

CHAPTER V

STRANGE SIGHTS IN THE HEBRIDES

THE following year brought a visitor to our shores whose name was soon in every mouth.

Mrs Harriet Beecher-Stowe had just scored a second success with her novel *Dred*; and though it never attained the celebrity of its world-known predecessor, it is, I venture to think, superior to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in point of construction and concentration. Like the other, it has unsurpassably beautiful episodes, and the reader's attention is never called away from them by being forced to follow the fortunes of insignificant personages who have nothing to do with the main story.

We were at Oban when the little party of Americans, whose movements were being eagerly followed by thousands of eyes, took their way up the West Highland coast. My father had taken a shooting in the Isle of Mull; but as there was no good house attached, we were obliged to content ourselves with "Rosebank Villa," on a little height above Oban Bay.

The gay little harbour put out its flags one August day, and we were told that the next steamer from Crinan would have the noted authoress and her friends on board. Of course we were on the *qui vive* to see them—or rather her; but our enthusiasm was not shared by one person at least in the place. Mr Anthony Cumstie, the grocer, was weighing out to our esteemed order some of his brown sugar-candy—which was of the best—when, seeing through the doorway the passers-by beginning to run towards the pier

as the red funnel of the *Mountaineer* rounded the last point, he thus delivered himself : “ All this fuss about a wumman just because she’s written a *bouk* ! A *bouk* !—What’s a *bouk* ? —Whae couldna write a *bouk* ? ” Words fail to convey the sour sarcasm of his accents as he kept on repeating the obnoxious word : and his long narrow chin, quivering with Scotch self-conceit, jerked itself higher and higher into the air : “ A *bouk* ! ” he muttered, “ juist a *bouk* ! ”

“ You think we could all write a book if we tried, don’t you, Mr Cumstie ? ” affably suggested one of our party. “ I didna say *you* could, ” snapped Mr Cumstie. He saw he was being laughed at.

Then we all rushed off to the pier ; but alack ! the pier was so crowded that try as we might we could not wriggle our small selves to the front, and all that I ever saw of Mrs Stowe was a blue veil ! It floated up for a moment, caught in a passing gust of air, and just sufficed to give me a throb of pleasure when a voice near by exclaimed, “ Thon’s her, wi’ the blue veil. ”

Oban has perhaps altered less than most other places of its kind during the past half-century. It has grown, of course ; but it has not grown out of recognition : it is not “ improved ” to the point of defamation ; and when it lies silent beneath the moon on a summer night—but perhaps I may be forgiven for reproducing here a couple of verses written for the *World* some years ago (though many years after my childish experience of it as a passing home).

IN OBAN BAY

Noon

A shocking place. Too vulgar, dear,—
Such dreadful people—and so queer,—
And so outrageous in their gear,—
Go where you may ;

'Tis odious all you see and hear
In Oban Bay.

Midnight

A spot to dream of. Solemn height
And awe-struck ocean, silvered white,
'Neath August moon. Nor sound, nor sight,
Nor note of day.
Oh, Heaven, that it were always night
In Oban Bay!

As my father got his wild shooting and deer-stalking in Mull and often spent a week at a time at Scalastal farmhouse, where he had installed a farm-manager and his wife, hoping to make the farm pay (which it never did), he did not object to the Oban villa as my mother and the rest of us did, though I daresay he was well enough pleased when the following summer it was settled that we should for the time being dislodge Mr and Mrs Sandy Crow, and ourselves take possession of Scalastal.

It was an excellent and commodious farmhouse—for a farmhouse. There was even room in it for the inevitable governess, while the tutor had lodgings in a cottage near; and the summer being an exceptionally fine one on the west coast, nobody minded roughing it a little indoors.

That was the summer of the Indian Mutiny. Who among us older people but can recall that awful time? Every newspaper, every letter filled with its appalling details, and such details as even children could understand and feel the horror of. As much as anything so far away, and so absolutely beyond our powers of conception could, it cast a shadow over our daily life. The sad looks of our elders, and seeing my father once turn away from his untasted dinner after the post came in, made an impression we could not forget.

