat stood firm, giving him some hard knocks with her horns. Finding she was so resolute, and not wishing to hurt her, he desisted for the present, marking the place well so as to find it easily again. The goat was again home before him, but not a drop of milk did she give. His mother was pleased he had discovered so much, and, said, " To-morrow I will go with you, and surely between us we shall manage to get a sight of the inside of the cave." Next morning the old woman and her son started, taking a rope with them to secure the goat if she should prove unmanageable. When they arrived at the cave, the goat was standing at the entrance, evidently angry, and determined to oppose them. In vain the widow called her pet names, and held out sweet herbs ; the stubborn animal would not budge an inch for all their entreaties or threats. " Well," said Kenneth, " its no use standing here all day ; I'll throw the rope over her, and drag her from the cave, and you shall go in mother, and see what she is hiding inside." No sooner said than done, and the poor goat was struggling on the ground, bleating loudly. As if in answer to her piteous cries, there issued from the cave, crawling on all fours, a beautiful boy about a year old, who scrambled at once to the goat,

and putting his little arms round the animal's neck, laid his face against its shaggy coat. She appeared delighted at the caress, and licked the hands and face of the child with evident affection.

At this unexpected sight, Kenneth and his mother were lost in astonishment and admiration. He at once satisfied himself, from the fairness and beauty of the child, and its being dressed in green, that it was indeed a veritable fairy, and his admiration for the goat was somewhat damped by a feeling of superstitious awe at being brought in such close proximity to one of "the good people." But the warm, motherly heart of the widow at once opened to the helpless infant, and, forgetting her natural fear of the supernatural, as well as her annoyance at the loss of her milk supply, she rushed forward, and catching the child in her arms, covered it with kisses, mingled with blessings on its beauty, and pity for its forlorn condition, vowing she would take it home, and cherish it as her own child.

Kenneth did not altogether approve of this proceeding, and exclaimed with some heat, "Mother! mother! what are you saying; don't you see it is a fairy? put it down, put it down, or perhaps you will get bewitched, and changed into some animal or other. How could a child like that, unless it was a fairy, live alone among these wild mountains, with no one to see after it? and where did it come from? No, no! mother; it is nothing but a fairy, and we had better leave it alone, and the goat too, for she is also, no doubt, bewitched, and we shall only get ourselves into mischief by meddling with her; or, if you must needs have the goat, just hold the rope, while I throw the fairy creature down the face of the rock, out of the animal's sight.

Before, however, Kenneth could lay hold of the child, he was arrested, and startled, by hearing a voice from the interior of the cave exclaiming, "Touch him if you dare! he is no fairy, but far better flesh and blood than you are." The next instant there rushed from the cave a young woman, scarcely out of her girlhood; fair enough, but with privation written in every feature of her face, while her torn dress and dishevelled hair, told a tale of want and exposure. Withal, there was a certain dignity about her that made Kenneth and his mother give way when she approached to take possession of the child, who clung to her with every mark of affection.

With an air of respect, mingled with astonishment, the widow asked who she was? and how she came there?

The stranger explained how she had been menaced with great danger in her own country, and had fled with her child for concealment to this secluded spot, and should have perished from absolute want if it had not been for the good-natured goat, whom she had enticed to the cave, and on whose milk she and the child had subsisted for several days.

The kind hearted widow at once offered them shelter and protection at her cottage, adding that she knew from sad experience what it was to be hunted from her own country like a wild animal.

Strange to say, Kenneth offered not the slightest objection to his mother's kind invitation. His dread of, and dislike to the fairies seemed to evaporate at the sight of a good-looking young girl. He offered no objection this time to the exercise of his mother's hospitality, which Flora

gladly accepted, and they all wended their way to the widow's cottage, followed by the sagacious goat, who seemed to perfectly understand how matters stood.

