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AMONG THE LOCHS :

BEING A NARRATIVE OF SOME PASSAGES IN THE ARCHDEACON'S HOLIDAY.

CHAPTER I.—KNOCKTARLITIE.

WHEN we were asked to join the Archdeacon's party on the banks of the Gare-Loch, after the brief and bright (though damp) experience of the Highlands, recorded on a former occasion,* it may be easily supposed that my friend Kate and myself eagerly accepted the invitation. After the ordinary conventionalities of life, there is something more charming than I can describe in that free, unfettered, half-Highland, half-seaside life which one lives in such a place. I can scarcely say what motive brought the Archdeacon to Knocktarlitie. I believe he had just *glimpsed* it in a former tour, and, charmed by the look of quiet upon everything in that lovely locality, thought of the place again when, worn out by the year's labour, he and Mrs Archdeacon consulted where to go in September. A dignitary of the Church does not, of course, shoot, especially not when he becomes stout and advances in life; and as our excellent friend is a literary man, and has always some work of that description in hand to occupy him, he does not care for the vulgar amusements without which other gentlemen do not seem to find existence possible. He is the very man to make a country residence delightful. The very sound of his laugh is enough to dispel the clouds from a less cheerful temper. The sound of that light step, which (having such a weight to carry) he naturally prides himself a little upon, stirs a whole house into alertness and pleasant looks. On the whole, he is what may safely be called a dear man, full of jokes and lively allusions, but in the pulpit as stately and serious as becomes an ecclesiastical dignitary,

and such a preacher as one rarely hears. No one who knows him can wonder at his great popularity; and if the *right* party were in power, and the bestowal of bishoprics was in *proper* hands, we all know who would wear the first vacant apron. But, of course, with a judge so advanced in spiritual discrimination as Lord Palmerston, nothing but Low Church will do; and I should not wish the dear Archdeacon to accept preferment through *such* a channel.

I am not sure that the regular current of Highland tourists know much about the Gare-Loch. I don't think they do, in fact. It is too near the ordinary world to catch the eye of the mere traveller, who thinks nothing of a place unless it is a few hundred miles off, and rather difficult of approach. On the contrary, anybody from Glasgow can reach Knocktarlitie in a couple of hours—can plunge into the sweetest quiet, the deepest wealth of foliage, a paradise of wood and water, at the very smallest cost of money and trouble; and consequently, as a matter of course, people think lightly of the Elysium that lies so easily at hand. Glasgow persons frequent the place in tolerable numbers, it is true; and as there is no show in it, no marine parade, not a single shop, I imagine these visitors must be devoured with *ennui*; but for people escaping from *the world*—people tired out with London life, or sick of work and noise in whatever quarter it may be carried on, nothing can surpass this tender tranquillity. The hill-side opposite, though its highest slopes are purple with heather, might be clad with vines, for anything one can say

* See *ante*, p. 256.

against it, when the sun shines on its heights, so soft is that gentle acclivity. Unfortunately the mists are only too ready to descend, and prove beyond controversy that this is not a region of wine and oil; but wherever a burn rushes down the steep (and they come in multitudes), the freshest foliage, heavy and rich and full, tracks the stream up to its sources, and clings about all the eccentricities of its way. Such plane-trees! patriarchal sycamores clustering in deepest umbrage!—such laurels! such crowds of graceful ash! such lofty limes, flinging down tremulous floods of verdure to their veiled feet! My enthusiasm may be smiled at, probably; but I do not deny that I am enthusiastic. At the entrance of the loch, the great artist, Nature, making her first sketch and study for the world of opening lochs farther down the Clyde, distinguished the spot by a repetition of sweet bays and beatific summer headlands, green to the water's edge; and, at the upper end, having made further progress with that splendid network of mountain and lake, throws across the gentle basin a noble line of hills, truly belonging to Loch Long, which is hidden yonder under their shadow, but in still more picturesque possession abiding here, giving a charm to the landscape which is quite indescribable. The wonderful thing seems to be that the sun himself never exhausts those hills. Every hour of his shining you see him busy about them, curiously investigating the countless knolls and hollows far up and near the sky, throwing now and then a surprised and sudden gleam upon some nook he has never fairly explored before, and intensifying the light upon it so that every spectator shares his sweet wonder, triumph, and joy. Now it is a crag, which shows stern and splendid under the wonderful flash of sudden perception—now a flush of heather rising forth into the light—now a slope of the most wonderful colour suddenly appearing with Pre-Raphaelite minuteness

from amid a world of other slopes, among which, a moment before, it was undistinguishable. This is the Gare-Loch. If it did not rain—if it were not raining half the time—it would be too much like paradise.

And often the rain is very bearable. Whenever it clears off, the atmosphere is delicious. But when it *settles down*—oh me!—let me not recall that persistent, pertinacious, soft, continual dropping. We are not in paradise after all—nobody ever passes along the heavy road—no good Samaritan comes to call—one cannot go out—one quarrels with one's best friend inside—one gradually grows into a slow desperation beyond the reach of hope; and the laurels gleam their wet boughs at you, and the long branches of the ash sway to and fro, and the clusters of the plane-trees nod together in a kind of dewy triumph. You think you will be in time for all the autumnal colours, I suppose, because it is September—that is why the green, green leaves, green as though it were June, whisper and nod at you with malicious triumph through the steady rain.

This, however, has nothing to do with the Archdeacon's party. The Archdeacon's house is a large yellow-coloured house, with a curious door, approached by two sweeps of staircase, like a Scotch pulpit. A pretty house, on the whole. The drawing-room has a handsome bow, with three windows commanding everything but the hills, where we used to sit in dumb despair, one in each window, watching the rain, but where we had abundance of talk and cheer to make up. This house is called "The Lodge;" anybody who is interested will easily be able to identify it. Here we lived in primitive withdrawal from the vulgar world. In the morning the postman came with a whistle, calling forth a flight of maid-servants to receive the letters; and at noon he came back, with a horn, to receive the communications which we sent out of Arcadia. Vulgar provisions, which one orders from vulgar shops

in the prose world, come here gliding in boats, or borne over the hills. Up the side of the loch gleams a line of cottages, here and there bursting into loftier gables or attic windows, appearing from behind high hedges, from within gardens, behind rows of potatoes or clusters of trees. Every house has its boat deposited on the beach: the aborigines, of every rank, sex, and description, are skilful in the management of these indispensable conveyances. The ladies, the very babies row. I saw a creature of four manage his boat as if it were the natural shell of that species of amphibian. The phenomenon amused me greatly. It was burned brown with the sunshine of the early summer, and damped throughout with the succeeding rain. I doubt if its feet or its petticoats were ever dry. There it sat in its boat, and prospered. Probably it will fall heir to its grandfather's rheumatism before it grows half as old a man.

"It is a curious fact," said the Archdeacon, coming suddenly in among us, as he did five or six times in the morning, making a little rapid excursion from his work, and back again, after he had discharged his arrow—"it is a curious fact that all the native inhabitants of Knocktarlitie—the aborigines, in fact—are old ladies. I have just been calculating that, in the course of a few years, chances of immigration excepted, the race must be extinct."

The sudden outcry which this speech raised among us three ladies may be imagined. "Archdeacon!" exclaimed his wife. It was all she could say. The idea of entire depopulation falling upon the pleasant banks of the Gare Loch, and all this beauty returning to the wilderness, was too afflicting to be lightly discussed.

"The Archdeacon is only ironical," said I; "and, besides, he means the upper classes: gentlemen always are so hard upon us. Perhaps we ought to take ourselves out of the world altogether when we grow old, and keep out of other people's way."

