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OUTER ISLES

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COTTAGE IN TYREE

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OUTER ISLES

By

A. GOODRICH-FREER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALLAN BARAUD

POPULAR EDITION.

WESTMINSTER
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE & CO LTD
2 WHITEHALL GARDENS
1904

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BUTLER & TANNER,
THE SELWOOD PRINTING WORKS,
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DA
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To

CONNIE AND SCAMP

COMPANIONS

IN

ARCADY

AND

HEBRIDES

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PREFACE

THAT "one half of the world knows not how the other half lives," is a statement one accepts readily enough in the abstract, but which seems less comprehensible when we reduce it to the concrete fact that, even in this miniature land of Great Britain, there is a whole chain of islands, some hundred and fifty miles long, possessed of natural beauties and resources, having its own characteristic literature, archaeology and traditions, in some sort even its special language and religion, of which its nearest neighbours on the mainland know little, the rest of the world, for the most part, next to nothing.

Possibly, in the case of most Englishmen, even that little would have been less, had not the publication of Martin Martin's *Description of the Western Isles* in 1695 led to the visit of Dr. Samuel Johnson in 1773, a brave, not to say desperate undertaking for an Englishman of his customs and circumference.

From the discomforts of Johnson and Boswell, the salmon and sunsets of Black's novels, the dialect and depression of certain modern story-tellers, even if balanced in part by the sympathetic sketches of Norman Macleod, the casual reader has possibly constructed for himself a picture of desolation, ignorance and melancholy, which is very far from the truth, even in these darker days of alien landlords and uncultivated soil. Even the possession of a language and a dress banished by Act of Parliament (1695), a musical instrument suspected of contributing to rebellion, an alien faith superimposed as a matter of policy (the "religion of the yellow stick"), even a land laid bare, and homes made desolate, these things and more have not sufficed

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to subtract from the Hebrideans the inherent characteristics of a people who were Christianized long before S. Augustine, who were sending scholars to found continental Universities two centuries before the existence of Oxford, and who, as we learn from early Gaelic poems, were drinking wine and burning wax candles, while English kings slept upon straw, and bought wine as a cordial from the apothecaries.

The earliest descriptive work to be depended upon for facts in regard to the Hebrides is the very interesting *Statistical Account of Scotland* (1798), written by various ministers, each describing his own parish, and edited by Sir John Sinclair. A later work, on the same lines, known as the *New Statistical Account*, was published in 1845, and these, together with the *Report upon the Crofter Commission*, most conveniently read in the form of Alexander Mackenzie's *Analysis of the Report of the Crofter Royal Commission* (Inverness, 1884), are practically the only books of general reference upon the subject of the Outer Isles. The student may nevertheless find passages of interest in *The Abridgement of the Scots Chronicles*, Monipennie (1612); Vol. iii. of *The Miscellanies of the Maitland Club* (1701); *Present State of the Hebrides*, James Anderson (1785); James Macdonald's *Agricultural Survey of the Hebrides* (1811); and, if he be a patient and tolerant student, in the writings of John Macculloch, who visited the islands in 1811–21.

The archaeologist and antiquarian will not fail to turn to the pages of W. F. Skene (*Highlanders of Scotland*, 1837, and *Celtic Scotland*, 1876), and Professor Anderson; more especially his *Scotland in Early Christian Times* (1881). He will also find certain descriptions of Churches and Crosses in the Outer Isles, in Thomas S. Muir's *Ecclesiological Notes* (1885), and in the anonymous *Characteristics of Old Church Architecture* (1876).

For the Folk-lorist there is always Campbell of Islay and, in relation to the Outer Isles, the even more precious volumes of Campbell of Tyree, edited by his sister, Mrs. Wallace, still living in the island. There are certain other volumes of folk-lore which have less of the essential accuracy of narration and scrupulous veracity

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in repetition, which the student of anthropology and the youngest child alike require in a fairy tale.

Those who would rightly understand the human interest of these islands, the sad story of depopulation, as effective as that of "Sweet Auburn," as tragic as that of Glencoe, should study David Stewart's *Sketch of the Present State of the Highlands*, preferably in the edition issued by W. Mackenzie of Inverness (1885); *The Depopulation System* by an Eye-witness (1849), and *The Argyll Manifesto* (No. 1, in the series of *Land Tracts*), a reply to the Duke of Argyll's *Crofts and Farms*. Though not directly relating to the islands, the student of the population and land problems should moreover not fail to read Macleod's *Gloomy Memories*, an essential contribution to the picture of the sad times when Highland property was "improved."

The present volume is so far from being exhaustive even of the notes and material I already possess, that I can offer it only as possibly suggestive to others, specialists or observers, who may wander further in the same fields. There is abundance of pasture, and those who go as friends, and not critics, to learn, not to discover fault, will assuredly find, as we have never failed to find, a hearty welcome.

To name all who have facilitated our enquiries, and added to the pleasure of our wanderings, would be impossible in a country where courtesy, hospitality, and even friendship, have never failed. I must however mention, with especial gratitude and esteem, the Rev. Allan Macdonald, Catholic priest, of Eriskay, whose practical kindness and companionship alone made possible some of the more difficult of our journeyings, and without whose help much of this book (especially chapters VII.–XIII.) could never have been written. As priest, and even more perhaps as friend, to a people whose hearts can never open fully but to one of their own faith, living daily in their midst, he has had, and has used to the full, opportunities which are in the most literal sense unique, and to his generous help I acknowledge the deepest obligation.

I would recall, in grateful memory, that to the late Marquess of Bute I owe the first stimulus to visit these

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islands, in many of which his name is still dear in the hearts of the people to whom he showed such timely and spontaneous liberality.

I would cordially thank Mr. Allan Baraud, of Bushey Heath, for the skill with which he has entered into the spirit of the work, and has made of my imperfect photographs, pictures which I hope may contribute largely to the right understanding of my attempts to describe the Outer Hebrides.

I would thank my friend, Walter B. Blaikie, Esq., of Edinburgh, for the use of two photographs, those of "Prince Charlie's House,"[1] in Eriskay, and of "Shealing Life," as well as for pleasant memories of companionship on land and sea.

Finally I have to express much obligation to Miss Ruth Landon for the patient kindness with which she has corrected the proof sheets of this book, and has made herself responsible for the tedious work of compiling an index.

From a distant land, where nevertheless much in the country, the customs, the folk-lore and the traditions reminds me daily of the western Highlands—pointing to the homogeneity of the less conventional types of the human race—I herewith greet my many friends in Outer Isles.

A. GOODRICH-FREER.

JERUSALEM, *May*, 1902.

[1] As this book is passing through the press, I hear with deep regret that this cottage, where the Prince slept for the first time in his own kingdom, has been lately demolished by permission of Lady Gordon Cathcart.

NOTE

Thanks are due to the Editors of *The Contemporary Review*, *The Folk Lore Journal*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, and *The Saga Book of the Viking Club* respectively, for permission to republish the chapters on "Christian Legends," "The Powers of Evil," "Prince Charlie," and "The Norsemen in the Hebrides."

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CHAPTER I

TYREE

WHEN the London season of 1894 reached the stage when one's friends began to ask "What are you going to do this summer?" we derived a certain amusement from the reception of our announcement that we were going to the Island of Tyree. Some committed themselves to nothing and hoped we should enjoy it; some supposed it was in the Mediterranean somewhere; and when, to a few of vaguely inquiring mood, we explained that it was about thirty miles south of the Long Island, such as knew their geography concluded that it must be somewhere within reach of New York.

As a matter of fact, the island does lie next to America, but in the sense in which, in a volume of the reign of Good Queen Bess, Cornwall is described as "a country on that side of England next to Spain," and had we explained that it was an island of the Hebrides, fifty miles west of the mainland of Scotland, few would have been much the wiser. Even the "Ideal Ward," with all his learning, abandoned an attempt to write a poem on the subject, having exhausted his available information in the lines—

> There are some islands in the northern seas—
> At least, I'm told so—called the Hebrides;
> These islanders have very little wood,
> Therefore they can't build ships—they wish they could.

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At last, however, we came across a man who, having met our statement with the observation, "But isn't it too early for snipe?" showed that he was really in touch with the subject. He knew a man who had been there—to shoot snipe—and he would get to know all about it. In course of time he communicated the fact that there was a mail boat which went twice or three times a week, weather permitting, and that we must be sure to take a case of soda-water.

The great MacBrayne's official handbook to the west coast of Scotland, had nothing to tell beyond the name of the pier-master, a fact which, later, became the more interesting to us that there is not a pier. Of other literature upon the subject we could find nothing written within the last hundred years, except an Agricultural survey of the year 1811.

It was therefore with some sense of adventure that we started on our journey on July 11, 1894, my friend, myself, and our dog Scamp, a Dartmoor terrier of admirable muscle and a pedigree to boast of even in the Highlands. After a night or two in Edinbro' and Glasgow we reached Oban, the Charing Cross of the north, where every second house is an hotel and every one has either just come or is just going away. At this period we knew nothing of the Royal Hotel, which, later, in moments of hunger and weariness we came to think of as home, and we were thankful to escape, as soon as might be, from German waiters and extortionate charges, and to find ourselves at sunrise on board the little *Fingal*—tonnage 123; Neil McArthur, Captain; J. McTaggart, Purser. That one should remember and write down the names of passing friends like these, is a feature of the life upon which we were entering, a life so primitive that those who ministered to us became for us, as in the childhood of the world, our fellow creatures, men and women of like passions:

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a strange sensation to reflect upon in a life in which a tradesman is a necessary hindrance to the acquiring of goods, and a cab-driver, like his horse, part of the means of locomotion.

We had been warned that we were unwise to travel at the time of Glasgow Fair, and that the boats would be crowded, but we were unable to see the connexion of ideas, and did not know, till later acquaintance with the *Fingal* revealed the fact, that our dozen or so of fellow passengers was such a crowd as we were never likely to see upon her deck again.

The morning was grey and chilly, and the piled-up hills of Mull and Morvern were clothed in mist on either hand, but by degrees the sunlight broke through, and by the time we reached Tobermory the unbroken water-line of the Atlantic stretched blue and clear before us. Away to the south lay the dream-lands of Staffa and Iona, and further still to the north were the dim peaks of Ben More in Uist and the Cuchullin hills in Skye.

The sea was clear and blue, not a sail was within sight, and in the entire selfishness of mere animal enjoyment and anticipation, we were almost thankful to the dancing waves for causing the withdrawal, into private life, of most of our fellow passengers. In Oban we had heard fearful tales of the dangers and horrors of a journey to Tyree, but those nine sun-lit hours still stand out in happy memory although only the first of many of a like kind.

The little boat, with her orange-coloured funnel, seemed to manage all her business for herself, for the crew had nothing to do but look picturesque, the Captain and Purser but to make themselves agreeable. Towards afternoon we peeped into the tiny cabin below, but roast beef and batter-pudding seemed an anticlimax, and we begged for something more ethereal on

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deck. Little guessed we how long it would be before we should look upon their like again !

As the afternoon wore on, a long straight line made a shadow on the sea, and we learnt that Coll was in sight, but somehow even memories of Dr. Johnson could not distract our thoughts from Tyree, and we were glad to pause no longer than was necessary to drop a whole family overboard, into a wide boat which rowed out to meet us, and carried off some half-dozen of the consequences of Glasgow Fair.

Soon we were in sight of Tyree, "the kingdom just emerging from the summits of the waves," as one of its old names has it, in terse Gaelic, *Rioghachd-bharr-thonn.* Slowly the little *Fingal* wound herself into a long narrow creek. There was no pier, not so much as a "slip," and so far as we could ever discover, the only high ground on this side of the island, which is nowhere more than 350 feet out of the sea, rises most precipitately at the spot at present selected for a landing-place. How we were to get to shore was not obvious, but we cared little, so absorbed were we in the novelty of the scene. On the rocks above us some fifty people at least were collected, and with much shouting, laughing, gesticulating, two small boats apparently already quite full of people were boarding our little vessel. Later we learnt that there were other reasons besides the desire to meet friends, to get the mails, to fetch the cargo, why some of the islanders greet MacBrayne with such eagerness—but of that anon. The tiny mail boat heaved and tossed in the water below—it seemed to us as if the very letters would upset it, but in went the bags. The parcel post, a great institution in the islands, followed—could she possibly survive? we wondered, and we modestly declined when courteously asked if we would care to take our places in her, instead of waiting for the cargo boat. Being Glasgow Fair, we

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LANDING-PLACE, TYREE.

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were told, the boats were "rather" full. The cargo boat certainly was. Large baskets like laundry travelling-baskets, full of Glasgow bread, we learnt, went in first, then sundry crates for the "Mairchant," then some luggage, including ours, then all our fellow passengers, finally half a dozen sheep. We remained modest and retiring. We knew that the handsome young Minister, who after a long disappearance was now again on deck, would have to get on shore somehow, and that another boat would surely appear from somewhere. By-and-by the cargo boat returned, more cargo went in, but few passengers, and no sheep, only the Minister and the men who had so mysteriously come on board and who now came out of the deck-cabin wiping their mouths and smelling of whisky. The Purser advised us to take our seats, the kindly Captain shook hands with us, obviously perplexed as to our business there, since we were no off-shoot from Glasgow Fair, and we were off. We drew up at a perpendicular rock upon which some scratches were pointed out to us as steps. Many kindly hands were offered to help us to shore. The dog was hauled up, and we found ourselves standing beside our luggage in a wilderness of sand with not the faintest idea what to do next. Most of our companions had already climbed into carts and disappeared, and a group of men shouting in Gaelic over the "cargo" at a little distance, alone remained.

The Minister had looked at us, paused, looked again, and with true Highland shyness walked rapidly away. It was no time for ceremony. I ran after him, and breathlessly presented a piece of paper on which was the address of the house where, so we had been told, we might hope for shelter. I had written some days before, I explained—was it likely any one would come to meet us? The polite young Minister smiled at our simplicity. The letter was probably in one of the bags

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still lying on the rocks, or perhaps, if it arrived last mail, in the post-office, waiting to be fetched; the farm in question was nine miles off, there was no road for most of the way, there was no vehicle to be had, and being Glasgow Fair they were "likely full." We began to feel anxious, not so much for shelter on so glorious an evening, as for food. Could we telegraph anywhere? we asked, glancing at a single wire overhead. No, that only went to the mainland, but the Minister would send a message for us from the post-office whence it would be taken with the letters, or the bread, and meantime could we not go to the hotel? We looked around at the wilderness of rock and sand and short, scant herbage, at the group of men still shouting in a strange foreign tongue, at the funnel of the little *Fingal* disappearing in the blue distance, at some tiny huts scarcely distinguishable from the rocks among which they seemed to hide, at the "road" a foot deep in loose white sand, at the bare-legged boy driving a herd of cows which clambered awkwardly among the rocks, and found the notion of an hotel somewhat bewildering. He would go with us, this kind young Highlander, and turning back, soon conducted us to an unenclosed house overlooking the harbour, destitute, like most Highland inns, of sign-board—and being conducted on strictly teetotal principles, destitute also of everything else—open doors, loafers, sound of human life, which one associates with inns. A kindly landlady, a quiet sitting-room, a clean bedroom, and a welcome tea soon made us feel that home life in Tyree had begun.

We have long remembered that tea; after nine hours' feast of the eye only, it was very welcome. It certainly was excellent, but we remember it the better because we sat down to its counterpart every time we called for food during our stay in the island, and

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after a time it palled. Good tea, good cream, good eggs, Glasgow jam, Glasgow bread (it was long before we convinced our kind friends that we preferred their own home-made scones), Glasgow cake, and from time to time something of the nature of meat out of a tin. Our sitting-room window opened on to the moor or common, that is on to unenclosed space, and the cows often looked on at our meals, sheep and fowls came in at the door, and presumably fish swam about in the sea which lay almost at our feet; but none of these things found their way to the table except once, when we had an orgie of chops — what became of the rest of that sheep we could not discover—and once when we had a fish of species so perplexing that we tossed up who should first venture upon it. It was finally rejected by the dog, and given, through the window, to a cow, who apparently thought it an interesting experiment.

Except for some potatoes, which we were assured were excellent, but which differed in some essentials from those which we were accustomed to, we moreover never saw either vegetables or fruit during this visit. On a later occasion, when the hotel had got into more experienced hands (into kinder it could never come), our bill of fare was greatly enlarged, and now every necessary of life is amply provided for.

After tea we of course went out, and first learnt something of the glory of evening in the Hebrides. Tyree is so flat, that a considerable tract of country in the middle, known as the Reef, is said to be below sea-level. The island slopes from south-west to north-east, and its average width is about two and a half miles; though, according to the Government Survey, it varies from seven miles to one. There is not a single tree, not a hill worth mentioning, and as we looked straight out into the open glory of the July sunset it seemed

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somehow to belong to us in some especial manner, so isolated did we feel on this little shelterless sand-bank in the wide Atlantic Ocean.

It was a pageant of which we never tired, but what followed was to us an even greater miracle. Elsewhere, when the sun has set, "at one stride comes the dark," but here, in these low-lying islands, the darkness hardly came at all, and at half past ten we could see the time by the tiny watch on my wrist, or read the Evening psalms from the smallest of pocket prayer-books. And again, when the change came at dawn, and colour, rather than light, returned to the sky, we were awakened by a rush of wings, and strange sounds overhead, as the sea-birds flew over the island from their home on the western side to seek for food in the more sheltered waters, between the island and the mainland.

Later we came to know that home of theirs, a precipitous cliff, not above 300 feet high perhaps, but absolutely perpendicular, where, on almost imperceptible ledges, the sea fowl dwell in thousands. Long before we came in sight we heard their voices in the cliffs of Ceann a Mhara, which for convenience I spell—phonetically—*Kenerara*; and though we have since seen even more wonderful sights of the kind, none have seemed more impressive than those bare cliffs fronting the ocean, a world of feathered life with all the freedom and independence which is its birthright. One evening too, we were so fortunate as to see the return of the sea-fowl. Towards the western side of the island, we found a house with a garden, a rare phenomenon in these treeless isles, and, still stranger anomaly, a garden enclosed with such a fuchsia hedge, as one seldom looks for out of Devonshire—probably the only shelter of the kind within fifty miles. Standing silently near by, we heard a rush of wings: and a sudden cloud coming towards us,

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resolved itself at our feet into myriads of small birds; starlings, sparrows, chaffinches, stone-chats, thrushes, larks, alighting upon, and below, and around, the green and crimson hedge. There was no chirping, none of the usual chatter of small birds, the invasion was sudden and almost silent. In a few minutes the sky was again swept, this time by a very different concourse. Far, far aloft there sailed a mighty fleet, looking like a vast white cloud, so far above, that the shrieks of the great sea birds, gulls, cormorants, guillemots, seemed a phantom sound. Almost in a moment, they were out of sight, and then, as suddenly as before, there awoke a whir of small wings close beside us, and the little birds arose from their hiding-place, and this time, with much clamour and talk, dispersed again into the fields of air, once more left open to them, as the crowd again closes in after a royal procession has passed by. We wondered what became of them all, and where they found homes for the night where there is no vegetation, and even where roofs and chimneys have, for the most part, so little elevation as to afford no protection from cats, and dogs, and even sheep. Strange shifts are they put to, these feathered exiles, and we have since found them crouching in holes in the rocks, or under tufts of grass, or even in ruts on the road.

It was not indeed upon this, our first visit to the island, that we discovered that fuchsia-hedge, and all we could learn in these earlier days, was that the Free Kirk Minister had a tree. We never saw it, and we also never saw the policeman, one third of whom, it was alleged, belonged to the island. A story is told of some old woman who, having been taken to the mainland, was much perplexed by the "big kail," cabbages having been the nearest approximation to trees in her limited experience.

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As to the fractional policeman, we could, on one or two occasions, have found a use for him, as on this island alone of the whole range of the Hebrides we saw signs of drunkenness. No licensed house is allowed; consequently, on occasions of weddings and funerals, the host imports or otherwise obtains his whisky in larger quantities than would in other circumstances be the case, and this, one gathers, it is considered hospitable to furnish. The results are generally obvious enough. There is moreover we are told, a considerable amount, among the fairly well to do, of that "close drinking" which comes of the private consumption of what, in public places and with companionship, would probably be taken in moderation only.

As long ago as 1811 it was stated, in the *Agricultural Survey of the Hebrides*, that "there were formerly large sums of money drawn by Tyree for whisky, distilled from the excellent barley of this fertile island; but of late this branch of industry has been suppressed, and that too, very probably, to the ultimate advantage both of proprietor and tenants."

We ourselves could not speak with the same conviction either as to the entire suppression of the commerce, or the advantage derived, at all events by the people, from the alleged abolition of the "shebeen." The Highlanders cannot be expected (apparently) to drink beer, but to assume that because the Duke of Argyll has suppressed licensed houses that they will necessarily abstain from whisky, is like other attempts to make people good by Act of Parliament, assuming too much. The *Fingal* is of course allowed, though at a special price, to sell whisky to her passengers; and, as we have seen, affords a frequent opportunity for a little mild conviviality while she lies in harbour; and remote and

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lonely as is the island, the inhabitants are visited by an occasional cargo-boat, the *Dunara Castle* or the *Hebridean*, which carries cargo direct from Glasgow, a journey of from twenty-four to thirty hours, and have thus the opportunity of importing whatever they desire for their private consumption, possibly sharing it with friends. Not to seem censorious, nor to speak *de haut en bas*, I freely acknowledge that we obtained a bottle of excellent whisky with little difficulty, and with the gratitude that one feels for luxuries, when necessaries are somewhat scarce. One of us who had an appetite for dairy-food did very well (though I fear the cheese was Glasgow, not to say American), but the other, an eater of dinner rather than tea-meals got. after a time, what old women call 'rather low,' especially as we were taking an immense amount of exercise and the sea air was strong and exhausting. We had forgotten the case of soda-water, and the water of the island was of quite too doubtful a quality to drink when not boiled, but after we possessed that bottle of whisky we felt that we were in touch with life and not more, perhaps, than eighty miles from a lemon.

The size of the island is roughly estimated at about thirty-four square miles, but it is so indented by the sea, that the coast is probably over fifty miles long. It measures about thirteen miles from NE. to SW., and lies in latitude 56½°. The population is about 2,000. The superficial contents are said to be about 17,000 acres; of which over 2,000 are water, rock, and marsh. There is but one road worth mentioning, which leads from a dairy-farm in the north-east of the island to the factor's house in the middle, and which, at one point, touches the harbour, or rather runs away right and left of it in the shape of a V. The greater number of the inhabitants therefore have houses reached only

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by rough tracks across grass or sand. They will however tell you that they have "the best of good roads which is mended twice a day," which means, that no one being in a hurry in Tyree, it is usual to go from point to point along the sea-shore.

For some distance along the best part of the road, one sees on either hand heaps of stones, all that now remain of comfortable homes on fertile ground, now part of one of the large farms, of which there are some half dozen in the island: three of them let to a Lowlander, and three being in the hands of the Duke's factor or his relatives. The theory is, that by giving the land to strangers, the natives receive an object lesson in good farming, though how that is to benefit those with no land to farm, one fails to understand. The whole subject of the rights of land in the islands is a difficult one, and must have a chapter to itself.

The islanders, when questioned as to the ownership of the island, will almost invariably reply that it belongs to the Macleans, "but the Duke has it now whatever." The island originally belonged to the Lord of the Isles, one of whom, says the story, had a daughter who married a Maclean of Duart or Dowart, whose ruined Castle is one of the most notable beauties of the Sound of Mull, and of whose family history most know something from Scott's *Lord of the Isles*, if not from Miss Joanna Baillie's *Family Legends*. When this lady was visited by her father he was surprised to see no linen cloth upon her table, and on learning that her husband's estate yielded no lint, he endowed her with the island of Tyree to grow flax upon, which for a long period was successfully done. Thus the island passed into the hands of the Macleans, who kept it till what is euphemistically called the "forfeiture" of the clan, at the end of the seventeenth century. The island sympathies are still in every sense with the old

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family, and they have a good many songs and stories not exactly complimentary to the Cailean Mor and his clan.[1] Over, and over again, when I was asking for stories from the people, I was told, with variations, that of a certain dark John Campbell, a hated tax-gatherer, who among other misdeeds seized a pair of plough-horses belonging to a man named Dewar, who was away at the smithy mending his plough. This led naturally to a fray between the two men, in which Dewar's policy was to drive Campbell backwards away from the sea and his boats, till they reached the burial ground of Soraby, where still stands a beautiful Celtic monument known as Maclean's Cross. Here Campbell fell, but on begging for his life was allowed to rise, on giving his promise never to return to the island on the same errand. Meantime his boat had gone, and the horses with it, so, on his return to Inverary, he had to sell the horses and remit their value to their owner. The ghost of Black John still "walks" among the scenes of his former misdoings.

Tyree is the land of song and story, and when the people come to look upon one as a friend, they will never weary of telling the traditions of their island, stories of the Fians, or as they call them, the Fingalians, stories of the Maclean Chiefs, and the old Bards, stories too of Witch-craft and Second-Sight and Fairies. Many an evening have we listened to these tales, told in quaint, precise, literary English, which has nothing in common with the language of Donald and Mairi in

[1] Macdonald, author of the *Agricultural Survey* (1811), quaintly remarks: "The natives of Tyree are like the generality of their countrymen, a brave and hospitable race, and make a good figure among the other Hebrideans, notwithstanding many disadvantages to which they have long been subjected. The Duke of Argyll is proprietor of the whole island, his ancestors having obtained it in consequence of the misfortunes of the ancient and gallant family of Dowart."

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the story books which the unsuspecting Saxon imagines to be pictures of Highland life. But of these tales we shall have more to say later. Tyree was the first chapter in our collection, and during this summer we came for the first time under the spell of a new life and a new world, and a new people with a history and a past of strange limitations. In our life, too, they took an interest which was something more than that kindly courtesy in which they never failed. Every Highlander is a gentleman, and in the poorest homes, under the roughest circumstances, we never met with anything less than a courtesy, kindliness, and what I can only call a *savoir faire* which one misses in many a drawing-room of the rich and great. They were interested in everything we would tell them, as to our aim and object in coming to the island, and as to our life and interests at home; but they were far too polite to show any curiosity except on subjects of acknowledged publicity, such as the health of the Queen or the fate of "Jack the Ripper" who, even seven years ago, was ancient history and of whom we could tell little.

Later, in other islands more remote, we fancied we could trace definite physiological distinctions, as typical of certain parts of the Hebrides, according as the Celtic, the Pictish, the Scandinavian, or even the Scot, predominated. In Tyree the types are less apparent, partly on account of this island's much more frequent connexion with the mainland, than upon those more inaccessible. The yellow-haired Scandinavian (not to be confounded with the high-cheeked, yellow-haired laddie of the Lowlands) was we fancied distinguishable, and the dark-haired, bright-eyed Celt, again not to be confounded with the almost Jewish, aquiline type which we came to call "Pictish."

The obviously Celtic, *i.e.* the Irish type, is very likely to be found in Tyree, for the island seems to have been

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early colonized from Iona,[1] having served as a farm for the Monks. "Wherever there was a farm there was a cow, and wherever there was a cow there was a woman, and wherever there was a woman there was mischief!" was their ungallant explanation of their choice of so distant a site. *Tir Ii*, the land of I or Iona, is the most commonly-received derivation of the name, though *Tire*, a country, and *iy*, an isthmus, is almost equally plausible, and, says Martin (in 1695), "the rocks in the narrow channel, seem to favour the etymology." The "land of corn," the land of barley, the flat or level land, and "the land of wood," are also given as possible derivations, the last being less improbable than would appear at first sight; for, though not a stick as thick as one's wrist grows on the island at present, there are remains of abundant woods, probably cut down on account of the scarcity of fuel, the peat-bogs which so adequately supply the outer Islands being exhausted, if they have ever existed, in Tyree. The author of the *Agricultural Survey* relates that in 1809 the islanders "exhausted one third of their annual industry in procuring peats"—mainly it is said from Mull. When, however, the population, or it may be the proprietor, of Mull demurred at such a tax upon them, and the outer Isles, alleged to contain 250 square miles of peat-bog, were found too inaccessible for such traffic, the natives of Tyree fell back upon coal, which is now imported at great expense from Glasgow by means of *The Primrose* and other special steamers.

The absence of peats should certainly be held, among other causes, to account for what we afterwards came to value as the very superior cleanliness of the persons and homes of the inhabitants of Tyree, as compared with any other island of the Hebrides. The burning of coal

[1] Iona, the reader will remember, was colonized by St. Columba and his companions, exiles from Ireland, in A.D. 639.

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has necessitated the use of a chimney, and this, in most cases, has led to putting the fireplace at the side instead of in the middle of the room, so that the skin and clothes and belongings of the inhabitants do not become stained with peat smoke as in the other islands. This encourages a degree of "house-pride" which we never saw elsewhere. and the houses, though quaint enough, are often beautifully clean and orderly, both within and without.

They are built of rough unhewn stones piled up in large masses which might almost be called rocks. Within this wall is another separated from it by a clear space often of several inches, which, as well as all interstices. is then filled up with the fine white sand which is so abundant in the island. It will be easily seen that the walls are thus from a foot to eighteen inches wide at the top, and as the roof springs from the inner edge there is a considerable ledge all round it, which in the fertile climate of Tyree, soon becomes clothed with flowers and verdure, and has the effect of a garland round the roof; and as the house is only one story high, affords a resting-place for dogs and cats, and even a promenade for sheep and goats. The windows, for the same reason, are sunk in deep embrasures which are generally carefully whitened, and give an air of neatness and finish to the house. The most curious feature, however, is the roof, especially in the case of older houses built before increased facility of access made the purchase of timber a possibility.

In former times the only source of timber was a shipwreck, and there is a story of a pious man in the island of Barra, who used to pray, "If ships must in any case perish, do Thou, O Lord, guide their timber with their tackling and rigging to the island of Barra and the Sound of Watersay," a prayer at which one wonders the less, when one knows that the roofs and doors of many a

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home depended upon the flotsam of the Atlantic ocean. Seen from inside, one notices all sorts of extraordinary devices to supply couplers, and old oars, parts of boats, and parts of masts are in common use. The thatch is of great thickness, and in view of winter storms is secured by old fishing nets, by means of which the roof is literally tied to the chimney, and pegged down to the projecting wall all round the house. As wood is again required for this last purpose, ingenuity is called into play, and we have seen the ribs of sheep thus utilized, and houses decorated with, as it were, the skeletons of departed mutton-chops.

Inside, the houses are warm and comfortable, the system of double walls, if somewhat clumsy, being probably warmer than that of mortar and hewn stones, in a climate which, though not cold, is as boisterous and humid as one might naturally expect upon a treeless sandbank in mid-Atlantic.

There is hardly any frost in the island, perhaps because it is not very far removed from the Gulf Stream, and snow falls seldom and never remains. The winds, however, are very violent, and as there is no pier it is quite common, even in summer, for the *Fingal* to have to return to Bunessan or Oban, unable to deposit her mail-bags or passengers. One inhabitant told us that his newspaper, which should reach him three times a week, often accumulated in the mail-bags to the number of thirty before he opened them, and Mr. Stanford, the late manager of the kelp industry, gave us another instance of the difficulties of traffic. He said that when a young man, in the prosperous days of kelp-making (of which more in a separate chapter), he would at times remain for some months on the island, and that on occasions of a family gathering in his father's home, various members came from far-away places—I forget exactly where, but let us say America, India and the Continent

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— when it was impracticable for him to come from Tyree.

During this very summer of 1901, in the first week of June, during weather so fine that we spent the entire day out of doors, it happened that twice over the mail-boat, and twice the cargo-boat, came within sight of the island but was unable to land either passengers or mail-bags. The small boats, accustomed to go out to meet the steamboats, were quite unable to put off, and for lack of a pier the larger boats could not come in. One boat indeed came into Gott Bay, east of the usual entrance, the site frequently recommended for the building of a pier, and remained there in shelter for some hours, landing a man and a horse. The boat was going north, but for the sake of the passengers put back to Mull, leaving them at Tobermory on the chance of their coming on in three days by the *Fingal*, the *Fingal* herself, with her crew, having also turned back from Tyree. After obtaining accommodation from Friday to Monday with considerable difficulty, the Mull hotel having, rightly or wrongly, refused to take in one passenger because she was ill, they were transferred to the *Fingal*, a boat with no saloon accommodation worth mentioning, and already occupied by two sets of passengers of her own, and once more, on a sunny June day, a landing was attempted. At first the case was considered hopeless, and we were told that when, for the third time, the unlucky sufferers were in danger of turning back, the sobs and screams of the women and children were piteous to hear. However, with great difficulty, a landing was effected, and very thankfully, but in a sadly exhausted condition, the unhappy passengers, and our delayed mail-bags, were put ashore.

Almost the entire wealth of the island is in cattle and horses, and it may easily be imagined what is

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the loss of life and limb in transit of stock. Often the farmers arrive in Mull or at Oban too late for the market, and have to sell their beasts at any price they will fetch. At the best of times it is of course obvious that good prices can seldom be obtained, as naturally the Tyree farmer is known to be anxious to sell when the alternative is the risk of attempting to convey his cattle once more to so inaccessible an island. The extreme necessity for a pier has of course been long obvious, and the case represented again and again as strenuously as possible. The Crofters' Commission recommended it, engineers have pointed out more than one suitable site, the people themselves are ready and anxious to contribute all the help they can in money or voluntary labour, and to submit to be heavily taxed in pier dues for a privilege which would be so very great an advantage to all concerned; it is even said that, as in the case of Uig in Skye, where an excellent pier has been put up under considerable difficulties in a very remote place, a Government grant would be given—but all to no purpose. The fact remains, that even in a sunny week in June, four times over, a landing may be impossible and discomfort and inconvenience and even heavy loss continue. Among other unfortunate results of the difficulty of transportation may also be mentioned the abandonment by the Company which undertook the working of the marble quarries at Balephetrish. The stone is of very beautiful appearance, judging from some dressed specimens in the possession of the late Mr. Edward Stanford, and is said to be varied and abundant, but, under the circumstances, competition with the mainland and the continent is of course out of the question. The fact is the more to be regretted as the quarries are said to have employed one hundred men.

With such advantages as excellent golf links, a comfort-

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able hotel, miles of sands which are an ideal nursery for children, a happy hunting ground for the antiquarian, botanist and ornithologist, Tyree might become, as Mr. Stanford, who had known and loved the island for over thirty years used to say, "the sanitorium of the west." That a proprietor should have the power to perpetuate a state of things contrary to every elementary law of civilization, is a relic of barbarism, a far greater anachronism than "black houses" or the Gaelic tongue.

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CHAPTER II

NATURAL HISTORY OF TYREE

IT has been mentioned that Tyree passed from the possession of the Macdonalds, Lords of the Isles, into the hands of the Macleans of Duart in order that a bride of the Maclean chief might keep her linen press well plenished. The growing of flax continued in the islands up to the middle of the nineteenth century, and, according to the *Agricultural Survey* (1811) was encouraged by a government grant of £1 for every acre which could be shown to produce 15 stones of clean lint, an average crop being from 30 to 32 stones per acre. The loose sandy soil of the south and east part of the island was excellently adapted for the purpose, and the sown grasses which are a common succession crop after flax, would flourish admirably in Tyree, so that spinning, dressing, and weaving the linen, mainly, it is said, for home use, occupied a great deal of time among the women.

A few looms are left in the island, mainly used for weaving blankets and a strong striped cloth which is quite a speciality in Tyree; and which is worn by all the women, except those who, through some unfortunate circumstance of having been in relation with the mainland, have come to prefer shoddy material and aniline dyes.

One would naturally expect that in such a situation Tyree would be a great centre of the fishing industry. Here is the opinion of an inhabitant upon this point.

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"The fishers are mostly always poor. The fishermen of Tyree have many hardships to brave. They have only small boats for the fishing, and they have a long distance to go to the fishing ground, about twelve or thirteen miles from land, and the coast is very rough and much exposed to the Atlantic. Ling and cod are the fish they mostly try, but sometimes they fish the lobster, which they can get much nearer land. The whole of them suffer much through the want of a harbour. Very often they themselves have to draw the boats up away from the beach, especially in rough weather. The trawlers too hinder very much the success of the fishing. Sometimes they come across the nets that the fishermen have set, and they break the nets and take away the fish. A fisherman's life is altogether a hard and dangerous one."

Technically of course, the steam-trawlers which sweep the bottom of the sea are not allowed to come within three miles of land, but in Tyree there is no one, owing to the absence of a harbour, or harbour arrangements and officials, to enforce the law which is here, as elsewhere, often evaded under cover of the night, and, moreover, the best spawning bank for the Tyree fishery is beyond the three mile limit.

The *New Statistical Account* of 1845 points out that even then, out of ninety-four fishing skiffs possessed in the island only ten were regularly employed, that owing to the absence of shelter, the herring, though often in sight, never came within reach, that the whales, once a source of profit, had given up coming, and that all boats had to be hauled up for at least four months in the year.

There is now very little arable land in Tyree; so little of the land, and that of so inferior a quality, is in the hands of the crofters, the six large farms all being in the possession of strangers, that the natives import almost all their food-stuffs, and one accepts the compan-

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ionship of sacks of flour and oatmeal as an inevitable feature of the journey to the island. Until lately the only profitable home-industry, now alas! dying out, has been the making of kelp, and the drying of tangles (of which more presently), and for this the possession of a horse and cart was an almost necessary condition. For this reason, and because the soil of Tyree is good for rearing young stock, horse-breeding has become the most important commerce of the island. In the *New Statistical Account* (1843) we read :

"A prodigious number of small ponies, distinguished for their symmetry and high mettle, were formerly reared in this island, and were grazed during summer on the plain of reef which was then used as a common. These are now totally extirpated. More than thirty years ago the inhabitants were prevailed upon, I believe with much reluctance, and by the interference of authority, to part with them as an unprofitable stock quite unfit for agricultural labour, and a strong kind was introduced in their stead."

There is a local tradition that the particular breed of horses was, like certain traits of physiognomy observable among the people, a consequence of the Spanish Armada.

The raising of horses has, however, revived as a local trade. It is said, that a few years ago, a horse bred by a crofter and sold by him to a local farmer for £30, fell into the hands of an expert, was trained for racing purposes, and finally, as an old mare, was sold for £600. It is needless to say that after that the dealers came in shoals, and sometimes good prices are paid still, but not to the crofters, who cannot afford to get their beasts into proper condition, and have to sell them while still very young to the alien farmers: who in this, as in everything else, have an advantage over the people whose ancestors not only fought for their island home, but by infinite labour brought it to its present state of

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fertility. A considerable part of the population has no land at all, and thus the cottars, in the absence of any trade, or fishing, can only live by contriving to maintain a horse, or cow, or a sheep or two for sale (naturally they do not aspire to milk for their children or meat for themselves), by doing work for the crofters or small farmers, who allow them a little grazing in return. These small farmers are practically the only employers of labour in the island, as the owners of large farms breed stock for sale, and give no employment except to a very few shepherds or herds ; one of these farmers indeed visits the island but about once a year, the late Duke had not been to Tyree for seventeen years, and the present one has also for long been an entire stranger.

On the occasion of our latest visit to the island (1901), we found that the quaint house which is shown in the frontispiece had disappeared, the old man was dead, and the old woman was most comfortably established in an exceedingly unpicturesque, very new, but really convenient cottage, with two stories and a felt roof, modern grates and wooden floorings. We had made friends with her eight years before, on the occasion represented by the picture, a copy of which was given to the old couple to send to their sailor son, then long absent from them abroad. Her gratitude for so small a service was almost oriental in its mode of expression, and we have been friends ever since. When the sailor son came home, his first care and pride was to better the housing of his aged parents, and when the dear old mother, very feeble and much shaken by sorrow, was left alone with no one to help her, it was difficult to arrange for her care and comfort. I suggested that with the savings of his seafaring life, he should manage to stay with her to the end, and cultivate a bit of land sufficient for their maintenance. The landlord gets from two to three pounds an acre for

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this waste of sand, which only an incredible amount of feeding can make productive for tillage of any kind. But no, the scrap of ground on which the four walls rested, probably about 30 by 15 feet, was every inch they could obtain, for the cottar has no enclosure whatever, and the crofter, if he get a few feet of front garden or back yard, pays for it as land, and not as the necessary accompaniment of a house, as elsewhere.

There is no range of hills in Tyree, but three hills at the west end of the island and two at the east, though of no great height, relieve the monotony of the landscape. The island, as has been said, is indeed, more than flat, for a part of it is absolutely below sea-level. One had heard stories of the sea from two sides meeting in the middle of the island, and one trustworthy inhabitant told us that he had often lain flat upon the Reef (this low tract of country) at night, and had lifted up his face to see the moonlight strike the waves above the level of his head. We never tried the experiment ourselves, as it is very easy to get into considerable difficulties on the Reef, home of mallard, teal, and coot, even in broad daylight; and we were once more than four hours wandering over and over a small tract of bog, unable to extricate ourselves, till help came from a shepherd who had seen us from the hill, and who, from his higher level, could signal to us how to reach a place of security.

There are no frogs, toads, or snakes; the hare, introduced within recent years, is the only quadruped, with the exception of the rat, which, since timber has been imported, has become somewhat troublesome.

Something has already been said of the wild birds, which in a country not only treeless but almost without cover of any kind, even heather being very scarce, are extraordinarily varied and numerous. Their perching places are of course the loose walls or the

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galvanized wire used for boundaries, and their entire fearlessness is a delightful tribute to the humanity of the islanders. The Hebrides are throughout a paradise of larks, which seem to sing almost all day and night in the clear summer twilights. We have heard them in full song at half-past ten at night, and again at three o'clock in the morning. The lapwing is even more numerous and even more assertive. To be attended for miles by, say fifty lapwings, each possessed of the opinion that your one object in life is to discover the whereabouts of his nest, and each protesting, with the vigour of a 'vert that it is somewhere else, becomes a really troublesome feature in the month of June. The cuckoo calls from the whin hedge which is the pride of the district of Moss; the swift circles overhead, partridges make merry in the sand-knolls at Haugh; the landrail and sandpiper and stone-chat are everywhere; the teal, the coot, moorhen, grebe and mallard may be seen about the lochs, and in the winter come the robin and the wren, and the thrush; but these leave before the nesting-season, as do other winter visitants, herons, wild geese, wild swans, the scoter, golden plover, the snipe (for the most part), and the godwit.

The cliffs of Kenevara present an extraordinary spectacle in the breeding-season. Wandering over the hill, one becomes aware of a sound only to be compared to a Wagner chorus, the Valkyrie, perhaps, performed on a thousand stringed instruments, and ever growing louder and louder. Suddenly the hill is cleft by a narrow ravine, and two absolutely perpendicular cliffs confronting each other, are separated by an inlet of the sea, but a few feet wide, where, on a sunny day, the seals bask on the sheltered rocks below. At the head of the gully is a deep cave entered only with considerable difficulty, and where hundreds of blue doves have their home in the rocks. The cliffs themselves from

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crown to base are white with hundreds of young sea-birds sitting, as it seems, in tight-packed rows on incredibly narrow ledges, and all screaming for food, while the old birds fly in and out in snowy clouds, bringing choice morsels for their exacting broods. At first one's sense seems almost dulled by the weird and monotonous orchestra, the sounds rising and falling as the creatures pause to devour their food, and varied only by occasional shrieks of expectation as the parents come in sight. Then by degrees one gains sufficient detachment to be able to take in the wonderful outline and colouring of the strange picture, the brilliant blue of a sky and sea which roll away and away without interruption to a New World—the deep grey of the towering cliffs, the irregular gleaming rows of white sea-birds, stationary in mass but in detail ever moving, ever stretching forth impatient golden beaks, and straining on long rows of tenacious golden feet. Above and beneath and about them, great hanging beds of pink sea-thrift, brilliant bluebells, pink and yellow vetch, crimson clover, and geranium, waving ferns and grasses, brilliant and prolific as such things are, only in places absolutely inaccessible except to the kindly hand of Nature. And then, from time to time, comes the swooping of strong wings overhead, the sudden descent of the great mother-birds—gull or kittiwake or guillemot. Away, under an overhanging crag, is the nest of the much-feared hoodie-crow, and there too, a pair of ravens have lived beyond the memory of man, every year driving their young family away from the island. Down below, our guide pointed to a ledge, sacred, it is said, year by year, to the cormorants. At certain times other birds make their way to this sheltered spot, wild geese, swans, scoters, great northern divers, falcons, or the goosander and seamew.

No one is such a lover of home as the Highlander.

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The old instinct of devotion to the Chief, of defence of his territory and theirs, of love for the Clan, survives in other forms to this day; in the absence of that spirit of detraction so common in what is called "the higher civilization," in mutual kindness and loyalty, perhaps, above all, in a pride in their native islands which is something more than Nature-worship. The following description of the bird-haunted cliffs of Kenevara is quoted from an essay written by a pupil in one of the schools of the district, a boy who probably from his earliest years has known and loved the scene of which he writes, and living in a world limited to the narrow bounds of his native island, has never dreamed of rivalry nor learned indifference to the familiar. The passage, and indeed the entire exercise from which it is taken, is a curious contrast (as are some hundred others in my possession) to what the average English boy would write in describing, let us say, the Black Gang Chine in the Isle of Wight, or the Devil's Dyke at Brighton. Even when writing a foreign language, as of course English is to the Gaelic-speaking Highlander, the fashion of speech is always Celtic, almost like Hebrew in its tendency to metaphor and mysticism.

"The bellowing ocean, dragging adown the beach the eternally rattling pebbles, and leaving inland and far up the shore the stranded produce of the everlasting sea-clad rocks, retreats back to its nethermost murmuring caverns. What a wonderful sight!

"Should you stand on the top of the cliffs and shout out at the pitch of your voice, lo! with mournful sound like the voice of a vast congregation solemnly answers the sea, mingling its thundering roar with your feeble voice that is instantly drowned thereby. Some of the caves go in far beneath the cliffs, and though you cannot see their inner recesses you can hear the continuous murmur. The wild sea-birds scream through

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the dark colonnades and steep corridors, breaking the death-like seal of the silence, and giving tongue to the sea-defying rocks. The multitudinous echoes of these birds awake and die in the distance over the watery floor, and beneath the reverberant tops of the hillock. Few are the sights more glorious to behold than this hill on a summer afternoon, resting in silence under the bluest of heavens, when twinkling vapour arises, and sky, water and cliffs seem all to smile joyfully under the illuminating rays of the sun."

There is something in the happy choice of epithets, even when, as in the case of the "watery floor," which is Milton's, it may not be wholly original, which compels the recollection that Tyree is the scene of much of the story of Ossian, and that the writer of this schoolboy exercise is thinking in the language of Ossian, a language impossible to translate and which is moreover an ill preparation for writing in a foreign tongue. In the above description, for example, the only word which jars is that of "hillock," as applied to the steep and frowning, though not really lofty cliffs of Kenevara. But no doubt the word in the lad's mind was one wholly suitable, for whereas, in English, we have none more dignified to apply to an elevation not quite a hill and certainly not a mountain, the choice which the Gaelic supplies to describe the infinite variety which the Highlands furnish, is at least worthy of the country of their origin; rising as they do in varying degrees from *montich*, *sliabh*, *aspach*, *gleann*, *coire*, to the loftier *cuse*, *meall*, *mam*, *bruach*, *leittir*, *ardoch* or *beinn*. From such a choice, which could probably be largely extended by a Gaelic scholar, it must surely be far more possible than in the humbler English to select one which can convey a shade of meaning with something like accuracy.

One who is familiar with Ossian—let Dr. Johnson

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say what he will—cannot fail to be constantly struck with the extraordinary choice of epithets furnished by the Gaelic language, and even the simplest of their songs, the most ordinary bit of folk-lore, is to this day recited with an almost equal delicacy and perception. It is a subject which one might illustrate at great length if space permitted, but here, at all events, I content myself with a single example.

A native of Tyree once recited to us the description of the horses of Cuchullin, the strongest man of the Fingalian tribes. It was an occasion I can never forget. We were wandering slowly among the long bent grass which clothes the low lying ground that slopes down to the Atlantic. We had just left the hill of Kenevara where, putting our ear to the ground, we were told to listen to the music of the lament endlessly sung in the cave below, where "the yellow-haired Dearmaid of women," so beautiful that every woman loved him, remained blamelessly with Graine, the wife of his uncle Fionn, but was unjustly slain and buried near by with his two dogs.[1] Graine was the daughter of Cuchullin[2] (according to our legend), and she was beautiful as he was strong.

The sun was setting over the wide west, and as we listened to the poem one was, as so often happens, seized with the sensation of the solidarity of human history and human thought. The old Greek story of Apollo driving his chariot across the western plain seemed very near, as the sky became a glory of gold and crimson, and we could almost fancy we heard the prancing of the steeds of Cuchullin, where down below on the firm white sand the fires of the kelp gatherers were beginning to twinkle as the sun went down.

[1] This is consistent with the old Gaelic notion—found among so many peoples—of the reunion of master and dog in Flathinnis, the Happy Island, after death.

[2] Pronounce Coolin.

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"What do we see in that chariot?"

We see in that chariot the horses white-bellied, white-haired, small-eared, taper-sided, neat-hoofed, great, majestic, with their bridles pliant, slender, shining like a precious stone, or the sparkling of red fire; like the movement of a wounded fawn, like the sound of the hard blasts of winter, they approach in that chariot.

What do we see in that chariot?

We see in that chariot the horses fleet, hardy, strong, powerful; as waves impetuous, vigorous, exquisitely formed, able to tear the tangles of the deep from their rock-fixed roots.

What do we see in that chariot?

We see in that chariot the horses rank-breaking, rank-levelling, exceeding strong, mettlesome, nimble, prancing like an eagle's talons seizing on an animal's head; they are called the beautiful greys, the highly prized stay of the chariot.

What do we see in that chariot?

We see in that chariot the horses white-faced, white-fetlocked, slender-limbed, fine-maned, high-breasted, head-rearing, broad-chested, bearing a silken flag; of little age, light of hair, little-eared, great-spirited, highly fashioned, of wide nostrils, slender-bellied, of form nice, delicate like foals, lively, frisking, prancing."[1]

The Gaelic of Tyree is said to be of exceptional purity, as well it may from the early connexion of the island with Iona, the centre of learning and scholarship, to an extent which the English reader does not always realize. A hundred years before the foundation of the earliest English University—at Oxford—monks sent out from this little islet in the Hebrides had established the universities of Pavia and Paris, had sent professors to Cologne and Louvain, had sent missionaries to "the Middle Angles, Mercians, and East Saxons, whose chief city was London, and instructed them in the liberal arts," and had founded some seventy monasteries in various parts of the continent. Little wonder then that in Tyree, so closely associated with Iona from a very early period, we should find a love and appreciation of scholarship and a well of Gaelic undefiled.

A stranger taking a casual walk almost anywhere in

[1] It must not be supposed that the above was written down from memory. I found the poem long after in a collection of the local evidence for the authenticity of Ossian by Dr. Blair, approved by David Hume 1763, and believe it to be practically the same.

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Tyree, but especially in the west and north-west end of the island, might suppose that there had been an epidemic among the big dogs or small calves, and that the owners had been preparing for their respectful interment. Scattered all over the island, mainly on dry ground within reach of the sea, are what look like little graves, carefully lined with flat pebbles, but are really kilns, destined to the burning of kelp.

Kelp is made from two kinds of sea-weed, the species called *fucus* which grows within tidal range and is cut from the rocks at low-water, and another variety, the *laminarias*, which is thrown up by the storms or other causes. When the drift-weed is seen coming in, those who live near the shore hoist a pole with a bundle of weed atop, and the cottars and poorer crofters hasten down to the shore, and men, women and children are occupied, whatever the weather, in removing the precious jetsam out of the reach of the sea, often working till the incoming tide is over the knees both of man and horse. It is then spread out on dry rocks—any admixture of sand being detrimental—until it putrifies and is then put into the kilns, each kiln holding about half a ton; a little dried straw being placed at the bottom. It is then set alight, and is allowed to burn for six or eight hours, being carefully watched the whole time, as, when the critical moment arrives, and the whole is reduced to a fused mass, it is carefully raked, sprinkled with salt water, and broken up into convenient pieces. At this stage it looks like grey slag with streaks of white, blue, and brown, running through it. The kelp-rake is like a small spade, with a handle about seven feet long. Often, late into the summer night, one sees the fires of the kelp-burners twinkling along the shore in scores. The labour and watching required is immense, especially in collecting the drift-weed, which, for its present purpose, the distillation of iodine,

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is three or four times more valuable then the cut weed. The south-country people, and self-interested proprietors, who talk about "the lazy Highlander" fail to realize that their work, fishing, kelp-making, crofting, is a war carried on at fearful odds with the elements, even in islands like Tyree, where, thanks to a kindly factor, they are not liable to be called off to the enforced estate labour which in certain districts frequently becomes imperative, immediately that the coming of the drift-weed is heard of. To produce one ton of kelp no less than twenty to twenty-two tons of sea-weed are required, but such is the industry of these thrifty folk that even when the kelp has been as low as £2 10*s*. a ton, a single family has been known to earn from £30 to £40 in a season.[1]

The tangle gathering is a somewhat analogous industry, but is carried on in winter, and consists in collecting and drying the large shiny brown stalks thrown up by the tide, especially after a storm. These are gathered with a sort of narrow hay-fork, tossed ashore, and then collected in carts and stacked in a dry place. These stacks are of oblong shape, built to a certain height, and are paid for by the North British Chemical Company, at a given price per foot of length. The grieve who collects them, is provided with a long stick having an iron spike at the end, with which he pierces the pile at intervals, to ascertain that it contains no foreign matter, and that it is built fairly and on a level rock. The refuse, when cut away from the stalks, makes excellent manure for laying on the fields. A single storm will sometimes throw up enough tangle to keep a whole village occupied for two or three months.

[1] The Duke of Argyll, in his pamphlet on *Farms and Crofts*, states that in the season 1880-1 from two to three thousand pounds' worth of kelp and tangle were manufactured in Tyree, representing 376 tons of kelp and 417 tons of tangle. It does not appear what proportion of this sum reached the people.

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Kelp is technically "produced by the incineration of various kinds of sea-weed obtained in great abundance on the west coasts of Ireland and Scotland, and the coast of Brittany in France."

The first chapter in the history of kelp belongs to the time when it was burnt in order to obtain carbonate of soda and other salts, also sulphate of potash and potassium chloride. It was, according to *The Old Statistical Account*, unknown to the Highlands till 1735, when it was but imperfectly introduced by one Rory Macdonald, whom a gentleman in this country (Hugh Macdonald, late tacksman of Balle Share, North Uist) had invited over from Ireland for the purpose of making experiments. In his first attempts he only reduced the sea-weed to ashes, on which account he was called Rhuary na luahigh, or Rory, maker of ashes. Nicknames were then, as they still are, a great feature of Highland humour. At first he sold it at a pound a ton, but gradually it rose in value till some time after the breaking out of the American War. The worthy minister who wrote this account, does not seem to have known that the real enemy to this flourishing Highland industry was Nicholas le Blanc. To the average layman indeed, the name of Le Blanc conveys nothing whatever, yet it is not too much to say that his existence has been as great a misfortune to the Outer Hebrides as if he had been a modern landlord. Born in the year 1753, he was educated in chemistry and surgery and became private surgeon to the Duke of Orleans. For anything one knows to the contrary, he led a blameless life till the year 1787, when, by the offer of a reward of 2,400 livres, by the French Academy, he was incited to an invention which may have been for the greatest good of the greatest number, but which, happening just when it did, perhaps put the coping-stone to the misfortunes of the unhappy population of the Outer Hebrides. It led

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to the depreciation of the value of kelp, the last hope of the old proprietors, already so sadly impoverished by the '45, with all the train of disaster that followed.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* tells us incidentally under the article *Sodium*, that Le Blanc's discovery was "perhaps the most valuable and fertile chemical discovery of modern time," though his name does not otherwise appear in its pages. His discovery brought him little personal good; had he been one of the crofters, of whom he was to be incidentally the ruin, he could hardly have been more unfortunate. For some technical reason, the prize was never awarded, but in 1790, his patron, the Duke of Orleans, agreed to provide a capital of 200,000 francs for working out the process, and in the following year the National Assembly granted him a patent for fifteen years, and works were established at Saint Denis. In less than two years, however, France herself came under the heel of new proprietors, the Duke of Orleans was murdered, Le Blanc was evicted, receiving a mere mockery of compensation (4,000 francs), and, broken in health and spirits, hopeless and without resource, he perished by his own hand in the workhouse.

The invention survived, and so far as the manufacture of soda was concerned, kelp was no longer needed, and it declined in value from twenty-two pounds per ton at the beginning of the century, when 20,000 tons per annum were produced in the Hebrides alone, to ten guineas in 1822. The duty was then taken first off barilla, and then off salt, and the price fell during the next ten years to two pounds. It was at this time that General Macneill, the last of the old Chiefs of Barra, sustained the severe losses that finally compelled the disastrous sale of his island. He had attempted the manufacture of soap, and according to some accounts, of glass, but the cheaper production of soda was more

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and more generally adopted, kelp yielding at best only four per cent., and often only two per cent., and being always for that purpose a more costly source for the manufacturer.

It was about 1755 when one of the authors of the *Old Statistical Account* wrote of the recent importation of barilla after the close of the American War: "It is to be feared the manufacture will be given up entirely, to the utter ruin of the inhabitants of the parish (North Uist), unless Government, to encourage home-manufactures, may look upon the commodities used in the place of it as objects of taxation." Of course Government did nothing of the kind; the problem of Free Trade *v.* Fair Trade is an old, old story, and before very long the products of kelp were made in Germany, at the Starsfurth salt-mines.

About the middle of the present century the industry received a new impetus from the great demand for iodine to be used in the preparation of methyliodide, used in the making of aniline dyes, the crude magentas and violets of 1857 or thereabouts. The presence of iodine in the waste liquors of kelp, had been discovered as early as 1811, but there had hitherto been no demand for it in any quantities. However, for some time kelp was the only commercial source, and it seemed as if prosperity might return to the islands. Before many years had passed, however, another discovery again interfered, and iodine made from Chili saltpetre appeared in the market. Fortunately, however, in 1863 Mr. Edward Stanford came upon the scene, and practically saved the situation. The rude methods in use by the Highlanders tended to the volatisation of the iodine, and by establishing in Tyree a distillery which secured the most careful utilization of all the salts, and by the use of all the most approved methods, the industry has been kept alive to this day, though, since his death in

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1899, it has seemed as if once more kelp were likely to become a drug, not in, but outside of the market, unless, that is, some *deus ex machinâ* should once more appear.

NOTE.—The name of Edward Cortis Stanford (J.P., C.C., F.I.C., F.C.S., late President of the Society of Chemical Industry and a member of the Committee of the British Association for nearly thirty years) ought never to be forgotten in the Western Highlands, not only on account of the scientific skill which enabled him to be of such eminently practical service to a cause which could never have survived without his help, but also for the enthusiasm and love of humanity with which he dedicated his rare knowledge to the service of a people little used to receive kindness from the outside world.

At the early age of twenty-six he received the Silver Medal of the Society of Arts for a paper on the Economic Application of Sea-weed, which led to his association, for thirty years, with the kelp industry of Ireland and the Western Isles. In 1863 works were commenced in Tyree and North Uist, and his improvements in kelp production were shortly after brought into use in Norway. The collection of tangle provided winter work for a great number of men, women, and even children. It was stored, preserved and turned to an immense variety of uses besides the central one of the manufacture of iodine. The works were lighted by gas obtained by its distillation, the ammonia was used as manure, the tar for the roof of the works and the residual charcoal was found of extreme value for sanitary purposes in dealing with domestic sewage. The value of sea-weed as food, in the form of dulse, laver, or Iceland Moss, was put forward, a substance was manufactured for sizing cloth, another for covering boilers, and for preventing boiler-incrustation. Perhaps of these by-products none has attracted more attention than that of Alginoid Iron, which is described (Biographical Sketch by Professor G. G. Henderson) as "a compound which has been found of marked therapeutic value."

Readers may be reminded that apart from his association with the kelp industry, Mr. Stanford rendered signal service to therapeutics by the perfection of a method for extracting Thyroglandin, the active principle of the thyroid gland.

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CHAPTER III

TYREE CHURCHES: SKERRYVORE

THE Island of Tyree is now (September 1901) in the market, and the future of its people hangs in the balance, though, thanks to the work of the Crofters' Commission, the inhabitants of the Hebrides can never again be at the mercy of their non-resident landlords as they have been since the old days when their chiefs—men of like blood and like passions—lived among their own kin. The island fell to the Argylls in 1674, and at that time its annual value was estimated at £1,565 13*s.* 4*d.* (Scots). Its present advertised price is £130,000. but as the newspapers also state that it abounds with game, contains twenty freshwater lakes, and, on account of its fertility, is often styled the granary of the Hebrides, "the kingdom of Tyree," as the American press calls the island, may be considered cheap at the price! Perhaps even the limited amount of fertility, measuring fertility by the cultivation now apparent in the island, would be even less were three-fourths of the "twenty freshwater lakes" known to the inhabitants. As it is, one feels glad to contrast it with the Long Island as possessing a reasonable proportion of dry land.

The extreme flatness of the country makes the drainage of pasture very difficult, and, in many parts, the island is intersected with narrow ditches to carry off the water as far as possible. Now that there is no common pasture as in old times, the cultivated ground

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can never lie fallow, and is therefore under constant tillage and soon gets quite "out of heart." Moreover the local stone is so extremely hard, that it is very difficult to provide enclosures, though lately the introduction of unsightly galvanized wire has done something for the protection of the little crops.

Possibly a new proprietor may make an effort to plant trees, which, as is evidenced by the presence in the ground of roots and nuts, were formerly abundant in Tyree,[1] and which would be of extreme value for shelter. When Dr. Johnson was in Mull he speculated as to the possibility of growing trees in what he calls these "naked regions." There are now fine woods in that island, and as he truly remarks "trees wave their tops among the rocks of Norway and might thrive as well in the Highlands and Hebrides." In Ulva, too, successful planting has been accomplished since his visit.

In a pamphlet published by the Duke of Argyll in 1883, a sort of *Apologia* following upon the *Report of the Crofters' Commission*, his Grace speaks of the enormous increase in the productiveness of the island, and points out that the seven large farms which, in 1847, the year of the Duke's succession, were worth £700, were, at the time of writing, paying a rental of £2,260. He also states, as a counter grievance to which landlords are subject, that some 300 families in the island were paying no rent whatever, i.e. that having built houses for themselves on pieces of useless ground, commonly measuring about thirty feet by fifteen, they were living by their own industry in kelp-making, fishing, and working for the crofters, often—since the common ground was taken away from them to add to

[1] The entire absence of peat, the fuel of the Hebrides, makes it probable that the forests of the island have been destroyed to burn.

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the "productiveness" of the large farms—receiving permission in return to graze a cow or a few sheep on ground for which they, the crofters, paid rent to the Duke.

"The increased productiveness" of the island is, of course, the increased rent roll of the proprietor, since the first principle of the grazing farms is to lay waste all the land under cultivation. The "granary of the Hebrides" now produces nothing worth mentioning, and food for man and beast is imported from America; the landing-boat is so constantly bringing in sacks of flour and grain that the leakage has formed a kind of permanent stratum as its flooring. At the time of the *Agricultural Survey* of 1811, 5,000 acres were under tillage. There was abundance of flax for the linen, and abundance of wool for the cloth, which was so skilfully made in every township; barley, oats, potatoes and turnips were largely cultivated, and "large sums of money were drawn by Tyree for whisky distilled from the excellent barley of this fertile island. . . . The soil varies from pure sand to black moss, and in some places, being the decomposition of limestone and mixed with calcareous matters, is eminently fertile and susceptible of the most profitable and lucrative system of regular agriculture. . . . The whole yields a beautiful specimen of Hebridean verdure in summer and autumn, and exhibits, from a conical tumulus near the centre, a display of richness unparalleled in any of the Hebrides" (pp. 721–2).

Now one may walk for miles without seeing a single sign of cultivation or, indeed, sight or sound of life but the bleating of sheep and the lowing of cattle, or any reminder of humanity even in the most fertile spots but heaps of crumbling stones and patches of brighter verdure to mark the sites of happy villages. These at least serve for abundant explanation of the

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"largely increased productiveness" in the *rent* of the seven large farms![1]

It is with some diffidence that I venture upon any account of the antiquities of Tyree, because I know well that they will be described with far more skill and minuteness than I can lay claim to, by Mr. Erskine Beveridge in a forthcoming work upon *The Ecclesiastical and other Remains*, in the island.

Perhaps, unless we except the so-called "Druidical" Standing-stone in Balinoe, the oldest memorial in Tyree, older even than the Culdee Churches, is the *Clach a Choire*, the ringing-stone—literally the "kettle" stone—which stands a little removed from the shore near Balephetrish, not far from the old marble quarries. It is a mass of stone, roughly cubical, balanced upon one edge, and computed to weigh about ten tons. When struck, no matter where, or however slightly, it sends forth a clear ringing note. The people have a tradition that the stone is hollow and contains gold, but happily they have also another tradition to the effect that when the ringing-stone is cleft, Tyree will sink. On the surface of the stone are some thirty circular indentations, which I think most persons familiar with such things in other places, would unhesitatingly suppose to be cup-markings, but which, it is only fair to say, are also explained away as traces of many years of experimental stone-tapping. Apart from the fact that it seems hardly likely that even in the course of ages, native curiosity would

[1] According to an article in the *Scotsman* quoted by Macfarlane in one of the very informing *Land Tracts* commenting upon the Duke's *Apologia* (1885), the rental at that time, exclusive of shooting (generally let to an Englishman), is £5,360. Of this £2,658, nearly half, is paid by the six tenants holding the seven large farms; farmers and crofters divide the attenuated remainder, and 400 persons have no land whatever. One farmer alone pays £1,232 and the factor £610. The fact that both are men liked and respected in the island, does not make life any easier for those deprived of the means of sustenance.

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compass so prominent a result, there is nothing to differentiate this rock from others admittedly "cup-marked" elsewhere, and they are found in great numbers in the British Isles and in Scandinavia.[1]

As has already been mentioned, Tyree was at one time the farm of Iona, and is probably the Terra Ethica or Ethica Insula of Adamnan. Small as is the island, one is not surprised to find in it the remains of five Churches said to be of Columban origin. Indeed there are various stories of visits from the saint himself, and certain it is that in Gott Bay one rock alone remains barren where all others are covered with sea-weed, owing, it is said, to its having caused the wreck of his coracle, and of its being cursed in consequence!

As a matter of fact, but three of the Churches are still standing, and this is a result, not of natural decay, for indeed, judging from what is left, the massive walls may still long defy the ravages of time, but from wilful destruction, in one instance so lately as the year 1898.

The most flagrant example is that of the Church at Soraby, which, from its position at the most thickly populated end of the island, and from the quality of the sculptured stones and monuments about it, was probably the most important in Tyree.

In Muir's very interesting work, *Characteristics of Old Church Architecture*, 1861, we read: "The Church,

[1] Except incidentally, and in a special chapter, I do not enter upon the large question of the Scandinavian remains in this and other islands. In remains of duns and forts Tyree is especially rich, and some of the finest specimens of "grave goods" found in Scotland have come from this island. The literary traits of the Vikings, their stories and traditions, have been most admirably dealt with by the Rev. John Gregorson Campbell, late minister of Tyree, and by his sister Mrs. Wallace, still resident at Hynish, in two volumes quite unique of their kind and beyond all praise, for the perseverance and true love of the island and of folk-lore literature which they display.

The archaeology of the subject will, I am confident, receive adequate treatment in Mr. Beveridge's forthcoming volume.

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of which there is barely the merest trace, was taken down not many years ago, much, as I was told, to the regret of the Duke of Argyll; but how it happened that any one possessed the privilege of grieving his Grace, without his Grace's permission to do so, no one could venture to say." The disgraceful act of wanton destruction was repeated in 1898, when the Church of Kil Phedrig (St. Peter) was ruthlessly thrown down by two idle lads "for amusement." The Duke was at once apprised of the event by a visitor to the island, in the hope that some steps might be taken for the better protection of the three ruins remaining. Nothing whatever was done, but happily the reverence of a naturally religious people, of a people proud moreover of the beauty and antiquity of their island, was deeply shocked, and I found on a recent visit, that the fact that both of the marauders have since died, has been wholesomely connected with their misdoings, as cause and effect.

The site of the Church at Soraby is one of deepest interest. Dr. Reeves speaks of it as "the Campus Lunge of Adamnan, lying over against Iona, retaining its old relation to the Abbacy there, and partially retaining the old name in the little creek of Port na Lung." Adamnan mentions two monasteries in Tyree, the one at Soraby under the charge of Baithen, afterwards the successor of the Saint in Iona.

It seems to have been the mother Church of the Deanery of the Isles, and later, the burial place of the Chiefs of the Clan Maclean, the proprietors of the island, who are commemorated by a fine sculptured stone cross of handsome proportions, though now much sunken into the ground.

There is also the stem of another cross, commemorating the Abbess Anna, which is said, by antiquarians, to have been removed from Iona, though one fails

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to see that the notion of an Abbess of Iona being originally buried near the daughter Church of Soraby, has in it anything inconceivable. It bears a curious sculpture of death armed with a spade, carrying off a female ecclesiastic, the whole being surmounted by a canopy.

In the churchyard there are some dozen or so of the flat stones familiar to all visitors to these districts, known as "Iona Stones," beautifully sculptured with elaborate Celtic ornamentation, and also alleged to have been "carried away from Iona," though again one fails to see why. Tradition does not attempt to explain away the existence of some equally elaborate, though needless to say not equally beautiful, stones, apparently of seventeenth century origin, probably commemorating some of the Maclean family, though they are now in so neglected and dilapidated a condition, covered with weeds and rubbish, that beyond the fact that the carving appears to be heraldic with heavy canopies and in the Jacobean style, one can say nothing about them, nor do I find them anywhere described. The Argylls obtained the island in 1674, the stones are not of a type likely to commemorate any but the chiefs of the island, and one may therefore venture to assume the Maclean theory. The special interest of a more modern corner of this graveyard has been commented upon in connexion with the Skerryvore Lighthouse.

The fragment of wall which is all that remains of Teampul Phedrig, the Church of St. Peter, also wantonly destroyed, lies at the foot of Kenevara Hill, at the south-west point of the island. Among the wreckage of broken stone Mr. Beveridge found and pieced together two incised Latin crosses carved on unhewn stones, and close by is a well, known as St. Peter's Well, and traditionally used for baptism.

Another small Church (33 by 5 feet), still standing at

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the west side of the island near the Greenhill farm (which is not green-hill at all, but *Grianul*: sunny spot), is known as Kil Kenneth, the Church of Kenneth, and is rapidly changing its aspect on account of the nature of its position. It is surrounded on three sides by sand banks which threaten to overwhelm the little building entirely, and which, in all likelihood, have already covered what it might be worth the antiquary's while to investigate. The irregular outlines of the sand-heaps at least suggest the presence of possible piles of stone, if of nothing more. The side where the ground slopes away (as possibly also the other ground surrounding it) was, until within the last century, used as a graveyard, but owing to the shifting nature of the soil, the bones at one time became exposed and the practice was discontinued.

Now, as in course of time generally happens, the machair or plain of loose sand thrown up by the sea is becoming overgrown with bent grass, the roots of which tend to hold it together.

This phenomenon perplexed Dr. Johnson during his visit to the neighbouring island of Coll. Boswell records: "On Monday we had a dispute whether sand-hills could be fixed down by art. Dr. Johnson said 'How *the devil* can you do it?' but instantly corrected himself, 'How can you do it?'" The unwonted excitement betrayed his perplexity, but the answer is simple and constantly to be met with in the islands—"Sow the plain with bent grass."

The two remaining Churches stand close together on the south side of the island at Kirkapol, above Gott Bay, each on its separate mound, far from any visible habitation, in a sunny spot, where in summer one walks knee-deep in flowers, where the larks sing overhead, and the sea, blue and friendly, laps on the silvery sand below.

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The sea seems to have receded somewhat, judging from the outline of what one may call the inner shore, and from the fact that a marshy plain now lies between what looks like the former edge of the island and the shore as outlined now. The smaller of the two Churches stands bare and unenclosed on a mound of solid rock which crops up irregularly within the walls—still almost entire. The Church is very small, not more than twenty-three feet by five, inside measurement, and is probably the older of the two. It is of the most elementary character possible, so far as its architecture goes, though structurally immensely strong, being of rough unhewn stone and of considerable thickness.

The windows, mere slits on the outer side, are in the north and south, the door in the west, wall. The east, as usual in these single-chambered Churches, is blank. It is not at all unusual to find two Churches side by side, the older the smaller of the two, as if the congregation had outgrown its accommodation.[1]

The larger Church (36 by 9 feet, inside measurement) is not later than the thirteenth century. It has two doorways, one south-west, the other, at the west, flanked by a dedication cross. It is probably the "parochial Church of Kerepol in the diocese of the Sudreys," mentioned in a document of Pope Gregory XI., Sept. 20, 1375. As we usually find in the islands, the old Celtic Church, not the modern Kirk, is the chosen burial place of the people, and accordingly this larger Church, which occupies a more sheltered position than its neighbour, has an enclosure where, among various grave stones, one finds again the sculptured "Iona stones," beautiful in the decay of all around and still showing their exquisite detail of tracery, though utterly neglected and grown

[1] Such proximity is not very unusual in the Hebrides, and at Skealost, in the island of Skye, on an islet in the river Snizort, is a group of five or six such chapels.

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over with nettles, and sometimes broken. Though the first parish Church was built in Tyree about 1776 and the first Presbyterian ordained minister, Ferchard Frazer, came somewhere about the middle of the seventeenth century, the burial of the people about the old Churches of their forefathers has never been interrupted, though they now speak of the Columban "teampuls" as "Roman Catholic" in much the same spirit in which the Americans claim Shakespeare as one of themselves, because he was born before they split off from England.

Here, therefore, as at Soraby, we find that a large burial ground has been added close by, where, even apart from antiquarian researches, one may find much of human interest, much which reveals the life of the people. More than one sailor is commemorated as belonging to a ship "last heard of" in such a latitude, or, as the thought is paraphrased in one instance :

> No marble column marks the spot
> Where he doth lie asleep ;
> We only know his resting place
> Is somewhere in the deep.

