

SCOTLAND'S ROAD  
OF ROMANCE

*TRAVELS IN THE FOOTSTEPS  
OF PRINCE CHARLIE*

by

AUGUSTUS MUIR

WITH 8 ILLUSTRATIONS  
AND A MAP



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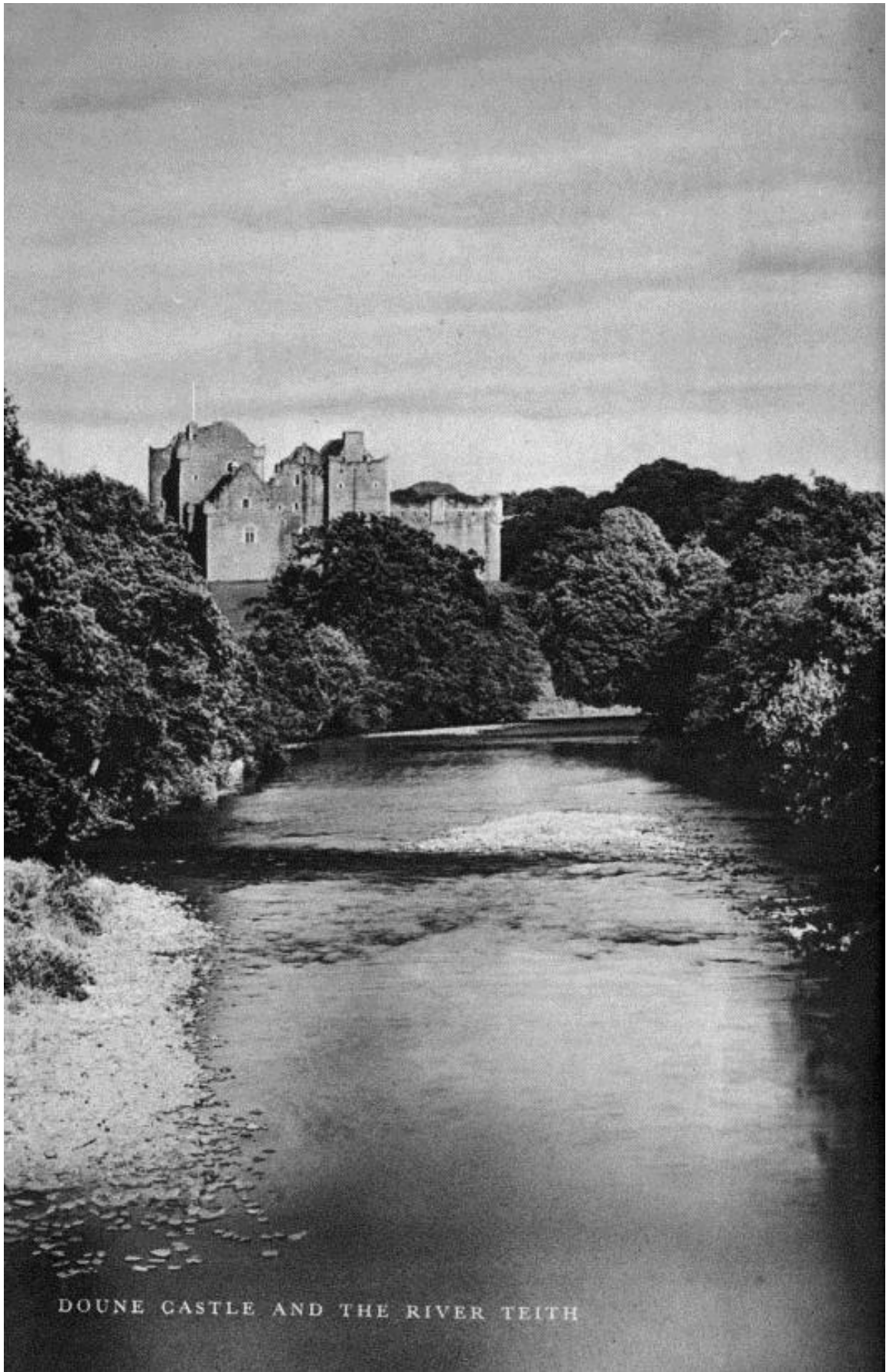


Figure 1 - Doone Castle and the River Tieth

## Chapter I. The Beach at Borrodale

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In Arisaig - A Stranger from Argyll - I Explore the Prince's Cave - The Islets in Loch nan Uamh - I Set Out for Moidart - The Black Loch among the Hills - I Arrive at Loch Ailort.

**T**HE road begins at Arisaig; and it was in low spirits that I watched the little Highland train steam noisily away from the station and disappear among the trees. I had been the only passenger to descend. The station-master, a strapping grey-eyed girl in a blue uniform, had directed me to the beach in a shy and lilting voice, and with a polite smile had left me alone on the platform. I am not sure whether it was Kinglake who said that a man can have a more acute feeling of loneliness in the crowded streets of London than on the Egyptian desert; and though I have had a deep draught of the one and a slight taste of the other, I have never known such a devastating pang of loneliness as I felt that morning on the empty platform among the trees at Arisaig. When the noise of the departing train had faded, the silence was eerie. It was sharpened to an even keener pitch when the engine, now far in the distance, hooted once like a prowling owl and went on its way around the mountainsides. So intense, so prolonged, was the silence that presently it seemed to become a living thing: you could almost detect its pulse-beat in the clear hot air of that autumn morning. I can remember my odd desire to talk to some human being, and, so far as I knew, the only one within miles of me was the young station-mistress. I had nothing particular to say to her, but I felt it would have been a relief to hear the sound of a voice-any voice-breaking that interminable stillness. It must have been reticence, I thought, that had made the girl turn on her heel and go swinging down the platform out of sight. If I'd had the Gaelic, the language she would have warmed to, she might have waited to pass the time of day; but she appeared to be so self-sufficing, so serene in the cool and shuttered hermitage of her own mind, that somehow or other I did not care to intrude with the rough battering-ram of a Sassenach tongue. And so I remained alone on the platform, feeling like a child cut off from his companions, feeling infinitely far away from the green South country and my pleasant, familiar, rhythmic life of work and books and sleep, and a little daunted at the thought that I had more than two hundred miles to cover alone on foot before I reached the end of my journey. To travel hopefully may be better than to arrive, but I did not think so then. I had lumped my rucksack, a dead weight, out of the guard's-van; it lay on the ground beside me; and I swung it on my shoulders and set out along the road through trees towards the shore.

It was cheering, twenty minutes later, to come upon two or three tiny cottages in a row, and to see some children playing below the gable-end. So the stationmistress and myself were not the only human beings in Arisaig! The children stopped their play and collected in a rigid group to stare at me, and I asked them to put me on the path for the shore; but though I repeated the question, I could not get a word out of them. They drew a little closer together, with the look of startled colts: I felt that at any moment they might toss their shaggy heads and, with a whinny, gallop for shelter. A friendly smile flickered for a moment on the face of the eldest girl. She put a protecting arm round the shoulders of a little man of three in baggy corduroys, and nodded to a boy in the rear of the group, who detached himself and ran into the nearest cottage. Presently, a middle-aged woman appeared at the door, and I asked her the best way down to Prince Charlie's beach-the beach where he landed in the 'Forty-five.

Her sad dark eyes were a little puzzled. "Prince Charlie's beach?" She shook her head. "I'm a stranger here," she said; "but maybe Donald will know." She called into the house in her soft Highland voice, and then, excusing herself, went indoors.

I slipped off my rucksack, glad to be rid of the weight of it for a few moments, and dropped it on the grass by the roadside; and I saw it was this the children had been staring at. Perhaps they were a little surprised at first that I hadn't come to sell things out of it at the cottage doors. They came a couple of steps forward, still keeping in a compact group, still uttering not a word, even among themselves. One boy ventured to draw yet a little nearer to the rucksack, but was hastily pulled back and chided by the eldest girl. I liked the look of the youngsters; they obviously were well cared for; and their respectful and reticent manners were pleasant to see. When I thought of the children near some big towns in the South, and of the sharp-eyed little Edinburgh keelies, lovable in their way but with the manners of unleashed demons, it seemed to me that the Gael in solitude must be rather a fine fellow when he can breed youngsters like these.

"Donald will take you to Prince Charlie's beach, sir," said the woman's voice behind me. "He knows where it is - there's a cave there - it will be a mile from here." And Donald himself came out of the cottage. He was pulling on a jacket, apparently not wishing to insult a stranger by walking beside him in the dishabille of a blue jersey. It seemed to be his Sunday jacket, too: which I accepted as a double honour. He was a sturdy boy of twelve or thirteen, with corduroy trousers reaching half-way between knee and ankle, and was uncommonly agile in spite of his enormous iron-shod boots. When I turned to the woman and thanked her she made a gesture of deprecation; and since she had mentioned that she was a stranger, it occurred to me to ask her what part of the country she came from.

"Argyll," she said, almost wistfully.

"And you've come to live in Arisaig for good?"

"Oh, yes." Her husband, she added, was a gamekeeper; and it struck me that she must find life a very lonely thing in these parts. When I ventured to say so, she wrinkled her brows and thought for a moment.

"It is very strange here," she replied slowly, "but I will get used to it. No, it is not too lonely - the place I have lived in all my life would be more lonely than this. Ah, it is the people here that are different, and so is the Gaelic. Yes, this place is very strange, but I will get used to it," she repeated.

When I asked how long she had been in Arisaig her reply startled me:

"Five years."

After five years this woman still called herself a stranger!" But I will be going home for a week in the Spring," she added, her eyes lighting up.

A little way down the road, the boy - a trifle stiff and self-conscious in his Sunday jacket - took me through a gateway and along a track which looked like a private avenue. My guess about the avenue was correct, for presently on our right I saw a long low white house with a veranda, set against a background of dark pine trees and rolling brown hillside. Some

washing stirred gently on a line beside the house, and in the deep shadow of the veranda a white-faced woman lay motionless on an invalid-chair.

“No, it is visitors who are there-the big house will be further on, sir,” Donald replied to my question; and on the shoulder of a low hill less than a quarter of a mile ahead I could see a large Scottish mansion-house of grey stone. “The laird lives up there,” said Donald in a slightly awed voice. “He is on the hills to-day after a stag.” He pointed to our left, in the direction the burn was flowing. “Prince Charlie’s beach is down this way. His cave is at the beach-they call it Prince Charlie’s Cave.”

We crossed a tiny pocket-handkerchief of a field where some thin pale corn stood in stooks, and followed the burn to the shore.

“I expect you’re often down here at the cave,” I remarked, but he shook his head.

“I have only been once before, sir.”

“And you’ve lived here five years!” I exclaimed.

He did not answer, but his eyes strayed to the windows of the mansion-house that overlooked the narrow valley. Evidently Donald and his friends did not think it fitting that they should romp within view of the Laird, so I said no more. The morning sun was hot in our faces, and I was glad I had left my rucksack up on the roadside. The valley opened out, and the shadow of the birch trees that thronged the slopes on either hand looked inviting. Ahead, a strip of beach was moist with the tide and shimmered in the morning sun; and Loch nan Uamh, which means the Loch of the Caves, was hidden behind a thin veil of mist. The boy beside me pointed. “That is where Prince Charlie came, sir.” And as if his mission were at an end, he dropped a few paces behind.