But of course ordinary life flowed on just the same ; and there were the long, light evenings when we hung over the side of the boat with handlines, or even condescended to the "cuddy-fishing" beloved by the natives of the Sound of Mull ; and there was the "Scringe Net," which gathered within its deadly folds salmon and cod, as well as whiting and haddock ; and there were ascents of the great, dark mountain, Dhundeghu, (the mountain of the two winds), and joyous processions home after a successful deer-hunt ; besides the never-failing treat of seeing the cows milked, and trying ourselves to milk, to the infinite worry of the cow—so that altogether we got on very well at Scalastal, and when a full harvest was succeeded by a rush of "leading in" to secure it, (my two elder brothers, on leave from their respective regiments, heading the carts all through the night), we had finally such a harvest dance as had not been seen before in those parts.

Tom Macdonald, the head shepherd, was the hoped-for partner of every Highland lass. A splendid-looking fellow was Tom, with the figure and the face of a Greek god. To see him striding over the hill-tops was a sight. There was no mistaking who it was : his height and the pace with which he covered the steepest ascents, betrayed him. Painters had tried in vain to beguile such a model away from his simple, solitary life, but Tom was proof against them : they held out no bait sufficiently tempting.

Nor did my brothers, who would fain have brought such a recruit to their respective headquarters, fare any better. Tom only laughed, looked sheepish, and whistled his dogs to heel. Those wonderful dogs, of the purest collie breed, there was nothing they could not do and understand. Tom was a king to them, and his "Forrit—forrit—forrit" a word of command.

And Tom had his secret aspirations, his vein of romance.

It may be that he was at that time a trifle spoilt, (though afterwards he became an excellent and much-respected member of society, married well, and throve exceedingly); but according to nurse Aiky, who was always our informant on such points, Tom in his heydey was very high and mighty towards the adoring females who cast their eyes in his direction.

“He’s for nane o’ them. He’s jist bothered wi’ them. He’s a’ for reading and *poetry*. Mistress Crow says there’s a pile of poetry-books i’ his bit room that blocks up the window—and he has aye ane i’ his pocket when he’s oot on the hills.”

Of course this was interesting; we were at an age to be poetry mad, and to spout to each other from Tennyson, Byron, and Scott directly our time was our own. We looked at Tom Macdonald from afar with a sense of sympathy.

And one day, far, far away upon the moor, by the side of a foaming waterfall and beneath a red rowan-tree, we chanced upon a plaid-girt form stretched upon the heather, poring over an open volume. “*Doch!*” exclaimed our Fräulein, and hurried us on. It was not for our virgin eyes to rest upon such a picture.

Nevertheless, years afterwards—when a certain London Adonis was disporting himself in the Row, the admired of all admirers, and my father, looking at him, muttered, “Not a patch on Tom Macdonald”—such of us as had seen the lonely shepherd lying beneath the rowan-tree on the slopes of Dhundeghu, were inclined to echo the sentiment in their hearts.

Highlanders, both men and women, are often something of readers and poetry-lovers, but though many can recall instances of this, I fancy an experience that once befell myself was exceptional.

In a poor Argyllshire hut, which boasted only a *but* and

a *ben*, I saw a small, beautifully-bound book lying open, face downwards, as though someone had just been reading it, and laid it aside at the approach of footsteps. Taking it up idly to look, what was my amazement to find it a copy of Dante in the original!

As there were some painters at work on a cottage close by, I jumped to the conclusion that here perhaps lodged some mute, inglorious Milton feasting his soul—but why feast it in Italian, and old and difficult Italian to boot? This in itself was curious enough, but a fresh surprise awaited our party.

“Who does this book belong to?” we inquired of the good woman of the house, and the response was a bolt from the blue—“Mysel’. I’m gey fond o’ readin’,” continued the speaker, standing still to twirl her apron and glance lovingly at the little volume; “and whiles, when I’m no thrang, I get yon oot. I’m frae Glasgy,” she added inconsequently.

“But this language—do you understand it?”

“Oo, ay, I did aince, and I do a bit still. I got yon as a prize at the Normal.”

A prize? It seemed a queer sort of prize, and we were bent on getting to the bottom of the mystery. “A prize for what?” demanded someone.

“For French. I was heid o’ my class for French—it cam easy to me; and then they speired: Wad I learn anither language or what? Sae I said ‘Italian’; and when I had lairnt Italian, they gied me this for my prize.”