"When you grow old, Miss Arabella," said the Archdeacon, with his finest bow, "I will allow you to consider the question; but, in the mean time, here's the fact; curious, isn't it? It struck me as quite a new branch of statistical inquiry. Given such a class of population, how it keeps itself up?"

"It is a class of population that affects such places," said Kate. "I'll tell you how it keeps itself up, Archdeacon. How does Chelsea Hospital keep itself up? I suspect if there were no battles going on anywhere, the old Peninsula men would soon be extinct, wouldn't they? How easily you talk of your old ladies! Aren't they the survivors, the wounded, of the outside fight? Don't be afraid, the race will never be extinct."

"Mrs S——, I stand reproved," said the Archdeacon. "Notwithstanding, you know it is remarkable. Why are there *no* young people among them?—that is the question. No daughters, nor nieces even, and as for sons——" The Archdeacon threw up his hands as if that were entirely out of the question.

"My dear, we have no children ourselves," said Mrs Archdeacon, very mildly. Upon which he looked at her, spun round upon his heel, and with his sharp light step was gone out of the room before any one could say another word. It was the Archdeacon's way. Something came into his head when he was at his work that wanted utterance. He came, fired it among us, and disappeared again. He did this, as I have mentioned, half-a-dozen times in one day.

"It is curious though, as the Archdeacon says, how old ladies do settle in one place, and keep it up from generation to generation," said Mrs Archdeacon, "with their tea-parties. They give tea-parties here, do you know. We have been to two or three, but it's fatiguing work. You sit down round a long table, and have every kind of cake offered to you. It's very odd. I

confess I like a mixture of all ages, for my part."

"And look here—here's a mixture of ages," said Kate.

It was a party of people coming to call—blessed visitants—in the rain! Some charming young friends of ours were among them. Mr Reginald, our kind young companion of former times, led the party, in beatific circumstances, surrounded by a halo of young ladies. I need not, however, enter into a description of this pretty group, as it is foreign to the immediate tenor of my tale. Possible romances gleaming through a pleasant mist of flirtation gave a sweet suggestiveness to the scene. Ah, youth, youth! always the same, though the actors in the drama change perpetually. But it is hard to think that these pretty creatures are to fold their wings in the inevitable course of nature, and drop down into sober elderly souls like dear Kate and me.

To look at them now, when the sun shines, philandering, as Kate says, down that pretty old avenue! The avenue itself is one of the glories of Knocktarlitie; yew-trees not to be surpassed, in solemn majestic lines of sombre foliage and brown branching—not crowded close as in an Italian alley, with the blazing sun shut out, a monastic twilight strait between two glowing worlds of day; but standing apart like English trees, having bars of sunshine and a whole universe of air and light breathing visible around those sombre-splendid arches which absorb and yet repel the sun. Outside the yews, two glorious lines of limes stand meditative over them, watching through those breaks of light the pretty figures gleaming past, the puffs of airy muslin and silken reflections of drapery. Solemn and abstract stand the yew-trees, immemorial spectators, lost in the observant calm of age, but the lime branches thrill with a sympathetic tremor as summer and youth go gleaming by. We come after, staid and serious, not

saying much; we two women, solitary, not any longer young. Do you imagine we have not thoughts of our own as we follow the young people through the airy lights and dropping shadows? I too, though nobody knows it, have such trees still growing, and such sunshine shining in the silent world of memory that belongs to me. Figures glide through those vistas which human sight beholds no longer. Ah, me! what human vision of to-day could identify the Arabella yonder, moving in a glorified surrounding of love and youth and sweet observance, with the Arabella here? But the two are the same to me. I can hear those voices whisper which have lost the faculty of mortal speech. The present is flitting by moment after moment. It is an evanescent glory even to these reigning princesses and princes before us: but the past is for ever. Why we should be sad about it I cannot tell. While it was doing, it was doubtful, transitory, crossed with clouds and suspicions, and a hundred pangs of uncertainty. Now it is *perfect*, sublimest suggestion of grammatical science. Perhaps it is because human faculties are so unused to perfection that we all think it sad. And I suspect one advantage of entering into the vulgar strain of life—marrying, in short—is, that one is let down more gradually and easily out of one's youth, and learns that one is not young, and that a different order of things has commenced, without any pang, but only with a natural revolution of thought. This, however, is an unprofitable subject of inquiry, especially as my subject is Knocktarlitie, and not the regretful musings of a declining life.

"The picturesque is dying out everywhere," said the Archdeacon, stretching himself out on the heather (but of course with a plaid between). "The picturesque of language as well as of costume, and all other external graces. Talk, like dress, flattens into a universal

fashion. When I was at Knockart-lie long ago—not so very long either—just before the present era of civilisation set in—the Glasgow folks used to come down here to the *saut water*. The *saut water*! Was there ever a more felicitous expression? Fancy how the briny wave must have flashed and danced and foamed to the civic imagination! Now that spell is broken. Look at those tufts of villas all over the side of the loch. The people nowadays bring their families down to the coast; whereas it is no more the coast than the Broomielaw is, and bears no resemblance, nestling up here among a thousand folds of hills, to the wild external edge of the island, with an ocean foaming on its rocks. But oh for the fresh days of the *saut water*! when a man made himself wretched for nature's sake with the best grace in the world, and slept in a box-bed, and scrambled for a living. I came down in the train from Glasgow the other day with a collection of men going home to dinner. Not a lofty style of physiognomy, I am bound to say; but to hear how they chattered over their Glasgow papers about cottages, and palaces, and who was living where! The coast, as they called it, was only a repetition of their crescents and terraces. They give the same dinners, I dare say, and talk the same stuff as usual. What is the good of leaving home under such circumstances? Convenience has swallowed up life."

"My dear, it must be very good for their health," said Mrs Archdeacon, mildly.

"And who on earth cares for their health?" cried the Archdeacon, kicking away a basket which John had just emptied. "A man who comes to such a scene as this in cold-blooded consideration for his appetite, deserves to be kicked out of it again summarily. Speaking of appetite, where's the luncheon? Here's that fellow John been left as usual to his own devices. Of course, he's fixed on a place where there's no view."

"No, dear uncle," said pretty Alice, demurely, "Mr A—— and I have just been choosing the spot, and there's the loveliest view."

"The loveliest view!" echoed young Mr Reginald, who was just behind her, and was not looking at the loch at all, so far as I could see.

The Archdeacon looked at them both with a twinkle in his eye. "Ah, ah! I perceive," said the dear good man, and jumped up and held out his hand to me to help me up the hill. "Young people fortunately are untouched by the vulgarising influences of civilisation, Miss Arabella," said the Archdeacon; "they are just as great fools as they used to be in old days. Don't you think so? Let us go and look at this view. I rather object to all the chateaux and cottages of the Glasgow people; but that big house, with its square tower standing out in a sort of vulgar suzerainship over the whole, is not so bad either in point of effect. In my day there was but a thatched house dropped here and there, and all the fresh freedom of the hill-side unbroken."

"But look here, Archdeacon," cried I, directing him to the other hand.

He looked, and, I am bound to add, was silent. There nothing was to be said. We were gazing straight into the marvellous inequalities of the hills; and the broken banks before us, as they folded over each other, opened here and there to a gleam of silent water, just touched into light at one corner by the white sail of a tiny yacht. Sound was not in that silent splendid landscape. Immediately before us, the first of that banded brotherhood of hills stood out calm into the water, silently emphasising the spot where nature, out of her boundless liberality, had sent forth Loch Goil out of Loch Long. In the distance, up the opening cleft of the smaller loch, appeared the glimmer of a yellow corn-field upon the water-side, and the dark ruin of Carrick Castle, lonely and voiceless.