Even here, under a June sky, the whole foreground bright with golden iris and buttercup, and spangled with great ox-eye daisies, the very ruins, bright with harebells and pink thrift, the starlings, with characteristic want of reticence, carrying on their domestic affairs at the top of the wall almost within touch—the blue sea gently splashing on the white shore below, one is reminded of the hungry waves outside, creeping, watching, ever waiting for their prey. Night by night when the great lights of Barra and Skerryvore, and the nearer answering island-lights of Scarinish and Hynish flash out, one realizes something of what human science and ingenuity and perseverance have done to circumvent the cruelty of the great deep.

Another never-ending fascination in Tyree is the

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Skerryvore lighthouse. Directly the sun god dies down in the Atlantic, one instinctively turns from the great nature pageant of the west to look for the wonderful triumph of the genius of man, as the light flashes out, fourteen miles away to the south.

Once every minute that restless eye is turned upon the surrounding ocean, keeping guard over the merciless waves, linking in one great brotherhood of pity all those who go by on the highway of the Atlantic. Once every minute the light flashes out, smiling, as it were, upon this little island of its birth, for here its stones were quarried, here its brave artisans made their homes, here many of them rest under the green grass of Soraby Churchyard. And then the great eye turns away and rests for a moment on Iona, twenty miles to the south, like itself a testimony of the triumph of man: where kings and priests and law-givers lie buried, and the grey ruins of Cathedral and Monastery keep guard over their graves, the monument of great days that are past, of hopes and dreams never realized, of Art that remains and Time that goes by. Just a glance, too, it gives in the direction of the distant mainlands, Donegal on the one hand, Argyll on the other, each fifty miles away, and then with a friendly response from the brother light thirty-three miles north-west on Barra Head, the great eye closes, and for a long, lonely minute all is darkness.

And in these moments of dark, black void, one's mind turns back to the horror of a time when darkness moved upon the face of the deep. Thirty-one wrecks upon the murderous rocks south of Tyree are recorded in the fifty years that immediately precede the erection of the Skerryvore, and such a list is inevitably far from complete, for those murderous rocks saw many a gallant vessel go to pieces, of which there is no record but "foundered at sea."

After every severe storm in old days, there was a

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grim harvest to be gathered in by the men of Tyree: timber, so precious in these treeless islands, foreign stuffs and strange merchandise, and even to this day one constantly hears, in explanation of the presence of some piece of drapery or plenishing which looks strange in its present surroundings, that "it came off a wreck."

As long ago as 1804, Robert Stevenson visited the Great Rock, the *Skerry Vhor*,[1] and it is to his genius that we owe, at all events the initiation, of the great work so effectively carried out nearly forty years later, by his son Alan. It is reported that he declared such an erection feasible, though "the Eddystone Lighthouse and the Bell Rock would be a joke to it."

He went again in 1814, and it is interesting to recall that Sir Walter Scott, as one of the Commissioners of Northern Lights, was of the party, and has recorded the visit in his Diary.

"Having crept upon deck about four in the morning, I find we are beating to windward off the Isle of Tyree, with the determination, on the part of Mr. Stevenson, that his constituents should visit a reef of rocks called Skerry Vhor, where he thought it would be essential to have a Lighthouse. Loud remonstrances on the part of the Commissioners, who, one and all, declare they will subscribe to his opinion, whatever it may be, rather than continue the infernal buffeting. Quiet perseverance on the part of Mr. S., and great kicking, bouncing, and squabbling upon that of the yacht, who seems to like the idea of Skerry Vhor as little as the Commissioners. At length by dint of exertion, come in sight of this long ridge of rocks (chiefly under water) on which the tide breaks in a most tremendous style."

[1] i.e. the Big Scaur, or rock.

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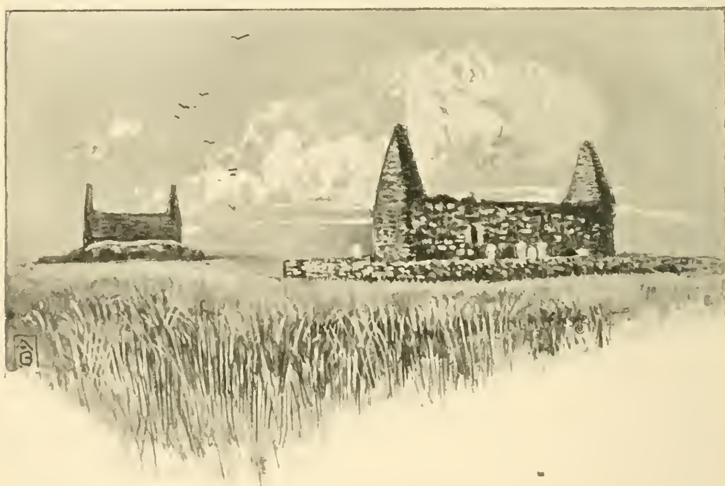
Sir Walter himself was one of the three or four who had courage to land and to explore these wave-washed islets, bestowing upon them, he says, "our unworthy names." Stevenson's rock and Mackenzie's rock still commemorate the occasion, but so far as I know, the visit of the great "Wizard of the North" is forgotten. It is indeed curious how little he is remembered in the Western Highlands.

An Act of Parliament empowering the erection was passed in the same year, but the difficulties were



COLUMBAN CHURCHES AT KIRKAPOL, TYREE.

so great that the work was postponed till 1838. Mr. Alan Stevenson has himself given us the history[1] of the immense undertaking, which, in spite of the difficulties, was carried through in five years without a single disaster to life, though, during the first year the barrack put up for the men was entirely swept away.

The difficulties can be only faintly imagined even by those who have seen the triumph of Mr. Stevenson.

[1] *Skerryvore Lighthouse* (Edinburgh, 1848).

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Immediately south of Tyree is a fairly clear passage about five miles broad, beyond that is a wilderness of low-lying rocks impossible to pass except in favourable weather. Even in the well-known "Tyree passage," Mr. Stevenson tells us, there is often "a sea such as no ship can possibly live in." Often the steamer carrying stores or material would have to return after its fourteen miles' journey to the special harbour made on purpose for this undertaking at Hynish in Tyree. Often the temporary barrack on Skerryvore, sixty feet high, was obscured from view by the uprising of the sea, and those on the watch at Hynish were unable to see the signals of those at work on the rock.

Then the rock itself, polished by the Atlantic waves for thousands of years, had acquired such a glassy and rounded smoothness, that, as the foreman said, "it was like climbing up the side of a bottle." Moreover, the possible working year for such an undertaking in the Hebrides is very short. Perhaps, worst of all, Mr. Stevenson tells us, was the fact that "Tyree is unhappily destitute of any shelter for shipping, a fact which was noticed as a hindrance to its improvement upwards of 140 years ago by Martin, in his well-known description of the Western Isles. . . . It was, therefore, obvious at a glance, that Tyree was one of those places to which everything must be brought; and this is not much to be wondered at, as the population . . . labour under all the disadvantages of remoteness from markets, inaccessible shores, and stormy seas, and the oft-recurring toil of transporting fuel (of which Tyree itself is destitute) from the Island of Mull, nearly thirty miles distant, through a stormy sea."

Another difficulty was that of quarrying among the gneiss rocks of Tyree, a difficulty which, as has been pointed out, is the cause of the very remarkable

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domestic architecture (if one may so say) characteristic of the Island.

When one realizes that the weight of the tower is 4,308 tons, and when one reflects upon the difficulties of conveying that amount of material across so dangerous a passage, one feels that it is not only in the pyramids of Egypt or the giant cities of Bashan that man has shown his master-hand !

Strange to say, Mr. Alan Stevenson tells us, it was from Egyptian Art that modern science unconsciously borrowed the curve of greatest resistance, and in his drawing of Pthah, the symbol of *stability*. one cannot fail to recognise the inevitable and now familiar outline of every modern pharos.

The tower is 138 feet high, and the light is visible for 150 feet above high water even in spring tides. It is 42 feet in diameter at the base, and 16 feet at the top. At Hynish we still find the quaint little village, covering about fifteen acres of ground, where the pier, the stores, the works, the signal watch-tower, and the dwellings for four lighthouse-keepers were erected.

The pier is now disused, and the store and houses turned to other purposes, for this model village, of which its originator was so justly proud as one of the most comfortable lighthouse settlements in existence, proved, after all, to be so inaccessible, thanks to the difficulties of life in Tyree already enumerated, that it had to be abandoned and a settlement made at far greater distance—in Mull.

In one other spot in Tyree we find the footprints of these five years. Though in the course of their dangerous work there were no disasters to life, as Mr. Alan Stevenson gratefully records, death nevertheless took his tribute, and some dozen gravestones, bearing English names, standing together in a remote corner

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of the Soraby churchyard, remain to record what must have been a strange interlude in the lives of that little colony of English workmen who, more than fifty years ago, so bravely fought against an enemy more merciless, more strong, than any whom their fellow men subdued but a few years later at Lucknow or Balaclava.

Of his foreman, Heddle, Mr. Stevenson speaks in terms of no common gratitude. In spite of mortal disease he fought bravely to the last, taking often not more than twenty hours' sleep in a week, so conscious was he of the supreme value of time in the difficult and dangerous work he had undertaken. Of other tragedies one gets only a glimpse. Charles Fyfe, "blacksmith to the Skerryvore works," buried his little daughters of seven and five. Poor little southern lassies, fading away in surroundings of food and climate and housing, (they died in 1841, before the Hynish village was finished) as strange to them as a foreign country. George Middleton, foreman of joiners, only thirty-two years of age, died suddenly in 1839. James Mitchell, mason, scarcely older, died also in the same year. Hird, Walker, Watson are among the names here, all sounding strange and foreign in this land of Celtic patronymics.

There is an undercurrent of some emotion only hinted at in one inscription, which, like so much of human pathos, is on the borderland of smile and tear:

Erected by John Smith
In Memory
OF HIS INFANT SON,
Died 27th December, 1841.
Aged 18 days.

When the Archangel's trump shall sound,
And souls to bodies join,
Millions on earth would wish their days
Had been as few as mine.

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It must have been with a heavy heart that the bereaved father went back to his weary work. Perhaps the healing hand of Time, and his companionship with Nature even in her wilder moods, may have brought him a more hopeful outlook. Even the granite walls of the Skerryvore Lighthouse have a human interest infinitely pathetic.

The human interest of the Hebrides, with all their simplicity of life, is nowhere stronger than in Tyree, where, to a full measure of plain living, the extreme intelligence of the people adds a degree of high thinking rarely to be found. There is a saying among the people that "if Tyree does not grow trees, it grows ministers and deep-sea captains"; that is to say, that there is an intense desire for education and for self-improvement of every kind. In the *Edinburgh Review* of June, 1827, it is asserted, on the strength of recent statistics, that "seventy per cent. in the Hebrides cannot read." Whatever may have been the case then, it is certainly very different now. There are five excellent schools in the island, of the work of two of which, those of Hylipol and Cornaig, I can speak from intimate personal knowledge, and which I desire to commend, if only for the zeal and intelligence which makes the study of Gaelic a prominent part of education. That this should be done was strongly recommended in the *Report of the Crofters' Commission*, and though the acquiring of good English is of great importance, to expect children to accomplish the elaborate curriculum set before them by our Board of Education, *in a language foreign to them*, seems, in the case of young children, a senseless waste of brain power. The island of Tyree stands very high in respect of examinations, and I only regret that it is impossible to quote, as would be very easy to do, many names distinguished in the literary, educational and commercial world of men

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who owe their success to the hardy, wholesome, intellectual up-bringing they received in the island of Tyree. We have seen classes in geometry, Latin and navigation, in which the knowledge displayed by barefooted children out of "black" houses would have shamed the sons of our aristocracy at Eton or Harrow. We have been the privileged guests at tea-tables where the hospitality was of the simplest, but where we knew that the brothers of the little herd-boy who ate his "piece" outside the door were gentlemanly, scholarly students of the Glasgow or Edinburgh University, where he too may probably go if he, like them, can win the bursaries which have made their education possible. There is no mere vulgar "bettering themselves" obvious in all this; simply "they needs must love the highest when they see it," and the minister's brother may be a ploughboy without the very slightest thought of humiliation on either side.

The girls of the island are intelligent too, and make admirable school-mistresses. Nor is their domestic education despised. There are classes in various womanly accomplishments, and the Tyree girls are very different in regard to personal neatness and daintiness from those in any other island. Cleanliness and order seem to be innate, and it is interesting to find this remarked upon so long ago as in the report of the *Glasgow Highland Relief Board* of 1849, when, even in the period of depression following upon the lamentable evictions of that year, the appearance of the people and of their homes testified to their self-respect.

Even the "black houses," i.e. those thatched with turf or heather, can be made exceedingly comfortable, and in one case we know well, even elegant. The whitewash used here round the outside of doors and windows gives an air of brightness to the rough grey

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stone, and the ingenuity of the patterns drawn upon the flagged flooring often found in the island, testifies not only to the industry but to the skill and artistic taste of the artist. They are often of the true Celtic type, accurately drawn in roughly outlined squares and renewed every day, so that one cannot but suspect that some talent for drawing is among the native gifts.

There are some good pipers in the island, and we were delighted, at the Hylipol School, to find that the master had introduced the pipes as a most original accompaniment to the school drill. We were present on a festive occasion, when a bonnie lad, himself a pupil, in full Highland dress, marched at the head of his school with as fine an air as if he were leading his clan to do or die, and they, quite as proud as he, did full credit to his inspiriting strains, afterwards, at our special request, ending up with a reel.

Tyree is the only island which has no specially distinctive patronymic, some say because the population was largely recruited about the time of the '15, but whether by fugitives who had been "out" or by those who sought, under the shadow of the Argylls, a protection against the contempt of their clans for not going "out," it might be better not to inquire.

Another obvious reason for the absence of any prevailing surname is the length of time that has elapsed since the island was orphaned of its chief, though of course the name of Maclean is still very usual. The Macneills too are an old Tyree family, and are said to have been among the followers of St. Columba, who predicted that there would never be more than twelve of them in any one branch. "There are still two," one of the clan told us, "over yonder, Donald and Sandy; and Donald had eight sons, and some persons were saying old Columcille would be done yet; but whenever they would be marrying they would

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be dying"—*whenever*, it should be remembered, being Highland for "as soon as." The Browns, too, have been long in Tyree; according to some, they were the bards of the Macdonalds, and their name, *Brunaich*, means *to sing*. It will be remembered that the lady who brought Tyree to the Macleans as her dowry was a daughter of the Lord of the Isles.

The old stronghold of the Macleans was a castle on an island. After being long a ruin, it was restored and enlarged for the use of the factor. The lake was drained, and only part of the old walls, of immense thickness, and the name of "Island House" remain to tell the story of the past.

Only the shade of Dr. Johnson summons us to Coll, accessible by boat from Tyree. However, the island is not without interest, though much has been sacrificed to sport, and what remains is not immediately obvious, as the people live quite away from the landing place, having been removed from the larger share of the surface and crowded together in one district. The sea-coast is bolder than that of Tyree, and though no hill is as high as Ben Hynish, the general aspect is more uneven. The soil is light and sandy, and, as in Tyree, horse-grazing is found profitable. There is no accommodation for visitors, and, indeed, nothing to attract any but the archaeologist. For him the island has considerable interest, as there are the remains of three religious houses and the old castle of Breacacha, which dates back even before the Macleans and which ceased to be inhabited more than 150 years ago.

In spite of the existence of eight dunes or forts which may be taken as probably denoting Danish occupation, the nomenclature is largely of later interest, and points to the remembrance of the continuous quarrel between the chiefs of Coll and the MacNeills of Barra; for example, in Baugh Chlaiun Neill—the Bay of MacNeill, or

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Slochd na dunach—the pit of havoc, where a fearful slaughter of the enemy is still remembered.

At the west end of the island are two upright stones about six feet high, and probably formerly still more prominent, as these "standing stones" tend to sink into the ground.

The Maclean occupation of Coll was, so to speak, an accident of their occupation of Tyree. It was, once upon a time, in the hands of three brothers from Lochlin, i.e. three Vikings from Scandinavia, but, at the instigation of Maclean of Dowart, one of his clan, Tain Garbh (Stout John), fought and defeated them. Beyond this legend, which is told at great length, the island has little history. The Macleans seem to have used the people well, and even in that melancholy *pibroch* of a book, Macleod's *Gloomy Memories*, it is said that Maclean of Coll was kind and liberal, but the island deteriorated from want of capital. A considerable part is now consecrated to "sport" and the preservation of game, but at the end nearest Tyree there are a considerable number of crofts, largely, I believe, owned by the family of Dr. Buchanan, whose skill, kindness and unselfish devotion to his profession have so long endeared him to the people of Tyree, that one cannot but feel assured of the equal regard which the same qualities must have gained for him among his tenants in Coll.

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CHAPTER IV

THE CEILIDH IN TYREE

NO account of the Outer Isles in general, nor more especially of Tyree in particular, would be complete without a description of the *Ceilidh*. It has been my privilege at various times to offer prizes in certain islands for essays written in Gaelic and in English upon this among other such subjects as are most familiar to the young authors. Rather than attempt in the first place any account of the custom of *Ceilidh* in my own words, I will quote from some of the essays sent to me under these circumstances, by boys and girls in the island of Tyree, confident that the inquiring reader will thank me for this glimpse, at first hand, of island life. I wish I could quote from all or almost all that lie before me, for, though many deal with similar details, each writer has something individual in his or her point of view. The first I give word for word as it stands :—

We are here in an island that is not altogether out of the way. Steamers call at it very often and so in this island we are not so ignorant regarding the affairs of the South as people would think. There is nothing more certain than that we are very superstitious throughout all the Western Islands of Scotland, but whether the Lowlanders will believe the tales that the old Highlanders tell, or not, we have reason to believe them.

In this island we have the custom of assembling together during the long winter nights to pass them off in happiness and mirth. We call this "Ceilidh."

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Well then the house in which we generally assemble is that of Hector, son of Donald, a kind-hearted, grey-headed old man who always earns his daily bread with zeal. I should not be acting justly if I did not bring before you his wife, for often did she pleasantly pass the evening with us, telling us her stories, of which she has a great many. She too is not young now and so you will not wonder, though she should have tales about wonderful things.

To show you therefore how the evening is spent in Hector's house, I will tell you about a certain night I happened to enter myself. Hector and his wife were sitting at the fire and on a bench at the other side of the house was a modest young man that was always one of the "Ceilidh" company. He was named "Red John." When I entered I began to tell the fright I got, as the night was so dark. I was hearing a most wonderful sound somewhat like the grunting of a pig, but though I searched as best as I could, no pig could I see. Then I got greatly frightened and I thought myself too slow to escape.

Red John: "It was a pig no doubt, but I daresay you will be of the opinion that it was something unearthly."

I (the Writer): "Indeed, I know not, but I got frightened whatever."

Hector's Wife: "Are you not foolish, John, if somebody were in his place with the gift of second-sight, it is a wonder to me if he would not see that it was not a pig. If it were a pig could he not have seen it himself? Indeed, there is somebody to die sooner or later and you shall have something to do about him. You may laugh, John, but there is such a thing as second-sight, and the effects of an evil eye, and I would not say but there is witchcraft yet, at least there was such a thing."

Hector: "No doubt but there is every such thing you mention and I will prove that in part. I remember of a good looking girl in our own township, who stayed near the seashore with her father and mother and there is nothing surer than that she saw a vision. I did not see anything, thanks to the Lord, and I do not

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wish to see it, but nevertheless she told me that much. She went one night to the well with two pails to fetch water and there she saw the form of a man. She understood that he was not earthly as he did not speak, and being frightened she fled home."

Hector's Wife: "He was seeking something surely."

Hector: "Undoubtedly, for in a little time a good-looking young man was killed under a boat, while being launched, and his appearance being ugly on account of the bruise, this young woman covered his face with her shoulder shawl."

John: "This was what he wanted the night he was at the well? But who is this coming in?"

Hector: "Is this you Archibald? Come up and sit near the fire, the night is so cold."

Archibald: "How are you all here to-night? Who occupies the chair? or who does the talking?"

John: "Well it was Hector the head of the house that was trying to make us believe about second-sight. What do you say to that?"

Archibald: "I indeed believe it, although I never saw anything myself, but I cannot at all believe in the effects of an evil eye, and foolish things of that kind."

Hector's Wife: "Is not the one thing as possible as the other, at least to one that has only what he hears from others? Hector already told you about second-sight, and many are the stories that I myself heard about second-sight, and now will you not believe me if I tell you about the effects of an evil eye?"

John: "Do then, it will pass the evening anyway. A story is pleasant though it be even untrue, and often can lies be polished."

Hector's Wife: "You do nothing but talk about lies. Well then I tell you if more would believe in an evil eye, sickness that cannot be understood would not be so often amongst men and beasts. I remember of a fine grey mare my grandfather had, and her equal was not in the near townships. She was strong as horse that ever was stabled. One day however, as she was ploughing, in the twinkling of an eye she fell and stretched her head and neck, and nothing could be done to her but to give her a drop of good

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whisky that my grandmother brewed. Then a certain man in the township who was nicknamed the 'Lord' advised us to send for a healing bottle to Flora, daughter of Peter, and said that it was a wonder if it would not prove of great use. The mare seemed to be lost anyhow, and so they sent for the bottle. It was got and sprinkled on the beast, and immediately she rose, shook herself, and was whole."

John: "Perhaps if your grandfather himself had put the water on her she would be all right. It was just weakness that was wrong with her."

Hector's Wife: "Oh! how content you are in being foolish. Don't you see that there was no use in the water unless the good woman had put some charm into it to do good? Understand, that it was some one who would not wish good luck for my grandfather, that brought that on the mare by evil powers. Powers given to evil people are the charms properly. You know there are many charms, such as a charm to produce unlawful love, a charm to make a cow allow the calf of another to suck her, a charm to drown a foe, and a charm to do evil to a person."

Archibald: "It is there now the wonders come in. What is the charm? Whether do you say about the one that harmed the mare that she had an evil eye or that she was a witch?"

Hector's Wife: "She had an evil eye, but you can almost call it witchcraft itself. Those that knew witchcraft troubled people in various ways, by ruining their properties, bringing death into their families and such troubles. Some say that this is only a revenge for something done by the ancestors of the man though it were by his great grandfather.

John: "I can hardly believe it although you put so much light on it for me. And yet I am somewhat afraid to go home alone."

Hector: "Throughout all the Highlands this sort of superstition is believed, and the stories are told and that often by those that saw or felt something in some way, and do you yourself think that they would all tell lies? To-day the Lowlander spurns them, but if it is truth that they tell, and I believe it is, why need they care?"

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John: "It is now late. Good night."
Hector: "Good night, and may you go home safe."

The next writer too. deserves to be quoted without curtailment. if only for the picture he draws of everyday Highland life.

Tyree, at its best, is not a very cheery place, especially in winter. One of the greatest difficulties which meet the young men is "How to spend the long winter nights." This, however, should present no difficulty to them, for it has been a custom in Tyree from very early times for the young men of each village to come together into one house and spend the time in various conversation—story-telling in particular. This gathering together we call "Ceilidh."

A welcome always awaits the young men no matter into whose house they go. They always have one who acts as spokesman, and he, as soon as they all have seats, stands up and says "The first story, we expect, comes from the man of the house, and we ourselves undertake to fill up the rest of the time by each of us telling a story in turn." The next to him then gets up and says, "I and my friends agree to that. Let the stories begin with the man of the house and pass on to the next till the last gives his own story." In this manner many stories are told.

One night last winter I and a friend went to "Ceilidh" to the house of an old man who was known to be a good story-teller. He was a man who firmly believed in ghosts and everything connected with the supernatural.

We were not long seated when we asked the old man to tell us a story. This he consented to do on condition that each of us would give another story when he finished. We agreed, and then the old man began the following story:—

"In my younger days I was a shepherd and I passed many a lonely day while thus occupied. I had to go at a certain time of the year (lambing season) from the house in which I was staying to another one, the reason being that it was more

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suitable for my work. This house to which I was sent was situated in a very picturesque but lonely place. The inmates of it consisted of an elderly woman and her daughter; they had come to this house only the previous year: they were a respectable, God-fearing pair, but there was something about them which did not agree with them (of this you shall hear later on).

"There were three apartments in this house—a kitchen, room and bedroom. I slept in a bed in the room.

"I was one day kept busier than usual and on coming home I felt more inclined for rest than for meat. However, I took a light supper and immediately after retired to the room with the intention of going into bed at once, but as there was a good fire on, and a comfortable chair standing in front of it, I thought I would sit down for a while. I sat down and, as might be expected, soon fell asleep.

"I might have passed the night comfortable enough in this ludicrous position had not circumstance willed otherwise. I slept in a chair for about four hours, when, strange to say, I woke up. (You may be sure it must have been some unusual thing that roused me from such a deep sleep.) I was not, as is generally the case, in the least drowsy on wakening; I rather felt in a nervous and excited mood—such a feeling as often follows the hearing of bad news. As I thus sat looking into the almost extinguished fire I heard a most weird and unnatural sound coming from somewhere in the room, but I could not exactly tell whence it came. The sound was not loud but was piercing.

"Strange to say, I can never recall that night to mind, but I hear as plain as ever the somewhat inarticulate sound. If it belonged to any language it was Gaelic and was like the word 'Mathair' (mother).

"For a short time I lived in the hope that it was my own imagination that had bodied forth the form of the thing unknown, but I soon thought otherwise, for shortly after hearing the sound, the woman of the house came into the room, ghastly pale, and asked me if I was well. I told her there was nothing wrong with me further than a little curiosity to know what was the meaning of

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the sound I heard. She was surprised on hearing that I only heard it once; she seemed to have heard the self-same sound twice.

"I concluded from what she told me that it must have been the first sound that wakened me. I asked her if she heard such a sound at any other time; she replied she did not but said she had seen a little incident or two during the night which she thought had better never be repeated, and do what I could she would reveal nothing. (So you see, my friends, a most interesting part of the story died with the woman; she ended her days not far from there in a peaceful and happy manner.)

"I asked her if she and her daughter slept together, and she replied that she had just left her quietly sleeping. After a little further talk we bade each other good-night.

"I was up early in the morning, having passed a very wretched and uneasy night. As usual I went up to the kitchen to have a cup of tea before taking my usual turn round the hill. The blinds were still down on the windows and all was still. At length I heard some one speaking in the bedroom and I thought that, as usual, one of the women was rising to get the tea ready for me. I heard the mother say 'A Mhairi eirich' (Mary get up). This sentence was repeated several times; at length a dead silence ensued. The next thing I heard was 'John, come here, quick, come here, quick!' I ran over to the bedroom and on entering it, I saw the mother ghastly pale sitting by the bedside. She made no attempt to speak but pointed to the bed, and when I approached it, she burst into a flood of tears. It never dawned upon me till now what might have happened. The mother had a hold of her daughter's hand, which was stiff and cold as ice. I looked into the youthful face that had been, the night before, o'erspread with innocent smiles and I saw that that which was, could be no more. The young girl was dead.

"The sound I heard through the night came from the trumpet of the Unseen; its warning notes sound but on very rare occasions, but blessed are we that such sounds are heard; they are unaccountable, but their beauty lies in this."

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The old man's story pleased us very much and we heartily thanked him for telling it.

My companion, seeing his own turn had come, then began :—

"Well, my friends, my story is not very long but it is quite true, for I myself played a prominent part in it. I was only a young man of eighteen years when I attended the Mull Market (at Sálen) for the first time, but till the end of my days I shall remember the dreadful night I passed there.

"I got the horse, which was sent with me, sold in the early part of the day, and since I had nothing more to do I thought I would take a look round the place. I walked for about eight miles down the country and when I came back I was very tired.

"Night was now approaching and I felt very hungry as well as tired. Being a stranger I knew not where to seek lodgings. I saw a dark-looking house, not far away, which was not very inviting, but one will go anywhere when hungry, so up I went and knocked at the door. A nice-looking woman answered the knock, and when I told her how matters were, she said that I was welcome to spend the night there. She told me to go in and sit at the fire till she would get something ready for me.

"The people were very kind to me, and I spent a very happy evening with them. When bedtime came I was shown to my room. Before leaving they told me I would have a companion sleeping in the same room. I said it was all right. When I went into the room I found there were two beds—mine was the nearer to the door. What surprised me most on entering was to see my companion lying asleep on the bed with all his clothes on. I thought nothing more of him, but soon undressed and went to bed, taking care beforehand to put my waistcoat, which contained all my money, under my pillow.

"I was very drowsy, but do what I would I could not sleep. I was about two hours in bed when I heard my companion in the other bed moving, but I could not make out whether he was getting up or not, as that side of the room was rather dark. Soon, however, I

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saw him slowly approach the window with something in his hand which he was examining. When he reached the window, he took hold of a belt that was hanging there, and then I heard sounds like those the razor makes when getting stropped. I concluded at once he was getting his razor ready for some dark work, but I could not say whether it was for myself or not. I was terrified, however, and began to move restlessly in bed. When he heard me moving he stopped, but as soon as all was quiet he again began. This went on for some time.

"At last I saw him approach my bed. Matters were quite clear now. He meant to take my life, for I saw the glitter of the razor in his hand. I sat up in bed, and when he saw this he hastily retreated, thinking perhaps I would lie down again, but I could not stay any longer. I seized my waistcoat, and without taking the rest of my clothes, ran from the room as quickly as my legs could carry me. I wakened the people and told them everything, but they didn't believe me, it seems, for they did all in their power to get me back to bed again. I was obstinate and would not go back.

"I told them to get my clothes for me, for I would not enter that room again for anything. When I dressed, I left the house and spent the rest of the night in the open air.

"In the morning I told some of those who were at the market of my experience, but they only shook their heads and would (perhaps they could) give no explanation.

"I have been at the market every year since, but I have neither seen nor heard anything about my would-be assassin or those in whose house I slept that night. You may easily guess that I have no wish to meet either of them."

This story surprised us very much. We never thought that such an attempt to take a man's life would be made in the Highlands. We congratulated him for having escaped. My turn now came. I told them I had no story about myself, but that I would give them one I heard from an old man. I gave it in his own words which were as follows :—

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"In my younger days people thought me a very wild and reckless fellow. I possessed the faculty of second-sight. Everything I saw I told at once, and whatever I told turned out to be true. It was on account of having this power, I believe, that people classed me among the bad.

"There was one man in particular who always made fun of me and my ghost stories. *He* would not believe them. He even went so far as to say that such a thing as second-sight did not exist. I did not argue with him, but I determined to convince him of it, and in the end I was successful.

"One day, I remember it well, he met me and asked me his usual question, 'Well, my lad, have you any ghost-story to-day?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'I saw a funeral to-day for the third time at the same place. I recognised every man there except one. You walked in front with another man, whom I did not know.' At this he only laughed, and told me I was foolish to believe in such a thing. I then told him that if he would meet me next day, at the same hour and at the same place, I would prove to him it was quite true. He readily promised to do so, for he thought that he could prove I was mistaken.

"We reached the place at the same time and we were not long there till I saw the funeral coming up the road. I asked him if he saw it, but he, after looking about him, replied he did not. I then placed my hand upon his shoulder (it is believed that, if a person gifted with second-sight touches another on the shoulder, that person acquires the same power) and again asked him if he saw it. This time he said he did.

"I told him to study the men as they passed, and tell me if he knew them all. Just as the two in front were passing us he said, 'I see *you* there in front with another man who is a stranger to me. Do you know him?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'for he is no other than yourself.'

"He said it was all an illusion and that he would not believe it. In a fortnight, however, both of us attended a funeral. We had to pass the very spot where we met that day, and as we passed it we were together in front, just as we saw before. I drew his attention to this,

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and it was then and not till then, that he believed in second-sight; and till his dying day he was never heard to say anything against it."

The night was now far advanced, and since we had a good distance to go, we thought it time to set out for home. The old man made us promise, before leaving, that we would be back again soon. It was late when we reached home, but we were quite happy. We enjoyed our "Ceilidh" very much.

"I was one night on Ceilidh in Big John's house, and there were others also, and they had the following talk: Alastar Mor began to speak about the weather and the good days there were to-day and yesterday.

"Good days," said Lachlan, turning to Alastar Mor, "if you were out, not sitting there at the fire, you would not say to me that there are good days."

Then poor Alastar shut his mouth when he saw that he was checked, and did not say a word all the night. But that silence did not last long, when Big John himself began to speak about another matter, and he said:—

"I think it is a good thing they are doing in putting up that Post Office, for many is the time I would be going to send away a letter, and the long distance I was from the other Post Office, I would not send it away, but now I may go with it any time I like, I will only have to pay a 1*d.* for a letter going to any place in Britain."

"That is true," said Ewan; "but I remember a time when I would have to pay 7*d.* for a letter that would be going to Glasgow."

"You and your 7*d.*," said Big John. "If you would say another 7*d.* along with that, you would be more like the thing, for I remember a time I sent a letter to Mary to Glasgow, and it cost me a 1*s.*, and you say it only cost you 7*d*!"

Then Ewan, getting angry, said:—

"I only paid 7*d.* for it, though you would pay a £."

Then Big John got so angry that he threatened to send Ewan out of the house unless he would stop arguing with him like that. Then when Donald Ban

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heard this, he rose up and told them "to stop their gabbling," and that it was better for them to be quiet and to speak about something else. Then they stopped, and no one said a word about the Post Office all that night. Then Donald Ban himself began to speak about the "steamboat and how very often she was now coming to the island, that he himself remembered a time when she would only come once in three weeks."

"I remember," said Big John, putting in a word once more. "a time when there was no steamboat at all coming here, but only small smacks that would be leaving here in the beginning of summer, and perhaps they would only be back here about the beginning of winter."

"That is true," said Hector; "for I remember a time that I went to Glasgow with fish in young Lachlan's boat, and we took a month to go there and six weeks to come back."

"How, how would we be if there was no steamboat coming here at all?" said Charles.

"We would be well enough off, though we would never see the steamboat," said Hector.

"Yes, indeed we would," said Finlay; "for our fathers were well enough off, and they would not know a steamboat from a bull's foot, and they were alive as well as us."

"That was a living indeed," said Big John, "when they would not get anything of what we now enjoy, but were going from place to place like the Red Indians."

Then they stopped speaking about the steamboat, and every one gave his own opinion about Turkey.

"I was reading in the paper," said Duncan, "about the fearful massacre committed by the Turks in Armenia, where a great number of good men were killed."

"That is dreadful," said Big John, "for Britain to be allowing the like of that."

"You and the like may be saying so, but if you were looking before you as the rulers of this kingdom do you would not say so," said Duncan.

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"I would only care a little to be reading everything like, if I was thinking that I could overcome him," said Hector.

"Oh, what would you do if you were to march face to face with your enemies?" said Duncan.

"Would I not do as much as you would?" said Hector.

"No, nor three in your township," said Duncan.

"What great work have you done?" said Hector; "when three could not do it."

"If you have seen so much of the world as I did, you would have reason to be boasting," said Duncan.

"What have you seen?" said Hector. "Is it because you were for a little time in America you are boasting?"

"You were not there itself," said Duncan, getting angry; and said to Hector "not to be so stupid as to think that he was a fool."

"What else are you but a fool?" said Hector.

Then they began to quarrel and gabble, but no one said nothing to them, till they stopped at their own free will, and nothing more was said about the Turk.

Then one would begin to talk of America, another one would be telling stories about India, and so on, till at last every one was gnawing a bone for himself. One would say, "that is not true." Another one would say, "better be quiet with your nonsense," till at last every one was against each other. But who came in while they were thus disputing but Calum, and when he heard them he told them to stop their mumbling, that it was better for them to speak about a thing they know, or that an old story will no be the worse. But every one said "that he had not an old story to tell," but that Calum himself might tell one.

"I may do so," said Calum. "And I will tell you a story that I heard from my grandfather, and it is as follows:—

"Once upon a time, long, long ago, there were elves living in Corn-Bray, and people would be alway hearing them playing the bag-pipe and dancing. My grandfather was one night coming home from Ceilidh,

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and when he was passing Corn-Bray, he heard the elves playing and dancing. He said to himself that he would go over to hear the music. Then he went over and sat on the side of the Bray, and the music was so delightful to him that he was willing to rise up to dance.

"While he was sitting there for a time, he looked at the top of the Bray, and saw a small red light there. And it happened when he saw it that he was amazed, his knees were trembling, and he could not leave the place where he was. But having regained his strength he said to himself that he would go up to where he saw the light, though he would never come down.

"Therefore, having crawled up on his knees, he sat near the light, and having looked down through it, saw how things were going on in the Bray. The piper was sitting on the bench with his back against the wall.

"The good wife of the house was grinding corn with the little mill, and four were dancing on the floor with pretty good spirits. When he saw this he longed to be with them, and he thought he would call, to try if he would get in. Then he cried to them to let him in, but when the elves heard this, they told the piper to cease playing. Then he stopped, but they heard nothing more.

"My grandfather was seeing everything that was going on, but at last he saw them arranging in order of battle, and every one putting his sword into the scabbard, though they were not higher than bottles. But let that be as it might, he fled as quickly as he could and made for home.

"But he was not far, far away when he saw the small host coming after him. Then he ran as fast as he could. But though he would run, they would fly, till at last he was wearied out and could not go further, but remained where he was. Then they came and gathered around him, and 200 of them took hold of him and put him on their shoulders. But he was not long there when they began to fall under their burden, but the more of them that would fall the more he would laugh. For he was thinking to himself if they would all tire out, he might get off without punish-

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ment, and above that, that he would get all the valuables of the Bray.

"And that was so, for every one of them was tired out, and my grandfather got off, and away he went to the Bray. But when he reached it the black cat was grinding corn with the little mill, with a bad turn in his nose, and therefore he came home.

"That is now my story," said Calum, "and it is now time for us to go home, and let Big John take his supper."

Therefore, we came home after we heard Calum's story, every one to his own home.

The next gives a good specimen of the kind of conversation that may be supposed to take place.

Dougald the fisherman's house is naturally near the seashore, and it is a great resort for Ceilidh in that part of the island. Every winter night excepting Sunday nights it is crowded with young and old telling stories, and often a sharp dispute arises among them. It was in this particular house that the following conversation took place.

Having entered Dougald's house, I found him sitting on a chair by the fireside leisurely smoking his pipe. As soon as he saw me, he asked me to come forward to the fire. I did so, but I was not long talking to the good old man when John the tailor, Hugh the smith, Lachlan MacCallum and a lot of boys who came with them to hear the stories which were sure to be told, entered the house unceremoniously. When they were all seated around the fire, and when the old men lighted their pipes, John the tailor said to Dougald, "Have you been a-fishing to-day?"

Dougald: "Yes, but I was not much the better of that. It would be the same to me supposing I went up to the top of the house and began fishing there."

John the tailor: "Well, I think that it was a very good fishing day to-day."

Dougald: "Certainly it was; but when I was leaving my house, who met me but Mary Cameron, and I might be sure that I would catch nothing."

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John the tailor: "Did she inquire of you whether you minded your hook, Dougald?"

Dougald: "No, nor whether I had my line. She never opened her mouth, and, believe me, it was better for her that she didn't at that moment; but she cast a glance towards me over her shoulder, which meant that I would as well remain at home."

John the tailor: "And why did you not say to her that you would give her a fish or two if you would be lucky?"

Dougald: "I would rather be ploughing the 'Northern Sea' for a week in vain than do that."

Then one of the young lads that were in lifted up his head (he was fishing that day with Dougald) and said, "By Jove, Dougald, you were in the blues when you were smashing the dog-fish against the boat. You nearly knocked out my brains twice when you were swinging one of them around your head to make sure of its death."

Dougald: "Indeed, I was very angry, my lad; but that is no wonder, for, whenever I would let down my line, no sooner did it reach the ground than I felt a splendid hug; but when I drew it up to the surface, it would be a dog-fish, or worse, a king-fish, and very often they would cut the line and go away with the hook: but, believe me, every one that came within my grip would hardly cut a line any more."

The boy: "But I don't think, Dougald, that you were at the height of your rage until Donald the shoemaker flung the anchor of the boat out into the sea, and when we looked, it had not been fastened to the boat at all, but had only a small bit of rope attached to it."

Dougald: "Everything was going right against me. I nearly lost my senses."

Hugh the smith: "Did you really lose the anchor, Dougald?"

Dougald: "Certainly; the very anchor that you yourself made for me a few days ago. That stupid fellow, the shoemaker, flung it out of the boat while the rope that was bound to it was not fastened to the boat at all. But what crowned my annoyance was the

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thought that all my misfortunes happened to me on account of Mary Cameron."

John the tailor: "And do you really believe, Dougald, that all these calamities happened to you on account of meeting that poor old creature, Mary Cameron?"

Dougald: "Certainly I do. Do you not believe it yourself?"

John the tailor: "Indeed, I do not."

Dougald: "Do you believe the Bible, then?"

John the tailor: "Every word of it."

Dougald: "Well, if you believe every word of the Bible, you must admit that witches existed at one time, for the Bible plainly shows us that they existed in the time of King Saul. And how now were they done away with?"

John the tailor: "Saul himself did away with them all except one."

Dougald: "That is true as far as the kingdom of Israel was concerned; but I believe that they were in other kingdoms as well as in Israel."

John the tailor: "That may be true, but they don't exist now."

Dougald: "Do they not? When did they leave the world?"

John the tailor: "I cannot say, indeed, but, for myself, I don't believe that there is such a thing as a witch in existence."

Dougald: "I fully believe that there is some supernatural power or other in Mary Cameron's eye, for if that were not the case, she could not have spoiled my fishing three times in succession; and, supposing there was no other witch on the face of the earth, as long as Mary Cameron lives I will not deny my faith in witches, and I will believe as long as I live that it will be far better for any poor fisherman who chances to meet her when he goes a-fishing to return to his house for that day, anyway."

John the tailor: "Seemingly, Dougald, there is no use in arguing with you about her."

Dougald: "No, as long as you do not admit that she has an evil eye."

Hugh the smith: "Now, tailor, do you believe the

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wonderful things that happened in James Henderson's house about half a century or at least forty years ago?"

John the tailor: "I was not in this island at all at that time nor a long while after it, and therefore I did not see these things myself, on which account I cannot be certain of their truth, and I always like to be very sure of anything before I believe it."

Hugh the smith: "Well, you need not doubt their truth, for I saw them with my eyes."

John the tailor: "Well, Hugh, you can tell us some of the astounding things that you saw."

The boys were greatly delighted with the conversation of the old men, and when they heard that Hugh was about to tell these wonderful things they closed in nearer him, so that they would catch every word he would say.

Hugh the smith: "Well, you all know the deserted place in which James Henderson's house was built, and as it was thus out-of-the-way, there weren't many going to Ceilidh in it; but it began to be rumoured that miraculous things were happening in it, and indeed, I did not believe them at first myself; but as my companions kept telling me that they themselves saw unnatural things, I thought that I would go also and see for myself if such things were true, and accordingly, on a certain night I and a friend of mine—who is dead long ago—set off for James' house. On going in, James himself asked us to come forward near the fire, a request to which we readily complied. James' wife and her servant were washing, while another lass was holding fast a large bed-cover on the top of the clothes that were washed for fear that they would disappear; but in spite of the big bed-cover and the efforts of the girl, when the clothes were counted, a blanket was missing. A search for the blanket began at once, but when they could not find it by any means, it came with a vehement sweep from the ceiling, as black as soot, and mixed with the other washed clothes until it dirtied the whole lot of them, leaving the washerwomen no other alternative but to begin to wash the clothes a second time. My friend and I were thunderstruck with amazement; but what horrified us the most

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was the following affair. James Henderson's walking-stick was in a corner of the house among other things. I heard some rumbling noise in the corner, and on turning round, behold, the walking-stick was hopping about in the corner; but it did not stop there: it began to advance from the corner to the middle of the floor, and danced and leaped fearfully all over the house. I was never in my life so dreadfully frightened, and my friend was quite as bad. Not one soul inside the house had the courage to take hold of the stick and stop its antics, but when Fortune saw it fit, after a quarter of an hour's dancing and manœuvring, the walking-stick returned to the corner whence it came, and stood steady with one end naturally inclined to the wall."

John the tailor: "Ha, ha! the walking-stick was only giving you a reel."

Hugh proceeds: "You needn't mock me, tailor, for it was a dreadful thing. My friend and I stayed some time longer, and then we proceeded homeward with our hearts almost leaping out of their places with fear. When that dread left us a week afterwards, we proposed to go there a second time. Suiting the action to the word, we went, and, on sitting down, we saw James' wife, who was knitting a stocking, with blood trickling down from a red gash that was on her head. We asked of those that were in before us what was the reason of this. They told us that, a little while before we went in, she was baking, and when she was finished, that the griddle sprang up and struck her in the head, thus cutting her. I was staring at the woman on account of my astonishment at what had happened, and as sure as death, I tell you that one of the knitting-pins which she was using, sprang out of her hand and struck up in the ceiling, and fell down on the floor twisted like a hair-pin. That is not all I saw. No sooner had this happened than an ember from the fire glanced past us and went among the bedclothes, and probably the house would have been on fire had clever lads not been in, who stopped it. After the fire had been put out, and when nothing of importance was happening, we were about to leave for our homes, but we were abruptly stopped. One lad was sitting on a

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low stool, and, by Jove, a bowl that was on the table came with incredible speed and broke in atoms between his feet, but not harming him in the least. That was scarcely over when a peat came whizzing through the kitchen door and struck in the fire, scattering it in all directions through the house. It was also said that that night a vessel containing a considerable quantity of cream overturned of itself all of a sudden. However, we went home, and we would imagine that peats were chasing us through the fields, but we came off unhurt.

"James Henderson was always thinking that this 'evil' was following either himself or his wife, and to prove this suspicion he said to his wife one day, 'We will go away from home to-day and travel in different directions, and we shall see which of us this evil follows.' 'Quite so. I have to go home with Mrs. Hugh Brown's spinning wheel,' said his wife. After a short while James left his house and went one way, and his wife left and went another way, having Mrs. Brown's spinning wheel on her shoulder. She did not go very far when the sickle which she herself placed at the back of the barn door came whizzing through the air and cut off a part of the wheel of the spinning apparatus, but spared herself. She at once returned home and her husband also, but nothing met him. So it seemed that the evil followed his wife, and not James.

"These things were going on for some time afterwards, but I do not at present mind of any more of them, only that it was rumoured that James' wife's father's ghost was seen about the house by some gifted with second-sight, and to keep him in the grave that they had to fasten and cross and recross chains over it. Do you believe that, tailor?"

But the tailor did not find it such an easy matter to believe these things as the smith imagined, and accordingly he said, "You, smith, can tell a story so pleasantly and so real-looking that you almost persuade me to believe these things. I do not indeed doubt that they happened, but I doubt and disbelieve that their author was an 'evil spirit,' as you believe, and, to throw some light on the matter, I will tell you a story

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which I believe has a great affinity to the story which you have told about James Henderson's house."

I do not quote the story, which, however, possesses for the folk-lorist the special interest of being a local adaptation, with nearly all the incidents complete, of the "Big Claus and Little Claus," well known to all readers of Hans Andersen and Grimm. A consciousness of its foreign element is displayed in the fact that the story is located "on the Mainland."

These few specimens go further than any mere second-hand description to make one realize the Ceilidh. At certain times of the year there is work to be finished, and, like the frequenters of "a Bee" in America, those gathered at Ceilidh will take their share in mending nets, patching sails, twisting heather ropes, or whatever occupation may be to the fore. The Ceilidh is the substitute for the newspaper, the library and the public-house. It is for Ceilidh that the rhymes of old time were made, as in Greece for the festivals of the gods and heroes, which keep alive for us even now the contemporary accounts of island history. It was at Ceilidh that the bards of old recited their poems and satires; it is Ceilidh that has preserved the tales of Ossian, so that to this day one may listen to endless stories of Fingal and Graine and Cuchullin. It is for Ceilidh that for centuries past the people have strung together the legends of their island homes, so that every hill and loch and glen and shealing has its own traditions. Whole sheaves of them lie before me written down at first hand. Many collected by Campbell of Islay, many by Campbell of Tyree, have been published and are dear to all students of Highland folklore, but many more have never yet seen the light, full as they are of interest to the historian and anthropologist alike.

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CHAPTER V

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES ON THE ISLANDERS.

BEFORE proceeding further in any detailed description of particular islands it may be as well to give some account of certain characteristics which apply to all, especially those which relate to the people themselves, and in so doing to avoid any possible suspicion of dealing in personalities.

The entire ease of manner and *savoir faire* of the Highlander, remarked upon by many travellers from the earliest times, is still noticeable, though some of the causes which so well accounted for it no longer exist. Personally, I have never seen a Highlander at a loss, even under circumstances which would have perplexed an Englishman of, technically, a higher class, and of far wider experience. I heard the other day of a girl, well known to me, from a very humble home in a remote island, whom a lady had taken into her service, and was training in the elements, as she believed, of civilization. However, on taking the girl on a visit to one of the most sumptuous of the noble houses of England, she observed that she was not in the smallest degree disconcerted, and though she showed an intelligent interest in her new surroundings, had quite the air of being accustomed to palaces instead of the black huts of the Hebrides. When the chiefs lived among their people this attitude of mind was not difficult to explain. The point is well put in Stewart's most valuable *Sketches*

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of the Highlanders, Section III: "The chief generally resided among his retainers. His castle was the court where rewards were distributed and the most enviable distinctions conferred. . . . His tenants followed his standard in war, attended him in his hunting excursions, supplied his table with the produce of their farms, and assembled to reap his corn, and to prepare and bring home his fuel. . . . Great part of the rent was paid in kind and generally consumed where it was produced. One chief was distinguished from another, not by any additional splendour of dress or equipage, but by having a greater number of followers, by entertaining a greater number of guests, and by the exercise of general hospitality, kindness and condescension. What his retainers gave from their individual property was spent amongst them in the kindest and most liberal manner. At the castle every individual was made welcome, and was treated according to his station, with a degree of courtesy and regard to his feelings unknown in many other countries. This condescension, while it raised the clansman in his own estimation, and drew closer the ties between him and his superior, seldom tempted him to use any improper familiarities. He believed himself well born, and was taught to respect himself in the respect he showed to his chief, and thus: instead of complaining of the difference of station and fortune, or considering a ready obedience to his chieftain's call as a slavish oppression, he felt convinced that he was supporting his own honour in showing his gratitude and duty to the generous head of his family."

"Hence," as we read in *Dalrymple's Memoirs*, "the Highlanders, whom more savage nations called savage carried in the outward expression of their manners, the politeness of courts without their vices, and in their bosoms the high points of honour without its follies."

Among the many more serious results of the intro-

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duction of the tacksman at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was the incidental disadvantage, that in supplanting the old class of tenant, usually a cadet of the family of the chief, the gentle classes of the islands came to an end. The Lowland, often non-resident farmer, was of an entirely different class from those whose hospitality Dr. Johnson so greatly appreciated, and of whom Buchanan wrote but a few years later: "The gentlemen in the Western Islands have, many of them, the advantage of a university education. They are commonly connected together by the ties of matrimony, consanguinity or otherwise, which makes them firm to one another, while the commoners are no less united among themselves by similar bonds of friendship in their respective departments." (*Travels in the Western Hebrides*, p. 45.)

In listening to folk-lore and old-time stories, especially in South Uist, now the home of little but utter poverty and squalor, I have often been struck by the number of incidents which could have occurred only where there was a resident, leisure, more or less "cultured" society, a fact which one at first fails to realize as a part of the past history of this unhappy people.

But, except where the people are depressed by sheer physical misery, they seem to have suffered surprisingly little from the enforced change in their social conditions. It is part of the system of a wide acknowledgement of relationship, of "calling cousins" to the most remote degree, part too of the pride which is something more than merely social—part again of the Highland capacity for self-advancement, that in every rank one meets with persons having relatives in a considerably higher walk of life, and this, in the present day, not merely as belonging to the time when the chief at court was the kinsman of his lowest retainer at home. James Conway, the observant author of

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Forays among Salmon and Deer, p. 161, points out that "from this constant and unconstrained intercourse of the different ranks has arisen an inborn propriety of manner, and an easy self-possession in the presence of his superiors, still conspicuous in the Highlander and which gives him a decided advantage over the clownish shyness of the peasantry of England."

Possibly, however, there is some temptation to lay too much stress on explanatory causes for a courtesy and grace, which, after all, is largely inherent in character, and Mrs. Grant (Letter 34) may be nearer the truth when she writes, remarking upon the refinement of the inhabitants of even the solitary district in which her husband was the minister, she herself being a highly cultivated woman who had travelled widely and had much knowledge of the world :—"You ask, how people secluded from the world are to acquire manner : I answer, that where there is mind there is always manner; and when they are accustomed to treat each other with gentleness and courtesy, they will feel that quick disgust at what is rude and inelegant, which contributes more than any instruction to the refinement of manners."

"Where there is mind, there is always manner," is a statement which is, I fear, not always borne out by experience, but which has, I believe, direct connection with the particular people under discussion. I find the following passage in my own journal, written in one of the islands last May: "During the past week I have found men—and one woman—with whom to discuss, much to my own advantage, various questions of local history, geology, and derivation; many points in politics, present and past; theology, dispassionate and unprejudiced; Miss Austen's novels; Sir Walter Scott's appreciation (the word used in its classical sense) of various writers of his own time; Dr. Johnson's views on the Hebrides;

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Mr. Rider Haggard's experiments in farming; the enthusiasm of humanity (the phrase was not mine), and the distribution of wealth. I think only one of those I talked with wore a collar—I wish I more often met men in dress suits who talked half so well. They were speaking in a foreign tongue of books and thoughts written in a foreign tongue, and their language was the more literary in consequence; for the Highlander of Miss Fiona Macleod and of William Black is a man I never met, and talks a language I never heard, further north than the London stage."

Happily, the Highlander's sense of humour comes to his aid, and for the most part he expresses, not indignation nor offence, but an amused toleration for the popular portraiture of himself, his surroundings, and his language. The "Celtic twilight" and "Celtic gloom" business amuse him exceedingly, though for Black's descriptions, especially for his sunsets, he has only unqualified admiration. The language with which they are credited, however, is a source of much perplexity. A first cousin of the "Princess of Thule," whose English would put to shame that of what, in England, is called "Society," assured me that neither in her father's home nor elsewhere had he ever heard the extraordinary phrases alleged to be current in the household of "the King of Borva," and which we listened for in vain in the same district.

However, I asked a man who had spent his life in various parts of the Highlands, where one might find the Highlander whose only equivalent for *he*, *she*, and *it* was alike "she," and after some thought, he replied that he knew of only one example, which he believed to be the result of mere force of habit—the case of a man who had eleven sisters!

The Highlander, as I have known him under a great variety of circumstances, for a good many years past,

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speaks English, even when limited in amount, which may be favourably compared, not with that of the man of his own class in England, but with that, in many cases, of the University man and the scholar. It is the English of books, and he consequently uses such words as seem to him to fit the occasion, without fear of pedantry. He uses a fine phrase freely and naturally, because it expresses what he wants to say, and indulges in metaphor or natural symbols because he thinks in terms of sight, and is a visualiser from childhood. His use of prepositions is different from ours, but the fact is often explained by comparison with the Gaelic, sometimes even by comparison with the French, which was largely in use in Scotland at the time when "English," so-called, first penetrated these islands.

The words, *débris*, *ashet* (assiette), *gigot*, are in common use. A Highlander always *infuses*, not "makes," the tea; they *rise* and *retire*, instead of "getting up and going to bed"; *in the meantime* means "for the present"; *presently* means "at once, now." They *go through* where we should "go over" a house; they *call for*, not "upon" a friend; they say *cannot*, where the Englishman says "can't," and the Scot "canna": and they use *whatever* as a general expletive.

Now and then, in districts where English is scarce, one comes across a curious use of words, as, for example, upon a gravestone which commemorated affectionate and *dutiful* parents: or another, where a young man, who had passed a harmless life in fishing and crofting on a very small and solitary island, was described as "patriotic." But even in cases of the exceptional use of words, I think there is often something to be said for their particular custom as against ours. Of Scotch provincial uses, they know nothing, and I remember a well-educated Highland minister expressing his regret, that having bought the whole of Scott's novels with the idea

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of laying up a treasure-house of enjoyment, he found them "too Scotch" to understand.

The fact of being bi-lingual gives to the Highlander an especial interest in, and appreciation of, language, and I have many times observed the particular attention they give to the speech of a new-comer, and the pleasure they take in that of any one gifted with power of expression at all above the average.

There are certain phrases used in the Highlands which have, one feels, a sort of historical value, and are born out of the conditions of life. Miss Wordsworth expresses something of this when she says:

"We were amused with the phrase, *Ye'll get that* in the Highlands, which appeared to us as if it came from a perpetual feeling of the difficulty with which most things are procured."

In the same way, "Take your time," is the phrase with which one is constantly encouraged and reassured by the kind friends always ready to help one over slippery rocks, or among treacherous bogs. There is always plenty of time in the islands, and there is no reason why the visitor should not take as much as he wants. In many districts there are no clocks: the sun and the fowls regulate the hours, and while these are active, the day will go on. The story is told of a Tyree minister who, himself intellectual and literary, was delighted with the companionship of an Edinburgh official, come over to inspect the Island Schools, and who checked his companion's anxiety to be down at Scarinish in good time for the departure of the *Fingal*, by the reiteration of "Hoots, man! What is a handful of minutes, more or less in Tyree?" with the result that the busy Inspector missed his boat, was detained four days (at least), and had to rearrange all his subsequent appointments.

Dr. Johnson, who should be an authority on the subject of language, and was certainly not prejudiced in

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favour of the Highlands, declared himself very definitely upon this point as long ago as 1773, at a time when the accuracy of Highland speech could not be accounted for by the advancement of education, or the presence of the School Board.

"Those Highlanders that can speak English, commonly speak it well, with few of the words, and little of the tone by which a Scotchman is distinguished.

"Their language seems to have been learned in the army or the navy or by some communication with those

SCARINISH VILLAGE, TYREE.

who could give them good examples of accent and pronunciation."[1]

He remarks also upon the presence of books and, naturally enough, upon the unfailing courtesy and good manners of the people. Moreover, he says, with the gallantry which the clumsy old Doctor seldom lacked,

[1] Dorothy Wordsworth, in her Journal of 1803, notices in the Highland speech, "a bookishness, a certain formality of language."

So, too, Mrs. Grant in her *Letters from the Mountains* (No. 1), herself an observant woman, who had lived in England and in America, writing at a time when, according to storybooks, the Highlander would refer to a third person as "hur nainsell," writes, "They certainly speak better English than most Scots do."

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"We know that the girls of the Highlands are all gentlewomen."

It is a painful and delicate point to discuss, but I am bound to say that we could not entirely endorse this opinion, and were indeed forced to the conclusion that the women of the Islands were, as a whole, inferior to the men. The physical inferiority, so obvious in the southern part of the Long Island, especially in South Uist, and, to some degree, in Barra, may be accounted for by the fact, that while the man's work—battling with the forces of Nature, bracing himself to danger and hardship by sea and land—tends to manliness, the work of the women, in these days, does not tend to womanliness. Indoors, without chimneys, without windows that will open, they become withered and anæmic, their skins are stained with peat, their eyes bleared with smoke. The men are, of necessity, often away at distant fishing, and the women have to climb the hills to dig and fetch peat, bearing it home in creels on their backs; they have to cut, and now that there is no common ground on which to graze ponies, literally *carry* home the harvest, such as it is; they have to tend the cows and sheep, and on account of the absence of fences, remain with them the whole day, so that the possession of a single cow absorbs the entire energies of an able-bodied human being.[1] They are prematurely aged with hardship, bowed with rheumatism, depressed by dyspepsia, and now that the hill-grazing is taken from them, they have none of the

[1] Indeed things are sometimes worse even than this. Mr. Carmichael, in his evidence before the Crofters' Commission, related that "In some places in the Long Island the people have to sit up all night to watch their corn from the deer. I asked the Crofters if ever they mentioned this hardship to the factor. 'Yes, we have mentioned it to him, and he told us that if ever we mentioned it to him again, he would clear us all out, to be out of the way of the deer. We therefore keep quiet, but suffer.'"

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change of air and scene which the men still get by going away to fish.

In Tyree, where the conditions of climate and the general surroundings are so much happier, we were told that the people had nothing to die of but "Glasgow Fair," i.e. of epidemics, introduced from without; in Barra and South Uist we learnt what was indeed sufficiently obvious, that those who survived starvation, died of the teapot. And indeed, "the cup that cheers" is the curse of these islands, in a degree never reached by the whisky of old times; though I feel I am courting the indignation of the virtuous in admitting it.

"A man of the Hebrides, for of the women's diet I can give no account," writes the tea-drinking Dr. Johnson, "as soon as he appears in the morning swallows a glass of whisky; yet they are not a drunken race, at least I never was present at much intemperance; but no man is so abstemious as to refuse the morning dram, which they call a *skalk*. The word whisky (uisge) signifies water, and is applied by way of eminence to strong water or distilled liquor. The spirit drank in the north is drawn from barley. I never tasted it, except once for experiment at the inn in Inverary, when I thought it preferable to any English malt brandy. It was strong, but not pungent, and was free from the empyreumatic[1] taste or smell." One must of course remember that the whisky was home-made, and free from potato spirit and other modern adulterations. The teapot, which stands by the fire the whole day, is especially dangerous for a race doing hard physical labour in a damp and depressing climate, where the food consists largely of potatoes—often of very inferior quality—unfermented bread, often made of home-grown

[1] *Empyreumatic*=fiery. Dr. Johnson's English sometimes stands in need of his own dictionary.

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flour, musty, poor, and ill-prepared, with, at best, the addition of boiled fish, chiefly flounders, if not worse.

That the coarse, unpleasing air of the women is mainly the result of their circumstances and conditions, is the more probable that they continue to be the mothers of fine manly sons of pleasing manners and appearance; whereas, at an early age, the girls, like their mothers, appear unkempt, weary and melancholy. What is even more distressing is the alleged fact that their inferiority to the men is not merely physical, but that morally too he is the superior, a fact which the physiologist may again conceivably explain by their respective conditions of life: speaking always of the unhappy islands of Barra and South Uist, with which geographically one should include Benbecula, but that this island, though sharing in many of the misfortunes of its neighbours, is, at least in appearance, decidedly happier than they.

One is always so reluctant to find a definite inferiority in one's own sex, that it is pleasant to turn elsewhere and to notice the very high level of intellectual success which the same class of women have reached in happier islands; to note, for example, that in the past six years the dux of the Nicolson School in Lewis, with its very high standard of attainments, has twice been a girl; that two girls in Lewis have lately obtained Highland Trust Bursaries: that one has successfully passed her L.L.A. Examination: to remember one June evening last summer, when, as the purple dusk fell, at ten o'clock or thereabouts, we saw a light sparkle out in a solitary cottage on the lonely reef of Tyree, a tiny shepherd's hut distinguishable only by its whitewash from the rocky mounds about it. There, we were told, lived a girl who, encouraged a few years ago by taking the first prize at the Oban Mod., persevered in her

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solitary studies, took next year the gold medal, and is now an M.A. of the Glasgow University.

That is what the Highland girl does, while her English contemporary is scheming to escape from home, to get paid for neglecting work in domestic service or business, and struggling to become a "lidy." Except where the trail of the Sassenach has corrupted the country, the "lidy" and the "gent" are entirely unknown in the Highlands.[1] 'Arry and 'Arriet have absolutely no equivalent, and long may they remain with the barrel-organ and the Music Hall, the Brummagem jewellery and tawdry clothing, the cheap trips and low standard of life which have created them! However, while I can say with conviction that we never met any Highland man who was not a gentleman, I am bound to admit that we now and then did meet with a woman guilty of the vulgarity of being anxious to show her superiority to her surroundings, and as a rule we preferred the surroundings.

The simplicity of plain living and high thinking are essentially Highland, and it is still true, as Mrs. Grant of Laggan said in 1807:

"Among the peculiarities of Highland manners is an avowed contempt for the luxuries of the table. A Highland hunter will eat with a keen appetite and sufficient discrimination, but were he to stop in any pursuit, because it was meal-time, to growl over a bad dinner, or visibly exult over a good one, the manly dignity of his character would be considered as fallen for ever."

The entire freedom from the fear of death is a characteristic of the Highlanders, alleged by those who do not understand them, to be among other attributes which they possess in common with savages. One so familiar with them as Stewart of Garth is, however, concerned to show that this is, on the contrary, a consequence of their family pride, their love of clan if not

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of country, their sense of the continuity of their history.

"By connecting the past with the present, by showing that the warlike hero, the honoured chief or the respected parent who though no longer present to his friends, could not die in their memory; and that though dead he still survived in fame, and might sympathize with those whom he had left behind, a magnanimous contempt of death was naturally produced, and sedulously cherished."

The Highlander, whatever form his religion may take is religious by temperament; alike in Catholic and Protestant islands, they are a worshipping, God-fearing people; even their superstitions, their charms, their stories of second-sight have mostly a tinge of the consciousness of the relation of this life with the next. The Presbyterian householder has family worship before he goes to bed, the Roman Catholic attends frequent mass, is careful in his religious observances, carries holy water in his boat, and has special prayers and blessings for every kind of domestic occasion. The modern exaggerations of the Free Church teaching, where it has taken root in the islands, mainly in Lewis, has found a ready soil, though there are not wanting stories of merry-makings carried on within closed doors and curtained windows, of profane songs of love and life overheard in the solitudes of the mountains, even of a minister, fearful of setting an evil example, yet possessed of a sensitive and artistic temperament which craves for expression, who is credibly reported to retire at intervals into an attic of the lonely manse, and with all precautions as to the absence of his household, to play upon the violin! For some inscrutable reason the religion of the Free Church of the islands is incompatible with any musical instrument, but a Jew's harp; whether because it is one calculated to give a minimum

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of pleasure, or because the name has something vaguely Scriptural in its associations, would be hard to say. In one of the small Catholic islands, the people, in the absence not only of a bell but even of clocks, are summoned to church by the music of the pipes, and the congregation, an extraordinarily good one. is not the less devout in consequence.

Possibly one source of the "Celtic gloom" apocrypha—unless its originators have lived exclusively in front of the stage in a Free Kirk island, seeing nothing of the real life of the people—lies in the constant allusions to death and the world to come, not only in the songs and stories, but in everyday life.

Dean Ramsay, in his *Scottish Life and Character*, has some quaint stories of this peculiarity, and Miss Ferrier, in her admirable novel of *Inheritance*, has a very characteristic scene in which the young lady of English education, visiting a sick man and inquiring what she could do for his comfort, is petitioned by his wife for some "good bein' dead claes," which, on a subsequent occasion she found, far more to her own horror than to that of the patient, in process of airing in front of the fire. In a rare book on the *Superstitions of the Highlanders* there is a chapter on their amusements, among which the author enumerates funerals! Without regarding them from quite that point of view, it is easy to understand that an occasion which brings together friends from considerable distances, who might not otherwise meet, to share in a common interest, if not a common sorrow, is not without its alleviations. It is the great occasion for showing respect both to the living and to the dead, and in the islands, where there is often no road between the home of the departed and the graveyard of his clan, which may be at considerable distance or even in another island, the services of the able-bodied men of the district are a practical

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necessity. The coffin is slung with ropes, and long poles, sometimes the oars of a boat, are passed through the ropes to facilitate carrying. Where the ground is rough, (and the funeral procession often has to cross over the shoulder of a mountain) the bearers are frequently changed, and it is customary for six or eight men to walk beside the coffin in readiness to "take up" as the phrase is, when those who have finished their turn pass to the back of the procession, and six or eight more step out. Wherever it is necessary to rest the coffin a cairn of stones is always raised to mark the spot, and these little cairns, wherever one finds them, have a peculiar and pathetic interest. In certain places, where such resting is customary, one sometimes finds quite a large number of cairns close together. When the procession approaches the burial ground, which is often unenclosed, a mere cluster of graves on the bare hillside, it will, at whatever inconvenience, approach the spot sunwards (dessil) from east to west. In the Roman Catholic islands there is a very pretty custom of throwing a coin into a newly-made grave, to pay mother-earth for her hospitality. The bareness, the absence of ornament, of flowers, in the Highland burial-grounds is no sign of indifference or carelessness. There is, as we have seen, no lack of loving service and respect paid to the departed. The people are not accustomed to any form of decoration in or around their homes, and it seems only natural to them that the resting-place of their loved ones should mingle with the grass and wildflowers with which they are familiar, and, it may be, form a shelter from the wind to a wandering lamb or a child engaged in herding. "In the midst of life we are in death," is ever prominent in the mind of the Islander, no mere sentiment, but a fact which is accepted as the natural corollary of the dangers by storm and shipwreck which accustom them

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to sudden death in a degree of which we, whose lives are so carefully protected, know nothing. *Crioch Onarach*, "may you have an honourable exit" is a common expression of kindly feeling, and "Peace to thy soul and a stone to thy cairn," is another phrase in common use, even among Presbyterians, though doubtless a relic of the older faith. It is quite common for those about the dying to send messages to friends who have gone before, generally of a practical kind, that a debt is paid, or a sick child recovered, or that good news has come from an emigrant son—something which they would be expected to hear with pleasure.

From all this one may reasonably gather that the familiarity with which the Highlander treats the subject of death proceeds, not from the indifference of the savage, but from the entire sincerity of his belief in other conditions of being. The very strong clan and family feeling of the Highlander comes out nowhere more prominently than in the burial of the dead. The great desire is to lie near kindred dust, and very touching stories are sometimes told of the pains taken to accomplish this even on behalf of paupers and the comparatively friendless. We heard of a woman who, born on the mainland but married to an islander, died in her new home, and all suitable arrangements were made for her funeral, when there appeared on the scene twelve of her father's family who had come sixty miles over the sea to carry her body back to lie among her own people. When the husband remonstrated, they quietly declared their intention of carrying out their scheme at all risks; and as the neighbours, while sympathizing with the husband, approved the sentiment too thoroughly to promise him any practical help, he was obliged to give in, and returned with the family to bury his wife in the graveyard of her old home.

Possibly it is from this very family feeling that a

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woman is always buried by her maiden name, so that the proprieties of the Saxon are violated by such inscriptions as ". . . children of Donald Macdonald and of Mary Macintosh." or "In Memory of Gillespie Maclean, and Flora Macneil; erected by their sorrowing children."

The absence of the separate family burying-ground (often on an island or in some corner of land near to the homes of the clan) so characteristic of the mainland Highlands, may be due to the fact that in almost every part of the Islands there are the remains of religious edifices, churches, monasteries, even a hermit's cell perhaps, which, with their instinctive reverence for religion and for the past, the islanders treat as holy ground and about which they bury their dead.

It would not be fair to pass over the question of the Highland funeral without expressing regret that it should ever be, as even now, though rarely, is still the case at times, the occasion for excess in drinking. The practice of taking refreshment at the churchyard has great excuse in the conditions of climate and distance, and those who cling to old-time usage and the traditions of Highland hospitality would be very unwilling to abandon it entirely. I believe that there is now a recognized limit of the amount allowed for each person, and taken with bread and cheese, it seems moderate enough.

On leaving the grave-side the minister, nearest friends and visitors of a superior class, commonly adjourn to some neighbouring house, where tea is provided and whence they can return at their convenience, leaving those less nearly concerned to remain, often for the rest of the day, in groups on the grass, talking of business and of family affairs. Before passing judgment on such utilization of a solemn occasion, one should perhaps think for a moment on the

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difference between our lives and the lives of these simple Islanders, when perhaps it may not seem quite so obvious that the same rules should apply to both alike.

Think of the existence of an intelligent, educated people who have no daily paper, and very few books, who have no trade, no business, little work, but that in which they are their own masters, or fishing, carried on mainly at night; no public house or meeting-place; often no neighbours; no local affairs to discuss; no markets, except perhaps twice a year; no buying and selling among themselves. Think of women who have no shopping but at best that from a cart which travels round the island at intervals; whose household possessions are so few that the "chores" can take but a very short time each day; who have no carpets to sweep, no rugs to shake, scarcely any crockery to wash; who, if they are in need of clothing, scarcely know whence to get the material, who have no table on which to cut it out; who if they break a needle, as Dr. Johnson points out, may have to wait weeks to get another, whose cooking is so elementary that they have need of no appliances but a pot hung over the fire, though sometimes indeed they have a kettle as well; who bake their bread on a stone and

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wash their few clothes in the burn outside the door; whose fire never requires re-lighting (it is ill-luck to let out the peats); who have no shoes to clean, no furniture to dust; who seldom travel more than a mile or two from home; who have no servants to discuss, and no new bonnets. Think what it must be in such a life to meet one's friends, to hear from one and another, of Neil out in Canada, and Lachlan away at sea; of Mairi who has gone to service on the mainland, or Alan who is learning a trade in Glasgow, to ask advice, to compare notes, to say, "don't you wonder?", and "do you remember?", perhaps too to mourn together over the friend who has gone, to recite his history and genealogy, to relate the visions and warnings which foreboded his death, to speculate on the future of his family, and the line the factor will take in regard to his affairs.

I have seen these little groups, decent and orderly, sitting for hours together on the bare hillside, greeting one another and parting, with much hand-shaking, for indeed hand-shaking is a great institution in these friendly Islands, and I have seen no irreverence nor lack of sympathy in their conduct, nor in their presence there.

The gentle courtesy of the islander is no mere surface politeness to a stranger. The kindness of the people to each other and to the dumb creatures about them would be proof of this, if proof were wanting.

The terror and aversion, passing even that of the mainland peasantry, with which the Islander regards the poorhouse, is, apart from his love of freedom, and habit of outdoor life, thoroughly justified by the nature of the accommodation provided either in North Uist or in Lewis. That at Loch Maddy supplies accommodation for, I believe, forty persons with wards and dormitories of size proportionate; but as a tenth of that number would exceed the average of occupants, the contrast

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between the great, bare, high, chilly, expanse of space and the very close, and, to their thinking, cosy and warm quarters to which they are accustomed, must upset the most rudimentary of their notions of life, kind and fairly liberal as is the treatment they receive.