I drew in a long breath. So this was where Prince Charles Edward Stuart first set foot on the mainland of Scotland. I had come five hundred miles by train so that I could set out on my travels from this place. My object was to go on foot over the ground the Prince had covered in the ‘Forty-five. I was to take my own time on the road, I decided to loiter when I felt like loitering, to hurry on when I was bored. And I had often tried to picture this beach to myself, but I had never dreamt that I would experience the sudden glow that came to me when I saw it for the first time on that September morning. The depression I had felt at the railway station was forgotten. It was not merely that this narrow shore, with a glimpse of the misty sea-loch beyond and a rocky islet rising out of the placid water, looked lovely beyond words: it was not that the morning itself was one of God’s best: it was something more than these things that quickened the blood. How easy it is to talk drivel about Prince Charlie! Almost enough sentimental ink has been spilt about him to have floated the ship that carried him back to France, and around his portrait saccharine tears hang in cloudy crystals. He has been spattered with mud by truculent Whigs, and white-washed by Jacobites. The unco guid have held up their white hands at some of the stories about his later life, to find their knuckles rapped by Stuart loyalists. And if one tries to steer a middle course, to be judicious and level-headed, admitting faults and admiring virtues, how desperately easy it is to be patronising! And, that odious trap avoided, how easy to be merely dull! I wonder if it is possible to be quite unprejudiced in our opinions about any fellow-being. A glance, a gesture, a word, some trivial impulsive act: so often we respond to these, or recoil from them, and the essential outlines of the picture are blurred. And the more one reads about Charles Edward Stuart in

the records of men who knew him personally, and in the writing of those who are entitled by scholarship to an opinion, the more one finds it difficult to keep bigotry behind the door. For example, it has been said that in dragging the Highlanders of Scotland through a slough of blood, and leading them into years of more brutal suppression than they had ever experienced, Charles himself had nothing to lose and everything to gain. And the retort has been that he would not have come to Scotland if he hadn't been confident of saving his country from the Hanoverian usurper who was on the throne; and if Charles had everything to gain, he had certainly one thing to lose, and he was ready to lose it - his life. More than two centuries have passed since he was born, and even today at the mention of his name wigs are on the green. And this is a hearty compliment to pay to any man: at least it is not paid to nincompoops or futile adventurers.

It was within sight of the beach at Arisaig that the prince's first battle was fought. I venture to think that it demanded more courage than any other battle he was engaged in, for it was fought with his own friends. He had arrived at Eriskay on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1745 with a handful of companions. His only hope of raising any army was among his loyal clans, but stern faces met him at every turn. Unless French troops were landed to back them up, the chieftains declared that a Rising would be another fiasco like the 'Fifteen, with bloodshed and bitterness to follow. They urged him to turn back to France-to go home.

"I am come home, sir," Charles had replied to one of them, and a few days later he cried: "If I can get but six stout trusty fellows to join me, I would choose far rather to skulk with them among the mountains of Scotland than return to France."

The situation was critical. The Prince was on board the *Du Teillay*, which lay at anchor in the sea-loch. The voyage from France had been nerve-racking. Their convoy had been crippled in a fight off the Irish coast. At the first sight of a sail on the horizon, they had been compelled to clap on canvas and alter their course; and after dark, not a lantern did they dare to light except the one at the compass. Off the Hebrides, they had been chased by a British man-of-war. And now, at any moment, a King's ship might come around by Ardnamurchan and block their only way of escape. On their arrival at Borrodale, the party had given out to the country people that they were smugglers, but now it was known that the Prince himself was in their midst. A man of lesser fortitude would have ordered Monsieur Walsh to weigh anchor and turn back to France. His own safety, however, had never meant much to Charles. He had stood staunch under artillery-fire as a mere boy at Gaeta after the besieging Spanish generals had scuttled to safety. For years, and he was now twenty-four, he had prepared himself against the day when he would come to Scotland to fulfill what he believed to be his destiny, and he was inflamed with a conviction that the hour had come. He was disguised as an ecclesiastic, and for the previous month he had allowed his fair beard to grow. On the deck of the *Du Teillay*, he stood looking into the gloomy faces of the Highlanders around him. If he had not found it out before, he now saw the dourness of the Highlander. How near he was to despair we may never know. With a sudden impulse, he turned to a man who stood in silence on the fringe of the group, and cried: "Will not you assist me?"

Ranald Macdonald's eyes lit up. He had heard the Prince's arguments and the short gloomy replies of the chieftains. He knew that little help could be expected from the powerful island clans. It seemed that the end had come. And then: "Will not you - even you - assist me?"

The words went home like the stab of a dirk.

“I will, I will-though no other man in the Highlands will draw a sword!” [No doubt John Home heard the details of this incident in Moidart; Chambers, in quoting Home, carelessly called Ranald a “youth,” and subsequent historians have followed suit. Ranald Macdonald, younger brother of Donald Macdonald of Kinlochmoidart, was in fact a man of about forty at the time of the Rising.]



Figure 2 - Borrodale in Arisaig

A hot-headed fool: the others in the group must have called him that under their breath. But the cry of Ranald Macdonald set the heather on fire. One after another, the Macdonald chieftains gave their word, and discretion went whistling down the wind. An eagle, the royal bird of good omen, had hovered over the Du Teillay at Eriskay: perhaps some fanciful Highland eye may now have envisaged above the ship the form of the Fiery Cross that was to go through the glens calling the loyal clans to arms. And so the Prince won his first battle—a battle against despair in the hearts of those who regarded him with passionate devotion.

This was the scene in my mind as I stood on the shore looking out on the narrow loch. I am aware that the spot most closely linked with the ‘Forty-five is Glenfinnan, where the Prince afterwards raised his standard and, to the paean of pipes, Highland bonnets were tossed in the air in an ecstasy. But as I lingered on the beach at Arisaig, where the Prince’s long journey began, the place seemed to hold all the glamour and the sorrow of those four hundred and twenty-two days when the grandson of King James VII was among his own folk. Forty-three years later, the old decrepit body of Charles Edward Stuart was laid in a tomb at Rome, but his heart should have been buried at Arisaig.



It was the voice of the boy behind me that broke into my thoughts.

“Prince Charlie’s cave is up there, sir,” he said, pointing to the rocks and birches of the steep slope on our right.

It was not until after Culloden, when Cumberland’s troops were on his heels, that the Prince was forced to take refuge in holes in the earth. Hunted from glen to glen and from island to island, he was several times back at Arisaig among his friends, the Macdonalds. It is strange that when he left Scotland for the last time, a fugitive with £30,000 on his head, he embarked from this same beach where he had first landed. But the wheel had an odd trick of coming full circle with Charles Edward Stuart, and it was his destiny to die in the same room in the old palazzo at Rome where he was born.

Donald was uncertain about the exact position of the cave. We searched for nearly twenty minutes before we found it; for a grey boulder, to which you must scramble over steep rocks, perfectly conceals the entrance. To hunt for a cave is to become a boy again. At the optimistic age of ten in Edinburgh, I have helped others to rake Arthur’s Seat from base to summit in search of a cave where we might cower in candlelight and share a romantic crust. But our luck was always out. The hollow under a red rock on the track over to the Hunter’s Bog was the best we could ever find. Even in the heart of that little cavern, on Arthur’s Seat, the wavering gleam of our candle was drowned by daylight, and we needed the dusk of a winter’s afternoon to catch the authentic shudder of outlawry, while one of us guarded the entrance with a toy pistol at full cock. I remembered that old eyrie at Arthur’s Seat as I lowered myself down into the entrance of the Prince’s cave at Arisaig. But here was certainly the genuine article. A deep fissure in the rock-face opened out into a goodly chamber. The floor was powdered with fine black soil. I lit a match, and caught sight of a further opening at the distant end. Among the dust lay the stump of a candle, the relic of some previous pilgrim. Lighting it, I went forward and crawled down with difficulty into the inner cavern. This was high and narrow, and the air was as cool as a well. Though the floor was hummocky, a bed of bracken would have made as snug a couch as any wanderer could wish for; and when the Prince lay here after Culloden, his thoughts must have gone back to many a wet night when he had shivered in an open corrie among the mountains, Cumberland’s troops at times within a musket-shot. I rejoined my young companion in the dazzling sunlight, and we scrambled down the slope to the beach below.

I lay back on the grass near the shore, and lit a pipe of tobacco, and let the utter tranquility of the place soak slowly into my bones. The gods had certainly granted me a fortunate day for the start of my journey. As I lay smoking, I tried to picture that strip of beach on a wild winter evening. With a gale whistling among the birch trees that crowd the high ground on either hand, and Atlantic rollers racing in between the islands of Rum and Coll, tossing up the sea-weed on these dark rocks like wind-blown hair, it would be a bleak spot to the eye of a stranger; but on that September morning the place was drenched in peace. The mist was now rising in the Sound of Arisaig, revealing the islets that are scattered along the northern shore of the sea-loch, and below the mist the sea itself was as placid as a gold-fish bowl. Two buzzards passed high overhead, moving slowly as though the heat of the morning made flight a burdensome thing. I could hear no sound except the sibilant purr of the Borrodale Burn that splashes down fifteen hundred feet from a tiny loch perched like a bird’s nest among the hill-tops of Morar.

When I looked at my map I found with surprise that Skye itself was less than a dozen miles away; and the gulls on the rocks before me could, if the whim took them, alight on the island of Rum in half an hour. Yet this little sea-loch seemed to be shut away in a fold of the earth inexpressibly far from familiar places. I looked out towards the Sound and tried to locate on my map the tiny islands that came glimmering like ghosts from the rising mist. Their Gaelic names sounded in my ear like unfamiliar music: [Eilean nan Cabar](#); and [Am Fraoch-eilean](#) with scattered islets near it; and [Eilean an Sgurra](#) with its pinnacle of rock; and further out An [Glas-eilean](#) a bold fellow with a group of satellites at his back. Donald helped me to arrive at their meaning. The Island of Staves; Heather Island; the Island of the Rock, and the Grey Island. Somehow or other, Gaelic names seem always to fit their places like a garment, and for proof of the richness of the Celtic imagination, a man has only to open a map of Scotland with a Gaelic dictionary at his elbow. Nearly every name in the Highlands has its story, and the pity is that some chiel with a note-book cannot creep back into the centuries and pick up those that have been long forgotten.

Already it was nearly noon. Where I was to sleep that night I had no idea, and I knew it was high time I was moving. Food did not worry me, for I had some dry rations in my pack. But I realised that to find a bed for the night was a riddle that would have to be solved every day of my journey. Though the weather was exquisite, the nights were sharp; and a light rubber sheet, which I carried to use as a cloak when it rained, was not the ideal covering for a man compelled to spend a night among the heather. Later on in my journey, when I had entered more populous districts, a room in an inn or a farmhouse might not be very difficult to find; but in this corner of Scotland, to get a bed or even a couch might prove the devil's own problem. If I had been tramping in these parts at the time when the poet Leyden made his tour, a night's shelter would have been a simple matter. A hundred years ago, between Loch Sunart and Loch Hourn, five or six thousand folk lived on this coast-more than were to be counted in the burgh of Lanark. But emigration has thinned down these people to a widely scattered handful. If I failed to find a bed before darkness fell, I knew I might be forced to pass the night without even the shelter of a haystack.

But there was a more immediate problem: the route I was to follow. I was making for Moidart, to which the prince had sailed from Arisaig in one of the Macdonald boats; and I knew that if I could not make the passage by sea, there was nothing for it but to tramp round on the shore. From the map I estimated that it was about five miles across the Sound of Arisaig, but more like twenty by road. Donald was watching me out of his big puzzled eyes.

"Is there any chance of hiring a boat here, and a man to sail it?" I asked.

The boy shook his head. The laird had a motorboat, he said, but the Laird was up in the hills to-day, and he wouldn't be back until evening. That settled it. While the Prince had gone by boat, a party of Clanranald men had made the journey to Moidart on foot, and on foot to Moidart I must go. Knocking the ashes out of my pipe and folding up the map, I turned and headed back towards the road. It occurred to me to ask the boy in which direction Borrodale House lay, for there the Prince had stayed for a week with Angus Macdonald, a cousin of Flora Macdonald.