Above, the sun was shining fitfully, and a hundred shadows flying over those speechless, eloquent mountains; and yonder, on the other hand, was the sweet Gare-Loch, all inhabited and kindly, with houses gleaming out from the wooded slopes, and boats upon the familiar water, and coy headlands stretching out as if to embrace each other, but kept apart by the current which sweeps into the Clyde and the world. I could not talk on that mount of vision; and even the Archdeacon drew a long breath and was silent. The landscape was perfect, a dramatic-suggestive scene—the mysteries of nature, on one hand, straying deep into the bosom of the hills, and the far-off world, on the other, toiling on, without a pause, yet not unsusceptible to the sweet holiday of the hills and the sky.

“Well, well,” said the Archdeacon, with a sigh, and a sort of deprecating gesture, lifting his hands towards the hills—“but we must have lunch, my dear Miss Arabella; lunch must be eaten all the same.”

And the truth was, we did eat lunch as if that were the object of existence, and all the glorious scenery around us was quite a secondary consideration; notwithstanding that, of course, we had come all the distance for no other object than the view. I confess that I gazed aside now and then from the laughter and talk, and felt the calm silence of the hills strike upon me like a reproach. Insignificant creatures of a day, what were we, to make all this gabble in the everlasting silence? Serious conversation, enlivened with the sweet sympathies of friendship, would have been congenial to the scene; but that, which is difficult to be had anywhere, was of course *impossible* in such a mixed party. Mr Reginald, whom I know to be capable of better things, was, it may be supposed, devoting himself to pretty Alice, the Archdeacon's niece (in whom I cannot say that I see much, for my own part, though, as every-

body says she is very pretty, I presume it must be true; but as for conversation, *that*, to be sure, is not to be expected from a girl of twenty); and Kate, whose own experience of life might have been supposed to give her more serious views of such matters, lost no opportunity of directing the attention of the company to the two young people, and making absurd remarks, accompanied by *eclats* of laughter—I must say, profoundly unsuitable to the scene; while Mrs Archdeacon's quiet attention to the luncheon, and her anxiety that her husband should have nothing which should disagree with him, and the Archdeacon's own divided mind, one while giving his countenance to dear Kate's nonsense, and the other lost in consideration of the delicacies of his own stomach, which exacted an amount of care altogether beyond the due claims of such a vulgar though important agency, made our meal, though eaten amid all the sweetest influences of nature, by no means such a feast of reason as it might have been. I alone, withdrawing myself a little by times from the others, gave my special attention to the landscape, which, on every side, wherever you could turn, was equally lovely. Since I have been in Scotland this year, it has been my fortune to occupy myself principally with the lochs of that beautiful country, and here, at one glance, was a mystical circle of three, all gleaming under the fitful Highland sunshine. But it was only by moments that I could really turn my thoughts, with my eyes, to the soft bays of the Gare Loch, on one hand, shining like an Italian lake, or to the solemn silent gleam of Loch Long penetrating among its hills, and the opening reach of Loch Goil on the other. The distraction of so many sounds close at hand, the little by-play of Reginald and Alice (which, however one might disapprove of its absurdity, attracted one's observation), the laughter and nonsense of dear Kate, who really does not

show that gravity which might be expected from her—even the puzzled, impatient looks of the Archdeacon, considering whether to eat or not to eat, and his wife's conjugal advices to him on the subject,—all combined to fret and wear out that attention which I would gladly have bestowed on the magic scene around. Oh human nature! here we were among the broken slopes that intervene between lake and hill, with our white tablecloth laid out over the rustling heather and sweet bog-myrtle, and our little group detached in mortal complacency of self-importance from all the silent splendour of the landscape, absorbed in ourselves, our flirtations, our jests, our dyspeptics. To an intelligent observer the scene would have been impressive; but I

doubt much whether any one but myself took note of the sweet universal harmony around, and the jarring but interesting chord of humanity, struck upon a totally different key, which gave a point and centre to the scene.

That was our last experience at Knocktarlittie. I might give other sketches at great length; but as there were other lochs to be visited, I refrain from describing our many pleasant water-excursions, and all the other charms of that Arcadian retirement. And only adding, Farewell, thou sweet peninsula! farewell, ye gentle hills and friends! leave the record to dear Kate, who chooses, I cannot tell why, the scene most sacred to sentiment and poetry, for her portion of our mutual task.

ARABELLA W.—

CHAPTER II.—THE TROSACHS.

The reason why I choose what Arabella, poor thing! calls "the scene most sacred to sentiment and poetry," is because there are some things very unpoetic and unsentimental in it, which will be quite in my way. And I do not hesitate, for this reason, to go over the ground which everybody has gone over before. Arabella and I are very old friends. We were not girls together, it is true; but we have lived near, and seen a great deal of each other, for many years; and she and I can afford to speak with a little freedom, and are above quarrelling. It will be perceived that her spirits are not so great as in our last excursion. I assign no reason for it; I only indicate the fact. The Archdeacon's company, and that of his nice wife and his pretty niece, changes the character of our party altogether. It is much more rational in some respects, and less piquant in others; and as I trust it may be the beginning of a series of expeditions, I welcome the change, and find it very much to my mind. We are giving all our attention to the lochs, as Arabella mentions. It

may be the Cumberland lakes next year, or the Swiss lakes, or the Italian. I think the prospect a famous one, though sincerely I doubt whether any of them could be finer than the lochs of Scotland, from which we have just returned.

We set out upon Loch Lomond a party of six, with a little individual in addition, who would have disgusted any sentimental tourist, but who became quite the hero of the day with some of us. The *personnel* of the group is worthy a word in passing. The Archdeacon himself comes out naturally in the foreground—he has tawny leonine looks and a portly presence; but, notwithstanding his weight, spurns the earth with a step as light and springy as if he were only twenty; and notwithstanding the sudden disgusts he sometimes takes at table, and uncertainties in the way of eating, looks, I am bound to say, as healthy and hearty as his best friends could desire. His wife beside him is everything an archdeacon's wife should be: suave and bland to the inferior clergy—kind to everybody;

but she has no babies, poor soul. The pretty niece is a very pretty niece, and a nice creature; and I am sure, if my friend Reginald tries his fortune in that direction, he has my benediction and best wishes. Reginald himself I need not describe—he has those black locks and blue eyes which are so seductive to the female heart, and which afford a palpable evidence—if his victims would only take heed—of the fickleness of his loves. Still, though I would not for much be a young lady in his way, it must be allowed that the wiles which he is accustomed to exercise upon our sex, and of which the young man can never entirely divest himself, make him very agreeable to the chaperones of the party, who are in no danger from those fascinations. One likes a young man to remember that one is a woman, though one is old; and even that one may have had attractions in one's day—facts which, after one's youth is over, the world in general is so apt to forget. I have now only to mention Arabella, who is taller and thinner than women in general, but has good eyes; and, with her pretty hat, might pass, when you are behind her, for something rather attractive. She highly approves of my bonnet, and says it is very becoming to a person come to my time of life; but I could not undertake to return the compliment. I had almost forgotten Johnnie: Johnnie is the brother of Alice, ten years old, red-haired, blue-eyed, full of freckles and glee. His achievements will be duly recorded in the course of the story. In the mean time we are progressing up the loch. Everybody knows Loch Lomond—the islands are all shining in the sun, and there are a quantity of tourist parties in the boat. One gentleman is examining his map exactly as one might do if one were travelling abroad. It is all right, to be sure, but looks odd in one's own country. Arabella is naturally full of enthusiasm—she is perpetually appealing to Mr Reginald for