On one of our visits to North Uist we were much concerned at a glimpse of a little tragedy so characteristic that I cannot refrain from relating it. A poor woman, very old, very feeble, lived alone in a wretched hut, which was undoubtedly an eyesore to any orderly minded proprietor. On the other hand, to its solitary occupant it meant home, and the alternative was the poorhouse. Eviction seemed inevitable, and some kindly neighbours, we were told, offered to build her a decent shelter—she was otherwise provided for—if the morsel of land, enough for an average cowshed, could be granted for the short term of life which remained to her. But no, among the thousands of bare acres all around, there was no room for so valueless a life as hers. The time came—the photograph of the scene is in my possession—when her few belongings were turned out by the roadside, and she herself laid upon the miserable bedding which, with a wooden chest, a couple of chairs, a single cooking pot, a few bits of crockery, constituted her entire wealth. When we saw her next she was sitting, decently fed and clad it is true, the sole occupant of a vast dreary "Female Ward." "And how did you get here?" we asked, and it is for the sake of her answer, so thoroughly characteristic of Highland speech and thought, that I have told the little story. Her eyes filled with tears, and for a minute she stroked my hand in silence. "It was himself that did it," she answered, pointing to the master of the poorhouse, himself an islander, who has since, as often before, served his country "at the front." "It was himself that did it, and may the blessed angels carry him to heaven

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as gently as he carried me here that day." There was no word of what she had lost, no reproach, no bitterness. To him from whom she had received kindness, she had nothing to give but prayer to the One who has "constituted the services of angels and men in a wonderful order," a gift which brings blessing alike to "him that gives and him that takes."

One cannot fail to be struck, in going through the Islands, by the singular absence, even as compared with the mainland, of cripples, or blind persons, or persons of weak intellect. One obvious, though perhaps superficial explanation, lies in the theory of the survival of the fittest, in the fact that a good constitution must be needed to survive existence at all in South Uist or Barra, though, on the other hand, that would be less applicable in happier islands, especially in Tyree, which has so superior a climate.

Lord Napier pays a well deserved tribute to those characteristics, which, according to modern theories of psychology, have so much connexion with the sound mind in the sound body, the just balance of body and spirit which is health. He writes of the Crofter (*Nineteenth Century*, 1885): "In the main his house does not make him unhappy, for he does not complain; it does not make him immoral, for he is above the average standard of morality in his country; it does not make him unhealthy, for he enjoys an uncommon share of vigour and longevity."

Perhaps the following expression of opinion in the *Report of the Crofters' Commission* is even more to the point.

"His habitation is usually of a character which would almost imply physical and moral degradation in the eyes of those who do not know how much decency, courtesy, virtue, and even mental refinement, survive amidst the sordid surroundings of a Highland hovel."

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Unhappily however, there seems to be a certain number of cases of insanity, of which of course one hears only. A recent contributor to the *Caledonian Medical Journal* [1] describes certain cases which he had personally met with as a boy in Uist. They seem to have always been treated with kindness, and in the Highlands, as in certain places elsewhere, one wanting in mind is regarded as being in a special sense under Divine protection—" God's fool " as such a patient is still called in Scandinavia, from whence the islanders may have received the idea. Mr. Macleod's concluding sentiments must appeal to the sympathy of any who have ever visited one of the institutions—with all their advantages—where the mentally afflicted are cared for.

" I presume there are *amadain* still roaming about in the more remote districts, but they are not seen so much as formerly. Possibly, as in more crowded and advanced places, they are swept into the district asylum or the poorhouse. In such institutions they are, no doubt, better lodged, clothed, and fed, but they, as a rule, do not thrive—they pine for the freedom of action and impulse, and for the kindliness of friendship which the weakest of them had bestowed on him from everyone."

I remember our meeting an old woman in a certain island (for her sake I will not say which) who seemed to be destitute of everything but the miserable shelter erected for her as a bride, where all her children, now dead, had been born and brought up, and her tenancy of which so far had escaped the vigilance of the factor. Without a morsel of ground on which to keep an animal or grow potatoes, she was too old and feeble to go any distance in search of employment. We asked a neighbour how she lived. " Oh, it'll be just by the goodness of God," was the simple answer,

[1] Mr. D. Macleod, M.B., Medical Superintendent East Riding Asylum, Beverley.

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not, as might truly have been said, "by the goodness of the friends, themselves of the poorest, whom God has sent to provide for her."

There is a Gaelic proverb, "Am fear bhitheas trocaireach ri' anam, Cha' bhi e mi-throcaireach ri bhruid"—"He who is merciful to his soul will not be unmerciful to his beast,"—and I think we may fairly say that we have never met with a single case of intentional unkindness to any animal in the Hebrides. If the poor creatures have hard work and scanty food, they are but sharing the fate of their owners; and if, as it sometimes struck us was the case, more dogs are kept than can be sufficiently fed, it is because they are the friends and companions of those whose pleasures and friendships can be but few.

A curious sight, in certain places, is to meet the cats of the islands coming down to the landing-place at the time when the fishermen are sorting and cleaning the fish. In spite, however, of the abundance of this particular kind of food, the cat race rapidly deteriorates in the islands. So too do the fowls, for they, like the cats, are by nature unfitted for cold, wet and draughts, though both cats and fowls live a good deal on the rafters of the houses, where they get the warmth of the peat fire burning in the middle of the floor below.

One of the duties of the *constabal baile*, a voluntary officer, elected by the people themselves, of whom we shall have more to say presently, was to see that in the hard labour of carting peats and tangles the brave little horses should not be overworked, but that the various crofters should contribute a share of the labour both of man and beast in just proportion. The work is indeed hard, not only because heavy loads have to be carted over very rough ground, but because the horses, like the men, have often to stand for hours together in the water.

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The horses are too valuable, too necessary to the life of the people, apart from their natural kindliness, to be unfairly treated. If a crofter's horse dies, the neighbours will help him with their own, or subscribe to get him another. Moreover, in districts where old ways prevail, they are very careful not to work a horse before it has come to maturity. Their rules about breeding are equally careful. The Islanders believe that before the Fall the animals had the gift of speech, and they preserve the last words of the horse, the cow and the sheep. They believe that from their superior innocence the beasts can see much that is invisible to man—or at all events those men not gifted with second-sight, and many of the stories of visions and warnings turn upon this special faculty. Moreover, in some places, where the narrow creeds of modern bigotry have not yet subtracted from the more genial views of life and death natural to these kindly people, they believe that as the animals shared in the Fall, so too shall they share in the Redemption, and that the horse, at all events, is, after death, in communication with the spirits of the departed.

There are some interesting sayings about cats. In spite of all the creature has to contend with it apparently attains to long life even in the Islands, for they have a proverb that the cat's first seven years are spent joyously and pleasantly, but that its other seven years are heavy-headed, large-headed and sleepy.

Another saying, which however tends to prove that a shorter career is probable, is that three ages of a cat are equal to the age of a dog, three ages of a dog to the age of a man, three ages of a man to the age of a deer, and three ages of a deer to the age of an oak tree, though what they know about oak trees it would be difficult to say.

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If a cat scratches on the ground with its forepaws, it is a sign of death, for it is seeking for a corpse. If it goes into a pot, it is a presage of fish coming to the house. Stories of sharp practice, such as in Æsop's Fables are attributed to the fox, in South Uist and Eriskay, where the fox is unknown, are told of the cat.

Two old cats went down to the shore one day and found a large lump of butter. After much quarrelling as to proprietorship, it was agreed that the oldest should have it.

"I am the oldest," said the one who had made the suggestion. "I am the cat that Adam had."

The other replied, "You are undoubtedly elderly, but not so old as I, for I was on the earth before the hempen feet [i.e. the rays] went under the sun. Hand over the butter."

He ate so much butter that he began to swell, and he became so heavy that he could not run, and so when a hungry wolf came down to the strand, he fell a victim. "It is not good to be telling lies," as the cat said when the wolf ate him.

There is a tree in South Uist, at least there was, though now you would not know it from a telegraph pole, for it was an araucaria of the monkey-puzzle variety, said to make and to lose a ring every year. This one seems to have confined its exertions to losing them. I remember when it had a ring and a half, now it is gaunt and bare. What misguided person put a semi-tropical plant in a Highland bog I never learnt, but next time planting is attempted in this island I should suggest that some very hardy pines, planted on an artificial mound for the sake of drainage, and temporarily sheltered by some elders of the coarsest variety, would have more chance of success.

Strange to say, one does not desire the presence of trees in South Uist. Never was any place so dependent

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for effect upon its own personality, and something would be lost, I think, by anything which approximated this with any other place. In Tyree one feels that trees have been lost out of the island: it was once the land of wood, and should be so again, but it is not so here. Here indeed, one is reminded of a story which Dorothy Wordsworth quotes from Sir Walter Scott (*Recollections of a Tour in Scotland*, under date September 21, 1803). ". . . . The neighbouring ground had the wildness of a forest, being irregularly scattered over with fine old trees. The wind was tossing their branches, and sunshine dancing among the leaves, and I happened to exclaim, 'What a life there is in trees!', on which Mr. Scott observed that the words reminded him of a young lady who had been born and educated on an island of the Orcades, and came to spend a summer at Kelso and in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. She used to say that in the new world into which she was come nothing had disappointed her so much as trees and woods; she complained that they were lifeless, silent, and, compared with the grandeur of the ever-changing ocean, even insipid. At first I was surprised, but the next moment I felt that the impression was natural. Mr. Scott said that she was a very sensible young woman, and had read much. She talked with endless rapture and feeling of the power and greatness of the ocean, and with the same passionate attachment returned to her native land without any probability of quitting it again."

In the island of Tyree, still more when crossing—as one does now on the West Highland Railway—the Moor of Rannoch, one is persistently conscious that trees ought to be there; it is obvious they were there once, and the landscape requires it. The same is true of many parts of the Highlands of Scotland, where

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trees have been destroyed, possibly for fuel, or perhaps, as within our own memory, on the Duke of Athole's property, by storm. None who have seen those thousands of stalwart trees lying in heaps on the hillside, their branches torn and mangled, their roots pointing to the sky, can ever forget this testimony to what Nature in her wilder moods may do, even far inland or on a sheltered hillside.

Burt, in his *Letters*, referring to a quaint book of travel called *A Journey Through Scotland*, published in 1723, remarks: "He labours the Plantations about the country-seats so much that he shows thereby what a Rarity Trees are in Scotland, and indeed it has been often remarked that here are but few Birds except such as build their nests upon the ground, so scarce are Hedges and Trees."

It will be remembered that when Dr. Johnson lost his walking-stick in the Hebrides he was convinced it was stolen, and Boswell could not persuade him out of the suspicion. "No, no, my friend," said he, "it is not to be expected that any man who has got it will part with it. Consider, sir, the value of such a piece of timber here!"

Macculloch remarks on the destruction of trees, and says that Johnson's remark "that no tree in Scotland is older than the Union" is likely soon to prove true.

"In former ages these trees were preserved and venerated, and by the recollections of the length of time they had sheltered and thrown an air of dignity and importance over the castles and seats of ancient families, the respect of people for their owners was increased and preserved. But such recollections are now out of fashion, the trees are valued according to the money they bring, and like the fidelity of the clansmen, sold to the highest bidder."

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CHAPTER VI

BARRA

IT would be tolerably safe to assert that of those who approach Barra, certainly if coming from the south, nine-tenths look with satisfaction, if not affection, upon the still waters of Castle Bay, for they have almost certainly spent several hours in a fashion which makes them more than thankful for a peaceful harbour and a tranquil sea. Even if they are going further the worst is over, and the worst—from, say an hour beyond Tobermory—is an experience compared with which that of the Bay of Biscay is a mere trifle. Macbrayne facetiously describes the journey, which may be taken three times a week, as of seven and a half hours' duration, 6 a.m. from Oban to 1.30 Castle Bay ; but there are circumstances, such as the condition of one's fellow-passengers, the accommodation, the amount of space at command, which, even when one is the best of sailors, compel attention to the duration of time, and that is seldom limited to seven and a half or even nine hours.

The tonnage of the *Flowerdale* is 537, and we, personally, have spent some very happy hours on the brave little boat. We generally had the deck to ourselves, we asked no questions, we came provided with food, and we had every confidence in the kindly captain. May he live to rule a better boat !

There is a companion-boat, the *Staffa*, her tonnage

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is 196, her captain and mate are alleged to be very skilful seamen, and the boat, built for the Tagus, but rejected for river traffic, is said to be very strong. I can well believe it, for, I repeat, her tonnage is 196 and she crosses the roughest minch on the coast of Scotland.

Perhaps this is all so much the better for Barra. As the purser of the *Dunara Castle* said to us under some such circumstances, "If it were not for these little disadvantages"—the discomfort of one's fellow-creatures—"we should not be the select party we are," and Barra has quite enough to endure without the invasion of the tourist.

Though one is sometimes inclined to feel deficient in gratitude to Macbrayne, his red ochre funnels represent probably one of the most valuable innovations in the modern life of the Outer Hebrides. The postage between the Islands and the mainland seems to us tedious enough, but in the old days, before the mail-boats were established, the connexion was incredibly difficult. The *Agricultural Survey* of 1811 calculates, (p. 519) that for Clanranald to communicate between his two estates in South Uist and in Arisaig (on the opposite coast of the mainland), and to get a reply, would occupy between two and three months, after a journey (via Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Inverness) of 1,444 miles, of which 200 would be over troublesome and dangerous fords and ferries.

If only Macbrayne would put large boats on to such crossings as from Mull to Barra, Skye to Lewis, Tobermory to Tyree, instead of keeping them all for inland lochs, and, even more, if he would give us deck-chairs in place of impossibly high and uncomfortable camp-stools, and a few "garden-seats" with sloping backs instead of the rigid benches at present in favour, one could forgive him other and perhaps more serious

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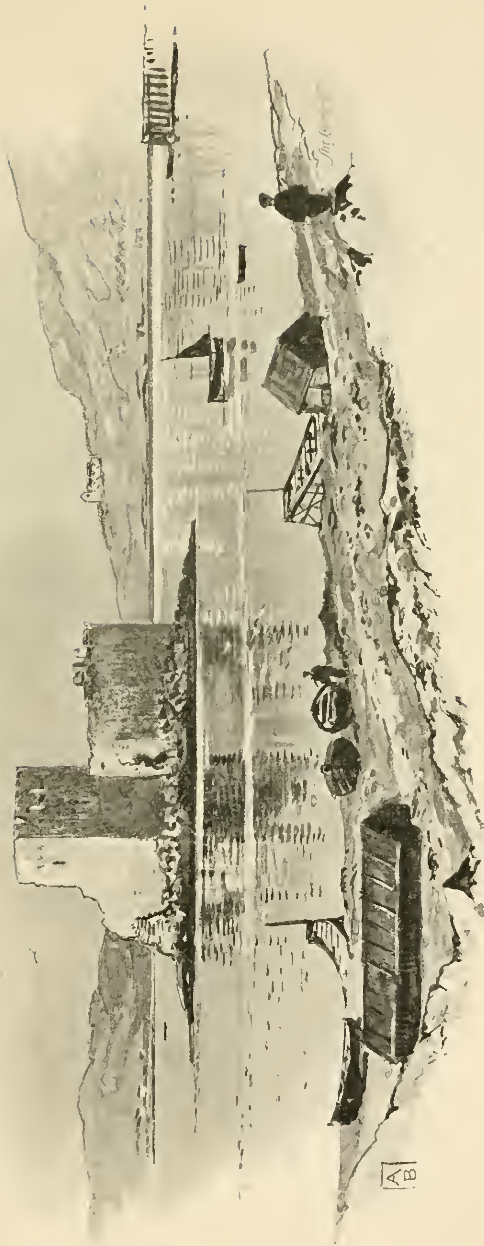

KISIMUL CASTLE, CASTLE BAY, BARRA.

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offences against one's comfort; but to have one's feet hanging in mid-air, and one's back unsupported, or forced forward, as the case may be, are serious aggravations of the wet and the cold, the driving wind, the pitching deck; with the sight of the misery of one's fellow-travellers, in an unventilated, evil-smelling saloon, for sole alternative.

None of the Islands has an approach half so picturesque as that of Castle Bay, nor such an air, fictitious though it be, of prosperity and well-being. The prosperity, far more real, of North Uist, has an air of being ashamed of itself, that of Lewis of being merely temporary, and for commercial purposes. But poor little Barra puts her best foot foremost, and brings down all she possesses to the sea-shore, to welcome the stranger.

The bay is almost circular, the opening somewhat narrow, and the first thing that strikes one's eye is the quaint little Castle of Kisimul, the old stronghold of the Macneills, sitting firmly on a tight little island which just holds it, with not an inch to spare. The Castle is said to be six hundred years old, the fort is hexagonal in form, the walls nearly thirty feet high. There is a high square tower in one angle, which tradition says was always occupied by a watchman who let fall a heavy stone on to the head of any one attempting to surprise the gate. There is a local story that he used to repeat rhymes to keep himself awake. Except by water, it is of course entirely inaccessible, and a more interesting example of its kind could hardly be found.

The Macneills of Barra, as every one knows, "had a boat of their ain at the Flood." It is said that there were thirty-three Roderick Macneills in succession before we come to the first one known to have possessed a charter, one Gilieonan, son of Roderick, grandson of Murdoch, who flourished somewhere about 1427.

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They were the possessors, according to an ancient description, not only of Barra and various smaller islands, but also of "all and sundry other castles, fortalices, manor places, fishings, tofts, crofts, muirs, marshes, islands, lochs, pasturages, pendicles, annexes, connexes, and pertinents, whatsomever, pertaining to the said Isle of Barray, remanent isles above specified, or possessed by the said Macneill, all lying within the Sheriffdom of Inverness, and now united, annexed, and incorporated in ane heil and free barony, called the baron of Barray."

One cannot wonder, after all this, that it was necessary, for the encouragement of his lieges, that a herald should daily proclaim from the roof of Kisimul Castle that the great Chief having dined, the people of the island were now at liberty to refresh themselves. One cause of their extreme dignity lay in the fact that they held their lands direct from the Crown without any overlord. But unhappily, in the reign of James VI., they fell upon evil days. It happened that the Chief of the period, a Rory of course, known, moreover, as "Rory the turbulent" (Ruary 'n' tarter) seized an English ship which was passing along the coast. Queen Elizabeth complained to the King, and Rory was summoned to Edinburgh to answer for his conduct, an order with which he characteristically refused to comply. Mackenzie, known as "the Tutor" of Kintail, thought it a good opportunity for ingratiating himself at Court, and effected by treachery what better authorized methods had failed to achieve.

He went off in whatever kind of boat answered to the yacht of the period, called at Kisimul, and invited Macneill and his retainers to dine on board. Having made them all drunk, he put the inferior persons on shore, and carried off the Chief to Edinburgh. The prisoner was tried, and pleaded guilty to an offence

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which he alleged was fully justified, as an attempt at retaliation for Elizabeth's conduct to his King, and still more to the unhappy Mary, his King's mother. The excuse was accepted, and his life spared, but the lords of Barra were thenceforth placed under the superiority of Kintail, i.e. in the humiliating position of holding their lands from a fellow-chief instead of from the Crown.

Among various stories of Macneill's humiliation under this hated yoke, is, that on one occasion Lord Macdonald was seen approaching the island at a period of great destitution. Macneill was unable either to leave the island or to give him proper entertainment, and his Highland pride could not stand having to make confession of not being in a position to show hospitality. He accordingly got into a creel and ordered a fisherman to carry him away from Kisimul on his back. As ill luck would have it, they met Macdonald, who entered into conversation with the fisherman, whose creel being portentously heavy, broke from the rope, and Macneill fell to the ground. Upon this, Lord Macdonald who seems, like others of his period, to have been ready, like Silas Wegg, to "drop into poetry," thus expressed himself in Gaelic verse :

> It is opportune for me to be going
> From Scanty Barra which is not abundant;
> From the shells[1] I gather
> That the clan Macneill are in need.
> They call Macneill a "lord,"
> And the smallest of birds a "bird,"
> They call the grouse's nest "a nest,"
> And a "nest" too is that of the smallest birdling;
> But small, small is my blessing on the withe[2]
> That allowed his mouth to be under the creel.

The superiority of the laird of Kintail subsequently

[1] Probably cockle shells, showing what food the people had fallen back upon.

[2] i.e. the cord which suspended the basket, probably made of reeds or of bent grass.

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passed by marriage to the Macdonalds of Sleat, the representatives of the Lords of the Isles, who had died out in the reign of James V. The Kings of Scotland always favoured division of power, and there were many shoots from the main trunk, including seven Macdonalds, as well as seven of other patronymics. The superiority of Barra, the value of which is variously reported as from a shilling to some forty pounds Scots, still forms part, it is alleged, of the Macdonald estates, and one rejoices that, however remotely, the island should still be connected with one of the old families.

It is sad, however, that another and less creditable consequence was that, in the '45, the Chief was prevented by his Superior from joining the Stuart cause. He made no secret of his sympathies, and was for a time confined in London. Looked at from another point of view, Sir Alexander Macdonald's conduct was somewhat to his credit, as in the event of Macneill's forfeiture of his estate he, as Superior, would have reaped advantage of the kind by which the Campbells have so often profited.[1]

Like the Clanranalds in Uist, the Macneills were ruined by the failure of the kelp industry, and the island passed into the hands of Colonel Gordon somewhere about 1838.

General Macneill, a brave soldier, survived till 1863, gratefully remembered by his bereaved islanders. Mr. Fraser Macintosh, M.P., tells a pathetic story of one of

[1] Charles II. remarked that there never was a rebellion in Scotland without either a Campbell or a Dalrymple at the bottom of it. Sir Walter Scott (*History of the clan Macgregor*, p. 51) points out that the Argyll Campbells from their vantage ground of frequent presence at Court always "found advantage in keeping o' the windy side o' the law, and in qualifying their aggressions of their Highland neighbours by such plausible forms as might pass current in case of inquiry at the seat of government."

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his own Highland constituents who visited him in London, "chiefly that he might with his own eyes see the house where General Macneill had lived and died."

The family of Barra is still represented by a Rory, an exile, alas! living in Prince Edward Island, a great-grandson of another Rory, Roderick of Brevaig, who emigrated from Barra in 1802.

There seems little doubt that the Macneills made a gallant fight for their island home; it was no case of dying out by slow decay, as among the Clanranalds of Uist. Even as late as 1794, we read, in the *Old Statistical Account*, of great improvement in agriculture within the last five years, "when Mr. Macneill, returned from visiting foreign countries, has begun to introduce the method used in the low country as far as he thinks the soil and climate can admit."

The crofts seem to have been small, not more than from £3 to £4, but with the help of the common-land most were able to keep three horses, four cows, and eight or ten sheep.

"The tenants," we learn, "pay their rents by kelp-making, the proprietor paying them, if on their own farm, £2 12*s*. 6*d*. a ton, if on his, from £1 10*s*. to £2 2*s*. . . . The people live very easy, excepting in bad years, when there is a scarcity of bread." Under these circumstances, we read, "the proprietor supplies the country with low country meal at the market price."

Things are now very different. Though, in this present year, 1901, the proprietor has been compelled to hand over 3,000 acres (till now part of a single farm which covers one-third of the island) for the use of the crofters and fishermen, very much remains to be done.

At the head of the bay is a very good pier, perhaps the best in the Islands, while all around, a number of miniature piers, each accompanied by a little iron or wooden hut, jut out a score or so of feet from the land,

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revealing, to the initiated, the fact that Barra is one of the largest fish-curing stations on the west coast of Scotland. Surrounding the bay are some half-dozen good and well-placed buildings—the Roman Catholic Church, the best in the islands, the Presbyterian Church, a few neat slate-roofed houses belonging to successful tradesmen, and the little hotel, erected, I believe, for the accommodation of the fish-curers, who come in great numbers in June and July, but which is also used by occasional visitors, sometimes artists. Behind, rises a hill 1,260 feet high, which seems to occupy the middle of the island, like, to use a homely simile, a pudding in a dish, the dish being represented by a tract of almost level land varying in width and stretching away from the mountain to the sea. The hill rises abruptly behind the village of Castle Bay, grey and bare like all the higher ground in the Hebrides, and so intersected with rocks, that the people tell you that you may climb up without stepping on the rock, and down again without stepping on the grass.

The island lies north-east and south-west, and measures about eight miles by four, or for part of its length, two. A good road surrounds the mountain, bearing witness to the fact of long-established traffic between the two extremities of the island. This probably is partly because, when the old Castle of Kisimul became uninhabitable, the Macneills removed, what one may call the seat of government, to Eoligarry, where they built a substantial house, though from the presence of remains of a much older civilization, as well as because the soil at that end of the island is more productive than elsewhere, one may conclude that the north and south shores of Barra have always been in active relation with each other, the one as the agricultural, the other as the fishing settlement. More-

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over, in the prosperous days of kelp-making, there was a factory towards the north end, which may partly account for the quality of the road.

On leaving Castle Bay all signs of prosperity are at an end, and not even in South Uist are the houses more wretched or the scraps of cultivated ground more pitiable. In one little gully on the east side an attempt has been made at tree-planting, mainly of elders, birches, and pines, with such fair success that one wonders it has not been carried further. The coarser trees have provided shelter for those of more value, and though none have gained any height beyond the dignity of bushes, owing to the severity of the winds, they are at least a suggestion of what might be done if some sort of artificial screen could be provided until they had attained a stronger maturity.

Turning westward from Castle Bay one comes suddenly, at the turn of the road, upon a little castle, a very toy in fortifications, standing upon a little island in a little lake which may be the scene intended in the story of *Saint Clair of the Isles*, a once popular novel, in the style of Miss Porter. A little further is a remarkable specimen of one of the mysterious Standing-stones of which there are so many in the islands, and of which it is so difficult to guess the original purpose, whether memorials, landmarks, or the site of worship, and, if so, to what kind of worship they have belonged.

One natural feature of the Island of Barra, which is of special interest, is Cockle Bay, a shimmering expanse, almost snow-white and consisting entirely of cockle shells, empty or full, and of the dust and fragments of a great cockle population, probably of thousands of years' duration. I do not know whether such a vast nursery of shell-fish is to be found elsewhere. It seems to have considerably astonished Mr. Donald Munro, High Dean of the Isles, who, as the title-page of his

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"Description" tells us, "travelled through the most of them in the year 1594." His ingenious theory deserves quotation :

"In the north end of this ile of Barray there is ane round heigh know, mayne grasse and greine round about it to the heid, on the top of quhilk ther is ane spring and fresh water well. This well treuly springs up certaine little round quhyte things, less nor the quantity of ane confeit corne, lykest to the shape and figure of ane little cokill, as it appearit to me. Out of this well runs ther ane little strype downwith to the sea, and quher it enters into the sea ther is ane myle braid of sands quhilk ebbs ane myle callit the Trayrmore of Killbaray that is the grate sandes of Barray. This sand is all full of grate cokills and alledgit be the ancient countrymen, that the cokills comes down out of the forsaid hill throughe the said strype in the first small forme that we have spoken off, and after their coming to the sandes growes grate cokills alwayes. There is na fairer and more profitable sands for cokills in all the world."

This explanation appears to have been seriously received, for in the *Old Statistical Account* (1755) we find a solemn contradiction based upon the two arguments : (1) that though there are such a hill and such a spring, the water never reaches the sea, but is absorbed by the sandy soil on the way ; and (2) that "it is allowed by all naturalists that every animal procreates its own species."

The cockles, be their origin what it may, have been a valuable asset of the island, and it is said have sustained hundreds of families in hard times.

Not far from Cockle Bay is the burial-ground of Kilbar (the Church of St. Barr) where are the remains of three chapels, one even smaller than the little one in Tyree. Many, if not most of these chapels, have the

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east wall blank, but one of these has the peculiarity of an east window, which, however, measuring only 16 inches by 3½ inches, can be reckoned but a very trifling exception!

The island formerly possessed a wooden image of St. Barr, which was annually produced on his festival, September 25, and clothed with a linen shirt, probably the remains of some forgotten ceremonial. Probably Barra was of some importance in Columban days, and it is said that some of the small islands belonging to it formed part of the endowment of the diocese of the Sudreys.

St. Michael's Day, in old times the great festival of the Outer Hebrides, coming but four days later, the Holy-day was often kept up for the greater part of the week, and there were horse-races on the sands and various forms of merry-making.

Perhaps an even greater festival is that of St. Bridget, to whom, I believe, the Roman Catholic Church in Barra, is dedicated. The Church stands on the east side of the harbour, and is a handsome little building, well fitted and well kept, and the parish priest is Dean of the Isles, so that it is quite an important religious centre. There is a second Chapel and a priest at the west side of the island. It is on St. Bride's Day that people meet outside the Church, and, by a very old custom, ballot for the position of the boats for the coming fishing season, after which again the skipper of each boat draws lots for his crew, he himself having made his arrangements with some fish-curer who lets him have a boat and a bounty for the men, while he, in return, undertakes to let the curer have all the herring taken by the boat's crew during the season. As the price is fixed beforehand this monopoly often falls hard on the men. They are driven to it almost of necessity, for, at the end of the winter, the bounty, often paid on

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the truck system, i.e. in goods, is very valuable to the poor who have come to the end of their autumn earnings, and now that the kelp-trade is declining have been almost unemployed all the winter; moreover, as the herring-fishery is carried on along the dangerous north and north-west shores of the Long Island, a special boat, heavier and more costly than anything they possess, is required.

The details of the fishing arrangements seem to be in something of a transition stage, so in attempting to describe them, I speak subject to correction, conscious that even as I write, the old customs may already be passing away. I believe, however, that still, after all the business is completed, the fishermen pass into the little grey Church under the shadow of which their plans have been discussed, and then a Service is held, praying for a blessing upon their undertaking, and concluding with the Gaelic hymn which they and their forefathers have always associated with this occasion, with its burden of—

> Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
> The Three in One be with us always;
> On the sea when the flood is about us,
> O Mother! Mary be with us!

We were in the island one year about the middle or end of August, and I remember one bright Sunday morning when, looking from the door of our little inn, we saw an unusual number of persons coming from all directions and gathering about the walls of the Church which stands, unenclosed, on the rocky hill-side. We passed out into the sunshine, and followed at a respectful distance. As always in these islands, and, so far as I know, nowhere else in a Christian country, the men among the Church-goers were in excess of the women. They were evidently fishermen, and all, old and young, were clad in their best blue jerseys or sleeved waist-

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coats. Among the women the Macneill tartan was conspicuous. The younger women wore little kerchiefs falling back from their hair, sometimes held in place by foreign-looking combs or pins. Their dress was generally a blouse and skirt, the lineal successor, differently worn, of the jacket and petticoat of the elder women who, moreover, wore a shawl which covered head and shoulders. All were neat, and looked far more picturesque than some half-dozen who wore hats, generally of a startling variety, imported from Glasgow. The occasion was obviously a special one, and, as we soon discovered, was the farewell service for the men going off to the "loch fishing"—which unfortunately takes off the able-bodied men just at the time of year when they are most wanted to look after the crops, thus leaving all the heavier work for the women.

It was a pathetic and interesting sight. All joined heartily in the Service and in the hymns of praise to Our Lady Star of the Sea. They listened attentively to the sermon, in Gaelic of course, which was special to the occasion, and made reference to the dangers before them, to the separation from home and friends, to the likelihood that never again would just that congregation meet together; for even for those who remained, death was near, and on the sea a thousand dangers were for ever plotting against the life of man.

And indeed the life of the fisherman is one of fearful risk, and we heard often of men dying from cold, and exhaustion, and fatigue, apart even from all the dangers from wind and wave never absent in those fearful seas.

The chance visitor who sees the fisherman lying asleep in the sun, and talks thenceforward, with a show of authority, about the idleness of the Highlanders, little realizes the likelihood that such a man

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has been out all night. Starting early in the afternoon, a crew of perhaps six, they may have to run twelve or fifteen miles up the coast in search of the herring. Their skill in discovering the whereabouts of the fish is like an extra sense. Without waiting for the phosphorescent shimmer of the water, before even the plunging of the solan-goose, or the swoop of the gulls have revealed its presence, they will point to some distant patch of water and tell you "the fish has come." There are times when they smell it, long before the fastidious nose of the landsman is in the least conscious of its presence; at other times they tell you they feel it in the air.

Much to our regret we were never out with any boat "on business," though, with the same boats in their leisure hours, we were familiar enough. The hold is broad and open, and the forecastle incredibly small, though it is all they have for shelter, and cooking, and sleeping, when sleep is possible. In the absence of personal observation, I borrow Buchanan's graphic description of the night's work (*The Hebrid Isles*. Robert Buchanan. Chapter v.):

"One man grips the helm, another seizes the back rope of the net, a third the skunk or body, a fourth is placed to see the buoys clear and heave them out, the rest attend forward, keeping a sharp look-out for other nets, ready, in case the boat should run too fast, to steady her by dropping the anchor a few fathoms into the sea. When all the nets are out, the boat is brought bow on to the nets, the 'swing' (as they call the rope attached to the nets) secured to the smack's 'bits' and all hands then lower the mast as quickly as possible. The mast lowered, secured, and made all clear for hoisting at a moment's notice, and the candle lantern set up in the iron stand made for the purpose of holding it, the crew leave one look-out on deck, and

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turn in below for a nap in their clothes . . . day breaks, and every man is on deck. All hands are busy at work taking the nets in over the bow, two supporting the body, the rest hauling the back rope, save one, who draws the net into the hold, and another who arranges it from side to side in the hold to keep the vessel even. Tweet! Tweet! that thin cheeping sound, resembling the razor-like call of the bat, is made by the dying herrings at the bottom of the boat. The sea to leeward, the smack's hold, the hands and arms of the men are gleaming like silver. As many of the fish as possible are shaken loose during the process of hauling in, but the rest are left in the net until the smack gets to shore. Three or four hours pass away in this wet and tiresome work. At last, however, the nets are all drawn in, the mast is hoisted, the sail set. . . . Everywhere on the water, see the fishing-boats making for the same bourne, blessing their luck or cursing their misfortune, just as the events of the night may have been. All sail is set if possible, and it is a wild race to the market. Even when the anchorage is reached, the work is not quite finished; for the fish has to be measured out in cran[1] baskets and delivered at the curing-station. By the time that the crew have got their morning dram, have arranged their nets snugly in the stern, and have had some herrings for dinner, it is time to be off again to the harvest-field."

Everywhere, and in Barra especially, we were told that the fishing was not nearly so profitable as it used to be. In the present year (1901), though it seemed to us that the harbours both of Castle Bay and Stornoway were crowded with masts, both local and foreign—of which more elsewhere—we were told that hundreds had gone away, for the fish was very scarce.

[1] A cran holds rather more than a herring barrel.

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In Barra, in the old days, at the end of the eighteenth century (*Old Statistical Account*), the average take during the spring-fishing (end of March to end of June) was 1,000 to 1.500 ling to each boat, and the twenty or thirty boats which then represented the great fleet of the present time would take, "one year with another, 30.000 ling besides cod. . . . They carry their fish to Glasgow in the very boats they use at the fishing, where the ling sell from £5 to £6 the hundred. Herring has often been got here in great abundance, but the want of salt has sometimes prevented the inhabitants from deriving any considerable advantage from it." That must, of course, have been before the establishment of organized curing-stations. The fish-curers of the present day seldom belong to the island: they come not only from the east coast of Scotland, but from Grimsby and Yarmouth, from Holland and Germany, and even from Russia.

In old days the dogfish and the cuddy had a value for their oil, which sold at sevenpence or eightpence the Scotch pint, and often sufficed to pay the rent. Oil, too, was taken from the seath or coalfish (in Gaelic *piocach*), and also from the seal.

Even in the good old days, however, it does not seem as if there had ever been an exclusively fishing population. It is quite in vain to contrast the fisherman of the Hebrides with his brother of the east coast, whose hunting-ground is very different.

The fact is obvious enough to any observer not a proprietor, but—always with the desire of excluding mere personal prejudice—I again quote from the often-quoted *Report on the Crofters' Commission*:

"On this island no fisherman can live from the produce of the sea alone, owing to the tempestuous nature of the coast, and the want of a ready transit to the markets. Those, then, who follow the profession of

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fisherman should have as much land as would keep two cows, and those who live by the land alone should have their present holdings greatly enlarged and rented according to the value of the soil. . . . The cause of the prevailing poverty is easily arrived at: it is the want of land. The land is particularly hilly and rocky, yet there is enough of good land if it were divided among the people."

The evidence goes on to show that the better half is held by large farmers, as has already been stated.

The people, here and elsewhere, were moved from their native glens in the expectation that they would at once become fishermen, and that, irrespective of any consideration as to the skill and knowledge they possessed, or even whether, as was very unlikely, they had boats suitable for the purpose, for the inshore fishing is precarious in the extreme, even if there were any possibility of fresh fish reaching the market. Mr. Fraser Mackintosh entertained great hope that the opening of the railway to Mallaig, this year accomplished, might have good results in this direction; but carriage by railway has not always shown itself beneficial to the home-market, and one must not be too sanguine. Moreover, there is not at present any direct communication between Barra and Mallaig, so that any advantage as to markets is more likely to fall to the northern end of the Long Island.

Even if the whole 22,000 acres of Barra were divided among the people they would not have more than seems really needful to supply such necessaries of life as they enjoyed under the former proprietors.

"It is doubtful," the *Report of the Crofters' Commission* admits, "whether it is of any use to give holdings to fishermen without land. The west coast crofters are not historically a seafaring people. While in many cases both good boatmen and daring sailors,

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they cannot be persuaded to trust entirely to the sea for a living."

Just as one associates the kelp industry with Tyree, and the land troubles with South Uist, so in Barra one's attention is inevitably called, before all else, to the fishing industry.

The grievances of the Barra fisherman, apart altogether from his grievances as a crofter, seem especially hard when one realizes that now the kelp industry is decaying and his position as a crofter is almost untenable, the fishing is all he has to look to. As we shall see in another chapter, even Nature and the fluctuations of commerce have treated him hardly; but such conditions are the almost inevitable consequence of our civilization. His worst difficulties are such as ought never to exist. They have been stated on various public occasions and before Parliament, but redress is slow. Under an Act of 1770–1, known as the *White Fisheries Act*, the land, or rather rocky waste within 100 yards of the highest high-water mark, is free to fishermen for drying their nets. For such land, already included in ground for which crofters are paying rent, it was stated in evidence at a meeting of 1,000 fishermen belonging both to Barra and the east coast, a second rent was being charged, often to the same men in their capacity of fishermen; i.e. for six weeks' use of their own rocks for drying nets, a rent of 7*s.* 6*d.* to 10*s.* is exacted per boat, while a third and similar rent is also taken from the alien fishermen for the same purpose.

The crofters, who were very friendly with the east-coast fishermen, and anxious to oblige them, would have done so to the utmost of their power, but naturally considered that the profit, if indeed any profit at all were legal, should go into their own pocket. One east-coast witness, from Lossiemouth,

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said that "speaking for about 2,000 fishermen they would not object to pay £1 per boat for good land to dry their nets on, but they refused to pay 7*s.* 6*d.* per boat for what was called net land, 75 per cent. of which was bare rock within 100 yards of the sea-shore."

Another grievance is connected with the Barra system of private curing-stations—the little piers, with huts adjoining, which have been already referred to. It was stated that for forty-six such stations put up entirely by the curers themselves, at a cost varying from £200 to £1,000, on patches of bare rock close by the sea, totally worthless for any purpose, they were paying a rental of £416; that when a curer, as was very probable, became bankrupt or left disheartened, he received no compensation, but that the whole benefit of their improvements and expenditure passed to the estate often to be re-let at greatly increased rent. In one recent case such a station, rented at £7, was, on the death of the man who built and maintained it, re-let for £30, with an assurance that the rent would be subsequently raised to £60.

The whole question of the Fisheries is now before Parliament, and such facts being made public must—in a civilized and Christian country—ultimately receive attention, though there are no doubt many complexities which will require time to adjust.

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CHAPTER VII

SOUTH UIST

THERE is nothing but a common name to associate the two islands of North and South Uist. They are separated by the island of Benbecula; they are under different proprietors: the one is Presbyterian, the other Roman Catholic; the one has certain connexions with the life of the outer world: it is, so to speak, the seat of government for the Long Island; the other is as separate from all that is human, kindly, genial, as if it were a suburb of the North Pole.

There is, thank Heaven, but one South Uist in the world, though in poverty, misery, and neglect, the island of Barra, sixteen miles south, runs it very close. Barra, however, thanks to its harbour and its fishing, is in touch with the outside world, whereas (save for a few tourists deluded by the tradition of past glory of trout-fishing—for the best lochs are withheld from the public—who for a few months in the year pay passing visits to Loch Boisdale on the east coast) South Uist is surely the most forsaken spot on God's earth. In spite of some concessions of land, wrenched, on behalf of the people, by the tardy action of the Crofters' Commission, the greater part of the island[1] is under sheep-farms, a "farm" here signifying a tract of country once

[1] The island of South Uist, including Benbecula and Eriskay, which, geographically, belong to it, is thirty-eight miles in length, and from two to nine miles in breadth. It contains some 137 square miles, of which, according to Campbell's survey, 10,000 acres are adapted for cultivation.

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bright with happy homesteads, now laid bare and desolate. Heaps of grey stone scattered all over the island are all that remain of hundreds of once thriving cottages; narrow strips of greener grass or more tender heather are all that is left to represent waving cornfields and plots of fertile ground handed on from generation to generation of home-loving agriculturists. The more hardy and vigorous of the race which once flourished here are now scattered over the face of the earth; the old, the weak, the spiritless, for the most part, have alone remained, and their children, white-faced, anaemic, depressed, driven to the edge of the sea as one after another the scraps of land redeemed by their perilous industry were taken from them, are still fighting hand-to-hand with Nature, almost worn out with a hopeless struggle. They are the only Highlanders I ever met who were curt in manner, almost inhospitable, discourteous; but one soon learns to forgive what, after all, is but the result of long years of life "on the defensive."

Nature herself has been but a hard step-mother to the people of Uist. MacCulloch, the correspondent of Sir Walter Scott, wrote of it: "The sea is all islands, and the land all lakes; that which is not rock is sand, and that which is not mud is bog, and that which is not bog is lake, and that which is not lake is sea!"

It is all true enough, but even Nature, "red in tooth and claw," might be, has been, propitiated. Even in South Uist there was a time when life was tolerable, "before chiefs divorced themselves from their retainers, before sheep became the golden image to be worshipped, before the lust for gold took the place of love for the people." [1]

The last of the old chiefs of South Uist, Macdonald of

[1] Preface by Alexander Mackenzie to his edition of Stewart of Garth's *Sketches of the Highlanders*.

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Clan Ranald,[1] driven desperate by family losses, by debts which had been accumulating ever since the disasters of the '45, hopeless of alleviating the distresses of his people, an unwilling party to the cruelties of the trustees and factor, parted with his estate of South Uist in 1841, to Colonel Gordon of Cluny.

The next chapter in the history of the island may perhaps be told more fitly in the business-like report of a contemporary Canadian newspaper. It would be difficult for any fellow-countryman to assume language sufficiently unimpassioned to be convincing to the judicial reader of history. The following is from the *Quebec Times*, of the year 1851, the year in which all civilized countries were ringing with the horrors of slavery as painted by the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, slavery which tore fellow-creatures from their homes, divided families, exported them beyond seas, but, at least, gave them the means of living, and bread in return for labour.

"Many of our readers may not be aware that there lives such a person as Colonel Gordon, proprietor of large estates in South Uist and Barra, in the Highlands of Scotland. It appears that his tenants on the above-mentioned estates were on the verge of starvation, and had probably become an eyesore to the gallant Colonel! He decided on shipping them to America. What they were to do there, was a question he never put to his conscience. Once landed in Canada he had no further

[1] South Uist was in the hands of three Macdonalds: Clanranald, Bornish, and Boisdale.

Ranald Macdonald, writes Mr. Fraser Macintosh, struggled on in the face of defeat and ruin till "by 1815, Bornish with all South Uist had fallen into the hands of the unlamented Aberdonian Colonel Gordon, who wished to turn the isle into a convict settlement, and was ready to dispose of it as such to Government, no doubt first clearing off the whole population as was done in Clanranald's other islands of Rum and Canna after their sale."

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concern about them. Up to last week some 1,100 souls from his estates had landed in Quebec and begged their way to Upper Canada[1]; when in the summer season, having only a daily morsel of food to procure, they probably escaped the extreme misery which seems to be the lot of those who followed them.

"On their arrival here they voluntarily made and signed the following statement: 'We, the undersigned passengers (per *Admiral* from Stornoway in the Highlands of Scotland), do solemnly depose to the following facts: That Colonel Gordon is proprietor of estates in South Uist and Barra; that among many hundreds of tenants and cottars whom he has sent this season from his estates to Canada, he gave directions to his factor, Mr. Fleming, of Cluny Castle, Aberdeenshire, to ship on board of the above-named vessel a number of nearly 450 of said tenants and cottars from the estate in Barra; that accordingly a great majority of these people, among whom were the undersigned, proceeded voluntarily to embark on board the *Admiral* at Loch Boisdale, on or about the 11th of August, 1851; but that several of the people who were intended to be shipped for this port, Quebec, refused to proceed on board, and, in fact, absconded from their homes, to avoid the embarkation. Whereupon Mr. Fleming gave orders to a policeman, who was accompanied by the ground officer of the estate in Barra, and some constables, to pursue the people who had run away among the mountains, which they did, and succeeded in capturing about twenty from the mountains and islands in the neighbourhood, but only came with the officers on an attempt being made to handcuff them; and that some who ran away were not brought back, in consequence of which four families at least have been divided, some

[1] Most of them knowing no word of any language but Gaelic.

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having come in the ships to Quebec, while other members of the same families are left in the Highlands.

"'The undersigned further declare, that those voluntarily embarked did so under promises to the effect, that Colonel Gordon would defray their passage to Quebec; that the Government Emigration Agent there would send the whole party free to Upper Canada, where, on arrival, the Government Agents would give them work, and furthermore grant them land on certain conditions.

"'The undersigned finally declare that they are now landed in Quebec so destitute, that if immediate relief be not afforded them, and continued until they are settled in employment, the whole will be liable to perish with want.

"'(Signed) Hector Lamont

"'and seventy others.'

" . . . Words cannot depict the atrocity of the deed. For cruelty less savage, the dealers of the South have been held up to the execration of the world.[1]

"And if as men the sufferings of these, our fellow-creatures, find sympathy in our hearts, as Canadians their wrongs concern us more dearly. The 1,500 souls whom Colonel Gordon has sent to Quebec this season have all been supported for the past week at least, and conveyed to Upper Canada at the expense of the colony, and on their arrival in Toronto and Hamilton, the greater number have been dependent on the charity of the benevolent for a morsel of bread. Four hundred are in the river at present and will arrive in a day or two, *making a total of nearly* 2,000 of Colonel Gordon's tenants and cottars whom the province will have to

[1] Great Britain, it will be remembered, had at that time begun an expenditure of twenty million pounds for the suppression of the slave trade.

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support. The winter is at hand, work is becoming scarce in Upper Canada. Where are these people to find food?"

Thousands more were evicted from their homes in Lewis, the property of Sir William Matheson, and from Tyree, the property of the Duke of Argyll; and those who remained were driven, for the most part, to little patches of bog or moor, the most barren of the whole district, while the country, fertile from centuries of the labour of their forefathers, was laid waste to make room for sheep.

No sooner had they, by industry and frugality, redeemed these, than the landlords, seeing profit in acquiring what had before been valueless, drove them on to barren strips of sea-coast where from the sea alone could they hope for sustenance.

"To accelerate the departure of the doomed natives the heath pasture was set fire to and burnt. The act deprived the cattle of their only subsistence—heather and young grass—during the spring months prior to the May term. The animals by this means were starved, lost, or sold for a mere trifle. The growing crops belonging to the tenants under notice of eviction were invaded by the incomers' cattle, owing to the destruction of the fences by fire, for which they got no redress. The houses occupied by the natives had all been erected by themselves or their ancestors—not by the landlord—and were consequently their own property; but that fact excited no scruples in the minds of the despoilers, for while the able-bodied men were engaged at a distance, the houses were pulled down over the heads of the old people, the women, children, and infirm, and set on fire! The people were thus left exposed to the mercy of the elements, many dying from alarm, fatigue, and cold. The barns, kilns, and mills [for storing, drying, and grinding corn] were also burnt.

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except *what the factor was likely to require.* What escaped fire was confiscated."[1]

The excuse for these brutalities was, of course, that the Islands were overcrowded, that the people were too thick on the land, that the land could not produce enough to support the population, that for some years past there had been a small voluntary emigration which had had excellent results, and that therefore it was, in all respects, for the best interests of the people that these clearances should be made. To dwell upon the last point is, of course, superfluous. The man who emigrates voluntarily has, it may be presumed, arranged not only for his future abroad but for the disposal of his possessions at home; moreover, to put it moderately, Britain is, theoretically, a free country.

On the other points we may venture to offer a few remarks because the question, though more pressing in the Gordon property than elsewhere (unless on that of the Duke of Argyll), is one prominent in every part of the Outer Hebrides.

There is an immense amount of specialist literature upon this subject, and it would be out of place here to attempt to do more than indicate the nature of the problem with which the Crofters' Commission and the Congested Districts Board are, however late in the day, not ineffectively grappling.

The question is now one of evidence; it has been taken out of the domain of sentiment, prejudice, opinion; and, on the whole, perhaps it is not too optimistic to say that, after nearly twenty years of inquiry on the one hand, and of incredibly patient waiting on the other, something in the direction of justice is beginning to be done. The problem—is it not stated in piles of folio Blue-books, 1883 *et seq*? And where in all the nation's history can one find Blue-

[1] *Glasgow Herald*, Feb. 9, 1883.

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books so readable; Blue-books that are literature—even poetry, written in great measure by the people themselves, in their own quaint English: the story of their own sorrows and sufferings, their hopes and fears, their love of home, their loyalty, their infinite courtesy, their kindness to each other, their gratitude, their readiness to forgive.

It is worth while, in this connexion, to quote from the evidence given before the Crofters' Commission of 1883 by the Rev. Donald Mackintosh, for twenty-two years priest in different parts of Lady Cathcart's estates.

"When I came to the country, the clearances in 1851, and the emigration, forced in some cases with circumstances of shocking inhumanity, were fresh in the memory of old and young. In the evidence given by the crofters' delegates before the Royal Commission . . . there was nothing regarding the doings in 1851 and the previous years that I did not hear long ago in every part of the parish from the Sound of Barra to the North Ford. To say, as has been said, that they only repeated the lesson taught them by agitators, means saying that they learned the lesson long years before agitators or a Royal Commission to inquire into their grievances were dreamt of. They did not exaggerate. Indeed, in describing things that happened in those times, to exaggerate would not be easy."

Under no circumstances could South Uist, or even the slightly more fertile neighbouring island of Benbecula, be in a condition of prosperity from agriculture alone, though in the old days of the kelp-manufacture, as we learn from the *Old Statistical Account*, 1,100 tons were manufactured in years of average dryness and absence of extremes of weather; and even after the discovery of the Le Blanc method, and the consequent

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reduction of wages to as low as £2 per ton, this was, in good seasons a very fair remuneration. And the people were not without other resources. There was considerable trade in eggs, for the excellent harbours made some small exportation possible. "The egg trade is carried on by young able-bodied men, who go about the country with baskets, buying up all the eggs they can get at threepence per dozen. These are shipped off for Glasgow and Greenock from Loch Boisdale, Loch Eynort, and the Sound of Eriskay, in open boats of from seventeen to twenty feet keel, in return for which the dealers bring home goods such as dye-stuffs, tobacco, cotton goods, crockery, and some other articles of convenience" (*Old Statistical Account*).

In the *Report of the Crofters' Commission of* 1883, (p. 5), we read:

"The conception formed by the people of the condition of their forefathers 100 years ago, derived from tradition and from the fugitive writings of the present time, appears to present the following picture:

"A large extent of arable and pasture land held by prosperous tenants in townships, paying a moderate rent to the proprietor; a sufficiency of grain grown, ground, and consumed in the country, in some places with an overplus available for exportation; cattle in numbers adequate to afford milk in abundance, and young stock for sale; horses for the various purposes of rural labour; sheep which yielded wool for homespun and home-woven clothing of a substantial quality, and an occasional supply of animal food; fish of all kinds freely taken from the river and the sea. The population, thus happily provided with the simple necessaries of rustic life, are represented as contented with their lot, deeply attached to their homes, but ready to devote their lives to the service of the Crown and the defence of their country."

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The fisheries of South Uist, though a valuable addition to the resources of the islanders, do not seem to have been profitable for commercial purposes, in spite of the excellence of the Loch Boisdale harbour, which is so safe and so capacious as to have long been the resort of shipping from the Baltic in tempestuous weather. There are, indeed, some five or six good harbours on the coast of South Uist.

From the *Old Statistical Account* we learn that Boisdale—one of the Clanranalds settled in the south end of the island—was then "the only person who carried on the fisheries with any success, excepting some adventurers from Peterhead, who come to the coast here in March and return in July generally pretty successful." Their catch seems to have been principally of ling, cod, skate, and turbot. Herring-fishing here, as elsewhere, at that period was unprofitable on account of the severe tax upon salt.

We hear, moreover, from *Campbell's Survey*, of the successful growth of hemp and flax (often referred to in local traditions), of "excellent grass, and garden stuffs of good quality and sufficient plenty."

And if the past, here as elsewhere, has gained "a glory from its being far," it is only fair to say that the Commissioners certainly extracted little or no evidence in disproof of such conception.

On the contrary, we find among the statements of the witnesses, passages such as the following from Father Campbell, for a great number of years priest in South Uist :

"I remember that there was a great deal of barley-grain exported from this island, but now, since these unfortunate changes, almost every sort of prosperity has declined. The late proprietors always kept a store of meal in the country, and allowed no one to suffer the pangs of hunger.

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They received payment for the meal in kelp. Now kelp-manufacture is discontinued, and the usual supply of meal is stopped, which sinks the people deeper and deeper in the debt of the merchants."

Or again, this is taken from the evidence of Mr. Alexander Carmichael, formerly resident for seventeen years in the island, in true sympathy with the people, and in his capacity of exciseman constantly going about among them, hearing their talk, and entering into their lives:

"In various localities and on various occasions I made minute inquiries of old people as to the detailed farm stock and domestic substance of their fathers. The people then had more land and of better quality, they had more horses, sheep and cattle; they had more crops and of better quality, they had better nourishing food, and they had better bed and body clothing. They had also more constructive ingenuity in arts and manufactures, and they had more mental and physical stamina, and more refinement of manners."

To the unprejudiced observer it is, I think, abundantly clear that the enforced emigration was merely an excuse to get the people off the land at any price, so as to get the highest price possible from tenants, independent alike of kelp-making and sea-fishing.

The irony of this position taken up by the landlords is, that so long as kelp-making was profitable[1] even the voluntary migration of any of the population was looked upon as an injury to the proprietors. Dr. Johnson has many remarks on this subject, and

[1] It should also be noted that during the years when kelp was of so much value, the people were restricted from using seaweed as manure for their lands, which naturally deteriorated greatly in consequence.

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always from the point of view that, of course, the emigration of the people is a great misfortune, but the proprietors have only themselves to thank for it; they should have made it better worth the tenants' while to stay at home! "That the immediate motives of their desertion must be imputed to their landlords may be reasonably concluded, because some lairds of more prudence and less rapacity have kept their vassals undiminished. From Raasay [Macleod's Island] only one man had been seduced, and at Col [Maclean's Island] there was no wish to go away. . . . Some method to stop this epidemic desire of wandering, which spreads its contagion from valley to valley, deserves to be sought with great diligence. In more fruitful countries, the removal of one only makes room for the succession of another; but in the Hebrides, the loss of an inhabitant leaves a lasting vacuity; for nobody born in any other part of the world will choose this country for his residence; and an island once depopulated will remain a desert as long as the present facility of travel gives every one, who is discontented and unsettled, the choice of his abode."

Dr. Johnson had obviously not contemplated the possibility of the existence of a class of proprietors who preferred that their island should be depopulated in order that it might "remain a desert."

Little more than fifty years later, in an article in *The Witness*, then under the editorship of Hugh Miller, (*The Depopulation System in the Highlands*), referring to the island of Tyree we find, in contrast, the following paragraph:

"And it is a melancholy reflection that the year 1849 has added its long list to the roll of Highland ejectments. While the law is banishing its tens for terms of seven or fourteen years, as the penalty of

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deep-dyed crimes, irresponsible and infatuated power is banishing its thousands for life, for no crime whatever. This year brings forward, as leader in the work of expatriation, the Duke of Argyll."

As has been well said by the Rev. John Macphail, a most deeply respected Free Church Minister, for many years upon Lady Cathcart's property, "I have never seen that emigration gave more room to people, though it did to sheep. The tendency has been to add more families to places already overcrowded."

A Roman Catholic priest, also a witness before the Crofters' Commission, and long resident on this property, further enforces this point:

"Owing to the removal of small tenants to make room for large farms or tacks, townships became over-crowded, and the extent of land originally estimated to support one family was made to be depended on by two or more families. . . . There can be no doubt that the land, from constant tillage, does not yield anything like what it once did. The returns, even in favourable years, are very low, only two or three returns instead of eight or nine. . . . The work is hurriedly done to enable the men to get away to the south to earn money there. Then the taking away of hill-pasture from those who formerly had it has greatly added to the discomfort of the people. It has deprived them of the means of furnishing themselves with clothing for day and night.[1] This is a very painful feature in the condition of the people with which our going among them comes into constant contact. This has also deprived them of an important part of food. When they had sheep they used animal food—i.e. meat, once common among them but now exceed-

[1] i.e. cloth and blankets spun, woven, and dyed, from the wool of their own sheep.

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ingly rare. And it has deprived them of the use of ponies in cultivation and in carrying burdens. The poor women have, in consequence of this loss, to do much of the work that ponies did formerly, such as carrying the peats and sea-weed and harrowing the fields.

"Emigration is proposed as a remedy, and it must come to this if there be no other; far better for the people anywhere than starving on our own shores. No one can wish to see their present state perpetuated. But though this remedy might ultimately be beneficial to them and their offspring, I look upon it as an injurious proposal for our country. For it deprives the country of a God-fearing, loyal people, who supply our industries with so much valuable bone and sinew, our fishing fleets with able men, our Naval Reserve with competent hands, and innumerable families with valuable servants. . . ."

It is interesting to observe that the very same remedies suggested now by the *Report of the Crofters' Commission*, were suggested half a century earlier by many of the writers in the *New Statistical Account* (1847).

"The only way to render the people comfortable and industrious, would be to grant each tenant a larger proportion of lands than what he presently possesses, as he could manage that with the same number of hands, the same number of horses which he requires for the small lot, and to grant the tenants a more permanent holding of their lands by leases of nine or ten years, with stipulation for improvements and other regulations."

It would not be fair, however, not to point out that the alien farmer question had begun before the importation of the alien landlord.[1] The threatening decay

[1] Burt, in his well-known "Letters," observed such changes as long

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of the kelp industry, the disasters of the '45, the consequent increase in prices, the increasing tendency of landlords, also incidentally a consequence of the '45, to migrate with their families to the south,[1] all these things and others, led to the letting to outsiders of those farms which formerly had been the portion of younger sons of the Chief or of members of the clan whom he desired to propitiate or delighted to honour.

"I must here observe," says Buchanan, in 1793, "that there is a great difference between the mild treatment which is shown to sub-tenants and even scallags[2] by the old lessees descended of ancient and honourable families, and the outrageous rapacity of those necessitous strangers, who, having obtained leases from absent proprietors, treat the natives as if they were a conquered and an inferior race of mortals."[3]

It is probably to this new race of alien tacksmen that Anderson refers (1785)[4] when he tells us that

ago as 1791. He was probably not sufficiently aware of the real state of things to know much of the distribution of blame, and inclines to lay everything at the doors of the ambition of the gentry in the islands to compete with those elsewhere in the elegancies of life, and of the consequent necessity of exacting higher rents. Thus the ancient adherents of their families are displaced. These, having been accustomed to a life of devotion, simplicity, and frugality, and being bred to endure hunger, fatigue, and hardship, while following their cattle over the mountains, or navigating the stormy seas that surround their islands, form the best resource of the state, when difficulties such as the inhabitants of a happier region are strangers to, must be encountered for its service.

[1] A correspondent of Miss Ferrier (whose clever novels of Highland life won for her from Sir Walter Scott the title of "the Scotch Miss Austen") writes in a letter, 1811, that "Macdonald of Clanranald is a great beau in the fashionable world, much in request because of his dancing."

[2] The sub-tenants and scallags of the eighteenth century are practically the crofter and cottar of later times.

[3] Buchanan, *op. cit.* pp. 49, 50.

[4] [Anderson, *op. cit.* p. 165]: "Certain exactions by the tacksmen

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they sell stores to their tenants in necessitous times at fifty per cent. profit, "so that the destitution of the people is truly deplorable." One has, however, to remember that the only means of transport was in open boats, that even when they reached the mainland, unless they accomplished the long and dangerous journey to Glasgow, they were still far from any centre of commerce, that the stores would often be months on their hands before they were needed, and that credit must be long and payments precarious.

Whatever the alien tacksmen might be, there was always the Chief to appeal to, ready to help those of his own name and blood, those by whom his fathers had gained and kept the lands which he was beginning to feel were slipping away from him, and even at this very time we find Buchanan constantly speaking of the kindness to their tenants of the Mackenzies in the Lews, of the Macdonalds in South Uist, and of Macleod in Bernera. It should be mentioned that Seaforth, perceiving to what species of injustice the sub-tenants were liable, allowed

from the sub-tenants were so far recognised by custom that there is a Gaelic rhyme enumerating them:

"Seven days forced labour in Spring,
Seven days forced labour in Autumn,
A lamb at Lammas,
A wether at Hallow-tide.

"There was formerly a barbarous law in Uist by which, if a woman lost her husband, she forfeited one of their two horses to the tacksman. There are some lines about the *Each Ursann*, the forfeited horse, made by a man who married a widow who had been thus mulcted:

"Who was conflicted with the law of widows,
Whom fate robs of their tiller (husbandman),
A deed not easy to bear would be done to them,
The ursann horse would be taken from them.

"The fat sheep sent at Hallow-mass was called the *caora chàraidh*, and a fat fowl required at intervals was called the *cearc fearinn*. The days of exacted labour were known as the *caraisde*; one day a year was also exacted for road mending."

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no sub-letting, and all his tenants were concerned with himself only.

The new school of proprietors and their advocates have tried to insist upon the serf-like conditions of life, and the oppression of the rule of the Chiefs in the old days, but even as far back as Martin (1703) we read :

"If a tenant [in Barra] chance to lose his milk cows by the severity of the season, or any other misfortune, in this case Mackneil of Barra supplies him with the like number that he lost," and "when any of these tenants are so far advanced in years that they are incapable to till the ground, Mackneil takes such old men into his own family and maintains them all their life after."

Moreover, as Burt reminds us (Letter 19, 1730), the alien is for the crofter what the *nouveaux riches* are to the peasantry of the village, whose squire they displace.

"This power of the Chiefs is not supported by interest, as they are landlords, but as lineally descended from the old patriarchs, or fathers of the families, for they hold the same authority when they have lost their estates, as may appear from several, and particularly one, who commands in his clan, though at the same time they maintain him, having nothing left of his own."

As has already been seen, Tyree was the first (1674) to pass from the old Chiefs: from the Macleans to the Campbells of Argyll, aliens in blood and faith, though that story belongs to another chapter of history altogether; other proprietors, the Macneills in Barra, the Macdonalds in South and North Uist, the Macleods in Harris, the Mackenzies in Lewis, at least parted with their property by honourable purchase, however distressing the loss of the lands of their ancestors might be, and in some cases undoubtedly was.

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The Reformation, which had caused so much bloodshed and heart-burnings elsewhere, had passed by the remote and peaceful Hebrides, and in most cases the old religion remained untouched till the introduction of Presbyterianism by the followers of the new proprietors.[1]

In Tyree, we learn, Ferchard Frazer, though himself a cadet of the Lovat family, who have maintained the old faith, was the first minister, and his son John, well known to antiquarians in another connexion, who succeeded him in 1680, is said by his biographer (1707) to have converted twenty-four families in Coll.

It was not till some fifty thousand Highlanders had been cleared from their native glens, and, in some of the islands, till hundreds more were perishing from want of proper shelter, food, clothing, and sanitation, that in August, 1882, Mr. D. H. Macfarlane, M.P., moved for a Royal Commission to inquire into the condition of the Highland crofters. The facts were so flagrant that, with none of the delay usual on such occasions, within six months the Commission was at work, and in 1883 their Report was before the public.

Mr. Macfarlane, to whom fell the privilege of bringing about such an inquiry, remarks :

"Everybody knows that it was a Commission composed almost entirely of landlords, that the crofters had no direct representative upon it, and yet, so irresistible was the evidence of wrong and the need of remedy, that it has made proposals almost revolutionary.

[1] One of the Clanranalds, Alexander Macdonald of Boisdale (d. 1768), became a Protestant and was one of the lairds of whom Dr. Johnson quotes an example, who drove their tenants to church with a cane, the new faith being accordingly known as "the religion of the yellow stick." The Clanranald islands of Benbecula and South Uist have, however, like Barra, remained constant to their old faith. It might have been different had the new proprietor been more popular, as was the case in Lewis, Harris and North Uist.

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That its report is favourable to the people may be accepted as proved when it is stated that it has incurred the bitter animosity of the Duke of Argyll.[1] Notwithstanding the studied caution of its language, the Report discloses a state of misery, of wrong-doing, and of patient long-suffering, without parallel in the history of this country. As great oppression may have been inflicted upon the Irish, but it was not endured without bursts of wild, criminal resistance."

A parliamentary commission is not, as a rule, overcharged with sentiment or philanthropy; a group of landlords compelled to sit in inquiry into the conduct of their own order, investigating conditions in which their own privileges are at stake, were hardly likely to overvalue the merits of the accuser in such a trial; but one cannot but feel that their appraisement of his value as part of the stock of our national hive is expressed in handsome terms:

"The crofting and cottar population of the Highlands and islands, small though it be, is a nursery of good workers and good citizens for the whole empire. In this respect the stock is exceptionally valuable. By sound physical constitution, native intelligence, and good moral training, it is particularly fitted to recruit the people of our industrial centres who, without such help from wholesome sources in rural districts, would degene-

[1] He characterized it (*Nineteenth Century*, 1881) as a "great shop for scandal, in which every private spite could be indulged."

Lord Napier in his reply (as Chairman of the Commission), after pointing out that conciliation was, on the contrary, the main end of all persons concerned, remarks:

"When we reflect that these remote and often illiterate men were contending for the first time on a public scene for all that is deepest and dearest to them in life, how slender do their offences against morality, reason and good taste appear, when set beside the stratagems and mendacities of a party demonstration in Birmingham or the revengeful diatribes of many a debate in the House of Commons."

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rate under the influences of bad lodging, unhealthy occupations, and enervating habits. It cannot be indifferent to the whole nation, constituted as the nation now is, to possess within its borders a people, hardy, skilful, intelligent, and prolific, as an ever-flowing fountain of renovating life.

"It would be difficult to replace them by another race of equal ability and worth."

It reads rather like a recommendation to go on breeding Highland cattle, and in consideration of its obvious adaptation to its environment, not to allow the whole stock to be exported; but one cannot quarrel with the terms of an appreciation, which is perhaps the more convincing that its manner is essentially business-like.

The problem finally brought before the Crofters' Commissioners appears to amount to this:

The evidence having tended to show that, more especially in relation to certain districts, the native population is not in possession of sufficient land to provide them with food for themselves and their stock,[1] is the difficulty to be met with more land or less population? They have expressed themselves very definitely as to the necessity of redistribution of land, and the Congested Districts Board, the practical outcome of the Commission, has already taken steps to carry out their recommendations—in some cases, notably those of Sir Arthur Orde in North Uist and Macleod of Macleod in Skye, with the ready col-

[1] Mr. Carmichael stated in his written evidence that two-thirds of the land was in the possession of forty families.

Other evidence extracted by the Commissioners brought to light the fact that in South Uist, after subtracting for the Clergy, the schools, and the inns, the gross rental of the island was £5,983, of which £2,763 2*s.* 6*d.*, nearly half, was paid by thirteen persons, the remainder being in the hands of 787 crofters whose share is so small as to average little over £4 each, and yet the island has to support 1,234 families, a total population of 6,078.

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laboration of the proprietor; in others, in spite of the proprietor. In the island of Barra, after what the Blue-books politely call "prolonged negotiation," that is to say, something as like a riot as the peace-loving Highlander knows how to produce, the people, by the timely action of the Congested Districts Board, have been put in possession of 3,000 acres of land, largely subtracted from that of a single farmer, who, as appeared in the Commission, was renting over one-third of the entire island.

In regard to the other phase of the problem, the utility of emigration, the evidence and the judgement upon the evidence has largely tended to show that, as Mr. Fraser Macintosh, himself a Highland landlord, expressed it:

". . . No necessity for State interference as regards emigration has been established, except in the case of the Lews and some of the minor islands of the Hebrides. Re-occupation by and redistribution among crofters and cottars of much land now used as large farms will be beneficial to the State, to the owner, and to the occupier."

Some of the members of the Commission, without going so far as Mr. Fraser Macintosh, were of opinion that emigration would be useful under certain conditions:

"Emigration offers few difficulties to the young and able-bodied, but it is obvious that it can be no benefit to a country to lose its workers alone, and that it is only by the removal of entire families that any serviceable relief from congestion will be experienced."

Surely the condition of some of our villages in rural England is sufficient protest against the subtraction of the able-bodied, a protest which the horrible consequences of our war in South Africa emphasize still further. At the time of the Commission it was pointed

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out that the Highlands and islands were contributing 4,431 men to the Naval Reserve, an organization which, as will be pointed out in the chapter on Lewis, is well worthy of special consideration in the Highlands. It is long now since, commenting on the emigration then beginning, before the resuscitation of the kelp-industry, Sir Walter Scott wrote:

"If the hour of need should come, and it may not be far distant, the pibroch may sound through the deserted region, but the summons will remain unanswered."

The problems with which the Government has to deal, prominent everywhere, are so much a part of the very existence of South Uist that it would be vain to attempt any account of the island without first describing its conditions of life. To quote once more from the *Report*:

"The history of the economical transformations which a great portion of the Highlands and islands has, during the past century, undergone, does not repose on the loose and legendary tales that pass from mouth to mouth; it rests on the solid basis of contemporary records, and, if these were wanting, it is written in indelible characters on the surface of the soil."

One might well go further: it is written on the faces, on the manners, on the very lives of the people. If anything on God's earth could be beyond hope it would seem to be the island of South Uist, for the people themselves seem hopeless. They have largely lost the frankness, the ease of manner so commonly characteristic of the Islands; those who know them best allege that they have even acquired some of the cunning, the graspingness so often characteristic of those crushed in body and soul.

I well remember the remark of one, whose life was sacrificed to the needs of these suffering people, upon

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looking at a spray of the blue forget-me-not which, mixed with the golden iris, makes a belt of June glory round every one of the hundred lochs of his watery parish, "Fancy any one wanting to remember this place that got a chance to forget it!" It was of South Uist that, when I had suggested a tidal wave as the only solution of its problems, Mr. Stanford quaintly remarked, "It would be more economical to turn it into

IN SOUTH UIST.

WOMEN REAPING OATS.

hypophosphates." He too well knew and realized the stagnant hopelessness of the island poverty.

The very existence of the island of South Uist is itself a tragedy which shames our civilization. Nowhere in our proud Empire is there a spot more desolate, grim, hopelessly poverty-stricken. It is a wilderness of rock and of standing water on which, in the summer, golden lichen and spreading water-lilies mock the ghastly secrets of starvation and disease that they conceal. The water is constantly utterly unfit for drinking purposes. There is not a tree on the island, and one wonders how the miserable cattle and sheep contrive to live on the scant grey herbage. The land of the

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poor is not enclosed; and to preserve the tiny crops from the hungry wandering cows and horses they have to be continually watched, and as half an acre of bere may be distributed over five acres of bog and rock, the waste of human labour is considerable. The potatoes often rot in the wet ground, and I have seen the grain and hay lying out as late as October from the impossibility of getting it dried.

Excellent and abundant fresh-water trout there is, but that is not for the poor; nor the rabbits, nor the game, and even the sea-wrack, formerly a means of living, is now hardly worth the getting. Nevertheless, when the "tangle" comes on the beach—provided the factor gives them leave to get it at all, which by no means necessarily follows—men, women and children crowd down with earliest daylight, and work on by moonlight or starlight, with the hideous intensity of starvation.

The houses of the poor, especially of the cottars, are inconceivably wretched. They are of undressed stone, piled together without mortar, and thatched with turf. Often they have no chimney, sometimes no window; the floor is a bog, and a few boxes, with a plank supported by stones for a seat, is all the furniture except the unwholesome shut-in beds. Cleanliness is impossible, with soot coating the roof overhead, wet mud for floor, and, except in the very rare fine days, chickens, and perhaps a sick sheep or even a cow or horse, for fellow-occupants.

To the old Boisdale and Clanranald chiefs with all their faults the people were ready to forgive much; but the Highlander, at best conservative, exclusive, distrustful of strangers, becomes, when oppressed, starving, terror-stricken, unreasonable in prejudice, intolerant of change, perverse it may be in refusing to do his part in establishing mutual understanding.

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Only those who have sojourned among them, not in the cosy fishing-hotel at Loch Boisdale, far away from the villages, but who have established personal relations with the people in their own homes, can even guess at the utter hopeless dreariness of their lives. The chronic dyspepsia which accompanies the ever-present teapot, the wan anaemic faces of women and children, the continual absence from the island of all able-bodied men make the human element almost as depressing as the flat, grey, glimmering, wet landscape.

One gleam of brightness there is, a cottage hospital, built and maintained by the Marchioness of Bute, on whom, needless to say, the island has no claim whatever. There three devoted women are constantly fighting such disease as comes of starvation, bad water, no drainage, and the accidents inseparable from seafaring life in open boats on a dangerous coast. The doctor, responsible for a district of over thirty miles in length, with a dangerous ford and a treacherous minch to cross and many a weary mile where there is no road to travel, cannot, as a mere question of time and space, do anything like justice to his work. His self-sacrifice and unceasing toil I know well; they are qualities one takes for granted in South Uist.[1] When an epidemic breaks out—influenza again and again, or the virulent typhoid, which one can only expect under the conditions of life at Dalibrog and other villages on the island—the people are helpless and terror-stricken. They are so absolutely without means of grappling with illness, of protection for the healthy, that they are panic-stricken with an animal-like savagery of self-defence. For the sake of others, such cases cannot be taken into the hospital; the Sisters

[1] I believe that, among other recent improvements, some curtailment of the sphere of the over-worked medical officer has recently been effected.

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can seldom leave their own work for distant nursing, though at critical times they have accomplished even this.