He had been entertained as royally as the farmhouse could afford. A guard of a hundred men had been provided. The news of the Prince's arrival had gone round like wildfire; and the district was shaken with enthusiasm. The doors of Borrodale House were thrown open. Men and women, young and old, were allowed to crowd in to see the Prince. The man who was

the 'first officer to be commissioned in the Highland army was present and has described the scene. "H.R.H. drank the grace drink in English," he says; and when he proposed the King's health in Gaelic, the Prince turned to him and asked him to repeat the words slowly - Deoch slainte an Rìgh - so that he should never forget them. ... But one's mind passes quickly to another picture. Ten months later Cumberland's troops had left the house of hospitality a blackened ruin, and Angus Macdonald was an outlaw in his own glens.

"That is Borrodale House," replied Donald in answer to my question, pointing to the long low house which I had passed on the way down to the shore. I had not realised that I had been looking at the site of the old Macdonald home. The place had been rebuilt in quieter days. Now dark pine trees stood behind it. The midday sun beat fiercely upon the white walls. The windows had been closed to shut out the heat, and the line of washing hung limp in the still air. Oddly enough, the sunlight gave the place a forlorn look. The only hint of life was the white-faced woman who lay on her chair in the deep shadow of the veranda.

The road from Borrodale to Moidart was execrably rough. I tried to keep to the grass at the side, but found it difficult to stride unevenly from tussock to tussock with a pack on my back, so in the end I held grimly to the road-metal. In places the surface was like the dry channel of a burn; and since this was the only road from Fort William to Mallaig - not merely the bridlepath to some deserted hamlet - it struck me as rather medieval. The roadway follows the West Highland railway line, now leaping across a bridge above it, now suddenly ducking underneath, so that the two tracks wind together around these hillsides like twisted skeins of wool. The little railway station, as I passed it, was as silent as a mortuary chapel, and I smiled when I remembered the mood of gloom that had come over me on that narrow platform. At the brow of the hill I glanced back and caught sight of the stationmistress, a solitary figure, crossing the line. Was she married or single: how did she fill the long days of summer and the winter evenings: what did she think of the roaring Central Station in Glasgow, if she had ever seen it? I shall never know now.

There are few things in this world more stimulating than to begin a journey on foot. Each day the setting out is a trumpet-call mustering a happy squadron of sensations: but on the first morning, these sensations are rallied with a pleasure that is doubly sharpened by their novelty. There is the weight of the pack on your back: you wonder how soon that Old Man of the Sea is going to settle snugly on your haunches. You decide in the first mile that you should have lightened it a trifle. Yet it was a wrench to have left behind that volume of Dunbar, particularly when you agree with W. P. Ker that "Dunbar is my poet" - and a volume of Scott's Journal, that most perfect of bedside and wayside books, now so portable, thanks to Nelson. The mind goes back to those hours of indecision when you weighed an extra pair of shoes against the Oxford Book of Verse, and a woollen jersey against Humphry Clinker. I recalled the pangs that had attended my final choice: Thackeray's Four Georges because I wanted to read it for either the seventh or eighth time, and T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land because I always open it with a thrill of expectation and the hope that at last I may be able to make head or tail of it, and the little old thin green Heinemann edition of Hamlet, for I find that Hamlet has a knack of being most urgently desired when it is not available. And after toying with these I had in the end replaced on my shelves the Dunbar, the Scott, the "Q" and the Smollett, leaving regrets with each; and according to the kitchen-scales, my pack was the lighter by three pounds two ounces.

The glen around me was green with birch-woods. Every forty or fifty yards the trees came huddling down close to the road, making a long splash of shadow in front of me. Each

shadow was a cool oasis, and I found myself slyly shortening my step so that I could taste the coolness for as long as possible. On either hand, gritty peaks of rock jutted high out of the trees and stood sharp and grey against the sky. According to my map, Loch nan Uamh was less than a mile away, but so shut in was this glen that I might have been a day's journey from the sea. Too soon for comfort I came out into the open, and pegged on in the heat. When the road wound southward again, and Loch nan Uamh once more came into view, I would fain have scrambled down to the shore and waded out after the ebbing tide to wallow like a duck in the shallow water. Not a breath of air was stirring. I remembered Barrie's remark about the great Professor Stuart Blackie: when all Edinburgh was sweltering in heat, fanning itself behind its venetian blinds, the Professor would swing along Princes Street in his Highland plaid, carrying his own breeze with him. I wished then that I was striding out at the tail-end of Blackie's breeze; and when my road crossed a noisy burn, I halted on the hump-backed bridge, and realised that I was not only hot but desperately hungry.

A thought struck me: since there was no shelter anywhere, it would be pleasant below this bridge. In a trice I was over the fence and crawling below the stone arch. It was as cool as a cellar there, and the shadow on the clear brown water was soothing to the eyes after miles of bright sun. With the stone vault above me, I ate my luncheon like a crouching hermit in his cell. But my likeness to a hermit began and ended with the vault. There was no nibbling at a tough ascetic crust. Though oat-cakes and cheese, dried dates and an apple, may not call up a picture of the Carlton Grill, I will wager that even the worshippers of Bacchus had never entered upon their orgies with a sharper zest. And I could have trolled a stave or so to old Bacchus himself as I drank the cool water that tumbled down from a hill-loch above. I look back with a fleshly joy, on that banquet below the bridge, just as I look back with horror on the miles that followed it.

Before luncheon I had accepted the roughness of the road with equanimity. But now, before I had gone a mile, I was cursing it from the depths of a full heart. I have said that the road in places was like the dry bed of a stream; gradually it began to resemble the red-hot bricks over which Eastern priests are said to walk with unbaked soles. Vague discomfort became positive pain; and though I trudged on, hoping that it would improve, I was wincing at every step. I made slowly round the long shoulder of Ben Chaorach, and when at last a clump of trees showed up on the roadside, I crawled among them, and, pulling off my shoes, leaned back in relief against my rucksack.

There was a little loch below me, less than a mile in length, and I spent half an hour in contemplating it. From my map I saw that it was called Loch Dubh, or the Black Loch, and the reason for the name was obvious. Glancing back in the way I had come, I could discern an inlet of the sea, and it was as clear and blue as the sky overhead. But though the sunlight lay full upon the quiet loch-water below me, it was as black as a well. On the opposite hillside, there were graceful trees in orderly platoons like little green soldiers set ready for a children's game. Whether they had been planted in that formation, or whether the woods had been thinned by some forester with a mathematician's soul, I do not know; but below a skyline that had been drawn by the slap-dash hand of nature, their neat effect was bizarre. My eyes wandered again to the west, where a sharp peak pricked over the edge of the horizon, and a little to the north of it I made out mountains which must have been on the island of Rum. The pictures on every side of me were lovely ones; but I was in no mood to appreciate their glories. Before going further, I decided to replace my shoes with an old pair I had in my pack.

The ones I had been wearing were new; they had been made and fitted in London, with much palaver, by a man who should have known his job; and I began to wonder whether their newness, rather than the stony road, was the cause of my discomfort. I shoved my hand into my rucksack, and then in bewilderment emptied out its contents on the grass: underclothes, books, spare shirt, cardigan, woollen scarf, pyjamas, flannel trousers, two pairs of socks, shaving tackle, soap, tooth-brush, and a small box of food. But shoes? Not even the tag of a lace. Yet I could have sworn I had packed an extra pair, and I realised that they must have been left behind with the rest of my kit in Edinburgh. There was nothing for it but to bite the bullet. With gloom in my soul, I laced on the instruments of torture and went up the hill, brooding upon things like thumb-screws and the rack.

By the time the head of Loch Ailort hove into view, the pain had dulled somewhat: or perhaps it was that I had come to regard it as an essential part of me, like the weight of the pack on my shoulders and the grip of the ash-stick in my hand. I can remember how heartened I was to see a solitary house on the roadside. Slowly I drew nearer to it, a square stone house, with a grey slate roof, and I wondered what kind of folk lived there. Perhaps they could tell me where I might find shelter for the night. Perhaps, on the other hand, there was nobody at home, and I would hammer on the door in vain. As I limped towards it, my hopes went up and down like the contour of the road over which I had been tramping since noon. And then I drew level with the house, and halted.

That was a blessed moment. Above the door was a sign-board, and it told me that the place was an inn. An inn! I stared at the sign, almost terrified that it was a dangling mirage and would melt before my eyes.

“Hullo,” said a voice.

I turned. At the corner stood a young man, with a briar pipe in his mouth. He was tall, bare-headed, fair, and he wore light grey flannel trousers, a tweed jacket, and old and comfortable-looking shoes-shoes at which I shot a covert glance of envy. “Walking?” he said affably, moving the pipe to the other corner of his mouth.

“Trying to,” I admitted, inwardly liking him because he had not used the detestable verb to hike. “Can one stay at this place?”

“Rather! I’m staying here myself for the night.”

There was something charmingly open about this stranger. It was the first thing that struck me; and within decent limits it is an engaging quality both in life and in letters. They say you can never really know a Macrimmon, unless you are a Macrimmon yourself, and only a Macrimmon can understand the dark reserve that is the spiritual inheritance of that kingly race of pipers. But there was no reserve of any kind about the young man with whom I chatted on the road outside the inn. He dumped my rucksack in the porch for me, and went in to fix me up with a bedroom, then rejoined me at the door. During the next fifteen minutes I learned that his name was Gillespie, that he had been educated in Edinburgh, where his people lived, and that he had a job in a Chartered Accountant’s office in London - a job he told me he was very lucky to have because the head of the firm, who was a relative, loathed the sight of him. He was nearing the end of a fortnight’s holiday which he had spent messing about - as he put it - in the Highlands, and from the vigour of his talk, I was sure that he had messed about energetically. Having freely opened the ship’s log, as it were, for my

inspection, he proceeded to tell me about his next port of call. "I'm going down Loch Shiel to-morrow," he said. "I've to meet a man at Acharacle for a couple of days' fishing, then home."

I pricked up my ears at the mention of Loch Shiel, and said that I too was heading for there, but intended to walk across Moidart.

"Across Moidart?" he repeated, puzzled. "Why?"

His candour about himself was disarming, and I explained that I was travelling on foot over the road Charles Edward Stuart followed in the 'Forty-five.

"Prince Charlie! Lord, one's always bumping up against Prince Charlie in this countryside. I met an Australian in the train to-day who has a brooch the Prince gave Flora Macdonald. Fact. He said he got it in Australia from a man called Graham. Queer, meeting you, just after that... . You said something about Edinburgh just now. You weren't at school there, by any chance? ... Heriot's? I was at Watson's. Remember those old snow-fights in the Meadows?" His eyes twinkled. "D'you know, at some time or other, I've probably hit you on the ear with a snowball! Fancy meeting in this God-forsaken place a chap you've once winged with a snowball!" The jingle of a bell interrupted him. "Tea!" said Gillespie cheerfully. "Want a wash first? Then come on, you damned Herioter." And turning with a friendly gesture, he led the way indoors.

## Chapter II. Into Moidart

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The Scot from London - The Adventure of a Stag - Evening in the Inn-Highland Evictions - I Sail down Loch Ailort - The Silent Mansion - A Lonely Village - The Chapel by the Shore - "The Eight Men of Moidart" - The Pass of the Rough Rock.

**M**Y new acquaintance talked without ceasing, and I was afraid I might grow a little weary of Gillespie before we said good-night. An exchange of snowballs in youth may be a powerful link between two young men; but I felt physically tired, and people with the salient energy of an oil-gusher take some coping with. And yet it was impossible to dislike him. I found myself passively disagreeing with a good half of his opinions about life and death and literature, all of which he touched upon at tea with a bustling bravado; and he cheerfully warned me that my politics were radically unsound as well as being too damnably eighteenth-century for words. But when he began to speak about his friends, I found myself listening with interest. The man was a mass of warm loyalties, and even in his remarks about his enemies - he seemed to have several - you could detect not the slightest trace of venom. Then I began actively to like him. His honesty was as transparent as a bit of clean plate-glass; but when you know exactly where you stand with a man, you may disagree but it is difficult to quarrel with him. Later on in the evening, however, I found out one piece of deception. The bedroom allotted to me had been the one Gillespie himself was to have used. For some domestic reason, no other was available that night, and without a word to me he had given up his bed and arranged to sleep on the couch in the sitting-room next door.

