

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

COURTEOUS READER!

I AM an elderly man of easy fortune, that is to say, I have enough for all the wants of an individual of my retired and moderate habits. Retired I may well enough call them; for, though I move in the sun-beam of human existence, I so rarely impinge upon any of my fellow atoms, that I am almost as little known as if I had no corporeal entity.

“ Whatten a dumpy-looking body’s that wi’ the brown wig?” said a barber’s apprentice to the servant girl, as I one day passed up stairs to my lodgings.

“ Troth, I dinna ken,” answered the girl;

“ he’s an odd being they ca’ Mongomery, that leeves in our house.”

I stopped at the turn of the stair to hear the rest.

“ He’s had our best rooms for mair nor five or six years. He keeps them winter an’ simmer, though he aye bangs aff with the first comin’ o’ the gouk, and ne’er comes back till driven in wi’ the bad wather, like a wudcock, in the hinder end o’ autumn. He seldom taks mair nor twa sarks an’ a change o’ stockins wi’ him. Whan he’s at hame he never sees a mortal, or speaks to a soul—an’ he’s aye vrite vriting. But he’s a harmless creatur’—pays weel,—and gi’es unco little trouble.”

I was amused with this sketch of my own portrait. The fact is, that being fitted rather for a spectator of life’s comedy than to be an actor in it, I haunt the public places of resort, during the bad weather

half of the year, greedily devouring man and his affairs; and then, during the more genial months, I roam about the country, mixing up the same substantial food, with the refreshing sallad of romantic scenery. Thus I find materials to occupy my pen in newspapers and magazines; and to make amends for the silence my tongue usually maintains to those around me, I enlighten the public in general with the fruits of my lucubrations.

When the first good weather appears, I fit myself with a new jacket, breeches, and gaiters, and a stout pair of shoes; and with a tough oak sapling in my hand, away I go to follow my nose, whithersoever it may lead. As I never can determine whither my steps are to turn, till I find myself fairly on the way, the curiosity of my worthy landlady, about the direction of these my summer jaunts, re-

mains unsatisfied. So utterly ignorant is she, indeed, of my motions, that if death should chance to arrest me in the midst of my wanderings, I shall probably be buried by strangers, unknown and unwept, in the spot where I am stricken down; and then Mrs Gladstones will be left to wonder and guess at the fate that prevents my periodical return. But here I am, safe for this season at least, installed in the full comfort of my old morocco chair, with my mind so full of interesting matter, that I must have a book of my own to put it into.—But before I give it you, Sir, I will tell you how I came by it.

I happened to be wandering on foot through the grand pass of the Grampians, when I overtook a respectable looking old man with a grey head, and a hale, though weather-beaten face, who had seated himself on the parapet of a bridge, a few

miles from the inn of Dalwhinnie. Though averse to anything like general intercourse with mankind, my heart warms to a solitary mortal like myself, especially when I meet him, as I thus did Johnny Fimister, as he called himself, in one of nature's wild and lonely mountain scenes, where man feels himself but as a speck amidst the grandeur of her works. I sat down by him, and after we had made acquaintance by a friendly pinch of snuff, and some remarks upon the weather, we set out on our travel together. I was not inquisitive, but Johnny showed every desire to be communicative, and made the road so short, as the saying is, by his stories, that we reached the place of rest and refreshment, ere we had, as I thought, gone half way.

As we entered the court-yard of the inn, we observed a tall, and very bulky old man, in enormous jack-boots, with a great

queue hanging over the capes of a blue surtout, who was in the act of mounting a powerful horse. The pedlar made two or three hasty steps forwards, and looked up in the rider's face, as he was adjusting himself on the saddle, and then returned, as if he had been mistaken in his man, and the horseman rode slowly away, without noticing him.

I had already made up my mind to ask the old pedlar to sup with me; and as he heard me order a nice dish of Loch Ericht trouts to be fried, and a couple of fowls to be split open and broiled, he very readily accepted my invitation. Little was said during the meal, both of us being too much occupied to talk. After it was over, without speaking, I gently pushed the punch-ladle, and the whisky and materials, over to his side of the table, with a nod and a sign. He comprehended me at once, and,

without losing a moment, mixed a bowl with most scientific precision. It was nectar; and lighting my segar, I spent the evening in luxurious ease and silence, listening to the ceaseless chat of my new acquaintance, who read all my shrugs and nods of reply with admirable tact, rarely putting me to the necessity of using my unwilling organs of speech, even in a monosyllable.