The summer of 1898 was one of the worst they have ever endured. The potato crop had failed the previous autumn, the fishing was exceptionally bad, and an epidemic of even more than usual virulence had broken out. Only one person was there to help, the young priest, the Rev. George Rigg. He was in every sense of the word a gentleman, and a scholar, educated at St. Sulpice, where he acquired something of the special subtlety of French thought which fitted him for work very different from that which lay in his path of duty. He had the fastidious refinement of thought and habit which is often inseparable from years of delicate health and over-work. Not himself of Highland blood, his personal devotion had made him nevertheless perfectly at home with his people, and often have they told me of the eloquence of his preaching in their own Gaelic tongue.

I remember that on first seeing him there I turned to his predecessor, himself broken down from over-work and heroic self-sacrifice in the interests not only spiritual but material of his flock, saying, "How I hope that bright boy won't be allowed to eat out his heart on this desolate island!" I little thought his deliverance would come in three years.

This is the bare story as written to me by that same faithful friend, a priest on a neighbouring island, who encouraged his work in life and nursed him like a brother on his death-bed:

"For three weeks he devoted himself to a fever-stricken family where husband, wife and children were all prostrate at once. No one ever called to see them or nurse them but Father Rigg and the doctor who called and prepared food for them several times. Not

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even the mother of the man nor the sister of the wife ever entered the door. Father Rigg came daily and nursed and fed them and spent the day with them to cheer them. He had the most menial and loathsome work to do, and did it heroically. He was struck down himself a week last Thursday, and died on the following Friday, at 7.30. a.m., in the height of a violent typhoid fever, after receiving the last Sacraments. . . . Father Rigg had not the enthusiasm, or I should say the natural pleasure, that hard work often gives [owing greatly to extreme delicacy of health], but worked out of a conscientious devotion to religion and duty. It was trampling down his natural inclinations thoroughly to undertake these three weeks of solitary and sickening work. He took pleasure in subduing himself."

And now

> His place in all the pomp that fills
> The glory of the summer hills
> Is that his grave is green.

He lies among the scattered and unenclosed graves of his flock on the "machair," the flat grass-grown expanse above the shore. A handsome Celtic cross marks the spot, and as one comes upon it suddenly on the bare expanse, one feels that here, far away from all the traditional sanctities to which one is accustomed, one is —perhaps all the more—on holy ground. He still lives in the hearts of his people, his deeds are told in their stories, and his name, like those of the heroes of their past, is preserved in song.

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CHAPTER VIII

SOUTH UIST AND ITS PEOPLE

LORD NAPIER, who has so admirably shown his real appreciation of the crofter and his troubles, has well described this district, as one which "the caprice of Nature has stricken with so many disabilities, and invested with so deep a charm."

As has already been shown, there was a time when man was glad, even in South Uist; and in truth, even here, were the tyranny of Nature all that he had to contend with, man's life might yet be tolerable. As it is, he lives in memory and tradition, and the Uist man is at his best when talking of the past.

Many of the common-place affairs of every-day life used to be conducted in the most picturesque manner. In every township, even if of only half a dozen houses, there was formerly a *constabal baile* (constable of the hamlet), whose business it was to direct and distribute the work of gathering peats, to select new peat grounds when the old were exhausted, to see to the repair of the mountain paths by which the peat was brought down in creels, to direct the reclaiming of land, to represent the crofters in their dealings with the factor, and in much else. He was elected yearly, or for longer periods or even for life, according to the custom of his district. When he accepted office he would take off his shoes and stockings—to show that he was in contact with the earth of which he was made and to which he would return, and then, raising his bonnet, and lifting up his

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eyes to heaven he would declare that upon his honour, in presence of earth and heaven, in presence of God and men, he would be faithful to his trust. Many are the tributes we have heard to the faithfulness of one and another of these men, to their zeal, justice, industry and resource.

Such an intermediary was especially necessary, when, as on the Gordon estates, the factor was unable to speak Gaelic. He, on his side, has a sub-official, known as the Maor Gruind, the ground-officer, who can meet and converse with the Maor-Baile, so that, as the local saying has it, "The tongue of the people is in another man's mouth."

There are some lofty hills in South Uist—one point, Ben Mhor, visible even from Tyree and from the mainland, is over 2,000 feet high; another, Hecla,[1] named probably by the Norsemen over a thousand years ago, 1,988 feet high. The hills lie along the east coast of the island, while westward of them, the ground, intersected with lake and bog, lies level to the sea-shore or machair, a great sandy, bent-grown plain, excellent for cattle and horses, and in former times all common land, as were also the hills.

Now the hill-ground is taken away as well as the best of the machair, and they have even had to share their rocks and bogs with new-comers. In the old days, however, when the grass on the shallow strand was exhausted, the people, with their cattle, used to betake themselves to the hills and so, by change of scene for themselves and of pasture for their flocks and herds, they escaped many complaints and ailments common now that the soil is over-worked, and food, lodging, and clothing so much deteriorated. They themselves, equally with the cattle, were much

[1] The natives call the hill *Teacladh* (pronounced Teela), a usual change in Gaelic when the initial H is introduced.

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SHEALING LIFE (SHOWING LOBSTER-POTS).

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better fed when the ground had a chance to lie fallow. The possession of common land made even a small croft much more productive than now, when so much is exacted from it, and Father Campbell, a native of South Uist, where he is still held in loving memory, assured the Commissioners that there was sufficient land in Uist for the present population if only they had the use of it.

A fine day in the month of June would be chosen for the start, and at an early hour in the morning the procession formed, the men, lads and young girls, driving the sheep, mares, and calves, their simple provision packed in creels strapped on the backs of a few mountain ponies, the older women, knitting as they walked, following with the young children, while half-grown boys and girls, full of wild anticipations of fun, ran backward and forward like the excited dogs, probably of all the party most conscious of responsibility.

On arriving, there would be small repairs to make to the shealings of last year, all of the simplest and most elementary description, often of the bee-hive shape, but on occasion adapted to the material available—stones roughly piled against a large rock, or against a bank, supports of disused oars or parts of masts, a roof of the roughest thatch of heather or bent grass, a shelf in the thickness of the wall for keeping the milk cool on hot summer days, the floor as Nature may have provided, turf or sand or beaten earth.

Then, when all was arranged, they would sit down in scattered groups to the Moving Feast, of which the eating and drinking would be, as on all occasions in the Highlands, the least conspicuous part, consisting probably of cheese and scones, perhaps tea.

Then would come, as the climax, the shealing evening hymn sung to one of the slow melodies with the melancholy cadence so characteristic of the oldest Gaelic

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songs. They would confide themselves and their flocks to the protection of S. Michael, subduer of the wild beast, to Mary, mother of the white lamb, to S. Columba, always concerned with the care of the dumb beasts to whom in his life-time he showed so much kindness, and finally to the Blessed Trinity.

> Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
> Three in One, be with us in light and darkness:
> Down in the low-lying machair or up on the hill-side,
> The Three in One be with us, His arm around our head.

Often in the Islands, one notes a brighter colour on the heather, or a greener shade upon the grass in some wild spot just above the rocky shore, denoting the former occupation of the spot by a group of shealings, perhaps for the pasturage of cattle, I am told, though I have not seen them, that on the machair of the west coast of South Uist there are earth dwellings, which are used as shealings by kelp-workers.

As is described elsewhere, it is not only at the shealing that such prayers are and have long been in constant use in the Catholic islands. There are prayers for travelling, for following the cattle, for going to sea, for raking the peats at night, for rousing them in the morning, the theory of saying grace carried to a logical conclusion.

The summer exodus was indeed the great festival of the year, and among the folk-songs of the people those in praise of the shealings are among the most poetical Both in mind and body, perhaps even in soul, the people have lost much in losing the rest and refreshment of the shealing life.

The women and children happily established in their new surroundings, all needful repairs done to shealing and bothie and pen, the men would return home to

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attend to the crops and get in the peat, thatch the houses and generally make preparation for the coming winter.

During the three months or more of their stay, the principal work of the women would be to make butter and cheese for the winter store. The flocks could ramble all day at will, feeding in the freshest and greenest spots; the calves and lambs would be growing fat and strong on the sweet hill pasture, and the cows would be yielding of their best.[1] Spare hours would be occupied with the distaff, getting the wool ready for the winter's task of weaving the warm durable cloth which was then their only wear. The young folks enjoyed the fun and freedom of an existence without even the responsibility of herding, and none of the folk-songs are so blithe and gay as those in praise of the shealings and the shealing life.

In the old days many of the people paid their rent in kelp, but when kelp-making for the Estate practically ceased, a reduction in rent, long promised by Colonel Gordon, ought to have been allowed, for money payment is always dearer for the people than payment by labour or produce; for the amount of money in circulation is very small, and has an exaggerated value among the people, whose ordinary transactions with each other are carried on by barter, eggs being a very usual unit of exchange. What the people buy from the local "merchant" or shop-

[1] The old days, with all their ease of life as compared with the hard hand-to-hand struggle of the present, were nevertheless days of order and economic law. The constable of the village, whose work has been already mentioned, carried out strict rules about the "souming," that is, the assigning of land for grazing purposes, that there might be fair play and just division. For example, a cow's grass was counted as the equivalent of that of eight calves or sheep, or of sixteen lambs or geese, and the utmost pains were taken to secure justice for all.

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keeper (a *tradesman* in the islands is a craftsman; a tailor, shoemaker, carpenter, etc.) is generally bought on credit and paid for in wool or home-made cloth, which, though a convenient method, indeed at times the only one possible, is considerably to the advantage of the merchant, who, however, of course incurs a certain amount of risk from which he is bound in some degree to protect himself.

Even when kelp was worth considerably more than at the present day, little more than two or three pounds per ton ever reached the people, and the tendency for the profit to accrue to the Estate, which contributed nothing whatever, has naturally increased rather than diminished, so that compulsory service in kelp-making, on pain of eviction, lingered on, often greatly to the detriment of agricultural work in June, July and August, until, in the year 1886, the crofters secured fixity of tenure and the old threat became of no avail. When, to a question put by Mr. Fraser Macintosh in the House of Commons, the Lord Advocate replied that there was now no contract compelling the crofters to make kelp for the Estate, and that all the money got for kelp was handed to them in return for their labour, the people naturally supposed themselves free to seek a better market. With a power of initiation one would hardly have expected to find in so remote a place, one of the crofters undertook to act as agent, and at once offered a penny more per square yard of tangle than was paid by the Gordon Cathcart Estate. The Estate authorities at once interdicted the prospective purchasers, and the poor islanders had no choice but to offer the result of their season's work to them at the old price. The Estate not only refused the offer, but served an action of suspension and interdict upon seventeen of the crofters, prohibiting them from removing or disposing of the tangles

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collected. To quote from a contemporary newspaper account:

"They were thus boycotted; their severe and protracted labours go for nothing, and the fruit of their hardy industry is ruthlessly sacrificed. Can anything more disheartening to industrious and honest people be imagined? The islanders are greatly agitated over the question, and claim that it is unreasonable and contrary to justice, that Lady Cathcart's claim to tangles, grown perhaps hundreds of miles from the shores of her estate, should be allowed as her property, merely because they happen to be cast upon the sea-shores of her island by the accident of the winds and the waves, and which, but for the industry of the poor people living on her estate, would not be worth a farthing to any person in the British Empire."

It is only in the Highlands, among a race accustomed to look to those over them as holding parental, not tyrannical authority, that such things are possible. In Ireland the people boycot the landlords; in the Islands, the landlord boycots the people. And then we talk about "the lazy Highlander" and wonder that he does not make more effort to better his condition!

It is obvious therefore, that with no agriculture worth mentioning, insufficient ground on which to graze stock, rare and uncertain markets for their beasts, and every obstacle put in the way of making profit out of even the jetsam and flotsam of the ocean, it is extremely difficult for the people to acquire the actual cash which alone would enable them to face the world with the characteristic Highland independence and self-respect. This their present life is going far to obliterate, at least among the inhabitants of South Uist. The hope of gaining a prosperous home in South Uist seems so remote that the islander in despair turns his gaze across the Atlantic. In Manitoba he knows that the hardy industrious High-

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lander will be welcome. It is true that compulsory emigration is not now permitted. Yet are there many indirect methods of making life quite intolerable, in districts where endurance is being already stretched to its utmost possibility of tension.

The people have an absolute craving for work, and it is chiefly from these islands that the young women go every year to the east-coast fishing, mainly now to Aberdeen, though formerly largely to Fraserburgh and Peterhead. They are expert fish-curers. They receive £2 on engagement, in mid-winter, when money is scarcest, and this probably tempts away many a woman who possibly repents of her bargain later. However there is no work for them to do at home, the change and better food, now that there is no shealing-life, is good for their health, and they bring home not only money but enlargement of notions. Many of the domestic details of life have improved greatly since the women have been away from the Islands. They bring home crockery and articles of clothing, and their lives have gained in order and in complexity. Their life at the fishing is necessarily of the roughest. Sometimes they work for two or three nights without sleep. Their conduct is said to be excellent.

I have travelled with them two or three times between Oban and their own islands. They were always neat and modest in their dress and orderly in their conduct, but, poor girls, strange to say, they were horribly sea-sick!

Some of the crofters too go south to work on mainland farms, but almost always as emergency-work to tide over necessities, bringing back the money earned to spend on their own crofts, and very rarely tempted to remain in permanent employment away from family and home. They are capable of immense endurance and

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very hard work for any definite object such as fishing or tangle-drying, persevering day and night without sleep and with scanty food. Indeed, without such perseverance and the capacity for seizing occasion, nothing would be accomplished. When the miserable little crops are gathered, often literally a mere handful here and there, as any little accumulation of soil in the hollow of a rock or under the shelter of a hillock has made planting possible, they often have to stand in the "stooks" (small shocks) for weeks before they can be stacked, waiting for a drying wind, in a climate where continuance of sunshine cannot be depended upon. Only about 150 or so of these poor little bundles go to a stack as, again probably on account of the damp, the stacks are made very small and of bee-hive shape. We were told that the flowers of the water ragwort, *caoibhrechan*, are put freely among the straw to keep out the rats; but whether this is a useful agricultural hint or a part of the same superstition which leads the people to put this weed into the dairy to keep off the Evil-Eye, I am unable to say.

The peat-cutting is still done, if possible, by the men, who leave the peats to dry; but the burden of bringing them home too often falls upon the women, as the men are away most of the autumn. The peats are cut flat and big, not brick-shaped as on the mainland, and require a great deal of drying before they are fit for use.

There are separate names for the peats: *Barrad* is the top peat, *Gollad* the outside peat, *Treasad*, the third peat, *Siomad* the one most protected.

Much labour is spent over the thatch of the houses, which, if attended to from time to time, may last for forty years. The material mainly used in Uist is the bent-grass from the machair, but the people have to pay in labour for permission to cut it. The bent, when

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dried, is extremely tough, and is sometimes woven into mats, bags, and horse collars; one industrious man in Benbecula makes excellent chairs of it, of design and outline just such as one sometimes sees in old-fashioned houses as having come from India. Sometimes rushes are used, if permission can be obtained to cut them, more rarely heather, bracken, or the *Osmunda regalis*. The walls are built three or four feet thick, but are pointed with lime, sometimes packed with sand, as in Tyree.

Now that the people have security of tenure and are beginning to improve their houses, the old building is often turned into a byre (shelter for cattle), and the new one built beside it. There are, however, a few of the old sod or turf byres still standing, built where surface stones are not easily available, and these, many of them, were at one time houses, put up when the unhappy inhabitants had to provide themselves with a roof-tree, yet with no certainty of being able to keep even such wretched shelter as this for long.

The average houses of old times of which large numbers, are still standing, measured, inside, about thirty feet by fourteen. One end was occupied by the box-beds, the fire was in the middle of the floor, and at the end furthest away from the beds, the cattle were formerly housed.

The crofters generally build north and south, which is said to be for economy in thatching, but I don't know upon what principle, and the miserable position chosen for their homes, is often accounted for by the fact that in old days, when the land was held in common, it was profitable to build on the worst part; even such a morsel as thirty feet by fourteen being too precious to use lightly, if it were capable of growing corn or potatoes. The house is regarded mainly as a shelter at night, and the people care nothing for a view; indeed, as windows

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are of comparatively recent introduction, they had, till lately, little opportunity to enjoy it.

It is said that there was formerly a good deal of illicit trade in South Uist, and that Dutch smugglers landed goods on the island, but whether for the benefit of families of the Clan Ranald or whether the goods were brought with the view of conveyance to the mainland does not appear.

The shebeen or unlicensed drinking-shops have also, technically, disappeared, though one in South Uist lingered on until but a few years ago, and naturally there is some evasion of the excise by the many foreign traders who visit Barra and Lewis during the short fish-curing season. Only this year we heard of a melancholy scene when some of the fishermen of a certain island were deluded into buying a considerable quantity of Eau de Cologne. Under the impression it was some new variety of *uisge* (strong water), they adjourned to the hill one afternoon, when resting from a night of fishing, and proceeded to drink it. Then followed a fearful thirst which the men on a Scotch or English boat induced them to appease with beer, and the results, as may be imagined, were highly disastrous.

The township of Steligarry, the endowment of the Macvurrichs, the bards of Clanranald, was a sacred place and afforded sanctuary for any person escaping thither, no matter what the nature of his crime. There is a tradition that the endowment was in perpetuity, as was that of Bornish, another part of the Clanranald estate, "To be held as long as the sea comes about a stone, or a black cow gives milk, and until the big stone of Beinne Corairidh (a hill in Bornish) runs out on the point of Ard by itself."

It is said, however, that when troubles befel the Clanranalds, both Macvurrich and the laird of Bornish had to go to Edinburgh to defend their claims, which

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they maintained successfully in six courts. But one day a man "like a gentleman" met them, and said that if they wished to be free from further trouble they had only to go to the Cross at Edinburgh, and declare themselves publicly in the phrase:

"I am Macvurrich from Steligarry. And I am Bornish from Bornish."

Unfortunately the expression they used—as was intended—was *Mach a Steligarry*, *Mach a Bornish*, which means *out of* as well as *from*, and when they had said it "the lawyers who had been in hiding rushed out, and told them they had publicly renounced all claim to their lands."

The same informant says that the Macvurrichs were in Steligarry, the Clanranalds in Uist, the MacNeills in Barra, and the Macleans in Duart for fifteen generations.

Like Claverhouse and many other heroes, the Clanranalds could not be killed with lead. The chief, who was at Sheriff Muir, was so certain of his immunity that he dressed in scarlet to exhibit the favours of fate. However, a man from Moidart, the district next to Clanranald's mainland property of Arisaig, who had enlisted to escape punishment for theft, knew of the charm, and loading his gun with silver, killed him.

At the north end of the island is a tract of country which, even in South Uist, is of exceptional desolation. Bounded on three sides by the sea, intersected with countless lakes on endless bog, fit only for a nursery of moss and sundew,[1] a hopeless dreary expanse overhung with a grey mist of exhalation, which never seems to clear away from the reeking soil, lies the parish of Iochar, a collection of nine townships,

[1] Mr. Carmichael points out that the local names for the sundew show that the natives understood its carnivorous nature long before the fact was appreciated by science.

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where, if anywhere on earth, one may look for the very apotheosis of the struggle for existence.

Mr. Carmichael, who for some years lived but a mile or two beyond the dreary region, thus describes it:

"Where the land is not rock it is heath, where not heath it is bog, where not bog it is black peaty shallow lake, and where not lake it is a sinuous arm of the sea, winding, coiling, and trailing its snakelike forms into every conceivable shape, and meeting you with all its black slimy mud in the most unexpected places."

But even here the gentle inhabitants cherish kindly thoughts and a love for home. The little Church has lately been restored by means of gifts from sons and daughters exiled abroad, and who, it may be, preserve in grateful memory the thought of one kind man who, in this desolate spot, preached to his people, as so many of these priests have done, by his life and active work, still eloquent, and still bearing fruit. With his own hands, Father Macgrigor laboured among the people, encouraging them to clear their little plots of the rocks that encumbered them, and using the stone thus gained in erecting miles of excellent dykes which help to diminish the task of herding the cattle by keeping the cows and sheep away from the crofts. A witness for the Commission testified (*Report*, p. 462): "During his incumbency of over forty years he showed a more admirable example to the people how to improve their crofts than all the proprietors, factors, and tacksmen put together."

This being the case, as reported by a Presbyterian witness, one is not surprised to learn further that the factor deprived him of his croft and confiscated his improvements; it is perhaps more surprising to hear that they were restored to him, probably owing to the kindly interference of one, Roderick Maclean, no less a person than the parish minister.

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Buchanan (*Land of Lorne*, vol. ii. p. 84) says:

"In the whole list of jobbers, excepting only the mean whites of the Southern States of America, there are no paltrier fellows than the men who stand by Highland doors and interpret between ignorance and the great proprietors. They libel the race they do not understand, they deride the affections they are too base to cultivate, they rob, plunder, and would exterminate wholly the rightful masters of the soil. They are the agents of civilization in such places as the Outer Hebrides, so that if God does not help the civilized it is tolerably clear that the devil will. In the islands beware of the civilized. Wherever the great or little Sassenach comes he leaves a dirty trail like the slime of a snake."

I have known factors and other agents of the proprietors of whom, so far as one may judge, every word of this indictment appeared to be true. But I think it only right to record that I know others, men whose life and conduct I have watched for years, of whom even the tenants freely testified that they were honest, upright, kindly, as factors go, and of whom the unprejudiced outsider might well say far more than this: men from whom I have received not only personal kindness, but just and humane testimony as to the responsibilities with which they are charged. No one who has not been on the spot knows all the trials and difficulties of a factor, especially such as are not autocratic, who have to render account to a chamberlain who gets the credit of what goes right and knows where to lay the blame of what goes wrong. It is high time that the proprietors took a fair share of responsibility for what is done in their islands. Merely to receive rents, spend them elsewhere, and leave the people to blame the unlucky agents for indifference, if not oppression, is often to do injustice to men,

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hard-working, well-meaning, but often sorely perplexed.

I venture to think, however, that the factors have in one respect themselves to thank for this. The people are ever ready to point out that they come to the Islands poor men, and go away rich ones, a reproach which they sometimes bring upon themselves by occupying the best farms on the island. Such a position ought not to be possible ; the proprietor ought, in common honesty to his tenants, to place the factor in such a financial position that he should have no temptation to expose himself to the charge of "having his own axe to grind."

Amongst other pleasant memories to which the people of South Uist still cling, is that they were once blessed with a good factor whose name deserves to be recorded, one Doctor Macleod, remembered for his medical skill when medical attendance was even more difficult to obtain than now, but still more for the very rare fact that he sought and gained the love of the people for whom he was responsible, although the representative of the new order and the alien proprietor. He helped to redeem the machairs, and by judicious cutting and economy to promote the growth of kelp. Moreover he contrived, and with great labour and skill carried out, the drainage of some of the vast tracts of water with which the land in South Uist is for ever carrying on a hopeless contest. As Mr. Carmichael has expressed it, "He drained the estates of their water, instead of the holders of their produce."

Father Allan has recorded a curious fragment of Gaelic verse which gives one an insight into the conditions of life at this period:

> McLeod is the clever man,
> I fear I shall lose his help
> Since it is he who stands true to the right.

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The factor spoke then:

> McIntyre has tortured me,
> If he remain in Glac-nan-Ruari
> I shall leave of my own accord.

The Colonel spoke majestically [Colonel Gordon]:

> Knock you down your house at Martinmas
> And put out the wife and the children,
> Though they should die in consequence.

The point being that anything like complaint brought summary punishment upon the person injured.

The mutual good feeling of the Protestants and Roman Catholics in islands where one might very naturally expect the reverse to be the case, is a fact which constantly came under our notice and deserves to be recorded. The only case of tension of which we heard was over a matter not under the control of the people, and which the late Archbishop Macdonald, of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, at one time himself a priest in the Highlands, brought before the notice of the authorities. This was the fact that although in South Uist, out of 280 children in the schools, 255 were of the older faith as against 25 Protestants, the Roman Catholics were allowed no voice in the selection of a teacher. As the Archbishop truly said, the majority had the law on their side, but as the proprietor and factors were on the other, they were afraid to enforce it.

The Chairman of the Commission pointedly replied that such a matter might well be referred to the sense of the ratepayers at the next School Board Election, and something has been done, though we still found some Protestant teachers in the island. What, to our thinking, was more serious, some of the Roman Catholic teachers, since elected, were Irishmen and could not speak Gaelic, and though native pupil-teachers supply the want to a certain extent, it is a cumbersome and

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unsatisfactory method to instruct a number of young children, intelligent it may be, but stupefied by want of nourishment and often wet and cold, by means of a foreign language. The attention of the Roman Catholic authorities in some of their many admirable training schools, might well be turned to this question of supplying Gaelic-speaking teachers for the schools of the Islands. Also, in these days of lack of work for women, it should be remembered that there is a very imperfect supply of Gaelic-speaking nurses. "District" nurses to look after people in their own homes, are perhaps the sorest need of the islanders. Happily one nurse speaking the language of the people and able to give them advice and instruction, is established in the admirably arranged Bute Hospital and Dispensary at Dalibrog which, though built and maintained at the sole cost of a Roman Catholic, is at the service of Catholics and Protestants alike and is freely used by all, even those from distant islands, (Barra, Eriskay, and Benbecula), who have to cross a dangerous minch or tedious ford as the case may be, as well as to take a journey of, perhaps, twelve or fifteen miles in a country destitute of any public conveyance, possessing indeed very few conveyances of any kind.

The work of the hospital reaches even further than the care of the sick only. While everything is done to show consideration for the feelings of the people, as for example in having all the rooms on one floor, for a staircase has all the terror of the unknown, and by, as far as possible, adapting the food to familiar methods and materials, at the same time advantage is taken of every opportunity of giving object-lessons in cleanliness, sanitation, and thrift. There is a good garden in which, as far as climate and soil permit, a variety of vegetables and even of flowers receive

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the care and attention which the people are too hopeless to bestow on their unenclosed patches of ground at home. Women, who are convalescent, are encouraged in sewing and household work, and little children, whose disease is often cold and hunger, receive that teaching of gentle example and quiet self-restraint, which far outweighs the temporary loss of Board school instruction.

The people of South Uist, perhaps even more than those of other islands, live in memories of the past. Reverence for the old and the sacred is a part of the Highland temperament, and here, where the present has so little to give, the past is especially precious.

A cross, known as Crois nan Cnoca Breaca, stood —(part of it still remains)—on a hillock, a little north of the present boundary of Ormiclet. It is said that when the old Howmore parish Church, now a mere ruin, was in use, the people coming from the south had to pass close to it, and always knelt in prayer as they passed, kneeling towards the Church, which was visible from this point. The lochs were then much fuller than now, and there was no road possible between the outer end of Loch Hollay and the Mol of Stoneybridge.

At Loch Eynort near Na Haun, there is an altar built of loose stones. It is now covered with bracken. Mass was said here years ago, and the spot is still called Glaic na h-Altarach. Our informant's mother had heard Mass there.

An old woman in Garrahilli, who is nearly eighty years of age, relates of her grandfather, Donald M'Ian, that in stormy weather, when there could be no Mass at Bornish, he used himself to place a clean linen cloth upon this old altar saying prayers for the people who gathered about him. There is a tradition, which is remembered by a Ben More woman, of the remains

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SOUTH UIST (BUTE HOSPITAL, IN THE DISTANCE, TO LEFT OF THE ROAD).

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of an altar at Coire an t-Sagairt in Hecla, and another in Sgalavat.

There are various prophecies current in South Uist which appear to be still unfulfilled, and should therefore be carefully recorded: that Uist will yet be under grey geese and rats; that the sea in the west will be so full of boats that one may step from one to the other;[1] that the old mansion at Bornish is to be burnt. The present occupier has had a conflagration in the farm-steading but none in the house.

Other old prophecies may have already received fulfilment. There is one that the inhabitants of Uist would become so selfish that a daughter would refuse necessaries to her own mother, possibly an allusion to the severe struggle for life, which our own day has witnessed. Again, that four signs should herald the misfortunes of the island. The first was the white raven which one Angus of Arivullin saw and killed with his own hand. He was drowned in Loch Eynort not long after, and the family of Arivullin (the alleged birthplace of Flora Macdonald),[2] has faded out of sight; the second was the white crow which old Angus, who remembers these sayings, saw at Kilbride just before it was lost to the old family; the third that the living would envy the dead, "and indeed that happened when they were putting men out into the sea (i.e. at the time of the Gordon evictions), and much rather would they have been at home in their own grave-yards"; and the fourth that charity would go away from the land, "and true is it that but the

[1] The old prophecy that the sea in the west would become so full of ships that you could step one from the other is believed to have been fulfilled when hundreds of east-coast boats came to fish for herring on the west of Barra and Uist.

[2] It is locally asserted that, as a matter of fact, she was born at Frobost, owing to the temporary absence of the family from their home.

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other day a crofter said that what was wrong with the island was that charity had gone out of the country."

It is said that the last Bornish was urging some of his tenants to go to the kelp-gathering when their own crops needed their attention, and one of the men got angry and said that "it would not be long that they would be reaping crops where he was now eating his food. And true is it that Neil Campbell who was on the same land with him after he became poor, actually planted cabbage on the site of the old dining-room."

"Big Margaret," a very old woman from whom many stories have been collected, says that it has long been known that there would be a great army that would stretch over South Uist, from the Benbecula Ford on the north to the Sound of Eriskay on the south. It has been suggested that the search parties which were scattered all over South Uist may be said to have fulfilled this.

She says that her father saw 300 men leave the Islands for the wars, eighty years ago (probably the Peninsula War, one does not expect chronological accuracy), and that it was only one leg that returned, that of Mac Dhunchaidh 'ic 'ic Iain.

The islanders hold in reverence certain little cells, about seven feet by six, which are still to be found in places, and which are called in the Gaelic "beds of devotion." We saw and measured the ground plan of some such cells in Mingulay and on the Stack Islands, and Father Allan records one at Dalibrog. Another, now destroyed, is remembered at a spot called *Garrahilli* (holy section) near *Heilibost* (holy town). These may have been places of religious retirement in the active days of the religious houses, such as the nunnery at Nunton in Benbecula, and possibly one at North Boisdale where,

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on the machair, some ruins and the traces of an underground passage may still be found.

An old woman, who had many old-time stories, says that no one had ever prospered in Nunton in consequence of the desecration of Church lands, and she produced many instances of the misfortunes of its inhabitants either by bereavement or loss of worldly goods.

Of the middle district of South Uist, the inhabitants of which are characterized by a rough frankness, is said—

> Stoneybridge of the tangles
> Township of worst manners
> Till you reach Hogh.

Hoghmore (= Great Hogh, there is also Hogh Beg = little Hogh) seems to have been the ecclesiastical centre in old days. There is a burial-ground of great age containing the ruins of a Church of which the internal length is nearly sixty feet, perhaps one of the largest in the Hebrides. There are also some three or four chapels or oratories. Hogh is, moreover, the birthplace of Neill MacEachain, the father of Marshal Macdonald, Duke of Tarentum, who, in 1826, visited South Uist, the home of his ancestors. It is said that he took away some stones from the cave of Corodal, and some earth from his birthplace, and that they were buried with him.

Another spot which cannot fail to be of interest is Airidh Mhuillin (pronounced Arivullin) = "the shealing of the mill," the birthplace of Flora Macdonald.

In Loch Eynort there is a rock still pointed out as the place where one of Cromwell's frigates, sent to subdue the natives, went to pieces. Once, à propos of the Estate having exacted payment from the noble philanthropist who built the only hospital in the Outer Hebrides, not only for the ground it stands upon, but

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for the stone of which it is built, I remarked to a native who was thankfully profiting by its benefits, "The Estate ought to be grateful to anybody who uses up any amount of the superfluous rock of this island." "Ah, but there's one rock," he said, "that South Uist would be sorry to want!" (that is, to *miss*), and this, we found, was the historical rock in Loch Eynort.

It is obvious that South Uist is not without its interests. It is less easy to convey to the stranger that, in spite of all its wrongs, its sorrows, its deprivations, it is, as Lord Napier has said, "a land invested with so deep a charm." It is the charm which Wordsworth has expressed for us in such poems as "The Daisy," "The Lesser Celandine," "The Solitary Reaper." It is the land where one learns

> To look on Nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth: but hearing oftentimes
> The still sad music of humanity
> Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue.

The lines, however, most often in one's thoughts under the grey skies of South Uist are those more practical, because the fruit of personal knowledge, of Sheriff Nicolson (LL.D.), a member of the Crofters' Commission who, poet that he was, was deeply sensitive to the soul-sorrows, even more than to the physical needs of these unhappy people:

> See that thou kindly use them, O man!
> To whom God giveth
> Stewardship over them, in thy short span,
> Not for thy pleasure!
> Woe be to them who choose for a clan
> Four-footed people! [i.e. who evict people from their homes to make room for sheep.]
> Blessings be with you, both now and aye
> Dear human creatures.

The following notes for which I am entirely indebted to the Rev. Allan Macdonald are recorded separately as interesting to the specialist rather than to the general reader.

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Duns and Earth Dwellings. (1) When the masons were laying the foundations for a house on or near the site of the old Dun at Trossary they exposed the flooring, which was of clay over peat.

(2) At Aridh Mhic Iain some thirty years ago was an underground dwelling unfortunately destroyed to furnish stones for building a store for the local merchant. A mason who was present at its destruction describes it as about thirty feet long, five wide, and four high. It was not floored with stone, and he could not say if both ends were open. Some fragments of clay pots were found and a quantity of limpet shells. A large stone slab showed traces of fire, and the roof was of stone covered over with earth.

(3) We heard also of "earth houses and shelves," *Sgeilpichean*, at Coire an t-Sagairt.

(4) Martin speaks of an underground dwelling near the South Ferry, probably identical with one we heard of at Kilbride.

Shaped Stone at Glendale.—At Glendale on the Sound of Eriskay there was found a stone of oblong shape with a cavity in it large enough to hold a quart. It was placed in the wall of Ferguson's shearing-house half in and half out, so as to hold oil and serve as a lamp for the sheep-shearers. It was put in by a mason at Loch Boisdale named Donald Campbell.

Rock of Columcille.—In South Uist, between Lochan na Comraig and Bealach a gharbh Choire, there is a stone known as the Rock of Columcille, upon which every wayfarer seats himself before passing on. There is said to be a rhyme about it, which so far we have not recovered.

Old Dedications.—The old Dedications in Uist were:

Kilbride, Kilpheder, Kildonnan. Kilchoinnich, Aird Micheil, Kilvanan, Kilaulay.

Cladh Chalumcille.

In Barra: Kilvarra Kilbhrianain.

In Mingulay: Tobar Chalumcille.

The last of the Lochlannaich. — There is a loch called Lochnanarm lying as in the crater of an extinct volcano between the hills of Stulaval and Triuirebheinn, a spot of quite exceptional beauty in South Uist. This is said to be the site of the last battle fought in Uist between the natives and the Lochlannaich (Vikings). Close by are remains of peculiar character. There is an artificial cavern about twenty-five feet long and varying in width from two feet at the entrance to five and a half at the end. The height too is variable, the general outline of the cavern being of the shape of the letter S. There are no signs of fire within. It is built regularly, but without lime, and there are two large cairns at the spot, now somewhat scattered. Two small stone pillars beside the lake are called Carragh a bhroin, the Pillar of Sorrow, so called, says tradition, because the wounded were brought here. It is alleged too, that after the battle the combatants cast their arms into the lake, hence called the Lake of Arms to this day.

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CHAPTER IX

ERISKAY

IN a letter to Lord Balfour published December, 1900, a sort of *apologia* for the recent agitations upon her islands of South Uist and Barra, Lady Gordon Cathcart, among many other surprising statements, asserts more than once that the people are worst off on the smaller islands. I never heard that she had ever visited any of them, but from some weeks' residence in Eriskay, one of those especially referred to, and from personal acquaintance with many of its inhabitants, I venture to assert that it is one of the few bright spots on her estate. It is a mere gull's nest, scarcely worth the name of an island, storm-beaten, wind-swept, treeless, shelterless, rocky, but the soil is a little drier than that of South Uist; there are no farms, and the people are let alone and have the island to themselves.

Though the distance across the minch is probably not much more than two miles, the crossing is one not to be undertaken lightly. Always difficult, sometimes dangerous, it is, not infrequently, impossible, and for long even the factor would not venture across to collect the rents, and so, to save trouble to one man, sixty would have to cross to the little inn at Polacharra, the southernmost point of Uist, and await his pleasure the whole day, an occasion of temptation which ought never to have been allowed.

The one charm of Eriskay is its utter solitude and

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aloofness. For one person who goes to Eriskay five hundred visit the shores of St. Kilda; it is unknown to the tourist, it is beyond MacBrayne. It rises suddenly and steeply out of the sea except on the west side, where a sandy plain stretches down to the historical harbour of Prince's Bay, where Prince Charlie landed nearly two hundred years ago, a fact still sacred in the memory of the people. It is said that there were but three holdings in the island in those days, and there is some vague tradition of monastic occupation at one time, though there are no architectural remains to give colour to the story. Munro in his *Description*, 1594, has the following paragraph:

"To the eist of this ile of Fuday,[1] be three myle of sea, lyes ane ile callit Eriskeray, twa mile lang, inhabit and manurit. In this ile ther is daylie gottin aboundance of verey grate pintill fishe at ebb seas, and als verey guid for uther fishing, perteining to M'Neill of Barray."

It is said that Eriskay was offered to Boisdale when he lost his property in South Uist, but that he would not accept it. The island has few traditions. Necessity alone drove human beings to so dreary a spot, and it was colonized by victims of the Gordon evictions in South Uist and Barra, people driven down to the edge of the sea to add land to the farm of Kilbride on the one island, to that of Eoligarry on the other. Some came also from the glens of Ben More, once well peopled, now occupied by two shepherds. Driven south, they redeemed some wretched ground and built shelter for themselves, but evicted again,

[1] Fuday was, according to local tradition, the last retreat of the Norsemen. An illegitimate son of Macneill fell in love with one of their maidens, and she made him aware that though invincible by daylight, they were weak and powerless after sunset. He and his men invaded the island during the night and they thus became extinct.

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with only the sea before them, they crossed over to Eriskay, and once more resumed the hand-to-hand fight against the fearful odds of Nature. They seem to-day altogether brighter and more intelligent, than their neighbours in Uist, possibly owing to the greater independence of their lives, and the relief from the hideous pressure of the extreme poverty of the parent island.

The island rises to a point, which though only some 600 feet above sea-level, appears considerably higher, from the very small amount of ground surrounding the hill, which is called Ben Serien. The people are healthier also, and free from the asthma which is so great a curse in South Uist, probably in consequence of the mists which perpetually hover about its countless lakes. There are no roads, and consequently no carts. Even a wheel-barrow would be out of place. We heard, on one visit, that the school-board had ordered a road to be made to allow of the bare-footed children getting more conveniently to school in the winter, but finding no trace of any such improvement, we had to accept the explanation that "the hens had scratched it." In the Highlands one speaks of "hens" not of "fowls."

There is a school-house and a post-office and a church and a shop—at least sometimes there is a shop or, rather, sometimes there are some things in the shop. On one occasion when we were there, there was a threatened famine in oil, and other necessaries of life, but after a few days' depression, the excellent and capable woman who was housekeeper to our host, announced, with a beaming smile, that the men were out of tobacco, from which we were left to infer that some strong measures would now be taken to communicate with "the mainland,"

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IN ERISKAY: WOMEN TWISTING YARN AND MAKING IT INTO "HANKS": MEN MAKING HEATHER ROPE.

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by which they mean South Uist. The post-office is an important centre of business. The post-master can write English, and one constantly finds him occupied with secretarial work, and that not only of a private nature, the communication with distant friends, but also in connexion with commercial interests. Incredible as it sounds, over £500 a year goes out from Eriskay—with a population of about 500—for goods sent by parcel post.

The export industry of Eriskay is confined to salt fish and eggs, of which latter nearly £200 worth are sent out yearly. The hens very quickly deteriorate in the cold and damp climate, and the strain has frequently to be renewed, or for table purposes they would be entirely useless. Something like £125 per annum is spent in Eriskay in tobacco, which, when on the sea during long dark nights, wet, cold, and often hungry, is almost a necessity for the men. As far as one can observe, they seem extraordinarily moderate in their smoking, using a very small pipe, which does not, to the merely female intelligence, look worth the trouble of lighting. None of the women smoke, and only one or two old ones take snuff.

The women are said to be exceptionally strong in child-birth, which, considering their distance from medical aid and from all conveniences of life, speaks well for their adaptation to environment; and moreover the rate of mortality is very low among young children. Of late years the influenza plague has sorely troubled both Eriskay and South Uist, but otherwise the islanders seem strong and healthy, and Father Allan tells us that when he first came to the island, there were three people over ninety years of age.

Before the days of the parcel post, before even such small conveniences as now reach South Uist could

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be imported into Eriskay, before even the small amount of cultivation now achieved was possible, one wonders how the people lived, and we were interested in learning from Father Allan various details about matters of diet. In old days cabbage and the curly green kail were freely grown in South Uist, but after the evictions the people had no ground even if they had had the heart to cultivate it, and they fell back largely on certain wild vegetables which before had been used only in emergency. The root of the pretty little silver-weed which grows so freely all over the island, is called in Gaelic "the seventh food that comes out of the ground"; and a man, still living, says that he remembers seeing a large trunkful stored for winter use in his grandfather's house. (In the islands there are no cupboards, and everything is kept in boxes, which they call "trunks.") This was in Harris, where, he says, the land used to be divided among the people at ploughing time, so that each might have a fair share of the weed which came off the ground when it was being tilled, otherwise the land was held and worked in common, and not in separate crofts.

Probably some of the stories told of injustice done to the people out of sheer vindictiveness may be exaggerated, such for example as that the disappearance of shell-fish from between Prince's Bay and Rudh Caol in Eriskay, and near Cnoc Mor on the opposite coast of Uist, as well as at certain other places, was due to their having been ploughed to deprive the people of food as a means of driving them away. When Eriskay was first inhabited, separate spots in the island were marked off for certain families, for collecting wild spinach. It is still found where sea-weed has been lying on the land, but is not eaten now, nor would be except under pressure of

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hunger. The goose-foot, wild mustard, and young nettles were also boiled as food. Then there were certain kinds of sea-weed: the dulse is still used, raw or boiled, also a sea-weed which grows on the rocks, called *Sloak*, which, is boiled with butter, so too another called *Gruaigean*, probably identical with Iceland moss. A broad-leafed sea-weed called *liathag*, which grows among the tangle, is edible when heated over the fire and rubbed in the hands. Another weed called cock's-comb, *feamainn chirein*, found on the rocks at half-tide, serves a variety of purposes. It is eaten raw by the cattle, and is given to them boiled as a useful cathartic. It is also made into poultices for man and beast, and boiled to give a lustre to home-made cloth.

When potatoes were a novelty and still scarce, they used to be brought into the house, and hung from the roof in bags made of bent grass. They were first introduced into Uist about 1743, and the old proprietors, anxious for the good of their people, threatened them with eviction when they refused to plant them, wisely, as it turned out, for in ten years the Islands were covered with them. They proved a most valuable addition to the barley, rye, and coarse oats hitherto grown, not only for their own merits as food, but because they could be grown where nothing else would prosper, on account of the hopelessly wet nature of the soil in a great many places.

This was accomplished by means of the "lazy bed" system, which as being largely in use in Eriskay, as it is in all the peat islands, may as well be described. Imagine a strip of soil, about three feet wide, upon which is spread a thick layer of decomposed sea-weed. At either side a deep trench is dug, the soil from which is thrown up on to the top of the sea-weed, thus forming a sandwich of soil with the sea-weed between. The

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bed so constructed has two advantages—that of artificial depth, seldom to be acquired otherwise on islands where the rock is very near the surface, and that of artificial drainage, equally important on account of the retentive nature of the peat. In the second year this same ground serves to grow barley, and the third oats.

Fishing is of course the main source of food, as well as of commerce, in Eriskay, and I hear, on the best authority, that every year fewer of the Eriskay men go off to the East Coast. They are capable and thrifty—they are not interfered with at home, thanks to their remoteness and other natural disadvantages; they have many good boats, and they find it more profitable and more independent, to remain in the island.

Then, of course, there were always plenty of shell-fish (limpets, and razor-fish), and abundance of sea-fowl. The domestic fowls are freely used at festivals and as many as forty will sometimes be seen at a wedding, mostly contributed by the guests, or the feast made at the birth of a child, to which every one brings some gift, usually a hen, or some meal.

At Christmas, many of the people will kill a sheep, though in truth the mutton is so lean and so dry that it seems scarcely worth eating. The pasture is so poor that the little creatures make no fat, and the absence of fat of any kind for cooking purposes is a serious difficulty, especially in islands where no pigs are kept. In old days no Highlander would touch pork, and where old customs are kept up, the prejudice still remains.

Another prejudice, commonly held, is that it is dangerous to eat the head of an eel, for eels are subject to madness and apt to communicate the disease. Our informant was asked if he had met with any case of such infection, and he instanced a friend of his own who was saved only by being caused to vomit just when

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his head was beginning to go wrong. He also told us a story of a man, who, having killed a trout and an eel, gave the trout to his wife and ate the eel himself. He forthwith became insane, but not before he had warned his wife to escape for safety from him to her brother's house. The brother went next day to visit his afflicted relative, and found that he had killed his horse, and was eating the raw flesh, so to prevent further mischief he shot him. It was considered advisable that he should leave the country, and that is how he came to Ben More, in Uist, where his descendant still lives, and is known as Ian, son of Ian, son of Donald "of the Horse."

Again if a person eat the liver of a spotted ling, his own skin will become spotted with red marks. The ling, however, is held in high estimation. There is a Gaelic saying that the ling would be the beef of the sea, if it always had salt enough, butter enough, and boiling enough. Another saying is, "A boiling and a half for the limpets, and warm water for whelks." The people have a high opinion of the nourishing power of whelks. They say, "The whelk will sustain a man till he be as black as its own scale." There is a black, scaly covering at the mouth of the shell.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that the trout lost its side fins, in consequence of the profanity of a man in South Uist. This is the way the story is told. "A niggardly man, fond of fishing, was asked what he had taken. 'Devil a fin,' he returned, though his creel was full of trout." That was how the devil came to remove the side fins from the trout.

Space will not permit of the quotation of many of the innumerable quaint beliefs of this primitive island, though they are interesting and characteristic, and one or two more must suffice.

It is not right to remove a dead fish from its native

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element. An Eriskay man says he and two others were landing in a boat a little below the Presbytery, when they saw a dead salmon and some large trout on the shore. All made a rush for it, "but the man who got it was thereafter sorry, for a near relative soon died."

The king of fishes is the herring, but the haddock is a good fish "whatever," for he it was who supplied Saint Peter with the tribute money.

News reaches this island so slowly, and the people have so little opportunity of enlarging their ideas, that they sometimes get curious notions about things. There is an old prophecy that "a war ship is to throw down the pinnacles on the house of Kilbride," the old Boisdale residence on the south point of South Uist opposite Eriskay; and in the summer of 1896 much alarm was caused by the appearance of a Danish gunboat which anchored in the Sound between Eriskay and Barra, and which they believed to portend the return of the Lochlinners (the Vikings who so long harried the Hebrides, a thousand years ago) and the beginning again of the old piratical work. A queer anachronism, showing their difficulty in appreciating the relation of time past and present, is that one man definitely asserted that a British gunboat was telegraphed for to Stornoway to prevent mischief! It is alleged also that many times during the past two years, when a foreign boat has been seen on the Atlantic, there has been serious fear of a Boer invasion.

When we were last in Eriskay the priest had decided to enclose the graveyard which lies just above the seashore, indistinguishable except by a few rude crosses, from the grassy plain on which it lies, so near the houses that reverent treatment of the graves, where children play, nets are dried, and sheep feed, is scarcely possible. Those who possessed any

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material out of which a fence could be made, a piece of a mast, a fragment of a boat, a broken oar, the rafter of an abandoned house, were expected to bring it, those who had leisure were required to give time, those who had skill were asked for direction. All were willing, but they worked like children put to a task. Twenty times a day they came up to the little Presbytery on the hill, to report progress, to announce new contributions, to receive praise or blame. It takes two men to do a day's work in the Highlands and two more to look on, it is said in the Lowlands. As we have seen, the Highlander can work seriously, solemnly, for life and death; but over his holiday tasks the saying is true enough. And yet what cannot he accomplish? The little Church at Eriskay is a monument to the zeal, and sacrifice, and endurance, of which some are capable.

Till within the last few years there was no priest in Eriskay, it was served jointly with the parish of Dalibrog in South Uist eight miles away. When the priest heard that he was required—for the last holy offices perhaps — by one of his flock in the smaller island, he would have to walk, fasting probably, down to the shore at Polacharra. Possibly the tide would not admit of his crossing, possibly the boat was on the further side. There is a rock, a signal from which, means "The Priest," and if it were dark he would light a bonfire, not always an easy task in a place where there is no wood and it generally rains, to signal that, if possible, the boat should be brought over. Anyway the light would be seen, and in the assurance that his faithful people would do their best, he would wait taking advantage of such shelter as the rocks could afford. There he might have to remain for many hours without food,

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and there might be delay, even on arriving, in the performance of his sacred task, and the possibility of taking refreshment. One of the cottages was always placed at his disposal for hearing confessions, and from time to time there would be Mass in the little Church. The scene was described to us by an eyewitness. The walls were without cement and unplastered; the windows had no glass and were filled with sods and stones for protection from the weather. There was no flooring, and in places the water stood in pools. Some rocks, however, which remained on the ground, afforded foothold for such of the congregation as required special consideration. Those who wished to sit down, pulled a stone out of the wall and replaced it when done with. To obtain light at the altar one of the divots (sods) was removed from the roof, and rough stones supplied the place of a bookstand. Now all is changed. The walls are pointed, the floor is levelled and paved, the windows are filled with glass, and the simple appointments of the chancel are neat and orderly. But at what sacrifices on the part of the people, and still more of the priest, this was all effected, one is afraid even to think. The people are devout, and, according to their means, liberal, and they are deeply conscious of the debt of gratitude they owe to the good Father now happily resident among them. His life is one from which most educated men would shrink as from a slow martyrdom, a living death. He has now happily a neat and comfortable house overlooking the Minch toward the island of South Uist. It is enclosed, and by blasting some of the rocks a fair piece of ground, perhaps some quarter of an acre, has been made available for cultivation and for the care of ducks and poultry. There is a tiny oratory where there is daily Mass, seldom unattended, and this little centre of "Sweet-

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ness and Light" is visible from almost every part of the island. But when one thinks of the utter loneliness of such a life, of the distance from any person who can even speak the English language, none probably, in any degree, companionable nearer than Dalibrog, when one remembers the dangerous Minch dividing the islet from even such amenities as are furnished by South Uist, and the fierce waves of the Atlantic beating it on every side, it seems as if even the lives of the hermits of old were not more sacrificial, more heroic, than this!

The people care mainly for cattle; indeed in the absence of any enclosures, and the consequent necessity for herding, almost every cow demands the constant attendance of a human companion, generally an old woman past other work or a boy or girl. The old women will occupy themselves with their distaffs, and the children, generally two or three together, amuse themselves, as children will, in constructing shealings, and rigging toy boats, which they sail in the little burns or on the seawater pools along the shore. A cow is the ordinary marriage dowry.

The people are more teachable than in South Uist, where probably they have grown defiant under oppression and injustice, and in many respects their surroundings are superior. Chimneys are to be found in almost every house, and the new ones they have built are better placed than formerly, in regard to aspect and drainage. They avoid wooden floors as requiring scrubbing and tending to infection; and indeed in these latitudes they have other disadvantages; one I know well has had large holes pierced in it to let the water off; and they are learning that, useful as it is to preserve manure, the spot immediately opposite

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the house door is not the best for the midden.[1] When a man happens to have leisure, now that security of tenure has been given, he will perhaps put up the stone framework of a house, about thirty feet by fourteen, the stones roughly hewn and pointed with lime, made from burnt shells. Then, possibly when he goes to the mainland for fishing, he may be able to expend the necessary £2 or £3 for the requisite wooden fittings, the pine partition, the window frame, a couple of doors, and possibly a shelf or two, often imported ready-made from America as cheaper and sufficiently good. The partition is generally so arranged as to provide a little anteroom or hall-way, which, as giving occasion for a double door, is, in these gusty islets, an immense advantage. No one locks the house-door, and indeed such an elaboration is unknown; to open a door you "pull the bobbin" as in a fairy story. The joiner is probably peripatetic like the tailor, and when he comes, possibly from another island, to do a piece of work, he has to be boarded and lodged.

The roof in Eriskay is a somewhat serious matter owing to the scarcity and cost of wood, and, in the interests of the picturesque, I much regret to state that the people have begun to import corrugated iron. If only they can be induced to paint it red, there might be some alleviation to even such a monstrosity as this, in a country of dun and neutral colouring. The thatch is generally of bracken, using principally the root and stem, and fastening it down with heather rope, the material for which has to be

[1] A common saying, "It will be got at the May clearing out," implies that a thing is not hopelessly lost. The allusion is to the fact that the manure, which accumulated in the house from the presence of the cattle, was removed only once a year, about May day. This dates from the time when the cattle slept at one end of the house.

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fetched from Uist, for there is very little heather in Eriskay.

Reeds grown in the lakes must not be used for thatch, or a death is sure to follow speedily either in house or byre. Inside the roof they add hay for warmth, and we have seen here very neat and comfortable dwellings, well kept and with many small comforts, generally brought home by the girls after the east coast fishing.

On Sundays and festal occasions the women are neat and even smart in their dress. We were interested in the favour shown to velveteen, although, as a material, it

TWO WOMEN GRINDING AT THE MILL

BRUISING GRAIN FOR PORRIDGE.

did not wholly lend itself to the loose nature of the local fashion, always more or less of the nature of a blouse. There is no prevailing tartan in the island, as the people are a miscellaneous gathering from other islands, but of course the Macneill and Macdonald are frequently met with.

The quern—the double millstone—is still in use in the island of Eriskay and indeed has been in almost every island, within quite recent years. Here too they have a still older mill, which we were fortunate enough to photograph.

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The old table-vessels, a wooden dish[1] used in common by the whole family for fish and potatoes, and a wooden cup with a sheepskin bottom for drinking, have lingered on in Eriskay till quite lately, but now there is crockery in every household.

In 1897, on the same day, at a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, lantern illustrations of ancient mills apparently identical, were shown by Mr. Flinders Petrie and myself, the one from ancient Egypt, the other to be found at the present day in Eriskay.

Many writers, as a rule those who speak at second-hand—though the observant Robert Buchanan, who ought to have known better, has fallen into the same error—have dwelt upon the bareness, the colourlessness of the Outer Islands. We, on the other hand, have found much delight in the wild flowers upon every island and islet we have visited. We have found them varied and abundant, and though, as a rule, short on their stalks owing to the severity of the wind, we have generally considered them fine of their kind.

The following list was made in Eriskay, wildest, most wind-swept, most rocky of islets, some three miles by one, without a tree or bush, with no shelter but the rocks, with nothing to break the force of winds sweeping over "half the breadth of half the world" but its own little hill of Ben Scrien. It was made late in August, not a very good month for flowers, where there are no cornfields, but it will be seen that we have included some not then in season, but of the existence of which we had sufficient evidence, either by the remains of leaves or roots, or from dried specimens kindly preserved for us by Father Allan.

As will be seen, the only flowers of special interest are the *convolvulus maritimus*, the history of which is told in

[1] See illustration, p. 338.

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another chapter, and the somewhat rare "midsummer men," *sedum rhodiola*, sometimes called rose-root from the pleasant smell of the root-stock when drying. English names are given for the benefit of the non-specialist reader.

Angelica: Asphodel (bog); Alexanders; Burdock: Bartsia: Bird's foot trefoil; Bird's foot (lady's fingers); Bed-straw (1) white, (2) yellow; Broom-rape; Bugloss; Butter-wort (1) common, (2) alpine; Butter-cup (1) meadow, (2) spear-wort, (3) acris; Buick-bean; Bramble; Bugle; Bladder-wort; Clover (1) dutch, (2) red, (3) purple; Crane's bill; Carrot; Colt's foot; Chickweed (1) water chickweed, (2) mouse-ear; Centaury; Convolvulus maritimus; Camomile (1) common, (2) scentless; Cress (water); Celandine (lesser); Cotton-grass; Cranberry; Cat's ear (mountain everlasting); Cudweed; Catch-fly (white); Cow-parsnip; Campion (moss); Dandelion; Dead-nettle (1) red, (2) white; Dock; Daisy; Oxeye daisy; Dove's foot (crane's bill); Duckweed; Eye-bright; Eryngo; Fumitory; Gale (bog myrtle); Groundsel; Gentian (field); Golden-rod; Goose-foot (chenopod) (1) red, (2) upright, (3) common orache, (4) hastate var.: Galium (1) marsh-bed straw, (2) hedge-bed straw: Hawkbit, autumn (var. pratensis); Hawkweed, umbellate; Honeysuckle; Hyacinth; Hogweed (cow parsnip); Hypericum (=St. John's Wort=St. Columkille); Heath (ling); Heather (bell); Heath, cross-leaved; Harebell; Hemlock, water-dropwort; Iris (yellow); Illecebrum; Knot-grass; Knap-weed (1) black, (2) greater; Lady's smock; Lettuce, sea; Myosotis (1) mouse-ear, (2) field, (3) changing; Mustard (1) charlock, (2) hedge, (3) treacle: Midsummer men (rare); Madder (field); Meadow-sweet; Marigold (1) corn, (2) marsh; Milk-wort (1) white, (2) blue, (3) pink; Mare's-tail; Nettle (1) common, (2) hemp, (3) dead nettle; Orchis (1) frog, (2) spotted, (3) marsh, (4) early purple; Persicaria (1) common, (2) amphibious; Pennywort; Poppy, long-headed (the common poppy of the English cornfields, rare in the Highlands); Parsnip, cow; Pearl-wort (1) procumbens, (2) alpine; Primrose; Pimpernel (1) scarlet (poor man's weather glass), (2) bog; Parsley, (fool's); Pond-weeds, various; Plantain (1) maritima, (2) buickthorn, (3) greater, (4) ribwort; Purselane, sea (caryophyllaceae); Potentilla (1) hoary, (2) marsh; Red-rattle (1) common, (2) dwarf; Rose-bay; Ragged robin; Rag-wort (1) common, (2) water; Rose, wild; Rue (meadow) (1) thalictrum, yellow, (2) lesser; Ransoms; Spurge (sun); Self-heal; Sorrel (dock); Sorrel (1) wood, (2) sheep; Stone crop (1) yellow, (2) white; Scabious (1) small, (2) devil's bit; Silver-weed; Sand-wort; Shepherd's-purse; Sundew (1) round-leaved, (2) spoon-shaped; Speedwell; Spurry (1) sand, (2) corn; Sea rocket; Snakeweed (bistort); Scurvy grass (1) common, (2) Danish; Squill, vernal; Saltwort; Sneezewort; Thistle (1) spear plume, (2) sow, (3) plume, (4) corn sow; Tormentil; Thalictrum (1) common, (2) meadow; Thyme (1) white, (2) red; Thrift (sea); Thale (cress); Tansy; violet, dog;

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Vetch (1) bush, purple, (2) yellow kidney: Viola (white field heartsease); Veronica marsh (becca bunga); Willow-herb (1) hoary, (2) broadleaved, (3) pale, (4) square-stemmed: Wormwood: Woundwort (1) marsh, (2) ambigua: Water-lily: Woodroffe: Water starwort: Yarrow: Yellow rattle.

The natives have many traditions and stories about the flora of their islands. The St. John's wort is called the armpit-flower of Columba (*achlasan Cholumcille*), and the story is that the saint, who had engaged a child to herd cattle for a day and a night, found him weeping as the evening fell, lest, in the darkness, the cattle should stray away and he be blamed. St. Colum plucked this flower and put it under the child's arm, bidding him sleep in peace, for no harm could befall him with this for protection. Virtue still lingers about the plant, and its golden stars are loved by the children and brought home to protect the cattle from the Evil-Eye.

There is a saying that, on St. Patrick's Day, Ivar's daughter comes out of her hole, and there is another saying that "If I will not touch Ivar's daughter (nighean Iamhair), Ivar's daughter will not touch me"; also that at St. Patrick's she throws away her rod of enchantment, with which she has stopped all growth during the winter. "Ivar's daughter" is the nettle plant, which, about St. Patrick's Day, puts her head out of holes in the walls of the houses loosely built without lime. She is said to be blessed by the saint as useful to man and beast. A kail made of boiled nettles should be taken three times a year, not oftener, and one is impervious to sickness ever after.

The wild carrot is the finest fruit ever seen by the children of the Outer Isles, and they value it as other children do apples. As they seek it they recite a Gaelic verse:

Honey underground
Is the winter carrot
Between St. Andrew's Day and Christmas.

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If one child has the luck to find a double or forked one, they all crowd round to rub their hands against it, four times, repeating

> Lucky folk, lucky folk,
> The luck of big carrots be upon me,

and then all begin to seek in the fortunate spot.

The fishermen will not wear clothes dyed with the lichen or crottle found on the rocks, though it is largely used in some places for children's clothing and for wool for knitting. They say "it comes from the rocks and will go back to the rocks"; indeed the Eriskay people will not use it at all, living, as they do, in a wild sea and surrounded by treacherous rocks. The use of it was caricatured by one of the bards

> 'Tis not the indigo of Edinburgh
> That would be for clothing to these kites,
> But lichen gathered by finger nails
> Scratched off the rocks.

The burdock is the nearest thing to a twig or switch known familiarly to many islanders, so destitute are they of wood. The children have a story known as the *Rann nam meacann*, which relates how a wren and his twelve children failed to uproot it. The dandelion is called *bearnan Brighide*, "the notched plant of Brigid."

As in English, where we have May, or May-flowers, May-buds, Marigold, May-lily, May-weed, May-wort, many of the favourite products of these islands are called after our Lady. We have *lus Moire*, herb of Mary, a useful application for stiff knees, and *luibh Mhoire*, plant of Mary, which brings favour from heaven if a prayer for some desired gift is offered at the time it is gathered. *Maol Moire* is described as a flattish green plant, valuable as a plaster when boiled, and the *biolaire Moire* is a kind of cress. We had not an opportunity of identifying any of these. Then there

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are certain nuts washed up on the shore which are considered lucky—the *cno Mhoire*, the Molucca bean, sometimes used as a snuff-box; and the *airne Moire*, kidney of Mary, which has a cross-like depression, used to be blessed by the priest and worn by the women in childbirth. The *coparran Moire* is a specially dainty kind of limpet, the *maorach Moire* a bright little whelk. Hail is called the stone of Mary, *clach Mhoire*:[1] the crested lark, so beloved of the islanders, is the *Uis-Eag Moire*; the sea out of which, and even on which, most of them live, which is ever around them as foe or friend, the most familiar part of their whole life, is the *cuile Mhoire*, the treasury of Mary.

We heard of a plant called *garbhag an't sleibh*, which we were told by one informant was club moss, though the Gaelic dictionary translates the name as "savoury." (*Garbhag* means "rough," and a kind of flounder, with a very rough skin, is called "garbhag.") The children seek it in the hills, and present it with the rhyme:

> Little man who wanderest lightly,
> There is no fear of hurt nor harm to thee
> With the sprig of "garbhag" on thy person.

There is a tradition that this is the parting present which a girl would give to her sweetheart in the days of forced military service. Some say that this rhyme is the *sian* or charm which preserved the Clanranalds from injury by bullets. The tradition that the charm was originally given to a Clanranald by a French lady makes it seem the more likely that the herb in question may be the wild savoury so much valued by the French in salads.

As a secondary use, it is said to have virtue for any

[1] The appearance of hail is welcomed in these islands. There is a saying—

> "Hailstones on the hill
> And God will make dry weather come."

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sickness if boiled in a quart of water till half has evaporated.

The marsh marigold is called "the shoe of the water-horse, *brog an eich uisge*, from the shape of its leaves. This flower is very abundant in inland lochs, and so too, it is said, is the water-horse, a monster which causes much terror to hapless wayfarers at night.

The water ragwort, *caoibhreachan*, is kept under an upturned vessel in the dairy, which prevents any one taking *toradh*, i.e. filching the milk by witchcraft. It is also used in the cornstacks to keep away rats. The children have a rhyme which they sing while scampering over the island in search of it:

> Hee! um! bah! the ragweed,
> Try who will be in first;
> The hindermost, the hindermost,
> The dead horse will catch him;
> The foremost, the foremost,
> He will get a silver shilling;
> The middle one, the middle one,
> I will thrust him into the bag.

i.e. the bag of bent grass in which they carry home the precious weed. The greater plantain is called *cuach Phadruig*, Patrick's cup. One side of the leaf is said to have a healing quality, and the other to act like a blister. It is good for stopping bleeding. The lesser celandine is called in Gaelic, the yellow swan, *eala-bhìdh*. It is a lucky plant, and there is a proverb that the flowering time is good for flitting. The buck-bean, *lus nan laogh*, is good for headache, a handful to be boiled in a quart of water till half evaporates, a glassful to be taken every morning. The centaury, *an teantruidh*, is good for colic; one "fistful" to be boiled in a quart and a half of water with three teaspoonfuls of sugar till half a quart evaporates; a glassful every two hours; this is good also for hemorrhage. A common fungus, *maolconain*, cut up and soaked in

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warm water makes a valuable poultice for festering wounds.

A stocking full of earth heated is also used for a poultice, as is also the *cnò bhreac*, a large shell-snail taken out of the shell and pounded. The same snail is used instead of a leech. It is also a specific for jaundice. The remedy does not sound pleasant. The snails are put alive into water, which the invalid then drinks. The use of the horse leech, *sliadh*, is also understood.

A decoction of marsh galium, in Gaelic *gairgean*, is used for dropsy; the ribwort plantain, *snath lus*, mixed with butter, is used for poultices.

A large-leaved plant was described to us, probably a colt's foot, called in Gaelic *sionnas*, which grows near the shore on the east side of Eriskay; it is used as a purge for cows. A decoction of wild parsley, *tath-lus*, boiled with sugar, is taken by the women, cold, as a valuable sedative. The stem of the bog-myrtle used to be pared down and an infusion made of the parings for a vermifuge. A decoction of burdock is used for jaundice.

I conclude the chapter with a few phrases and sayings collected from the current speech of the people, mainly in Eriskay, some being of special interest as denoting their picturesque outlook upon life; some as evidence of the shrewdness with which they assimilate its lessons.

> As a stone (rolling) down a glen
> The faint autumn evening:
> As a hunter climbing the hill
> The joyous spring evening.

"Let the loan be laughing going home" (i.e. treat well whatever is borrowed).

The swift wind is said to be "as quick as the changing passions of the light-headed woman."

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"One flaw spoils the pail." The origin is said to be the displeasure of the hermit when Michael Scot went to heaven, which spoiled all his years of penance.

The temple of the head is called "the gate of death."

What in children's games is called "home" is called, in Gaelic, the *cathair* or citadel.

The following sayings and phrases are remarkable, mainly for their shrewdness and knowledge of life.

"When a man is come at, he is come at all round,"

('Nuair a thigte ri duine
Thigte ris uile)

is said especially of the kind of slander when others follow up what one has begun.

If a person were to find a change in the manner of his reception at a friend's house, he would say, "The shore is the same, but the shell-fish is not the same."

The impossible is thus denoted: "Blackberries in mid-winter and seagulls' eggs in autumn."

"An egg without butter, ashes, salt, at the end of seven years will cause a sickness."

"Better thin kneading than to be empty," i.e. half a loaf is better than no bread.

"The man who is idle will put the cats on the fire."

"He that does not look before him will look behind him."

"A house without a dog, without a cat, without a little child, is a house without pleasure and without laughter."

There are three sayings, expressive of three degrees of annoyance, the origin of which is as follows:

A man sought to break off his engagement to a girl, and sent word to this effect by a companion.

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The girl replied only: "It is a mote in my eye." Not certain whether she had understood, he sent again. and she answered, "It is a little particle sticking between my teeth to me." He sent a third time, and she replied, "It is a pebble in my shoe to me."

The young man thought her words must have some hidden meaning, so he personally tested these small troubles and found them sufficiently unpleasant. His conscience smote him and he returned to his allegiance.

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CHAPTER X

CHRISTIAN LEGENDS OF ERISKAY AND SOUTH UIST

AN Egyptian Pasha, to do honour to a distinguished traveller, arranged that he should visit an unopened tomb, one which had not been robbed for any European museum, nor refurnished from Birmingham for the advantage of Cook's tourists. The door was unsealed, and Baker entered alone into the silence and solitude of 4,000 years. There, with the surroundings of a civilization which ours can barely comprehend, slept the mighty dead, already forgotten, it may be, when Greece and Rome were yet unborn. But the past called with an appeal even more imperative than this. In the sand at his feet were the footsteps of *the last man who went out*, and the marks of his broom as he swept his way to the door.

Somehow, the slave who, doing his common task, went out into the sunshine, has a stronger human interest than the great who slumbered in the dark. and one regrets the obliteration of his footsteps more than the decay of lawgivers and priests.

The world has but little space now for sand that holds the footsteps of the past, but for those who know how and where to seek, there are, even for us, some such fields of silence still remaining. In the grey islands of the Outer Hebrides, even in the last few years, I have found some traces of the outgoing footsteps of men who have already turned towards the glare and sunshine of to-day. Proprietors of an alien

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blood and an alien faith, the School Board, the steamboat, the telegraph, have shut the door upon a past which speaks with other tongues than theirs.

It was in the bare islands of South Uist and Eriskay that the following stories were mainly collected. It is impossible to present them in anything like their original form, and they lose infinitely in translation. The English of the Western Islands is by no means that of Mr. Black's stories, still less that of other novelists. It has been learnt from books, and is the English of the eighteenth century, almost pedantic in its accuracy and literary uses. But such legends as these are told in the intimacy of private life, and therefore mainly in the native Gaelic. They were a part of the faith and the life of the people, and have no affinity with the long winter evening stories, the lineal descendants of the Saga of Viking times, or the *Sgeultachd* of the Celtic bard. These, too, we may find even now, with much else of the poetry of life, as did Monro in the sixteenth century, and Martin, a century and a half later. MacCulloch, however, the correspondent of Sir Walter Scott (how the genial Sir Walter must have been bored by so superior a person!), found nothing of what Buchanan, fifty years later, found in abundance. Then, as now, one needed something more than a thirst for information, to be taken to the heart of these most simple, most courteous of Nature's children.

From a great quantity of folklore collected in these islands I have selected a few stories bearing on the life, especially the childhood, of our Lord, not, as might at first appear, to illustrate the ignorance, but rather the reverence, the natural piety of the islanders, who, though left for generations without books, without teachers, have so taken the pictures of the holy life into their hearts and lives that, while the outline remains in its original purity, the painting has been

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touched with local colour, and the eastern setting of 2,000 years ago has been translated into terms of the daily life of the simple dwellers of the Outer Hebrides.

To realize this, one must recall the main facts of the history of their faith. The ravages of the Norsemen can have left little material trace of the mission of St. Columba, the St. Columkille of whom they speak to-day, with a friendliness which is something more personal than their reverence for saints. Nevertheless, the work of the Church seems to have been revived within three centuries of the destruction of the settlement on Iona, and a See of the Isles existed from 1113 to 1550 (revived only in 1878). Monro, visiting the islands in 1549, found five parish churches in Uist alone, and Martin speaks of these as still existing in 1695, also of the remains of a monastery and nunnery, and even of one remaining lay Capuchin brother dressed like his Order, but with a tartan plaid about his shoulders. The proprietors were then, of course, of the same blood and faith with their people, and traditions still clinging around sacred spots, ruins, now mere heaps of stones, and even the nomenclature of the Islands are living evidence of the piety of the earlier people.

A very few years of relation with England put an end to the prosperity and patriarchal life of the Hebrides. The works of the earlier Cromwell took a long time to arrive in the Highlands (though Dr. Johnson found something to say as to the reformers when he visited certain ecclesiastical remains),[1] and indeed

[1] E.g. "The malignant influence of Calvinism has blasted ceremony and decency together, and if the remembrance of Papal superstition is obliterated, the monuments of Papal piety are likewise effaced."

"It has been for many years popular to talk of the lazy devotion of the Romish clergy; over the sleepy laziness of men that erected churches we may indulge our superiority with a new triumph by comparing it with the fervid activity of those who suffer them to fall."—*Journal to the Western Islands.*

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the old Church still holds her own in at least four of the islands. The later Cromwell, however, had a strong arm of the flesh, and the story of the persecutions in Scotland is too well known to be repeated.

In 1653 provision was made by the Congregation of Propaganda for the establishment of missionaries in the islands, under one William Ballantyne or Bellenden, who was, however, seized by the English, and died after two years' imprisonment. MacNeill, the chief of Barra, went into exile with his king. Bishop Nicolson, Vicar Apostolic for Scotland, visiting the islands in 1700, says he travelled for days without meeting a single inhabitant. His first station was the island of Eigg, where he found that a number of the inhabitants had been lately martyred by an English pirate, who gave them the choice of death or apostasy.[1] Even Chalmers, not likely to be prejudiced on behalf of Catholicism, says that "men, in trying to make each other Episcopalians and Protestants, had almost ceased to be Christians"; even in Edinburgh there was no hospital till 1731.

Neglected in one century, persecuted in the next, the people nevertheless were true to the main outlines of their faith. Cardinal Rospigliosi[2] wrote, in 1669, what probably remained true for nearly another century and a half:

"The natives of the islands . . . can, as a general rule, be properly called neither Catholics nor heretics. They abhor heresy by nature, but they listen to the preachers by necessity. They go wrong in matters of faith through ignorance, caused by the want of priests to instruct them in religion. If a Catholic priest comes

[1] This story bears some resemblance to the earlier one of the Macleod raid, but Nicolson, himself a Scotchman, is hardly likely to confuse the two.

[2] *Arch. Propag. Acta*, 1669, fol. 462.

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to their island they call him by the name of 'the tonsured one,' and show much greater veneration and affection for him than for the preachers. They sign their foreheads with the sign of the Holy Cross, they invoke the Saints, recite Litanies, and use holy water. They themselves baptize their own children when the ministers make any difficulty as to administering the Sacrament on the pretence that it is not essential for eternal salvation."