After tea, he suggested that we might stroll down to the loch and-if we could find a good place-bathe. but bathing seemed to be impossible, and I said so for the tide was low, and the beach was covered with a deep mat of saffron-coloured seaweed that shone like pale gold in the evening sun. Gillespie's enthusiasm swept aside my objections, however, and before darkness fell that evening I was glad that I had given in to him, for if we had kept to the higher ground I would not have seen what I did. We descended the hill to the uttermost tip of the loch, into which a river flowed from a wooded glen and curled like a long shining eel in and out among the hillocks of seaweed. We sauntered up this river and came upon a pool that evoked a sudden whoop of joy from my companion. In a trice, his clothes were on the grass, and he flopped into the pool and bobbed about like a sportive seal. As the water was icy, I was out again and clothed long before Gillespie crawled up beside me and lay on the grass with heaving sides and wet hair over his forehead. It was good to get your back against a warm rock and close your eyes against the brightness of the setting sun. For the first time since we had met, his cheerful tongue was still, and I am not sure whether it was the smell of his tobacco or a slight nip in the evening air that awakened me from a delicious dose. We must have lain there for nearly an hour. I noticed that my companion was casting glances upwards at the crags across the river; then he spoke.

"Thought I saw something moving! It's a man - look, he's got a gun with him. Wonder what he's doing up there."

I followed the direction of his pointing arm. The hillside rose steeply above the crags, and whins and heather grew thick among the outcrop of rocks.

Though the distance must have been four or five hundred yards, the air was so clear that I could make out the man distinctly. He had settled down beside a clump of whins, stretched out at full length, his gun between his hands.

We continued our talk for a little, but the presence of the man on the hillside seemed to worry Gillespie. He got to his feet and took a survey over the flat top of the boulder beside which we lay. Except for the gentle rush of the little waterfall a dozen yards from us, there was no sound to be heard; in the bay, the tide was ebbing sluggishly; a few sheep brooded on the slope behind us; and on the skyline, the smoke from the chimneys of the inn wavered gently to westward against the reddening sky.

“Good lord-look, man, look!”

I jumped to my feet. Gillespie was pointing eagerly across the river into a corn-field. At first, I could not make out the reason for his excitement. And then my eye lit upon a moving thing.

It was a stag. The animal was wading through the corn, which came up past his brown haunches. He was breasting it as if he were crossing a pool, his head high, his horns thrown back, and was moving very slowly as though he hated the stiff stalks of the grain swishing around his flanks.

He halted for an instant, the sun glinting in his big brown eye, then went on again. Though the shoulder of the hillside shut him off from the man among the rocks above, it was plain that every moment he was coming nearer to the point when he would be in full view.

Presently, we caught sight of another figure—a short kilted young man with a faded blue bonnet on his head. He was on the low ground across the river, crouching behind a dry stone dyke, obviously afraid he might startle the oncoming stag. The pair of them must have been waiting for the beast for some time; and Gillespie told me he had heard at the inn in the afternoon that for the last few days a stag had been coming down from the hills and working havoc among the corn.

The young man behind the dyke was making gestures towards the hillside above, and a hand was raised in acknowledgement. The stag must now have been within twenty yards of the edge of the field; and at any moment he would be within the keeper’s area of vision. I tried to watch both man and animal at the same time. The keeper was motionless beside his rifle, his face making a pale blotch against the darker surface of the rocks. The wind was blowing gently in our direction, and the stag had not scented any danger, for he came on through the corn with his slow gliding motion. And then on the hillside, the man’s head jerked up, and went down again. He had seen the beast. I found myself holding my breath, and though I wanted to watch the stag in the cornfield, I could not take my eyes from the clump of whins on the hill. After what seemed a long interval, there was a tiny flash and a puff of smoke. I could hear the scream of a bullet, then the bark of the rifle, and the explosion was caught up in the valley in long deep echoes.

For the fraction of a second the stag stood rigid. Then he leaped. I could see daylight below his belly. And across the pale gold of the grain there was a streak of brown as he covered the last few yards to the edge of the field. Over the wire fence he went, his horns back, his bent knees high on his breast, alighting as nimbly as a cat, and you could hear the patter of his hoofs as he skimmed across the road to take the ditch and dry-stone dyke at a jump. With his



buttocks oddly like a scurrying rabbit's, he dived into a grove of birch trees and hazels, and had disappeared before the echoes of the shot had quite faded in the glen.

I drew in a long breath. Only a stop-watch could have told how few were the seconds that had ticked away, from my first sight of the animal to the final flicker of his hindquarters among the hazel-bushes; but that brief span of time had been as heady as any man could have wished for. Gillespie and I stared at each other in silence.

"Were you hoping he'd get the beast?" he enquired at length. "Or are you one of those damned sentimentalists - like me?"

"Yes, damned sentimentalist," I said.

"Good," grunted Gillespie. "Well, he's half a mile into Morar by this time. Here's hoping he stops there ..."

As the sun went down over Arisaig, leaving a sky that was splashed with all the colours of one of Turner's wildest visions, we slowly climbed the hill. There were lights in the windows by the time we reached the inn.

The pleasant smell of oil lamps was through the house as we sat down to supper. The landlord had modestly warned us that it would be a simple meal - a few trout and a bit of mutton. But I had little expected on setting out that morning to sit down to such a meal, and I accepted the happy gift of the gods with suitable gratitude. The trout were small but delicious. The bottle of claret that accompanied the roast mutton was passably good, and I find it difficult not to be happy in the company of passably good claret. Gillespie drank whiskey, maintaining that a mere French wine was no tippie for a man at all, and I had the satisfaction of reminding him that claret was drunk in Scotland long before whiskey became the popular tippie. "Exactly," he retorted. "They drank the claret stuff until they discovered something better."

In defence of my beverage, I ventured to protest that claret drinking was killed in Scotland when the English forced a tax upon it after the Union, and that whiskey was used as the next best thing. Which sent Gillespie off on the subject of Heather Ale: "They say the secret of it died with the Picts. But that's nonsense. Sir Walter Scott said he was given it among the hills in his younger days." And from drink, I remember, we passed by some obscure sequence to the topic of Scottish Nationalism. That fur did not fly must be accepted as evidence that we were both in the most genial of moods, for Gillespie's brand of Nationalism was not mine, and the presence of two other people in the little dining-room did not check our babble. I was a little ashamed to find that my tongue was keeping pace with Gillespie's, and that I was painting nightmare pictures of what Scotland would soon be like if he had his way, pictures of revolution and pestilence and death which the inspiration of the claret did not tend to subdue in colouring or detail. I glanced at the two strangers, wondering what they thought of us.

They sat apart. One of them, a tall dark heavily-built man of over fifty, with high cheek bones, read a book while he ate. The other-ruddy-faced, ginger-haired, with small bright blue eyes-gazed stolidly at the food on his plate, no doubt chuckling to himself at the yeasty extravagance of our argument.

Among the fumes of tobacco, the four of us gathered afterwards round the sitting-room fire. The dark man did not seem to be in the mood for talking, and, after a few words of conventional politeness, relapsed into the pages of his book. I liked his pale square face and quiet dark eyes, and could not help wondering what his profession was. His well-worn tweeds had been decently cut, and his firm hands with their square-tipped fingers were cared for. At the other side of the fire, the ruddy-faced man in the brown plus-fours began to speak to Gillespie. I gathered from one of his remarks that he was a Government official of some kind, and was on one of his periodical tours around the countryside. He seemed to come into pretty close contact with the West Highland folk, and he was not diffident in talking about them.

“They’re a dawmed lazy lot,” he declared. “They’ll do nothing to help themselves. They need to be led -ay, and they’re that dawmed slow to take a telling! Tuberculosis has played the devil with them, and they’ll do little to check it. That-and the tea-pot! The tea-pot’s one of the curses of the Highlands. It would be telling the ministers if they’d preach a sermon twice a year about it. What’s the trouble? Well, it simply stews on the hob all day, and the folk wonder why they’ve got raddled stomachs! But will they take a telling? Not them. Besides, they haven’t the guts of the Borderers. They’re a quarrelsome lot, too-always bickering among themselves ...”

Gillespie was about to put in a word when the man across the hearth smiled and laid down his book.

“I hope you’ll forgive the interruption? ... If I may say so, I think you’ve seen the worst side of the Highlander.” He spoke with a careful formality that somehow did not sound in the least pompous, and his voice was pleasant. “There’s been so much sentimental nonsense talked about the Gael that the worst side of him is apt to strike you. But surely if there’s one thing that stands out in a Gael it’s this. He’s instinctively a gentleman. Yes, instinctively. Take the Gaelic servant. As a rule, he’s never servile -servility simply isn’t in their blood. You’ve only to look at the little maid who waited table to-night to see what I mean.”

The ruddy-faced Government official crossed his legs and lay back in his chair, as if to set himself comfortably for an argument. “Servility isn’t in their blood? I don’t follow. I thought some of the old Highland chiefs were supposed to keep up an establishment like a prince. How can you run a show like that without servants-and servility?”

The question seemed to interest Gillespie. “I read just the other day that there’s no word for servant in the Gaelic language. I’d like to put the point to a Gaelic-speaker.”

The dark man hesitated. Something was on the tip of his tongue, and Gillespie looked at him expectantly.

“You don’t have the Gaelic, sir, do you?”

“As it happens,” he said, “I do, and I think I can explain.” He told us that the Gaelic word *maol* was once used for servant, and it meant crop-haired, as distinct from the long hair that the nobles wore. “But there was no odium in the word,” he went on. “Why, many a noble in Scotland had it as part of his name, linked up with some Celtic saint or other. You see what I’m driving at? But there’s one thing that’s apt to be forgotten nowadays. Parts of Scotland and Ireland were once the most cultured places in Europe. Learning, and music, and so forth were flourishing in these islands when there was darkness over most of the Continent. And

that's the Gael's inheritance! Nothing has been able to kill it. The spirit is still there. Forgive my preaching like this, but the subject happens to touch me rather on the raw."

"I dare say you've got me whacked on history." The Government official lit another cigarette. "Anyhow, I do know this. The Highlanders have changed in the last twenty-five years-deteriorated. They're softer-less independent. Come in contact with them in the way I have to do, and you'll find their heads are too mighty full of how much they can get out of the Government."

"Can you blame them, poor devils?" asked the other. "Do you expect them to refuse Government benefits? They're hard pressed. In the old days they may have been poor, but they were looked after by their chiefs. At least, they were-until times changed, and some of the chiefs changed too. But we won't go into that ..."

"You mean the evictions?" said Gillespie.

The man nodded, and stared into the fire. For some reason, he seemed to dislike the subject, and I wondered why. In the silence that fell, I was hoping that the subject had not been dropped for good.

"I've read a little about the Clearances," I ventured to remark. "The apologists say there's been a lot of wild exaggeration."