Thus they, for a time, lived happily and safely, and the widow found her visitors no encumbrance ; for Kenneth exerted himself with such goodwill in hunting and fishing, that he supplied more than sufficient for them all. The boy grew a strong, sturdy fellow ; and Flora, by good nourishment and mind at ease as to the safety of herself and charge, expanded into a most lovely woman, as amiable as she was beautiful, and assisted the widow in all her household duties, although it was very evident she belonged to a far higher class than that of her protectors.

Kenneth was the only one of the small circle who was not perfectly at ease. He who used to be one of the most happy and careless of mortals, with no higher ambition than to be a good sportsman, now became dissatisfied with himself and discontented with his lot in life. When out on the hills alone he would fall into moods of abstraction, building castles in the air, wishing he were a soldier—ah ! if so, what wonderful feats of valour would he not perform ; he would surpass all his comrades in courage and dexterity ; he would be rewarded with knighthood ; and then he would have the right to mingle with the best and noblest of the land ; and then—then there would flash across his mind a vision of a brave knight fighting to assert the lawful claims of a fair lady, of his being successful, of his being rewarded by the hand and heart of the beautiful heroine ; and then—then poor Kenneth would find his fine castle crumbling away, and standing alone with empty game-bag. So, with a sigh, he would wake to the commonplace world, and hasten to redeem the idle time already wasted ; and besides, did not Flora prefer one sort of game, which he must get, and did she also not admire a wild flower he had taken home yesterday, and he must scale the highest rocks to find more for her to-day. On his return home he would present the flowers shyly, blushing and stammering at the graceful thanks he received for them. He would scarcely taste his food, but sit quietly, following with his eyes every movement of the bewitching Flora, until little MacGabhar—for so they had named the boy—would come and challenge him to a game of romps.

One day, when alone with his mother, Kenneth suddenly asked her "if she thought Flora was really the mother of the boy?" "Foolish boy," answered she, "do you think I have lived all these years and not know a maid from a wife? No, no ; Flora is no more his mother than I am. And, son Kenneth, I wish to give you some advice : don't you go and fall in love with Flora, you might as well fall in love with the moon or the stars. Don't you see, she is some great lady, perhaps a princess, although now obliged to live in concealment. I expect little MacGabhar is her brother, and heir to some great lord. What we must do is to treat her with respect and kindness, and perhaps some day, if she gets her rights, you may be her servant, if she will accept your services. Though she never told me who she was, she showed me a very handsome sword and a beautiful scarlet velvet mantle trimmed with fur, which she said belonged to the boy's father, and she was keeping them to prove his birth some day."

This sensible though unpalatable advice fell like lead upon Kenneth's

heart, but still, thought he, "it will be something to be even her servant. I shall at least see her, and hear her voice."

Matters went on thus at the cottage for some time, until one day Kenneth came home hastily with the news that the Lord of Castle Donain, the chief of that part of the country, was come on a grand hunting expedition to the neighbourhood, and would probably call at the cottage, as he had done on former occasions. For themselves Kenneth had no fear, for although they did not belong to the chief's clan, he knew of their living on his estate, and had never offered any objection. It was only on Flora's account that he had hastened with the news. She, poor girl, seemed dreadfully agitated, and said, "that Lord Castle Donain was one of the last men she wished to know of her whereabouts," and suggested that she and MacGabhar should again take refuge in the cave until the danger was past; but, alas, it was too late. Already some of the foremost clansmen were in sight. In another minute the chief himself appeared, calling out to Kenneth to come as their guide, as he knew the ground so well. Kenneth hurried out, closing the door of the cottage after him. This Lord Castle Donain noticed, as also the uneasiness of the young man's manner. "How now, Kenneth," he exclaimed, eyeing him suspiciously, "what have you in hiding there? where is your mother? and why do you not ask me in to take a drink of milk as you used to do?" Kenneth confusedly muttered something about his mother not being well, and offered to fetch some milk for his lordship. The chief was now convinced that there was a secret, and determined to find it out. He entered the cottage without ceremony, exclaiming angrily, "What is the meaning of this, old dame? Do you not know you are only living on my estate on sufferance, and if you don't render me proper respect as your chief, I will soon pack you and your son off again." Then perceiving Flora, and being struck with her exceeding loveliness, he involuntarily altered his tone, and continued in a more gentle voice, "Ah! I now see the cause; you have a stranger with you. Who is she, Kenneth?"