Martin's evidence is practically to the same effect. Discussing certain superstitions, he writes (in 1695):

"I inquired if their priest had preached or argued against this superstitious custom. They told me he knew better things, and would not be guilty of dissuading them from doing their duty, which they doubted not he judged this to be. . . . The Protestant minister hath often endeavoured to undeceive them, but in vain, because of an implicit faith they have in their priest, and when the topics of persuasion, though never so urgent, come from one they believe to be a heretic, there is little hope of success."

The causes of this influence may be a matter of opinion, but observers seem to have agreed as to its extent. Even the superior MacCulloch writes as to his experience:

"The appointments of the priests are very scanty, but they are remarkable for their good conduct and attention to their charges, not only in matters of religion but in the ordinary concerns of life."

These words might have been written yesterday instead of close on a century ago, so literally true is each statement, as is also his further evidence as to the entire harmony of the Presbyterians and Roman Catholics. no proselytism being attempted on either side.

Even the establishment of Presbyterianism seems, however, to have brought but limited advantages, for

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in the *Agricultural Survey* of 1811 we learn that in 1808 not a single school existed south of Baileloch in North Uist, a district of 200 square miles and 7,000 inhabitants. "Barray and Uist contain, indeed, a large proportion of Roman Catholic inhabitants," says the historian, "but that is no reason why they should not have churches and schools. The Catholic inhabitants are as good citizens and as much inclined to give their children the advantages of education as Protestants, but both are at present unhappily excluded."

Such being the history of their religious life, one wonders, not that their sacred traditions should be changed into apocrypha, but that religious traditions should have been kept alive at all. One must remember, moreover, that they had practically no written language; that to this day, owing to unaccountable neglect in the schools, in which one constantly finds only English-speaking teachers, a large proportion are unable to read or write in Gaelic.

That stories transmitted orally for generations, corrected neither by teachers nor books, should nevertheless maintain the life of the original, though adapted as to the vehicle of instruction, says much for the people's grasp of the Gospel spirit. To love God and one's neighbour, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world; not only to give, but to share; to entertain strangers and show respect to man and reverence to God—this is the uniform teaching of all the legends.

That for the country "over whose acres walked those blessed feet" they should substitute their own island home, grey and treeless, hung about with mists of the Atlantic and exposed to storms of wind and water, shows mainly, I venture to think, how much they had realized the presence of the Master in their midst. With all their Celtic faculty of visualization, they had

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realized His life on earth as a Man of Sorrows; like themselves, poor and cold and storm-beaten and hungry, and the background of that sacred Life had been their own poor homes. For Him, too, had been the turf-thatched cottage, built of unhewn stone, the hearth in the middle of the floor, the iron pot—the only cooking utensil—suspended over it by a chain, a cottage of a but and a ben, the family beds at one end, the cattle at the other. He had been homeless, and the poor had given him of their store; a little meal, a drink of milk, a shelter from the driving storm. It is only by realizing their point of view that one perceives what there is of beautiful in such stories as the following, which I give, as far as possible, in the words of the narrators, who used mainly the colloquial Gaelic, but sometimes quoted fragments of old rhythmical versions, and now and then one or two of them, sailors for the most part, translating into their quaint, imperfect English.

Our Lord and His Mother were one day going through the country when a storm of snow and wind set in. They came to a little house and entered it for shelter. The goodwife was alone, and she hastily prepared a meal and set it before the travellers, afraid of being blamed if her husband should come in and find her giving away food. When he appeared, he just ate his supper, never speaking to the strangers, and then slunk off to bed, without making any provision for them for the night. The goodwife followed him, and asked if she should make them up a bed, the night being so wild. "Tell them to lie down on a bundle of lint (flax) straw," he said, and they did so. During the night, Our Lady was awakened by cries from the other end of the house, and she awakened her Son. The cries came from the churl, who was suffering intense internal pain, while his wife was getting ready hot

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plates and hot boards to relieve him. Our Lady asked her Son to help him. "Not yet, not yet," He replied, but on her further intercession, He took a handful of the prickly lint straw, which had been their bed, and rubbed it three times with the grain and against the grain, and said certain words which are still, it is said, used as a charm for colic, but I have not been able to recover them.

A variant of the story is that it was the goodwife that was taken ill, and was relieved in her suffering by the Virgin Mother, whose words on the occasion are still used as a charm by midwives.

The Blessed Virgin, before the birth of Our Lord, had an intense desire for some fruit, and asked St. Joseph to get her some, but he only answered that the father of her child was the proper person to give her what she was craving for. Thereupon the trees bent down of themselves and she gathered what she needed, and so he was satisfied of the Divine paternity. The story is told in rhyme, but the Rev. Allan Macdonald is of opinion that the story, obviously the same as the English "Cherry Tree" carol, is older than the poem, for he has traced it back to a certain catechist, a saintly and scholarly man, who had what was then the rare knowledge of writing in Gaelic, and some of whose verses are still repeated among the islanders.

Another day, the holy wanderers met a poor orphan girl who was working in hard drudgery. In the original this part of the story is in rhyme, and her labours are described with much detail. Our Lady asked her Son to help her, and He put it into the mind of a miller, who was also a carpenter (a common combination in the Hebrides), to marry the girl, who soon forgot her poverty and gave herself great airs; and when the Mother and Son came to see her she hardly spoke to them, but gave them a place far from

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the fire, and went on fussing about her housework. At last they rose to go, and all she gave them was a ladleful of grain. Then they went to the mill and asked the miller to grind it for them, but he said there was so little of it that it would break the quern (mill-stones). "It is food for the needy," said Christ, "and no harm will arise if you grind it." So the miller gave the stones a turn or two, and then went on with his carpentering. After a little while God put it into his heart to look to the grist, and he found that the ladleful of grain had filled the chest with meal of the finest quality. The travellers took part, and went on their way, and the miller went into the house to ask if any one had called "the day." His wife said there was no day but people called, and that she was wearied and annoyed with beggars such as had come that very day. (This part of the story is also in verse.) Then he told her of the miracle that had been done, and she was filled with shame and hastened after the Mother and Son, and said she had not known them. "When you saw My poor did you not see Me?" said Our Lord. "I saw you an orphan and I gave you plenty," and ever after that she was good to the poor.

On one occasion they entered a house where there was porridge boiling and asked for some. The goodwife refused, saying there was little enough for those who were out ploughing. When they had gone she took off the pot, and began to pour out the porridge, but though there had been plenty, there were now not two bowlfuls left.[1]

The moral of these stories does not vary greatly; here is another to the same effect.

[1] It is still believed that this is the reason why porridge shrinks one-third in cooling. One variant relates that being startled she ran after Our Lord, who, turning to her said, "I give as a leaving for it [i.e. as a peculiarity] that no drop will ever be made that the third part will not be lost.

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One day they came to a house where were an old woman and a young one. "Give them something to eat, they are so cold," said the old one. (One is generally either cold or wet, or both, in these Islands.) The young one paid no heed. The old one was not glad, and said, "Rise and give them something." The other answered, "You were never saying anything but 'Give away'; do you know who is to give yourself anything?" "Give the boy something, at least," said the old one. The other was beginning to knead bread, for it was near dinner-time, and she contemptuously cut off a lump of dough, and threw it to the Child. "If I had it I would make a cake for the boy," said the old woman.

The Holy Mother took the dough, and put it into a hole in the middle of the fire, and they went their way. They had scarcely gone when there sprang out of the fire a tree, and the women were much startled. (To realize this to the full, one has to remember that wood in any form is a very precious possession to the islanders, and that many of them have never even seen a tree.) The old woman observed that "Long it was since she had heard that Our Saviour would be going about pitiable and poor," and she added to the other, "You have committed your own misfortune." The young one ran after the travellers, and called, "If Thou be the Son of God, turn towards me, a sinner." And He turned towards her and answered, "Never keep your hand so empty again."

The only loan that should not be repaid is a loan of salt. The salt is a blessed thing, and "the eye should not go after it"—i.e. we should give it without measure or grudging.

Our Lord and His Mother came for alms to the house of a woman who was rich, but who gave them nothing but a handful of meal, and that with a grudge. *Her eye was after it.* When they had gone she went to the

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meal chest to see how much less it looked after the gift, and she found it full of unknown beasts. She knew at once who her visitor must have been, as she had heard that the Son of God was going about among the people, and she hastened after Him, beseeching pardon, and saying, "Thou gavest me worldly substance, but not a kind heart in proportion," and He gave her pardon and a changed heart, and created a cat to drive away the rats.

There is another version of the origin of the cat.

As Our Lord went about relieving the poor, there was an artful woman who pretended she had nothing in the world, while all the time she possessed a sow and a litter of pigs, which were concealed under an upturned tub, while she went to plead her poverty to Our Lord. She could not move Him with her false tale, and after some time she found it was in vain, and went off to feed her pigs. When she raised the tub, she found to her horror that the little pigs were changed into some unknown animals of a vicious kind [i.e. rats], who rushed forth and began to gnaw all they could find, and would have destroyed the world if Our Lord in His mercy had not at once created the cat to check their ravages.

One version of this story describes the woman as penitent, and as following Our Lord to beg forgiveness, and then it was that He opened His closed hand towards her, and in His hand was a little cat. The mystic lore of Egypt, with its rites of Isis and Horus and Pasht, has not penetrated to the Outer Islands. The cat, however, plays a considerable part in their traditions and nomenclature.

A poor woman went to Our Lady to beg for wool to finish the cloth she had in the loom. Mary had none, but gave her a lock of her hair from the left side of her head, and the cloth was finished. No one should ever

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refuse wool or thread for the *Inneadh* (a deficiency of thread when the web is in the loom), and, as a matter of fact, it is always given cheerfully.[1] It is to remind them of this, that the hair of women is thinner on the left side than on the right. Whether this peculiarity really exists in the Hebrides I know not, but I never heard of it elsewhere.

One day, with another poor woman, Mary was gleaning in a field of corn. The other woman took a handful from a sheaf, but Our Lady reproved her, and she repented and opened her apron to put it back, but because she repented so quickly she found in her lap no corn, but a loaf of bread freshly baked.

Variants of this story are, of course, very common in the lives of the Saints.

It is "crossed"—i.e. unlucky—to put the peats on the fire the wrong way. Our Lord was one day passing a house, and He said there was either a corpse in it or a peat broadwise on the fire. It is also "crossed"—such is the literal wording of all such precepts—to turn the red side of a peat outwards, and the black inwards. It is a stupid thing to do in either case. The interpretation given to the story is that Our Lord wishes things to be cheerful and liberal, and it is a churlish thing to economize the peats thus, so as to give neither warmth nor light.

Here is the story of Martha of Bethany told with local colour:

Our Lord had an appointment with the goodman of a certain house. When he arrived the man was not there, and the wife, who was baking, said, "He is out watering the land." Our Lord asked for a lump of

[1] A variant is, that Our Lady herself, when spinning had need of more wool, but because the neighbours gave it willingly, there has always since been enough. The warp has always its woof, "the *cur* has always its *dlùth*."

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dough, kneaded it and put it to the fire, when lo! there grew from it a bunch of ears of corn, in the very midst of the fire. This was to show that from the very driest of places God could make corn grow for those who sought His kingdom first. The man was seeking worldly advantage when he might have been talking with Christ.

As Our Lord was one day passing along with His Mother, they came to a township where the people were rich and had many cattle. No one asked them to take food, except one poor widow, who had but one cow, and she pressed them to take a drink of milk. After bidding her farewell, Our Lady asked her Son what blessing He would bestow on the poor widow, who had been the only one to show them kindness. "That her cow die this night," He answered. "But that would surely be hard," said His Mother. "Yet so would she be richer possessing God alone," He replied. It is curious and interesting to find that the islanders hold, with Francis Bacon, that "Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament, but Adversity of the New."

Another story, however, tells of a more conventional and evident reward.

A woman was going to milk the fold when Mary met her. Our Lady was exhausted with travelling, and asked the woman to take the Child into her arms for a moment, which she rudely refused to do. Mary then passed on, and met a woman who was going to milk a larger fold, and asked the same of her. She at once took the Child, and after Mary had rested and taken back Our Lord into her arms, she went on to milk the cows, and was finished before the churlish one.

Our Lord once came to a house where a mother was going to crack a nut, every young one clamouring for a share of it. "It is too small to divide," said the

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mother; I shall keep it myself." But the clamour growing louder, Our Lord took the little nut, and gave to each a handful of the kernel, saying, "Sharing should reach to the kernel of the nut," which is still a common saying among the people.

An old woman had a sick cow, and she went to ask Our Lord, as He passed by, to make a charm for the cow. But He returned with her, and, when He came to the beast, touched it with His staff, saying certain words. The cow was healed, and Our Lord went His way. Soon after, "a priest, or some other great person," came by, for whom the woman had a special regard, and he was ill of a quinsy. The old woman struck him with her staff and repeated the charm, but he only laughed at its absurdity. However, the laugh was his cure, for the quinsy burst.

The sequel to the story has so very modern a tone that it is quoted mainly for the sake of adding that the old woman who told it said she knew of no other case of Our Lord healing animals. It was always St. Columcille who did that. There are, in fact, an immense number of stories, some very quaint, as to the healing-miracles of St. Columba.

It is said that Christ blessed the duck more than He did the hen. This is why He gave the duck a covering which protects it from the rain, while the hen is miserable in the wet—a serious matter for a dweller in the Outer Islands. Our Lord once sought shelter in a barn, where He lay down among some straw scattered over grain. The hen scratched away the straw, but the duck covered Him up again. A matter-of-fact comment on this is the assertion in the Islands—elsewhere for aught I know—that a hen always scratches from the top of a heap, but the duck from the bottom or edge.

The Son of God came one day to a stream that was

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swollen with heavy rain. There was a goat by the bank; He asked it to take Him across, but it refused. Then there came a sheep, which at once took up the sacred burden. Hence the goat is cursed and the sheep blessed.

A very similar story is told of the horse and the ass, to account for the ass being a blessed animal—contrary to the tradition of some countries, probably to the experience of the poor beast.

The soldiers of Herod, pursuing the Holy Child, came to a certain house where there was a fowl boiling in a pot over the fire. When they entered to make their search the fowl rose from the pot, and, "hooking its claws into the chain over the fire, crew at the prompting of the King of Virtues." How this produced the desired effect, whether by driving away the soldiers, or by convincing them of the miraculous powers of the Holy Child, is not told.

The story occurs in a fragment of verse.

Another version of the cock-story was given by a very old woman. When Our Lord was lying in the tomb, two girls, who were cooking a fowl, were talking together as to whether He would really rise again as He said. "It is no more likely," said one, "than that that fowl will rise again." Whereupon the cock crew.

The blackbeetle is universally detested and trampled upon, but the sharded beetle, called *Ceardobhan*, is a favourite. The blackbeetle tried to betray Our Lord in His flight to Egypt. Herod's men were in pursuit of Him, and came to Egypt, and were inquiring of the people if they had seen the Holy Family pass that way. The person particularly addressed said he had observed just the party described; and on being asked when he had seen them, he said it was when the corn, which was now yellow in the field, had been sown. The seed

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had been sown only the previous day, but a miracle was wrought in favour of the owner of the field on account of some kindness shown to the Holy Family. As the soldiers were departing a blackbeetle crept across the path, and said, "Yesterday, yesterday, the Son of God passed." The large sharded beetle, however, called out, "Whisht, you imp, a year from yesterday the Son of God passed,"[1] and so put the pursuers off the scent.

Beetles are seen everywhere during Lent,[2] and it is believed that they are specially restless at this sacred time on account of the curse upon them. The stone with which they are crushed should always be left upon the remains, otherwise they may get into a child's ear at night.

Because the dove came back to Noah he is next blessed to a cock, and he has, as a reward, three grains of barley wherever he alights, were it even on the top of a lone mountain; also he has a brood every month.

The reason, by the way, that the raven did not come back to the Ark was that he was eating the floating carcases. The knowing of the whereabouts of a dead body is hence called: "raven's knowledge." A child can be initiated into this by giving him to drink out of the dry skull of a raven. He would ever after be able to find where any missing beast was lying down to die.

There are many stories, possibly imported by Irish missionaries, of St. Bridget or Bride. One associated with Our Lord was told as follows by an old woman, as explaining her assertion that St. Bride was the first who took the infant Christ into her arms:

[1] Or in another version, "Three Fridays before yesterday."

[2] Possibly because this is about the winnowing time and they are disturbed in their winter quarters.

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"There dwelt an innkeeper at Bethlehem of the name—I forget it now. He had a servant called Bride. There happened a great drought in the country, and it was necessary for the innkeeper to go to a distance with carts to draw the water. Before leaving home he gave Bride strict orders not to take any person into his house during his absence, and he left one precious bottle of water in her charge.

He had been gone but a few days when there came to the door an old grey-headed man and a young and beautiful lady. They were tired with travel, and parched with thirst. Bride was very sorry for them, and said how gladly she would have taken them in, but her master had forbidden her to admit any stranger; the old man then asked for a mouthful of water for himself and the lady, and Bride gave them willingly out of her little store, and, strange to say, when she took back the bottle after they had drunk, it was quite full; and then they went away to seek shelter, and Bride cast a pitying eye after them.

At nightfall the innkeeper returned with his waggon and the water. As soon as he entered the house he heard a sound as of rushing waters, and he and Bride knew that the hour of their deliverance had come, for there was an old prophecy that after the drought there would come abundance of water, and the Messiah would be born. Then he asked her if she had seen any strangers in the place, and she told him what had happened, and that she had seen that the beautiful lady would soon have a mother's cares, and how, after they had drunk from the bottle, it was still full.

So they were hurrying off to seek for the holy strangers when Bride perceived an unwonted light through the stable wall. She pushed open the door

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and found Joseph and Mary with the Holy Child, whom she lifted in her arms and tenderly embraced."

Another narrator of the same story makes St. Bride housekeeper to her father, and not a servant. The sound of rushing water was of a miraculous stream, which still flows at the back of the house, as a reward for their kindness.

This suggests the recollection of another story.

On the night that Our Lord was to be born all the water in the streams would be warm. One incredulous woman would not believe this, and on the blessed night she went out to prove herself right but did not return. Her friends going to seek her, found her dead by the side of the stream.

To return, however, to St. Bride. It is said that she spread a bed for the Child Jesus, and on St. Bride's Eve, February 1, it was, till lately, the custom to make a point of spreading a bed for any strangers or homeless persons who might be passing by. The old people speak of a custom of "spreading the bed of Bride," of which the details are now forgotten. The version of it given by Martin in 1703 sounds like a Pagan survival adapted to Christian tradition, like so many other relics of former custom.

"The mistress and servants of each family take a sheaf of oats and dress it up in women's apparel, put it in a large basket, and lay a wooden club by it, and this they call Briid's bed; and then the mistress and servants cry three times, 'Briid is come; Briid is welcome.' They do this just before going to bed, and when they rise in the morning they look among the ashes, expecting to see the impression of Briid's club[1] there, which, if they do, they reckon it

[1] Martin's imperfect knowledge of Gaelic has probably betrayed him into confusion of two different ceremonies. The word *lorg* stands for *club* and for *footstep*, and it is the footstep of the Saint which is looked for, in token that she has been in the house.

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a true presage of a good crop and prosperous year, and the contrary they take as an ill omen."

There is a curious method of divination, long in use in the islands, known as the *Frith*, which is analogous to many practised in all parts of the world. It consists of the skilled observation of natural objects and their interpretation in relation to some special problem, most frequently as to the welfare of friends at a distance. The *frithear*, or Seer, says a "Hail, Mary," and then—such is the medley of Christianity and Paganism—he walks *dessil*, or sunwards, round the house, his eyes being closed till he reaches the door-sill, when he opens them, and, looking through a circle made of his finger and thumb, judges of the general character of the omen by the first object on which his eyes rest. If this should be a sacred symbol of any kind—if only two straws crossing each other—all will be well. He then proceeds to detail, and delivers judgment accordingly. A man standing is a sign of a recovery, a woman standing is a bad sign, and so on. The *Frith*, says an old woman of ninety who has been a noted Seeress in her day, is a blessed thing, and was first practised by Joseph and Mary when looking for the Holy Child. St. Bride was employed to look through the circle made by the fingers of the Virgin herself. Parts of the story were told in a quaint rhythmical form, probably very ancient, but where her verbal memory failed she was confused as to certain points. St. Bride, she declared, was a sister of Our Lady, and "was married to the man who washed his hands when Christ was condemned, and who was influenced by a dream she had had!"

It would be easy to multiply these stories, but I have, perhaps, quoted enough for all purposes but those of folklore. They belong to a past in which

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to-day has little share. For the Englishman who thinks that the Long Island is off the coast of New York and who calls the Highlanders "Scotch," for Scots even, such as MacCulloch, that past has been dead for centuries, even though the trail of Saxon or Lowlander has not yet greatly affected the islands of which I write. His bicycle would be buried in the sand, his yacht would find no harbour, his *Times* would be of the week before last. The attractions of brown trout may induce him to "rough it," as he imagines, at Loch Maddy or Loch Boisdale, but it is not within hail of a frequent steamer, or within reach of fresh beef and "loaf-bread" that one finds a people who cherish folklore, and refuse a "tip."

Armed with his instrument of toil, that slave of old went out into the cheerful day, but we who would find his footsteps must turn backward to the dark, and there, as elsewhere, wherever our sympathy is real, human, we shall find some traces of the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

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CHAPTER XI

THE POWERS OF EVIL IN ERISKAY AND SOUTH UIST

THE following traditions are in strange contrast with those of the last chapter, though gathered in the same district, often from the same informants. I believe them to be collected for the first time so far as the islands in question are concerned. Even the researches of Campbell of Islay did not penetrate to the smaller islands of the Outer Hebrides, and assuredly they are as remote from less adventurous inquirers as the snows of Alaska or the monasteries of Thibet. Every year boat-loads of tourists visit the shores of remote St. Kilda, and the inhabitants reap their harvest in a fashion worthy of Italy or Switzerland, but I could count on the fingers of one hand the number of strangers who have visited Eriskay in the last five years, and other islands familiar to us are even less frequented.

The language used is, as far as possible, that, or a translation of that, of the informants, and variants have always been carefully noted. Such gatherings are not easily made. The Celt must know and trust well those whom he admits into his inner life, and though in our wanderings in the islands we have long since learnt to feel at home and among friends, I could never myself have accomplished such a collection, and have to acknowledge most cordially and fully, the help of the Rev. Allan Macdonald, Priest of Eriskay, to

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whose patience, erudition, and perhaps even more his friendship with the people, these records are mainly due.

Nothing strikes one as more strange in these islands than the curious mixture of religion and superstition; and one realizes, as in perhaps few other places, what life must have been in early days when Christianity was first superinduced upon Paganism. Here there has been, moreover, the curious complication of a Christianity rooted in the hearts of a people, who were then left without teachers, without books, without, practically, any written language, for nearly three centuries. The realization of the forces of nature and the powers of evil was strong in a land wholly without trees, without the convenience of wood for any purposes of shelter or manufacture: where the soil is so shallow and ungrateful that few things will even take root; where, so wind-swept is the land, that even when rooted they have but a precarious hold upon the soil; where man and beast alike have to make a struggle for life, of which we happily know little.

Thus it came about that one of the most obvious uses of their religion was to play it off, if one may say so, against the Powers of Darkness.

The spinning-wheel is blessed when it is put away for the night; the cow before she is milked; the horses when put to any new work; the cattle when they are shut up in the byre; the fire when the peats are covered up at bedtime; the door is signed with the cross when closed for the night; and the joiner's tools when he leaves them in his workshop, otherwise he is likely to be disturbed by hearing them used by unseen hands. For the same reason the women take the band off the spinning-wheel, for when a death is about to occur, tools and wheels are likely to be put to supernatural use.

The boats are always blessed at the beginning of the

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fishing-season, and holy water is carried in them. When one leaves the shore, "Let us go in the name of God." says the skipper; "In the name of God let us go," replies the next in command.

The sea is much more blessed than the land. A man will not be afraid to stay all night in a boat a few yards from shore, but he would not stay an hour alone in the dark on land.

A priest told me that one day he was crossing the dangerous Minch,[1] which lies between Uist and Eriskay, on a dark night to visit some sick person. He asked the man who had fetched him where his companion, who was awaiting them, would shelter on the shore. "He won't be on the shore at all, by the Book! it is in the boat itself he will be. The sea is holier to live on than the shore."

When the door is opened in the morning one should say on first looking out: "May God bless what my eye may see and what my hand may touch."

An old inhabitant told us that there is not a glen in Eriskay in which Mass has not been said on account of the *fuathas* or *bocain*. Father John —— used to say Mass at Creag Shiant, a fairy or enchanted rock in Baile, Eriskay. She herself had never felt anything there.

It is customary to recite the genealogy of St. Bride, who is a very important saint in these islands, and among the concluding lines are these:

> Each day and night that I recall the genealogy of Brigid,
> I shall not be killed,
> I shall not be wounded,
> I shall not be struck by the Evil Eye.

There is a little brown bean[2] which they call the "Marybean," and which women still wear round their

[1] *i.e.* strait; cf. La Manche, the English Channel.
[2] See page 203.

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neck as a charm, which used always to be blessed by the priest.

The cow is a blessed animal. It is not right[1] that she should be struck by the flesh of a sinner, and her last words—for before the Fall of man all the beasts had speech—were: "Do not strike me with your palm." A stick, even a few inches long, is to be used in preference.

The sheep's last words were: "Don't break my foot, don't burn my bone, don't shear the back of my head." It is therefore not right to throw a mutton-bone on the fire.

There seems to be some half-forgotten mystic use of the rod. In taking cattle to the hills they should be driven with a stick of no value, as it must be thrown after them when they are left. The stem of the docken, which comes naturally into use in Uist where sticks are scarce, is "forbidden." The drovers and crofters are agreed about this, but can give no reason. It is equally "forbidden" for horses.

An old man in Eriskay used to say, on leaving his cattle, after leading them to the hills: "Closed be every hole (i.e. into which they might stumble) clear be each knowe (i.e. each knoll, from obstacles over which they might fall) and may the herdship of Columcille be upon you till you come home."

One does not hear of dogs being blessed, though animals of great value to their owners, perhaps because the demon or evil thing sometimes takes their form, as it does that of the cat or the hare. I never heard but one story of a dog being so utilized, and that was of one belonging to a priest, who was once hearing confessions. Whether the atmosphere was overcharged with piety, or for what reason, does

[1] The literal translation of this expression, so often heard in the Islands, is "It is not ordered," *cha n'eil e orduichte*, as if it were a question of ritual.

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not appear; but the dog, who was lying on the hearth, suddenly started up, saying, "If you liked me before, you never will again," and disappeared in a shower of sparks.

The cock is considered sacred. No one would willingly walk abroad in the night, as night and darkness are pervaded by evil, but as soon as the cock crows the most timid will venture alone, no matter how dark it may be.

If the cock crows at an unusual hour, it is a sign of some untoward event. The crow of a cock hatched in March has more effect against evil spirits than one hatched in autumn, especially if black.

In a certain house a guinea disappeared from the stocking. A suspicion, well founded, it is said, fell upon a noted character in the country. Nothing was said at the time, but when the suspected person next asked for hospitality, the inmates were about to eject him, when the cock flew down from the couples, and flew about him with flapping wings, so, thus countenanced, they permitted him to come in out of the darkness and allowed him the shelter of the house.

A skipper of a vessel lying in Loch Skipport, on three successive nights saw from his deck a curious phenomenon, a ball of fire, which came from the north towards a dwelling-house on the shore, and which always turned back at the crowing of the cock, doing no injury. The skipper went ashore, bought the cock, and asked the people of the house to pass the night on his vessel. As they watched on deck, they saw the ball of fire approach the house as before, but this time it entered under the roof and the house was consumed by flames before their eyes. The owner was of opinion that it was a punishment from heaven for some wrangling with his wife during the last few days.[1]

[1] This curious story is widely spread in Scotland. See Hugh

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There is a house in Morven in which no cock ever crows. Some years ago a man and his wife lived there who differed in religious opinions. She was a Catholic, and he put every obstacle in the way of her performance of religious duties. One Christmas Eve she said she wished to attend Mass next morning, and would be obliged if her husband would wake her up in time.

"I shall do nothing of the kind," said he.

"It doesn't matter," she returned patiently; "I daresay the cock will arouse me."

"You will sleep long if you wait for him," he answered, and so saying, he lifted up the cock and twisted his neck. And no cock crowed in that house thereafter.

Mrs. D. went to visit a sick old woman who was a Protestant. She was alone with her, the relatives being at the other end of the house, and the patient was not supposed to be near death. Suddenly the fowls flew down from the roost and rushed wildly about the room, as if pursued by an enemy. Mrs. D. was much alarmed and perplexed; when she looked again at the sick woman, she was dead.

John M., joiner, was playing his pipes one winter evening while there was a terrible snowdrift outside. The cock suddenly came down from his roost and began to crow and to leap up, flapping his wings at the piper. The wife, who herself told the story, told him to stop, as the cock's behaviour foreboded ill. In the lull that followed the shrill notes of the pipe, the group around the turf fire began to meditate on what mishap had occurred, or was likely to occur, that night in the blinding storm, and thought that perhaps the priest, who had been seen to pass south, might have succumbed to the storm while returning home, when

Miller, *Scenes and Legends*, p. 72; *Notes and Queries*, 7th Series, vol. xi. p. 95.

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the voice of the priest himself was heard at the door asking for the good man of the house. The priest took John a little apart and told him that his brother had been lost in the storm ; being deceived by the drift, he had walked into a loch, had fallen through the ice and had soon become too numbed to extricate himself. John heard all with surprising composure, his mind having been prepared for the worst.

The crofters very much dislike the modern innovation of not being allowed to keep their beasts in the house, and specially resent the exclusion of the cock, who serves to keep out the Powers of Darkness.

There are, however, methods, other than religious, for *dodging* the Powers of Evil.

"It is not right" to call dogs by name at night, for that will inform the *fuath* or wandering spirit, and then he can call the dogs as well as you and make them follow himself.

The Rev. A. Macdonald told me that one day one of his parishioners was telling him that a certain spot on the island was bad for cattle, and remembering that the priest had a sheep there at the moment, used the phrase, "It's telling it to the stones I am, and not to you, Father" ; intending to divert the evil from the sheep.

The fire of a kiln is spoken of as *aingeal*, not by the more obvious name of *teine*. The fire in a kiln, it is said, is a dangerous thing and should not be talked of except by a euphemism. One man said he always blessed the kiln before leaving it, but should feel even then no security if he called the fire "*teine*." There is a proverb : "Ill will come if mentioned." In the same way drowning is spoken of as "spoiling" or "destroying" *(milleadh* not *bàthadh)*. Even in a sermon it would be thought bad taste to speak of the Devil. He is "the great fellow," "the black one," "the nameless," "the brindled one," "the evil one." A priest told us he

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once gave an evening hymn to an old man, in which the word *diabhol* (devil) occurred. The man afterwards said he had changed it, as he could not go to bed with such a word on his lips.

So, too, hell is called "the bad place," sometimes, even, "the good place," just as elsewhere—not, I think, in Gaelic-speaking districts—goblins and fairies are the "good folk."

If a cow or a horse die, it is not right to say "it died," but "it was lost"; and in asking a question it is right to preface it with "It is not asking that I am," not only, I think, as a matter of good manners, but also not to attract the attention of the evil powers to the information given you.

A child should not be named after one who has died young. A mother was heard to attribute the early death of a child to its having been named, to please the father, after a girl who had died young.

The Powers of Evil should not be allowed to hear praise of any person or beast. A certain Ian was one day ploughing with a pair of horses when a man from Uist came by and praised them very much, asking where he was likely to get such horses; and they chatted in a friendly way together for some minutes. The Uist man went his way along the shore, but had not been long gone when both horses fell down as if dead in the field. It was evidently the work of the Evil Eye, and Ian followed the man and upbraided him bitterly. The Uist man declared himself quite innocent in intention, but said that if he had any hand in it he would undertake that Ian should find them all right on his return, as in fact he did.

If a person praises your ox, or your horse, or anything that is yours, be sure to say, "Wet your eye," which, if kindly disposed, he will perform literally. The phrase, albeit in the Highlands, has no ulterior meaning.

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If a person should praise any child or beast of yours, you should praise what he praises, only in more extravagant terms than he. If out of good manners you should dispraise anything belonging to yourself, his praise would have an ill effect. If you commend the size or appearance of a child, you should use some such formula as "God bless it, how big it is!" If you ask how many children a person has, it is proper to say, on being told, "Up with their number," so that they may not decrease; and in counting chickens you should say, "Let not my eye rest on them." If you should go to a house to ask for anything, it is wise to enter into general conversation before stating your needs; if not, some one else should at once say:

> Ask it of the ravens,
> And of the hoodie crows,
> And of the ridge-beam of your grandfather's house.

And, equally with the idea of distracting attention of listening Powers, if any one tells news of the loss of a horse or a cow, those around should answer:

> Pluck the hair out,
> Put it into the fire,
> And may all be well where this is told.

Father R. had a good cow, which died of some internal inflammation; but of course the Evil Eye was at the bottom of it, according to current opinion. He had a capital pony; and a few days after the cow's death one of his parishioners, looking at the pony, began to dispraise it in no measured terms, of course with the notion of warding off the attentions of the Powers of Evil. Another advised him to put his new cow in a park (*anglicé* paddock) at some distance from the chapel, on Sundays, so that it might not run the risk of being "overlooked" by any of the worshippers.

Much may, moreover, be done by right selection of days for any purpose.

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Monday is a good day for changing one's residence, provided it be from north to south.

Tuesday is a good day to get married, or for shearing, which means cutting the *corn*, not the sheep.

The Devil cannot touch what is done on a Tuesday.

There was a man who had no son to help him with the harvest; and when one day a fine looking young man offered himself as a servant, he was glad to accept him. The terms were that he was to have one load for his wages. The farmer saw with whom he had to deal, and felt sure the load would be of large proportions; and he consulted a wise man, who told him to address his assistant thus:

> Tuesday I sowed,
> And Tuesday I mowed,
> And Tuesday I carried my first load,
> And let it not be among thy deeds, O Demon,
> To take with thee what is done in the Lord.

The new "hand" went off in a flame of fire.

When All Saints is on a Wednesday the men of the earth are under affliction.

Thursday is St. Columcille's Day. There is a rhythmical saying:

> Thursday, the day of kind Cille Colum.
> A day for setting sheep apart for luck,
> For arranging the thread in the loom,
> And for getting a wild cow to take to its calf.

There is a saying that "Luckless is the mother of a silly child, if Beltane come on a Thursday."

The ordinary superstition against Friday does not greatly obtain in Scotland. Friday is a good day for planting or for sowing seed, for engaging one's self either in matrimony or any other bargain. It is not right to buy on a Friday, nor to be buried, nor to cut one's nails or hair, nor to kill sheep. On Good Friday no metal must be put into the ground, such as the spade or plough; but sea-weed may be spread on the

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surface, or the wooden rake used. It is not right to sharpen a knife on Friday. A knife so treated is cursed, and will probably be used before long to skin one's own cattle, which will have fallen to the Powers of Evil, or fallen dead before the Evil Eye. A person born on a Friday is said to be delicate and dilatory.

Saturday is good for changing one's residence if going from south to north, but it is not right to spin on Saturday night. A woman who did so had her spinning fingers, i.e. the forefinger and middle finger, joined together; nor is it right to spin with a corpse in the township.

There is much luck in spots and sites. "'Tis I that sat on a bad hillock," is a very common saying of any one who has had deaths either in house or byre, and means that the site of the house is not well chosen.

The *sortes numismaticæ* are resorted to in choosing the site of a house. If heads turn up twice in three times, the spot is lucky. They talk about "heads" and "harps," as if used to the Irish coinage.

A silver coin is buried under the corner-stone for luck.

Another important matter is that of direction. Everything should be done *dessil*, i.e. sunwards. When a child is choking they say, "Dessil," possibly part of some old invocation.

It is not right to come to a house "tuaitheal," i.e. northward. Probably the word is here used as the reverse of "dessil" or sunward. Witches come that way.

It is a rule to keep on the west side of the road at night, and at all times to keep sunwards of unlucky people.

There are of course many ways in which evil may be unconsciously invited, and the avoidance of them involves a whole code of right and wrong.

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If a knock comes to a door after midnight, it is not right to say "Come in." Wait till the knock is repeated and then say "Who is there?" Our informant added: "My father being ferryman, many a person used to come to the door and ask to come in, but my mother always insisted on hearing the name before it was opened. He used to tell her not to be so particular, but she said: 'The wandering ones would be often knocking, and when a person would go to open, there would be nobody there. They would be playing tricks this way on people.' A goblin came thus to a door one night, but failed to get admittance. He then said: "If it were the red cock of autumn that were in the house, he would open the door for me. It isn't that that is in it,' says he, 'but the black cock of the spring March.'" The special good luck of this kind of cock has already been mentioned.

It is not right that any person should sleep in a house without water in it, especially a young child. In a house thus left without water "the slender one of the green coat" was seen washing the infant in a basin of milk.

Sleeping on the bench is always rebuked, and a certain Angus testifies that once, when he disobeyed this rule, he awoke to find himself being dragged by the feet by invisible beings. Moreover, one Donald, alleges that over and over again he has been rebuked for not going to bed properly, but he persisted in having his own way, until one night he also was dragged across the floor by invisible hands.

One old woman said she did not think sleeping on the bench mattered if you had your feet to the door, so as to be able to rise at once if interfered with, but that it was a serious matter to be dragged out by the head.

If you find yourself accidentally in a byre when milking is going on, or in a dairy where the churn is at

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work, it is on the safe side to say, "May God bless everything that my eye sees and that my hand touches."

It is not right to hurry a dairymaid to milk the cows. To avert harm she says: "Hurry the women of the town beyond" (a euphemism for fairies). A variant of this is, "Hurry your mother-in-law"—a repartee of immense effect.

If a person suspected of the Evil Eye should speak to one while milking, it is not right to make any answer, perhaps because so doing establishes a *rapport.*

The first day of the season that a man goes to fish it is not right that anybody should go to meet him, as is done on other days, to help to bring in his catch. He must manage it for himself somehow. Any person officiously doing this is said to drive away the fish from the coast.

Stones placed in a certain fashion bring ill-luck. One woman said that ill-luck had followed her, and all her cattle had died; on changing the house and taking off the thatch, four stones appeared concealed under the divots.[1] Some "evil words" must have been used in placing them there.

If a cow is lost through illness of any kind, it is not right to distribute any of the beef raw. It must be boiled, otherwise the *dosgaidh* (loss) might be spread. If a cat cries for it, it is reproved with "Whist with you, for asking for blighted food; may your own skin be the first on the rafters," so as not to attract the attention of the Evil Influence.

When going to a well or stream for water, the rinsings of the pail should not be thrown on one's own land or crop—probably a reminiscence of some custom of libation.

If there be a little milk in the bottom of a pail, it

[1] i.e. the sods with which the house is thatched.

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should be thrown out on to grass, never on to earth or rocks, because the milk comes from the grass.

In preparing water for boiling clothes, after it has once boiled it is not right to allow it to boil a second time, not for the sake of the clothes, but because it would bring evil to the house. The Rev. A. Macdonald says his informant, an old woman, would not specify the evil, though he thought she knew.

Some people are lucky to meet, in spite of having red hair or other personal peculiarity. A fisherman told us that he had twice met such a woman when on his way to fish saithe, and on both occasions had as much as he could carry home.

Others are just as unlucky to meet, and you would be sure to have disappointment in your errand. If it were only to fetch a spade you had left lying in the field, you would be sure to have to come back without it. A man from North Uist says that he often makes a détour of about a mile when he is going to hunt ("hunting" means shooting in the Islands) because he says: "If I should meet the people from that house, though I would use two pounds of shot I would kill nothing."

Women do not seem to be a sign of good. If you are making a *frith*[1] and you see a woman, cross yourself. If a woman tells you the new moon is visible, do not look at it.

At one time no male could survive in the island of Eriskay. Women were less intolerable to the spirits of the place, and on one occasion when by some accident a man got into the island and could not get away, it was suggested that he should dress up as a woman and sit and spin among the rest. Though he showed some skill with the distaff he was soon found out, and the adventure proved fatal.

[1] i.e. a kind of horoscope much in use.

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Good as well as evil must have a start. The people will say to any who complain, that they are "like the sister of St. Columba." He used to visit her daily in illness, and she always complained, and he always agreed that she was, as she said, worse. At last some one advised her to answer him differently, which she did, and when he replied "Good and evil must have a start," she began to get better.

This is the theory underlying the idea that the evil influence, once put on the track, takes complete hold. There is an aphorism in Gaelic: "When a man is tried, he is tried completely." Acquaintance with death invites further visits. Thus, it is not lucky to own a boat that has carried a coffin. We heard in one island that a woman having lately died, her relatives, who had two boats, carried the corpse across to the adjacent island for burial in a small one, quite unfit for such work in such weather, rather than use the boat that did service for fishing.

If a dog kill a sheep, the luck of the flock is lost to the owner, and the rest will follow by some means.

Also, if a person die who has been lucky in accumulating flocks and herds, the beasts will follow him shortly.

There is a mysterious entity called "the Aoine." All we knew of her is a proverb to the effect that "When the Aoine has got it in her mouth, the raven may as well start off to the hills"; which we took to mean that she was loquacious. However, I incline to think that there is another possible meaning, and one more gruesome. We heard of a man, now deceased, who knew the Raun or rhyme of the Aoine, and that he was liable to recite it if he saw a person bathing, who would then be instantly drowned; and that in order to resist the impulse he would turn his back to the bather and fall down upon his face.

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Another mysterious entity who appears only in a proverb is "Ōm," of whom it is said: "Ōm is most active in his morning." The phrase is used to any one who wishes at night to put off doing something till next day.

The *Fuath* or Evil Spirit is sometimes seen, and we were interested in seeking a description of him. As of old, he has the power of transforming himself into an angel of light, but he is generally found out in the long run.

It is well known that any being which frequently changes its shape is of evil origin. When I asked my informant if such changes were frequent, he referred me to his sister, who tells that when she was a servant, the doctor's horse and trap rushed into the yard one night, the gate being happily open, which was not usual. The driver followed soon, also in a state of alarm. He had come to meet the ferry, and the doctor was staying the night at the inn; but there was not room for the trap and he drove on towards a neighbouring farm. Suddenly the horse stopped, and on getting out to see what was wrong he saw "a beast climbing up from the shore to the edge of the road, like a pig. It went up the face of the brow of Cnoc Sligeannach and went back from there like a coil of heather rope, and after that it went into the shape of a dog."

Sportsmen will rejoice to hear that it is believed among the people that a curse follows the killing of fish in spawning time, and that those who follow the occupation are apt to encounter a *fuath* or evil spirit; many men would not dare to go to catch fish at that time.

One informant relates that about sixty years ago he was catching fish by night when he perceived a man coming down the stream. He told him to step aside so as not to frighten the fish, and he obeyed. W. had caught a good quantity of fish by this time, and follow-

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ing up the stream he was surprised to see something like a mill-wheel rolling down towards him, in a way he did not think canny, and he deemed it prudent to decamp with all speed. He picked up his fish hurriedly and put them on a withe, with the exception of one which he had decapitated accidentally by trampling on it with his boot. As he was going away, he stowed the fish in a nook where he could afterwards easily find them, and hurried off to the nearest dwelling. On his way over the moor, he was frequently thrown on the ground by some unseen power. On asking if it had any part with God, he got no answer. In the morning he returned for his fish and got none but the headless one.

A certain farm servant had set a net in the spawning time across the little stream to the west of the house. At midnight he went to pull in the net, when he saw a man of gigantic stature at the other end of the net, and retired in terror to the house. He was pursued till he entered, and ever after believed that he had encountered the *fuath*.

Another man went by night to kill fish in spawning time, and was joined by some unknown person who bargained with him that they should work together, and share and share alike. After landing a large quantity, the stranger urged that they divide the spoil, but he would not interrupt his work, and replied: "No, no, there's lots of fish in the stream yet." And so they went on till the moorcock crew and the unknown vanished in a flame of fire; he found that the fish were all phantoms.

Three men went to fish by night as usual on the stream at Hornary; they had cabers (long staves) for splashing and terrifying the fish into the nets. They also used these cabers as vaulting-poles when crossing the stream; and in one spot, where there was a stone

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standing in the middle of the stream, it was their custom to vault to this stone, and afterwards, by another leap, to get across. As they were going to cross the stream, they perceived a man standing on the stone, who stretched out his hand and helped the first two comers over. As the third was expecting the same courtesy, the stranger said: "Thy hour is not yet come," and gave him no assistance. The other two men soon fell into a decline and used to exchange visits during their illness, remarking: "It were easy knowing that something was coming upon us since the night at Hornary Stream." They died shortly after.

The eyes of Christ were blue, of Our Lady brown, of the Devil black; but the Evil Eye does not depend upon its colour, nor necessarily upon any desire of doing harm; and a person so unfortunate as to possess it may injure even his own children. The people who have skill in making *snaithean* (charms for turning away the effects) say they know, without being told, whether the eye was that of a man or a woman. Two women were pointed out as being the cause of many a swearing, for they, quite unwittingly, bring misfortune on any person they may meet who is going out to fish or hunt. One has dark hair and the other red.

To preserve against the Evil Eye, one article of clothing should be put on wrong-side out.

The Saint John's wort[1] is called *Lus Columcille*, the armpit-plant of Columcille. It is a lucky plant, and brings increase, and protection from evil to one's store, be it cattle, or sheep, or grain. It is plucked with the formula:

> Unsearched for and unsought, for luck of sheep I pluck thee.

The marsh-ragwort (*caoibhreachan*) is valuable against the *toradh* and Evil Eye generally.

[1] See page 202.

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Of all forms of evil influence none is more dreaded than this *toradh*, or the charming away of milk from cattle. The methods by which this is effected are various. There was a woman who had good cheese, but only one cow. A neighbour bought some of the cheese, but directly grace was said at table it disappeared. The cow always stood on the same place to be milked, and some one examined the place in hope of instruction. Nothing was to be seen on the surface; but on digging, a vessel was found containing hair from various other cows.

The furnishing of a house in the Hebrides is, as may be supposed, of the simplest. The beds are enclosed. There is a dresser, a table, wooden boxes for receptacles, and a plank supported by large stones for seats. The fire is usually in the middle of the floor, the cooking-pot hangs over it suspended by a chain from the roof. This chain is mysteriously connected with the Powers of Evil, it is said to be cursed; the Devil is called "Him of the Chain."

Once when there was a talk of a change of factors in the island, some one remarked of the one who was leaving that his successor might be worse. "No, no," was the reply, "not unless the chain came across entirely," i.e. the Evil One himself.

It is not right to handle the chain; evil may come of it. There was a man whose cows ceased to give milk; and suspecting that a woman near by was the author of the mischief, he went into her house in her absence and found only a little child. "Where does your mother get the milk she gives you to drink?" he asked. "Out of the chain," said the child. "Come, little one, show me how she will be doing it." "Like this," said the child, and drawing the chain the milk flowed from it. The man tore down the chain and carried it off, and the milk returned to his cows.

There is no saying in what unexpected places milk

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may be found, when subtracted under evil conditions. There was a woman who had always an abundance of milk, butter, and cheese, but no cow. A suspicious neighbour entered her house during her absence and found a quantity of black tangle hanging up. He took his knife and cut one of them, and milk flowed forth abundantly.

Happily the methods of cure are also numerous. A woman had lost many cows from no apparent cause, and was sure they had been "overlooked." She consulted a drover, supposing that he might have suffered in the same manner. He told her to have the hide of the next victim laid upon the thatch of the house, and to watch what bird was the first to be attracted by it; for, as there are no trees, the thatch of the house is a substitute for many purposes, to the birds among others. The next calf that was born was to be called after the bird. A hooded grey crow came, and the first calf was therefore called *feannag*=hoodie crow, and the name being retained by all its descendants the murrain ceased.

It is not right to lose the *buarach*, i.e. the horsehair tie which goes about the cows' feet at milking-time, because any one getting it could get *toradh* of your cattle. One notices the care with which, after milking, these ties are carried home and hung up in a certain spot.

Once or twice a year a drover from the mainland comes to the islands to buy cattle. He used always to stay with a certain farmer, from whose daughter the story comes. He was accustomed to abundant fare, but one year no cheese was forthcoming. "It is not," said his hostess, "that we have not plenty of cows, but for some reason we can make no cheese." Early next morning the drover rose and looked out. On coming in, he asked for three or four bunches of "bent" grass (i.e. the long grass that grows on the shore), and made

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as many *buarachs*, and asked the women to put them on the cows, three times round each, and then to let the herd go where they would. This was done, and the cows rushed off wildly and never stopped till they reached a certain crofter's house, when they climbed on the roof and began to tear at the thatch, to the great astonishment of its owner. "They are wanting what belongs to them," said the drover in explanation; and when the woman of the house came out with an armful of cheeses, the cows surrounded her and drove her back to the byre from which they had come. This happened a second and a third time, till all the *toradh* that had been filched was restored, when the cows settled down quietly and their mistress had once more abundance of cheese.

If the person whose Evil Eye has taken away the produce be publicly rebuked, the milk or other produce affected will return.

If a person is very much afflicted in regard to the *toradh*, he is wise to adopt the following remedy: "Whenever" (*anglicé* = as soon as) one of his cows has a calf, take it away before any milk is drawn. Then, taking a bottle, he is to draw milk from the four teats, kneeling. The bottle is then tightly corked; this is important, for carelessness in this respect might give access to the *toradh* and upset everything. Another method is for a man—a woman won't do—to go to the house of the person suspected, and pull off from the roof as much thatch and divots as his two hands will hold, and over this to boil what little milk is left, until it dries up. Another informant advises burning the thatch under the churn, instead of under the milk.

Another means of removing the blight from one's cattle is to bury the carcase of one of the victims by a boundary stream. Similarly you may transfer it to your neighbour by burying it on his land.

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A man told my informant that one day when he was ploughing, one of his horses fell. He took the tail of the horse in his hand and put it to his mouth, while he repeated a charm, and the horse recovered.

Another informant says that one day she was taking home a load of sea-ware in a cart, when a person who had the Evil Eye came by and the horse fell down and could not rise for a long time, and even then was quite weak and could not take food. When she got home, her neighbour filled a bowl with water taken from a boundary stream and put silver into it, and threw it over the horse's back, and it immediately got better. She had herself been once "overlooked," and was ill for many days in consequence, but I forget whether by this person or another.

If, in such a case as this, the silver remains at the bottom of the bowl, it is an indication that the *snaithean* must be resorted to. This is in most cases the ultimate appeal, and I never heard of a case in which it had failed.

The *snaithean* is made of wool, often black, so as not to be easily seen. If you buy a cow or horse in the market, you are almost sure to find a piece of black wool round its tail, well out of sight under the hair. Certain persons in most districts know how to make it and can repeat the charm, which is part of the process, The person who fetches it should carry it in silence. and in the palm of the hand—not between the finger and thumb, because with them Eve plucked the apple and they are "not blessed." It must be burnt when removed, and must not be paid for, though those receiving it consider themselves under an obligation which is to be discharged somehow.

When it is the Evil Eye that has fallen on the victim the person making the *snaithean* is seized with a fit of yawning, or becomes ill in proportion to the disease of

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the sufferer and the duration of his attack. Whether the author is male or female is determined by casting the *Frith*,[1] or horoscope, which is another story and belongs to the subject of divining.

When the thread is put about the cattle, first is said the *Pater*, and then the following:

> An Eye will see you.
> A Tongue will speak of you.
> A Heart will think of you.
> He of the Arm is blessing you (i.e. St. Columcille).
> The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
> Four persons there are who may have done you harm,
> A man, a wife, a lad, a girl.
> Who is to turn it back?
> The Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity,
> The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
> I call Mary to witness, and Brigid,
> If it be a human thing that has done you harm
> With wicked wish,
> Or with wicked eye,
> Or with wicked heart,
> That you (name of person or animal) be well
> From the time I place this about you.
> In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

A very respectable widow related with great detail how she was once under the Evil Eye. She was going along the machair (the sandy plain near the seashore) with two ponies, and she met a man with some grain on his back, going to the mill, and immediately she began to feel very weak. When she came to the nearest house she found that she could not go any further, and felt a sort of retching, with cold shivers all over her. They brought butter and put it into warm milk to restore her, and a man who was present felt sure that she had fallen under the Evil Eye, and they duly sent for a certain Ranald who knew how to make spells. He twisted some threads and passed them round the fire three times. (It must be remembered that the fire would be in the middle of the room.) Then he tied it on her

[1] See page 227.

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hand, and she began to get better immediately. Ranald told her it was the Evil Eye of a man that had affected her, but she did not know how he made that out. It must certainly have been the man with the grain.

This woman's husband had knowledge of the *snaithean*, as we discovered another time. Perhaps he was dead or away on the occasion when Ranald was sent for. A girl came to him one day and begged him for the love of goodness to make it for her sister, who was very ill. There were several men in the house at the time, and he said he would not do it, as the priest had told him not to be doing it. But the girl got him outside and asked him, for the pity of God, to help her, and he then asked his wife (who told the story) for some wool, and she twisted some for him on her wheel. The girl got better, and is alive to this day to prove the efficacy of the cure.

She said the *eolas* (spell) would not be right if it were not paid for, but she did not know the rate of payment, I can personally testify that when silver is put into a bowl of water to work a spell, the wise woman keeps the silver. The theory is that when the water is thrown over the patient it does no good unless the silver sticks to the bowl. She told us also that not long since a woman, from a small neighbouring island, came to ask for rennet, which the servant gave her without asking her mistress. Thereafter, the cattle went all wrong with their milk, and the servant confessed what she had done, as this was probably the cause of the trouble; but we did not hear what steps were taken for its removal. One poor beast that we came across had been smitten by two Evil Eyes at the same time. The maker of charms, at first much perplexed, at length discovered the cause, and said the creature would be ill for a year, which came to pass.

Many stories in the Hebrides are on lines which the

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Society for Psychical Research would call "telepathic suggestion." A good many examples of wisdom are told of tailors, just as in England they are told of cobblers (who have little employment in islands where women and children go barefoot). A tailor's wife was busy churning, when a woman came in to ask for fire,[1] "Keep busily at it," called the tailor to his wife, and gave the woman the embers she required, but dropped one into a tub of cold water. This happened a second and a third time, and though the tailor's wife was ready to drop with fatigue, she churned away as she was told. When the third ember was dropped into the tub, the woman sat down moaning: "Oh, in the name of God, let my hand away!" The tailor said he would not, unless she promised never to trouble him or his house again, which she did, and then showed her hand all bruised and blue from the blows the tailor's wife had given it in the churn. The lid was taken off, and there was nothing within but watery stuff, but in the tub were three large lumps of beautiful butter.

I will conclude with a warning against lightly meddling with matters so serious as these. A man was going to Mass early on Sunday morning. As he crossed the strand he found a woman and her daughter actively engaged in framing witchcrafts by means of pieces of thread of various colours. He tore up the whole apparatus and rebuked them for malice and for breach of the Sunday. They entreated him not to reveal what he had seen, and promised their protection in return for his silence. Nevertheless, after Mass he told the story. Shortly after, when he was about to sail for the mainland, a black crow settled on the mast of his boat, and a storm arose in which he perished.

[1] i.e. for a glowing peat to kindle her own which had gone out. It is considered unlucky to allow the embers to get cold.

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CHAPTER XII

PRINCE CHARLIE IN ERISKAY

Some Unwritten Memories of the '45.

"THERE are red cheeks," says a proverb of the Outer Hebrides, "before the tailor and the fulling women," their visits being the two occasions when the public is admitted into the intimate domestic life of the family. The tailor is peripatetic, and as he visits from house to house he carries with him the gossip of the neighbourhood. He knows when the meal tub is getting low, and when the whisky bottle is withheld from the guest. So, too, when the cloth is being dressed after it is taken out of the loom. It needs eight or ten women to do the work, and as many as the house will hold to look on. None may refuse an invitation to a fulling, and as it requires skilled labour, and the work is voluntary, it is an opportunity for the exercise of all possible hospitality: to give less than the best would be, indeed, an occasion for scandal and "red cheeks."

The "fulling" is a scene of the utmost friendliness: the talk is intimate, and yet a certain ceremony and dignity are observed, and the customs, probably many centuries old, are adhered to rigidly. The songs which accompany the work are preserved orally, and are of the deepest interest; some are love ditties; some are religious, some political, all have a quaint picturesqueness of language, which, like many things in these

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Islands, is almost oriental. One sees, on such occasions as these, something of the under-current of the life of the people ; in the song, one hears, as it were, the keynotes of the views and the faith which they have inherited. They are an emotional people, but so reticent that one who would know what traditions they still cherish has need of some such opportunity as this.

The scene is almost weird. It is an evening in the early autumn. The house is long and low, it has neither floor nor ceiling ; but the walls are thick, and the thatch, of divots, or sods of grass, fastened on with heather ropes, is an excellent protection from cold and draught. A peat fire burns in a hollow in the clay floor, and the smoke seeks escape through an opening in the roof. A kettle, singing gaily, is suspended from an iron chain, and round flat cakes, supported by stones, are arranged in a circle about the fire. The scant furniture of the house has been cleared to one side, and three long planks, supported table-wise at either end, so as to slope towards the door, occupy the open space. Chairs are scarce, but forms and boxes are placed so as to seat the women who are to do the work of the evening. Ten big muscular young women they are, with bare arms, and long coarse aprons over their gowns. They take much heed to the right height and firmness of their seats, as indeed the violent exercise they are about to enter upon requires. The house is already well filled with humanity, and but ill-ventilated, while two or three smoking paraffin-lamps further subtract from the available oxygen. Later we learn to be thankful for the additional reek of peat and tobacco, for the climax of ill savour is not reached till the hostess brings in the web of cloth freshly dipped in some nauseous compound which contends with its original

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smell of fish and hot sheep,—fish oil and tallow being the most fragrant of the various dressings applied to the wool, from which the process of fulling is to cleanse it.

Five to each side they sit, and the dripping cloth is passed from hand to hand, while the moisture runs down the sloping boards to the floor. The movements of the women, at first slow, are in perfect rhythm, and, like all co-ordinated movement in these islands, their direction is *dessil*—sunwards. It is only at first that we can observe the details of their operations, for soon the process becomes so rapid that we can distinguish nothing but the swaying of their figures, and the rapid thud of the cloth, keeping time to the rhythm of their song.

And what strange singing it is! Deep-toned and monotonous, the rhythm very marked, the thud of the wet cloth regular as the beat of a drum, the melody seldom extending beyond five notes, each syllable having its separate note, and no pause made from beginning to end of the song, which is necessarily in four time. The verses are couplets, and each is sung first by one woman alone, and then taken up by all.

The course of the web along the board describes a series of zigzags, each woman's movement forming the letter V, of which she herself is the base, and each point being marked by the loud thud of the cloth upon the board, always in four time. At *one* she receives the cloth from her neighbour on the right, leaning forward and throwing it down at arm's length; at *two* she draws herself upright and brings it down again immediately in front of her, twisting it as she does so; at *three* she passes it, again at arm's length, to her neighbour on the left; and at *four*, once more upright, she brings her hands again in

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front of her, still beating time, and is thus ready for *one, da capo*, for the rhythm is ceaseless.

Each song averages about eight minutes, and is about fifty couplets in length. As each one is finished, the women throw down the web and their arms drop. They are exhausted and breathless, as well they may be, for to sing and work as they do, throwing themselves violently forward so that the cloth they are handling becomes absolutely hot in the process, is no light work.

In a minute or two they begin again. A "songless" web (*clo bodaich*) is unlucky, and, without any pre-arrangement, another strikes up an air. Like the last, it is a love song, its sentiment of the most florid description. After this we have another in which the rival merits of two adjacent islands are discussed, and then the women, having worked more than half-an-hour, examine the cloth. It is carefully measured: a piece of cloth must always be finished at a sitting, and in course of fulling it should shrink an inch to every foot of length. The women measure on the back of the hand, occasionally verifying their estimate on a half-yard wand—eight feet to the yard being the Highland measurement.

"It will take three or four songs more," they say, and the picturesque phrase seems in keeping with the scene about us.

While the work has gone on, more visitors have strolled in. The hostess is moving about, now that the cessation of work makes movement possible in the cramped space. The dogs have clustered about the fire, relieved at the stopping of the singing. The hens are complaining on the beams overhead; the cat, who had climbed to the top of one of the cupboard beds, is expressing disgust as only a cat can. With every hair of her fur she protests against the crowd, the

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smell—above all, the noise; but it is better to bear the ills she has than to run the gauntlet of the dogs.

Now they begin again: the women are rested, and the singing becomes more vigorous,[1] the melody is marked and rapid, the aspirates of the Gaelic breathe an audible excitement. Four long and short syllables go to a line, and the accent this time is very definite, and the thud of the cloth takes on a sharper sound as the web dries. The very first couplet reveals why the song is one which they sing with especial gusto. Morag is the old secret name, in Gaelic, for Prince Charlie.

> Morag of the flowing hair,
> It is of thy love my thoughts are full.
>
> If over seas thou hast gone from us,
> May it be soon thou wilt return.
>
> To take with thee a band of maidens
> Who will full the red cloth with vigour.
>
> *　　*　　*　　*　　*
>
> O! I would not let thee to the cattle-fold,
> Lest the soil should be on thy raiment.
>
> What! is it thou should be tending the cattle?
> It is for the rough lassies to do that.
>
> Pretty is Morag, my maid,
> She of the fair ringlets;
>
> Clustering, curling, wreathing
> Are the ringlets of the winsome maid.
>
> Thy tresses are bright as the peacock's neck;
> 'Twould blind nobles to see their sheen.

Four more couplets describe their colour and luxuriance, and the song continues:

[1] Pennant, describing a similar scene, 1790, writes: "As by this time they grow very earnest in their labours, the fury of the song rises; at length it arrives to such a pitch that without breach of charity you would imagine a troop of female demoniacs to have been assembled." He found then, as now, that "the subjects of the songs . . . are sometimes love, sometimes panegyric, and often a rehearsal of the deeds of the antient heroes."

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Far we wandered in the land we knew,
And far in a land unknown.

I would follow thee through the world
If thou shouldst but ask it of me.

Many a lover has Morag
Between Annan and Morar.

There is many a gay warrior of a Gaul
Who would not shun taking sides with Morag;

Who would go with sword and shield
Boldly to the cannon's mouth.

Much else would he do, this warrior, here and in Dun Edin, but above all else:

There is who would rise with thee,
Thy own Captain Mac ic Ailein!

It is of their own former chieftain, young Clanranald, they are boasting, and the sad dreary present under the rule of proprietors alien in blood and faith is forgotten, and a century and a half rolls back as their voices ring out loud and clear:

He drew near thee ere now before all the rest,
And again would he do it didst thou return.

Every man that is in Moidart and in Uist,
And in dark blue Arisaig of the birches;

In Canna and Eigg and Morar
Foremost were ever the men of Ailein's race,

Spirits[1] of terror to the Southrons
In the days of Montrose and Alasdair.

The yellow hair, worn *au naturel*, recalls the familiar portraits of Prince Charlie, and the miniatures of him seem to be before us as the women continue:

Thy eyes, kindly and level,
Full-round and playful, are upon me.

Many a youth took joy in thee
Between Man and Orkney.

In the day of Inverlochy was it felt
Who they were that were sweeping with the blades.

---

[1] Literally *bòcans*, bogies.

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> In Perth and Kilsyth and Aldearn
> Dead and soulless lay the rebels.

And as the song of triumph rings out, one forgets for the moment all the sad story of loss and failure so little looked for. The song is one of their own bard's, Alasdair Macdonald, and he, says Professor Blackie, was to the '45 what Körner and Arndt were to the liberation war of the Germans in 1813. Even here and now we catch something of the warmth which he kindled then. Morag is a part of their own story, personal and living, and their love for him means the traditional hatred of a Protestant succession. "In the Highlands," says J. R. Green, with a perception of facts one should be a Highlander to appreciate—"In the Highlands nothing was known of English government or misgovernment: all that the Restoration meant to a Highlander was the restoration of the House of Argyle. . . . They were as ready to join Dundee in fighting their old oppressors, the Campbells, and the Government which upheld them, as they had been ready to join Montrose in the same cause fifty years before."

All the Highland chiefs would muster, says the song:

> Big Alasdair of Glencoe
> And the fierce battle of Glengarry,
>
> As also the chiefs of Sleat,
> Though he himself were but a child.

There are several more verses descriptive of the Prince's adherents; then the melody changes a little —the thud, thud of the cloth becomes more rapid, and the women more breathless and shrill, as they continue:

> Ten thousand of them sat at the fulling-table
> In the wars of King Charles who lives not.
>
> On many a cloth they raised the pile
> Between Sutherland and Annan.

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Others there were who fulled not for thee,
But they gathered the people in bands.

O King, good too was their handiwork,
When they came to the drawing of blades.

They too handled the cloth for you,
And stiff it was they left it.

Tight, thick, strong, woven, fulled,
Dyed red of the hue of blood.

Haste across with thy fulling-women,
And the maidens here will go with thee.

The song is finished, and the women, exhausted, lean forward on the table. The sudden cessation of sound and movement is almost painful. The discontented cat shakes a disgusted paw, the dogs look hopefully towards the door. The fulling is over, the cloth lies reeking on the table.

We are once more in the sixty-second year of Victoria; but remembering time, we also remember place, and the place, of all in her Majesty's dominions, is the island of Eriskay, where Prince Charlie first set foot in the kingdom of his fathers.

The ceremonial is not yet ended. Two of the women stand up and roll the cloth from opposite ends till they meet in the middle, and then, still keeping time, four of them fall upon the roll and proceed to pat it violently, straightening out the creases, and those unemployed strike up another song, this time of different metre. This finished, one standing up calls out, "The rhymes, the rhymes!" And those who have been working reply:

Three rhymes, four rhymes, five and a half rhymes.

This is very mysterious—probably the last remains of some forgotten ceremony.

Then the cloth is unwound, and again very carefully rolled up, this time into one firm bale, and then all rise and stand in reverent silence while the leader

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of the fulling-women pronounces the quaint, old-world grace with which their work concludes. Laying one hand on the cloth, she says:

> Let not the Evil Eye afflict, let not be mangled
> The man about whom thou goest, for ever.
>
> When he goes into battle or combat
> The protection of the Lord be with him.

And then some man of the party—it would not be etiquette for a woman—turns to the owner and says with emphasis:—

> May you possess it and wear it.

And the cloth is fulled.

* * * * *

Whisky of course follows—the merest taste for each; but there is much drinking of healths, with pretty formal speeches which seem to belong to other days. The woman who has led the fulling begins. "Your own health," she says to her hostess, and then turning to us, she bows and adds, "And the health of the noble ladies, and may they long remain at the top of the Ru Bàn."

The Ru Bàn—the White Point—where stands the Presbytery in which we are guests, seems to us for the moment a place in which to spend the rest of our lives, where common things become dramatic, and hard labour is set to music, and our emotions are attuned to the hopes and longings of a century and a half ago.

Even the next morning hardly restores the light of common day. The grey islet, treeless, sea-worn, can look little different this September morning from what it showed to Prince Charlie that 23rd of July, 1745 Thanks to Lowland "sportsmen" and alien proprietors, no eagles hover over the Long Island to-day as the king of birds hovered over the Doutelle to welcome home his royal master; and starving refugees evicted from other

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islands have perhaps added somewhat to the population of Eriskay. Now, however, as then, one sees little on landing but bare grey rock, rising five hundred feet in height, and sloping gently away from the white sands which surround it. A little bay, outlined with broken rocks, and facing north-west, is known as the Prince's Bay, and here one finds, still growing luxuriantly, the delicate purple and white blossoms of the *convolvulus maritimus*, said to have been planted by the Prince on landing. Some years ago one of the Stewarts of Ensay (Harris), who claim royal descent through the Stewarts of Garth, built a low wall for its protection, and to mark the Prince's landing-place, but little is left of it now. We proposed to have a brief inscription carved upon one of the rocks, but were begged to do nothing that might attract the tourist,—though how the tourist is to get there, or to get food or shelter if he does, is not easy to say.

Now, as then, a few rough stone huts lie in a little hollow just above the bay, scarcely distinguishable from the rocks about them, and among them still stands the hut in which the Prince is said to have sheltered.

"Is not this Prince Charlie's house?" we ask of a man who stands in the doorway. He laughs at the form of our question. "It's mine now, in any case," he answers, hospitably standing aside that we may enter. It is just like a score more within a stone's throw, and has probably changed little in a century and a half. An iron pot is boiling over the peat fire in the middle of the clay floor, the roof is black with smoke, the family beds are in cupboards concealed by dimity curtains; hens are clucking to call attention to the eggs they have deposited in corners; wooden trunks are ranged along the wall containing all possessions that are not in actual use, and a bench made of a plank supported on rocks is the most noticeable article of furniture. A

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small dresser, adorned with gay crockery, speaks of relations with the mainland, visits probably to the east-coast fishing, and is the only article which could not have been present when Prince Charlie stood here, coughing at the peat smoke, as we do to-day. "You must be proud of the house in which the Prince slept," we suggest. "Oh ay, I'm proud of it whatever," replies our friend.

Across a narrow strait, about two miles to the north-west, on the opposite coast of South Uist, stands Kilbride, the home of Boisdale, brother of Clanranald, one of the chiefs of the clan Macdonald,[1] who were among Prince Charlie's most faithful adherents, although, in common prudence, they at first attempted to dissuade him from his wild attempt. When they met, the morning after the Prince's arrival, Boisdale advised him to go home. "I am *come* home, sir," said the Prince, looking across these wild grey waters. "I am persuaded that my faithful Highlanders will stand by me." The people of Eriskay tell that the Prince's foot slipped as he landed on the Kilbride shore, and that he fell on the treacherous seaweed-covered rocks—an ill omen, it was felt, in this land of omen and presentiment.

We are fortunate enough to find some still living who claim kindred with those who served the Prince. There are descendants of one Angus, son of Murdoch, whom history has forgotten, but Eriskay folk remember as the man who carried the Prince ashore from the boat. In a neighbouring island, even more remote and inaccessible than Eriskay, we chance to find the proud descendant of a faithful adherent. The story

[1] Indeed—*pace* the Macdonalds of Sleat and Macdonell of Glengarry, who also claimed the chiefdom—the representative of the Lord of the Isles. The whole question turns on the legality of a marriage in 1337, for which the Pope gave dispensation, but as to which, when tired of his bargain, the bridegroom had, like Henry VIII, scruples of conscience at his convenience.

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"PRINCE CHARLIE'S HOUSE," ERISKAY.

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comes as a matter of fact from the mainland, but we listen to it in especially appropriate surroundings, for here, in hollows and caves, among lofty cliffs, there are still pointed out the hiding-places of fugitives after the 'Forty-five.

Our informant is descended on the mother's side from the Macraes of Kintail, one of whom, "sure to be a Gilchrist or a Farquhar by his first name," served as guide to the Prince at some period of his wanderings—it may be during that unhappy time in July, 1746, after his parting from Flora Macdonald and return to the mainland.

The Prince, with his guide and a dog, were resting on a ledge overhanging a mountain pass, screened from below by a projecting rock. "You may fancy it just there," says our friend, pointing to just such a spot on the hill above. "Suddenly, and never a word, the man—he that was of my kin—took the dog by the throat and laid him strangled on the ground, dead. The Prince was sore afraid, for it seemed to him the man was mad, till he pointed below to where the men of the red army were passing by, just at their feet. And the Prince's eyes filled with tears."

Well they might! for he, the fugitive upon whose head was set a great price, had been long enough in the Highlands to know the tie between man and dog, and the worth of such a sacrifice!

It is in Eriskay, however, that we find a wonderful old woman, Mairearad Mhor—big Margaret—so old that we could almost believe that her stories of the last century were contemporaneous. She comes of a long-lived family, and declares that her father's great-great-grandfather was murdered in the massacre of Glencoe. He was not a Macdonald, but a MacEachan from Morar ("Morar" being in the Islands a generic term for the mainland), and was there only by acci-

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dent. "He went to see a friend," she says, "and he hasn't come back yet." Another friend who paid a later visit came back not long since. He had stayed in the house of some Campbells. "Why didn't you get up in the night and murder them?" big Margaret had asked. "*Some* Campbells may be innocent," the friend had replied—a suggestion which she offers to us with an air of conscious tolerance.

Prince Charlie remembered Glencoe, she tells us. When he was in Glen Corrodale, in South Uist, he asked a man his name. "Campbell," said he. "Oh, confound you for a scoundrel!" said the Prince. "That was because of Glencoe," Margaret explains; but she has the honesty to add that the man Campbell "ferried him about all the same."[1]

Margaret can speak no word of English, and has never been farther from Eriskay than the island of South Uist, where she was born, in a glen near to Corrodale, at the back of Ben More, the highest point of the mountain range of the Outer Hebrides, where the grass grows sweet, and there is a bonnie loch, and it is sheltered from the south-west, whence have come all floods and storms from the time of Noah, and such a spot, in the eyes of proprietors, was too good for any but sheep. So Margaret and many another were evicted, and, wandering south, took up their abode on the southern shore of the island. When a few years of hard work had shown that even here a little grass and corn might be raised, they were again evicted, and as there was nothing beyond them but the sea, they crossed it and came to Eriskay. Margaret still speaks affectionately of Corrodale. "When Prince Charlie was there," she

[1] Donald Campbell, in Scalpa, gave the Prince hospitality, and resisted the Rev. Aulay Macaulay, who came to win the reward on the Prince's head. (Blaikie *Itinerary*, p. 18.)

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tells us, "he took a drink at the delicious spring which flows there. 'This is the Well of the Rock of Wine,' he said. It is called that still, and," she adds with conviction, "it will be." Later we found our way up to Glen Corrodale and identified the nook in the rock where the Prince sheltered, and possibly the well, "Tobar Creag-an-Fhiona."

Seeing our interest in the subject, Margaret sings us a quaint lullaby, with a refrain about Prince Charlie, dandling an imaginary baby the while, and beating time with her feet. The air is monotonous, but, considering her great age, the musician is wonderfully accurate in time and tune. We try to write down the words, but not even one or two islanders whose aid we invoke can make much of them. Either the sense has been lost, or they are baby-nonsense rhymes pure and simple.