The man moved uneasily in his chair. "There's little doubt about exaggeration," he said slowly. "Some of the landlords spent thousands to help their people. But in places I'm afraid there was a good deal of brutality-devilish brutality. I'm sorry to say it. I happen to know one case ..." He hesitated again, and it crossed my mind that perhaps he was thinking of some forebear of his own whose hands had not been altogether clean. "It was a painful business, and I'd rather not mention names, but I happen to know it's true." And he told us a story that made the blood tingle with pity and anger. I shall not try to reproduce his words, because my memory may be at fault in some of the details, and the subdued tones of his voice-subdued with shame, one might almost have believed-had an impressive quality that cannot be put down on paper. The gist of the incident is in this. There had been ill-feeling between a Laird and some of his people, for times were bad, and their rents were in arrear. The Laird himself was impoverished, and a sheep-farmer offered him a good rent for the land. But the people refused to move-their fathers had lived there for generations-so the Laird gave orders to his factor to get rid of them, by force if necessary. When he returned home, after attending to some business in Edinburgh, he found the people gone. Although it was the beginning of winter, young and old had been turned out of their homes to fend for themselves in the open air. Their belongings had been torn from their cottages, piled up in a heap, and the thatched roofs set on fire. One family-a father; mother, and three children-ventured to return to the blackened ruins of their home, huddling together below a sail they had stretched over some wooden poles in a corner. A week later, they were ejected again, with the warning that, if they went back, their belongings would be made into a bonfire.

"They took refuge in a hollow under some crags," the man went on, "and there, ten days later, a child was born. In the end, help was forthcoming, and the family went overseas in an emigrant ship. The mother died on the voyage ... Things like that," he added quietly, "make one ashamed of one's own countrymen."

The silence was broken by the Government official on the opposite side of the hearth. "Pretty low cads, some of those fine old Highland gentlemen must have been! "

"Worse," said the other quietly. "But don't forget this. After the Rising of 'Forty-five, the Government went out deliberately to smash up the old clan spirit. The chiefs were deprived of their privileges; the clansmen became mere tenants-or squatters. As time went on, some of the chiefs were nearly bankrupt, and thousands of the people were on the point of starvation. Thank heaven, the emigrants were soon much better off in the lands they went to. In Nova Scotia to-day there's more Gaelic spoken than in all Scotland-people there still talk of the Highlands as 'home.' I happen to have travelled a bit, and it's amazing how a love for the old country is handed down to children and grandchildren who are never likely to set eyes on it. I've heard the bagpipes in some of the loneliest corners of the world. More than that, I've actually heard a sermon preached in Gaelic to negroes in Carolina-they had picked up the language from their masters. Which reminds me ..."

It was midnight before we broke up, and I forget whether it was Gillespie or I who suggested a stroll in the fresh air before we turned in. The Government official thought he would go straight to bed, and the three of us smoked our last pipe out of doors. It was a perfect night, the air clean and still, sweetening our tobacco. We sauntered over the rough grass to the brow of the hill. The loch lay below us, and the moon cut a white furrow across the quiet water. Over the folds of the hills on either side, there was a haze that seemed to shimmer like a curtain of thin pale silk, hiding mysterious things. It was easy to be fanciful in that place on such a night, easy to imagine that the Little People themselves were dancing round their knolls; and it was difficult to believe that on the same island there were cities with streets, and men hurrying through them at this midnight hour, and women with hard questioning eyes in the darkness of doorways: it was easy to let the mind stray down the moonlit loch and travel out to sea, out beyond the Hebrides to the Blessed Islands in the Atlantic mists where the Highlanders used to think their souls would find a resting-place; and it was difficult, desperately difficult, to believe that on my journey I would have another night so fortunate as this, or that I would find so perfect a haven or talk so good. Gillespie broke the silence by asking the older man a question.

"Do you live in the Highlands, by any chance?"

"In the Highlands?" the man repeated, his voice showing surprise, and then in the moonlight I could see the flicker of a smile on his face. He drew himself up. "No; I don't live in Scotland at all. I come from America. I told you about a crofter's child that was born in the open air beside a crag, over these hills. That child," he said quietly, "was my grandfather."

Next morning I was awakened before seven o'clock by noises in the next room. Gillespie was stirring early. I expected that at breakfast he would give me an account of a hill-walk taken in the cool of the morning, and would charge me with indolence; but I decided to save my energy for the long day's tramp across Moidart, and so dozed off again into that region of pellucid bliss that lies between sleep and wakefulness, when the mind moves with the ease of bird-flight. I can remember how in that hour my thoughts went ahead of me into Moidart with an absurd and careless rapture. But it was a Moidart of my own creating, not the country I had been warned about, the heart of the "Rough Bounds," where there was not even a decent cart-track to follow, where the postman was compelled to make his daily journey on horseback, where no inn existed, and where in consequence a shelter for the night might be hard to find.

Gillespie and I had nearly finished breakfast before the Government official appeared. The older man had breakfasted early, and, after saying good-bye to us, had gone off to the hills. I went out into the sunshine to smoke the best pipe of the day; and when I had settled my bill, I went in to the little dining-room to make my farewells.

Gillespie rose with a smile in his quick eyes.

“We’ve been arranging things for you,” he said. “I’ve just discovered that our friend here is going in your direction. A motor-boat’s coming from Genuig to take him down the loch. He’ll give you a lift. It’ll knock a good ten miles off your walk. What about it?”

I jumped at the suggestion. If I had known that a motor-boat was to be had, I might have been tempted to hire it myself, though the only way of getting in touch with the owner would have been to send a message by the postman who came daily from Genuig on horseback, which would have meant the delay of a day. As the official was going on duty, he declined my offer to share expenses, adding that if I did not care to sail down the loch as a guest of His Majesty’s Government, I must foot-slog into Moidart by the shore.

“But that’s not all,” said Gillespie. “I’m coming with you, if you’ll have me. I’m making for Loch Shiel, and so are you. I meant to go round by Glenfinnan, and take the steamer. But the chance of walking across Moidart is too good to miss. Mind, if you’d rather go alone, say the word.”

I told him I’d be delighted to have his company. But at the same time I warned him that the walk would be a tough one, that only heaven knew where we would get shelter for the night, and if my feet hurt as they had done the previous day I would be in a vile temper before we had covered many miles—that in short, the journey across Moidart might turn out to be anything but a spree. At my recital of all the ills in store for us, Gillespie’s face lit up with pleasure. “It sounds just about right,” he declared, and so the thing was clinched. He had with him an old haversack, which he filled, and he gave a boy a shilling to carry his suitcase down the road to the little railway station. Three quarters of an hour later we were at the lochside stepping into the dinghy that took us out to the clumsy old motorboat, which lay like a fat sleepy aquatic animal sprawling on the water. But she was staunch, and though at times the engine snorted and roared like an angry bull, we made a good steady six knots. It was, however, the crew of two that caught my interest. One was a boy of about fifteen, the other eighteen or so.

They were hatless, collarless, and their clothes were faded and patched. But their faces were a revelation, with eyes as clear as dew and skin that glowed pinkly with cleanness and health. I detest these fables about the dirt and lousiness of the Highlander: I have seen more dirt and lousiness among the Saxon peasantry in a couple of English parishes than among all the Gaels with whom I have come in contact in Scotland. And as I looked at the young men standing in the cockpit, I remembered the remark the American had made the previous evening about the Highlander being instinctively a gentleman. In these boys there was nothing loutish, nothing of the slouch or even the covert glances that one so often notices in the country folk of some districts in the South. Their spines were straight, their heads well set on their shoulders, and their eyes politely ignored us. Some of my best friends are crofters in the glens of Perthshire; but I knew nothing of the West Highlander or the Islesman and here, I thought, are people one can surely trust. The Government official’s remarks at the fireside had stuck unpleasantly in my mind, but I wondered whether on analysis they might reduce to

this-that these Gaels are a stubborn people with a hearty concern for their own rights, a concern which has perhaps been intensified by repression in the not very distant past. I went aft and lowered myself into the cockpit beside the two boys.

They were not anxious to talk, but presently I gathered that they worked on crofts at Glenuig, and one had spent the summer on the fishing-boat of a relative who lived on the Long Island. The English they spoke was slow and careful; it was the lovely musical speech of a people whose tongue-muscles are flexed and made sensitive by one of the richest languages on earth. They seemed a little surprised when I asked whether they found Moidart a lonely place to live in, and whether they wanted to get away from it and take their chance of earning more money elsewhere. "Ah, we'll be better in Moidart," said the older of the two; and once more they seemed a little surprised when I agreed with them. For they were better off in Moidart. It was obvious. Their living might be poor, but a glance at their healthy skin was enough to tell that it was adequate. They were living in a countryside that is between the mountains and the sea, with a climate that is unsurpassed in Britain and a winter temperature as high as that on the south coast of Cornwall. Given land to till, sheep or cattle to tend, a boat to sail, fish to catch when the larder is bare, it is difficult to see why a man of a placid temperament should not be happy. Ambition is a fine thing; but fortunately it is not the glittering prizes that most folk are struggling for. To imagine you are a temporary millionaire makes quite a jolly day-dream, but the truth is that few people have the palate to enjoy either wealth or power; and some of the most miserable men of my acquaintance have a nagging ambition to get out of the very rut for which they lack the wit to realise they are admirably fitted. Cool, hard-headed, successful men of the world often snort with scorn at platitudes about ambition and say that you hear them only on the lips of those who have failed in life. But do these hard-headed, successful men gloat over the glittering prizes they have won? I have not noticed it. When they talk about themselves-which they often do - It is their battles they like to dwell upon, not their spoils of war.

I leaned over the gunwale of the boat and looked down into the water. The surface around us was as blue as the sky; but when you stared into the depths, the water was a wonderful green colour, clean and transparent, and you could see the rock and sand and waving myrtle-tinted seaweed on the bottom. To the south, mist was rising from the hills of Ardnish, and to the east a thicker mist was drifting from the crown of Ben Rois nearly three thousand feet above. Ahead of us, the rim of the Atlantic glittered like a taut piece of silver wire. On the rocks of an islet I could see many black seals lying quiescent in the morning sun; as we drew near, they slid smoothly into the water, like the launching of tiny skiffs; and presently their dark snouts broke the surface, and their big eyes watched us with the stupid inquisitive stare of weekold calves. Soon we were out in the Sound of Arisaig, passing close to Eilean nan Gobhar, which the older boy told me meant the Goats' Island, because goats were kept there in the old days; but indeed the island itself, with its pale grey rock rising steeply, was for all the world like a gigantic goat standing up to the belly in water.

As we were slipping away from the island, Gillespie waved me forward, and for my benefit the Government official repeated the yarn he had just been spinning. "It's a story they tell in Moidart," he said. "A battle was fought here in Loch Ailort soon after Culloden, between English and French warships. It lasted for a whole day, so it is said, until the English ammunition ran short and they had to make a bolt for it. The country folk gathered up on the hills and watched them. One old man got down on his knees and began to pray as if his own life depended on it. Some of the others went over to him and asked whom he was praying for-

the English or the French. The old man opened his eyes, and pointed -across to the Goats' Island. Some of the shots of the guns were falling on it. Then the man spat on the ground. `What do I care for the English or the French?' he cried. `I am asking the Lord to preserve my goats on the island! '“

I suddenly remembered it was here that the Du Teillay had anchored in the 'Forty-five, for the ship with Prince Charles on board had made a tour of the Sound of Arisaig, and the Goats' Island is mentioned in a letter the Prince wrote to his father. In the Log of the ship for Tuesday, the 10th August 1745, it is recorded: "At ten o'clock at night we had been sending arms and ammunition ashore, till three o'clock in the morning." By Sunday the Du Teillay was still anchored in this place, for the Log says: "We carried our dinner on shore and fished for oysters." The weather must have been good, for on Monday "the Prince embarked in our little boat with four gentlemen" and was rowed back to Angus Macdonald's in Borrodale.