Now this was a very puzzling question for poor Kenneth to answer, as he did not know himself, and being fearful of saying anything that might injure Flora. However, he answered as boldly as he could, that she was his wife. "Your wife, Kenneth?" said the chief, "impossible, where did you get her from? I am sure she does not belong to this part of the country, or I should have noticed her before; however, I must claim the privileges of a chief, and give her a salute." But when he approached Flora, she waved him off with conscious dignity, saying "he must excuse her, as it was not the custom in her country to kiss strangers." Her voice and manner, so different to what he expected from one in her seeming position, more than ever convinced the chief there was a mystery in the case, and when in answer to his enquiries, she told him her name was Flora, he exclaimed, "Kenneth, I am sure you are deceiving me, she is not your wife; her voice, her manner, and, above all, her name, convince me that she is of high birth, and most probably of some hostile clan, consequently she must return with me to Castle Donain, until I fathom the mystery surrounding her, and you may think yourself lucky that I do not order you to be strung up on the nearest tree for a traitor."

This speech threw them all into the greatest consternation. In vain

Flora pleaded to be left alone with her husband and child ; in vain the widow and Kenneth asserted their innocence of wishing harm to the chief ; he remained inexorable. To Castle Donain she must and should go. The widow, in the extremity of her grief, caught up the child, to whom she was greatly attached, and exclaimed, " Oh ! little MacGabhar, what will become of you ? "

On hearing this, Lord Castle Donain started as if an adder had stung him, and with agitated voice cried out, " MacGabhar ! whence got he that name, for it is a fatal one to my family. Hundreds of years ago it was prophesied that—

The son of the goat shall triumphantly bear
The mountain in flames ; and the horns of the deer—
From forest of Loyne to the hill of Ben-Crosheen—
From mountain to vale, and from ocean to ocean.

So, little blue-eyed MacGabhar, you must come with me too, for I am sure you are a prize worth having."

Again poor Flora pleaded hard to be allowed to remain in her humble home ; urging, what a disgrace it would be for him to tear her and her child away from her husband and home ; but all vain. The chief refused to believe the story of her being the wife of Kenneth, and insisted in no very measured terms on her at once accompanying him to the Castle of Islandonain.

Finding all her appeals and supplications of no avail, Flora began to grow desperate. Drawing the child to her, she faced the chief with a look as haughty as his own, and producing a small, richly ornamented dirk, which she had concealed about her dress, vowed she would rather kill herself and the boy too, than that they should be taken prisoners.

This bold mein, and determined speech of Flora somewhat confused the chief, as he was far from wishing to offer any violence to one whom he was convinced was of high birth. It was consequently with a gentler voice and more respectful manner that he now addressed her, saying, " I do not wish to use any force towards you, and will therefore waive the question of you leaving your seclusion at present, but as I am thoroughly convinced there is a mystery about you, I will, as a precaution for my own safety, require to know more of your future movements." He accordingly directed one of his clansmen, Hector Dubh Mackenzie, to remain meantime as her guard ; and then, to the great relief of the whole of the inmates, he retired from the cottage.