Now we knew, and once again was truth stranger than fiction. This poor, peasant woman, clad in homespuns, with her coarse, worsted stockings and clumsy clogs, plying her daily toil of cooking and washing and sewing on the wild moor, far from the madding crowd, possessed that strange, inscrutable gift for other tongues given to so few, denied to so many, and by its aid could soar at will into

other altitudes. I often saw her afterwards, always busy, always cheerful, and am glad to think never in the least sensible of any hardship in the lot which seemed so much at variance with that to which she might have aspired.

The Sound of Mull is a glorious place. From Scalastal, looking south, one can see the dark ruin of Duart Castle, standing out on its bare and lonely headland ; then, to the left, the island of Lismore, where many currents meet and foam ; while the long chain of the Appin mountains, faint and blue in the distance, bound the view and proclaim the mainland beyond.

Opposite us was Ardtinish, at the mouth of Loch Aline, another rugged pile, but less imposing than Duart ; while finest of all, against the western sky, stood out the bold Killundine.

Aros, too, desolate but enduring, brought its testimony to the fierce feuds of other days when every chieftain's home was a fortress.

We learnt to know Aros well, when presently my father added the shootings of Glenforsa, on the other side of the island, to those of Scalastal ; and for three years we resided every summer, and often late into the autumn, at the little old-world house on Loch Baa, a small inland loch, whose waters flowed for a couple of miles, before emptying themselves into Loch Nagaul, an arm of the sea.

Perhaps of all our Highland homes Glenforsa was the most romantic. It was certainly the most primitive and remote. The posts came but thrice a week, and letters and parcels were not delivered at the house, but were deposited in a rudely constructed box within a pile of stones, at a point a mile and a half away.

As the hour when old Posty went by was also peculiar—between six and seven o'clock in the morning,—and as our

elders were naturally impatient for news of the outer world, we younger ones easily obtained leave to ride off on our shelties and fetch the mail. It was a responsibility to be gloried in,—besides which, we were not forbidden to extend the ride, provided it was before and not after our commission was fulfilled ; and at that fresh and fragrant hour, when all the shy, wild creatures were still about, and the early mists were breaking on the crags above with their shadows reflected in the loch beneath, it was a joy only to live. I believe we should not have been sorry to go every day ; at any rate, I know it was a grief if a morning were too wet—and a Scotch mist can be very like rain sometimes—when another messenger had to be substituted.

There were also to modern ideas other inconveniences in the Isle of Mull at that date. Provisions often fell short ; the only shop was a “General Mairchant’s ” on Salen pier, four miles away, and the “mairchant” was a woman, and this woman drank. In consequence, she neglected her business—such business as it was—and either did not order in her stores properly, or forgot where she had put them. Glenforsa House was naturally not dependent on such a source ; but if the weather were stormy and steamboats delayed, what was to be done ? It is a fact that we were once without *salt* for several days, before any could be begged, borrowed, or stolen, all our cottage neighbours being in the same plight ; and the season being over, and other shooting tenants departed, we had none but cottagers to apply to.

We were also a long way from any church, that at Salen being the nearest.

To meet this difficulty, my father had had what I can only term a most terrible conveyance specially built—a sort of bathing-machine which could carry six people within and three without. When the door was open there was also a seat on the step, and this was *the* coveted seat in the “Bus,”

which is not to be wondered at, considering it was the only one blessed with a breath of air. No windows were made to open ; the heat within was well-nigh intolerable on a summer day, and there was nothing we would not have done, no fatigue we would not have endured, to escape the sensation of nausea engendered—a sensation reminding us only too forcibly of our grandmother's carriage at Park Place.

The "Bus," however, came to the door every Sunday morning, and such as could not evade it rumbled off, to change halfway with others who had started earlier to walk. Outside the little port of Salen we all met again, and the "Bus" retired into obscurity, while a picnic luncheon took place—this being, even to my parents' view, unavoidable. There was only one service, and it was at twelve o'clock, lasting till two. We could not get home till past three, and food must be eaten somewhere. "Hoots, there's nothing *wrong* in eating out of doors," quoth my father when the idea was first mooted ; and his good common-sense having thus promptly settled the question, the Sunday picnic (though it was never called such) became a settled institution. No doubt it also helped us to endure the service which followed, as to which the less said the better.

But the walk home, gathering as we went the large heavy-headed cotton-rush, the bitter-sweet bog-myrtle, the delicate cup-shaped Grass of Parnassus, besides rare ferns that thrive in that soft, moist atmosphere, and moss and bell heather that loved the peat-bogs ! Somehow on Sundays we seemed to fill our hands fuller of these than on any other day of the week, and the great china bowl that stood in the hall was always cleared and waiting for its nosegay the night before.