To complete the story of the Du Teillay: She avoided the British men-of-war by sailing round the north coast of Scotland, and Monsieur Walsh ["Along with Walsh there returned to the Continent a man called Butler, who had played a considerable part in making the arrangements for the expedition to Scotland. As soon as Walsh and Butler reached Paris, Butler set out for Rome to give personally to James full details about the landing, and he carried with him the Prince's despatches. Butler again was prominent in making arrangements for the Heueux to bring Charles back to France after the failure of the Rising. It would be interesting to know more about this mysterious figure who accompanied the Prince to Scotland. He is referred to by Walsh as the Abbe Butler. He had been an equerry of Louis XV, who had sent him across the Channel in 1744 to make a detailed report about the strength of the Jacobites in England, and he had travelled through the country on the pretext of buying horses. Copies of these reports in French are in the Stuart MSS. at Windsor Castle; and thanks to Major L. Eardley-Simpson, whose admirable book *Derby and the Forty-five* has filled a gap in Jacobite history, they have now been published in English.] did a little quiet privateering on the way. From the Margaret of Aberdour, he demanded and received a ransom of "£100 sterling and £10 for the cabin." From the Unity he extracted a ransom of £200 and £10 for the Captain's cabin. From the Princess Mary of Renfrew, £100 sterling and £10 for the cabin. From the Lirwindiwin laden with planks and iron from the Baltic, he took £650 sterling and £10 for the cabin. I like that delightfully frugal addition of £10 for the Captain's cabin! And over a thousand pounds before he was out of sight of the Island of Skye strikes me as pretty good going, especially as he did not need to fire a shot. On Saturday, 4th September, the ship arrived safely in Holland, where she was sold to a Dutchman. The Log, thirty-five quarto pages, yellow and stained by the vinegar of quarantine ports, now lies in the archives of Serrant.

We were glad of the lift down the loch; and after thanking His Majesty's Government, represented by its official in plus-fours, Gillespie and I were taken ashore: n the dinghy, and we landed on a slippery rock in the corner of a secluded bay.

I was a little startled to see a magnificent mansion-house on the hillside above us. What enthusiast for solitude had selected this site miles from the nearest road, and with the mountains of Moidart piled round it like a rampart? And whence had come the thousands of grey stone blocks that had gone to the making of his house? Perhaps they had been quarried out of the bills behind; and I could not help wondering what the builders thought of their task--that regiment of stone-masons, and carpenters, and plasterers, and slaters - that had worked there with only the mewling of sea-gulls to accompany the clink of their chisels and

the reedy discord of their saws, and a deer from the mountains taking a peep at their labours from the edge of a gully. How the proprietor transported his household furniture passes my comprehension, unless it was brought by sea from Glasgow and taken ashore in small boats, just as Prince Charles more than a hundred years before had landed a few miles further along this coast his shipload of swords and muskets and fieldguns from France.

To reach Glenuig, we found that our shortest way was to go through the private grounds of the house, and presently we found that we were compelled to pass quite close to it. In case there was a chance of going off our way a little further on, I decided to stop and enquire. The door was open, and I stepped into the panelled vestibule to find the inner door open also. Since I could not see a bell, I knocked. But there was no response, no sound of movement. I waited patiently, and as I listened to the loud ticking of a clock within, my eye was attracted to a great collection of shepherd's crooks in the hall-stand-crooks of all shapes and sizes. It had never before occurred to me that a man could take a connoisseur's pleasure in the elegantly curved tops of these tall staves, but here lived someone who evidently did. I knocked again, this time so loudly that I was sure the sound must have penetrated to the uttermost corner of the house; and I retreated from the vestibule and waited for several minutes. What was the explanation of the silence? The doors and some of the windows were open, so I knew the house was occupied; but except for ourselves, there did not seem to be a living soul within or without. In the end I joined Gillespie, and we went on our way, the mystery unsolved. Soon the trees shut the place off from our sight; and had it not been for a tingling in the knuckles that had smitten the panelling of the vestibule it would have been easy to believe that the silent house had been part of a vivid illusion, a trick of sunshine and shadow... .

We struck a path that ran down close to the shore; and after two or three miles we came round the shoulder of a low crag and saw before us a green corrie in the hills with a few cottages scattered on its slopes. My map told me this was Glenuig.

We pulled up and stared at that solitary place. Gillespie, who had been talking cheerfully, became suddenly quiet. It may have been that the empty house with the open doors had put us in a receptive mood, but when we afterwards compared our first impressions of Glenuig we were in a curious agreement -we both felt that here we were on the fringes of an older world. The empty house was like a lodge at the gates through which one had to pass to reach this magical corrie. In front of the little schoolhouse, a handful of children with wise faces paused in their play to look at us, and in their odd and courteous shyness they reminded me of the children I had seen at Arisaig. With clasped hands the girls had been dancing in a circle, singing with soft treble voices, but presently they moved timidly away to continue their game out of sight. The boys, however, bravely held their ground; and it was pleasant to hear the friendly ripple of their Gaelic tongues as they talked together. Remembering what I had been told about the postman and his pony, I asked where the post office was. One of the boys, a little bolder than the rest, stepped forward from the group and pointed to a white-washed cottage that lay snugly below some pine trees across the burn.

We walked in single file over the narrow planks of the bridge, and a puppy raced out to welcome us. The woman who answered my knock was short and dark-skinned, with black eyes and jet black hair, and was very neat in her dress. She could not have seen us coming, and seemed startled at the appearance of strangers. I asked her the way to Kinlochmoidart, and she pointed to a path among the hills. It seemed a little unfriendly to turn away at once, and I found myself asking her whether she found Glenuig dull: an absurd question, because it



showed how shallow was my appreciation of the essential life of these people, a life that is quiet and deep, drawing its strength from these very hills and shores that I was misinterpreting.

Without a gesture of her placid brown hands, or a shake of her head, or even a hint of feeling in her dark eyes, she said:

“No.”

I was disconcerted by her calmness, and asked another question equally stupid. “I don’t suppose you see many strangers in these parts?”

“No,” she said again.

Her tone was perfectly polite, but distant: there was no vital link between us. I waited, but she did not enlarge upon her reply. I thought of how a woman of the South country would have explained what was so obvious—that she saw no strangers because there were no roads or railways within a good many miles; but this Highland woman waited patiently at her doormat, I thought, wishing us to be gone, but just waiting. Once more I recalled the American’s remarks at the inn-fire about the Gael being at heart a gentleman, and I perceived that this woman possessed an old and serene dignity that she herself was probably unaware of. I spoke of Moidart, and called it the Prince Charlie country, wondering if this would evoke a response. “They say the Prince sailed across from Arisaig and landed at Kinlochmoidart,” I added.

“No, the Prince landed here,” she said, her placid eyes glancing towards the beach, then looking past us to the hillside.

“He’s supposed to have sailed round to Loch Moidart,” I insisted. “So some writers say.”

“The Prince landed at Glenuig,” she repeated with quiet confidence. “But it was a long time ago. We are not paying much attention to it now.”

“It was a long time ago,” I agreed. “You don’t talk about the Prince here nowadays?”

“No.”

“But the old people?”

“Yes, the old people used to talk about him when I was young. There is an old woman who lives there on the hill, she is very old and bed-ridden, her great-grandfather went with the Prince when he came here. These were the terrible days, she would be saying.” Her dark eyes turned from their slow contemplation of the rocks and heather and gave me a glance that seemed to mean: “Why trouble now? The men are dead. It is an old story.”

She was silent for nearly a minute, and then in a tone which gave no suggestion that she was offering a favour, she asked us if we would care for a cup of tea since we had such a long journey ahead of us to Kinlochmoidart.

We thanked her, and she led us into the room on the right and drew in two chairs to the fire. A little iron grate had been built into the old open fireplace where logs had once crackled on a bed of wood-ashes. The paper on the walls was of the wild floral pattern of Queen Victoria's days, and hanging round were old calendars and almanacs and some dim yellow photographs of bearded men with big shoulders. There was a bed in the corner, and the white coverlet was as fresh as though it had come that day from bleaching on the grass. Dishes were set on a table-cloth that was as spotless as the bed, and on them were thick oat cakes, and cheese, and a tall pile of girdle scones. The woman said she was expecting somebody for a meal a little later on. Perhaps it was a visiting priest from over the hills, I thought, but I did not venture to enquire, and she did not explain.

Neither of us was hungry, but the tea was very welcome. The water tasted of peat, which gave it an attractive pungency; and while we drank it, the woman told us she remembered a man at Samalaman, a little way round the coast, who sometimes talked about the Prince. "But Samalaman is not on the way to Kinlochmoidart," she said; "it is in the other direction."

The name Samalaman was unusual, and it sounded familiar. And then I remembered. I had read somewhere that about a hundred and fifty years ago a Catholic Bishop had taken up his residence there and had run a college for young priests. But I was doubly interested to go there because it seemed that we had hit upon an interesting local tradition about the route Prince Charlie had taken. Many scholars are apt to look askance on local traditions, for so often these have been embellished by some person with an eye for the picturesque. The Senate, in extolling to a chief the mighty deeds of his ancestors, was not likely to subtract from the stories handed down to him. Even the early historians themselves were not too scrupulous; and Hector Boece, founding his famous history upon early chroniclers, added many fascinating and enthusiastic lies about the origins of the Scottish people. But I think modern research tends to treat tradition a little too lightly; and if the man who lived at Samalaman had anything to say about Prince Charles Edward Stuart in Glenuig, I was eager to hear it.

My only difficulty was Gillespie. He was to meet a friend at Acharacle on Loch Shiel, and he had talked of arriving there that night. I thought this optimistic of him; and if we wasted time by going along the shore to Samalaman, it was certain that he would not reach his destination until the following day.

When I put the point to him he brushed it aside with a jest. The reply struck me as a piece of generous camouflage, like his deception of the previous evening when he had given up his bed to me at the inn. It made me anxious to press on to Kinlochmoidart, which we had to pass to reach Loch Shiel. But Gillespie stubbornly turned down the idea: "We're going to Samalaman first," he said. I think he felt that he had thrust himself upon me, and that his own plans must therefore come second. I would have suggested to him that we separated, and that he should go on by himself to Acharacle, but I was afraid this might be taken as a hint that I would rather be alone, which was not the case. Because the woman was listening to our argument with a puzzled expression, I gave in to him. Thanking our hostess rather abruptly—she would accept no money—we set out on the cart-track along the coast. I had a notion that a row was brewing, a childish and unpleasant row, simply because each of us was over-anxious to do what he thought the other would have liked.

When we came to a tiny church on a knoll, with a grove of birches and pines surrounding it on three sides, I climbed up to it. With a grunt, Gillespie refused to follow. The double doors

were secured by a hazel-twigg, and when I got inside I saw that it was a Catholic chapel. It was dim and cool, and there was a simplicity about it that I had never associated with a Catholic place of worship. Shadows lay around the altar, shadows that gave it dignity and seemed to lift it into a little dim world of its own. I sat down on one of the benches. Moidart was entirely Catholic, I remembered, and there was something deeply reverential in this simple place. As I tip-toed out, a slip of paper pinned beside the door caught my eye, and-I read this: "In your charity please pray for the repose of the soul of ... who departed this life on the ... strengthened with the rites of the Holy Church." The rites of the Holy Church-the phrase made me think of Rome, thirteen hundred miles away, and brought suddenly and profoundly home to me the spiritual link that existed between it and this tiny grey chapel on the seashore: a little corner of Rome itself, where the ancient faith of these people was kept alive. When I went out into the sunshine Gillespie sat on the edge of the knoll smoking his pipe. I think he had concluded that I was a Catholic, but he did not refer to the matter, and neither did I, and we went on our way to Samalaman in silence.

Set in a little hollow with trees was a large whitewashed house with many gables, and a burn trickled past it and fell into the sea. From the distance we had covered, I knew this was the college of Samalaman. No sweeter place for study and meditation could be imagined; the Bishop must have had an eye for atmosphere. I learned afterwards that the college had been transferred to Lismore, and the house had eventually passed into the hands of a Stewart from Lochaber. This Stewart as a boy had studied under the Bishop, and had finished his education in France, and strangers were a little startled to find a Moidart sheep-farmer carrying a copy of Virgil in his pocket. One night the house was struck by lightning and badly smashed; but one room stood quite intact, and nothing could shake Stewart's belief that God's special blessing had been upon this room because it had been the Bishop's own chamber in the college days. A boy in the steading behind the house directed us to the small white-washed cottage that we sought; and when we drew near we heard somebody playing a melodeon.