the glass, which he wears slung over his shoulder, and which Alice rather scorns. But the youngest eyes are the sharpest after all. It is Alice who finds out that white flash of a torrent streaming down the hill, and the white cloud of mist which lingers all by itself in one particular hollow, nobody can tell how. And the Archdeacon looks at her with a smile, but turns and talks to Arabella, who really has an eye for the beautiful landscape, though perhaps the dear old soul may possibly say too much about it. In the midst of all this, I, who am the commonplace member of the party, and am understood to interest myself about practical matters, condole with Johnnie, who has seated himself snugly in the stern. He can't tell what the people are all looking at. "I'm very tired, for my part," says Johnnie. Upon which I open my basket, where there are a store of sandwiches and some sherry. At this vision Johnnie brightens, as is to be expected; and the Archdeacon draws near; and the ladies approach, all a step closer, not without vulgar feminine curiosity; and Reginald intermits his favourite occupation, and comes to my side with seductive looks. Yes, it is true; even amid that beautiful scenery, lunch is a necessity of nature. I remark that even Arabella does not despise the common impulse. I can watch the mountains opening up and standing by each other like so many Highland henchmen as well as other people, and the islands all feathering down to the water's edge, and hanging over, fond and fantastic, as if they loved it. I have an eye for the torrents and the mists, and even for the pretty boatful of girls rowing out into the lake from some of those Elysian cottages on the shore which the gentlemen are gazing at; but at the same time I know how people begin to feel when it is past one o'clock, and they have breakfasted at eight before starting—and about that hour I generally find myself hailed with acclamations

when I open my basket—a method of acquiring popularity which I beg to recommend to other women of my own standing when they accompany a party of pleasure. It is astonishing how such motherly consideration opens one's companions' hearts.

At Inversnaid wait the coaches, which are all top, and have no interior whatever; and where, but for my enterprising exertions, our party would have been dispersed and separated. It is awkward clinging on to the seat as one drives backward up the hill; but it is worth while, certainly, to see those Alps of Arrochar detaching themselves one by one out of the darkness which hangs about, and which is more picturesque than any sunshine. Up in that wilderness of hills storms are always brewing; but as one dark peak heaves up after another out of the chaos of mists and glooms, one can almost forgive the deluges that come of their conspiracy. After all, they are very splendid these Arrochar hills. I don't mind saying that they overawed me for the moment. I never go into raptures like Arabella; but to see them, out of a conglomeration of heights, coming separate one by one with such glooms and purple darkness about them, and underneath the bit of gleaming loch, and the one sweet island dropped close by the woody shore, was a very fine sight even for a person of unexcitable feelings. Just in front were an odd party, led by a woman with a guide-book, with grey curls and a hat—a woman, I venture to say, quite as old as myself—who read out all the notes of the way exactly as people abroad read out of their *Murray*: quite proper, and correct, I don't doubt, but curious to note in one's own country, where one can speak the language, and know all about it from the coachman. The coachman here, however, was a mute creature—very different from that intelligent man on the road to Inveraray, who gave me so much valuable information about the poor-

rates. I should not care to set up housekeeping in Mull, if John Campbell's accounts be true. Fancy seven shillings in the pound for poor-rates! One had as well live, for that matter, in Spitalfields or Bethnal Green. I had been in the habit of thinking Marylebone heavy, as most people do; but the idea of living in a wild Highland strath, where, of course, all the old wives in the glen had a funded interest in one's tea and sugar, and paying seven shillings in the pound of poor-rates! I can't quite enter into the question about the depopulation of the Highlands; but before such an argument as that, you know, one's conscience would succumb. If the present population can't be kept up at less than a poor-rate of seven shillings in the pound, sheep and deer must be better than that. And I don't speak out of economy and hard-heartedness, as people may suppose, but because human creatures *can't* be kept up unless they keep themselves. Nobody in the world will ever convince me that Christian souls can be maintained like a breed of poultry: the thing is impossible, you know, and an impossible thing may be done for a generation, but cannot be kept up. I don't vouch for the fact, having only John Campbell's authority; but if the facts are true, that is my conclusion; and I am convinced it is the truth of the matter.

Loch Katrine is rather tame at the outset, it appears to me. I saw even Arabella listening languidly to something about the waterworks, and the Archdeacon marching about the deck with his springy light step, sometimes humming a tune to himself, sometimes keeping time to the reel the bagpipes (hideous instruments of discord) were playing, looking out sharply ahead, and evidently concluding in his own mind that Sir Walter had beguiled us all into extreme expectations which were not realisable. At last he paused, held up his finger, raised his head, and turned round

in triumph. "This is something like!" said the Archdeacon, and we all stood up to gaze obediently; and there, with a few green preludes of bays and islands, rose out of the water that island where Douglas and Ellen found their shelter. I do not pretend to say that I thought much of the *Lady of the Lake*; but I will tell you what scene flashed upon my memory. I fancied I could see the battle raging on the mainland; the wild women and babies looking out in their safe but passionate shelter on the island, with all the boats huddled round that nest of the clansmen's treasures. What woeful strained eyes there must have been blazing through that foliage! What ears that heard one voice in every battle-shout and death-cry! And then when the adventurous soldier plunged in to seize a boat and betray their refuge to the enemy, the women's wild agony of courage and terror and dread suspense thrusting the ready dagger into one trembling hand:—

"I saw Duncraggan's widowed dame,
Upon the shore I saw her stand,
A naked dirk gleamed in her hand."

Let us make haste past. I forgot Ellen just then, and her harper and her lover. It is only sadness and sweet pathos that belong to the young people, Heaven bless them! One weeps for them when anything befalls them; one does not thrill with pity and horror over their tender young tragedies. It is age that calls forth those images of terror.

"But when I say age," said I, "recollect I don't mean *old* age. I mean middle age, Archdeacon; that age when the morning dews are over and the evening dews are not yet; when the hot skies are blazing, and the work at its hardest; when the heavens above are as brass, and the earth as iron; when people say you are in your prime, and do not dream of being sorry for you—that is the agony of life."

"I cannot agree with you in the least," puts in Mr Reginald, who of

course knows nothing about the subject. "There must be always a conscious satisfaction in doing one's work, and being able for it. By that time one has cleared off one's earlier embarrassments, and got fairly into one's occupation in all the vigour of one's powers. A man ought to enjoy above all that period of his existence."

"A man ought to know what he is talking of," said I. "What do you boys and girls know about it, with all the dew upon you? I can fancy it sweet to grow old—quite old—yes, older than I am. Age is only elderliness with me yet, Alice, my dear, though you open your pretty eyes. Going down into the valley is easy. Holding up on the burning hilltops, where you have to fight for every step you make, and hold your morsel of standing ground to the death, is hard—harder than people fancy who have not just been in it. I would be either young or very old, if the choice were left to me."

"But, dear Kate," said Mrs Archdeacon, who, dear soft soul, never had any labours or troubles, "people have different lots in life; some people are very happy through it all. Though we may not have many belonging to us, still if those we have are spared——" Here she paused and gave a tender look at the Archdeacon; and, I believe not knowing very much about it, a surprised compassionate one at me.