One day we went to Staffa. Staffa was to be seen from our side of Mull, and looked often temptingly close, though in reality it was a good way off in the open sea. Our party,

including several guests, numbered seventeen, and we went in two open boats rowed by our own men, my father and brothers also taking their share of the work. The day—it was the 22nd of June—was one of those “halcyon” days when earth and sky and sea are alike motionless in melting sunshine, and every mountain peak and craggy headland was mirrored in the loch below. Flocks of seabirds hovered over our heads, and swooped, and soared, and poised themselves aloft, and then, what did we see next? A dark, shining object upon the surface of the water? An object that moved, that turned from side to side, then disappeared, to return soon, in company with another. They were the square, sleek heads of seals.

Seals? We were accustomed to seeing seals by this time, Loch Nagaul being a favourite haunt of theirs; and we often watched them waddling over the rocks, and sportively plunging among the sea-pools of a group of islets barely detached from the shore; but it was a new thing to be thus followed, and at first we could hardly credit the evidence of our eyes, and still less the statement of a boatman: “It iss the music they’re after—oh, yess, indeed, it iss. They do come always to the music.” My mother was playing the concertina, as she often did upon the water, and the seals had bidden each other to the concert. They kept close by for many miles, in fact till we got well out to sea, and far beyond their usual range.

How long it took us to reach our goal I do not know. We were able to put up sails coming home, but had to row the entire way out, as there was not a breath upon the ocean; and a steamer lay off Staffa, re-embarking her tourist passengers, as we approached. No doubt we were looked upon as one of the sights of the day, since rowing-boats rarely venture so far from land on that part of the coast; but the steamer blew her whistle and was soon plough-

ing her way south, past the "Ross of Mull" and the "Dutchman's Cap"—so that our humbler craft could draw in to the mouth of the far-famed Fingal's Cave, and find only its own wild tenants there.

The tide was low, and the rugged pathway to the inmost recesses of the cave not so troublous as it would otherwise have been to light heads. But it was exceedingly slippery, and at the very furthest point within something happened. I was standing still, gazing up into the vaulted roof, my mind filled with the wonder, the glory of the place,

"Where as to shame the temples deck't
By skill of earthly architect,
Nature herself, it seemed, would raise
A minster to her Maker's praise,"

when something or someone startled me—one is easily startled at such a moment—and, losing my balance, I fell.

The fall was nothing ; but, seeking a handkerchief wherewith to wipe off the traces, I drew back my hand with a scream. It had plunged into—what ?

At the same instant, a foul smell—a smell that could only be called a stench—filled the air.

We were at the extreme end of the cave, as I said, where it narrowed to a point, and there was no escape for the putrid fumes ; after a single inhalation and a glance at my tell-tale hand, my brothers and sisters with one accord rushed from the spot, holding their noses. I was alone with a broken guillemot's egg in my pocket, and the huge egg was addled !

With the strength of combined disgust and despair, I tore the pocket from my holland frock—luckily it had already begun to give way under the weight of its varied contents (for it was stuffed full), and, though plentifully bespattered in the process, I did succeed in wrenching it loose and flinging it into a pool. Then after a hasty dabble of

the horrible hand, which had to be held at arm's length even then, I hurried after the flying squadron in front, as fast as a poor, frightened, shaking little girl could scramble over the slippery pathway.

They yelled to me to keep back—to keep away from them all!

It was not cruelly meant, I knew; I could hear them laughing as they ran—but still!

Then what did my tearful eyes behold? Someone not going from me, but coming towards me—a friend, a deliverer!

It was only the poor tutor: an uncouth Edinburgh student, whom in secret we laughed at and despised, but whose next action put us—put me in particular—to shame. For this humble Dominie Sampson, who had not been with us in the cave, but who now learnt the shocking tale of what had happened there, instead of turning back, made straight for the hapless, ostracised culprit, filled with pity and commiseration.

“Miss Lucy, let me help you; let me”—and he produced his own clean handkerchief and fell to wiping; “but how is this? You have surely not left behind a whole pocketful of things? Oh, that will never do: I'll bring them,” and having carefully conducted me to a place of safety, where I sat ruefully alone, but thankful to be again in the sunlight, he disappeared, heedless of remonstrance.