The music stopped abruptly, and a girl of about eighteen came to the door. Her father, she said, was down at his boat, and she would take us to him. I had been a little surprised at the girl's appearance, and as we walked down to the shore I was still more surprised by her talk. She was slightly built, with dark hair and large dark blue eyes. Her dress was simple but in perfect taste, and her shoes looked both elegant and serviceable. It is easy to understand the flowering of rustic beauty: but here was a girl who, if she had slipped a modish hat on her head, could have mingled with the crowds on Princes Street at that very hour of half-past eleven and attracted not the slightest notice except an occasional glance of admiration. Though she was a crofter's daughter, it was plain from her dress and her speech that she lived in one of the larger towns, and I guessed that she was at home on holiday. I could not make up my mind whether she was an assistant in a big store or was studying to become a school-teacher: perhaps, I ventured to think, she was older than I had imagined and was a student at some University. It seemed a little impertinent to put the question bluntly, but my curiosity got the better of me: "I don't suppose you live here all the year round?" The answer was accompanied by a twinkle of amusement in her eyes. Yes, she had lived here all her life: she hardly ever went away: she was educated at the little school at Glenuig: she had been in Glasgow once or twice, perhaps, and did not care for it much-she liked Glenuig better. Her placid acceptance of things, her quiet happiness in the slow turning of the wheel, was disconcerting after my attempt at trying to guess her environment. This was her environment: she had never wished for any other.

“Do you know,” said Gillespie afterwards, “I’d like to take that girl out to tea at some swell place in London. I wonder what she’d think of it all-the skinny chattering jays with their damned awful painted faces ...”

I wonder.

Her father turned out to be a tall strongly built man with hair and moustache that had been reddish and were now turning grey. He was standing in the stern of his rowing-boat, ten or a dozen yards away from the low rock where the three of us stood; and without a word, he sculled in to the shore and tied the painter to a post. When I told him I had heard of a tradition that the Prince had landed at Glenuig, he nodded.

“It is so,” he said.

“He didn’t sail to Kinlochmoidart?”

“It was to Glenuig the Prince came from Arisaig,” he said confidently, adding that with warships about it was not likely they would have ventured to sail round the point. “The stores and ammunition were landed from the Du Teillay near Glenuig, and were carried up over the pass to Loch Moidart by Clanranald men. Tearlach and his friends went the same way.”

There was no shaking the man in his story. His great-great-grandfather, who lived within a mile from where we were talking, had followed the Prince in the ‘Forty-five. Moidart was wild with enthusiasm when Charles came ashore at Glenuig, and there was much piping and dancing. One of the MacIntyres, the hereditary pipers of the Macdonalds of Kinlochmoidart, composed a reel in honour of the Prince’s arrival called “The Eight Men of Moidart,” and it is still played at Highland dances.

For our benefit, the tall Macdonald who stood beside us whistled or rather breathed the lively melody, beating time with his foot on the rock. “They danced to that at Glenuig when the Prince came here,” he repeated. His story had the ring of truth, and every Moidart man to whom I spoke about it was firm in the same belief. Although Dr. W. B. Blaikie, [In his article in the Scottish Historical Review, April 1926, Dr. Blaikie took the opportunity to correct two dates in his Itinerary of Prince Charles Edward from information he had derived from the Log of the Du Teillay, which was published after his own work had been completed; and it is possible that he afterwards revised his opinion about the Prince’s route between Borrodale and Kinlochmoidart.] who knew more Jacobite history than any man, stated in the Itinerary that the Prince made the journey from Borrodale to Kinlochmoidart by sea, I have no doubt in the face of so clear a tradition that he came by Glenuig and went on foot over the pass to Loch Moidart, where for a week he stayed at the house of Donald Macdonald.

It has been often said that the famous “Seven Men of Moidart” took part in the dance; and in histories of the Rising one reads that these were the seven companions who came with Charles from France. I myself have always believed that “The Seven Men of Moidart” were not the strangers but Moidart men the seven Macdonalds who were among the first to join the Prince. I am open to correction, but here I think are their names: Donald Macdonald of Kinlochmoidart and his brothers Ranald and Allan; Aeneas Macdonald of Dalilea and his brother Alexander; and Alexander Macdonald of Glenaladale and his brother John.

I put the point to Angus Macdonald when he came to the end of his tune.

“The Seven Men of Moidart weren’t the Prince’s Irishmen at all,” he agreed emphatically. “They were Moidart men.”

“Why are you so certain?” I asked.

“My grandfather told me,” he replied; “and I have read it in a book besides.”

“What book?” I enquired.

“A book by Sir Walter Scott,” he said, with a nod which implied that anyone who dared to contradict Sir Walter was a brave man.

For myself, I am happy to leave it at that.

We did not get back to Glenuig until it was nearly noon. The directions the woman at the post office had given us had been quite clear, and we made for the steep path leading up to the Beallach-a-Charra (the Pass of the Rough Rock.) Neither of us made any reference to the long tramp ahead of us. I did not know what Gillespie was thinking, but I was satisfied in my own mind that we could not possibly reach Loch Shiel that day. When you are walking on an old drove road, with springy turf beneath your feet, you can keep up a steady pace for miles with little exertion; but it is a different thing to pick your way along a steep and rocky track, where the descent is often more tiring than the climb; and when you are carrying a pack, each jolt seems to increase in force. More than that, it was not as if we had a long day before us; but I dismissed from my mind the problem of where we would sleep that night, and concentrated on the effort of keeping pace with Gillespie, who was going up the track ahead of me with the slow long stride of the hillwalker. Near the summit we halted for a backward glance at the sweet green corrie we had left behind. On our right the crags rose sheer, with many tumbled rocks at the bottom. Hazels and heather and bracken lined the track, and an occasional rowan clung sturdily in high crevices. Below us Glenuig lay under the hot noonday sun looking more than ever like a hamlet of the Middle Ages. The ruins of cottages showed how populous it once had been. In the little bay beyond, the sea was a clear blue-green, its surface broken a hundred yards from the shore by a long ridge of rock, on which oil-beacon lights burned night and day. Eight miles across the Sound, the brown mountains of Arisaig and Morar stood against the sky. I was reluctant to turn and follow Gillespie over the summit, for we were leaving the sea behind us, and I doubted whether in all the miles I had to tramp before I reached Edinburgh I would again look upon a view more entrancing.

We were soon to halt again, however, for among the grass and bracken beside the path was a large group of cairns. I counted between sixty and seventy of these little conical heaps of stone. Each marked the place where a corpse had been set down on its way to the burial-ground. It was here that the bearers and the rest of the cortege paused to refresh themselves. These resting-cairns are to be seen in many parts of the Highlands, reminding the passer-by of the solemnity of death, and reminding one at the same time of much deep and solemn drinking of whiskey—for in the old days no Highland funeral was counted decent if the bottle did not freely go round among the mourners. Some of the cairns had been raised for individuals, some belonging to a family; and to say, “I’ll put a stone on your cairn,” is a Gaelic way of expressing gratitude to a person who has done you a favour. I walked forward to one pile a little larger than most of the others, and on a flat slab beside it I read: “This cairn is erected in memory of James MacLean who died in Glenuig ...” The rest of the inscription had been obliterated by the weather. Probably James was a descendant of the two Glenuig

MacLeans, James and Donald his brother, who were recorded to have followed the Prince, the one armed only with a sword and the other carrying a gun. As we paused beside these grey monuments, the thought that we were walking on the funeral road was a little sobering to our spirits. When we turned our faces to the south, a new land was spread before us.

### Chapter III. The Cave by the Lochside

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By the Funeral Road to Loch Moidart "The Galley of Clanranald" - Among the Birch-woods  
- A Shelter from the Storm-A Night with Wat the Wanderer-Dawn at Loch Moidart.

**A** NEW land indeed: the wide green valley of Loch Moidart. So different was the look of this place from the rocky corries of Glenuig that we might easily have imagined that we had been wafted into another country. We had been travelling through wild and impressive scenery, but as we walked down into the glen on the south, we might have been stepping into the country of Surrey - a Surrey with its skyline exaggerated, and the green of its firs and larches more vivid. It was a friendly place we were coming to, a place that warmed the heart. A big island covered with trees lay in the loch, and we set out with renewed vigour on that long descent into the valley.

The sun was hot. It was good to reach the shade of some birch-woods where the bracken grew shoulder high. Above us on the left was a place that is called the Hillock of the Big Woods-a name which suggests that forest trees once grew there, trees which no doubt were used for building the Clanranald longboats, and it set me thinking of MacMhaigstir's poem, "The Galley of Clanranald," which has been called the finest sea poem in any language. To one who has had the Gaelic from his youth, it must bring a quickening of the heart, but even in an English translation you can feel the surge of its power. It opens with the blessing of the ship; then follows the blessing of the swords and the bows of yew-tree; next, the order to bring the galley to the place of setting out. When the rowers are seated at their oars, the son of Ranald of the Ocean calls for a boat song: "Let the boat's track gleam behind her in glory! ... Strain on your fir-shafts of grey hue ... the smooth shafts so slender!" Sailing directions are given, a look-out man is ordered to the bow, and a man to the haulyards. A teller of the waters is set apart, for the sea is growing rough, and another man to bale out the green water that is breaking over them. The tempest reaches its height; the deep is "full of spectres, and horrid is the screeching to give ear to, that would drive to madness fifty warriors." They fight through the storm gallantly, and reach at last the good harbour where they cast anchor ... This is one of the poems of the golden age of Gaelic poetry, the eighteenth century, and was written by a man who followed the Prince throughout the 'Fortyfive, and afterwards lurked as a fugitive in the glen to which we were descending.

It was three o'clock before we halted for lunch. We dropped our packs on the moss beside a noisy mountain torrent. The very sight of water seemed always to awaken in Gillespie a desire to immerse himself in it, and before he touched food he had stripped off his clothes and was wading into a tiny pool, breaking out in low joyous chuckles as he stood beside the waterfall. I required no invitation to follow him, and I can recall few things so refreshing as the spray that lashed the skin like the needles of a showerbath. It even made me forget the pain which the descent from the summit had brought back to my feet, so that I had been compelled to keep slightly behind Gillespie to prevent him from noticing how badly I limped. After a rub down, it was the peak of physical bliss to lie back in the shadow of the birch trees and eat. Gillespie had had some sandwiches made up at the inn, and by the time we had finished them we had so blunted the edge of our hunger that the oat cakes and cheese I had laid out were untouched.

The pipe of tobacco I smoked there, lolling in shirt and trousers, is memorable. The sunlight came down into the birch-woods in a multitude of long insect-laden shafts that picked out the

wild flowers and mosses and the grey crotal on the rocks, and dropped little pools of light on the gently stirring surface of the sea of bracken on the slope below. Through a gap in the trees I saw that the tide was ebbing, and gulls stalked on the mud and seaweed around the stepping-stones at Caolas, the little ford by which one may cross to the island of Shona at low water. The Scots pines on the island were in deep shadow. The air was unnaturally clear, for I could trace minutely the blue gullies on the mountains beyond. I lay back on the grass and closed my eyes. The sound of the waterfall pounding behind us was like the roll of a distant drum. Time seemed to have stood still. I was conscious only of being completely at peace with myself and with the world. The ghosts of the resolutions I am always making and breaking, the gibbering spook that follows me about in all my waking hours urging me to kick myself out of my habitual indolence: even these had buried their ugly heads. Perhaps it is good that we do not often have these experiences of perfect physical and mental happiness when one somehow or other feels attuned to the rhythms of the earth itself and shares with a deep intimacy the life of all created things. These swiftly-snatched moments of ecstasy are the more precious by their infrequent visits, for even an ecstasy dwindles into a bore when it is as familiar as a well-trousered penny-piece.