"I cannot think how you speak so lightly of growing old," said Arabella. "One must look for it, to be sure, and put up with it when it comes. But really to sit in an easy-chair all day, and be left to one's self, is not delightful to think of. It requires courage, and fortitude, and——"

"A degree of philosophy not to be acquired on Loch Katrine," said the Archdeacon. "My dear Mrs S——, you are right, and you are wrong. People in general don't know much about agonies and passions. They get along smoothly enough because human nature is

the mightiest of philosophers, and nothing puts it long out of its way. I agree with you otherwise about middleage; expectations have grown dim by that time. We used to feel that anything might happen when we were young; now we know that nothing will happen but only the reaping of what we have sowed. And days are tedious and life is hard. Very true—very true. In short, a truism. You might as well say that the morning hour before the battle begins, or the evening hour after it is ended, when some are safe and some are dead, are the times to be chosen; but in the battle itself is the glory and the pain. I can't think what our friend means by turning our thoughts in such a direction, Miss Arabella. There is Ben An, and this is Ben Venue; and yonder went Ellen's skiff across the lake; and here we are about to disembark and fight for places on the coach."

On the coach!—on the coaches drawn up into the yellow mud, with a host of people screaming and arguing about the laden vehicles. As for seeing the Trosachs, I solemnly declare I saw nothing of them. A peep here and there of a splendid wooded bank, interrupted by a scream of despair from Alice, whose cloak was utterly disfigured with mud ere we had gone a mile, or an ominous jolt, which, but for my own energy in seizing fast hold of Johnnie, would have shaken that hero totally off the precarious perch assigned to him, was all that was practicable. Ben Venue looked down sullen over the opening gorge upon those who had disengaged minds and could attend to him; but I am free to confess that between Johnnie and the mud, through which we flew like a whirlwind, no peace or freedom was in my oppressed understanding. The horses went like horses returning to home and dinner. The woods and crags and enclosing hilltops flew past amid showers of flying mud. What I saw was Mrs Archdeacon patiently smiling opposite to me, and covering over her

proper pretty dress with a shawl, in a vain hope of escaping the nuisance. So I am really quite unqualified to say anything of the Trosachs. I daresay they are very fine if one could get at them by one's self; but to do such a road as this in regular tourist course is a thing I will never be persuaded to attempt again, whatever the inducements may be. Talk of poetry, indeed! Do you think any poetry can withstand the pandemonium into which, just as you have begun to enter into the beauty of the loch, and to recollect what you have read about it, you are suddenly plunged by that horrible landing, and the necessity of finding a place somewhere, and flying on through mud and din to the *table d'hôte* at the hotel. That, I suppose, is the occasion of all the haste and worry. Such at least was the curious scene awaiting us when we got to our destination. I know few things more amusing than a *table d'hôte* in a Highland inn. The Archdeacon found his natural place at the foot of a table, where he sat beaming in puzzled hospitality dispensing the viands before him. An occasional humph! burst from his lips as he looked with a twinkle in his eye up the long table. I had a pie before *me*, and a Glasgow person sat blandly opposite helping his fellow-travellers to lamb. Speak of the Scotch as a reserved and uncommunicative people! If Mr Buckle will tell me of any other nation where all classes of tourists hob and nob together and help each other amicably at table, I will give in to that great authority; not a single sulky John Bull appeared to disturb the equanimity of that friendly party. We smiled at each other, and helped the mutton, and handed salt and potatoes. The lively interest displayed by the waiters in my admirable young friend Johnnie, showed a degree of sympathy seldom manifested by the domestic mind. How they plied that boy with platefuls of lamb and slices of beef! "Any pie, sir?" asked an

affectionate functionary, and comes to me with another plate on the dear child's unhesitating affirmative. After the bore of the scenery Johnnie came out in native force and interest into the true enjoyment of the position. The gleeful daring with which he plunged into every dish that came in his way, the inconsiderate temerity of those mixtures at which the Archdeacon looked on with pitying horror, is really beyond my descriptive faculty. I devoted myself to the charming boy. My attentions, I trust, have left an indelible impression on his opening intelligence. Not having exhausted himself like the rest of us in the preparatory journey, Johnnie, recovering from his *ennui*, by a stroke of inspiration became the hero of the *table d'hôte*.

In the evening we floated out in a boat on the still waters of Loch Achray, the third loch we had that day traversed. We were rather a romantic party at one end of the boat. Pretty Alice had been sent along with her uncle, to keep the party duly balanced, into the bows, and by some chance Reginald naturally found a place behind her, and sat on the edge of the boat, with his tall figure relieved against the light, and his raven locks stooping towards the pearly ear which came out clear and unshadowed from under one of those shadeless hats with which girls nowadays put their complexions in danger. The wonder to me is how they don't take cold and have endless toothaches and ear-aches; but, that danger excepted, it is pretty enough, you know, it must be allowed, to see the little pink pearly ear just pointing the outline of the round soft cheek, and the pretty glances thrown back, half-shy, half-disdainful. Mrs Archdeacon sat placidly in the stern and smiled; while Arabella, I am sorry to say, made some spiteful remarks about my *weight*, which showed that her temper was not all it ought to have been. I admit that I am no longer slender, nor what you would be disposed to call sylphlike; but I think a moderate

degree of *embonpoint* is only becoming to a woman who has arrived at my time of life. We glided along over the still waters which gleamed darkly under the evening sky, big Ben Venue lifting his vast bulk over us, and standing up black against the luminous, colourless firmament. I wonder, for my part, when such a boat shoots into such a scene of quiet, why the water does not bubble and hiss immediately round the palpitating human cargo. How the quiet continues all the same, bewilders me when I think upon it. I am not at all sentimental, but I have gone through enough of trouble in my day to bring such contrasts strong upon my mind. The ineffable sort of disdain which nature seems to have of us, enclosing us all in her quiet, taking no notice, as unconcerned for our passions and commotions as if we were so many babies, naturally strikes one when one turns one's thoughts that way. I don't doubt we had ponderings and agitations enough among us to have upset half-a-dozen boats; but, notwithstanding, on we went harmonious, as if the whole panorama of hills and waters had been got up for our amusement. I wonder what the boatman thought of it all. I wonder what addition he might make to that progressing chapter of human history. The old man at Dunkeld, who went about the grounds there and acted as our guide, what a tragic chapter of old age he added unawares to the lighter strain of our pleasuring! Poor aged soul! he went after us with a blank weariness pitiful to look at, and told the little facts of his story without knowing what suggestions of a melancholy beyond tears lay in them. He had lost all his children—everybody belonging to him—and was waiting lone for the hour of his departure. But he said little about that, and much of the toil of walking round and round those lovely river-banks, which look like a sylvan paradise to the thoughtless visitors, but were only a treadmill to the tired old guide. We all

wanted to give him money, you may guess, the only thing one could do for him, and on he marched blank and passive, in the dull misery of his old age. Old age, I allow, has a depth of dreariness not to be reached in any other period of mortal existence; but the old man's faculties were calmed down, you know. A little rest and comfort, I daresay, would have made the end of his days bearable enough.

"Yes, that is the ordinary philanthropical way," said Arabella, sharply: "when one's heart is bleeding for sympathy you give a little vulgar money; that's the way with all you practical people; when a few precious words of fellow-feeling might bind up the wounded heart!"

"My dear, words seldom stanch wounds," said I, "unless it might perhaps be the kind of wounds and words that circulate among young people like our friends over there. After all, a little external comfort is the best thing that most of us can do to soften the troubles of our neighbours. It shows goodwill at least."