Now there was in that pocket a whole collection of treasures. There was, for one thing, a beautiful little tortoise-shell penknife, with four blades, by which I set much store; and though I forget what else, I remember that the good, kind man was himself amused at their multiplicity when presently he returned, with all intact, and all, even to a pair of gloves (how *could* he do it?) carefully rinsed in sea-water. And he never thought that he had done any-

thing : never dreamed that his gallant act—for so I *will* call it—was to be recorded of him long, long after he had lain in his quiet grave, at the close of a useful and honoured life. My heart warms to thee, even as I write, honest and excellent Liddell.

The beautiful lines on Fingal's Cave which I have quoted from *The Lord of the Isles*, remind me that it was in this island home of ours that I read my first Waverley Novel.

The event—for it was an event : it marked an epoch in my young life—happened on this wise. As we had now two residences of a sort in Mull at one and the same time, and as our sportsmen were even keener on shooting over the Scalastal moor than that of Glenforsa, rooms at the farmhouse were always kept in readiness, and they and others of our party were forever coming and going between the two.

We loved this ; it was a delightful change, engendering no trouble, as the humble "Bus" carried luggage on the top—and there were always volunteers in plenty when the question was raised, "Who's for Scalastal this week?"

For those left behind, moreover, small indulgences were provided, and one of them was invariably liberty to select a new story-book from the bookshelves wherewith the house was well provided. The owners of Glenforsa must have been readers, for albeit some of the volumes were quaintly out of date, and many were beyond the capacity of young folks, there was abundance of lighter literature of the best quality. Our reading was, of course, supervised by a careful mother, but she was not one of those who ground us down to the usual type of children's books ; whatever was good of its kind she did not consider over our heads, provided we aspired to it ; and when I took for her inspection a volume with a faded, brown, linen cover and a label bearing the name of *The Talisman*, she smiled.

Most of Scott's novels had already been read aloud in the evenings by my father, who read well ; but this was for the benefit of my elder brothers and sisters at a time when I was too young to sit up for it ; and it had been my lot to hear only a page or two before the loathed bedtime summons came—always at a thrilling moment.

Now I was older ; I was wiser ; I hoped for the best—and the best came to pass.

The sister who was to be my companion for the nonce also made her choice—I think, *The Inheritance*, Miss Ferrier's masterpiece—and as soon as we had seen the departure of the rest, we hurried to a selected spot.

This was a little bend of the lake below, fringed by alders, where moss and fern crept down among the rocks even to the water's edge. It was a favourite haunt. There we were safe from intruders, hidden from every eye ; and the distant bark of a collie and the lapping of the waters, varied by an occasional " plop " as a trout leaped and turned in the air, were the only sounds to fall upon the ear. As the month was August—our holiday month—we had the whole long day before us.

Well, that day—has she forgotten it ? I never have, and never shall—amidst ideal surroundings, at a time when the mind is capable of being wholly absorbed and the soul stirred to its depths, I fell under the spell of the magician.

I fell headlong. The splendid Saracen, the knightly Kenneth, the noble Richard, and the enchanting Berengaria lived, moved, spoke, suffered and triumphed before my eyes. Hours passed ; we were left in peace, for the sultry heat of an August sun was deemed sufficient excuse for what probably seemed torpor in the eyes of others ; and except to obey the sound of the gong at meal-times, the whole peaceful, rejoicing day passed as in a dream. Only the long shadows of evening drove us indoors at last.

But next day found us again beneath our "Sochen" tree, (our own badge: we always wore a spray in token thereof), and when the last page of the wonderful book—of the two wonderful books, for I must apply a like adjective to *The Inheritance*, and have Sir Walter's own authority for doing so—when this was turned, a silence fell between us, and a grey shade seemed to have descended over the land.

Will anyone in these days believe that such a thing could be? There is so much pleasure, there are so many varied forms of amusement provided for modern juveniles, that it seems to me they are cheated of a lost delight—the power of illusion. Except in rare cases, the boy or girl of to-day is too intensely self-conscious, too critical and competent, to surrender himself or herself wholly to the creations of genius.