From Prince Charlie to Flora Macdonald is not a far step, and having once lifted up her voice, Margaret proceeds to give us a fulling song, swaying herself backwards and forwards the while as if actually at work, beating time with her feet, and getting terribly out of breath with her efforts. It is quite usual, we are told, for those able to do so to extemporize songs at a fulling (which possibly accounts for the custom of having each couplet sung first by one woman alone), and Margaret's story is of a certain occasion when Flora Macdonald came back to Uist from Skye, on a visit after her marriage. Entering a house where a fulling was in progress, she improvised as she stood by, watching the workers:

> My father[1] sent me to the place of falsehood
> The night that he made the marriage for me.

---

[1] Her father, Margaret explained, was "the man of Airidh Mhuillin = the Shealing of the Mill"—his property in Uist.

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Is it not sad, O God, that it was not the funeral feast,
That they did not bring the red pine for me?

Margaret stops at this point to remark, "That does not look as if she were very happy?" and wanders off into a story of Flora Macdonald's husband—a very fat man, she asserts. On one occasion, having to cross Ben More, and his dimensions not being adapted for climbing, he engaged a sedan chair, and "loud was the cursing," says Margaret—his at the jolting, and his bearers' at the weight of the burden.

We recall her to the song, and she continues. The rhythm is now somewhat changed, and though she is perhaps describing the wanderings of the Prince, we think it probable that some stanzas from a different song have crept in:

I was at Mass in the yellow wood with thee;
I was in ——[1] and I was in Uist with thee;
I was in Kildonan of the pine with thee;
I was in the land of the black nuns with thee.

After a few verses of this kind she reverts to the original, and sings with serious air and without any accompanying movement:

I would not give thee to gentle Mary,
Though she should come, and her hand stretched out;
If I did I would ask thee back again.
I would not give thee to Jesus Christ.

"It was never Flora Macdonald that composed that," she says with an air of horror. "There's no knowing what creature it might be, but she was impertinent and she was ignorant."

The thought is too much for her; Margaret will tell us no more to-day, though on other days she tells us many things,—stories of fairies and enchant-

[1] Margaret is too deaf to converse with, and we fail to recover the missing word. "The land of the black nuns" might conceivably mean South Uist, where, as in the next island of Benbecula, there is the tradition of a nunnery.

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ments, spells and divinations, and of what Pennant calls "the antient heroes."

We learnt to know the island well, we photographed it a score of times, we classified its flora, surprisingly varied in a spot so bare and bleak, learnt its songs and its traditions, and we came to love its simple folk; but no familiarity could banish from our minds the ever-present sense that here were written the opening lines of some of the saddest chapters of our country's history.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE NORSEMEN IN THE HEBRIDES

NEXT to the memory of Prince Charlie the occupation of the Vikings is perhaps the most prominent historical fact with which one meets in the outer Hebrides, and before going further north, it may, perhaps, be well to familiarize ourselves with some of the more prominent facts of their relation with the Outer Isles, and to indicate the direction in which we may hope to find direct traces of their influence upon the language and archaeology of the district.

About 787 we first hear of Norse rovers on the English coasts. They seem to have had a special liking for the monasteries so often established on islands, probably not only as most likely to possess wealth, but also as easily accessible to men whose natural element seems to have been the water. Thus in 793 they attacked Lindisfarne, in 795 Lambey Isle (the nucleus of their later kingdom of Dublin, 852 to 1014), and in 802 Iona.

The first record of their settlement in the Hebrides dates it as about 870, but it was possibly, as a matter of fact, earlier. Its history is familiar to us all. It was "in the days," says the Saga,[1] "when King Harold Hairfair came to the rule of Norway. Because of that unpeace, many noblemen fled from their lands out of Norway, some East-over-the-Keel, some West-over-the-Sea. Some there were withal who in winter kept them-

[1] *The Story of the Ere Dwellers*, chap. i.

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selves in the South Isles or the Orkneys, but in summer harried in Norway and wrought much scath in the kingdom of Harald the king. . . . Then the king took such rede that he caused to be dight an army for West-over-the-sea, and said that Ketil Flatneb should be captain of that host." In the *Heimskringla*[1] we are told that "Harald Hairfair sailed south to the Orkneys and cleared them utterly of Vikings . . . thereafter he fared right away to the South Iles and harried there, and slew many Vikings who were captains of bands there." The chronology of the Saga stories is, according to some, antedated, but the story itself is believed to be substantially trustworthy, and we may take it that about 888 the Isles were added to the Crown of Norway.

Ketil's daughter married Olave of Dublin. which seems to have formed a link between the kingdom of Dublin and the South Isles. After Ketil's time "his son Biörn came West-over-the-sea, but would not abide there, for he saw they had another troth, and nowise manly it seemed to him that they had cast off the faith that their kin had held, and he had no heart to dwell therein, and would not take up his abode there." However, he remained two winters in the South Isles before "he dight him to fare to Iceland." There was a good deal of gentlemanly feeling among these Norsemen; something, one fancies, of the qualities which linger still in the Highlands and Islands. One would even now wonder if any there should do what was "nowise manly."

According to the Sagas, the race of Ketil became extinct about 900. There are intervals during which the story of the Isles is obscure, but there seems no doubt that they remained under Scandinavian influence for 470 years at least. Now and then we get a glimpse

[1] *Heimskringla*, chap. xxii.

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at their history. First we find them incorporated with the kingdom of Dublin, next as part of that kingdom of Sodor and Man the title of which still survives as that of an English bishopric. Towards the end of the tenth century they came under the rule of the Earls of Orkney and Caithness—Sigurd and his son, the powerful Thorfinn, said in the Sagas to be possessed of nine earldoms in Scotland, whose history is sometimes confused with that of his contemporary, Macbeth. Again they were ruled over by the kings of Man, but were reconquered by Norway in the person of Magnus Barefoot, still a hero of Hebridean romance, the Manus of the Fingalian stories. His conquests are enumerated by the Skald, Biörn Krephende :

> In Lewis Isle, with fearful blaze,
> The house-destroying fire plays ;
> To hills and rocks the people fly,
> Fearing all shelter but the sky.
> In Uist the king deep crimson made
> The lightning of his glancing blade ;
> The peasant lost his land and life
> Who dared to bide the Norseman's strife.
> The hungry battle-birds were filled
> In Skye with blood of foeman killed,
> And wolves on Tyree's lonely shore
> Dyed red their hairy jaws in gore.
> The men of Mull were tired of flight,
> The Scottish foeman would not fight,
> And many an island girl's wail
> Was heard as through the isles we sail.

In 1093 he placed his son Sigurd on the Island throne, but there was not peace for long. Another revolution brought the Islands again under a branch of the Manx dynasty, and they fell upon evil days. One Olave the Red, who contrived to keep his rule over them for forty years, was the grandfather of the princess who married Somerled of Argyll, through whom, in 1156, the Islands passed to the lords (Macdonald) of the mainland.

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The Norse period of Scottish history ended finally about a century later. King Hakon made a brave effort to recover possession, but was routed in the battle of Largs in 1261, partly in storm, partly in fight. His son Magnus formally surrendered the Hebrides to Scotland at the treaty of Perth for 4,000 marks, and 100 marks yearly as feu duty. A tradition survives[1] that when King Magnus came home from his Viking cruise to the Western countries he and many of his people brought with them a great deal of the habits and fashion of clothing of those western parts. They went about in the streets with bare legs and had short kirtles and overcloaks, and therefore his men called him Magnus Barefoot or Bareleg—a story which would date back the use of the fillibeg and plaid at least to 1099.

What remains to us of these 470 years of influence in islands where life moves very slowly, where people cling to the traditions of their fathers, where so little is there of complexity, mental or physical, that one may yet study, as perhaps in few other places in Europe, something of the childhood of the world, where, so far are they removed from modern progress, that to cast off the faith that their kin have held is yet accounted "in nowise manly"?

In topographical nomenclature the evidence of Norse occupation is abundant, and, thanks to recent philological inquiry, obvious and conclusive. In certain remains of grave-goods the archaeological testimony is also clear and especially interesting; but one looks almost in vain in two special directions in which, in most countries, is found indisputably written the history of race. The Norse period has left us nothing in the way of architecture, and nothing, certain, of physiognomy.

[1] *Magnus Barefoot's Saga*, chap. xviii.

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In wandering, as we have done, through many pleasant summers from island to island, I have pleased myself by fancying that I could distinguish certain definite racial types—the intelligent countenance and often Spanish features of the Tyree men, most active-brained, clear-headed of islanders; the dark-skinned, lighter-limbed fishermen of Barra; the bigger, slower, duller-witted, perhaps because worse-fed, native of South Uist; the almost Jewish-looking, well-featured men of Harris, with dark eyes and coarse hair; the big, fair Skye man, most suspicious of the stranger, because he best knows his possibilities, living as he does in the show island of the west coast. Dark Pict, fair Scandinavian, canny, freckled, light-eyed Dalriad Scot—but such divisions are probably wholly arbitrary, and one is right only by accident or chance coincidence.[1] It seems likely that but a small proportion of those who came to the Hebrides settled there permanently. The Islands were a refuge, a starting-point, a place to winter in,[2] and it seems likely that a large proportion of the present population are the descendants of fugitives or adventurers from the mainland, and only remotely of Scandinavian descent. That they are of different temperament from the race we now call Scots seems obvious, however, if one may take mental characteristics as any criterion.[3]

[1] So apparently distinct however are the types, that I have picked out a Mull child in a school of seventy Tyree children, a Skye man by accident in Barra, a sailor of remote Irish parentage in Eriskay, a Lewis lad in North Uist, and so on without difficulty.

[2] Tyree and Coll are delightful places to winter in; there is little frost, and the snow does not remain. The Long Island, however, is a less attractive winter resort. Like Tyree, treeless, it is, as further from the mainland, even more shelterless, and consists of low barren rocks intersected with lakes, and is the sport of howling winds and a treacherous sea.

[3] A writer on Cornish folklore seems to consider that the race distinction is fully sustained in Cornwall:

"The red-haired Danes [i.e. Scandinavians] have continued a source

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Architectural Remains.

The fact of the entire absence of any architectural remains of a powerful race which occupied a small district for nearly 500 years seems at first sight surprising, the more so, perhaps, that the buildings of a still earlier race are well preserved and abundant. The brochs, dunes, barps, Picts' houses, tullochs, etc., remaining, were, in fact, so admirably contrived for purposes of defence, and so easily adaptable for domestic use, that for such an unsettled population as the Norse invaders they were probably sufficient for most purposes. Captain Thomas conjectures,[1] that "while the common people adopted the dwellings of the expelled Scots, their chiefs—those who could command the labour of others—raised houses, like their ships, of wood. The ancient Norsemen were certainly neither masons nor bricklayers, though they may have been good carpenters."

The conjecture would be more tenable if Captain Thomas would tell us where the wood came from. There is a legend that there were once some trees on Tyree, but even tradition refuses so improbable an assertion as to Uist. South Uist, by the way, has

of terror and a name of reproach to the present day. On the 1st of this month a Long Rock quarrel was the subject of a magisterial inquiry at the Penzance Town Hall, when it was proved that the defendant, Jeffery, had called one of the complainants, Lawrence, who had rubrick hair, 'a red-haired Dane.' In Sennen Cove, St. Just, and the western parishes generally, there has existed, time out of mind, a great antipathy to certain red-haired families, who were said to be descendants of the Danes, and whose ancestors were supposed, centuries before, to have landed in Whitsand Bay, and set fire to and pillaged the villages. Indeed, this dislike to the Rufus-headed people was carried so far that few families would allow any member to marry them, so that the unfortunate race had the less chance of seeing their children lose the objectionable tinge of hair."—Bottrell, *Traditions of West Cornwall*, 1870, p. 148.

[1] *Proceedings, Society of Scottish Antiquaries*, "On Primitive Dwellings," vol. xi.

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possessed a tree within the memory of man, now reduced to the likeness of a telegraph pole.

By whomsoever or for what purpose they were used, there is, according to the best authorities, no doubt as to the adaptation to some later use of these primitive dwellings. It would be superfluous to insist upon the evidence for their antiquity, which is acknowledged freely among archæologists. Captain Thomas counts about 2,000 of them in Orkney—he includes, I imagine, the older "Picts' houses," or chambered mounds, as well as the brochs, or round towers, with their treasure of querns and combs and the like, proclaiming their later date.

One never hears the term "Picts' houses" in the Hebrides. Indeed, in the Hebrides, tradition is silent about the Picts, but numerous specimens of the buildings are to be found, a specially fine example remaining near Husinish in South Uist, though in his enumeration, Dr. Anderson, I observe, in his Rhind Lecture, omits Uist and Barra altogether. He assigns sixty-nine to the Hebrides, twenty-eight being found in Lewis, ten in Harris, thirty in Skye, and one in Raasay. I feel sure the list might be largely increased. He appears to group together all the primitive dwellings known as duns, tullochs, Picts' houses, brochs, without regard to any differences locally associated with this term or that, and would therefore probably include the numerous stone duns, if duns they be, so common upon the islets in the inland lakes of Uist. At Kilpheder is one covering nearly half an acre. As the word "brog" is of Norse origin, one may conclude that the brochs were familiar objects at the time of the Norse occupation, as the term forms a part of many place-names, as Dalibrog in South Uist, Borgh in Barra, Castral Bhuirg (Gaelic *Caisteal*, a castle) in Benbecula.

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The history of the broch divides itself naturally into three chapters. That of their original use as places of shelter and defence for man and beast in times of Viking and other ravages; their secondary use, when they were turned to domestic purposes by certain additions and alterations, possibly by the Vikings themselves; and their third period, as places of sepulture, which may be almost within the memory of man. They are not found in remote glens or in mountain fastnesses, but, as a rule, on arable land, which confirms the view that they were not military forts, but shelter for the tillers of the soil. That they are absolutely Celtic in their origin, though in their secondary use adapted by the Norsemen, no one seriously doubts. "They belong," says Anderson, "to a school of architecture truly unique and of absolute individuality. Even the relics they contain constitute a group of objects differing widely from those which characterize the Scandinavian occupancy of the north-west of Scotland. No group of objects, in its general facies comparable to the group which is characteristic of the brochs, exists on the continent of Europe or anywhere out of Scotland." And yet, so all-pervading is the Norse influence, that even relics so unique as these have a Norse name and Norse associations.

All wanderers in the north know them well, both in their undisturbed condition as round grassy knolls, locally venerated as "burying-places," or as having been opened and explored, when they are collectively described as "forts." Their use as burying-places is undoubted, but comparatively modern, and possibly was an adaptation, springing from an unformulated sense of reverence for the sacredness of the past and the unknown. I have never found any one who had a first-hand tradition of the memory of this use, which probably ceased after the existence of consecrated

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churchyards, but antiquarians seem to be agreed that the human remains found have been placed there after the buildings had become mere grassy mounds.

These grassy mounds, or tullochs, are usually from ten to fifteen feet high, and about one hundred and twenty yards in circumference. When opened, they disclose a circular wall of immense thickness, often from ten to twenty feet, having but one opening, a tunnelled doorway, narrowing towards the inside, the inner court being further protected by a guard chamber. The enclosed space is a well-like court, from twenty to thirty feet in diameter, and having often two or three chambers tunnelled in the wall. There are no fireplaces nor chimneys. There are galleries, more or less elaborate in structure, at the height of about twelve feet from the ground, also in the thickness of the wall. The total height, in the very good example at Dun Carloway in Lewis, is said to have been at one time forty feet; but the finest example extant is said to be at Mousa in Shetland, to which Dr. Anderson gives a height of forty-five feet.[1] It would be difficult to imagine buildings better adapted for defence against such attacks as the science of that age made possible. It seems certain that in their original state they were never used for permanent residence, though the remains show that the arts of peace were cultivated there as well as the arts of war, and include apparatus for handloom weaving, similar to that still in use. However, their original purpose seems to have been to provide refuge against the incursions of enemies, probably on some principle of co-operation, for in 1703, Martin, describing the remains in Skye, writes, "All these forts stand upon eminences, and are so disposed

[1] I am informed by the Saga-Master of the Viking Club, however, that there is no appearance of this fort having ever been covered by earth.

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that there is not one of them which is not in view of some other."

Literary Remains.

To ask whether there are any remains of a Scandinavian element in Gaelic literature is not quite so absurd as it sounds to those who believe Gaelic literature to be non-existent. As a matter of fact, possibly one of the earliest recorded stanzas in Icelandic literature comes from the Hebrides. In the appendix to Olaf Tryggvasson's Saga (eight chapters of doubtful origin, but certainly not later than between 1387 and 1395) we find the statement (chap. i.):

There was a Christian man belonging to the Hebrides, along with Herinlf, who composed the lay called the Hafgerding Song, in which is this stave :—

> "May He whose hand protects so well
> The simple monk in lonely cell,
> And o'er the world upholds the sky,
> His own blue hall still stand me by.'"

While speaking of literature, one's mind naturally turns to the question of folklore. It would be an interesting point to ascertain how much the folklore of the Hebrides has in common with that of Ireland and Scandinavia respectively—that is to say, to what degree it may be considered Celtic, and to what degree Norse. Probably the truth would be found to lie largely between the two. The stories of the Fingalians are, doubtless, to a great extent, of Norse origin.[1]

[1] Compare the stories of Thorfinn often confused with Macbeth—the story of his going to Rome at Easter to make confession, and of his leaving his sword upon the altar. The giants and heroes in the Sgeulachd are Erin or Lochlan men, never Englishmen. Compare, too, the Argonautic expedition of Manus, or the Saga story of the Three Harpers of the Red Hall in Lochlan.

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Grave-Goods.

A specially interesting group of Norse remains in the Hebrides are certain grave-goods found in many of the Islands, and undoubtedly Scandinavian in origin, their distribution being conterminous with the range of territory conquered by the Norse. Among the most interesting and frequent are those known as "tortoise brooches," always associated with burial by cremation or otherwise, and generally found in pairs. Dr. Anderson has fully described those to be seen in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, but I have, I believe, seen others, the property of private persons. Two were found in Islay in 1788, one pair in Tyree in 1872. These, presented to the Museum by Dr. Norman Macleod, were found in a grave along with a peculiarly shaped and massive bronze pin. There are undoubtedly other Norse graves in Tyree, but the supremely valuable archæological remains on that island have, since the death of the late parish minister, the Rev. J. G. Campbell, been grossly neglected. Moreover, I found that in Tyree, as elsewhere, the private owners of valuable antiquities were not anxious to air their treasures, on account of a tradition that anything once submitted to the inspection of authorities was somewhat difficult to recover. I regret that this tradition should have any basis, as much valuable matter goes unrecorded in consequence. Another brooch was found in Barra, another in the island of Sanday, north of Uist. The fellow to it is in the British Museum. These six from the Hebrides are included in the fourteen pairs which Dr. Anderson describes as found in all Scotland, a good proportion of the whole. Three belong to the Orkneys, one to Shetland, two to Caithness, and two to Sutherland. Brooches of the same type are said to be frequently found in Norway, and still more often

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in Sweden. Dr. Anderson[1] calculates that there are about a thousand extant in Scandinavia. The type seems to be exceptionally characteristic of the period to which it belongs.

The story of the Tyree brooch has an interesting detail worth quoting. Dr. Anderson, in examining this and comparing it with one of similar appearance from Haukadal in Sweden, found that in both a minute morsel of fabric had caught between the pin and the hook. He writes: "So far as I can judge of its appearance under the microscope, it seems to be linen cloth, with a partial admixture of another fibre, which I take to be hemp, and I can detect no material difference between the cloth in the specimen from Norway and that from the island of Tyree on our own western coast. These, then, are actual specimens of the linen manufacture of the Viking age."

Similar brooches are found in other districts visited by the Norsemen, and never elsewhere. Livonia, Normandy, Iceland (associated with Cufic coins of the tenth century), in Ireland (associated with the characteristic swords of the Viking time), and in England, in Yorkshire and Lancashire. They are found in the graves of bodies burnt and unburnt, of men and women—with shield-bosses, swords and armour on the one hand; with combs, needles and spindle-whorls on the other.

The swords and other fragments of armour found among the grave-goods of men are also characteristic, and of extreme evidential value. The Norseman, convinced that to be slain in battle or wounded by arms would be a passport to the halls of Odin, was careful to take with him his sword and spear, his axe and shield, and his smithy tools to sharpen them. Such remains are found in Islay, Mull, Barra, Sanday, and

[1] *Scotland in Pagan Times.*

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even in St. Kilda. Dr. Anderson records the Viking graves in Eigg,[1] but, so far as I know, has ignored, or is not cognizant of, what are locally believed to be Norse graves, numerous in the island of Fuday in the sound of Barra, but I believe that no one, except to a certain extent Captain Thomas and Mr. Alexander Carmichael, has taken any trouble whatever to explore this, by no means the least interesting, district of the Hebrides. These graves are quite unlike any of purely Celtic origin. They are let into the sand, are about six feet long, and the sides are built up with stones like the kilns used for the burning of kelp. They are covered with large flat stones. The Islanders call them "graves of the Lochlannaich," or Lochlin men, which is their name for the Norsemen, or sometimes the "fiantaichean," which, however, is now a generic name for a big, muscular fellow.

Martin relates,[2] "There was lately discovered a grave in the west end of the island of Ensay, in the Sound of Harris, in which were found a pair of scales made of brass, and a little hammer." This was possibly one of the "Thor's hammers" which are used as amulets in Iceland.

The name "Thor's hammer," or "Norseman's hammer," by the way, is given by the islanders to relics of very different proportions. The "Standing stones," or upright pillars, to be found on most of the Islands (there are six in Uist and Barra alone), and which are probably commemorative, unless their origin is earlier and their signification religious, are said by the people to have been used by the giant Fiantaichean for knocking limpets off the rocks. To judge by the remains found near primitive habitations, limpets must

[1] Anderson, *Proceedings, Society of Scottish Antiquaries*, vol. x.; *ib.*, *Scotland in Pagan Times*, p. 34.

[2] Martin, *Western Isles*, ed. 1716, p. 50.

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at one time have formed an important article of diet, but my learned friend, the Rev. Allan Macdonald, ingeniously conjectures that these denote Gaelic rather than Norse occupation, as the abler seamen would have been independent of such humble landlubbers' food.

Personal Adornments.

Dr. Anderson speaks of the hoards of silver ornaments, such as have been found in certain of the Islands, as "one of the most characteristic features of the remains of the Viking period, whether in Scandinavia or in Britain."[1] He believes them to be the hidden plunder of Viking rovers, silver, of course, being characteristic of the Iron Age to which they belong. Morris, in his preface to *Howard the Halt*,[2] tells us that "there was carrying of wares backward and forward, and it was a kind of custom for young men of the great families to follow their fortunes and make a reputation by blended huckstering and sea-roving about the shores of the Baltic and the British seas." Interesting evidence of this is found in the fact that not only have hoards of silver ornaments been found in the Islands, notably a collection of armlets in Skye (1850), but brooches of true Celtic design have been found in considerable number in Scandinavia.

Perhaps the most curious example of this blending of Gaelic with Norse ornamentation is that on a stone found at Eoligarry in Barra, on one side of which is the ordinary elaborate Celtic chain ornamentation, and on the other an inscription in Runic characters. This stone, and, unless I am much mistaken, not a few others, is ignored by Dr. Anderson in his dictum that "only three rune carvings on stones have been found

[1] Anderson, *Notes on Relics of the Viking Period, Proceedings. Scottish Antiquaries*, vol. x.

[2] Morris, Preface to *Howard the Halt*, Saga Library.

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in all Scotland,"[1] and these he locates in Dumfriesshire, Morayshire, and Holy Island, Arran. In the Museums of Edinburgh and Glasgow one may see specimens of personal adornments said to have been found in the Islands, but never on the mainland. They are made of hammered metal, wrought together in interlaced patterns, the ends of the metal wire being soldered together.

Topographical Remains.

Doubtless our most valuable source of local evidence as to Norse occupation of these Islands is that of topography. Names which have long attached to any given district are like fossils dug out of the earth—evidence of an active life which once existed there. Unfortunately there is no work of any antiquity which deals with the topography of the Highlands with any sort of authority. We are dependent mainly upon charters which contain names of places, and on *retours* (or what in England would be known as *visitations*) connected with succession to property, and often containing lists of place-names with their spelling as adopted at different periods. In these we find traces not only of Norse and Gaelic, but of some original language unknown, as well as of so-called Anglo-Saxon.

It is a commonplace to say that the topographical distribution of a language is not necessarily conterminous with the spoken language. In Galloway, for example, the spoken language is Scotch and the topography Gaelic, while in the Hebrides the spoken language is Gaelic, and the topography largely Scandinavian. Gregory is of opinion that the Scandinavian element in the Hebrides is Norse, not Danish. The

[1] Anderson, *On Rune-inscribed Relics*, *Proceedings, Society of Scottish Antiquaries*, vol. xiii.

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names of those chiefs mentioned in King Hacon's Saga are Norse.

In the Shetlands and the Faroës the Norsemen were probably the first colonists, but in other islands topography, as well as history, gives abundant evidence of earlier inhabitants. The Scandinavian occupation of St. Kilda has been called in question, but if place-names are any criterion, one would guess it to have been frequent, if not continuous.

The Norse element in the topography of the Hebrides is almost exclusive of any other, though this has been only realized comparatively of late years. Probably we owe very much to the academical labours of Professor Mackinnon, and to the valuable researches of Macbain. Mr. Allan Macdonald tells me that only ten years ago he would have been, and often was, ridiculed for asserting a Scandinavian origin for words which no one now questions, and a published correspondence remains between Captain Thomas and so accomplished a scholar as Professor Münch, in which the former deprecates the Professor's assertion as to many Scandinavian derivations apparent only to the Gaelic scholar. The Gaelic substitution of one consonant for another, the absence of H as an initial and yet the frequency of aspirated words, is certainly perplexing. So, too, are the combinations, till one masters the fact that in place-names the generic word comes last in Norse and first in Gaelic—compare *Dal*more (Gaelic) and Helms*dale* (Norse).

The more entire realization of the extent of the Norse influence in place-names has, I think, somewhat altered the views of antiquarians as to the extent to which the Celtic population was extirpated. Professor Münch says the population was never wholly absorbed by the Norse settlers as in Orkney and perhaps in Shetland, and Dasent speaks

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of the original inhabitants as "not expelled, but kept in bondage." The more recent view, however, is, I think, that they were practically swept away, so much so that on the mainland the Islands came to be called "The Isles of the Galls," or "strangers," i.e. the Norsemen.

To attempt any general discussion of the influence of the Norse occupation upon the language of the Hebrides would be a task far beyond my powers. We can hardly hope to have the subject exhaustively treated until it shall have been studied, on the spot, by an able philologist, familiar with the Gaelic and the Scandinavian tongues alike. This is the more important that for philological purposes the Ordnance maps are very misleading. Moreover the subject demands a thorough apprehension of the relation between written Gaelic and its pronunciation, of the mysteries of aspirates in the absence of the one letter commonly aspirated. The classics on this subject are still, I imagine, the essays by Captain Thomas in the *Proceedings of the Society of Scottish Antiquaries*, from which most later ones that have fallen into my hands are largely borrowed. Mr. Alexander Macbain has given us an interesting paper on *The Norse Element in Highland Place-Names*,[1] and the Rev. Neil Mackay has dealt with *The Influence of the Norse Invasion*[2] generally. All that I venture to attempt is to indicate the direction of Norse influence on the topography of the Outer Islands in particular.

To a certain extent, he who runs may read; my own notebooks are full of memoranda as to the derivation of names of persons and places, and in comparing my own bits of local gossip and local interpretation and my own uninstructed guesses with those

[1] *Transactions, Gaelic Society of Inverness*, vol. xix.
[2] *Ibid.* vol. xx.

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of more serious students, I have been interested to find that the inferences are so obvious that I have been generally correct. This fact alone I take as evidence of the extent of Norse influence, for my philological knowledge, such as it is, is more likely to be correct as to Scandinavian than as to Gaelic derivation.

If ever there were a Pictish place-nomenclature it has long ago been superseded by the Norse, for, so far as I can gather from local information, almost all the Gaelic names that do exist are of modern origin, in some cases so recent that within living memory an older name of Scandinavian origin has existed, as in the case of Ben More in Uist, formerly called Keitval, the one name being as obviously Gaelic as the other is obviously foreign.

The Gaelic names are seldom applied to the more important places or geographical features. Nearly every large hill, or sea-loch, or promontory, and the chief bays and islands, have Norse names.

There are a large number of words special to Hebridean Gaelic, not known on the mainland, which it would be well worth while to inquire into, could any competent Scandinavian scholar be found to undertake the task before it is too late and the words forgotten.

The very names of the Islands are alone suggestive. Dean Munro enumerates 209, from which I select a few for examination as to their possible Norse origin.

There are eight Fladdas (Norse, *flad-ey*), i.e. *flat isle*; three Berneras (*Bjorn's isle*, pronounced Beornera); three or more Scalpas (*skalpr*), *ship's isle*, compare *shallop*; four or more Pabays (*papi, priest*), *priest's isle*, possibly Culdee settlements. We have also Trodday (compare *Trotternish*), *pasture isle*; Ensay (*engis-ey*), *meadow isle*, said to be very fertile; Scarpay

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(*scarp's-ey*), *sharp* or *cliff isle*; Eriskay (*Eric's-ey*), *Eric's isle*, (this inversion of consonants, Erisk for Eric's, is often found in Cornwall, another Celtic district, where we have "piskey" for "pixie," etc.); Scarba (*skarf-ey*), *cormorant isle*; Jura (*djur-ey*), *deer isle*; Soa (*so-ey*), *sheep isle*; Shellay (*sel-ey*), *seal isle*; Raasay (*raa-ey*), *roe isle*, and many others equally suggestive of their history and character.

Among words probably of Scandinavian, still found in common use in Eriskay and South Uist, Mr. Macdonald sends me the following list:

Aoineadh,[1] the precipitous part of a hill; *bàrsaich*,[1] to talk nonsense; *barp*,[1] a cairn of stones; *bodha*, deep sunken rock; *bàgh*,[1] bay; *cuidhe* (cudde, *Dutch*), an enclosure; *cràghiadh*, a sheldrake; *crò*,[1] a pen; *cuisle*, the branch of a stream; (?) *faothail*, a ford; *fàradh*,[1] litter placed under cattle when ferried in a boat; *geòb*[1] (geo, *Norse*), a partial opening as of a door or mouth; *haf* (haf, *sea*), Western Atlantic; *hawn*, haven; *luitheur*,[1] (louvre, *N.*), a hole for smoke in the roof of a house; *mealbhach*, links where bent grass grows; *mealtrach*, grass roots; *mol*, pebbles; *nàbuidh*[1] (nabo, *N.*), a neighbour; *òb*[1] (op, *N.*), a tidal bay; *oda* (odd, *N.*), a tongue of land; *roc*, tangle-covered rock visible at low water; *rustal*, a rough kind of plough used in land which had long lain fallow (from *ristel*); *saoithean*, saithe; *scàireag*,[1] a young gull; *sgeir*, rock visible at low water; *sgiothal*,[1] a wretched hut; *sgrèab*,[1] a Greenland dove; *smal*,[1] dust; *smád*, to abuse; *sparran*, rafters; *stamh*, tangle (compare stuff); *stann* (stint), to confine oneself to narrow limits; *staore*, dead, stark; *stearr*, a pole to knock down wild fowl; *treisgir*,

[1] I am bound to say that two such capable critics as my friends Mr. Duncan M'Killop and Mr. Duncan M'Isaac, both of Oban, are of opinion that the words here indicated may be of Gaelic origin.

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turf-share, peat-spade; *trill*,[1] a sand-plover: *trosg*, a cod: *ugann*, a gill (fish); *ùiridh*, a monster.[2]

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] The following words, taken from Cleasby and Vigfusson's Icelandic-English Dictionary, by Mr. Albany Major of the Viking Club, show that some of the non-Gaelic words collected by Mr. Macdonald are undoubtedly Norse, and suggest a possible Norse derivation for the majority. The two first depend upon whether Norse *v* and Gaelic *b* are ever interchanged:

Bàrsaich.—Perhaps connected with *verr*, worse, and *segja*, to say.

Barp.—Perhaps from *verpa*, to cast up (a cairn or the like), or *varp*, a casting, throwing.

Bodha.—Perhaps from *bodi*, a breaker; "*boding*," hidden rocks.

Bàgh.—Perhaps from *bugr*, bight of a creek, etc.

Cuidhe.—Perhaps from *krí*, a fold, pen, or *kridr*, the womb.

Cràghiadh.—Perhaps from *kráka*, a crow.

Crò.—*Kró*, a small pen.

Cuisle.—Perhaps connected with *kvistr*, a twig, branch.

Faothail.—*Vadill* and *vödull* (Shetl., *vaadle*; Dan., *veile*), a shallow, or ford over fjords or straits.

Fàradh.—Perhaps connected with *för*, *farar*, journey and *fara*, to go. Cf. far-skip, ferry-boat.

Geòb.—*Gjá*, chasm, rift.

Haf.—*Haf*, sea.

Hawn.—*Höfn* or *hafn*, haven.

Luitheur.—*Ljóri*, louvre.

Mealbhach.—*Mel-bakki*, bank where bent-grass grows: *melr*, wild oats, bent-grass; *bakki*, bank.

Mealtrach.—*Melr*, as above.

Mol.—*Möl*, *malar*, pebbles, worn stones.

Nàbuidh.—*Ná-búi*, neighbour.

Òb.—*Hóp*, a tidal bay.

Odu.—*Oddi*, a tongue of land.

Roc.—Perhaps connected with *rok*, the splashing, foaming sea.

Rustal.—*Ristill*, a ploughshare.

Saoithean.—Perhaps connected with *seidr*, a kind of fish.

Scàireag.—Perhaps from *skári*, a young seamew.

Sgeir.—*Sker*, skerry.

Smal.—Perhaps from *smár*, small, and *mold*, earth, or *moli*, a small particle.

Sparran.—*Sperra*, spar, rafter.

Staorc.—Perhaps connected with *sterkr* or *styrkr*, stark, strong.

Trill.—Perhaps connected with *troll*, evil spirit, and *trylla*, to enchant, from the mournful cry of the plover on lonely wastes.

Ugann.—Perhaps connected with *uggi*, the fin of a fish.

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There are certain terminations which point to Norse origin in place-names:

Hills in val, vin (ben), breck, berg, haug.

Islands in ai.

Islets in mul. lam and um.

Sea-lochs in ort, ford and art.

Bays in vagh and vik.

Isthmus in ei.

Rock-clefts in geo, klet, or cleit (a rock where the cormorants roost).

Outlets of rivers in oss.

Duns in brok.

Fields in vallar, often wall (Dingwall).

Farms in stul, garry, bost, clet, sary, ary, bol (pool).

Lakes in vat (*N.*, vatn).

Streams in a and ai (*N.*, a); strom (sea-stream).

Sea-rocks in skeir (*N.*, skor).

Points in nish and ness and mull.

Valleys in gil (in Yorkshire and Cumberland, where Scandinavian words linger, the same word is found as "ghyl").

In Uist there are several places with "gir" for termination, probably the same word as "gil," by an interchange of the "l" and "r."

Many place-names are compounded with adjectives or with qualifying names, such as *breidha*, broad; *smuk*, narrow; *hà*, high; *lai*, low; *gaas*, a goose; *so*, a sheep; *calv*, a calf; *arne*, eagle; *hest*, horse; *ros*, horse.

Among personal names which appear in connection with places are—Asgard, Sigurd, Trigurd, Björn, Grimm, Eric, etc.

The ordinary terms in use for land and its parts are Gaelic, but there is one word which the Rev. A. Macdonald conjectures may be of Norse origin, namely *gearra* (as in Gearravailteas, Gearrahaily). This may be the Gaelic *gearradh*, i.e. a cutting or section, or the

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Norse *geira*, i.e. a slice of land. Most probably it is the Norse *geira*, as its plural form is *geàrachan*, and not *gearraidhean*, which is the common plural for the Gaelic word *gearradh*.

I am indebted to Mr. Allan Macdonald (as well as for much else) for some notes on the topography of Eriskay, the sea-worn islet he himself inhabits. The place-names here are of special interest, because so remote, so (superficially) unattractive is this island, that there can have been but little in its history to initiate change, or occasion those admixtures which perplex the historian and the philologist. In illustration of the misleading nature of Ordnance map nomenclature, he points out that in this one little island we have Loch Duval given for Duvat, Loch Crakuvaig for Leosavag, Hainish for Rainish, and Haisinish for Eenshnish.

The chief geographical features are as follows:—Hills—Ben Sgriothan, hill of the landslip (skrid, to slip); Ben Stack, of obvious meaning; Ben Eenshnish, from "innse," top of the head, a neighbouring peak being called Sgumban, which has the same meaning in Gaelic. Two smaller hills are called Cnoca Breck and Haily Breck. "Cnoca," though looking like Gaelic, does not undergo the grammatical changes of the Gaelic word, and "breck" equally does not appear to be the Gaelic "breac" (speckled), as it does not decline. "Haily" is very common as a prefix in the district. In South Uist there are Haily-Bost and Haily-Stŭl. "Stŭl" is very frequent in Uist. It would be interesting if some scholar would tell us whether the word is an obsolete Scandinavian form, as the dictionaries refer one to the word "soeter," which, as equivalent to mountain pasture, we find in other districts in the termination "setter" and "shader." In South Uist it is found only in the form "stul." Boisdale, for

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example, is pronounced in Gaelic "Bŭhŭstul," and may possibly mean the mountain pasture of the "boi" or "bend" (compare the Gaelic name for a place on the shore of Boisdale, called "Lub-bhudhustail," that is, the bend of Boisdale). The fact of finding this particular form of the word in South Uist may conceivably indicate the district of Scandinavia whence came the settlers who established the topography of the island.

Among the bays of Eriskay we find "Na Haun," that is, the haven; and again, another called "Cràckavick," which may mean "crowbay," from "krage," a crow, and "vik." The name is repeated in South Uist, and it is said that the former name of Kirkwall was "Cracoviaca," apparently the same word.

We have among Points, Rosh-nish (horse point, from "ros" and "ness"), and Rhainish (cleft point, *rivn*, riven), which marks out a rent running right over a hill, beginning at this spot. Another Point is Rudha-na-Hùslaig; Uslaig is Gaelic for an old hag, but is probably identical with Usling, which is Danish for a wretch (or Aslakr, a personal name).

There are two long rocks jutting out into the sea, on different sides of the island, both at high water separated from the land. They are called "cleit," possibly from "cloeft," cloven. The word is now common in Gaelic for such rocks, or for cormorants' roosts, which such rocks are. The word as so used must be distinguished from three other "clets," also found in place-names. We have, for example, in Uist, the names "Smerclet," "Ormiclet," "Lianiclet," and in all these cases the derivation is, as the situation of the places makes obvious, "klit," that is, a dun, or low sand-hill. "Smerclet" is "butter down," from "smoer," butter. (We have among Gaelic place-names in the same district, "butter-hole," "cheese-rock," and "beef-skerry.") "Ormiclet" is "Orm's klit." The

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derivation of "Lianiclet" is less obvious, but we have the same prefix in "Lianicui" (cui, pen or fold) and "Lianimull" (holm, or small islet). It is not to be confused with another word of similar sound, "liana," a wet meadow.

The word "clet" is also applied to a piece of land, possibly from "klat" (a bit of ground). We have in Benbecula a "chleit mhòr," which means the great lot, and we have it as a termination in "Hàclet," as high lot. "Làmaclet," as lamb lot, and "Calliclet," possibly, cold lot.

"Klet" is found in its third meaning as signifying "rock" or "cliff," from "klettr," in the name "Cleiteachan," rugged inland rocks, north of Loch Boisdale.

The prefix "kil" is of very common occurrence, and its meaning and derivation are obvious where the word is associated with ecclesiastical remains, as in "Kilbarra" and "Kilpheder," i.e. the Churches of St. Barra and St. Peter, but it seems probable that in certain connections the prefix may be the Norse word "kil," a creek or inlet, as in "Kilerivagh," which would mean "mud creek bay."

Another argument for the importance of the study of topography on the spot, is the differentiation between Gaelic and Norse words having the same sound, and only to be distinguished by the geographical situation of the places indicated. There is, for example, in Eriskay, a hillock called "Carn-a-chliabhain," literally, the cairn of the little creel, a name which has no obvious meaning, which would, however, be readily found, if we suppose the derivation to be from the Norse, a "cleft" or "cleaving," which would make it, "the cairn of the rent or gully."

There are three common Norse prefixes of like spelling but different pronunciation. *Há* (as in "father" or "*ar*"), *ha* (as in "matter" or "*ah*"), *hà* (as

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in "call" or "*or*"). *Hei* and *hae* are also found, and it is often difficult to differentiate among them. *Lange* for "long" is found in such words as *Langisgeir*, long scar, and *Langanish*, long ness. There is a long sea-rock in the Sound of Eriskay called Am Bruga, and another at Kilbride called Na Bruganan, which is the plural of the other. They have the peculiarity of being cut up by little channels, through which a boat can pass at all times save low water. Can this be derived from a Norse word, meaning broken? At Kilbride in Uist there is a loch called Loch-a-Bhruga, frequently broken into by the sea, and separated from it by only a bank of shingle. Another loch of the same kind is called Loch Briste, which is Gaelic for Broken Loch.

The syllable *mol* (pebbles or shingle) occurs in several place-names, such as Mol-an-dùdain, Mol-a-tuath, Mol-a-deas, and is not to be confused with *mul*, a small islet, which, like *lum* and *um*, is a modification of holm (compare Sodhulum, sheep isle); Teistea-mul or Heistea-mul, horse isle; Lam-a-lum; Gierum, perhaps *geir*, auk isle; Airnemul, eagle isle, and a great number of others.

Lamruig, a landing jetty, is common here, a word possibly of Danish origin.

A loch called Drollavat may be "troll" or "goblin" loch, and Sieuravat may be Sigurd's loch or *vatn*. The name Dalibrog is probably the *borg* or *dun* of the meadow. Some of the natives call it Dun-beag, the little castle. At the time that it was a fortified place it must have been surrounded by water. The mound on which it was built remains, and is the site of a house still occupied.

The word for a ford, an extremely familiar geographical detail in these islands, is *faothail* (pronounced *fūh-ill*), and may be related to the Norse *veile*, a ford. The name of the island of Benbecula, which lies between

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two fords, is pronounced in Gaelic, Binavula, and the termination again suggests the Norse *veile*, the meaning of the name being, perhaps, "between fords."[1]

In reply to a question as to proper names which may have been legacies of the Norsemen, Mr. Allan Macdonald points out that, oddly enough, the families making use of such names in South Uist are seldom natives of the island, but hail from Skye, Lewis or Harris. We find *Somerled*, *Uistein*, *Ronald*, *Ivaer*, *Tormod*, and as a feminine name, *Raonailt* (that is *Ragenhilda*). It is said that there was a woman's name *Gill*, which seems to have died out about sixty years ago.[2]

Among surnames we have *Lamont*, (law-man), *Mc-Askill*, i.e. *As Ketill son* (the kettle of the gods), *Mc-Aulay*, i.e. *Olaf son*. There was a poet of North Uist called *McCodrum*, probably the Norse *Guttormr*. *Mc-Leod* is from *Ljotr*, Earl of Orkney; *McSwain* is the Norse *Sweinn*[3]; *McCorquorquodale* is *Thorketel*. The name *Dougal*, i.e. *dubh gall* (black stranger) was the term applied to the Danes, in contradistinction from *fionn gall* (fair stranger), given to the Norwegians.

These conjectures as to derivation are in no sense dogmatic, but are offered tentatively, in the hope of provoking criticism and discussion, and should they lead to competent treatment of Gaelic and Norse nomenclature, by a Scandinavian scholar, they will have served the purpose for which they are intended.

[1] Compare (possibly) *Benderloch* (between lochs) and *Eddrachyllis* (between two sounds).

[2] I know of two more recent instances of the use of *Gill* as a woman's name, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, in a district in which Scandinavian remains and names of persons and places are still common.

[3] Swain, Swayne, Swein, Sweyn, etc., are names often found in the district of Yorkshire already referred to.

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CHAPTER XIV

BENBECULA AND NORTH UIST

ONE may travel northward from South Uist either by land or sea. that is, one may either take one of our old friends, the *Staffa* or the *Flowerdale*, from Loch Boisdale to Loch Maddy, or drive northward from Dalibrog up to the south ford, and so across Benbecula, and over the north ford into North Uist. It is a long drive, some forty miles. and to the mere tourist a tedious one, but, to the observant. full of interest, and, in a sense, of charm, if not of beauty.

The time of day for the journey is decided by the hour at which the state of the tide will make it possible to cross the fords. The road is little more than a causeway across a mere, so innumerable and extensive are the lochs, between which we make our way. The only road in the island runs north and south, and lies on the west side on the low ground, so that the mountain range to our right is uninterrupted the whole way, Ben More, over two thousand feet high, dominating the whole ; though perhaps Hekla, in height but little less, is in outline with its volcanic-looking crest, even more impressive, and may, one fancies, have been named by some Viking jarl in memory of his home. The charm of Uist is largely that of colouring, especially in the early summer, when the grey water of the lochs is wreathed round with golden iris and blue forget-me-not, and the short grey turf is aflame with a hundred alpine flowerets. It is a land in which every touch of

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colour *counts*; not a tree, not a bush, overshadows the detail of the landscape, there are no warm greens and browns to modify the colouring, nothing breaks the grey background of the plain till we come to the deep purples and rich blues of the mountains beyond. The hills rise steeply from their base, and the low ground at their feet has but little undulation and few interruptions. Here and there one comes to a township, the little sod-roofed huts scarcely distinguishable from rock or peat-stack; here and there a group of children are herding, and playing the while at building a shealing, or sailing a boat; but, for the most part, flocks of wandering sheep are the only evidence of life, and for miles there is no sign of human habitation, but the patches of greener grass which tell of homes laid low, and a population dispersed. With an occasional excursion from the main road we may make this drive a veritable pilgrimage in memory of Prince Charlie. Soon after leaving Loch Boisdale, we come in sight of Hekla just beyond Ben More, and in the glen between these hills we may find the cave where the royal fugitive spent so many weeks. We may fancy him coming one bleak day in May, from his first hiding-place in Benbecula, by Clanranald's advice, and for his greater comfort and protection, to the Forest House of Glencorrodale, little more than a shealing, from whence, when his safety seemed to require it, he found shelter in the cave: so safe a place of concealment, that we had some little difficulty in lighting upon it, even though accompanied by friends who knew its whereabouts. The glen is approached by a narrow pass sacred to the memory of St. Columba, who is said to have addressed the heathen from a rock still pointed out. The scene is wild and bare, but has a grandeur and solemnity even apart from its associations. There is a loch in Glen Uisnish which, in its utter loneli-

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ness, rivals the now tourist-frequented Coruisk, and is, thank heaven, too inaccessible to tempt the wandering Sassenach. From the cave, which is somewhat elevated on the eastern front of Hekla, one can look out over a vast extent of land and sea, and one realizes the advantage of such a position for the royal exile. The glen now is utterly deserted, and only a single lonely hut remains where, when the Prince was among them, over ninety families had their home, all undoubtedly knowing that by one word to the enemy as to the whereabouts of the "fair haired shepherd," a man might enrich himself beyond the wealth of all the clan. Have we in these days, anywhere, a village, where man, woman, and child, with no promise binding them, in face of a reward of £30.000, could be absolutely depended upon for such fidelity as this? The Uist bard, MacCodrum, contemporary with Prince Charlie, knew the people among whom he dwelt—

> "They were lofty in spirit and noble in mien,
> A statelier race never trod on the green:
> And they showed to the foe not the face of a child,
> In the breast of the storm when the war-cry was wild.
>
> "O they were manful and mighty of mood,
> Nor shrunk like a woman, from tasting of blood;
> They were modest and gentle, but bold in the fray,
> And though proud to command, they were prompt to obey."

Returning to the high road, and on the further side of it, we may visit the remains of the cottage of Airidh Mhuillin (pronounce Aryvoolin), "the shealing of the mill," once a thatched hut of three rooms, where Flora Macdonald was brought up, and where Professor Blackie, it is said, when a white-haired old man, stooped down and kissed the threshold. It is a matter of psychological interest that strikes one the more in face of the grim grey life of today in South Uist, that it was from a cottage in this island that a gentle girl stepped out to become one of the greatest heroines

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in history, braving not only a situation in itself embarrassing to one of her modesty and upbringing, but one which endangered the life and fortune of herself and her friends. Looking around here, west to the Atlantic, eastward to the mountains, in the immediate distance. only the dreary hills of Arneval, Sheval, Reneval, and Askervin, one realizes the more the innate greatness of the Highland character, and its independence of those things upon which convention and tradition have taught us to lean for guidance.

Some five miles away are the ruins of Ormiclete, once the seat of the Clanranalds. When Allan, the chief, died for his master on Sheriffmuir, and the old home at Ormiclete was burnt down, the family removed to Nunton in Benbecula, where they remained till the islands passed away from the clan, and even from the Highland race.

With hearts saddened by memories such as these, and by the ever-present sight of poverty and desolation, we continue our drive northward, past the comfortable homes of factor and absentee proprietor, past *the tree*, but for the most part with only bare grey grass and sullen grey water on either side the road, and with what Mr. Jolly, who has given us so sympathetic a sketch of Flora Macdonald, has well called "an inextricable confusion of mountain and moor, sea and lake" beyond; with the bleating of sheep for sole sign of life, varied by the cry of coot or seagull, "like some lone spirit crushed by fate."

As an old writer expresses it, the lakes in this district "perplex the view, and defy enumeration." The total lakes in the Long Island from the Butt of Lewis to Barra Head are estimated at one thousand five hundred, covering a superficial extent of 50,000 acres, of which the greater portion must lie in just that district which we are traversing today.

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It is curious, in remembrance of the scene as it is now, to read the description of the same district in the Agricultural Survey of 1811, which describes this low-lying country as producing "crops of barley, oats, rye and potatoes, or of natural grass and wild clover, far beyond what a stranger would expect. They assume a variegated and beautiful dress, scarcely yielding in colours or perfume to any fields in the kingdom; and being of great extent. they afford a prospect of riches and plenty equalled by no other of the Western Isles.

THE SOUTH FORD

The lakes, with their verdant banks and ruinous forts, surrounded by hamlets and covered with wild fowl, yield a pleasant picture."

At last we reach the south ford, and if we have timed ourselves well, we cross it without difficulty. The horses are used to it, and make no objection to their work, even when—in places—they feel severely the weight of the carriage as it sinks into deep sand, or is retarded by heavy shingle. Some serious accidents have occurred, and almost any one in the district can describe personal adventures in the fords, not wholly encouraging to the stranger; but after

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nearly a mile of effort and patience, we reach the other side, and the little inn of Creagorry, where, all things considered, it is as well to stay the night; one is sure of the society of one or two sportsmen, and of the good dinner of fish and birds which their presence—at the right time of year—ensures. I remember, however, once arriving there alone at a somewhat late hour, to find that no accommodation beyond a meal was to be had. I was directed elsewhere in search of a lodging, but found so large a hole in the floor of the room overhead as to promise a somewhat insufficient degree of privacy, and so, as not infrequently happened in our adventures, I presumed upon Highland hospitality, and found a kind welcome and hospitable entertainment in the Presbytery, with a ready pardon for a late and unexpected arrival. I have grateful recollections of pleasant entertainment, both in manse and presbytery, in this island of Benbecula, and of glimpses at different times, of certain comfortable and home-like interiors, which have left us with associations of ready hospitality, and a capacity for triumphing over the material difficulties of life, which we had not seen equalled unless in the more genial atmosphere of Tyree. The islanders have a saying about

> The vain Benbecula man,
> The impudent Barra man,
> The Barra wag,
> The Benbecula snob.

If, as from certain indications of the state of public opinion seems not unlikely, the vanity and snobbery of the Benbecula people consists in a greater care of their homes and a regard for the *bien séances* of life, they fully deserve the characterization, for there is a marked difference between the general appearance of this island and of those of Barra and South

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Uist, although, as they are on the same estate, they have much the same difficulties to contend with. Whatever the cause, there is not, even about the obvious poverty, the same look of hopelessness as in South Uist. The district is smaller, and the people are near neighbours to the happier island of North Uist; it has, moreover, the appearance, at all events, of being healthier and more productive. In Benbecula, as elsewhere on this estate, there are remains at best neglected, often wantonly destroyed, of buildings of intense interest to the archaeologist. Here and there a native will show us a few stones, within his recollection a fine dun now destroyed for the erection of some farm dyke; will point out the spot where a stone coffin or cinerary urn has been unearthed, though no one knows what has become of it, or will remind us that the modern and ugly farmhouse at Nunton, built for the convenience of the proprietor, was erected on the site and with some of the material of probably one of the oldest religious houses in Scotland. Another nunnery also existed on the islands of Heisgar (also called Monach), the nearest land to St. Kilda, where, when the night falls, the lighthouse will send forth its warning ray just where long ago the pious women sent forth holy prayers for the safety of the wandering mariner in that boundless Atlantic sea. "There were nunneries here in the time of Popery," says Martin. It is still the time of Popery to some extent in Benbecula, though there is a larger proportion of Presbyterians both of the new and old variety than in either South Uist or Barra. In Eriskay and most of the smaller islands there are no Protestants at all. At Baile Mhanaich is another neglected monument of antiquity in the remains of an ecclesiastical building of unusual size, some fifty-seven feet long, with a window at either end and the traces

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of a chapel within a few yards. Martin adds, "I remember I have seen an old lay Capuchin here, called in the language *Brahir bocht*, poor brother, which is literally true, for he answers this character, having nothing but what is given him." It is said that he dressed like his Order, but with a plaid about him, that he lived in great poverty and humility, speaking only when addressed.

The name Ben-becula means "hill of the fords" from the hill of Rueval, which stands in the middle of the island, between the two fords, and near this hill was another of Prince Charlie's hiding-places, where he lived for some time in a bothy, the doorway of which was so low that his followers scooped away the threshold to admit of more convenient entrance. There he was visited by Clanranald from Nunton, bringing wines, provision, shoes, stockings and some shirts made by Lady Clanranald, that which the Prince was wearing being, said his follower, Douglas Graham, "as dingy as a dish-clout." According to some, the first meeting between Flora Macdonald and the Prince was at this, or probably some other hut in Benbecula, though others believe it to have been near a boulder beside her own home at Airidh Mhuillin. Be that as it may, it was from Benbecula that the memorable expedition to Skye started on Saturday, June 28. The small shallop which should convey the Prince had been made ready, and the Prince and his attendants descended to the shore in the forenoon, after hearing that one large search party had arrived in Benbecula, and another at Ormiclete. It is only here, on the spot, with the bare hills and the bare sea at either side, and the open shelterless country all around, that one can fully realize the scene: the Prince in his flowered linen gown—treasured fragments of which are still to be

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found in certain Highland homes—his light-coloured quilted petticoat, white apron and mantle of dun camlet, made after the Irish fashion with a hood; here in the pelting rain they found shelter and warmth by lighting a fire beneath a rock, an experience we have ourselves tried and of which we know the difficulty. It was on the south ford, which we have just crossed, that Flora Macdonald and her servant, having no passport, were made prisoners by a party of militia. As, by a strange coincidence, their commander, absent at the moment, was her own stepfather, she preferred to remain in the guardhouse rather than be put through any catechism as to her movements, and when he (Macdonald of Armadale) arrived, she was speedily released, provided with passports, and furnished with a letter recommending the services of the Irish girl, Betty Burke (the Prince himself), as able to spin and sew, to his wife, who, like every housekeeper since civilization began, was, at the moment, in need of a servant.

Resuming our road, we are soon at the North Ford. It is about sunset, as that is usually a convenient time for crossing, and this ford, being considerably wider than the other, is the one especially to be considered.

I remember arriving here once at somewhat too early an hour, and though by dint of putting our feet and possessions on to the seat of the carriage, we advanced for a mile or so, we had then to wait for an hour before it was safe to proceed, and so had a grand opportunity for beholding the great pageant of sunset under conditions new even in our varied experience of nature's grandest effects in the Outer Hebrides. What I think impressed one most was the power of nature, not in her supreme, but in her quiet moments. All around us were the waters of the same Atlantic ocean which, not far off, was raging and hurling itself with its wonted

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might, but here silently ebbing and clearing a pathway for us mere human things whom a single wave could destroy, and who yet sat there undisturbed, confident in the reign of law. The expanse of land at our feet, the sobbing waters, the glittering pools, the rocks reaching out above the retreating tide, were glorified with a thousand hues. The islands of Grimisay and Ronay to the east, and of Baleshare to the west gleamed like jewels in the lap of earth, and away on the horizon the mighty sun, father of all this glory, was slowly, slowly sinking into the ocean, again obedient to the reign of law. There was no obtrusive sign of power, no immensity of effect, but only silence and the setting sun brooding upon a watery waste, while from the distance came the low ceaseless sea-sound which in these Islands is about us night and day. It was the magic of law, the silent law of nature and of God.

When we reach the other side the twilight has fallen, that long soft twilight of the Outer Hebrides of which one never ceases to feel the wonder and the charm. The Heisger light shines out, and our companion points to the whereabouts of St. Kilda beyond on the north-west.

We are now in North Uist, but the glamour of the southern island is still upon us. There is still the same "inextricable confusion of mountain and moor, sea and lake;" there are a few lonely wayside townships, now and then a home-returning shepherd, as we drive on and the darkness gathers. Presently we reach the top of a steep hill, and looking down we perceive such a cluster of lights as betokens a population such as we have not yet seen collected in the Outer Hebrides, and which, except at Stornoway, we shall not see again. Loch Maddy is at our feet, and we are soon at the door of the comfortable hotel, where we find a four-course dinner, a varied wine list, sea-water baths, and fellow-

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guests speaking the English of the Court of King Edward VII.

It is all very comfortable, but we find a large addition to our cares in the fact that we have "come up" with our luggage and our letters.

The little cluster of suburban villas look as if they had strayed from the outskirts of Glasgow, and had never had the heart to settle themselves comfortably, so forlornly are they set down anyhow and anywhere, with no relation to each other nor to the general scheme of things—if scheme exists. But they are comfortable and well-to-do of their kind, and however much one may resent their intrusion they have their *raison d'être*, for is not Loch Maddy the capital of the Inverness-shire portion of the Long Island, the abode of officialdom, the whereabouts of Courthouse, and bank, and prison, and police station, and poorhouse, and various of those necessities of life we have been so glad to forget, and have for so long dispensed with? In Loch Maddy there are pianos, and drawing-rooms, and afternoon tea, and people call upon one, and leave cards, and take photographs, and read newspapers, and are kind and friendly, and a wholesome reminder of some of the duties and pleasures of normal life.

The English and lowland Scots, for whom the hotel exists, have come to fish, and we eat fish, which is very good, and talk of fish, which, with limitations, is very pleasant at every meal, and then we go out in the hall and weigh fish, and then adjourn and look at the map of the district and discuss to-morrow's fish, for it is a subject which for the fisherman nevers palls, and as a rule he has no other. For him the Hebrides means Loch Maddy, with a possible diversion to Loch Boisdale, for he knows nothing, and would care less, for Celtic charm, and Island glamour.

The only exhibition of officialism which attracts us is

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the poorhouse, and, comparatively fresh as we are to certain aspects of civilization, we come to it with vision somewhat assimilated to that of its unhappy inmates. It is far less cheerful than the prison, infinitely more official than the Courthouse; from the point of view of the desire to make pauperism costly to the public and a terror to its victims, it is a triumph of achievement. This is, however, from no lack of kindness in those whose immediate concern it is to care for the inmates, but the mere result of the utter inability of the official

THE CAPITAL OF THE LONG ISLAND.

mind to adapt itself to special conditions. The building, in all its gaunt dreariness, with its long wards, bare "day rooms," draughty passages, its extensive powers of accommodation, might fairly meet the requirements of a Board anxious to discourage the drunken, the idle, the ne'er-do-well of some average mainland town; but to set down such a place on a remote island, to house three or four old men and women in the last stages of senile decay, who want nothing but a warm shelter and the simple food they are accustomed to, until some sailor son or some daughter at service on the main-

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land shall return to care for them, or, at worst, till death, not very remote, shall release them from the weariness of living, is brutality to an industrious population, and an imposition upon a rate-paying public. I have seen two old men, bent and blear-eyed, searching the scrap of enclosed land for the precious silverweed as a substitute for tobacco, or an old woman sitting solitary at one end of thirty feet of bare day-room trying to extract a breath of warmth from a fire which would have been kindly enough in the ten feet of space in which her indoor life has hitherto been passed, but which is wholly inadequate to illumine or console in such a wilderness as this; and the islander, whose first instinct is for warmth, is no better adapted for chilly space than a cat for draughts. A somewhat pleasanter recollection is of Widow Orr, said to be over 104 years of age, alone and in a preposterously large room it is true, but as well warmed and cared for as the kindness of the good Master and Mistress could desire, and who, even on a sunny June day, was indulged with a hot water bag to her aching spine; complaining of nothing, wanting nothing but a little snuff, which was soon supplied: talking brightly of far-off days when she was in service at Glasgow, or when her husband was living, or when her children were with her; desiring nothing but, with true Highland pride, that those who had known her then, should not hear of her whereabouts now. Many kind friends she has in Loch Maddy, friends who will do their utmost for her and for others, but the institution as such, remains, a monument of human stupidity and lack of imagination.

One anomaly which strikes one accustomed to more careful religious organization than one meets with in Presbyterian islands, is that here, the centre of the educated population of the district, with an hotel well-

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filled for several months in the year, there should be no provision made for religious teaching of any kind except a tiny Free Kirk and the occasional visit of an Established minister whose Church, (a *quoad sacra*, that is a small chapel of ease) is in a remote spot, distant some six or eight miles from the high road; and that the parent Church, one of the most presentable buildings in the Long Island, should be sixteen miles away on the west side.

A good road encircles the island of North Uist, and indeed there is very fair provision made for all the ordinary requirements of life. The new proprietor, a son of the original purchaser, has at least carried into effect, without any of the "prolonged negotiations" which have elsewhere accompanied enforced reform, the recommendations of the Crofter Commission as to new townships and township roads.[1] Sir Arthur Orde has been absent in the service of his country, but there seems every prospect that his relations with his people will be those of mutual kindness and good feeling.

The island from time immemorial has belonged to the Lords Macdonald; and, like all the proprietors, they suffered, and the island suffered, from the depreciation of kelp, following on to the losses of the '15 and the '45. Here, as elsewhere, were evictions, but no tragedy of depopulation to compare with that of South Uist. In the *Old Statistical Account* (1755, etc.) we read of an industrious and prosperous people, of two hundred ploughs, and forty-two women weavers in the island; of a surgeon, a merchant, and a schoolmaster; of sloops of thirty and seventy tons, both built in the parish; of

[1] The evidence before the Crofter Commission showed that the rental of this property was at that time £4,872 16*s.* 10*d.* of which the Crofters paid £1,900, or nearly two-fifths, a less unsatisfactory proportion than in islands further south.

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luxuriant crops of barley, and rich pasture of white and red clover.

Then came the kelp harvest, and we hear of twelve hundred tons of kelp being annually made, four hundred being negotiated by various tacksmen. We read that the rents which in 1763 were £1,200, rose, till in 1794 they reached £2,100. besides the profit on the kelp. Then came here, as everywhere, the reaction, but thanks to the kindly Highland proprietor, though himself heavily in debt, the time of poverty was late in reaching the people. The *New Statistical Account* (1841) tells of weavers, and tailors, and boat carpenters, and millers, and smiths, of abundance of cockle shells used for lime and in extracting soda from kelp, of the value of the bent grass in domestic manufactures and in suppressing the sand drift, of tormentil used for bark in preparing leather, of the edible laver found on the rocks—all evidence of the utilization of the resources of the island. We learn, however, that "at present (1841) it is notorious that there are no less than 390 families not paying rents, but living chiefly on the produce of small spots of potato ground given them by some of their neighbours and relatives. Subdivisions of this kind, from the purest motives of humanity, will and must take place. To force the people away has been entirely repugnant to the humane feelings of the noble proprietor."

In spite of overwhelming debt, amounting, it is said, to £200,000, we hear little of eviction till 1849 (eight years after the horrors of the depopulation of the Gordon estate), and even then only under the extreme pressure of the chief's own personal poverty, and to his avowed bitter regret. (See Macleod's *Gloomy Memories*). Even then he struggled on for six years more, before dire necessity compelled him to sell the island, in 1855, to Sir John Campbell Orde. The later eccentricities of the

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new proprietor, and consequent serious misunderstandings with some of his people, were long kept in check by the skill, kindness and wise administration of his factor, whose name is still mentioned with respect and affection, Mr. John Macdonald, tacksman of Newton, a farm at the north end of the island, now occupied—occasionally—by the proprietor himself.

The island is about thirty miles long, and from eight to fourteen wide. The hills, which are not so high as those further south, are, however, beautiful in outline and in position, and are divided and intersected, not by ravines and rivulets, but by inlets of the sea, so that quite far inland one is surprised by the phenomenon of salt-water lochs (with, of course, the usual tidal changes) producing unexpected effects in the heart of the hills.

The traces of Scandinavian occupation are here especially abundant in the shape of barps and barrows; some twenty duns are commonly known, and probably Mr. Beveridge in his forthcoming book will tell us of more. There are several examples of the mysterious "druid circles," so called, and the almost equally mysterious little places of defence, generally placed upon hills, and more or less in line with each other. Martin, with his usual tendency to accept evidence of any kind that offers, explains certain Standing-stones on the hills above Loch Maddy as being there "to *amuse* invaders, for which reason they are called 'false sentinels.'" It is said that there are still in the burial ground of Kilmory, the site of a chapel which has long disappeared, the remains of two cruciform pillars such as exist in various places in the Islands, with which Martin connects another curious tradition. "The ancient inhabitants," he says, "had a custom of erecting this sort of cross to procure rain, and when they had got enough they laid it flat on the ground." From what one knows of the North Uist climate, it

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seems probable that those crosses seldom attained the perpendicular.

Similar crosses are said to exist on the island of Valay, also certain ecclesiastical remains, an underground dwelling, and some relics of Scandinavian occupation; and as if these remnants of the past were not sufficiently varied, there is even the flat stone upon which the ancient inhabitants *every Sunday morning*—note the anomaly—poured a cow's milk as a libation to Brownie.[1]

On the island of Rona, to return to the south end of North Uist, are the remains of a chapel and burial ground known as the Lowlanders' Chapel, because in former days strange seamen who died when fishing in the waters of Loch Eport were buried there. We could not help being reminded of the little colony of lowland and English dead lying in the Soraby churchyard on Tyree.

Loch Maddy takes its name from the *maddies*, or "dogs," two basaltic rocks curiously different in substance and outline from anything in the district, and which stand prominently at the entrance of the harbour, adding alike to its picturesqueness and its danger. Martin gives another derivation, and says the rocks are so called "from the great quantity of big mussels, called maddies, that grows upon them."

It is with no ingratitude for its hospitalities that one rejoices to leave Loch Maddy, which one may do by either end of the road which encircles the island. Choosing that which goes northward, we find many points of interest on the way, from the romance of a fairy Knowe, past which the wayfarer hastens after sun-

[1] It is seldom that one can feel any satisfaction on hearing of Highland property passing into the hands of a Lowlander, but it is with cordial pleasure and a strong sense of the fitness of things, that we note that this island has just been purchased by Mr. Erskine Beveridge.

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set, to the grim historical suggestiveness of a Scandinavian fort, a dun in very good preservation, though the characteristic "sounding stone," which gave warning on the approach of strangers, is missing from the causeway which, after a thousand years or so, still bears us safely across the loch. Not far away is a well of delicious water, slightly ferruginous, which one fancies may have been an inducement to the hardy warriors to settle near by.

All the way along we note, at intervals, the remains of "rigs," now only heather and coarse grass, telling of a time when the land was under cultivation, and a forgotten population made their home where to-day all is solitude and silence. By-and-by, turning aside from the main road, some six miles after leaving Loch Maddy, we come to Trumisgarry, where a farm or two and a few scattered huts, are all that remain to account for the existence here, rather than elsewhere, of the Church and the little manse beside it. Half a mile further, on a low hillside, we come suddenly upon one of those unenclosed burial grounds, which one feels to be the more sacred that it makes no appeal to conventional sanctities; but which seem to be in a special sense the *resting*-place of those who once lived and worked in sight of the same wild sea, and beneath the same grey sky. It is so lonely that we come across a covey of baby plovers trying their first strength in the long grass, with no thought of possible invasion, so rare is the advent of human visitant, and too young and inexperienced to attempt to escape, or to shrink from the attentions which the anxious mother views with apprehension and distress. The hill rises between an open plain and the sea, and the summer sunshine has covered it with a mantle of countless flowers of richest hue and liberal abundance; but the same exposure which brings a wealth of sunshine, brings also the

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violence of winter winds, and the heavier gravestones stand each in a cage, "shored up," back and front, to secure them from the Atlantic storms which sweep, without break, over hill and plain, levelling everything in their path.

As we came along we noted a little cairn in the heather telling of a drover returning with sheep from Loch Maddy, who, exhausted by the battle with the pitiless storm, lay down and perished by the roadside. From the minister, too, we hear of many a winter's day, when, abroad on parochial duty, he is so blinded by the storm that he cannot see the head of the horse he is riding, and the combined instinct of man and beast barely suffice to keep them in the road.

Proceeding further along the island one comes to the less conventionalized district of the west coast. Here, in the little village of Houghgary, in one of the neglected and forsaken churchyards one so often meets with near the remains of some Columban Church, lies MacCodrum, the bard of North Uist, and an important contributor to the evidence in favour of the genuineness of Macpherson's Ossian. His grave is covered with a rough slab of gneiss, without inscription, which the poet himself picked up on the shore, desiring that it should be used to mark his burying-place.

But even the memory of MacCodrum, even the sight of the wild swans which frequent the lochs, or the glimpse of the red deer in the hills, cannot redeem North Uist from being the least individualized of all the Islands. One cannot wholly escape from the taint of Loch Maddy. The moment the islander ceases to be himself, his charm has gone; as an imitation mainlander, still more a low-lander, he is a poor creature. Buchanan puts this forcibly when he says, "The farther one recedes from the seaports, from the large farms of the wealthy tacksmen, from the domain of the shopkeeper and the

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BURIAL GROUND, TRUMISGARRY, NORTH UIST.

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schoolmaster, the brighter do the souls of the cottars grow, the opener their hands, the purer their morals, and the happier their homes. Whenever the great or little Sassenach comes, he leaves a dirty trail like the slime of a snake. He it is who abuses the people for their laziness, points sneeringly at their poor houses, spits scorn on their wretchedly cultivated scraps of land; and he it is who, introducing the noble goad of greed, turns the ragged domestic virtues into well-dressed prostitutes, heartless and eager for hire." (*The Hebrid Isles*, p. 195.)

Strong language this, my countrymen, but we have heard it elsewhere; among the decaying races of North America, among the Europeanized peoples of India, the gin-sodden tribes of Western Africa, the disappearing natives of Australasia! No one is more adaptable than the Highlander, and all over the world we find him in positions of responsibility and trust, perfectly at home in changed surroundings, and yet preserving his independence of character and bearing. It is when he is put upon the defensive, when he and his are misunderstood, undervalued, that the worst in him is called out; the indifference which leads to that idleness and drunkenness which the Lowlander associates but too often with the Highland gillie, or the suspiciousness and resentfulness which leads Buchanan to say elsewhere: "Walk from one end of the Uists to the other and you will not meet a smiling face." The remark certainly does not apply to North Uist, and is not indeed wholly true of the sister island, for in both we have seen much fun, and life, and humour, though they are not displayed in the presence of the stranger and the indifferent.

It is now, as it was a hundred and fifty years ago, when Burt wrote (*op. cit. Letter* xlii): "It is almost peculiar to these people that the greatest beauties in

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their character have commonly been considered as blemishes. Among these, the most prominent are family pride, the love of kindred, even to the exclusion of justice, and attachment to a country which seems to have so few charms to the inhabitants of more favoured regions."

Still much is left in the remoter parts of North Uist. I cannot forget a certain occasion, when—leaving a breakfast table at which the talk had been of the imposition, the overcharging, the idleness, the greed, with which "the inhabitants of more favoured regions" considered that they had to contend in these districts—we made our way in a few hours to others some dozen miles more remote. For a whole day we trespassed on the leisure and enjoyed the hospitality of certain kind friends, strangers until that day, working people, fighting the battle of life honestly and well. As we were leaving I said to my companion, "Now you shall see something you never saw before." "Not unlikely—here," my friend replied. "Unlikely this, anywhere," I persisted. "You shall see a *schoolboy refuse a tip*." The tip was of a nature which would have been promptly accepted at Eton or Harrow, but my young friend, who had probably never spent half-a-crown for himself in his life, barely glanced at the more attractive coin, put his hands behind his back, and firmly declined to accept it. When we explained that we should consider his doing so a favour to ourselves, that we desired him to exchange it for something that would keep us in remembrance, his innate courtesy came to our rescue, and he accepted the position from our own point of view.

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CHAPTER XV

LEWIS

THE island of Lewis, another peat bog in the Atlantic, contains a great deal that is of interest. According to Martin, one should find the traces of sixteen of such Churches as we have heard of in Tyree ; its Druidical stones are among the most famous in history and are part of the setting of William Black's story, *The Princess of Thule*, incomparably his best picture of Highland life. It contains the largest and most flourishing town of the Outer Hebrides, and some of its wildest and most savage scenery ; here one may see the highest prosperity, possibly, of which these Islands are capable, and some of the most sordid, savage poverty. It is, as the people themselves say, in parts, "the farthest back" of all the Islands. The trail of the Sassenach is over it, and the Highlander inevitably deteriorates under the influence of the lowland sportsman. He loses all his characteristic attributes ; he puts out his hand, not as elsewhere, for a friendly shake, which one soon learns never to omit, but to take a "tip." Other islanders know the English for "you are welcome,"—the Gillie learns to say "I should like to drink your health." He leaves his croft to take care of itself, and hangs about the hotel doors, waiting for a job. Although geographically more remote than other islands already described, the island of Lewis and Harris (for physically they are one) is more easily accessible, as the visitor for shoot-

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ing or fishing can do the greater part of his journey by train; and even if he choose the longer sea journey, he may take the *Claymore* or the *Clansman*, which, for MacBrayne, are really luxurious, and make the journey from Oban in (nominally) thirty-six hours.

The sport is said to be good, and probably the shooting lodges which the proprietor has scattered about the island have been an excellent investment, and give a great deal of pleasure to the English sportsman, only, for some of us, they have spoilt the island, just as the Glasgow excursionist has spoilt St. Kilda.