"The most difficult thing I know is to offer consolation," cried the Archdeacon, from the bow. "Perhaps nobody can understand all the hardships of it as a clergyman does. We are called up under all circumstances, my dear Miss Arabella. I have to comfort people whose situation would make me, who endeavour to console them, turn my face to the wall and hate the light. What am I to do? Must I argue them into patience because they cannot help it, or tell them it is all for the best? My little wife there goes and cries over them, and tells them of other people's sorrows. I believe hers is the wisest way."

"Dear, we are commanded to weep with those who weep," said Mrs Archdeacon, in her dove's voice.

"Consolation seldom comes well in words," said I. "I have seen a wistful woman come stealing up, with her heart in her eyes, all silent and tearful, and the cup of tea in her hand, which, knowing nothing

else to do, she has gone to prepare for the mourner. I have seen servants and homely people do so scores of times. I have been so moved myself by that humble consolation, that I could have poured it out as David did the water from the Bethlehem well before the Lord. Talk does little. When the kind neighbour came in to console that old man at Dunkeld, I daresay she swept his hearth and set his old chair and made his little meal look comfortable. It comes more natural than philosophy; with that homeliest ineffable touch of religion which says, 'It is the Lord's will,' and says no more."

"Putting the clergy out of court," said the Archdeacon. "Never mind, you can do nothing serious in life without us. Look at that peak of Ben An, my dear ladies, and don't let us discuss such grave matters. As for Ben Venue, he fronts us like an old heathen, shadowing inexorable over this pale feminine creature that owns his sway. What, Reginald! beginning to sing? a thousand times better than philosophy! And now for Allie's little pipe. Come now, we are beginning to enjoy the night."

"The pale feminine creature that owns his sway," said Arabella over to herself as the two voices burst forth into the silence; and the dear old creature looked at us all round, and then at Alice trilling with her little linnets' note. No! I declare there was not among us a single pale feminine creature darkly reflecting some big image like Loch Achray under Ben Venue. Poor dear Arabella thought it a very poetical simile. She has never been disenchanting, the good soul. She believes as much as ever in that ideal hero whom one expects to worship all one's life when one is young. As for me, I smiled at the Archdeacon's poetry. Loch Achray gleamed darkling under the big shadow. I have seen a patient soul just so, throwing up pale reflections to catch the eye of her master; but I suspect other thoughts as well were in the

female mind under that subjection; up, far off, the soft wave caught a star or two, and solaced itself with that light, and darkly mirrored the rustling foliage on the island, and sighed along the plaintive shores, not without a little pensive self-assertion. And the young people sang; pleasant young voices, full and liquid. Perhaps the creatures will never be so happy. Why can't they linger there, just where they are, upon the lake that carries them no further? I have no daughters, you know. I don't feel any duty upon me to plunge them into thoughts of the future. They are better if they so abide, in my opinion, as long as it is practicable; but you will see they don't agree with me. I shouldn't wonder if, even

before we have left this delightful lake, where there is no hurrying current, but one can float at one's ease with no fear of the consequences, they were off, these unguarded souls, on their earliest venture into the river of life—the earliest venture, so far as poor little Alice is concerned—and go hurrying on henceforward with no more such delicious pauses. They don't know what they are doing. Knowing what they are about, and where that stream that tempts them leads to, I should like to keep them floating about the safe motionless loch, the darkling island, the steady mountain shadow. I like to go lingering about, for my own part, here, where is no tide.

KATHERINE S—.

CHAPTER III.—INCHMARHOMIE.

I am amused at the quiet composure with which dear Kate lays down the law. She thinks she has so much experience. She has, of course, seen a little *external* life beyond that which has come under my personal investigation; but what she calls her practical faculty, is highly edifying to me. The sort of sentiment expressed in her last words will shock many people, I don't doubt. It is only her way of appearing superior to common notions. Of course, if Mr Reginald and Miss Alice fancy each other, it is to be supposed that the Archdeacon will allow none of that foolishness; to permit a young man to go lightly about the world deluding sensitive hearts, is a *wickedness* and *folly* which I could not suppose Kate would lend her sanction to. But I forbear. The extent to which flirtation is countenanced in these days, is something quite extraordinary to an old-fashioned person like myself. Had I been Alice, I should have been ashamed of myself; but girls are not what they used to be. I am not disposed to mix up my own opinions about so-

cial matters, with any account I may be able to give of the charms of nature; but I must protest against the *very good-natured* allowance for what might be sport to one and death to another, which appears in these singular sentiments of dear Kate.

The only other day I mean to record was altogether a charming one: such beauty, such associations, such touching and tender memories! We drove to Callander in the sweetest early morning, with the dew sparkling on the wooded banks, and gleaming over Ben Venue with a freshness of light in which all dews and morning influences were included. We drove past the sweet Loch Vennachar, shining in the delicious early light, with the hills over it greening into breaks of unlooked-for verdure, and emerald glimpses of turf so sweetly reflected in the water, that one could not tell where the margin of fact parted the real greensward from the shadow; and ere we had well left the shadow of Ben Venue, came upon the heaving shoulder of Benledi, slowly emerging out of the morning mists

over the little fresh-awakened village, where we were to pause for breakfast. I do not pause to remark upon the mountains, because, as the lochs are the main object of our expedition, it would but complicate the narrative; but if Ben Venue had not already gained a prominence in the *Lady of the Lake*, which involuntarily disappoints one even with one's own admiration, I would pause to remark upon that noble hill, throwing a backward glance as it does over Loch Katrine, but reserving its loftiest aspect for fair Loch Achray, that wedded partner in whom the lofty solitary sees himself reflected in every mood and aspect of his mightiness. If Genius had not thrown "the light which never was on sea and shore" over this lovely union of mountain and water, it would be possible to admire it as it deserves; but Sir Walter has glorified and exhausted the Trosachs. They are like some classic maid, wooed by a god, and incapable of humbler worship. I escape, for my own part, to streams unsung, and localities unhallowed, with a fresher zest.

Dear Kate made herself very merry at breakfast with the boy John, whose boyish appetite and inclinations she has chosen to pet for the moment. Such vulgar divergences from our purpose naturally do not tempt *me*. I hasten to the real object of our journey. We drove to Aberfoyle under threatening skies. The dear Archdeacon twisted his thumbs and hummed a tune, as he contemplated the lowering firmament; and Kate, with an utter abandonment of all the sentiments becoming the occasion, put up her umbrella with savage calmness, and, totally indifferent to the fact that it shut out a hemisphere of scenery from me, who chanced to sit opposite, put down my murmurs by a hard-hearted reference to certain passages in the past. The young people were in the rumble behind, looking very contented and totally indifferent to the rain, as,

indeed, I could very well believe them to be, for what is rain or any other disagreeable circumstance to people in their position? I confess it required all my self-command in face of Kate's umbrella, and her little remarks and reminiscences, to keep my temper; but I triumphed, being sorry for her, poor dear, who, in the prospect of such scenery as we were about to visit, could occupy her mind with the trifling recollections of a few transitory days—days which have passed and left no trace behind. At length we reached the Lake of Monteith. The hills had withdrawn a little from the quiet landscape; all lowland and gentle, with its wooded island rising out of the soft water, spread before us this calmest, tranquil lake. I do not call it a loch—somehow the word does not seem applicable. No mountain shadows overawe its quietness, nor claim those sweet waters as their natural thrall. A different soul possesses the meditative scene. As the boat draws near the shore, grey vestiges of art and antiquity rise silent among the trees. There stands the massive basement of a tower, from which holy bells once rung into the echoes; here rises the lofty wall, with its great window, once perhaps dazzling with painted saint and martyr, but now filled up dully with rude stone-work. It is the religion of the past that lingers there, writing its sermons on the carved and desecrated stones. As one approaches, ruined pillars of nature, grand as the ruined capitals of stone, lie half-smothered in the luxuriant grass; here is nothing but decay, neglect, a plaintive desert, sweet with all the pathetic compensations of nature. I enter softly into the green monastic isle. I wonder to myself whether the sweet seclusion of that cloister might not have given honour and credit to one's loneliness. I follow my companions with a little natural reluctance on the common road, where the guide is to explain everything, and the sentiments of the scene are

to be desecrated into sight-seeing. If I had my own will, I would wander over the pensive limits, and dream it out by myself. But dear Kate, who has put down her umbrella, and is more active and bustling than usual, calls me forward—and there is nothing for it but to submit.