Forty or fifty years ago it was different; men and women were not then ashamed to dwell for a while in the realms of fancy, or romance, as the following will show. There was a certain sombre Doctor of Divinity who frequented our house, a dear friend of our parents, and benignant though somewhat unapproachable generally—certainly dry as dust to the world at large. One day we had an argument among ourselves concerning the *Waverley Novels*, by which we younger ones were by this time fairly besotted, and, carried away by the heat of battle, we appealed to Dr Veitch for his opinion as to which was the best—the very, very best?

The good man looked from one to another, and wagged his foot thoughtfully—he had long, thin feet at the end of long, thin legs, and when he crossed the latter, they entwined like a vine.

"Which—which?"—we urged, hotly.

The doctor coughed, and pressed his finger-tips together.

We hung breathlessly on his lips; we did not like his sermons, but his judgment on the present occasion would

give victory to one side or the other. "Say *Guy Mannering* ; say *Ivanhoe* ; say *The Pirate*." The wagging foot ceased, and a light came into the pale blue eyes.

"If you ask me which, I think when I had read each one I should have said that one ; but now, if I were now to say"—he paused, and his voice sank. "I think—*The Bride of Lammermoor*," he murmured.

The Bride of Lammermoor ? We were scarcely prepared for that ; no one among us, strange to say, had selected that—the most sensational, the most emotional, the most terrible of all.

The Bride of Lammermoor ? Was it fancy, or did I really see a glance, and a glance full of meaning, pass between my parents, who had hitherto listened in silence ? Their old friend came from Lammermoor, had been born and bred among the Lammermoor Hills ; was it a memory of his childhood—but then why those softened accents, that momentary hesitation ? And his bowed head remained sunk upon his breast—what was passing within ? Could it have been that something deeper and tenderer still stirred those dry bones ? In the far distant past could there have been some bonnie Scotch bluebell, some golden-haired, sunny-faced Lucy Ashton, who had also been a bride, and not for *him* ? Who could say ? He had never married, and that spare, bent form was not always bent, nor those scanty, grey hairs always grey. *The Bride of Lammermoor* ? Young as I was, I had my own thoughts, and perhaps others had theirs.

As autumn approached, wild weather often set in on the West Highland coast. There would be hurricanes of wind and lashing rain ; branches torn from the trees ; seaweed flung across the shore roads—flung over the dykes and into the low-lying fields beyond. The gulls would walk about in our garden, pecking fearlessly at upturned potato roots and fallen fruit. "Spates" from the hills made the trout-

burns unfishable ; and as the day for our return to more civilised regions drew near, there would be anxious eyes watching the sky and sea, and anxious ears on the stretch when the mountains themselves seemed to moan, and echoes hung about the glens.

For we had a fearsome journey before us, as those who have traversed the Hebrides in those times and at that season of the year will attest. There were no piers for steamers to call at, all along the Sound of Mull, as far as Tobermory ; and passengers had to row out in an open boat to be taken on board the *Clansman* or her mate (whose name I have forgotten)—which pair of good, solid boats absorbed all the traffic of the west coast after the summer boats had ceased to run.

Even those only ran on alternate days, and were very erratic, depending as they did upon the amount of cattle, sheep, and herring-barrels to be shipped at each port. Falkirk Tryst, the great market of the north, is held in November, and either not cognisant of this or regardless of its effect upon the Highland traffic, my parents frequently timed their departure from Mull so as to clash with it. This was unlucky, for the *Clansman*, increasing her load at every stopping-point, would often be fifteen or twenty hours behind her time—once she was twenty-four, and we had waited exactly a day and night upon the pier, or in the little smoky, whisky-smelling shop attached to it, ere the long-drawn cry of “Bo-o-at ” was raised.

As she might appear at any moment, and as telegraphic communication, which might have warned or comforted us, was never thought of, it followed that no one durst leave the spot—since the instant the smoke of the steamer was seen, always before she herself appeared, we had to put out to sea.

And it really was “putting out to sea.” There was but the faintest caricature of a bay, either at Salen or Craignure,

(the latter the port of Scalastal), and in the Sound of Mull the waves run high. Worst of all, moreover, was the fact that so many hours of weary waiting had had its almost inevitable effect upon the sturdy boatmen. What Highlander can be kicking his heels for hour after hour among his fellows without taking "a glass"? I recollect my father's aside to Sandy Crow, the farm manager—"For Heaven's sake, Sandy, keep an eye upon them"—and the anxious eye he himself cast upon the group as we embarked.