Moreover, the Lews is a Free Kirk island. I have left this fact to the last, but even at the risk of being suspected of religious prejudice, the statement must be added to the list of drawbacks. From the religious point of view I have nothing to say against the Free Church, to which belong many of my most valued friends. I have never really grasped the varieties of Presbyterianism, except that "the New Presbyterian eats hot roast beef on a Sunday, and the Old Presbyterian eats cold roast beef on the Sabbath"; and now that the Free Church has amalgamated with the United Presbyterians, there is one variety the less to take account of. My quarrel with Free Churchmen is purely intellectual, and solely from the point of view of the anthropologist and the antiquarian. They are the enemies of romance and of the beautiful. They have banished the bagpipes and the violin. They forbid dancing and merry-making; they have dried up the springs of the *Ceilidh*, and have denounced the recital of the deeds of the Lachlin men, and the traditions of witchcraft and second-sight. They are the apostles of the common-place, excellent in its way, but having, by rights, neither part nor lot in the Outer Isles!

Mr. Anderson Smith, in his *Lewisiana*, the only modern book of interest about this island, tells a story

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of a lame boy at Shawbost who "had bought a fiddle to solace himself during the long winter evenings, but the Elders forced him to dispose of it, and not a man now plays anything but a Jews' harp among the natives of the west. Everything that dark superstition and a severe creed can do has been done to oppress the minds of the people; but Celtic blood will show."

That is the only consolation. Nature and temperament will have their way, and we hear on excellent authority that when the Minister and Elders remove themselves from the scene of a wedding, it is no uncommon thing for the guests to hang plaids over door and window to deaden sound, and screen the festive lights, and (taking turns to watch outside) to draw the fiddle from its hiding-place (probably too the whisky bottle), and clearing the house for a dance, to "play at" bringing back the old times when, under a more genial faith, the world was young and hearts were merry. Even the weekly recurrence of the Free Church Sunday cannot but have a depressing effect upon the lives of the people. Everywhere, and among all creeds, Sunday in the Highlands is kept with reverence and Godly fear,[1] but the sacred festival is

[1] The observance of Sunday is an old and very strict tradition of the Church, and there are many rhymes and stories of supernatural appearances to those breaking the Sabbath.

There is an old rhyme known as the "Lay of Sunday," of which Father Allan has collected some fragments.

O bright God,
Give truth and strength to help the Christian;
  Sunday was born Mary,
Mother of God, with gold-yellow hair;
  Sunday was born Christ
For honour to us;
  Sunday, the seventh day,
Ordained of Christ for each,
  To preserve life only
That all should take their breath,
  Taking no work from ox or man.

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here degraded by superstition into a day of starvation for soul and spirit. We happened to be at Stornoway last June when a week of rough weather had driven away many of the east-coast fishing boats, after which followed a calm and beautiful Sunday. A fellow-guest in our comfortable quarters at the Royal Hotel

> Mary ordained that it should be
> Without spinning of thread, silk or wool,
> Without cleaning of house, without reaping,
> Without kiln, without mill,
> Without rowing, without fishing,
> Without hastening to the hunt,
> Or whittling with pegs.
>
> Whoever would keep Sunday,
> 'Twere smooth and lasting for him,
> From the sundown of Saturday
> Till the rising of Monday;
> He would have value, therefor;
> There would be fruitfulness after the plough,
> And fish in the river, newly run from the sea.
> The water of Sunday, warm as honey:
> Whoever shall drink it as a draught
> Will get healing without harm
> From every illness that may be upon him.
>
> The wailing of Sunday, let it be brief,

[The reference is evidently to hired mourners.]

> Not raising it in an unseemly hour;
> Let us rather wail early on Monday,
> And wail not at all on Sunday.

[The next lines are very obscure and are omitted.]

> Not listening to the babbling of strangers,
> Nor to common, idle talk,
> Lawful is it to guard the crops on a high hill,
> To fetch a leach for a violent ailment,
> To lead a cow to a strong bull,
> Far or near though the way may be;
> And to let a boat sail under canvas
> To the land of its home from strange parts.
>
> Whoever remembers my lay
> Let him recite it each Monday night,
> That the blessing of Michael may be upon him,
> And that he may never see hell.

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reported at breakfast that he had innocently observed to one of the fishermen to whom the past week had brought serious loss, "We want some days like this for the fishing," and had promptly received the reproof, "Is this a day to be talking about days?"

Norman Macleod, in his *Reminiscences of a Highland Parish*, a matchless epic of Highland life, gives a very different picture of the spirit of the manse of the Established Church. "One cottager could play the bagpipe, another the fiddle. The Minister was an excellent performer on the latter, and to have his children dancing in the evening was his delight. If strangers were present, so much the better. He had not an atom of that proud fanaticism which connects religion with suffering, as suffering, apart from its cause . .. A minister in a remote island parish once informed me that 'on religious grounds,' he had broken the only fiddle in the island! His notion of religion, I fear, is not rare among his brethren in the far west and north. We are informed by Mr. Campbell, in his admirable volumes on *The Tales of the Highlands*, that the old songs and tales are also being put under the clerical ban in some districts, as being too secular and profane for the pious inhabitants. What next? are the singing-birds to be shot by the kirk sessions?"

Without going so far as to endorse the account given of the Free Church in the Highlands by William Black, who had seen something of life in the Lews (*In Far Lochaber*, chap. iii.), one cannot but feel the intense contrast between this island and all the rest of the Outer Hebrides, where the Roman Catholic Church or the Established Church of Scotland still allow the liberty of the subject.

The depression of the Lewis people is intellectual rather than physical, and all the greater because, as will be shown, they are an intelligent race, with the

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Tyree thirst for education. In spite of much apparent poverty, probably more apparent than real, and chiefly shown in disorder and want of cleanliness in their homes, the Lewis people have no such record of suffering and injustice as those of South Uist and Barra.

The island has, of course, had its vicissitudes, but on the whole the proprietors have been for long well spoken of. In a *Description of Lewis by an Indweller there*, 1673, we read that it is "a fertile soyl for bean and oats," "plentiful in all sorts of cattle, such as kyne, sheep, goat, horse. It is also plentiful of all sorts of wyld foul, such as wilde goose, duck, drake, whape, pliver, murefoul, and the lyke. It is also served with a most plentiful forest of deir . . . . But of all the properties of the countrie, the great trade of fishing is not the least, wherein it exceeds anie countrie in Scotland for herine, cod, ling, salmon, and all other sorts of smaller fishes."

Moreover, "the Earl of Seaforth established a school where the gentlemen's sons and daughters are bred to the great good and comfort of that people, so that there are few families but at least the maister can read and write. I do remember in my own time that there was not three in all the countrie that knew A B by a Bible."

At a later period we read in the *Old Statistical Account*, 1797: "Seaforth Lodge is now the abode of Col. Francis Humberstone Mackenzie, who with his lady took pleasure in directing and superintending their people to habits of industry and happiness, until he was called away at the commencement of the present war to serve his King and country, by raising two battalions of infantry for Government."

The lady in question established spinning schools in various parts of the island, and receives an amusing contemporary tribute :

"The memory of the haughty, and of course the

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cruel-hearted daughters of dissipation, shall be utterly forgotten, or if mentioned, shall be mentioned with abhorrence; whilst that of the generous, whose kind efforts are well directed for the permanent good of mankind, shall be blessed on the earth for many succeeding ages."

Times change and we with them. This guileless author did not foresee the time when "philanthropy" would be a recognized method of whitewashing "the haughty daughters of dissipation," and a valuable advertisement for those anxious to get into society!

It will be remembered that in the days of the oppression of the tacksman, Seaforth alone allowed no subtenant, but dealt direct with every one on his estate. Moreover, "Mr. Mackenzie of Seaforth gives every head of a family one guinea to encourage them to remove [from miserable huts on the north side to better ones east on the shore]. He gives those poor people twenty years' lease of their dwelling-places, to each of which a small garden is joined, and they pay three Scotch merks yearly for every such house-room and garden. He gives them full liberty to cultivate as much as they can of a neighbouring moor, and exacts no rent for seven years for such parts thereof as they bring into culture."

The title of the Seaforth family, forfeited after the '45, was restored to the laird of whom we are speaking in 1797, and he became the sixth and last Earl of Seaforth.

The story of the forfeiture of the family property in Lewis and elsewhere, is too romantic to be passed over, and is perhaps the more interesting as forming part of the history of an island in which romance, and especially the romance of second-sight, is no longer tolerated.

The name of Coinneach Odhar, known as the "Brahan Seer," should not be omitted in any account

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of Lewis. if only because the real place of his birth seems likely to be forgotten on account of his more familiar association with Brahan, the seat of the family of Seaforth, to whom so many of his predictions refer, and who, as proprietors of Lewis, had very naturally a special claim upon the interest and attention of one who was brought up on their estates, and belonged to their clan.

Kenneth Mackenzie, better known as Coinneach Odhar, was born at Baile na Cille, in the parish of Uig, a remote spot on the edge of the Atlantic, where he remained till he was grown up, when he went to work as a farm labourer, near Loch Ussie on the Brahan estate in Ross-shire.

There are various wild stories as to the occasion, when, a lad in his teens, he acquired the power of divination, all centred round the possession of a certain stone of miraculous origin. That narrated by Hugh Miller in his *Scenes and Legends in the North of Scotland* is the most commonly quoted, and refers the gift to a period after he had left the island of Lewis, when, on awaking from sleep upon a fairy hillock, he found upon his person "a beautiful smooth stone resembling a pearl, but much larger"; according to other versions, the stone was blue and had a hole through its centre.

"He is," says Alexander Mackenzie in *The Prophecies of the Brahan Seer*, "beyond comparison the most distinguished of all the Highland Seers, and his prophecies have been known throughout all the country for more than two centuries. The popular faith in them has been, and still continues to be, strong and widespread. Sir Walter Scott, Sir Humphrey Davy, Mr. Morritt, Lockhart, and other contemporaries of the last of the Seaforths," firmly believed in them. Many of them were well known, and recited from generation to generation, two centuries before they were fulfilled.

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Some of them have been fulfilled in our own day, and many are still unfulfilled.

There is a tendency among those who quote the Seer's predictions to suppose that he brought about some of the evil which he predicted, and to represent that the downfall of the Mackenzies of Seaforth and the consequent loss of the property, including the sale of the island of Lewis to Sir James Matheson, was a revenge for the brutal cruelty of the wife of the third Earl, which would be a very literal visiting of the sins of the fathers upon the third and fourth generation.

The story is, that Earl Kenneth had occasion to visit Paris after the restoration of Charles II. His prolonged absence in the gay city causing much anxiety to his countess, she sent for the Seer and asked him to give an account of her lord's interests and occupations. Applying the divination stone to his eye, Kenneth somewhat unwillingly described some of the gay and not very creditable scenes in which he saw his chief engaged.

The lady perceived that her husband's desertion of her would become a widespread scandal, only to be averted by branding the Seer as a liar and a defamer of his chief, with which idea she doomed him to an instant and horrible death.

"Such a stretch of feudal oppression," says Alexander Mackenzie, "at a time so little remote as the reign of Charles II., may seem strange. A castle may be pointed out, viz.: Menzies Castle, much less remote from the seat of authority, and the courts of law, than Brahan, where, half a century later, an odious vassal was starved to death by order of the wife of the chief, the sister of the 'great and patriotic' Duke of Argyll."

When Coinneach found that no mercy was to be expected either from the vindictive lady or her sub-

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servient vassals, he resigned himself to his fate. He drew forth his white stone, so long the instrument of his supernatural intelligence, and once more applying it to his eye, said :

"I see into the far future, and I read the doom of the race of my oppressor. The long-descended lines of Seaforth will, ere many generations have passed, end in extinction and in sorrow, I see a chief, the last of his house, both deaf and dumb. He will be the father of four sons, all of whom he will follow to the tomb. He will live careworn and die mourning, knowing that the honours of his line are to be extinguished for ever, and that no future chief of the Mackenzies shall bear rule at Brahan or in Kintail. After lamenting over the last and most promising of his sons he himself shall sink into the grave, and the remnant of his possessions shall be inherited by a white-coifed lassie from the east, and she is to kill her sister. And as a sign by which it may be known that these things are coming to pass, there shall be four great lairds in the days of the last deaf and dumb Seaforth—Gairloch, Chisholm, Grant and Raasay—of whom one shall be buck-toothed, another hare-lipped, another half-witted, and the fourth a stammerer. Chiefs distinguished by these personal marks shall be the allies and neighbours of the last Seaforth, and when he looks around him and sees them he may know that his sons are doomed to death, that his broad lands shall pass away to the stranger, and that his race shall come to an end."

Sir Bernard Burke, in his *Vicissitudes of Families*, remarks : "With regard to the four Highland lairds who were to be buck-toothed, etc., I am uncertain which was which. Suffice it to say that the four lairds were marked by the above-mentioned distinguishing personal peculiarities, and all four were contemporaries of the last of the Seaforths."

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Mr. Alexander Mackenzie, author of *The History of the Mackenzies*, believes that Sir Hector Mackenzie, of Gairloch, was the buck-tooth laird, the Chisholm the hare-lipped, Grant the half-witted, and Raasay the stammerer.

Francis Humberston Mackenzie, the last Earl of Seaforth, became deaf after an attack of scarlet fever and by degrees lost the use of his speech. Nevertheless he raised a regiment at the beginning of the great European War, in 1797 he was created a British peer, in 1800 became Governor of Barbadoes, and in 1808 was made a Lieutenant-General. He survived his four sons, but died on the 11th of January, 1815, the last male representative of his race. His modern title became extinct, the chiefdom passed away to a very remote collateral who succeeded to no portion of the property. He was thus lamented by Sir Walter Scott:

> Thy sons rose around thee in light and in love,
> All a father could hope, all a friend could approve;
> What 'vails it the tale of thy sorrows to tell,
> In the springtime of youth and of promise they fell!
> Of the line of MacKenneth remains not a male
> To bear the proud name of the Chief of Kintail.

The Seaforth estates were inherited by his eldest surviving daughter, Lady Hood, who was returning from India a newly-made widow—"the white-coifed lassie from the East." Some few years later she was the innocent cause of the death of her younger sister from an accident to a carriage which she was driving at the time.

These events greatly interested Sir Walter Scott, who wrote to Mr. Morritt:

"Our friend Lady Hood will now be Cabarfeidh (=stag-head, the Celtic designation of the Chief of the Clan, taken from the family crest) . . . there are

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few situations in which the cleverest women are so apt to be imposed upon as in the management of landed property, especially of a Highland estate. I do fear the accomplishment of the prophecy that when there should be a deaf Cabarfeidh the house was to fall."

The fall soon followed. Lady Hood married Mr. Stewart, who assumed the name of Mackenzie. Lord Seaforth had already sold a part of Kintail. The remaining portion, the property in Ross, the church lands of Chanonry, the Barony of Pluscarden, and the island of Lewis were disposed of one after the other. All that remains are the ruins of Brahan Castle, and a last fraction of property now in the hands of trustees.

Lockhart, in his Life of Scott, remarks: "Mr. Morritt can testify thus far, that he heard the prophecy quoted in the Highlands at a time when Lord Seaforth had two sons alive and in good health, and that it was certainly not made after the event," and he goes on to remark that Scott and Sir Humphrey Davy were most certainly convinced of its truth, as were also many others who had watched the latter days of Seaforth in the light of these predictions.

The late Duncan Davidson of Tulloch, Lord Lieutenant of the County of Ross, wrote (May 21, 1878), "Many of these prophecies I heard of upwards of seventy years ago, and when many of them were not fulfilled, such as the late Lord Seaforth surviving his sons, and Mrs. Stewart Mackenzie's accident near Brahan, by which Miss Caroline Mackenzie was killed." He was a regular visitor at Brahan Castle, and often heard the predictions discussed among members of the family. (Cf. Mackenzie's *History of the Mackenzies*, p. 267.)

A prophecy which has been handed down in Gaelic

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verse relates to another branch of the family, the Mackenzies of Rosehaugh :

> The heir of the Mackenzies will take
> A white rook out of the wood,
> And will take a wife from a music-house
> With his people against him.
> And the Heir will be great
> In deeds and as an orator
> When the Pope in Rome
> Will be thrown off his throne.
> Over opposite Creagh-a-chow
> Will dwell a little lean tailor,
> Foolish James will be the Laird
> (When Wise James is the measurer)
> Who will ride without a bridle
> The wild colt of his choice.
> But foolish pride, without sense,
> Will put in the place of the seed of the deer
>   the seed of the goat
> And the beautiful Black Isle will fall
> Under the rule of the fishermen of Avoch.

We can hear of no tradition of any literal taking of a white rook out of the wood,[1] One of the Rosehaugh Mackenzies is said to have married a girl from a music hall, for which his people were naturally "against him." Sir George Mackenzie, Lord Advocate for Scotland, was celebrated as an orator, though he lived before the Pope suffered the loss of his temporal power. Mr. Maclennan of Rosehaugh, who says that he has heard these lines discussed ever since he was a boy, explains that the lean tailor was a pious man who frequently remonstrated with the Laird of Rosehaugh, known as Foolish James, as also did Wise James, one James Maclaren, who often

[1] There is an old prophecy long current in South Uist as to the signs of the changes which have taken place there, one of which was also the appearance of a white crow. An old man related to Father Allan Macdonald that he himself saw this at Kilbride the year it was lost to the old family. He says it was not wholly white, but only as compared with any other crow. He is sure it was a crow, "it had the same style of conversation."

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rebuked him for the freedom he allowed to his wife, "the wild colt" whom he chose from the music hall. None can deny that the ruin of the Mackenzies, whose armorial bearings are the deer's head with his horns, was brought about by "foolish pride without sense." The arms of the Fletchers are a goat, and as they now rule in Rosehaugh, the seed of the goat may be said to have taken the place of the seed of the deer. Perhaps one of the most curious details of this fulfilment of prophecy is the fact that the proprietor of Rosehaugh, who in 1856 assumed the name of Fletcher, is the son of an Avoch fisherman of the more humble patronymic of Jack.

Though, from the first, the personal relations of the people with the new proprietors have never been other than friendly, there has been in Lewis, as elsewhere, a certain amount of friction on the subject of the land, and in some degree the same mistake of expecting a people, whose instincts and hereditary tendency are those of crofters, to become fishermen, only because it suited the proprietors to subtract land for sport and for large farms.

Mr. Anderson Smith, an expert in the fisheries question, testifies that "it is ridiculous to suppose that the fisheries, as at present conducted, are alone capable of supporting such a large and rapidly increasing population. . . . The Celtic races never seem to become thorough seamen. They are tillers of the soil, to which, in general, they are passionately attached." Hence there was, even in the Lews, work for the Crofter Commission, and the usual evidence was extracted as to the degeneracy of recent times.

"My recollections of Lewis go back for seventy years," says an aged Free Church minister. "How different the comfort and circumstances of the population of sixty

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years ago! All the people were then in a state of comparative comfort, having arable land and hill pasture for sheep and cattle, whereas now poverty and want largely predominate.

"Increase of population cannot here be the cause of the immense difference in the condition of the people. The present population (1883) of 3,489 is only some 488 more than that of fifty years ago, when the parish had a population of 3,041, and when the circumstances of the people were much more comfortable. And this is so in the face of the large increase in the value of the fishing industry since 1831, affording a source of income to the people many times larger now than it was then. Why, then, the unfavourable condition of the people as contrasted with their condition then? Simply because the large reaches of pasture ground then in their possession have been taken from the people since and are formed into sheep walks and deer forests." The same witness testifies that out of £20,000 rental yielded by the island, £12,000 comes from sportsmen and a few large farmers, though all the land now in possession of these farmers, except what was reclaimed by the late Sir James Matheson, had been reclaimed by the forefathers of the present crofter population.

Or, again, what says the minister of the Established Church of Scotland in Stornoway, the very centre of the fishing industry?

"It is evident to any one who knows the real state of the Highland crofters that the Commission has not been appointed a day too soon. Fifty or forty years ago they were quite comfortable and able to live well, but now they find it very difficult to make a bare living."

Another witness, a solicitor, who had lived for fifty years in the island, set forth various grievances of the Crofters: that the statistics presented were not to be depended upon, that they are "virtually factorial

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figures, that families increase and holdings diminish." It was further asserted that emigration was no remedy in this island, that "for many a year to come every able-bodied man, with a taste for the sea is *required* in Lewis."

The presence of the sportsman is sufficient explanation for the greater part of the discontent in Lewis, for he is not even of use as an employer of labour. He is naturally a passing visitor, whose presence is disturbing rather than productive, and who probably, with mistaken generosity, overpays the few persons he employs, and unfits them doubly for their ordinary occupations.

In all the complaints made there is nothing that is personal. Unlike other new proprietors, the Matheson family, including the late proprietor, Lady Matheson, are spoken of with unfailing respect, and it will never be forgotten that in the dreary years of 1846-7 when others thought only of promoting emigration, voluntary or involuntary, Sir James Matheson brought all his resources to the help of the famishing islanders.

The original possessors of the island were the Macleods, and some small ruins of an ancient castle still testify to their existence. There is a tradition of another tower "built by Cromwell to awe the neighbourhood," but its very site is now uncertain.

The old Seaforth Lodge is now superseded by a modern "Castle," which, if not in itself of very imposing appearance, has at least the advantage of a most beautiful situation, surrounded not only by glorious and extensive woods,[1] but even by a flower garden

[1] These must be of comparatively recent growth, as we read in the *Old Statistical Account* that the proprietor had planted some trees near the house, but all had failed except the allar [? alder], and mountain ash or rhodin [rowan tree].

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which might be the pride of any nobleman's seat in Britain, and which in these latitudes is especially remarkable as a triumph of taste, industry, and perseverance. The islanders are allowed access to the grounds within certain reasonable limitations, and such a tribute to the power of mind over matter cannot fail to have its effect upon the beauty-loving Celt.

The Castle contains nothing of special interest unless it be a china bedstead, at which one gazes in much the same spirit as at the full-rigged ships which a sailor brings home at the bottom of a narrow necked bottle. As it is alleged of a certain boat, which shall be nameless, in which we crossed over to this island from Skye, that at a particular period of the voyage even the crew take to their beds, and as we can testify to the sufferings of even certain officers of His Majesty's Royal Navy on the same occasion, the problem of how a china bedstead arrived on the island of Lewis seems to be beyond solution.

Stories are still current about one Eonachan Dubh, a factor to Lord Seaforth, who seems to have been quite a "character." He could neither read nor write, but seems to have prospered, for he had a cow for every day in the year. Returning from Brahan Castle one day, he was asked what fine things he had seen there, and replied, "I saw tongs with a crown [i.e. tongs with rounded ends like crown pieces], a goad for embers [a poker], and a spoon for ashes [shovel]."

The saying common among the other Islands, that the people of Lewis are "very far back," points to another of the anomalies characteristic of the island, its mixture of culture and superstition, prosperity and squalor. The houses are certainly among the worst we have seen, but the appearance of the people themselves is very superior to that of the population

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of South Uist or Barra, where the houses are often equally wretched. We read that in 1845 there were sixty-seven slated houses in Stornoway, generally of two stories high, and a garret; that there was "a custom house, a town house, an assembly room and two schoolrooms, one attorney, and one Roman Catholic priest, without an individual of a flock," from which we may gather that Protestantism gained an early hold upon the island. Mr. Anderson Smith (1874) tells us that fifty years before there was only one bowl to drink out of in the Carloway district, and

WOODEN DISH FORMERLY USED FOR MEALS

that when the minister came from Lochs every third Sunday, it had to be sent for from Dalebeg, three miles away; the people ate out of a trough. such as we have seen (though not now in use) in Eriskay. Whisky was made from oats, which were cut with a sickle, but the barley crop was plucked up by the roots. The grain, if wanted at once, was dried in a pot over the fire, and ground in a handmill, but generally there was a kiln or two in every township.

A field is still shown, called the "tea field," on

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account of its having been manured with tea from a wreck, which the people did not know how otherwise to utilize. Some queer things come of wrecks. A doctor in one of the Islands told us he had lately seen the Bay strewn with thousands of pills of a much advertised variety, which were being eagerly collected. Professional etiquette would not admit of his gratifying our curiosity as to the effect of the salvage upon his practice.

The people of Lewis are said to be extremely healthy, and, especially in the district of Uig, there are records of considerable longevity; it is said too that tubercular consumption is unknown, except when introduced from towns on the mainland. There is, however, the tradition of a disease which seized new-born infants about the fifth night after their birth, and from which no case of recovery is recorded. The infants of aliens did not suffer; evidence was conflicting as to whether this still continues.

Unlike other islands, where the difficulty is, and has long been, to get work, as late as 1845 we hear of labour being very scarce, principally on account of the fishing, but also of levies for the services. Wages at that period were sixpence a day, with two meals of meat and a dram, or eightpence without: which does not suggest that living was dear half-a-century ago.

The excellent roads now to be found all over the island were begun in 1741. We read, about the same time, that fine hares had lately been introduced by Seaforth, but that there were "no partridges, robins, rooks or magpies."

In 1759 a fortnightly post was established which soon became weekly (*Old. Stat. Acc.*). We hear that there were twelve large farms and that some of the land was worth 36*s*. an acre.

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The peat in Lewis seemed to us very poor, and it burnt with difficulty. Indeed at the Royal Hotel in Stornoway we had coal fires, the only place in the Hebrides except Tyree where we did not find peat. The peat beds in Lewis seem to cover the greater part of the island, but we were told that they were only about six feet deep and soon exhausted. Stornoway, Gress and the peninsula of Ey are the only districts where any sort of fertility is apparent.

It is said that there is extraordinarily little crime in Lewis, and indeed the same may be said of all the Hebrides.[1] The people are not litigious, which is fortunate, considering the nature of the arrangements for the administration of justice. For some time past there has been no sheriff at all in those islands, which belong to Inverness. Part of Lewis belongs to Ross and there may be special arrangements for this bit of country: otherwise any one in the Long Island down to Barra Head could not seek for justice nearer than Portree in Skye. It transpired in the evidence of the Crofter Commission that a certain factor in the Lews had boasted of appearing in sixteen capacities at the same time, including that of clerk of the School Board, distributor of stamps, clerk of the Harbour Trusts, collector of rates and local bank agent.

It is said that Lewis was one of the latest settled of all the islands: whether as being nearest to Norway and the more subject to raids from the Vikings, or as

[1] Andrew Henderson, the severe critic of Doctor Johnson's *Travels*, remarks that "fewer people come to an untimely end in Scotland in thirty years than at Tyburn in one: and Burt, who, it must be remembered, was an English contractor visiting the Highlands on business, observes some twenty years later: "We may venture to affirm that ten Yorkshiremen lost their lives for horse-stealing for one Highlander that died in a case of cattle-lifting."

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furthest from Iona and therefore from civilizing influences, it would be difficult to decide.

According to the "Indweller," himself a Morison, the inhabitants of Lewis are descended from three sources: "(1) Mores (now Morison), son of Renannus, natural son to one of the Kings of Norway. (2) Iskair MacAulay, an Irishman. (3) Macnaicle, whose only daughter Torquile [descended also from the King of Norway] did violently cut off immediately the whole race of Macnaicle."

I owe to the courtesy of Mr. Gibson, the headmaster of the Nicolson Institute at Stornoway, the opportunity of making a summary of the patronymics of the island as represented in the schools of the district, from which one or two interesting historical facts may be inferred.

The Morisons (or Mores) are indeed fairly numerous; 239 children of that name come from the three parishes of Barvas, Lochs and Uig. They are however exceeded by the Macleods, the patronymic of the old chiefs of the Islands, who number 585, and by the Macdonalds (the name of the Lord of the Isles) numerous in almost all the Islands, of whom there are here 364. The next to follow are the Mackenzies—184. These four names are held by 1,392 school children out of a total of 2,974. The only other names represented by over 100 children are Mackay, Maclean, Smith (of which the Gaelic equivalent is the more euphonious *Gow*) Maciver and Macaulay. It is curious, as possibly an evidence of the Highland clinging to familiar surroundings, to observe in how many cases a name belongs to a single district, denoting that a family tends to remain where it has once settled. For example, all the twenty Kennedys but one, and all the sixteen Macraes but one, come from Lochs; all the eighteen Buchanans but one, from Uig; all the six-

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teen Gillies, fifteen Grahams, eleven Gunns, eight Macleays, eight Mitchells, five Bulges, three Hunters, three Macfarquhars, three Rosses from the remote parish of Barvas. The Macsweens, Kerrs, Chisholms are found only in Lochs; the Macgregors, Beggs, Macneills, only in Uig. The presence of some obviously Scotch and English names, represented only by one or two children, Stewart, Beaton, Anderson, Practice, Young, is accounted for, probably, either by the fact that Stornoway is resorted to by Scotch and English fishermen, or because it is the depôt of the Royal Naval Reserve.

Perhaps nowhere is the question of names so interesting as in these Islands, where indeed they are often important as traces of history. For example, the fact that the name of Macleod is still the most numerous in the island is confirmation of the tradition that the Macleods held Lewis till 1597, when Torquil, a disinherited son of the chief, recovered the island from the usurping occupant and conveyed it by deed to Kenneth, chief of the Mackenzies, a gift afterwards ratified at Court in 1607 when Kenneth Mackenzie was created Lord Mackenzie of Kintail. The Mackenzies, first distinguished by their bravery at the battle of Largs (1263), gradually rose on the ruins of the Macdonalds, when the lordship of the Isles was forfeited in the fifteenth century, though the Macdonald clan in its various branches remained, in certain districts, powerful and numerous. Hence the Macdonalds occupy the second position. The Morisons, according to the "Indweller," are abundantly accounted for as among the oldest inhabitants, settled in the island before the battle of Largs brought the rule of the Vikings to an end. The Mackenzies are very naturally third in the list, and it is equally natural that the Mathesons should be only fifteenth with but fifty-four representatives,

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as, until about sixty years ago, the clan had no connexion with the island. The low-country names, though of recent origin in Lewis, will long testify to another detail of its history, just as the English names in Tyree are a relic of the period of the erection of the Skerryvore lighthouse.

In Barra, in one of the schools, we tried the simple experiment of asking that every child of the name of Macneill should stand. About half the school rose to its feet. Then we asked that those whose mother was a Macneill should also stand, after which not more than a sixth of the school remained sitting. In Tyree and Eriskay, for reasons already given, we found no prevailing patronymic; in South Uist it seemed as if every one we met was, when we came to inquire, a Macdonald; but inquiry was necessary, as on account of the lack of variety most people seemed to be known by their first names, often accompanied for further distinction by some epithet or by the name of their township; hence the fashion of address of Father Allan (Macdonald), or of Big Peter, or Black Donald, or Ian Bornish (name of the township), and so on.

Lewis, however, has historical monuments beside which even the clan Macleod is of modern growth. The Standing-stones of Callernish, the Stonehenge of the Hebrides, are among the most famous in Britain. They are situated in a wild spot on a tableland somewhat raised above the peat bog which encircles them for miles. A few houses are clustered at the foot of the hill beyond, and there is a little temperance inn, where the friends of the Princess of Thule, on their way to Loch Roag, mysteriously drank whisky. The name Callernish at once suggests a Norse derivation, the affix *nish* generally denoting a point; but those who would seek a more remote origin for this mysterious monument derive the name from *call*, a circle, *airn* of

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the judge, and *gheis* of sorcery; hence *Callairngheis*, which would denote a place of assembly or of judgement. Though the depth of the slow-growing peat which surrounds the base of the stones (we were told that some six feet had been cleared away) would suggest a more remote antiquity, many think that it is of Norse origin, for small counterparts of this monument are pretty frequent in Iceland, where they are variously regarded as battle-sites or as places of assembly. The

CALLERNISH, LEWIS.

ground plan is that of a recumbent Iona cross, that is, a Latin cross with a halo encircling the junction of the arms, the top of the cross pointing almost due west. Hence there are some advocates for the theory that it is of Columban origin. The whole question of such stones is so wrapped in mystery that one can only state the direction of conjecture. Possibly the following theory of the "Indweller" may however be eliminated.

"It is left by traditione that these were a sort of men

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converted into stones by ane inchanter. Others affirm that they were set up in places for devotion; but the places where they stand are so far from any such sort of stones to be seen or found either above or below ground that it cannot but be admired how they could be carried there"—(like the china bed at Stornoway).

There are, moreover, two subsidiary circles on an opposite hill at a short distance, all, I believe, pointing in the direction of the Atlantic and the setting sun.

The celebrated Dun of Carloway is of its kind perhaps the most perfect in Scotland, and there are several others, mostly on islands in small lochs.

Of the many remains of chapels now largely buried in sand, some of the most interesting are in the wild district of Barvas,[1] the most primitive part of the Islands. It was to our great regret that we never penetrated to the Butt of Lewis, the most northerly point of the island, and far wilder than anything to be now seen in the much frequented St. Kilda. The largest Church is St. Mulvay, fifty feet long by twenty-four broad, outside measurement, the walls being about four feet thick, which reduces the inside measurement to sixteen feet.

The visitor to Barvas should not omit to see the manufacture of the crogans or bollachans still made by the old women of the district for domestic use. They are pots or jars with a wide mouth not ungraceful in shape, moulded in the hand, without tools, from the local red clay, and hardened in the sun. Then warm milk is put into them, and boiled slowly over a peat fire, which produces a fairly good glaze. They must at one time have been in common use in the Islands,

[1] S. Peter's, Habost; S. Thomas, Swainbost; S. Clement's, North Dell; Holy Cross, South Galson; S. Bridget, Borve; S. Peter's, Lower Strather; S. Mary's, Upper Barvas; S. John Baptist, Bragir, should be specially noticed.

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as we saw some in Tyree and heard of them in Skye and elsewhere.

At Melista there are the remains of a nunnery called "Teagh na n cailichan don," "the house of the old black women."

On the peninsula of Eye, near Stornoway, the burial ground surrounding the old chapel (or *Teampul* as these Columban Churches are called) is still in use, as are many others elsewhere, and we were told that the old sentiments so far linger that the people still bury their dead with their feet to the east. A worthy minister, anxious to stamp out "a Popish superstition," set the example of burying his own relatives north and south, but it was quite in vain. Moreover, we noted with interest that a boy relating a story of an apparition which met him on the way to school, said, "I had only just time *to bless myself* (obviously a relic of the days when the sign of the cross would have been made) when it disappeared." Another informant, speaking of a deceased relative, used the phrase, "God bless him," evidently the remains of the old "God rest his soul." Old beliefs, which have taken hold of the life of the people, die hard, and that in more directions than one.

Only a few months ago a Free Kirk Elder was visited by a witch who wanted a glowing peat, for her fire had gone out, which is unlucky. Hospitality compelled him to oblige her at all risks, and "besides, you never know what may happen when the like of them are crossed. But it would not do to let her have a share in anything that belongs to you. You might as well let her have your hair, or the parings of your nails, instead of putting them in among the stones of the wall of the house, as one always should. So when she got the peat, he put a similar one into the tub of water by the door. In a minute she came back, and said the peat had gone out, and she got another, red and glowing from the

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fire, and he put another one into the tub. Then again she came back and the same thing happened a third time, after which, when he looked into the water, there were three lumps of beautiful butter," which but for the Elder's foresight would have come for the witch and not for himself.

Truly, Lewis is in some respects an anomalous island, an island of contrasts, the contrasts of poverty and prosperity, of the old and the new, the romantic and the commonplace. One may drive to the Seal cave of Gress which runs back into the conglomerate for two hundred yards or more, and of which Anderson Smith says, "It is a much more imagination-stirring and weird-like cavern than the more celebrated cave of Staffa," and then one may come back and eat Italian ices in Stornoway!

One of the objects of interest described by the "Indweller" we did not manage to locate.

"There is a little island hard by the coast where it is said that pigmies lived some tyme by reason they find, by searching, some small bones in the earth"; Standing among the giant stones at Callernish one feels oneself such a pigmy, such a pert anachronism, that if the green-coated men of peace, the *daoine sithe*, should open their green hillocks and come out into the daylight, one could hardly feel surprise, unless it were that they should brave the wrath of the Free Kirk Elders by the gaiety of their fairy dance. Everywhere in the Islands, singly or in circles, the Standing-stones are impressive, guarding their secret in the solitary places of the earth, their past known only to the hills, memorials of a time to which no one can put a date, of a religion of which no one knows the creed, of lawgivers whose code is forgotten, of a race which we cannot even identify.

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Note on the Brahan Seer.

The following account of similar prophecies elsewhere is borrowed from *The Oban Telegraph* (April 27, 1888).

The records of Argyll tell of a seer known as Niven Macvicar, the first Reformed minister of Inverary, who preached under a rock until a church was built for him, called after him Cill Ghillenaoimh—Niven's preaching and burying place; it was built in an old burying ground, pronounced now *Cillmale*, and in English, Kilmalieu.

His principal prophecy was about a dyke not then built. "This dyke was built for the most part by Duke John, the fiftieth duke, and begins at the Garrora Bridge, and goes along the side of the road to the Stronshire Cottage, and after numerous windings enters the sea at Rudha nam Frangach. He prophesied that an enemy would come secretly into the place and surprise the inhabitants within the crooked dyke, and that a sanguinary battle would take place at a spot named from this prophecy Ath-nan-lann (the Sword Ford). At this ford the heat of the battle was to take place; and so much were the men to be engaged in the strife that a man born with only one hand would hold three kings' horses; and so great would be the slaughter there that people would walk dry shod on the bodies of the slain across the ford; that the ravens would drink their full of man's blood, and the river would run with blood; that the inhabitants would be defeated, and that an old lame white horse would carry all that remained of Siol Diarmid (Clan Campbell) over Kern Drom, near Tyndrum; and that after that day one would travel in Argyllshire forty miles without seeing a chimney smoke or hearing a cock crow."

When the Marquis of Argyll is said to have asked of this person, "What death shall I die?" the parson replied, "You'll be beheaded, my lord." "What death will you yourself die?" "I shall be drowned, my lord." Then the Marquis said, "I will prevent that," and sent the parson to reside in Stirling with a servant to attend to him. One night the drum beat an alarm of fire, and the servant ran to see what was the matter. As he did not return soon the parson attempted to go out, and fell from an outside stair into a hogshead for catching rainwater. When his gillie returned, he found the parson feet uppermost in the butt and quite dead.

Other of the Brahan Seer's prophecies which have an interest for us as relating to the Islands, are as follows:

"The day will come when the Lewsmen shall go forth with their hosts to battle, but they will be turned back by the jaw bone of an animal smaller than an ass," was a prediction accounted ridiculous and quite incomprehensible until it was fulfilled in a remarkable, but very simple, manner.

The Seaforth estates, forfeited after the '15, were restored shortly before the '45. On this account it was considered desirable that Seaforth, though still a Jacobite at heart, should not take part in any new rising. When the news came, he set out with a friend

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and travelled by night in the direction of Poolewe. While in concealment near the shore, they saw two ships entering the bay, having on board a large number of armed men, whom they at once recognized as Seaforth's followers from the Lews, raised and commanded by Captain Colin Mackenzie. Lord Seaforth had just been making a repast of a sheep's head when he espied his retainers, and approaching the ships with the sheep's jaw bone in his hand, he waved it towards them and ordered them to return to their homes at once, which command they obeyed by turning back for Stornoway.

On another occasion, Coinnaich Odhar predicted that "When the big-thumbed sheriff's officer, and the blind man of the twenty-four fingers, shall be together in Barra, Macneill may be making ready for the flitting." This prediction, well known in Barra for generations, has been most literally fulfilled. On a certain occasion a blind man from Benbecula having six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, went to collect alms in South Uist, and afterwards decided to proceed to Barra. He crossed over in the same boat with "Maor nan Ordagan morah" (the Sheriff-officer of the Big Thumbs), who was on his way to serve a summons of ejectment on the unfortunate Chief of Barra. Iain MacAonghaisic Calum, the man who served as guide to the blind beggar, was living at the time when Mr. Alexander Mackenzie published the story (1882). We also gleaned the same story in Barra, with the addition that when Macneill heard they had come to Eoligarry, he said, "This is the man who is to put me out of Barra," and talked of shooting them, which sounds like a local variant.

"The day will come when the old wife with the footless stocking will drive the Lady of Clanranald from Nunton House in Benbecula." Old Mrs. Macdonald, whose husband took the farm of Nunton, was probably one of the last to wear those primitive articles of dress once common in the Highlands. Clanranald and his Lady were compelled to leave the island, and the descendants of the *Cailleach nam Mogan*, as Mrs. Macdonald was called, have long occupied the ancient residence of Clanranald of the Isles.

Among other prophecies which have been definitely fulfilled are the following, made, it should be remembered, some 210 years ago. "Strange as it may seem to you this day, the time will come when full-rigged ships will be seen sailing eastward and westward by the back of Tom-na-hurich" (the far-famed Fairies' Hill near Inverness). This has been literally fulfilled by the making of the Caledonian Canal.

"The clans will flee from their native country before an army of sheep." "The day will come when the Big Sheep (understood to mean deer) will overrun the country until they meet the Northern Sea." "The ancient proprietors of the soil shall give place to strange merchant proprietors, and the whole Highlands shall become one huge deer forest; the whole country will be so utterly desolated and depopulated that the crow of a cock shall not be heard north of

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Druim-Uachdair (in Kintail): the people will emigrate to islands now unknown, but which shall yet be discovered in the boundless oceans." Comment upon these is needless. With respect to the clearances in Lewis, he said, "Many a long waste feannag (i.e. rig once arable) will yet be seen between Uig of the mountains and Ness of the plains," a prediction which has been fulfilled to the letter.

The following does not concern our district, but is too striking to be omitted. The Seer, called to Culloden on business, was passing what is now known as the Battlefield, when he exclaimed, "Oh, Drummossie, thy bleak moor shall, ere many generations have passed away, be stained with the best blood of the Highlands. Glad am I that I will not see that day, for it will be a fearful time; heads will be lopped off by the score, and no mercy will be shown on either side."

The Seer one day, pointing to the now celebrated Strathpeffer mineral wells, said, "The day will come when this disagreeable spring, with thick-crusted surface and unpleasant smell, shall be put under lock and key, so great will be the crowd of people that will press to drink its waters."

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CHAPTER XVI

LEWIS AND ITS FISHER FOLK

LEAVING the wilder country north and north-west of Lewis, and crossing endless miles of grey moorland, diversified only by black patches of peat, or grey lochs of sullen water, we come to Stornoway. Here we have paved streets and rows of shops, several varieties of Churches, even villas with "bedded out" gardens, which would pass muster in a London suburb —a place where people pay calls, read the ladies' papers, and have afternoon tea.

Just as one thinks of kelp and Tyree, of poverty and South Uist, of officialism and Loch Maddy, so one inevitably associates Stornoway with fish and education. The shops and the villas and the church-going finery are an accident, the real Stornoway smells of fish and reeks of education; and in regard to both interests one finds much that is characteristic, much that well repays one for inquiry.

In spite of considerable difference of detail and surroundings, the fishery problem is much the same in all the Islands. In Stornoway, however, the capital of the fishing world of the west coast, it naturally reaches its climax; and had the relations between proprietor and people been such as they are in South Uist, or even Tyree, the brave little town would never have arrived at its present degree of prosperity.

But the people, in spite of occasional errors on both sides, have been generously and considerately treated; and in Stornoway, with its shops and hotels and

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Churches, its villas and gardens, its harbour, its orderly officials, its police, its poorhouse, its courts, its Banks, its general activity, we see what can be done, under fair conditions, by the same people who, otherwise dealt with, are condemned, wholesale, as idle and ungrateful.

Even in Lewis, where the industry has reached its height, where the facilities for transport are so much better than elsewhere, and where there is some co-operation and local organization, we are told by those most cognizant of the subject that the population can never be supported by the fisheries alone, that the fishing-trade can never be much more than a help to the people, that every acre annexed for sport is subtracted from the living of the poor.

The minister of Uig, giving evidence before the Commission and speaking from a life-long familiarity with the conditions of the people, stated: "There is a notion prevalent with some that the people, or at least many of them, should become exclusively fishermen, and that this would leave them better off than they are at present. I wish very strongly to impress upon the Commissioners the folly of this view and the danger of entertaining it. The herring-fishing is carried on for two months of the year on the east-side of the island. During the remainder of the year the native population prosecute the ling-fishing exclusively. I should also mention that for two or three months in the year they go as hired men to the east-coast herring-fishing."

The east-coast fishing, though very variable, may in certain years be remunerative. The men go mainly to Peterhead and Fraserburgh, and take their chance, following the herring round the coast, and selling it at so much a cran, i.e. a deep barrel. Often they bring home from £20 to £30 each, which supports their

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families through the worst of the winter. Then, returning early in September, they fish for lythe and saithe, while the women get in the harvest.

The lobster fishing, once profitable, is now declining, and no pains are taken to cultivate oysters, which might do well in the calm lochs and bays of the east coast, if only some one with capital could take the matter in hand. It is out of the question for the people themselves to undertake the experiment, the first step of which is to lodge £60 in advance, with the certainty of other costs to follow.

"The Crown," says Mr. Anderson Smith, "is the most mercenary and least satisfactory landlord to deal with. Others may be negligent, the Crown is oppressive," from which we gather that there were some islands with which Mr. Anderson Smith had not made personal acquaintance! He points out (*op. cit.* p. 415) that what is required is some cheap and simple means of getting grants for oyster or lobster beds and other small undertakings, and, above all, compensation for improvements on Crown-fishing with no Government rackrenting allowed. On the part of the proprietors there should be the granting of facilities for building small piers, and right of settlement at reasonable cost on lands near to the foreshores.

The salmon rivers are, of course, a feature of the "sport," so productive—to the landlord. We read that in old times salmon was sold at a penny a pound, and the "Indweller," already quoted, speaking of a river in Barvas, half-a-mile long, which connects a freshwater loch with the sea, says that "in 1585 it was observed that there were 3,000 great salmon taken in that small portion of river."

It is also alleged by older writers, as well as by Mr. Anderson Smith, that many species of fish of little value elsewhere are firm and well-tasted here.

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The fishing operations, even from the practical point of view—all questions of the science of breeding and preservation apart—are far more complicated than the mere outsider is at all likely to realize. A recent writer in the *Quarterly Review*, July, 1901, touches on some interesting points, which he has obviously observed for himself, a privilege which has not been ours. We talk about "poor" fishermen and "ignorant" fishermen; it is a becoming lesson in humility to learn that the mere question of nets is one involving much knowledge and experience.

"Four different kinds of net may be enumerated. The trawl scrapes the sandy bed of the sea, scooping up everything that moves in its path. The trammel is a fixed wall of meshes, generally laid among the rocks, with deep purses, in which the wandering fish entangle themselves. The drift net, which may be likened to a moving trammel, drives through the water ahead of the smacks, and enmeshes every herring or mackerel that strikes it. Omitting some less important patterns of net, we have as our fourth type the seine or sean, a corked and leaded net, which is 'shot' with the aid of a rowing boat close in shore in a circle. Its method of working is thus a compromise between trawl and trammel.

"Each method of netting has its followers, and the trawlers, drifters and seaners of any large fishing community may be regarded professionally, and in some parts indeed socially as well, as distinct castes, the adept at one method being often totally unfitted to earn his living at any other. Dire necessity, it is true, may compel fishermen of one class to turn their hands to another, but such transferred activity is rare. This distinction between the various sections of the fishing population is scarcely common knowledge with those who have not resided for a time in their midst; and

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we have even recounted instances of profound ignorance on the subject, in gentlemen who sit for these fishing constituencies in the House of Commons, and are proudly alluded to with a conscious dignity of ownership by those hard-worked electors, with the nature of whose occupations they are so slightly acquainted. To the uninitiated, fishing appears to be unskilled rather than skilled labour. A fisherman is just a fisherman, and not a drifter, or seaner, or hooker; and few persons are aware of the deep-rooted prejudices and jealousies that demarcate the men of different methods."

It seems almost incredible that there should not be "as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it," but such is in fact the melancholy truth; and just as England is looking forward to the extinction of her coal mines, so the west-coast fisherman is not only looking forward, but in certain cases is already experiencing the exhaustion of his fishing grounds; and in both cases to some extent for the same reasons—that the alien is allowed to profit, and that it does not seem to be any one's business to prevent the individual from enriching himself at the expense of the ultimate public good. Even as I write, the newspapers are reporting the co-operation of Welsh coal owners with a view to the direction and organization of output; but again and again our enlightened Government entirely refuses to consider the enforcing of any such policy, in regard to fish, as the coal owners are voluntarily proposing for themselves.

And yet the fishing question is of more pressing consequence because more remediable. If those who cut down the forests of the outer Hebrides had planted as well as destroyed, it would have been to the permanent advantage of the health, climate and cultivation of the Islands; like these selfish destroyers of

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old, with no thought for posterity, our lawgivers are absolutely refusing to give attention alike to the possible replenishing and the imminent exhaustion of our waters.

The most evident of the grievances calling for redress is that of the abuse of the alien steam-trawler, which sweeps the bottom of the sea, and destroys far more than it takes away; disturbing the spawning-beds, and shoals of school-fish, crushing young fish in the beams, and breaking tackle and fishing gear spread by other fishermen. Such attempts at legislation as have already been made have been mainly in the direction of restriction of area, but this, as has already been pointed out, is constantly evaded, and a trawling-boat will often come in by night, do infinite damage even before it is perceived, and be off before any steps can be taken to arrest its movements.

Experts tell us, moreover, that even the methods of the fishermen themselves, both those belonging to the district and the visitors from the east-coast, are not entirely blameless, and require supervision and control. Be that as it may, few seek to deny that while the division of profits is spread over an ever extended area, the "bad years" are increasingly frequent.

To come, as we did only last June, from the repose and silence of other islands into the Babel of a Stornoway evening, is a curious and surprising experience. The pearl-coloured tints of sky and sea which follow a calm sunset in the Hebrides, the distant purple hills, the grey plain of the open country, all are there; but the rare meeting of a home-returning shepherd, of a girl carrying a basket of peat for the evening fire, of the old woman weary with a long day's herding, all friends, known to us by name and kindly acknowledging our evening greeting, this, the familiar human element, is wanting. Instead we have a motley crowd,

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largely of strangers, speaking in tongues that sound harsh and strange; for only here and there one catches the usually predominant Gaelic; instead, there is the plaintive sing-song of the low country Scot, the guttural of the east-coast, the provincial utterance of the East Riding of Yorkshire, or the coast of Norfolk and Suffolk, or, stranger still, the Babel-sounds of Dutch or German, or even Russian. Even the Jew is not wanting on this Rialto of the north. The day's work is done, the night work not yet begun. The men have perhaps had their afternoon rest, and are smoking their evening pipe; the women, in holiday attire, are walking up and down or standing about in bright-coloured groups, knitting the inevitable stocking, and, often enough, betraying their own local origin by its make and quality. No sportsman, catered for with dainty fingers at country-house fire-sides, can show "tops" to compare for skill and elaboration with these produced by the fish-curing girls of some of the Islands and east-coast stations; patterns never yet written down, designs handed from generation to generation, marvellous to the uninitiated. It is to be for ever regretted that the introduction by wandering pedlars and visitants from Glasgow, of hideous aniline dyes, has been encouraged by English purchasers, and that the people are learning to buy inferior wool of the crudest reds and greens instead of using the fleeces of their own sheep and the beautiful colourings of the lily-roots and heather-tops which have been their pride and distinction for generations. All is decorous and orderly; their dresses varied and picturesque, ranging from the "mutch" of the east-coast fishwife to the conventional form and livid colouring of the English girls from Grimsby or Yarmouth. The local costume, however carefully reminiscent of last year's visitor, generally betrays itself from lack of variety in form or material, and we traced a

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trimming of wavy braid, probably imported by some merchant in Stornoway, through half the villages in the island. One always reflected with satisfaction that the flimsy stuffs of mainland manufacture, with which the native girls were rivalling their summer visitants, would soon perish in such a climate and with such service, and that before long they would be back in their own tweeds of softer colouring and more dignified outline. Meanwhile the gay colourings were not unacceptable among the sober tints of earth and sky.

At sunrise the whole scene is changed. The harbour is a forest of masts, the sails are folded away; here and there a lantern, fastened to the mast, has been forgotten, and the light is dimly twinkling in the early sunshine. In every boat men are hauling up from the bottom the great red-brown nets full of silver fish, while scores of girls with bare heads and shortened skirts stand in orderly rows beside great wooden troughs, into which the gleaming spoils are cast, in deep basketfuls. Then, with incredible rapidity and a skill learnt from danger avoided, they slit and gut the fish, casting them, one by one, into the barrels which stand in rows beside them. How the palms of their hands escape a horrible accident a hundred times a day is a problem to the uninitiated, but we are assured that accidents are very rare. The island-women are said to be especially skilful, and their services in much demand. The Dutch fishermen cure for themselves, and the east-coast men bring women with them, but extra hands are often wanted. Stornoway alone possesses some eighty or ninety lassies, and some two thousand inhabitants are engaged just now in fishing; so with the temporary immigration the fishing-population is very large at the present time, although we are assured that some two-thirds of the foreign fleet has already gone elsewhere, a fact which, in face of the close-packed forest of masts, it is difficult to

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BAY HEAD, STORNOWAY.

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apprehend. The scene is curiously characteristic. There is none of the chatter which accompanies any gregarious work in the fishing-quarters of Dieppe and Boulogne. Now and then the men on the boats shout to each other, or to the women ashore, but there is no mere talk. The scene however is not silent. The air is rent with the shrieks of thousands of gulls, and the flapping of their wings as they hover in myriads, darting and swooping at the refuse thrown to them, is distinctly audible. They are the scavengers of the occasion, taking a useful and definite share of the work in progress.

As we turn away in the direction of our hotel, which, facing the bay-head, affords us a lingering view of the scene, we meet certain lounging gentlemen whose appearance might perplex a stranger. No tourists are they, affecting the air of sportsmen; no real sportsmen affecting nothing at all; but trim and well-dressed, unmistakably commercial, canny Scots some of them, silent English, voluble Frenchmen, heavy German, even the Dutchman whom we saw last night in his wooden shoes, now alert, and with an eye to business. Merchants they are, every one of them, waiting till the fish shall be cleaned, salted, and measured into crans to be sold in open market and carried off in the little steamboats that are standing outside in the bay. Some, it may be, however, have a contract with certain boats and do not buy as the fish comes in, as do others.

An important and interesting feature of Stornoway life is that it is one of the depôts of the Naval Reserve for the west of Scotland, and, naturally, a centre of attraction towards naval life for the whole of the Long Island. The particular aspect in which the Naval Reserve is presented to most of us is that of the coast-guard, which is entirely recruited from able-bodied navy men who have seen nine years' service, and who are moreover kept up to a high standard of efficiency by

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regular drill and inspection, and are ready and liable to be called upon at any hour for active sea-service.

The primary and obvious duty of the coastguard is of course the protection of our shores; but when one passes the little white-washed stations with their flag-staff and parallelogram of garden, on some lonely promontory overlooking the Atlantic, one realizes that there must be work for them other than the prevention of smuggling. And indeed their work as protectors of life and property in such spots as these is both difficult and dangerous, for they serve the Board of Trade and the Admiralty, as well as the Customs, and on the storm-beaten shores of the west-coast of Scotland they have a wide field for noble and quiet heroism. When sitting comfortably at breakfast we read in the paper of a wreck (off the Hebrides, it may be), and we say carelessly, "It is all right, no life lost," we little realize all that has probably been dared and endured in cheating the hungry waves of their prey. When a ship is in distress, the coastguard, on the look-out night and day, signals or fires back an assurance of help at hand, and the wonderful rocket apparatus is at once brought into use. The sending of a line by means of a rocket so that it shall arrive on board a ship tossing wildly on a boiling sea, while a heavy gale is madly raging at every human effort, is often a difficult, sometimes a hopeless task. Again and again the attempt is made against fearful odds, and at last the coastguardsmen see their efforts rewarded, and the line is drawn in; the hawser follows, and the frail-looking basket or "trousers-buoy" carries out the brave expert, and the grand work of rescue begins. The coastguardsmen are not only the last to leave the wreck, but, from the time she is left by the captain and the crew, they become responsible for every spar and every morsel of cargo which it may be possible to redeem from the fury of the waves. The

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brief announcement which we read so carelessly may be the record of deeds of endurance and heroism hardly to be paralleled in the annals of the Victoria Cross.

Often the coastguardsmen have to spend hours in the water conveying help, it may be, to fellow-creatures struggling in the waves, or perilously floating on rafts and spars. The victims of the shipwreck are taken to the coastguard station and fed and warmed, often restored to life, and kindly cared for till help reaches them.

The Naval Reserve, moreover, supplies our lighthouses. A visit to the Skerryvore or the Dubh Eartach, or Barra Head, or the Flannan Island lighthouse, is a revelation not only of human skill, but of human endurance and heroism, which can hardly fail to produce a permanent effect upon one's view of life. Now and then some ghastly tragedy, such as the Flannan Island catastrophe of last year, reveals the hideous possibilities of lighthouse existence. We had a talk with William Ross, the sole survivor, the one man who, according to the regular rotation, happened to be on shore at the time. He had photographs of his three companions, one of them a fine young man, over six feet high, only twenty-nine years of age. "We were all good friends," he said, showing us a group of the four, himself included; "and we never even had a chance to bury them." "And it might just as well have been himself," his wife interjected, looking round upon her bonnie children and her orderly home. And then he told us how the weather being rough, those in the look-out house were hardly surprised that the light should be obscured, as was sometimes the case in a heavy sea-fog; but when the storm somewhat subsided, and eleven days passed, and still no light shone out, they became alarmed, and went across the dangerous minch, to find not a trace of the three brave men upon whose

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life, as upon their work, had fallen the silence of eternal darkness. The lighthouse stands upon a perpendicular cliff, and some 200 feet down the zig-zag path which leads to the landing-place, is a ledge or small terrace, where various ropes and landing-gear are stored, ready for use. It is supposed that the men may have gone down to rescue implements, the loss of which would have been very serious, and that they were swept away in the attempt. Looking at the photograph of the scene, it seemed to us incredible that even the fierce waves of the open Atlantic could reach such a height as this, but our friend assured us that it not infrequently happened. He had also been at the Skerryvore, but we could not wonder that he should now feel unequal to further lighthouse work, and that the authorities had considerately placed him in a coastguard station, upon another and more accessible island, a post lonely and perilous enough, but with none of the hideous possibilities of a home on a solitary storm-beaten rock in the open Atlantic.

Such, varied by signalling to passing ships and by gun practice, is the life of the men of the Naval Reserve, as none know better than the islanders who see it in its most heroic and dangerous aspects. It seemed to us therefore the more creditable, that no less than 2,558 men were drilled at Stornoway last year, including 567 newly enrolled. By the courtesy of Mr. Beedle, the divisional officer, we were allowed to see the buildings and apparatus in use, and to be present at various kinds of drill, including that of the life-saving apparatus and signalling to shore, which are perfectly understood by all the men, and constantly practised. A rifle-range is rented from the local Company of Artillery, and there is also a sea-range for heavy guns. We learnt that 5,000 rounds are fired annually, and that the practice is at a range of 600 yards. A certain number of men are constantly

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under instruction, while those who have arrived at full efficiency have to come up for inspection and drill for a fortnight during the year, often walking immense distances for the purpose. These visits are, however, a sort of festive occasion, and they value the opportunity of intercourse with old friends. They are, for the most part, of excellent physique, in spite of a life of poverty and hardship, the larger number of them being crofters, cottars, and crofter fishermen. Their average height is five feet eight, and many are even up to six feet three. They showed the characteristic Highland earnestness in all their work, and the intentness of their expression when under instruction was almost painful to witness. All considerations of public utility apart, such revelation of orderly life, such discipline, such enforced neatness of appearance, dignity of carriage and propriety of conduct and habits, as even the temporary privilege of their life at the depôt permits, cannot fail to modify their entire existence.

Their public utility can scarcely be over-rated. To quote the words of Captain J. T. Newall, late Indian Staff Corps, and familiar with the island and its people: "From an Imperial point of view, any unnecessary expatriation of the islanders of the western coast would be, as it has been, a national loss. These islands, Skye especially, once formed a depôt from which was drawn some of the finest fighting material in the British Army. At present, in the Lews, there is a considerable number of Navy Reserve men."

He wrote in 1889, and I believe that under the present able management, and the pleasant personal relations of the officers with their Highland recruits, the number is considerably on the increase. The lover of the Islands who is truly anxious for the development of the best characteristics of the people cannot but rejoice at this. The personal element, the influence

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of the chiefs has always been so strong an incentive to the service of the country, that when this was withdrawn, there seemed real danger of actual indifference to public duty. Sir Walter Scott quotes an Argyllshire chieftain who said, "I have lived to woeful days. When I was young, the only question asked concerning a man's rank was, how many men lived on his estate; then it came to be how many black cattle he could keep; but now they only ask how many sheep the lands will carry." [1]

Six Highland regiments formed part of the conquering force at Seringapatam, and we who have lived to see the horrors of the field of Magersfontein may glory still in the brave deeds of our valiant countrymen, perhaps all the braver and more glorious that their incentive is the less.

Sheriff Nicolson's poem, *A Highland Marching Song*, to the tune of *Angus O'Mhòrag*, should be learnt in every Highland school. He begins with a worthy battle cry:

> He that wears the kilt [2] should be
> Erect and free as deer on heather.
>
> When he hears the bag-pipe sound
> His heart should bound like steed for battle.

---

[1] It would be interesting to know what amount of black cattle the land *did* carry, even in the best of the good old times. In the Long Island, with its 1,500 lochs, its rock-strewn hills, its sandy plains, three acres of average land would be the merest mockery of any self-respecting cow. Four and a half acres is not considered too large an allowance for a single sheep, and five sheep are counted as equivalent to a cow, so that the conventional three acres in the Long Island would have to expand into twenty-two acres and a half of unselected pasturage.

[2] It must not be forgotten, however, that the Hanoverian Government forbade the Highland dress, that to quote Sir Walter Scott, "A Highlander going armed incurred the penalty of serving as a common soldier for the first, and of transportation for the second offence"; and that "twelve Highlanders and a bag-pipe made a rebellion." Such legislation needs no comment. It only makes one wonder the more at the military record of the country.

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Think of them who went before us,
Winning glory for the tartan.

Vainly did the mighty Roman
Check the Caledonian valour.[1]

Still from each unconquered glen
Rose the men no yoke could fetter.

And then he proceeds to enumerate, with suitable epithet and picturesque characterization, the deeds of the days of Bruce, Montrose, Dundee and Prince Charlie. He reminds us of Fontenoy, Culloden, Ticonderoga, Quebec, Aboukir, of the Peninsular War, of Waterloo, of Alma, of the Mutiny and of the Ashantee War. The poem was first written in 1865, and brought up to date to 1882, and looking back over twenty years, we the more appreciate his,

From Cabul to Candahar
Glorious was the march with Roberts.
Nor shall he that war who ruled,
Donald Stewart, be forgotten.

And so with much annotation of accurate chronology, the poet presses on to the key-note of the whole:

Where the doughtiest deeds are dared
Shall the Gael be forward pressing.

Where the Highland broad-sword wave
There shall graves be found the thickest.

But when they have sheathed the swords
Then their glory is to succour.

Hearts that scorn the thought of fear
Melt to tears at touch of pity.

Hands that fiercest smite in war
Have the warmest grasp for brothers.

And beneath the tartan plaid
Wife and maid find gentlest lover.

Think then of the name ye bear
Ye that wear the Highland tartan!

---

[1] It is recorded that Severus lost 50,000 men in Caledonia.

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Jealous of its old renown
Hand it down without a blemish!
Angus O'Mhòrag!
Ho-ro! march together,
Angus O'Mhòrag.

Nothing less than the call upon Mhòrag, the esoteric name of Prince Charlie, can serve as fit peroration for such a battle-call as this. It would be a vain and thankless task to represent to the Highlander that their idol had feet of clay. More, it would be irrelevant. To them the thought of Prince Charlie is the last utterance of the day of romance, of enthusiasm, of love for the chiefs, of hatred of the alien oppressor, —for them represented by the Duke of Argyll rather than by the Elector of Hanover. The thought is cosmic, not individual, the voice of a dying past, that lies "too deep for tears."

And so we come back, and truly it is not far to come, to the depôt of the Naval Reserve at Stornoway.

Here, as in the schools, we were interested in asking questions as to family and clan, and we noted that 496 Macleods and 138 Mackenzies were drilled during the past year. We heard, moreover, of an amusing episode when, on some occasion, an Angus Macleod being required without further specification, the claims of no less than forty Angus Macleods had to be considered!

The transition to the remaining prominent fact in the existence of Stornoway is not remote from that of the elevating influences of the Naval Reserve.

Heron, writing in 1794, whether humorous or ignorant it would be hard to say, attributes the improvement in the Hebrides to the family of Argyll, the soldiers of Cromwell, and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. The good old S.P.C.K., like all reforming bodies, is used to being libelled and misunderstood, and is doubtless strong enough to endure

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any propinquity which may be thrust upon it! There is no question as to the good work it accomplished in old times in the Hebrides, especially in the direction of education, and I believe that the Society still contributes £60 a year to the support of higher education in Lews. In Martin we learn that even two hundred years ago Stornoway was in the van of the education movement, and that in 1696 schools were generally established. In 1774 there is a report upon education which tends to show that at that time it was largely religious, as it included religious teaching on two afternoons a week; "the inspection of morals in and out of school"; and a day of real hard work on Sundays. There was school, with religious teaching, from 7 to 9, from 10 to 12, and from 2 to 5. If the children did not go to church at 11, being afterwards catechised on the sermon, they had a sermon in school from 12 to 2. In 1803 we learn that the salaries of teachers were raised—one cannot wonder if there may have been some agitation on the question! The scholars' fees were very low, 2*s.* 6*d.* per quarter and a guinea for extras, such as navigation, a subject now constantly taught in the West Highland schools. There was a sort of private academy known as Mackay's School, where navigation, "the big book of the sea," was studied by men still living, who speak gratefully of their old master, whose devotion to this particular subject is recorded on his gravestone. He died in 1879.

When the School Board came to Stornoway in 1873, it found no schools in its charge except the Parish School, which was closed, and the teacher retired. As we hear that in 1865 there were some 2,500 children in the island not attending school at all, one feels that the Parochial Inspectors must have had plenty of occupation!

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However, the whole question took on a new aspect when Nicolson, a native of the island, left a considerable sum of money for the building and endowment of schools to benefit "the children of my old schoolfellows."

For six years these schools have been reported on by the Government Inspectors in the most favourable terms, and they are constantly enlarging their sphere and advancing in efficiency. Their leaving certificates are now accepted in lieu of the preliminary examinations for legal and civil service training, for the War Office, the army, the English and Scotch Universities, and for the Royal College of Surgeons. The course of study ranges from *kindergarten* work up to preparation for the Universities. Commercial life is equally kept in view, and includes modern languages, mathematics, shorthand, and typewriting. There is a physical laboratory, the girls, especially, have teaching in botany, and half an hour every morning is devoted to religious instruction.

The stranger probably looks around at the modern villas and enterprising shops of Stornoway, and concludes that it is from such homes as these that the Nicolson School gathers its material, which is true enough so far as it goes; but, mingling with the well-dressed girls and boys (taught together after the Scotch fashion, be it observed), are large numbers of bare-footed children, of children whose vernacular is Gaelic, to whom English and Latin are equally foreign languages, who—as we were quietly directed to observe—go up and down the handsome school staircase clinging to the railing with both hands, so absolute a novelty is a second floor to children brought up in "black houses" with a roof of sods, walls without mortar, probably a fire in the middle of the room, and a plank, a box or two,

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and a few shelves for sole furniture. An almost incredible—except in the Highlands an impossible—fact, is that the presence of a considerable number of these children is due to the arrangement in 1894 of a bursary scheme, for bringing into the school the best pupils from rural schools, who come to live in Stornoway *on an income of ten pounds a year.* Imagine the English villages with all their advantages, all their experience, all the difference of their conditions, under any conceivable County Council arrangement, sending, wanting to send, being persuaded to send, finding the notion conceivable of sending, their little Charlies and Florences alone, on an income of ten pounds, to study the classics or modern languages, not across miles of peat-bog among strangers speaking a foreign tongue, but even by train to the capital of their county!

The quiet dignity of the girls, the matter-of-course courtesy of the boys, is a tribute to the success of the system of bringing them together as part of the ordinary course of things from the very first. Moreover, the girls receive the highest of all tributes to their potentialities, in the fact that a successful student is not regarded as a *lusus naturæ*, that a woman may exhibit intellectual ability, and capacity for making her way, without exciting either misplaced admiration or irrelevant surprise.

Martin tells us that women "were anciently denied the use of writing in the islands to prevent love-intrigues; their parents believed that Nature was too skilful in that matter, and needed not the help of education, and, therefore, that writing would be of dangerous consequence to the weaker sex."

The Highlands, if not the rest of Britain, have, however, happily outgrown a point of view so elementary as that of supposing that a woman is

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necessarily deprived of common sense and self-respect by the mere accident of sex. Moreover, the fact that the girls of the Nicolson School have distinguished themselves in such subjects as point to future plans of womanly work, rather than to any vulgar "equality of the sexes," suggests that absence of strain and abnormal intellectual effort which has done so much to make our professional "clever woman," educated beyond her brain power, the uninteresting animal she is. During the past six years the *dux* of the Nicolson School has twice been a girl. Whereas the lads have been foremost in science and in classics, the girls have done best in modern languages—English, French, and German. It is the girls who have taken prizes in botany and who have shown special aptitude for shorthand and drawing from nature. Girls and boys are equally successful in the theory of music. In all languages, Greek and Latin, or French, German and English, composition is taught, and the boys who work in the practical laboratory are encouraged to make their own instruments.

Perhaps in America, possibly in Germany, we might find some such combination of teaching and receptivity, but nowhere but in the Highlands could we find quite such social conditions as here. It takes Caledonia to "cultivate literature on a little oatmeal!"

It was with very real pleasure that we found to how great an extent the inferior teachers of the school had been trained within its walls, and how sympathetic they were with their pupils in consequence, meeting them on their own ground, and, above all, addressing them in their own tongue. Among all the words of wisdom to be found in the *Report of the Crofter Commission* none, as it seems to us, shows more real love for the people, more

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true knowledge of their lives than the following:[1]

"We think that the discouragement and neglect of the native language in the education of Gaelic-speaking children, which have hitherto so largely influenced the system practised in the Highlands, ought to cease, and that a knowledge of that language ought to be considered one of the primary qualifications of every person engaged in the carrying out of the national system of education in Gaelic-speaking districts, whether as school inspectors, teachers, or compulsory officers."

Dr. Johnson spoke severely of the absurdities of "the native language being proscribed in the schools, and the children taught to read a language which they may never use nor understand."

Things have changed since Johnson's time, and the opportunity for the islanders to make use of English, and the advantage of their familiarity with it, have greatly increased; but the futility of trying to instruct children entirely in a foreign language is too obvious to dwell upon. It was a matter looked into even by the S.P.C.K. in 1824, and we read in the report that after careful enquiry they came to the conclusion "that great injury had been done by the neglect of the vernacular language."

There are some 300,000 Gaelic-speaking persons in Scotland, and surely such a population should be specially considered, as indeed it has been, by the central if not by the local authorities; for the code of 1878 gave permission for examinations to be conducted in Gaelic. In the more enlightened

[1] It is noteworthy that the Commission was so fortunate as to include Professor Mackinnon, M.A., himself a Hebridean, who holds the Chair of Celtic language in the University of Edinburgh.

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districts, the schoolmasters themselves are becoming conscious of the folly of the wholly English system, and I know of one most praiseworthy instance, in the island of Tyree, where a schoolmaster, with the kind and capable assistance of the parish minister, has absolutely learnt Gaelic, and is now, unlike many head-masters, in a position to have direct intercourse with the children under his care.

Professor Blackie, than whom the western Highlands had no truer friend, reflects upon "the stupid system of neglecting the mother tongue, and forcing English down the throat of innocent children who can no more be changed into Saxons by a mere stroke of pedagogy than the heather on the hills can blush itself into roses, from hearing a lecture by the professor of botany."

Professor Blackie, moreover, is not only an advocate for the education of the Gael in his own language, but both by example and precept he has done much to stimulate its acquisition by the stranger, and he relates how, after working his way through the Gaelic Bible with the help of Monro's Grammar and MacAlpine's Dictionary, he was able to read various prose works, and so to acquire a considerable vocabulary in a language which he describes as a "very fine and polished dialect, rather too polished, somewhat like French, and especially adapted for music." And indeed for students very inferior to Professor Blackie the acquisition of a reading acquaintance with Gaelic, which has so many roots in common with more familiar tongues, is comparatively easy. "It is not," he says in another place (*Language and Literature of the Highlands of Scotland*, p. 21), "it is not, therefore, the difficulty to the learner, but the ignorance, indifference, laziness and prejudice of the teacher, that makes the reading of Gaelic so

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shamefully neglected in many Gaelic schools. It is an act of intellectual suicide of which an intelligent people should be ashamed."

To the stranger it is not the establishment of a reading, but of a speaking acquaintance with Gaelic which presents the supreme difficulty. The relation between the appearance and pronunciation of the commonest words, makes one feel inclined to assert that there are two languages, the spoken and the written. One says, *Kem mar hâ shiv?*—How do you do? and one *writes, Cia mar tha sibh.* One says, *Hātch mēshu colla riv*—I'll come with you; but one *writes, Theid mise comhla ribh.*

It seems as if the only way to spell a Gaelic word is to begin by eliminating every letter, which by the light of nature seems likely to be required. That it is an extraordinarily expressive language, peculiarly rich in epithets, no one would venture to dispute. It is popularly described as the finest tongue "to swear in, to make love in, and to shuffle out of a bargain in," the last probably because it contains no direct equivalent for "yes" and "no." When one remarks that it is a fine day, your interlocutor replies, "A fine day it is." "You say so" (reminding one of the biblical "Thou sayest it"), or, "I'm sure," are courteous forms of agreement with your statement. For story-telling the language is unequalled, as any one may discover from a study of the *Highland Tales* collected and almost literally translated by Campbell of Islay.

He, by the way, goes even further than Blackie in denouncement of the policy of stamping out the tongue of the people.