Oh, Duke of Montrose! I do not know your Grace, and in a general way I wish you no harm—but what is the use of being a duke if one cannot preserve the matchless relics which dukedoms could not purchase? Here, in this vision of an island, in this chapel of ancient consecration, in this pensive centre of recollections, what can a man say for himself who suffers senseless hoofs to desecrate the sod with which nature has replaced the ancient pavement? Bad enough to find the pavement and the roof equally gone, despite the noblesteadfast walls which declare the ancient builder's skill; but fancy a sacred spot of consecrated soil, where gallant Grahams lie buried, and where dead Love, clasping stony arms about its recumbent partner, puts up a pathetic human appeal for sympathy to living Love, which makes no answer—fancy, I say, such a spot, to name nothing of its other claims, trodden into mire with hoofs of cattle, and left to gather all the showers of the rainy west, without the faintest attempt at shelter or safe keeping! On the mudded trodden sod lie the nameless knight and his wedded lady in their immemorial embrace, once doubtless tenderly sheltered beneath the canopy of an altar-tomb, but now, all moss-grown and soiled, with pools of rain in every hollow, a desecrated image. In the old sedilia, other broken emblems lie rudely laid aside as if on shelves, precariously refuged out of the mire about. Here, where once a high altar rose—where Augustine friars, in their white mantles, chanted solemn masses, and little Scottish Mary, baby queen, bowed her infant dawn

of beauty in innocent prayers—could any one believe such vulgar sacrilege was possible? Presently I will tell you the story of the childish visit, which makes Inchmahome a wistful point in the saddest tragic story—but in the mean time let us make our appeal to earth and heaven. I cannot tell what is written on the new white marble tablet, curiously stuck up in square mediocrity upon the ancient wall; but however ugly it may be, it proves that somebody living has laid their dead in that desecrated place. Duke! Inchmahome does not grow you an apple in these days, but it might produce you honour and gratitude if you were true steward and worthy officer of your country's scantiest, fairest annals. But if the cattle still tread down the consecrated sod; if the rain-clouds of the west still pour down all unobstructed upon wall and monument; if you see it drop into foul and weedy destruction, and never lend a hand to save,—then heavy be the marble, and bad the artist, that carves cenotaph or monument for you!—

“ Oh, be the earth like lead to lead
Upon the dull destroyer's head—
A minstrel's malison is said!”

Calm and tranquil lies Inchmahome amid its secluded island waters. Here troubled Scotland, three centuries ago, sent her Mary, tenderest blossom, to the gentle custody of the daughters of Augustine. She was five years old, the fair doomed creature in her tiny hood and wimple—the little maid of Scotland, with her baby train of Maries. It was in September weather, when the convent orchards were sweet. The nuns were not human if the very soil they trod did not thrill with tremors of joy and welcome. At matins and even song, the winter through, hereabouts they must have knelt, with baby chimes echoing into the music, that loveliest, hapless group, royal and noble. “Mary Beaton and Mary Seatoun”—Mary

Stewart first of all; five harmless, tender souls, that might have grown into so many sweet recluses or domestic creatures as women use. Oh, sorrowful, inevitable years! One's heart weeps over the children in that sweet pause of their fate. The little island was an orchard in those tender primeval days, where the sisters garnered their apples in the fresh autumnal mornings, and laboured in dainty devices of husbandry to enrich those sweet convent gardens, which were, like their pictures and their carvings, to the glory of God. Amid that poetic harvest, fancy those children, wonderful buds of beauty, with gentle novice-maidens and mild nuns surprised into ideal maternity, wondering over their lovely promise and their lofty fate. The dullest spectator could not forbear a thrill of emotion to think of those fairy footsteps dancing over the sweet immemorial sod. The little train in mimic state, with its sweet masquerade of baby dignity, its outbreaks of infant laughter, and all the anguish and the misery lying unforeseen before the lovely procession. Such a point in a grievous story overpowers all after-opinion. One puts forth one's hand in a vain effusion of pity and tenderness to ward off the dreadful years. There the child stands innocent upon the threshold of her fate; soft Scottish waters rippling on the shore—still shadows of conventual trees—echoes of sacred bells and lauds and psalms charming the vivacious Stewart blood in her baby veins—and all the white Augustinian sisterhood, innocent and ignorant, between her and harm. Another year, and fatal Guises and Medicis would envelop the little maid. Pause and uncover, gentlemen! The Queen and her Maries hold pathetic possession of this little territory; and mournful history weeps over those flowers of Scotland blooming beneath the orchard trees. The quaint after-thought which has appropriated a nook of ground to her memory, and called this little

enclosure her "child-garden," is to me an almost impertinence. I cannot imagine that royal creature cultivating common flowers like any modern child. One cannot reduce that group, in their quaint splendour of baby dignity, to the wholesome but unpoetic level of even a royal nursery nowadays. But the dark tragedy we all know so well—the terrible spectres watching round that momentary refuge of safety—spectres among which Love and Beauty themselves, changed into awful forms and faces of anguish, are not the least terrible—make the sweet sunshine within all the sweeter and more heart-breaking in the contrast. Island of peace! Why, out of blood and passion, out of dread love, and despair, could not some remorseful angel have found graves for those infants under the mournful trees?

This wonderful little episode in the story of such a tiny speck of earth is enough of history for the conventual isle. The orchard is gone, like the sisterhood; but the whole extent of the little island is covered with that mossy delicious grass, out of which, by natural right, the trees of an immemorial orchard should have sprung. Nowhere could there be a spot more perfect, or possessed with a sweeter unity. On the soft bank at one end, which the homely cicerone calls the Nun's Hill, what a bower of seclusion might be built! Not a lover's bower. Too delicate, too absolute, for invasions of passion, is this virgin solitude. A retreat for Una in her loneliness—Una always young in immortal lily-bloom. On the other side of the sweet water, the shore bends out in a wooded point, leaving a fair retreating curve of white sand, a delicate margin, to mark the limit of the lake. A group of pines throw out their distinct forms from the soft world of foliage upon that fairy promontory, adding an exquisite touch of completeness to the landscape. Never was any scene more virgin-fair. Within, some forlorn

fruit-trees * linger among the oaks and chestnuts ; and the melancholy convent ruins are crowned and garlanded with scarlet wreaths of barberries. We all carried away branches of those last ; the dear Archdeacon himself adorning his ecclesiastical hat with the beautiful drops of berries, with all the naturalness and delightful abandonment to the feeling of the moment, which is so charming in such a man. Thus, with reluctant steps, we all left the pathetic historic isle ; and indeed, so perfect and engrossing was the impression it made upon me, that I feel but little inclination to go further. That image has no discord ; except, indeed, what in our pilgrimage through the island I had forgotten, the barbarous neglect into which the chapel has been allowed to fall. Considering the singular pathos of its recollections, it is incredible that the little convent church in which Mary of Scotland said her baby prayers, and which connects itself so exquisitely with her memory, should, in the Scotland which is still loyal to Mary, be permitted to drop so miserably into ignominious decay.