But we got on all right, too tired and sick of our surroundings to care very much what brought relief, and only on one occasion was there any real danger.

The *Clansman* was later than ever; it was night when she appeared, and the night was dark and stormy. Our small boats tossed from wave to wave. A chill sensation kept us all rather silent, and the huge side of the steamer towered above us like a monster. Then—Tom Macdonald missed the rope!

I do not say that he was drunk; the lordly Tom was a sober man, but could "take his glass" with another, and no doubt there had been a good many glasses going, with but little food to temper them,—the fact remains that the stalwart shepherd, lurching forward to catch the steamer's rope, overbalanced himself and fell back into the boat. The boat was rocking vehemently. Afterwards we heard whispers: "A near thing—ay, a near thing. *Man!* yon micht ha' been a near thing!"—and we did not ask questions. Another hand caught the rope on its return swing, and we were quickly on board the steamer.

She was packed from bow to stern. Not only were there farmers and drovers bound for the "Tryst" from every point along the route, but several families who, like ourselves, had waited till now at their various moors, the weather previously having been fine, and sport plentiful;

and these with their dependants filled the cabins and saloon. The saloon had to be turned into a sleeping-place. It was hot to suffocation. It was unbearable to our panting lungs—but everything suits somebody. A head bobbed out from under the table, on which our mattresses, or what did duty for such, were spread, and a voice exclaimed cheerfully, "I'm very comfortable down here. There's no draught."

No draught indeed! We recognised the broad burr of a Berwickshire man we knew—one who might have been expected to value fresh air; but the head of Mr Tom Horne withdrew, and soon a peaceful snoring proclaimed that asphyxiation, if nothing else, had completed his satisfaction with his cosy corner.

That night *The Royal Charter* was wrecked off the same coast. The wind rose higher and higher, and how we fared can easily be imagined when we came to rounding the Mull of Cantire—or the "Moil," as it is called by its inhabitants.

For those who do not know Scotland, I may explain that a "Mull" or "Moil" signifies a long, narrow promontory, which usually does not strike out to sea, but runs parallel with the mainland; between the two, cross-tides and currents are rife. The Mull of Galloway is the only other important one on the Scottish coast, and rounding it is as trying to landsmen as the other. A heavy swell from the Atlantic is sure to send its long rollers inwards in either case; and when a gale is blowing, a terrific sea may be on.

The *Clansman* weathered it on the night I refer to, but she was twelve hours late when she drew up alongside the Broomielaw.

It was again a dark night, and a November fog made it darker still, and we had an hour to wait before our train for Edinburgh would start. Anything more unpromising than that hour looked, it would be difficult to describe—and yet even it had its compensations. We were huddled miserably

together, waiting for cabs to be brought, in which to drive to the station, when the lights of an open house—a wretched place, a sort of sailors' eating-house—met our gaze ; and seated within were some of our steamboat crew merrily at work. We prevailed on our long-suffering Fräulein to let us join them.

Not that we actually sat at the same board, but we partook of the same mutton-pies, hot and savoury ; and the poor Fräulein, who, after all, was human and dying of hunger like ourselves, laughed for many a day after over the adventure, protesting that nothing had ever tasted so good as those salty, peppery mutton-pies, she having existed throughout the twenty-four previous hours upon a single peppermint drop!

After this, my mother refused to “round the Moil” any more. She and my elder sisters crossed by ferry to the mainland, by way of the Isle of Kerrera—and drove thence to Ardrishaig, where they caught the daily boat for Glasgow.

This transit was simple enough, and it was decreed that though we of the rearguard should still take the useful *Clansman* to Oban, we should follow our leaders for the remainder of the journey. The *Clansman*, however, being late as usual, we had but little time to lose, as we had to be at Ardrishaig by noon. About four in the morning we started ; and this time, there being no kind servants to look after us—for they went on in the steamer—we had no breakfast, and were in a state to eat anything when our goal was reached.

We had half-an-hour. Much may be done in half-an-hour.

We ensconced ourselves in a good hotel facing the pier, so as to make sure of not being left behind, and fell to work. An elderly man from a table near watched us with twinkling eyes. We heard afterwards that Lord Hill—the Lord Hill of his day—on hearing a certain enormous appetite remarked upon, exclaimed with a chuckle : “Call that an appetite ? *You never saw those young Colquhouns eat herring !*”