M. A. ROSE.

(*To be Continued.*)

MEMORIAL OF THE QUEEN'S VISIT TO LOCH-MAREE.—On a rock of pale red granite across the road from the Loch Maree Hotel, Sir Kenneth S. Mackenzie, Bart. of Gairloch, has caused to be inscribed the following memento of Her Majesty's visit last autumn to this celebrated spot:—" Air an dara latha-deug deth mbios meadhonach an fhoghair, 1877, thainig Ban-Rìgh Bhictoria a dh'fhaicinn Loch-Maruibhe, agus nan crìochan mu'n cuairt. Dh'fhan i sea eìdheche s'an tigh-òsda so thall ; agus 'na caomhalachd, dheonaich i g'um biodh a' chlach so 'na cuimhneachau air an tlachd a fhuair i 'na teachd do'n chearn so de Ros." For the benefit of our English readers we give the following literal English translation:—" On the 12th day of the middle month of autumn 1877, Queen Victoria came to visit Loch Maree and the country around it. She remained six nights in the opposite hotel, and, in her kindness, agreed that this stone should be a memento of the pleasure she experienced in coming to this quarter of Ross." The Gaelic inscription, which was drawn up by our friend the Rev. Mr Macgregor, Inverness, was submitted to, and approved by, Her Majesty.

A LEGEND OF LOCH MAREE

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[CONCLUDED.]

THOUGH left unmolested for a time, poor Flora knew well that she was in the power of the Lord of Castle Donain, and her distress and perplexity of mind was extreme. She had the wit, however, to hide it from Hector, who was now a constant and unwelcome visitor at the cottage,—and chatted and laughed with him and Kenneth, when they came home in the evening, as though she was quite careless and contented. Hers was not a nature to sit down quietly under danger. No, the greater the danger, the higher her courage seemed to rise, and she determined to effect her escape. She arranged with the widow that they should pack up a few necessaries, take the boy and the goat, and again have recourse to the cave for a present refuge. Unfortunately, however, she could find no opportunity to confide her plans to Kenneth, for the vigilance of Hector was so great that neither she nor his mother ever had a chance of speaking to him alone even for a moment. She was anxious to give him a clue, however slight, to their intended movements, so on the morning of the day they had fixed upon for the attempt, before the men went out, she carelessly said to him, "Oh Kenneth, I wish you would try to get me some more of these flowers, they are so beautiful," at the same time exhibiting a bit of a plant which Kenneth and herself well knew grew only in the neighbourhood of the cave, "but," she continued, "you need not trouble about it to-day, as you are going fishing; to-morrow, when you go to the hills, will be quite soon enough." These simple words, so frankly spoken, caused no suspicion to cross the mind of Hector, but to Kenneth, accompanied as they were with a quick expressive glance of her beautiful eyes, they were fraught with meaning, and he felt assured that she wished him to go to the neighbourhood of the cave on the morrow, though for what reason he could not surmise. As he promised to endeavour to procure the flowers, he gave her a look, intelligent as her own, which at once convinced her that he understood some plot was hatching.

That evening, when Kenneth and Hector returned from their day's fishing, they found no fire on the hearth, no supper ready, no voice to welcome them. Kenneth, from the hint he had received, was somewhat prepared for this unusual state of matters, but at the same time he echoed his companion's exclamations of astonishment; he tried to account for it to the satisfaction of his companion by suggesting that the women were out milking the goats, but, as if to contradict him, they heard a bleating outside the cottage, and, going out to ascertain the cause, they found the goats, tired of waiting, had actually come to the door themselves to be relieved of their milky treasure. Kenneth said nothing, but his quick eye at once detected the absence of the dun-coloured favourite which had nursed the boy. Hector, terribly chagrined and annoyed at finding himself thus outwitted, questioned and cross-questioned poor Kenneth until

they both lost their temper, but failed to obtain any satisfactory information. They both passed a sleepless night, and at dawn of day Hector started, accompanied by Kenneth, in pursuit of the fugitives, feeling sure they could not have gone far in such a wild and rocky country. He kept a strict watch on Kenneth, who, notwithstanding, managed in the course of the day to get near the cave, and unseen by his companion gave a signal, which he was delighted to see answered. He now knew that his friends were safely lodged, and had no fear of their discovery by Hector, but how to communicate with them he could not imagine, for Hector kept the most jealous eye on his slightest movements.