“ I saw you looked strange at me, Sir,” said he, “ when I glower’d yon gate, at yon auld carle on the brown naig. Troth I thought, for a gliff, that he was a man I aince see’d here about fifeteen or aughteen years syne. He was vera like him, and he was mounted upon just sic a like beast; and as I cam lampin into the yaird that day, for I’m no athegither sae souple noo as I was than, he was just ridin’ away after the same fashion yon yane did. But

yon canna be him, after a', for he maun be dead mony a day syne."

A long draught of smoke, treasured up within my cheeks, and accompanied by a look of inquiry, told him I wished him to explain to whom he alluded.

"Aye Sir, ye want to ken wha it was I saw at that time I'm speakin' o'. Troth it was nae less than the Laird o' Lochandhu that was. Every body believed it to be him. And wha else could it be?—for he was nae stranger, and kent a' the nooks and corners o' baith Badenoch and Strathspey. He gaed about a'where, an' mony a question he put about the auld fouk o' his ain day. But maist o' them ware dead.—He was seen to shed mony a tear. At length he rode awa' again, and naebody kent whare he gaed."

"And who was Lochandhu?" said I,

my curiosity overcoming my habitual taciturnity.

“Lochandhu!” exclaimed the pedlar, “an’ did ye never hear o’ Lochandhu?—my troth, he made some steer in his time in thay pairts. Lochandhu was——But I hae gotten a deal about him in an auld warld history in my pack, though its no just a’ about him neither, for there’s a hantel else about ither fouk, that I ken naething o’. But I’ll let ye see’t gin ye like,” continued he, unstrapping and unlocking his box, and drawing forth a large bundle of papers. “It was a’ written by a gude honest man o’ a minister in this country—a great scholar, they tell me. When the worthy auld man died, his hellicate, ne’er-do-weel, havrel, o’ a hafpins son, couped it wi’ me for a new snuff-mull,—ane o’ yere horn mulls, wi’ a wee bit silver, and a Scots peeble on the tap o’t. Troth I

thought I had a gude bargain o't; and gif it had been in prent, I might may be hae sauld it again for a profit. But naebody can be fashed wi' vrite, ye ken; and sae I hae carried a' this weight for naething, ever sinsyne. I wuss I ware weel quite o't."

Without a word, I opened my purse, and laying a couple of sovereigns on the palm of my hand, I nodded significantly at the MS., and then looked in Johnny Fimister's face.—There I read surprise and joy.

"Troth ye's hae it wi' a' my heart, Sir," quoth Johnny; "my back 'll be glad to be free o't, an' I'll walk a' the lighter wi' thae yellow boys i' my pouch. Mony thanks t'ye, Sir—mony thanks; I wuss ye muckle gude o't."

With all the eagerness of a book collector who has had the good fortune to pop upon some rare volume at a book-stall, I

pounced upon my precious purchase, packed it up with attention, and sent it off next morning for Edinburgh by the Highland coach, addressed for myself, at Mrs Gladstones', with a large "*Care, and to be kept dry,*" on the back.

On my arrival in town the other day, I was pleased to find that my worthy landlady had taken particular care of it, and as I was employed in opening the parcel, the good woman remained in the room to tell me she had done so. The strings took some time to undo, and her curiosity made her loiter about the apartment, under pretence of dusting the chairs and tables with her apron, but always keeping her eyes thrown over her shoulder, as if eagerly watching for a sight of the contents. I was rejoiced to find all right. But mine hostess, on seeing nothing but a number of quires of dirty, close-written, coarse sheets of foolscap, much

browned, and highly perfumed with peat-reek, left the room in evident chagrin, with a half audible “hoof! is that a’? naething but a parcel o’ auld paper to sing fowls wi’!”

I had no sooner dined than I sat down with a bottle of prime fifteen, a box of segars, and the MS. before me; and lighting a weed, I read straight on, sipping and puffing alternately, until I had gone completely through it. I leave you, courteous reader, to whom I now resign it, to judge whether my night was well or ill employed.

CHARLES MONTAGUE MONTGOMERY.

*Gladstones’ Lodgings, James’ Court,
10th November 1824.*