"I find," he writes (*Highland Tales*, vol. iv., page 358), "that lectures are delivered to Sunday-school children to prove that Gaelic is part of the Divine

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curse, and Highland proprietors tell me that 'it is a bar to the advancement of the people.' But if there is any truth in this assertion, it is equally true, on the other hand, that English is a bar to the advancement of proprietors if they cannot speak to those who pay their rents; and it is the want of English, not the possession of Gaelic, which retards the advancement of those who seek employment where English is spoken. So Highland proprietors should learn Gaelic and teach English."

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CHAPTER XVII

HARRIS AND SMALLER ISLANDS

FOR twenty-four miles after leaving Stornoway there is little to interest one. The road is bordered on either side by a gloomy moorland, varied occasionally by small, shallow grey lakes; and only the distant view of the grand hills of Harris encourages one to persevere in exploring a country so dreary and so featureless.

After passing two or three small villages, at one of which, Ballallan, we change horses, we come nearer to the land of promise, the purple glory of the Harris hills, and about a mile short of the border—for Lewis and Harris, be it remembered, are not two separate islands—we reach Athan Linne (pronounced A-Leene) when the ground suddenly rises, and we enter upon a mountain pass. Up and up we go, till at some 800 feet above sea-level, with great walls of mountains still surrounding us on either hand, we turn and look behind us, on perhaps the grandest view in the outer Hebrides. We are on an isthmus between Loch Seaforth and Loch Tarbert, both salt-water inlets, strewn with green islands, while also nearer at hand are various small lochs, upon which the shadows of hill and cloud are painting fairy islands of purple and blue, adding yet fresh beauty to a picture more varied in colour and outline than anything we have yet seen among the Hebridean greys and sepias. Across the front of

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the hills are giant terraces, the path of some moving glacier, and from deep clefts come the sounds of rushing waters forcing their way down to the sea. The great wall of mountain, which has been our goal almost since leaving Stornoway, is the Forest of Harris, which one cannot grudge to the deer, for those bare peaks, towering each of them well over 2,000 feet, could serve no other purpose, and the sport which involves such climbing, is, unlike a good deal of "sport" one hears of, at least fair play, man's wit and endurance pitted against the beast's experience and agility. In places, even the high road makes some demands upon the fortitude of the nervous traveller, and the merciful one will certainly travel some miles of the journey on his own feet, though the excellent horses sent for us from Tarbert are an equine pleasure such as we have not enjoyed since we left Tyree.

Perhaps none of the Islands has a name so English, so commonplace in sound as this. Till after the first half of the eighteenth century it was known as Kilbride, the Church or cell of St. Bridget, but how it came by its later name Na Heradh, i.e., the Herries (plural), or what the name means, it is difficult to ascertain. The alleged explanation that the reference is to *na hardubh*, "the heights,"—the mountains of this parish being higher than any in the Long Island—is said by etymologists to be purely fanciful, though it is worth observing that the same name, *Na Heradh*, is given to the highest part of the island of Rum.

As a matter of fact, Harris is not an island—only the southern half of the Lews, but it is difficult not to separate them in one's thoughts, so utterly unlike are Lewis and Harris in every natural feature; the one flat, desolate, colourless; the other mountainous, varied, rich with colour and beauty of form. Moreover, Harris, though not an island, is set in a numerous Archipelago

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of islets of which some half-dozen only are inhabited, though many measure a mile or more in length. They seem to have been named by the Danes; the larger, to the number of about a score, having names ending in *ay*. Ensay, to the south, was made famous for Highland cattle by the late proprietor, Major Stewart, and there is one celebrated bull with whom most of those we met in the Islands are anxious to call "cousins," as other Highlanders with other chieftains. South-west of Ensay is Berneray, smiling and fertile, of which more elsewhere, and we note too Pabay, one of many of that name, "priest's islands"—possibly in old times part of the endowment of the Church—Calligray, Hermitray, Hulmitray, Gilisay, and so on. Some of the smaller islets have a different termination, Tu*em*, Cuad*em*, Codd*em*, Hest*em*, etc, Scandinavian, too, are the names of most of the farms; Nisabost, Horgabost, Shelabost, and the many points in *Nish*—Renish, Noranish, Groadnish, and the like.

Far away to the south we note the most northerly point of Skye, and the hills of North Uist seem mere hillocks seen from amid the great mountains which tower around us here. A characteristic, though unconscious testimony, to the hilly character of the roads, is presented in various parts of the island, by the number of cairns marking the resting-places of coffins on their way to the burial - grounds, which here, as elsewhere, generally surround the ruins of some old Columban church.

Tarbert, which is our destination, is an exceedingly neat, well-kept village, perhaps the most orderly in all the Hebrides. The houses are not only well-built, but, unlike those of Loch Maddy, for instance, well-placed, having some relation to each other and to the roads and neighbouring buildings. There are trees, too, and about the hotel and one or two comfortable private

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houses there are well-kept gardens, which yield excellent fruit and vegetables, in spite of the usual difficulty of rough salt winds and sand drifts, and poverty of soil. There are neat little shops and a well-arranged pier, two Churches and a police station, which, not forty miles from Stornoway, would strike one as superfluous as official arrangements go in this island, only that one is being constantly reminded of the fact that here we are in the county of Inverness and not in Ross, as we were a few miles back; a fact which introduces extraordinary complications into common things, and sends one's letters to mysterious and apparently irrelevant places.

Harris appears to have belonged originally to Macleod of Macleod, by whom it was sold in 1778 to a relative, a native of Harris, one Alexander Macleod, and to have passed later into the hands of Lord Dunmore, who, it is said, gave £60,000 for it, not apparently a satisfactory bargain, as a considerable portion of the property has again changed hands, and now belongs to the well-known bankers, the Scotts. The present representative is reported to be much in favour of emigration, and even to offer special facilities to steady and capable young men, but this liberality is not quoted to his disadvantage, as the fact that Harris is wholly unadapted for agriculture is too obvious to be disputed; moreover, the deer forests are less injurious to the country than sheep farms, because, among other reasons, the ground they occupy would, here at least, be for the most part valueless for other purposes. Such complaints as one hears are mostly of old standing, and bear reference to former depopulation in the early days of Lord Dunmore. The island contains about a hundred and forty-six square miles of land, being about fifty miles in length and from eight to twenty-four in breadth, rock being the predominating feature of

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the country, instead of the watery wastes of other islands.

Even the *Old Statistical Account* which, as a rule, gives such golden pictures of former fertility, admits that "Harris can never be enriched by agriculture." The prominent reason, then, lay in the fact that in the anxiety to make kelp, the land had degenerated from want of manure, the seaweed being otherwise utilized, but the underlying cause for the necessity of so much manure still remains—that of the extreme shallowness of the soil which lies often but a few inches deep over the gneiss rock of which the island is, for the most part, composed. The only possible system of cultivation is by "lazy beds," which, upon any extensive scale, is extremely laborious, but except at the south end of the island, near Rowdill, seems to be almost a necessity. Munro, nevertheless, tells us that in his time "Harris was very fertill and fruitfull of corne, store, and fisching," but, he adds mysteriously, that there is "twisse more of delving in it nor of teilling."

Harris, like Lewis, seems to be largely under Free Church influence which, acting upon the essentially religious temperament of the people, appears to have taken real hold of their life, not only on the aesthetic side which one cannot but regret, but in regard to more practical details as well. There was a powerful religious revival about 1835, "in consequence of which," says a contemporary writer, "the Sabbath is strictly observed." The inhabitants have been recently subjected to a Christian Science Crusade, under the leading of Lord Dunmore himself, but the results do not appear to be conspicuous. It is said that in the whole of Harris there is hardly any tradition of crime; theft is uncommon, and murder wholly unknown. The *Statistical Account* speaks of "two licensed houses seldom frequented by natives." Of one licensed house at Tarbert

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we can testify that it is considerably frequented by visitors as a convenient and comfortable centre for fishing, the only abiding place between Loch Maddy and Stornoway.

There are some stone circles in Harris, two of which are near Tarbert and, we are told, are spoken of by the people as "clach na greiné" (stone of the sun), an interesting testimony to the tradition, doubtless very ancient, as to their original purpose.

Perhaps the most interesting monument in Harris if not, of its kind, in the Outer Islands, is the Church of St. Clement at Rowdill. Its records go no further back than the sixteenth century when, according to Buchanan, it served as the Church to the monastery built by Alexander Macleod, who died in 1527. It was restored by another Alexander Macleod, who began work upon it about 1784, but during this restoration the building took fire and had to be re-roofed. The Church was again repaired by Lady Dunmore and appears to have been in use when the family were at Rowdill in the "mansion-house" of the proprietor. Of late years it has, however, fallen into a state of most unfortunate neglect; the windows are broken and the damp sea-air has coated the stones with moss, to the threatened injury of the curious and beautiful carvings upon the tombs of the Macleod chieftains. An occasional service is held, we were told, but the people have their suspicions of the Popish tendencies of the architecture, and it is but little frequented. The body of the Church is a narrow oblong about eighty feet, seven inches long, by fifteen feet wide. It is correctly orientated, and has north and south chapels, and a western tower the width of the church. Even the *New Statistical Account*, so recent as 1841, written by the Parish Minister, entirely ignores the existence of the Church, though it makes mention of a plague of

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rats in the parish and of an alleged stone-circle under the sea. The Church itself, however, hints at a story much older than has been preserved for us in history, or even in the traditions of an indifferent population and an uninformed public.

Rowdill is certainly remote; it is in the extreme south of the island, but is easily reached by the help of the mail-boat which brings letters from Skye.

ST. CLEMENT'S, ROWDILL (OR RODEL), HARRIS.

As there is no pier one has to row to the shore in a small boat, but except in bad weather, or when the boat is more than usually crowded with cattle and stores, it is easy enough, especially if the tide admits of the choice of a convenient landing-place. There is a little coffee-house at Obbe, three miles away, where one can spend the night if necessary, as of course the mail steamer leaves at once and may not return for some days. To drive from the hotel at Tarbert is really the

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easiest plan for the non-adventurous, and the visit may be made in a day.

There are the remains in the churchyard of some handsome tombs enclosed by carved-stone screens, all in a state of disregarded dilapidation. The Church tower tells the story of a structure older than even the Macleod monuments or the ancient font, for built into the walls are some fragments of a much earlier building, figures which suggest to the learned, traces possibly of Phallic worship, or at any rate of something pre-Christian.

Rowdill probably dates, as a Church, from the flourishing times of Iona when, it is said, the lands of Harris belonged to the Columban territory, and it is not unlikely that some missionary named Clement, "sainted by the courtesy of after ages," may have been sent there and may have turned to Christian use some existent sacred spot, in the same spirit which we find among the earliest religious teachers in all parts; the same spirit indeed, which we have met with in other islands prompting the burial of the dead on the sites of old Columban Churches, and even of Scandinavian barrows and brochs. The subject matter of the carvings is, in some cases, of a nature which makes their exalted position, removed from public gaze, desirable where their deeper purport is not perceived, but to the student they are suggestive of the mysteries of an older faith, of far-away times more remote even than the simpler nature-worship which the "Standing stones" may possibly commemorate. Sex worship, sun worship, Christianity itself, in its older forms, are to the uninterested alike all part of the forgotten errors of our fathers, to be ignored by a pious present and allowed to fall into decay, as belonging merely to the ancestors of somebody else.

In visiting the ecclesiastical sites of the western Highlands one becomes accustomed to meet with the

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names of various unfamiliar saints, from Jeremiah whom one is not used to hearing of as such, to Pharaer, Lennan, Cutcheon, Aula or Kiaran, whom one is unused to in any capacity. But St. Clement, it seems, is not a saint at all. Two Clements are known as belonging to the period of the Columban missionaries, one who was persecuted about 747 by Boniface, Archbishop of Mentz, and the other who was entertained by Charlemagne in 784, and who taught the first Grammar School in Paris. Neither was canonized, and the latter is probably the one commemorated by the Church at Rowdill.

No account of Harris would be complete without some reference to the "Harris tweeds," though, as a matter of fact, they are in no sense peculiar to Harris and may be bought in almost any part of the Long Island, more especially in Lewis and North Uist. The process of fulling the cloth, with all its attendant ceremonial, can be seen in perfection only in the Catholic Islands, where the romance of life still lingers, and indeed much so-called "Island" tweed is made wholly or in part in "power-looms" on the mainland, thus losing all its distinctive character, as well as its especial attributes of being waterproof and changeless in colour by wind or sun. Those who want the real thing should trust no London or mainland agencies, but apply direct to the local dealers in Tarbert (Harris) or Stornoway (Lewis) as the method most satisfactory to oneself, and most beneficial to the weavers. The cloth is of excellent quality, and endless in wear, both for men and women, besides being often beautiful in combination of colouring, or in pure tints, all of local, and mainly vegetable, extraction.

In former days, and in certain islands still, the people have suffered at the hands of local general merchants, especially before the recommendations of the Crofter Commissioners came into operation, and land was more

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difficult to come by than even now. The difficulty of keeping sheep obliged them to run into debt to the factor or general merchant for wool; then, when the cloth was finished, it would probably be sold to the same man at a low value; and being already in his debt they would have to take payment in goods, charged at extortionate prices, so that in many cases he would make three profits,—on the wool, the cloth, and the groceries.

In South Uist and Barra, the people have long given up any attempt to make cloth for the market, as they have been compelled to give up other advantages common to happier islands, but a little is made in Benbecula, and a good deal in North Uist, and now that the land question is under consideration, the people are likely to have opportunities of obtaining wool among themselves without resort to the factor or general merchant. Moreover, by selling the tweed to the tweed merchant, of whom there are now many in various parts of the Islands, the truck system is avoided, and the weavers are honestly paid in cash, which enables them to pay ready-money for wool, and at once establishes trade on a just and reasonable basis, as they can obtain their goods at market value, and "philanthropic" stimulus is rendered superfluous.

The entire manufacture is done by the people themselves, often by different members of one family. In Tyree, where, from the land famine, the people have, as in South Uist, given up making cloth, even (to a great extent) for their own use, there are but few looms, and it is common for people to bring their home-spun wool to the weaver, and to pay by the yard for the labour of weaving, but in the Northern Hebrides, where looms are common, most weavers undertake the entire work. This includes washing the wool, drying it (often on the roof), dyeing, carding, spinning, running

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on to the spindles, setting the warp, weaving, washing, drying, fulling (or waulking), baling, and delivering the goods to the merchant, often carried in a creel, perhaps on the weaver's back, for many miles.

As a rule the cloth is woven in lengths of from thirty to forty yards,—the shorter the length the greater the multiplication of labour in setting the warp, which from personal experiment is, I can testify, a

DRYING TWEED ON ROOF OF HOUSE.

CUTTING PEATS.

somewhat tedious process, and trying to the sight. Cloth of good quality weighs, when finished, and dried, very nearly a lb. per yard, say 28 lbs. to a length of thirty yards. The loss in carding and washing the wool is at least thirty per cent., so that about $8\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. must be allowed for waste.[1]

[1] This does not include the loss in process of fulling, when the cloth shrinks about an inch to every foot of length, so that for a web intended to be thirty yards long when finished, about two yards and three-quarters extra have to be allowed.

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The piece will therefore require at least 38 lbs. of wool, which costs at present value (October, 1891) about ten shillings a stone of 14 lbs. for black-faced sheep, and about fifteen shillings for the superior Cheviot; the cost of raw material therefore is in itself considerable.

The intrinsic value of the dye is trifling, as it is generally some local product,—seaweed, sundew, lichen, dandelion, iris, heather, blaeberries, tormentil, bog-myrtle, and various other simple herbs.

This is assuming that the dye is one of those characteristic of the Islands, which is by no means always the case unless the tweed is bought direct from the dealers, who, honesty apart, would never so far kill the goose that lays them golden eggs, as to rob the cloth of what to the expert is one of its especial "points." The colours of the "Harris tweeds" one meets in London drawing-rooms are certainly surprising. The real cloth is dyed ingrain and will wash and wear "for ever." That the art of faking is confined to alien sources of supply is illustrated by the following story, quoted in *The Nicolson Institute Annual*, as pure humour—

"At another time one of the standards was getting a lesson in nature knowledge, the subject being the tweed industry. They had found out the details of every process in the tweed-making, till it came to the question of dye and its source, when one little fellow, who thought he was sure of this at any rate, answered, *They'll be buying it down in Mr. John Maclean's shop!*"

The people themselves are extraordinarily ignorant of the value of time and labour, mainly because they are not accustomed to receive payment for it in cash, and it is therefore extremely difficult to arrive at any estimate of the additional cost of the labour of spinning and weaving. A recent article which received the *Mod* prize and is published in the *Celtic Monthly* gives

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the cost of carding and spinning at 8*d*. per lb. (raw material) and 7*d*. per yard for weaving, thus adding another thirty-five shillings to the cost of the web. Elsewhere we heard of a shilling per Highland yard of eight feet, and were told that this was about a day's work, though sometimes a good weaver might earn as much as 1*s*. 6*d*. Even the *New Statistical Account* (1845), written when wool and labour were alike cheaper than now, quotes the value of Lewis *Kelt* cloth at about 4*s*. per Highland yard (four feet). However, in buying from these unsophisticated people through the local merchants, one may, as a rule, make sure that they will be fairly dealt with on straightforward business lines with none of the superfluous "philanthropy" which the true Highlander so properly resents.

It is possible that English readers may expect to hear something of the islands of Skye and St. Kilda, not knowing that neither of these comes under the category of Outer Isles. There is some question whether Tyree does not fairly belong to the Inner Hebrides, but at least it has, in common with islands geographically more remote, the characteristic of not having yet attracted the tourist, and therefore of, so far, avoiding the commonplace.

In Skye there are some delightful districts, wild, beautiful, and romantic; glens of which we think with gratitude for happy days spent among kind friends; mountains and moors still possessed by the old families, and sacred from vulgar intrusion. But also in Skye there are electric light and Tottenham Court Road furniture, and the exorbitant, even worse, the pretentious and incompetent innkeeper, with other blessings of civilization. Something in the direction of return to old times may be hoped for from the deviation in the path of the tourist, by the opening of the new route to Mallaig; though the inhabitants of the quaint little town of

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Portree may not at present regard this as other than a doubtful blessing. Here, as elsewhere, the alien landlord is in possession, and the least observant cannot fail to trace his handiwork in depopulated glens and an incredibly poverty-stricken populace. One district was pointed out to us near the town of Portree where, at the time of the threatened Napoleonic invasion, 200 able men were raised in a fortnight, and now a single farm, twelve miles by four or five, occupies the site of scores of homesteads, and, as the local phrase is, "the smoke of a hundred hearths goes through a single chimney."

Now and then one realizes that better times are coming. A few months ago a certain landlord moved his tenants from the sunny to the shady side of the hill, where good grass was to be found only near the top, and which was therefore better adapted for sheep that could climb, than for cows. The people accordingly exchanged their cows for sheep in the usual proportion of six sheep to a cow, but the County Council having given a licence for cows and not sheep, the tenants were ordered to remove them just at a time when the patriots of the crofting township were away: some at the "front," some at their "depôts," some in the Naval Reserve, having, as they supposed, arranged their home affairs according to such poor best as was possible under the circumstances. The County Council supported the rule, and an enforced sale was ordered. Fortunately the people of Skye are not so friendless as those in more remote islands. An appeal was made to Lord Balfour, who declined to order out the militia or even the police, and let us hope the sheep are still evading the arbitrary rules of unreasoning officialism.

St. Kilda, like Iona, has become the happy hunting-ground of the Lowland tourist, and nearly every year some irresponsible book or magazine article, founded

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on a week's observation plus a *Kodak* camera, is added to the "literature" of the subject. When we were last in Eriskay where, during the two years of our previous absence only three strangers had landed, we observed from the newspapers that during the fortnight of our solitary stay in that lonely island, over 300 visitors had arrived in St. Kilda.

The natives are deteriorating under the foolish treatment of those who "take an interest" in them: who bring them presents of silver teaspoons, confectionery, silk aprons, mantelpiece ornaments, and silk handkerchiefs of tartans belonging to no clan in the island. A lady on her return showed me with much delight an old Celtic brooch she had "picked up" for five shillings. It was made, doubtless, in anticipation of such purchasers, out of a brass safety-pin and a penny key-ring (both new). Such an incident, I venture to say, could occur in no other island, not even in Iona.

Elsewhere we found that the district nurse had lately left a certain island, quite one of the most comfortable of the Hebrides, because she missed the conveniences she had been previously accustomed to in St. Kilda! Mr. Richard Kearton, whose volume (beautifully illustrated) *With Nature and a Camera* is quite the best of its kind, testifies:

"The houses are substantial one-storey buildings with zinc roofs securely fastened down by iron bands. . . . They are far ahead in point of comfort and conveniences of nearly all the crofters' dwellings I have been into in Harris, Uist, and other Hebridean Isles."

The houses are all divided into two rooms at least, are well-lighted, and have fair-sized chimneys—all very satisfactory and greatly to the credit of their excellent landlord, Macleod of Macleod. The tourist who lands

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—only if the landing can be quite conveniently managed — from the electric-lighted saloon of the *Hebridean*, or the homelike comfort of the *Dunara Castle*, and returns in a few hours to sleep in harbour at Loch Maddy, must not however delude himself into supposing that he and some scores of companions have done anything adventurous or unique.

The birds of St. Kilda are its most interesting feature, but even they can be more than paralleled elsewhere in lovelier spots, and where the hand of man is less violent against them.

We remember with far more interest than St. Kilda can invoke in us, at least half-a-dozen islands which, if geographically nearer to the world, are at least much more "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife."

The *Old Statistical Account* observes in its stately fashion :

"The compilers of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* will do well to correct their error in calling Barra a rock half a mile in circumference, inhabited only by solan geese and other wild fowls."

The Encyclopædia was evidently referring not to Barra at all, but to Barra Head; but how the author of the article knew anything of that remote island is difficult to conjecture. It is a solitary rock, from 600 to 700 feet high, boldly defying the Atlantic, difficult of access, and yet it seems to have been long inhabited, for there are the remains of a dun testifying to Danish occupation, and of a graveyard possibly older still. That half-a-dozen brave men should consent to risk their lives in the service of the Lighthouse one can understand, as one understands other deeds of like heroism. One I remember, who described for us the spectacle of an Atlantic storm as seen from within the shelter of the light-room : how at that elevation, some 700 perpendicular feet, one could look down into the

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storm and see it raging and swelling below. He said the sensation was of extraordinary security; there was no sense of movement, and even the roar of wind and wave seemed apart and afar in another world.

The birds were in former times the wealth of the islands, and the natives were extraordinarily skilful in collecting them. The cliffs are more precipitous and inaccessible than those of St. Kilda, and yet the islanders used no ropes but climbed over the rocks. Perhaps the grandest cliff is that of Biolacreag in the bay of Aoineag on the west coast, which used to be the crest of the Macneills, and "Biolacreag!" their rallying cry.

The islanders used to pay their rent to Macneill in these birds, called *fachaich*, fatlings, principally the young of the Manx shearwater, now well-nigh extinct since the arrival of the puffin, a comparatively valueless creature and very vicious, who, according to modern custom, has evicted the older and more profitable inhabitants. Fortunately careful observations have been taken of the birds of these islands by the eminent naturalist Macgillivray, a native of Barra.

No words can describe these wonderful precipices and the long marine arcades which intersect the solid rock, so that one may wind in and out among the grim stone pillars and perpendicular walls which uphold their endless subterranean galleries—the little island-world overhead, the reverberant waters of the Atlantic beneath, a marvellous aquatic aviary all around; the black walls gleaming with myriads of feathered creatures standing erect in close-serried rows, motionless, and so tame that one might handle them could we approach near enough. Sometimes the ledges are so narrow that one wonders how they obtain any foothold at all, while in other spots, on some few inches of vantage, the birds are standing three and four deep, their white breasts and

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red bills shining weirdly where an occasional ray of sunlight chances to pierce from above into the mystic gloom.

Sometimes we seem to be making direct for a blank wall of rock, leaving behind us the last spark of daylight, return in so narrow a space being impossible: when suddenly, with a deft movement, our skilful oarsmen guide the little boat down some sudden opening to right or left, and a new gallery in the great crypt opens out before us. The immensities of Nature's architecture, the silence, the mystery, the sense of one's own helplessness and the rich glory of the deep-toned colouring, combine to make an experience we can never forget, and which we cherish with all the more gratitude that it might not be easy to repeat.

On account of the strong currents running between them these islands are very difficult of access, and landing is so hazardous that it is not unusual for even the native sailors and fishermen to have to return and land elsewhere. One of our party, whose home was within some twenty or thirty miles, told us that during twelve years he had made many fruitless attempts to reach the caves we visited, sometimes waiting within reach even in fair weather for a whole fortnight, but until we brought him good fortune, in vain. A particular combination of wind and tide, a good boat, experienced boatmen, and steady nerves are certainly requisite.

Bernera used to be known as Bernera of the Bishops, *Bearnaraidh an Easpaig*, probably to distinguish it from several other islands of the same name; and it seems probable that it was—perhaps in Columban times—once Church property. In Mingulay is a well, known as the well of Columcille, which the people regard with such especial reverence that, left often for months together without any religious privileges, or any means

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of consecrating water for devotional purposes, they use the well as "holy water," and will cross themselves with it as they go by, and carry it at the prow of their boat, as is the pious custom among the fishermen.

In Mingulay also are the remains of what may have been a hermit's cell or "bed of devotion," of which little more than the ground plan is now left. It is spoken of as "the Cross," but is really a circle enclosing three rectangular cells, and a solid heap of stones in the centre, upon the use or origin of which, so far as I know, no expert has yet pronounced.

These islands are the remotest corner of the Gordon estate, having passed to it as appertinents of Barra with the rest of the Macneill property; but they are so inaccessible, so remote from the centre of things, that the people seem exceptionally well-off and comfortable. They welcomed us with the utmost cordiality, and their kindness and cheerful readiness to take any trouble for our pleasure or convenience, we can never forget. So far are they from exploiting the stranger, as is the custom in St. Kilda, that we had the greatest difficulty in persuading them to take payment even for laborious services, and to prevent them from robbing themselves to give us such necessaries as added greatly to our comfort.

"This now is the Atlantic," said Dr. Johnson. "If I should tell at a tea-table in London that I have crossed the Atlantic in an open boat, how they'd shudder, and what a fool they'd think me to expose myself to such danger."

The visitor to Barra Head must travel in the same fashion as Dr. Johnson; the convenient mail steamers which travel to St. Kilda or the Orkneys know nothing of these solitary islands, and it need hardly be said that one does not travel with much luggage. We had a dog and a "hold-all," our companions (three priests

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and a doctor) carried, they alleged, a razor and a Breviary. We made our headquarters in Mingulay, in some rooms under the new chapel in process of building. It was bright August weather, and the scanty furniture was quite sufficient for our needs. There was a bedstead and bedding, which, with the aid of a lavish loan of clean home-spun blankets, we were enabled to distribute into three separate rooms ; there was a board and trestles left behind by the workmen, and a good cooking stove, with a pot and kettle as part of its fittings. Within an hour of our arrival we were supplied with chairs, cups, plates, the inevitable teapot, and abundance of blankets. A burn trickled down the hill behind the house, the sea lapped gently on the white sands in front; we had abundance of water for drinking and ablution. What more could one want?

The day of our arrival was Friday, and we had excellent fresh fish in abundance, though there is a tradition that the sea-birds taste so strongly of their natural food, that we should not have transgressed had we dined off them. Our companions, the men, both of religion and medicine, found plenty of occupation, for the people naturally took advantage of their visit to supply their needs spiritual and bodily.

At an early hour next morning Mass was said in the little unfinished chapel, with such fittings as could be arranged. There were no seats, but we were glad to bring up our four chairs for the very old and infirm. Almost every adult in the island was present, except a retired Presbyterian schoolmaster, and outside, a little group of awe-stricken children silently awaited the dispersion of such a gathering as they had never beheld.

The schoolmaster interested us greatly. He was a scholarly man from the mainland, and could speak English. He came to the island somewhere about 1860,

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and the story is told that on his arrival the children crowded round to see the school they were going to have! I believe he has never been away; he married a woman of the island, and after teaching for, I think, over thirty years, was pensioned, and now is "passing rich" on half the income of the village preacher. His little croft supplies him with food and clothing; his house is well-furnished with blankets, his fire with peats; and his one luxury is tea—which he imports—of the very best. He has books, and is quite an accomplished botanist, having observed and classified the flora of the island without knowing the names of a dozen flowers. We had the privilege of being of some use in naming his collection, and left him, feeling as one so often does among the Highlanders:

> Alas! the gratitude of man
> Hath often left me mourning!

The island is so little known that no Martin or Buchanan, not even a contributor to the *Statistical Account* has been found to write its history. We had an interesting talk with "the oldest inhabitant," which can be but inadequately reproduced in English.

"Calum Macphee is my name," said he, "son of Donald, son of John, son of Rory, son of Rory, son of Rory, son of Donald, and I can't go further back than that; but the man we came from was big Kenneth, who was an unrighteous man, and came from the island of Colonsay or from Eigg. In any case there were men slain in a cave in the place where he came from.[1]

[1] Readers will remember the horrible tragedy in Eigg about the middle of the seventeenth century, when the Macleods of Skye, in revenge for previous injury, set fire to the cave to which all the inhabitants of the island had retreated for safety.

> The vengeful chief maintains his fires,
> Till in the vault a tribe expires;
> The bones which strew that cavern's gloom
> Too well attest their dismal doom. Sir W. Scott.

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"Kenneth and his son, with a crew of three, fled to Barra, but a storm came on them with great cold, and the three men perished; but big Kenneth and his son got ashore at Oronsay in the Sound of Vatersay. He had a crock of gold, and he took his son under his arm, and tried to spring across to the bigger island. In springing over, the crock fell, and was broken, and it has been cast up to the Macphees ever since, and there is a raun about it. I might have learnt it, but I would not: it was a reproach to us. Next day he went back at low tide and picked up the gold.

"The Macneill of the day liked to have all the stalwart young men about him at Kisimul, and it was either the son or the grandson that was along with him there, when the people died of the plague in Mingulay.

"Macneill at Kisimul had noticed that it was long that the people of Mingulay were not coming to the mainland,[1] and he sent out a crew to see what was wrong, and the stalwart descendant of big Kenneth was with them. They landed over there at Sloc nan Druisdan [chasm of brambles]. Macphee jumped ashore and came up to the township, and every house he went into he found clean swept and the fire out, till he came to the last house, where the people lay dead, for there had been none to bury them. The township was then up above to the north-west, and I think that there must have been houses where the chapel is built, because they found many stones and some ashes when they opened the ground there.

"Macphee hurried back to the boat, and called to the crew to put back for him. 'You must tell us your news first,' they said, for they were surprised no person had come down to welcome them to shore.

"When he told them how things were, they were

[1] i.e. to the Island of Barra.

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afraid,[1] and pushed off and left him alone: but when they got to Kisimul and told Macneill, he was angry, and told them to go back at once to fetch Macphee, with the *coit* [a Gaelic word for "boat," now falling into disuse, but the lingering use of which in this remote island is worth noting].

"However, it was seven weeks before they could land in Mingulay because of the weather. All this time the poor man had no fire, but he was yet alive before them; some say he had killed a sheep, and lived on raw flesh and sheep's blood. Every day he used to climb to the top of the highest hill, looking out for the boat, and the hill has been called Ben Macphee ever since.

"When they returned with him to Kisimul, Macneill asked if he would be willing to go back again and stay in Mingulay, and he said he would if he could choose his own companions. Macneill told him he would get that, and among those he chose was an ancestor of Michael there, and of Angus, son of Donald, who lives at the back of the schoolhouse."

"Did he take a Campbell?" asked one of the group mischievously.

"And Michael's ancestor a Macneill of the chief's own blood! No!"

"Macneill went with them, and on landing climbed up Ben Macphee as far as the place since called Macneill's Bed, yonder" (pointing to where a projecting rock made a sort of cavern-like shelter), "so as to be away from the smoke and disease, while Macphee, who was not at all afraid, set fire to every house, and the township was built in the new place. Macphee got free land for himself and his descendants."

As elsewhere in the Islands the inhabitants had

[1] Nothing terrifies a Highlander like infectious illness.

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plenty of time for *ceilidh*, and another kind friend was ready to give us a further unwritten chapter of Mingulay history. We had often heard of a certain pious priest named James Grant, who had been stationed in South Uist at the time of Prince Charlie's visit. He was then about thirty-nine years of age. He was betrayed, and had to seek shelter in Mingulay, whence, after some time, he tried to escape to the mainland. It was at this point that our friend's story began.

"It was at nightfall that he set sail, and when he got to Vatersay he went ashore to enquire news, and heard that the red soldiers [i.e. the Hanoverians] were in Barra, so he returned to Mingulay, and went alone to the cave of Hoisp."[1]

I note as thoroughly characteristic of a Highland *ceilidh* that at this point a bystander interrupted to add, "And a man brought him an egg to eat." There is always a received method of telling a story, from which no deviation is permitted without reminder, which, in the interests of history, has its advantages.

"The red soldiers came to Mingulay, and the first two men they met were put under oath at the point of the sword. The first man said he had seen the priest leaving the island the day before, and the second said he had seen him come back and go over the hill. The soldiers struck the first man on the face with their muskets, and his nose was crooked till the day of his death. The other man they took with them, and they got the priest, and he was bound, and brought down to the village, and thrown into a barn near the house where John Mackinnon, son of Donald, son of Niel,

[1] This cave is situated in an isthmus, SW., called the Dun, because there are the remains of a very ancient wall built across the only accessible part. The cave is in the face of a precipice, near the top, facing the lighthouse.

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now lives.[1] Two young lads came in, one after another, where he was, and he asked the first to bring him some thatch to put under him, for the ground was very wet; and the lad went out, but was unable to return. And he asked the second to bring him an egg, but he too could not return. Thereafter the priest was taken away, and the next thing they heard was that he had been made a bishop."

James Grant did happily escape from his enemies, ultimately became Bishop of the Lowland district, and died in Aberdeen in 1778 at the age of seventy-two.

We were next informed why this particular story belonged to our informant. His mother, who died at over 100 years old, remembered the two lads. She was "a praying woman," and Father Allan himself communicated her at Easter, 1885 or 1886. Her son is now seventy-one, and she married late in life.

A cave in Ben More in Uist, which also sheltered Bishop Grant, is still known as *Uamh a Ghranndaich*, the Cave of the Grant.

From yet another chronicler we gleaned a further note to our little chapter of Mingulay history.

"There was about this time a soldier, who had been in the '45, who belonged to Mingulay. He was great-uncle's son to Ian yonder, the son of Hamish, and he had some money, and the soldiers were coming after him. His brother advised him to put away the money in case of what might happen, but he said, 'They've not done with me yet.' However, he was surrounded by soldiers, and Captain Scott [whose name is execrated in the islands] ordered him to be shot, and he was robbed and murdered at the back of the house where the stackyard is.

"Captain Scott, with some more of his kind, went

[1] A house which we afterwards sought out, and where we saw a curious and apparently very ancient stone mortar.

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off in a ship to Tyree. He was only just in time, for his superior officer, on coming to Mingulay, was shocked to hear of his brutality, and said that if he had been there, it was Scott himself would have been shot."

"And there is no more story about Mingulay," said one of our friends, "till we shall begin to tell about the time when the two ladies with the wise white doggie came to the island."

Sometimes—when our thoughts go back to those hours of golden sunshine on the little green bank in the Atlantic Ocean, where men and women lead simple lives and talk of golden deeds, where they visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction (alas! how many are bereaved each stormy winter!), and keep themselves unspotted from the world—theirs "seems the real life and this the dream."

But if they had no more stories to tell us, we could always talk about the birds, and to us that seemed an endless fairy tale.

About the 1st of February they come. There is snow on the hills, it may be, or at least far away to the east one can see on a clear day that the Scaur of Eigg and the hills of Cuchullin are crowned with silvery white. The lighthouse men talk of wrecks, and the fishermen's boats are on shore, and at night the winds wail and moan about their homesteads; but the birds have come, and it is the first promise of spring, just as surely as when, with us, the brown of the winter woods takes on a veil of purple.

The birds have come, but not to stay. They will visit the old nests and clear them of rubbish, and clean and repair them, and then, in great flocks and clouds, they fly away and melt into the grey distance. But now and then, on bright days perhaps, or when the wind sets towards the island, a few will be seen here and there—advance guards of the great army. About

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the last week of April they again reconnoitre their nests, and in a few days they are all about the islands in thousands; and then the great nursery is opened, and each hen lays one egg on ledges so narrow that but for their extraordinary balance—which one realizes only by experiment—they must inevitably be destroyed. They are so close together too that it is wonderful how each bird can distinguish her own. About the end of July all are hatched, and soon they disappear—some say that each hen with her young one on her back plunges into the sea, and is no more seen. Each tribe keeps, year by year, to its own quarters—the oily puffin, the rare shearwater, the various gulls, the guillemot, the cormorant and a dozen others.

The island of Mingulay is rough and hilly, but the pasture is good. Naturally life is not easy, and expedients have to be resorted to. There is a high rock called Bennichorn close to the island, with very fine grass upon the top, up which men climb at the risk of their lives, and then draw their wethers up after them to fatten. In another place we were shown a very narrow cleft in a rock, the jagged edges of which just make it possible for a sheep to obtain a foothold, but it can never turn round. The men bring their sheep in boats to the bottom, and start the poor beasts on their upward path, which eventually, after some hundreds of feet of danger and darkness, brings them out into green pasture and the light of day.

These islanders are a fine-looking race, the men as usual superior to the women; some were of definitely Scandinavian appearance, veritable Vikings, with grand, fair, well-shaped heads and big voices. They are notoriously long-lived, unless, as so often happens, they fall victims to the hungry sea. Mingulay has lately boasted two giants: one Peter Campbell of six-foot-nine, and Duncan Sinclair nearly as tall.

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We heard of a monster that inhabits the caves of Mingulay at the north end opposite Pabbay, and interviewed one man who had seen it, but could only tell us it was not a water-horse but very like it. Of the water-horse we were constantly hearing in many islands, but here we found something very like what the *Society for Psychical Research* would call "collective evidence," i.e. a whole boat's crew, who saw the beast following them for a quarter of a mile. Big Ian, grandest of Vikings, whom the Atlantic in all its fury could not daunt, himself described it. It was bigger than a common horse, and of a dark grey colour; he couldn't see whether it had hoofs, but its action was that of swimming.

We would gladly have remained among these friendly people, and were really grieved to be told suddenly that it was best that we should be off in half an hour, with barely time for leave-taking; but our friends were right, and we learnt afterwards that had we not left just when we did we might have been detained three months. We were almost becalmed, and the men had constantly to row. We went ashore on the islands of Pabbay and Sandray, on both of which are traces of ecclesiastical buildings; and the evening fell before we reached Barra, after some eight hours' dream-like floating over a moveless silent sea, with not a sail in sight, only here and there when we neared an island we exchanged greetings with some solitary fishermen setting their nets in the golden twilight.

Many things we talked of in that dream-journey, and now and then some of the men would sing to us, especially when their companions were rowing. We talked of the kindness we had received, and to illustrate their assurance that visitors were welcome in these lonely places, one of the party quoted the speech of a man in Iochar to a priest who was visiting him, and who was

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MINGULAY.

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detained by a snow-storm, "I wish it would snow so that there wouldn't be room for a little bird below the heavens!" that is, in order that the visit might be prolonged.

We heard more about the water-horse—one had been seen not long since by four men who were fishing lobsters only sixty yards from shore. The creature came within two oars' length of them, and looked at them fixedly with great eyes like cups. It had a very broad head and a mane. No one present would own to having seen a mermaid, but they said that when one was reported it was a sign of bad weather, apparently distinguishing between veridical and non-veridical hallucinations, as the learned in such things would say.

We stayed in Barra for the night, and next day resumed our voyage back to Eriskay, a fact which I mention only for the sake of recalling our sight of the Stack Islands' wave-worn rocks, now only occupied by sheep. One—*Creag Mhor*, the big rock, romantically crowned with a ruined tower—is the subject of weird legend, and is indeed suggestive to the imagination. Nothing more absolutely solitary could be imagined, and the utter loneliness of the position is accentuated by the extreme minuteness of the island, which seems as if the rush of the surrounding sea might any moment dash it to pieces. Yet even the miniature castle on its summit has defied the Atlantic for untold centuries, while nations and empires have been swept away and whole races of mankind forgotten.

A nameless mystery clings about the Flannan Islands, lately the scene of the terrible disaster which has been already referred to, and which occasioned the death of all the men of the lighthouse, their sole occupants.

The islands, seven in number, are accessible from Lewis, about twenty-five miles to the west.

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They have long been uninhabited, though apparently at one time an ecclesiastical settlement of sufficient importance to invest the islands with a reputation for special sanctity. There are the remains of chapels: one, still in some degree of preservation, known as *Teampul Beannachadh*, the House of Blessing, about 11 ft. by 10 ft. 2 in., may have been the abode of some penitential hermit. It is of the usual Columban variety, built without mortar, and ascribed by Buchanan to the Druids. He calls the islands Insulae Sacrae, and the "Indweller," John Morison, also regards them as especially sacred. "When the people go there," he says, referring to the depredators of the sea-fowl, "they use every two men to be comrades. They hold it a breach of the sanctitie of the place (for they count it holier than anie other) if any man take a drink of water unknown to his comrade, or eat ane egg or leg of anie fowl, yea, take a snuff of tobacco." Martin gives quite a long and very curious account of the customs associated with the Flannans, which in his time were held so sacred that "it was not right" to call them by their name, and they were always spoken of as "the countrie." In the same way to this day green is in certain districts constantly spoken of as "blue," to avoid naming the colour of the fairies. The St. Kildians do not speak of their island as "Hirta," but as "the high country" (cf. chapter xi. "*The Powers of Evil*"). Martin quotes other instances—that water must be called *burn*, not *visk*; *crag*, a rock, should be called *cruey*, or the hard thing; *cladach*, the shore, should be called *vah*, a cave; *gort*, sour, should be called *gaire*, sharp; and a bog, a constant source of peril, "the soft thing"—all of these instances being just examples of the Hebridean tendency towards "dodging" the powers of evil, on the principle that "ill will come if mentioned," and that those things

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will be injured to which the attention of the listening powers is even accidentally called.

Those who landed must do so sun-wards, thanking God for safety; and they always held a special service, morning and evening, in the ruined chapel, for three days before the work of fowling began, for "there was none ever yet landed, but found himself more disposed to devotion there than anywhere else."

The Hebrideans have a way, worthy of the mediaeval saints, of including their dumb friends in their recognition of sacred times and places. At certain festivals extra food is given to the cattle, and it was part of the religious celebration to refrain in the Flannans from killing any bird after evening prayer, or *with a stone*, a belief which, even associated with the almost necessary work of taking life for a liveli hood, included the idea of—

> He prayeth well who loveth well
> Both man and bird and beast.

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CHAPTER XVIII

STRAY THOUGHTS

SOMETHING has already been said as to the Nicolsonian Institute in Lewis. As I write, there reaches me from that far-away island the first number of what, it is hoped, may prove an annual publication, a pamphlet of thirty-two pages, well printed on good paper, and containing so much that is of interest wider than the merely obvious, that I cannot refrain from comment.

It is produced and edited by the scholars themselves, and naturally enough exhibits a laudable pride in their school and their companions; it is natural too that the contents should be chosen from the best material which the school has produced, that we should have well-informed essays on such subjects as *Britain as a Colonizing Power*, or *The Literary Projects of the Twentieth Century*, though original and interesting views on such subjects may surprise the Anglo-Saxon when hailing from "a peat floating on the Atlantic." But it is even more interesting to realize that the ordinary school-boy and girl pedantry, even among a race so literary as this, has not superseded a healthy interest in their immediate surroundings, but that, out of thirty-four items in the magazine, twenty are of purely local interest; that they are concerned with the flowers, scenery, games and fishing of their own island, that there are, even among the rising generation in a Free Church community, those who collect

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and preserve old-world stories and, what is more, who can retail them equally well in excellent Gaelic, and in spirited, and not too conventional, English.

In the original stories, as well as in the spirit in which old traditions are related, there is much of the characteristic pathos which those who speak the Gaelic tongue so well, know how to use. What will perhaps surprise the inventors of the "Celtic gloom" theory, are the gleams of that wider sympathy with nature, which Wordsworth, also a dweller among the mountains, understood so well:

> There is a blessing in the air,
> Which seems a sense of *joy* to yield,
> To the bare trees and mountains bare,
> And grass in the green field.

What is more, there is active humour. The children have enjoyed and remembered various youthful inadvertencies of their own, some of which are really pleasing. The following are examples worth noting.

"Here is a line from Vergil" (your Highlander is careful of the spelling of the poet's name) "meaning roughly that the hero weeps copiously:

> *Largoque flumine vultum humectat,*

which being interpreted means, according to one scholar, "He moistens his countenance with a large river." Another illustration of dictionary pitfalls—English it must be remembered is as much a foreign language as Latin—is the paraphrase of Coleridge's line,

> *The balls like pulses beat.*

"The bullets kept striking repeated blows like peas." Another story comes from a younger class. A little boy "who had evidently some experience of daily journeys for milk, on being asked the meaning of the 'Milky Way,' replied 'Goathill Road.'" Another very

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human incident also preserved in the infant school, was of "a teacher who was telling her class how Monmouth was found lying in a ditch, with only a few peas in his pocket, when she noticed one boy not attending. Pointing to him she asked rather sharply, 'What had he in his pocket?' 'Jumbo balls ma'am,' was the faltering reply of the conscience-stricken little fellow." Another teacher was giving an object lesson to infants about a chair; infants, be it remembered, to whom a chair was conceivably a novelty, or at best a rare and precious possession. She took one little boy out to examine it. "Now," she said, "What did the wood feel like?" "Please ma'am, dusty," was the answer.

One's pleasure in such stories lies in the fact that they were observed and recorded *by the children themselves*, that they are not the humours of the examination room, perceived by an educated man of the world, with a wide experience of the relations of things.

A question which cannot fail to occur to one on reading of the kind of education the children receive, is as to its subsequent utilisation. In the *Annual* we hear of twenty-one now studying in the Universities of Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow, ten in arts, and eleven in medicine; of three more about to enter the Universities, a number which will probably be largely increased now that the Carnegie Fund is available. We hear of eleven women who are certificated teachers, one a Hospital Nurse in London, one who has just finished an advanced course in cookery, eight variously employed on the mainland, eleven in Stornoway. To return to the lads, only two appear to be teaching, which is to be regretted, Gaelic-speaking teachers being still scarce; five are engineers, one is in South Africa, three are architects, one a chemist, one a

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photographer, fifteen are clerks, of whom six are in banks.

We note also that out of the sixteen students who are from the out-lying country districts, presumably holding that miraculous course of ten-pound scholarships, two are now girls.

And so the brave little ship launched less than thirty years ago keeps her course, and lands the little passengers so lately wandering bare-foot on the shores of their native peat bog, into distant worlds of thought and action. It is delightful to learn that the intentions of the pious founder of the Nicolson Institute are to receive further extension, and that his two brothers, between them, will further endow the school to the extent of £7,000, "the annual income to be employed in providing University Bursaries for boys educated in the school." Possibly, now that Mr. Carnegie's liberality has possessed the Universities of more wealth than at present they know how to employ, this sending of "coals to Newcastle," or perhaps in such connexion, one should rather say, "owls to Athens," may be reconsidered, and the endowment otherwise utilised. One more point of which the magazine reminds us, is of special interest to the student of these Islands, who may be tempted to ask whether all this training and education and enlargement of notions is robbing the Celt of his inherent characteristics. Personally we answer "a thousand times, *no*." That is the work of landlordism and oppression, and Sassenach propinquity, and alien contempt, and certain religious influences; but of education—never. Even so essentially Celtic a characteristic as the power of spontaneous poetic expression remains, not only in islands more remote from the conventionalities of life, but even here, on the desk of a schoolgirl. The following lines, written impromptu

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in a few minutes, on hearing of the Queen's death, have something in them of the wail of the pibroch, if not of the old bardic lamentation.

Tread softly, she's no more,
She's gone beyond the roar
And strife: weep nations all:
Let every pleasure pall
Now that she's gone.

Ah! who can fill her place?
Whose smile so full of grace?
Whose hand so bountiful
Could countless thousands rule?
Ah! who?—Not one.

Tread softly, she is gone,
And we are left alone;
A nation deep in woe,
That can no solace know
Now she is gone.

It is the womanly lament for a good woman gone from among us, albeit written upon soil which furnished brave soldiers to fight the Hanoverian army in the '15 and the '45! I once heard a gallant Highlander tell how, when Queen Victoria was engaging him as a piper, she said to him, "You Camerons were all for the Stuarts when they came over"; and how he, starting forward with raised hand, shouted, "And so we are now, my leddy!" But he loved and, till her death, faithfully served, the good woman who made no demur when, Queen as she was, he point-blank refused to enter her service at the date she desired, because there was "no one but himself the day" who could do justice to the Laird's moor, or could rightly distribute the points of vantage for the deer, or could finish training the young dogs, and so "it would be when the season was over that it would be just right and fair for him to be leaving the Lodge."

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I have lately had opportunity for inquiring how far the Nicolson gift really benefits the class who could not otherwise obtain secondary education, or whether the desire for education is in any way confined, as is so largely the case in England, to the middle-classes, as a means mainly of self-advancement. I learn, in reply, that out of two-dozen lads now at the University, ten or eleven are of the crofter class; and that two of the most promising now in school are the sons of widows of crofters. One of these brave women still works her own croft, allowing her bright lad, the eldest of four children, to follow his bent at school, while she herself works at farm labour at home. Who that has taken any part in the work of training children in England does not know the difficulty of being *allowed* by the parents to carry on the work after the children have arrived at even the earliest wage-earning age?

"The difficulty in the way of the crofter's children," writes Mr. Gibson, the able Headmaster of the Institute, "is one of money mainly. As far as natural ability goes, the country boys can quite hold their own with the town boys. . . . I can assure you with, I believe, no hesitation, that these children, whatever the station of the parents, have a susceptibility to culture that I can only explain as racial. It is certainly inherent in many of them, and is perhaps one of their most interesting features."

It is certainly one of their most characteristic features, and one for which England can furnish little analogy. Even in the Lowlands of Scotland one may perhaps assume that some of the sacrifices made for education owe something to Highland example and influence. Now and then one meets an American, seldom an Englishman, who has grasped

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the difference between Scot and Highlander, their diametrically opposed temperaments and tendencies, their differences of history and of race. The Scot will occasionally claim the Highlander. "We're all Scotch," I have heard him say, especially if he were a Lowland-born schoolmaster anxious to minimize differences, but the Highlander tells another story; and I have heard him mimic, with infinite gusto, the Scot abroad about the time of Glasgow fair, with the "Tammy Shanty" cap, which the tourist believes to be the equivalent of a Highland bonnet, and his "Whaur's Wullie?" and "What's gotten Jock?"

Perhaps the most surprising instance of failure to realize the difference in speech of Scot and Highlander is in the case of James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, who makes Flora Macdonald lament in such phrases as:

> But oh there is ane whose hard fate I deplore,
> Nor house ha' nor hame in his country has he;

"It jars upon a West Highlander's ear to find broad Scotch put into the mouths of Gaelic speaking Highlanders," writes Dr. Keith Macdonald, who has written with so much sympathy of the Highlands to which he belongs; "they never pronounced their English in Lowland Scotch, and don't do it now. . . . This is not finding fault with the Lowland Doric, which is a most expressive and, according to some, a most beautiful language."

Since remarking, in an earlier chapter, upon this question of Highland language, a few more examples have come under my notice, which further illustrate the historical interest of certain local phrases. *Cothram na Feinné*, literally "Fingalian justice," was an exclamation to which our attention was called when used by some boys at play, and which bears the same testimony as do the traditions of the Fingalians to

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the Highland belief in their honour and courtesy. It is perhaps interesting to remark that there is an old Island belief in the existence of a cold hell, a faith which a very short residence in South Uist would incline one to share. The first instinct of hospitality among the people is always to provide warmth, and everywhere we go we can always record that "the people showed us no little kindness, for they kindled a fire because of the present rain and because of the cold." In a land of damp and draughts, and wet mist and low-lying clouds, a warm hell sounds almost luxurious! The people have a saying which one soon learns to appreciate, "Hell is bitter with its dampness," and they make use of a euphemism, "Save us from the wind of the cold channels" (i.e. hell). There is however a story which tells in another direction. The will o' the wisp is a blacksmith who could get no admittance even into the lower regions. The most that could be granted him was a single ember to keep him warm, and he has gone shivering about with it ever since. Such a legend however need not be taken seriously, as the origin of the will o' the wisp is an historical fact with date complete. Like the Siege of Badajoz and the Retreat of the Grand Army, it was first heard of in 1812, and is well known to be the wandering spirit of a woman condemned perpetually to seek the *Galium verum* used for dyeing the tweeds, as a punishment for having covetously sought to overreach her neighbours in collecting an undue quantity of what should be common to all!

There are certain terms of endearment which have what I have called, an historical interest. "Oh food and clothing of men!" in a country where food and clothing are hard to come by, is expressive of no common affection; so too, "Coat of the waist," *Cota cneais*, and "Shirt of the girdle," *Leine chrios*, are expressive of

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hearty devotion. "Calf of my heart," where cattle are so much valued, is even yet more loving. Affection is indeed variously expressed in terms of cows, and the Highlander, speaking of the old indigenous breed of small sheep, as differentiated from the large Lowland sheep which have been the cause of so much disaster and sorrow, will speak of them affectionately as "the small cattle."

Norman Macleod, in one of his matchless *Highland Reminiscences*, brings to bear another argument against the new order of things in the Highlands which has hardly been so forcibly and clearly stated elsewhere—that is, the enormous increase in the cost of the poor to the country. In a note to the paper on *The Minister and his Work*, he points out that before the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, when relief was gratuitously administered by the sessions, the cost of all the poor in Scotland, including the towns, went little beyond £170,000 a year; whereas he writes in 1864, some ten to fifteen years after the Highland depopulation, "under the present system, with rentals largely increased, with wages rising rapidly, the poor cost the country annually upwards of £750,000, that the expense is steadily rising, and that the discontent of the poor is rising as steadily." Elsewhere (*Tacksmen and Tenants*) he points out that, in the old days, the poor of the parish were wholly provided for by the tacksmen. Each farm, according to its size, had its old men, widows and orphans depending on it for their support. "The widow's free house was kept in repair by her neighbours, who also cut her peats and drove her cow to the hills with their own. Her gleanings of corn—a sparrow would disdain to glean in some of the islands now—were threshed at the mill with the tacksman's crop, she had hens and ducks and a potato patch." In short she was tolerably comfortable and

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very thankful, enjoying the feeling of being the object of true charity, which was returned by such labour as she could give, and by her hearty gratitude. "But all this was changed when those tacksmen were swept away to make room for the large sheep farms, and when the remnants of the people flocked from their empty glens to occupy houses in wretched villages near the sea-shore by way of becoming fishers—often where no fish could be caught. The result has been that this parish for example, which once had a population of 2,200 souls, and received only £11 per annum from public (church) funds for the support of the poor, expends now, under the poor law, upwards of £600 annually, with a population diminished by one half, but with poverty increased in a greater ratio."

The same author does not hesitate to assert that the drunkenness charged upon the Highlanders (but of which we have seen next to nothing in the Islands) also belongs to the New Order. He quotes from his father (the well-known Dr. Macleod of Glasgow) an account translated from the first Gaelic magazine ever published, in which the Hogmany Festival, the great merry-making of the year, is described with its mumming and dancing and singing, and adds, "Thus we passed the last night of the year at Glendersarie (in the Island of Mull), and neither I nor my father ever saw a quarrel or heard an improper word at such a gathering. It is since the gentry have ceased thus to mingle freely with the people that disgusting drunkenness has become common in these black tippling houses, which prove the highway to almost every vice. The people of each estate were as one family—the knot of kindness tying every heart together, and the friendly eye of the superiors was over us all."

Courtesy, courage and fairness are the ideal virtues of the Highlands, and any disregard of these is not

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easily forgotten. I remember once asking a piper for the well-known dance tune *Dubh Luidneach*, a request which so obviously created amusement that I inquired into the cause. "Oh, they'll be thinking you will be knowing the history of that tune," said my hostess; and I was further informed that the *Dubh Luidneach*, the Black Sluggard, was the boat in which Argyll sailed away after the defeat of Inverlochy, leaving his men to be slaughtered by Montrose and the Macdonalds. In how many English kitchens could one hear the history of, let us say, Sir Roger de Coverley?

In recalling the history of the fisheries it ought not to be forgotten that it is only since the decline of the House of Stuart that England has been indifferent to the prosperity, in this respect, of the sister kingdom. Careful investigation was made by Charles I into the possible developments of an industry of which he saw the advantages, but the fishing-stations which he established, afterwards fell into neglect in the generally disturbed state of the kingdom. Charles II revived the good work, which succeeded well for a time; but, says Martin, "the design was ruined thus: the king having occasion for money was advised to withdraw that employed in the fishery; at which the merchants being displeased and disagreeing likewise among themselves, they also withdrew their money, and the attempt has never been renewed since that time."

For the observant, much of the history of a country may be found written upon its agricultural and domestic implements, and this is especially the case in the Outer Hebrides, where the scarcity both of wood and iron, and the peculiar nature of the soil, sometimes bog, sometimes dry and stony, sometimes incredibly shallow—a few inches of soil collected on the surface of the rock—have necessarily influenced the material and nature of the tools in use.

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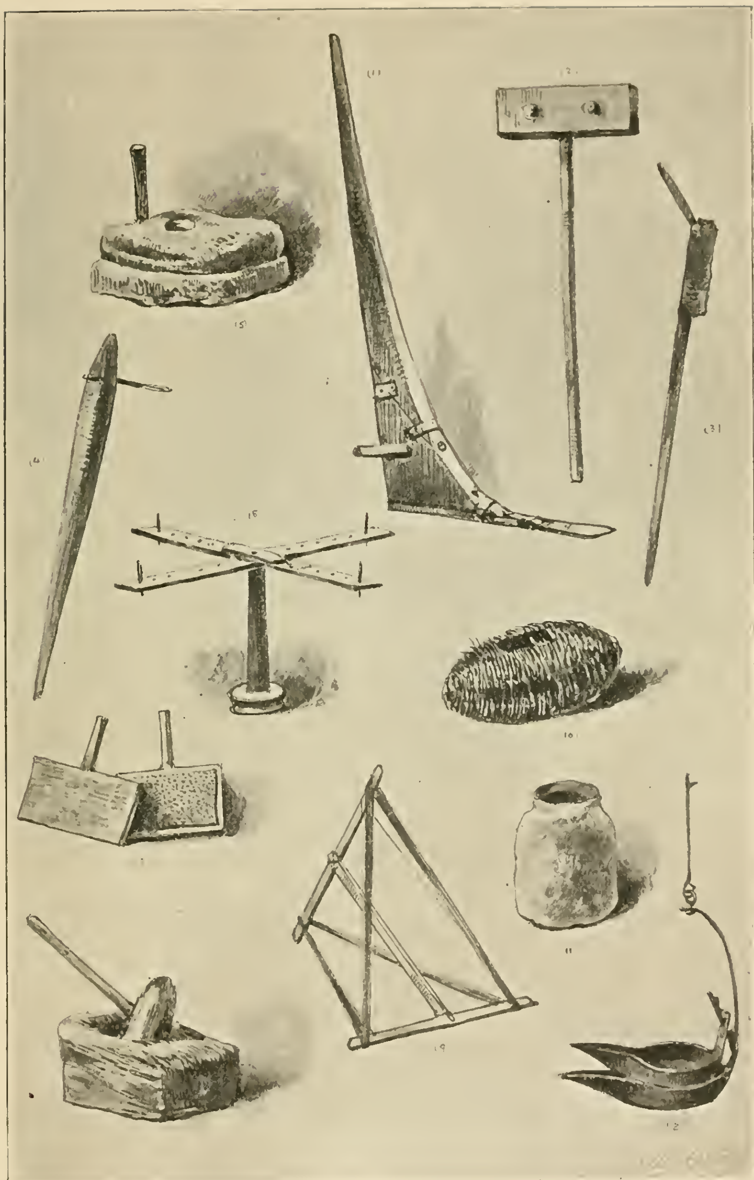

AGRICULTURAL AND DOMESTIC IMPLEMENTS.

1. Cas-chrom.
2. Ràcan.
3. Trèisgir.
4. Plèitheag.
5. Bràth.
6. Cnotag.
7. Cards.
8. Lianradh.
9. Crois-iarna.
10. Màdag.
11. Bollachan.
12. Cruisie.

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The oldest implement in the Islands, possibly one of the oldest in the world's history, is the *cas-chrom*, the crooked spade (literally, crooked foot). It is still in use in certain districts—we have noticed it in Skye and in Harris—and is said to be far more effective than the plough, besides being suitable in positions practically inaccessible for horse-labour, for many an island plot is too small for a plough to turn in.

The *cas-chrom* is extremely strong. The right foot is placed upon the side pin, and the head, which is about 2ft. 9in. long, jerked into the ground with the entire weight of the labourer, who rests upon the long shaft or handle which measures between 5 and 6 feet. He works from right to left, walking backwards. In Harris and other districts where cultivation is by means of "lazy beds," already described, this instrument is almost indispensable. There are various modifications, notably the *cas dhireach*, as to which some verses are recited, said to be the spontaneous address of a Lochaber drover on first seeing an islander at work with the less orthodox implement:—

'Tis not the right stick
  You have got in your fist,
You have gone beyond your senses
  You will never be right while alive;
Little tillage will you do
  With the ugly stick
You cannot raise a crop
  That will keep alive a child,
My darling is the crookie
  That comes up to meet me,
When my foot is on the side spur,
  Heavily and kindly.
It is not the right stick
  You have got in your fist.

Then there is the *ràcan*, or clod-breaker, so primitive but withal so useful an implement that one may suppose it to have been unaltered from the earliest

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days of tillage. It is primarily used as a mallet, and the teeth are only called into requisition on occasion.

The *trèisgar* and the *plèitheag* are used in cutting peats, and however primitive are admitted to be very effective for their purpose. The head is shod with iron, and the labourer cuts the peats the size intended at one push, while a second man casts them out on to the nearest plot of dry ground ready for drying and subsequent stacking.

The *bràth* (two stones revolving one upon another) is by some thought to be the oldest form of handmill in existence; the *cnotag*[1] is a very simple instrument for bruising grain for immediate use, and consists of a solid piece of rock, often merely rough hewn, with a hollow for receiving the grain.

The women, too, have their special implements, the *cards* for combing or carding the raw wool into fleecy curls ready for spinning in the graceful *cuibhioll*, the low Highland wheel, which must always revolve *dessil*, sunward, which is used with a special grace—put away with the sign of the cross, and on Saturdays with the loosened band, that the powers of evil may not find it ready to their hand on the day of rest. Then there are the *crois-iarna* and the more uncommon *iaunradh* for winding the wool into skeins, and the *mùdag*, a basket made of osiers to contain the ball of wool during manipulation and so keep it from the floor, which at best is sanded, but may be wet and muddy, for it consists of the native earth more or less hardened by use, sometimes with a rock cropping through, and affected, even in the best-regulated households, by the state of the weather.

An illustration is given of the *crogan* or *bollachan*, vessels still made in Barvas, Lewis, and formerly in other places, moulded in the hand, of clay; roughly

[1] See Illustration, page 199.

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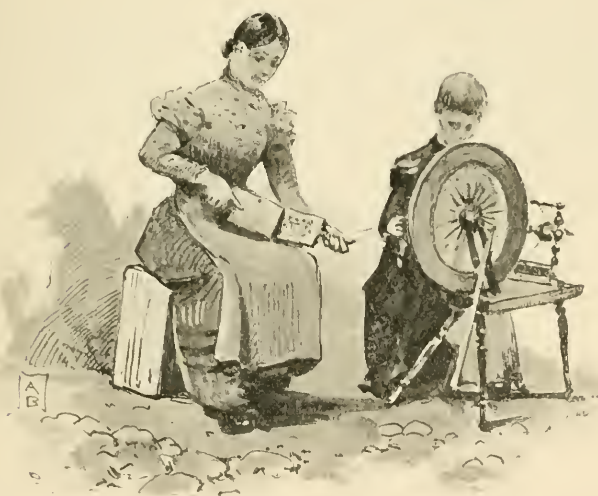
decorated with patterns drawn with a pin and glazed by being filled with milk and slowly heated. The *cruisie*, a lamp of the same design which figures on Egyptian monuments and is still found in Pompeii, is alas! almost superseded by the unsavoury abomination of ill-made lamps and second-rate paraffin. Formerly they were burnt with fish or seal or whale-oil, or, in remote islands, with the intestines of birds.

I remember once seeing on the west coast of a soli-



WOMEN CARDING AND SPINNING.

tary islet a treasured example of one of those freaks of mood with which Nature bewilders her votaries. It was a tiny globe of intensely fragile glass for electric light, washed on to shore by a storm which had wrecked the ship to which it belonged, and landed safely above rocks and shingle—a fairy toy one was almost afraid to handle. Many strange things come ashore from shipwrecks, and unlikely objects are often found among the possessions of the islanders. Once a

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basket of tomatoes was washed up to the satisfaction of the people, who seldom see vegetables and scarcely ever fruit, as was testified by an old man who observed that he was glad to have seen *apples*, if only for once, before he died !

It is not every one who has been given the opportunity of studying the Highlander's character or the privilege of being able to appreciate it. The Highlander is infinitely patient, and he will minister to the requirements of the stranger as part of the respect which he owes to himself, but such courtesies are scattered, not elicited. It is in this faculty of patience that he differs from his nearest of kin in Ireland—

> The stranger came with iron hand
> And from our fathers reft the land,
> Where dwell we now? See rudely swell,
> Crag over crag, and fell o'er fell.
> Ask we this savage hill we tread
> For fattened steer or household bread?
> Ask we for flocks? These shingles dry
> And well the mountain might reply,
> To you as to your sires of yore
> Belong the target and claymore!

The Highlander's nature is too great for malice, too brave for petty revenges. If he is strong to suffer, he is strong also to endure.

He has the virtues and the failings of a child, or of the beasts who are his companions and friends. He is sensitive, easily hurt ; his memory is tenacious of a slight or of an injustice ; but he has lived hand-in-hand with Nature, and it is not only in his gift of second-sight, in his friendship with bird and beast, in his joy in the glamour of his Islands, but also in capacity for friendship, and in readiness to exchange sympathy, that he shows that his ear has been ever close to the beatings of her heart.

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This book will have served its purpose if, in its degree, it has set before even a few of our own countrymen a true picture of the people of the Outer Hebrides; a people well worthy of our friendship and of our interest, but who are practically less known to the average Englishman than the inhabitants of New Zealand or of Central Africa. They are of the same blood with all of us who can claim to be Celtic rather than Saxon, they are geographically our near neighbours, they are under the same rule and obey the same laws ; and yet even those who penetrate to their islands, so far at least as they are represented by comfortable inns in easily accessible places, come back knowing nothing of the life of the people, and only ready to condemn them as half-savage, extortionate, and above all, idle. It is not to the man who wants to kill something, not to the woman who has a wardrobe to exhibit, that the Highlander reveals himself.

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GLOSSARY

It was suggested that a list of Gaelic words used in this book might be of interest, containing as it does many terms that are not well known. Accordingly they have been arranged in alphabetical order, and although no great etymological accuracy can be claimed for it, it is hoped that the list may be useful as far as it goes.—R.M.L.

Word.	Meaning.	Page.
Achlasan Cholumcille	St. John's Wort, "the arm-pit flower of St. Columba"	202
Aingeal	Fire, light, sunshine	235
Airne Moire	A kidney-shaped bean	204
Amadain	Fools	103
An teantruidh	The Centaury	205
Ardoch, or Ardach [F'ardach]	High-field, or Home	31
Aspach	A low hill	31
Barrad	The top layer of peat	167
Bathàdh	A drowning, quenching	235
Bearnan Brighide	The dandelion, or "the notched plant of Brigid"	203
Bearnaraidh an Easpag	Bernera of the Bishops	394
Beinn	A mountain	31
Biolaire Moire	A kind of cress	203
Bocain	Spectre, sprite	231
Bollachan	A clay vessel	424
Brath	A quern, handmill	424
Brog an eich uisge	The marsh-marigold, or "The shoe of the water-horse"	205
Bruach	A small rising ground	31
Buarach	A horsehair cow fetter	248
Burn	Water, fresh water	408
Cabarfeidh	Stag-head, Celtic heraldic term	331
Caisteal	A castle	278
Caoibhrechan	Water ragwort	167
Caora chàraidh	The fat sheep exacted by tacksmen at Hallow-mass	145
Caraisde	Days of exacted labour (Càradh =mending, repairing)	145
Cas-chrom	A crooked spade	423
Cas dhireach	A straight delving spade	423
Cathair	Citadel, a fortified city	207

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GLOSSARY

Word.	Meaning.	Page.
Cearc fearinn	Fat fowl exacted by tacksmen	145
Ceardobhan	The sharded beetle, a dung beetle	223
Ceilidh	A gossiping, visiting	61
Clach Mhoire	A hailstone	204
Clach na greiné	Stone of the sun	382
Cladach	A shore, beach	408
Clo bodaich	A "songless" web	257
Cnò bhreac	A large shell-snail	206
Cnotag	A hollowed block of stone used for bruising grain	424
Cno Mhoire	Molucca bean	204
Coire	A circular hollow surrounded with hills	31
Coit	A small fishing boat, a coracle	399
Constabal baile	Village officer	104
Coparran Moire	A kind of limpet	204
Cota cneais	"Coat of the waist"	417
Cothram na Feinné	"Fingalian justice"	416
Crag	A rock	408
Creag mhor	The big rock	407
Crogan	A clay vessel	424
Crois-iarna	A hand reel, wool-winder	424
Cruey, or cruaidh	A stone used in place of anchor in a small boat	408
Cruisie	An oil-lamp	425
Cuibholl	A spinning wheel	424
Cuile Mhoire	The sea, "the treasury of Mary"	204
Cur	The woof (?)	220
Cuse	A hill	31
Cuach Phadruigh	The greater plantain, or "Patrick's cup"	205
Daoine sithe	Green-coated men of peace, fairies	347
Dessil	Sunwards	227
Diabhol	A devil	236
Dluth	The warp	220
Dosgaidh	Loss, misfortune	241
Dubh luidneach	Black sluggard	420
Each Ursann	The forfeited horse	145
Eala bhìdh	The lesser celandine, "the yellow swan"	205
Eolas	Knowledge, spell	252
Fachaich	Fatlings, puffins	393
Feamainn chirein	A rock weed, "cock's-comb"	191
Feannag	A royston, or hooded crow	248
Fiantaichean	The Norsemen, a big, muscular fellow	284
Frith	A method of divination, horoscope	227
Frithear	One who makes the "Frith"	227
Fuathas	Apparitions, spectres, ghosts	231

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GLOSSARY

Word.	Meaning.	Page.
GAIRE	Sharp	408
GAIRGEAN	Marsh-galium, garlic	206
GARBAGH AN'T SLEIBH	Club-moss, or "savoury"	204
GARRAHILLI	Holy section	180
GEARRADH	A cutting, or section	292
GLEANN	A glen	31
GOLLAD	Outside peat	167
GORT	Sour	408
GRIANUL, or GRIANAIN	A sunny spot	47
GRUAIGEAN	A kind of seaweed	191
HEILIBOST	Holy Town	180
INNEADH	Want, deficiency	220
LEINE CHRIOS	"Shirt of the girdle"	417
LEITTER	The side of a hill or of a country	31
LIANRADH	Wool-winder	424
LIATHAG	A broad-leafed seaweed	191
LORG	A staff, a crutch; a footstep, or footprint	226
LUIBH MHOIRE	Plant of Mary	203
LUS COLUMCILLE	St. John's Wort	246
LUS MOIRE	Plant or herb of Mary	203
LUS NAN LAOGH	The buck bean	205
MACH A	Out of, from	170
MACHAIR	A field, a plain	156
MAM	A hill of a particular form, slowly rising, and not pointed	31
MAOL MOIRE	A flat green plant	203
MAOLCONAIN	A fungus	205
MAOR GRUIND	The ground officer	158
MAORACH MOIRE	A kind of whelk	204
MÁTHAIR	A mother	66
MEALL	A hill, or eminence	31
MILLEADH	Spoiling, destroying	235
MONTICH	Small hill	31
MÙDAG	A basket to hold ball of wool	424
PIOCACH	Seath, or coal-fish in its third or fourth year	126
PLÉITHEAG	Peat-cutter	424
RÁCAN	A rake, a clod-breaker	423
RANN NAM MEACANN	The name of a children's story	203
RIOGHACHD-BHARRTHON	An old name for Tyree, meaning "The kingdom just emerging from the summits of the waves"	4
SGEILPICHEAN	Earth houses	183
SGEULTACHD	Tales and traditions of Celtic bards	210
SIAN	Charm	204
SIOMAD	The inmost layer of peat	167
SIONNAS	A plant probably of the colt's-foot tribe	206

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GLOSSARY

Word.	Meaning.	Page.
SKALK	A morning dram	91
SKERRY VHOR	The Big Scaur (Sgōr)	51
SLIABH	A mountain of the first magnitude, an extended heath	31
SLIADH	Horse leech	206
SLOAK	A kind of seaweed	191
SNAITHEAN	A charm, a thread	246
SNATH LUS	Ribwort plantain	206
TATHLUS	Wild parsley	206
TEAMPUL BEANNACHADH	House of Blessing	408
TEINE	Fire	235
TIR II	The land of I or Iona	17
TORADH	A form of evil influence, the charming away of milk from cattle	247
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SCALE

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THE MINCH

LITTLE MINCH

Isle of Skye

SEA OF THE HEBRIDES

Passage of Barra

Passage of Tiree

Passage of Skerryvore

Sound of Pabbay

Sound of Harris

Sound of Barra

Cuchullin Sound

Sound of Sleat

Sound of Mull

Small Isles

Longitude West of Greenwich

Butt of Lewis

Stornoway

Peninsula of Eye

North Uist

Benbecula

South Uist

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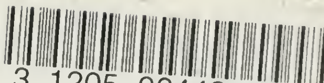
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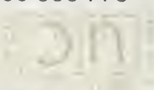

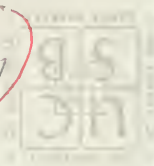

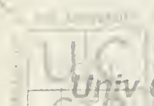

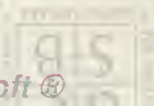
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