The day was nearly spent; the men, fagged and wearied with their long and toilsome search among the mountains, lay down on the heather. Hector, sulky, and deeply mortified at the trick played upon him, lay thinking of what excuse he could make to his chief, and how that high-spirited gentleman was likely to receive the news of Flora's escape. One thing was certain, he must at once acquaint his lord with all the circumstances, whatever the consequences might be to himself; but the difficulty was, how to do so. He first thought of securing Kenneth, and taking him a prisoner along with him, but glancing at the well-knit, hardy figure, and determined eye of the young Highlander, he concluded it would be no easy task to secure him single-handed; and Hector, who, though brave, was also very prudent, saw no benefit likely to accrue from a combat between himself and Kenneth, which would probably end in the death of one, perhaps of both of them. At last he decided that the best plan for him would be to go off quickly and quietly, give information to his chief, and return with a sufficient number to trace and secure Kenneth and the runaways. The idea was no sooner conceived than executed. Seeing that Kenneth lay with his face covered, buried in thought, Hector rose and ran through the hills with the fleetness of a deer.

Kenneth lay for some time, revolving scheme after scheme, when, wondering at his companion's unwonted silence, he raised his head, and was astonished to find him gone. He jumped to his feet and looked eagerly around; at last he espied him at a distance, running as if for his life. This conduct somewhat puzzled him, and for a moment he was tempted to send an arrow after him, but recollecting he was now too far away he dismissed the idea from his mind, and began to reflect how best to turn Hector's absence to his own benefit. The first thing he did was to hasten to the cave to inform its inmates of the strange and abrupt departure. Flora, with her usual intelligence, soon defined the reason, and a consultation was at once held as to what they had better do in the perplexing situation in which they now found themselves.

They could not stay in the cave for any length of time for want of provisions; the small stock they had brought with them would soon be exhausted; the goat's milk would not even be sufficient for little Mac-Gabhar himself, and it would be unsafe for Kenneth to venture out to procure food for fear of their retreat being discovered, and they dreaded this might be the case even as it was, for if their enemies brought their slot hounds they would soon be tracked. Under all these circumstances, in about a week they concluded upon going down to the seashore, trust-

ing fortune might favour them by sending a boat or vessel that way, in which they might make good their escape. This they did, taking the goat (which would not part from the boy) and their baggage along with them. As if in answer to their wishes, they no sooner arrived at the shore than they saw a large ship sailing towards them, and casting anchor at Poolewe. Shortly after they saw one of the ship's boats, with five or six men, rowing in their direction. Kenneth and Flora hastened forward to hail it, and see if the men would take them on board. In their eagerness, they were nearly at the water's edge before they discovered that the principal figure in the boat was none other than Hector Dubh himself. With a scream of terror the affrighted Flora turned and fled, followed by Kenneth, back towards the child, for whose safety she had undergone so many hardships; but, alas, she was destined never to reach him, for in her haste she stumbled and fell. Kenneth stopped to raise her, the next moment they were surrounded, taken prisoners, and hurried to the boat.

Flora's anguish of mind at being thus cruelly separated from the boy was painful to witness. She prayed and entreated the men to return for him, promising that she would go quietly along with them if she only had the child. But all in vain, the men turned a deaf ear to her most vehement and impressive appeals, Hector saying, "No, no, my pretty madam, you have cheated me once already; I'll take care you shan't do it a second time. We can easily return for the boy if our lord desires us to do so, but we will make sure of you, and Kenneth, at any-rate." So, in spite of Flora's tears and sobs, and the more violent expressions of Kenneth's anger (who was deeply grieved at leaving his mother in such a critical situation), the boat speedily bore them from the shore, and shortly after Hector had the satisfaction of handing them over to the custody of his chief.