I hasten, however, to the end of my task, though feeling that I have exhausted myself in natural enthusiasm over this lovely lake. To imagine, after such an experience, that one's thoughts could turn to Bailie Nicol Jarvie and his adventures, as one is called upon to do by the very name of Aberfoyle, is too contemptible to be dreamed of. I should have *despised* myself could I have entered upon the ludicrous immediately after having been so deeply absorbed in the pathetic—I might, indeed, say the sublime ; though, I am sorry to add, dear Kate, from whom I expected better things, was quite as ready to be interested as if no such contrast

existed. A little way past Aberfoyle, however, we came upon another wilderness of wood and water, a chain of lovely lochs connected by links of the infant Forth, then just setting out upon his devious way. The innermost of these, and indeed all of them, with their lofty banks of wood and fairy stretches of water, and the shallow straits between, where our boat had almost grounded, were really not to be surpassed, had my eyes been equal to their office. But one cannot either suffer or enjoy beyond one's measure. I feel that too much beauty, like too much of anything, obscures one's powers of observation. The upper lake, however, brought us in sight of another living wall of mountains grandly turning upward towards the west—mountains darkly overhung by clouds, and covered with that wonderful gloom and blackness which give so much grandeur to their aspect. At one spot, and one only, a yellow gleam of light descended into the narrow opening of a defile, and between the thundery firmament above and the glooming hills below, gave a wonderful centre to the scene. Warned by threatening rain and falling night, we had, however, to hasten from Loch Ard and its linked companions. *My* companions had clearly enjoyed themselves in their various fashions ; and nothing could better illustrate the course of human life than our procession as we hastened to our carriage. The Archdeacon, dear man, marched in advance with the barberries in his hat—his wife not far from his elbow, but not clinging to him (indeed it did not seem to occur to him to offer her any assistance on the way), while Kate (absorbed with the boy John, who was very tired and getting sleepy, and of course totally indifferent to the scenery) and I followed. The Archdeacon's

* *Note.*—K.S.—Very sour plums ; discovered, of course, by Johnnie, whose wonderful faculty of observation is not duly appreciated, especially by Arabella. That boy will develop into something, if the Archdeacon does not cramp his genius. He ate them, of course, and took no harm.

conversation, I must say, was chiefly addressed to myself—as, indeed, he is a man of wonderful discrimination, and did not fail to observe that his wife was tired, and dear Kate preoccupied. Behind us, a long way off, so that we half lost sight of them in the gathering twilight, were the two young people. Yes; I am not aware that there need be any delicacy about it—I am sure no one can say that any particular effort to preserve their secret was made on *their* part. The Archdeacon marched on, a little apprehensive about the rain and the darkness. Mrs Archdeacon went along in a resigned silence, sighing audibly now and then, all enchantment having gone out of the day, now that fatigue and night were setting in. Kate kept talking to the boy, but her words dropped more and more sparingly; and I, though my mind, I trust, was filled with lovely images, and *all* my thoughts delightfully occupied,—even I was not unwilling to see the lights in the windows, and hear the wheels of the carriage coming to take us on to our night's repose. But the two behind came lingering on, turning round to look at views which they could not see, and disposed to keep us waiting for an amount of time which, if they had been left to themselves, would certainly have ruined the Archdeacon's temper for the night. When I was a girl, Alice's conduct would have been unbelievable. Of course nobody objected to them falling in love with each other. When two young people are permitted to be much together, one naturally, of course, prepares for the possibility of such a result; but still there are feminine decorums which ought to be attended to. I do not blame Mr Reginald; but really, for a girl who wears a veil perpetually over her face, I think a *little* reserve might have been becoming. However, I say no more. I don't doubt it is a very suitable match. Mrs Archdeacon seems pleased enough,

and she ought to know best. I only hope everything may go on well, and *no obstacle* come in the way of their happiness.

As dear Kate has something to add, and I own to being a little fatigued after all the delightful excitements of this excursion, I leave the conclusion to my friend.

POSTSCRIPT.—*No obstacle*: I must say I think it very spiteful of Arabella to make such a suggestion—when, to be sure, the young creatures are as happy as possible, and it is a pleasure to see them. A handsome couple. Mrs Archdeacon and I are quite agreed upon the subject.

What I have got to say, however, has nothing to do with any accidents of the journey. After talking it over, I have been intrusted with the drawing out of a proposal for the formation of a confraternity of lake tourists—not exactly on the principles of the Alpine Club; a wider latitude is to be allowed, and at the same time a more rigid selectness. We are now five in number;—Alice, of course, being a girl, does not count—and it is also possible enough that Reginald, when he is married, may have to be turned out likewise; but in the mean time there are five of us. I trust we are not unpleasant companions. Under the following limits we are open to applications for admission into our number:—

1st, Elderly ladies very eligible, their good-humour being properly certified—especially if possessed of a little wit. I may be allowed to add, that judges and other learned functionaries, of suitable years, are included in this description.

2d, Clergymen of advanced views will be admitted freely, under promise of saying nothing to disturb the faith of the lay members of the body. Other professional persons will also have their claims duly considered on the similar condition, that, except in the case of soldiers and sailors who will be permitted

to describe their adventures, professional talk of all kinds is prohibited.

3*d*, Young ladies will be allowed to become members of the society only under very strict regulations. They must be under the charge of their lawful guardians, the heads of the society not undertaking to be responsible either for engagements made or hearts broken by the way. If very pretty, objected to; the object of the confraternity being inconsistent with an excess of devotion on the part of the brethren to any beauties but those of nature.

4*th*, Members of Social Science committees, both male and female, and other scientific persons, totally ineligible.

5*th*, The initiatory rites to consist of a journey of fifty miles or more, according to the mode of conveyance, through Highland scenery, on a very wet day. Candidates who come through this ordeal with perfect good-humour and unabated courage, to be, all other rules being complied with, received with acclamations.

Applicants may address themselves to Reginald A——, Esq., by letter only—the said letters to be sent to that honourable house in George Street, Edinburgh, which is the local habitation of the ever-revered and illustrious Maga.

Operations, however, I am sorry

to say, are over for this year—but as we have not nearly exhausted the Scottish lochs, and have all the lakes of Christendom, not to say the world, before us, I think a very fair prospect opens before those of the band who may live to see next summer—before which time I have no doubt its numbers will be largely increased.

It is unnecessary to add to Arabella's narrative. We saw a good deal more to be sure, but space forbids detail. One thing I should be glad to know before concluding—are people aware how many fine ecclesiastical remains there are in Scotland, and how much might be done for them? I cannot believe it possible, or the frightful vandalisms in existence could not be tolerated. The cattle in Inchmahome are bad enough—but, good heaven! fancy a noble church like that in Stirling remorselessly cut in half and choked up with close pews! not to speak of Dunblane, where a fine old monument is smothered under those frightful intrusions of carpentry. If some great impulse of universal "restoration" could be given in Scotland as in England, under High-Church influences, the Presbyterian nation might manage to hold up its head again among the church-builders of the world;—as it does to be sure, but not, so far as architecture is concerned, in a very desirable or creditable way.