The Lord of Castle Donain was very much put out at losing the boy, whose fate he felt was strangely interwoven with his own, and in proportion to his dread of what that fate might be was his anxiety to gain possession of MacGabhar. Many a long and fruitless search he caused to be made for him, many a sleepless night he passed in endeavouring to unravel the mystic meaning of the prophecy, and many an hour he spent in consulting his aged bard, who possessed the gift of second sight; but they could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion, save that MacGabhar should surely in the end become the possessor of the vast estates of Castle Donain, but whether it would be accomplished by victory in war, or by more peaceful means, whether in the lifetime of the present lord, or in that of his successors, was at present hidden from their vision.

Flora, who was kept in a kind of honourable captivity, would not afford him the slightest clue to her own identity, or the parentage of the boy, for whose loss she never ceased to grieve. On being perfectly satisfied that Kenneth was as ignorant as himself regarding Flora's antecedents, and being assured by her of Kenneth's absolute innocence of any design against him, the chief allowed the young man to go free.

Kenneth, however, was too devoted to the fair Flora to leave the place, while she was unwillingly detained there. He accordingly lingered about at a safe distance until a favourable opportunity occurred which enabled him to effect her escape, and of safely conducting her to another

part of the country, out of the reach of the Lord of Castle Donain. Flora, finding herself alone and desolate, afraid of returning to her own country, and being deeply touched by Kenneth's unflinching devotion, at length consented to become his wife, a decision she never had cause to rue, but realized more every day the fact that

**The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man's the gold for a' that.**

After this they wandered about in many places, where it is unnecessary to follow them, searching for the widow and the boy ; but at length gave up their efforts as useless. They then went south, and Kenneth joined the army of the king, in which he speedily found favour, rose step by step, until the summit of his youthful ambition was attained, being knighted by the king for his distinguished gallantry on the battlefield.

When the poor widow saw her son and Flora so suddenly torn from her side, and herself and the child left desolate on the shore, she knew not what to do, nor where to turn for shelter. It was no use returning to the cave, for how could they subsist there ? her cottage was not better now that Kenneth was gone. She, alone, would be totally unable to provide a livelihood. She had now only the one supreme idea of discovering and, if possible, rejoining her beloved and only son.

The kind and hospitable people of Poolewe supported her and her charge for several days, till at last they secured a passage for her on board a ship, the crew of which promised to take her to Castle Donain. The widow, like most old women, was rather garrulous ; she told the captain all her troubles, and the strange story of the boy she found among the rocks of Loch Maree sucking her favourite goat, showing him at the same time the velvet mantle and sword of state which belonged to little MacGabhar's father, to corroborate her statements. The captain, interested in the touching narrative, listened patiently, and consoled with the poor woman in her misfortunes ; but, at the same time, feeling sure that the boy belonged to some family of note, he determined, instead of carrying them to the desired destination, taking his passengers to his own chief, Colin Gillespick, or Colin More, as he was generally called, a noted, brave, though rather unscrupulous chieftain.

Gillespick, on their arrival, was very glad to obtain possession of the boy, and upon hearing the whole story, he decided on taking MacGabhar into his own family and bringing him up as one of his own sons. He also provided the widow with a small cottage near his castle, and allowed her enough to live upon very comfortably. She had liberty to see MacGabhar as often as she wished, and as she was very much attached to him, she would have been quite happy but for her grief at the loss of her son, which almost obliterated every other feeling. The boy was never tired of listening to her while she told and retold him all the incidents of his discovery in the cave with Flora, of their subsequent happy days at the cottage, and of their sad and sudden termination. As MacGabhar grew up, he became intensely anxious respecting his parentage, and many a pleasant converse he had with the old widow, who always maintained and taught him to believe that he came of noble blood.

He would gaze on the mantle and sword by the hour together, trying to imagine what his father had been. The time thus spent was not altogether wasted, for these reveries made him feel that, if he was well born, it was necessary for him to conduct himself like a nobleman, which he accordingly strove to do, and soon excelled all his companions, as much by his skill and dexterity in the warlike games and manly accomplishments of the times, as in his fine athletic figure, handsome features, and dignified bearing.

When MacGabhar was about eighteen, his adopted father told him that he would now give him an opportunity of showing his prowess on the battlefield, as he had resolved to gather all his clan and retainers and make a grand raid into a neighbouring territory, of which the people were at the time in a state of anarchy and confusion, which circumstance he had no doubt would greatly aid him in his intended project of subjugation. This was welcome news to the fiery youth, longing "to flesh his maiden sword," and he exerted himself with right good will in making the necessary preparations for the forthcoming foray.

When Flora married Kenneth, she, like a true wife, concealed no secret from him, but told him all her history—a strange and romantic one. She was of high birth, but, being an orphan, lived with her only sister, who had married and become the queen of the chief or king of a powerful neighbouring kingdom. They had an only child, a boy, named Ewen, to whom Flora was devotedly attached, being his companion and nurse by day and by night. When the child was about a year old, a revolt broke out in his domains, led by a natural brother of the king, who, being the elder, thought he had a better right. The rebels seized and murdered Ewen's father, their lawful sovereign, and took the queen prisoner.

Kenneth's blood ran cold as his wife continued, in graphic terms, to relate the horrors of that period; how the rebels, not satisfied with the death of their king, plotted to murder herself and the young heir during the night. Even in this trying emergency she did not lose her presence of mind, but courageously determined to defeat their wicked purpose by a counter-plot. She accordingly concealed her agitation during the day, and on some pretext persuaded the wife and child of one of the conspirators to change bedrooms with her; the latter were slain, while she made good her escape with her darling Ewen, but in such haste that she could make no preparations for her flight beyond carrying away the sword and mantle of the murdered king, as evidence, if ever opportunity occurred, to prove Ewen's high lineage and birth. After days of painful travel, she at last reached Loch Maree, where she was happily found in the cave, and succoured by the goat, by Kenneth and his devoted mother.

After Kenneth had been made a knight, and stood high in favour at court, his wife accidentally heard from a wandering minstrel that great changes had taken place in her native country. The usurper was dead, leaving no successor, and the people were divided and in a state of discord, some wishing to have the queen of the late rightful king restored, while others wished for a male ruler. Flora, on hearing this, at once expressed her desire to visit her sister, of whom she had heard nothing for so many years, once more, and suggested to her husband that he might possibly help

the queen to resume her rightful position. Sir Kenneth, ever ready for adventure, consented, provided he could get the king's consent for a time to withdraw from his service.

The kingdom being now at peace, the king readily granted him leave of absence, and also permission to take his immediate retainers along with him. They all started in high spirits, and arrived at their journey's end in safety, when Flora was overjoyed to find her sister alive and well. The queen, on meeting her, was no less delighted to find her long-lost sister, and to hear of the wonderful preservation of her beloved son, though their joy was damped by the uncertainty of his fate since Flora was separated from him. With the valuable assistance of Sir Kenneth and his brave men-at-arms, the queen was soon reinstated in her proper position. But no sooner was this accomplished than she was threatened with an immediate attack from the formidable and dreaded Colin More. Her subjects, however, rallied round her, and, forgetting their mutual quarrels, stood well together, and led on by the brave Sir Kenneth, they rushed to meet the advancing foe with irresistible force, and gained a complete victory over him, taking several important prisoners, among whom were three of Gillespick's sons, and his adopted son Ewen MacGabhar.

Colin More's raid being so unjust, for there was no reason for it but the desire for plunder, it was decided that his punishment should be severe, consequently all the prisoners of any pretension to rank were ordered the morning after the battle to be publicly executed, beginning with the youngest. This happened to be Ewen MacGabhar, who determined to meet his fate without flinching, and as befitted his birth, which he always felt was of noble origin. He accordingly dressed himself with care, and threw over all the scarlet velvet mantle he had preserved for so many years, and girded on the sword, with a sigh to think that he should never know the secret of his birth.

At the time appointed, the prisoners were brought out for execution before the queen and her court, according to the barbarous custom of the time. MacGabhar walked at their head with a stately step, his fine figure as erect, his fair head held as lofty, and his bright blue eye as fearless, as if he were a conqueror and not a captive. As he approached nearer where the queen sat, surrounded by her ladies, her sister Flora started violently, and seizing her husband by the arm, exclaimed "Oh Kenneth, see! see! that mantle, that sword, look at his fair hair, his blue eye, it must, it must be he;" then rushing towards Ewen she cried out, "Your name, your name, young man; where did you get that sword and mantle; speak, speak, I adjure you by all you hold sacred to tell the truth." Young Ewen, considerably surprised by this impassioned appeal, drew himself up, and answered firmly and respectfully, "Madam, these articles belonged to my father, whom I never knew, and the name I am known by is Ewen MacGabhar, but I know not whether it is my right name or not." This answer, far from allaying the lady's agitation, only served to increase it, and with an hysterical laugh she screamed out, "MacGabhar! yes, yes, I was sure of it. Sister! husband! see, see, our lost darling, my own dear MacGabhar;" then, in the excess of her emotion, she threw her arms around him, and swooned away.

All was now confusion and perplexity. Sir Kenneth hastened to his wife's assistance. The queen rose and stood with an agitated face and outstretched hands, looking earnestly at Ewen. The older chieftains, who remembered his father, began to remark the extraordinary likeness Ewen bore to the late king; clansmen caught up the excitement and began to shout "A MacCoinnich More! A MacCoinnich More!"

After a while, when the Lady Flora had regained consciousness, and some degree of order was restored, the queen began to closely question her sister as to the identity of Ewen; "For," she sagely remarked, "although that mantle and sword did indeed belong to my husband, that does not prove its present possessor to be his heir; and further, though I admit I perceive a great resemblance in that young man to the late king, yet he might be his son without being mine, and until I am persuaded that he is indeed my own lawful son, I will not yield up this honoured seat to him." This spirited speech was received with approval by the nobles, but still the common people kept up the cry of "A MacCoinnich More! A MacCoinnich More!"

"Stay, stay," exclaimed Kenneth, "I think I shall be able to decide if he is indeed MacGabhar; do you remember, Flora, the day when little Ewen was playing with my hunting knife and inflicted a severe cut on his arm? Now, if this young man has the mark of that wound, it will be conclusive. Approach then, and bare your left arm, MacGabhar."

Ewen stood forward, and amid the anxious, breathless attention of all, bared his muscular arm, when there plainly appeared a large cicatrice, evidently of many years standing.

All doubt was now removed; the queen embraced him and owned him her son. The chieftains crowded round to offer their congratulations, and the clansmen shouted loud and long.

MacGabhar bore himself throughout this strange and excited scene with a dignity and composure of manner which greatly raised him in the estimation of his new found friends. His first act was to beg the lives and liberty of his late fellow prisoners, which was readily granted; and when he had explained to his mother how indebted he was to Gillespick for his kindness in bringing him up, and had also told Sir Kenneth how well treated his mother had been, their indignant feelings towards Gillespick gave way to more kindly emotions, and a firm and lasting peace was concluded between the two clans. Sir Kenneth hastened to fetch his mother, whose joy at being thus re-united to her beloved son, after so many years separation and anxiety, was almost overpowering to the now aged woman. Sir Kenneth took up his abode in his wife's native country, and by his wise and sagacious council greatly assisted Ewen in the management of his kingdom, the queen, his mother, resigning all her authority in his favour. He ruled his people firmly and well, and by his courage in the field, and wisdom in the council, he so raised the strength and increased the dimensions of his kingdom that it became the most prosperous and powerful in the Highlands. He married the only daughter of the Lord of Castle Donain, and by her inherited all that vast estate, in this way fulfilling the old prophecy which had caused so much uneasiness for years to his future father-in-law.