When at last we went on our way, the sun seemed to be already low in the sky; and on reaching an open space several miles further on, we saw clouds blowing up from the west. It looked as if there was going to be one of these rapid changes of weather which to people with a roof overhead form part of the charm of the Highlands of Scotland. But to us there was precious little charm in the prospect of a wet evening; and Gillespie, who was setting the pace, quickened his stride as we made along the Beallach nan Coisichean (the Walkers' Pass) by the side of Loch Moidart.

There was a stiff pull up the shoulder of a hummock of rock that rose sheer from the lochside. If the Clanranald men hauled the Prince's swivel-guns over it, they must have been hours at the job, but I think it more likely that the artillery was taken down to the water edge and transported up the loch in rowingboats. At any rate, I afterwards learned that the Prince himself got into a boat at this point and was rowed up towards Kinlochmoidart House. The rock is called the Plate Rock, because it was here that the Macdonalds hid the family plate and title-deeds when Cumberland's troops came to burn down Kinlochmoidart House after Culloden; and it was at this place that there occurred the only act of treachery known against any Moidart man in the 'Forty-five. One miserable shivering creature confessed to the Government soldiers that he knew where the plate was hidden, and he led them to the spot. For which his kinsfolk kicked him scornfully out of Moidart, and he never again dared to show his face in the district.

I was now quite certain in my own mind that we would not reach Acharacle that night: at least I knew that I myself could not, for my feet were paining me so acutely that soon I was no longer able to conceal the fact from Gillespie. If we had been walking over springy turf I would have slung the offending shoes over my shoulder, but the track was sharp with a multitude of small stones. Gillespie tried to induce me to hand over my [pack](#) for him to carry as well as his own, and it was only my wretched pride that made me hang doggedly on to it. I was beginning to wish I had never agreed to his coming with me, for there seemed to be every chance that I was landing him in a rather awkward hole. His friend at Acharacle - an Edinburgh man called Grant - was confidently expecting him that night, and there was about as much hope of getting word to Loch Shiel as there was of signalling to New York. I decided that Gillespie and I must presently separate: I would try to find shelter for the night



in a cottage, while he went on alone. But he received the suggestion with a slow smile: "We'll see what happens! You set the pace. There's no hurry."

It seemed to me, however, that there was very good reason to hurry. The clouds we had seen above the distant hills were now blowing blackly across the sky, and one or two big raindrops were beginning to fall. The air was stifling; and though we had not detected it in the exhilaration of our climb from Glenuig, the atmosphere all day must have been sultry. It was plain that a thunder storm was brewing, and the first crack came as we emerged from the birch-woods. This was followed by a sharp patter of rain around us. If we had not taken shelter beside a rock, we would have been wet to the [skin](#) in ten minutes. The thin rubber sheet I carried would have kept my shoulders and rucksack dry, but Gillespie had no covering, for he had packed his waterproof coat in one of his suitcases, which by this time was probably being taken off the Loch Shiel steamer at Acharacle, where his friend Grant would be standing on the jetty puzzled at the absence of their owner.

Soon the rain was seeking us out beside the rock, and rivulets were beginning to trickle down the face of it. It was doing us no good service to wait, for we saw we were in for a wetting anyhow, and decided to push on. I had stopped urging Gillespie to make for Acharacle by himself; for in the darkness that was settling down, I doubted whether he would be able to find his way over the hills. Though a road of a kind was recorded on the map, it twisted so often that it would have been easy to go astray. I was beginning to feel wretched, and the pain in my feet did not help me to look at our plight with what is called a philosophic calm. Indeed, the only cheerful thing in that slowly blackening landscape was Gillespie himself, who began to sing and caper like a half-wit until I was forced to laugh, although I knew he was playing the fool merely to rally my spirits. But he suddenly stopped his antics and drew to a halt.

At the foot of the crags on our left there was a deep hollow under the rock, and from it a wisp of grey smoke curled out and was being quickly dissipated in the rain. We went forward to have a closer look.

"It's a tramp," cried Gillespie. "Come on." And he raced for the shelter of the overhanging rock, while I limped after him.

Gillespie's guess was correct. It was a tramp's fire, for the startled face of a man shot up from behind a low rampart of sacking hung on sticks. He had a fair bushy beard which grew high on his cheeks, and he wore one of those small narrow-peaked cloth caps that you sometimes see in the photographs of our grandfathers. The hollow below the crag went quite three or four yards into the rock, and a fire of birchwood was spluttering in the furthest corner. The smoke clung to the sloping roof as it wavered upward, and its smell was homely. I looked down at the tramp, who was throwing aside some sacking and scrambling to his feet. He had deep-set blue eyes which were friendly enough after he had recovered from his surprise at our hasty assault on his lodgings. I saw that he wore an old short fawn-coloured overcoat, very much tattered at the button-holes and sleeves, and the knees of his trousers had been often and ingeniously patched, but his boots were good, his face and hands were clean, and his soft Highland voice, as he told us to sit down on a pile of bracken, had no suspicion of a mendicant whine. However, I thought it unlikely that he would refuse a shilling for a share of his fire for half an hour.

There is often something amusing in the ill-luck story of a tramp who has been for years on the road. His story no doubt changes with the locality he is in and the person he is begging from; and I have even overheard one of them assume a rolling Irish brogue when he perceived it was an Irishman whose withers he was trying to wring. The real old-timer hates the gipsies and the tinkers, for they are the aristocracy of the road; and I remember how a certain lovable mahogany-faced rascal who from his early youth had been familiar with the whole art and craft of "sleeping rough" once spun me a story of persecution by gipsies so vivid in detail that it was worth the florin which in my glow of admiration I handed over to him. When our tramp in the cave began to talk I saw that he had a similar gift of the gab; and though he had not yet touched upon his tragic lack of food and money, I suspected that if we sheltered beside him for very long, it was much more than a humble shilling we would be in honour bound to bestow upon him on parting. I could even see ourselves paying his railway-fare from Fort William to Perth or some other distant town where he had a starving wife and family living in a hovel, both family and hovel having sprung miraculously into existence in the twinkling of one of his innocent blue eyes. He was such a gentlemanly tramp, I decided, that he might even try to assure us he was not a real tramp at all, which would of course make the climax of his story the more heart-rending. While I happen to like tramps, the genuine old-fashioned tramps, I am not sorry for them. They are on the whole an honest lot - if not by inclination, certainly in practice - for their healthy fear of the county police is almost as great as their terror at having to do a job of work. In country districts they are seldom refused food, and indeed often get it from cottages where the pantry is emptier than the hanging pantehnicons which they call pockets. True, on many a cold night they sleep in the open, but they have so mastered the knack of it that discomfort is reduced to a minimum, and they can usually find shelter in some poorhouse or "Union" if they are prepared to pay for bed and breakfast with a few hours' work next morning. While the idea of settling down in some "cushie job" is seldom absent from their minds, few of them could bear for one month the monotony of opening their eyes each morning on the same old scene. The excuses they offer for their descent into vagabondage are often as untrue as they are ingenious; and since our tramp in the cave seemed a cut above the average, I wondered how he would explain why he had taken to the road. When I put the question to him, he looked at me steadily for a moment, then shook his head and laughed. No; he would not be telling the gentlemen that at all He poked at the fire with a stick. "Yes, a bit of green birch makes a grand blaze," he said. "It's the only wood that burns wet. You ken the best wood to burn when you're in my" - he seemed to fumble for a word - "when you're in my circumstances," he added, and you could almost hear him smacking his lips at the euphemism. Then he pulled from his pocket a couple of printed leaflets and with a little gesture of pride handed one to each of us. I leant towards the fire and with interest looked at the first page. In large bold type was printed:

SONGS  
BY  
WAT THE WANDERER

The other three pages contained effusions written to the tunes of well-known Scottish melodies. "I am Wat," announced the man, and he told us that he himself had made the songs and could sing them too.

"I didn't know you were a bard!" said Gillespie, with a laugh. "Look here, you must sing us one of these before we go. Do you make a decent living at the job?"

“It is no living at all,” he said, his chubby bearded cheek resting on his hand as he stared into the fire. “But it is good enough when you do not think about it...”

Afraid that he was preparing to become maudlin about himself, I changed the subject by asking what part of the Highlands he was brought up in.

“Ach, I am not a Hielander at all,” he declared. “I come from the Borders, but I have been in the Hielands for a long time. No, I have not the Gaelic just a wee bit I have picked up from the country folk.”

From his talk and manner, and his perky pride in his songs, I had been sure he was a Highlander; but my ear had not been fine enough to detect that he had acquired that soft lilt in his voice and many of his phrases from long contact with Gaelic-speaking people. He told us he had once ventured back into the Border country, but had done badly there: it was the Highland folk that liked his songs. At the big houses, too, the gentry were good to him, he said, and his eyes twinkled. “The gentry do not think much of my songs,” he declared, chuckling quietly to himself.

“Not the English gentry that come about in the autumn! When the English shooters are in the Hielands, they call me into the big house to sing to them. As soon as I’m gone, ach, they are all laughing at me, but I don’t heed that if I’ve had a dram and some siller. It’s the poor folk, the Hieland folk, that like my songs, they are aye glad to see Wat back at their door.”

He flung some birch-wood logs and chips on the fire from a pile in the corner, and glanced out at the pelting rain. Gillespie asked him what he did in the winter.

“Oh, it is no life for a man,” he said lugubriously. “It is fine enough in summer, but in the winter I keep to the West Country. It’s warmer here, you don’t get the snow so bad. I have a bit hut in Argyll where I bide. It’s in the winter I make my songs—it’s fine to listen to the storm when you are making a sad song in your head!” He wriggled back from the heat of the fire, squatting against the rock, elbows on knees, his face between his fists.

“I suppose we’d better wait till that confounded rain eases off,” remarked Gillespie, and at this Wat sat up.

“Then there is time to sing you a new song I am making,” he said, and looked at us for approval. Raising himself on one knee, he pulled from his pocket a little note-book with a black shiny cover. “It is a very sad song, but you will hear it, as much as I have made,” he announced, cocking his head with self-importance. And out of his round little mouth that peeped from his thick beard, he began to sing.

He had a soft tuneful voice; but the shudder of emotion he put into it almost turned the affair into a burlesque of himself and of all his singing brethren of the road. Because of his earnestness, I felt a little ashamed of my desire to laugh, and I did not dare catch Gillespie’s eye, for the singer was watching us eagerly in the firelight to note the effect of his ballad upon us. He was (as it were) trying it out on the dog, and I found the role of an appreciative dog a difficult one to sustain. Nor was the situation improved by the words of his song. He had fitted some verses to the air of “Wandering Willie,” and had taken himself for the hero. He drooled and mourned about Wandering Wattie, who had no wife, no bairns, no bield of a roof-tree, nothing but the bleak moorland on which to lay his head; and when he got a little

husky in the third verse, it was the voice of Leslie Henson I heard, Leslie at the top of his form, Leslie leaning over the footlights on the point of side-slipping into one of those falsetto squawks that bring down the house in a pandemonium of delighted applause. Indeed, to bring down the house was the only thing Gillespie and I could do to prevent us from wounding our friend to the heart. We thudded on the ground with our walking-sticks, and assured him that his new song would go down like honey in farm kitchens. As for Wat, he was charmed. He stuffed his little shiny note-book back in his pocket and rubbed his hands. "I'll send it to the People's Friend," he said confidently. "I have had a song before this printed in the People's Friend," And he added with satisfaction that he would send a copy to Steenie: it would make Steenie envious. Steenie, we learned, was a rival of his, though their beats were different. Steenie kept to the country north-west of the Great Glen, selling his songs from door to door, while Wat's country was south of it, including Lorne and Kintyre. He was explaining this to us, when the words were taken out of his mouth by a crack of thunder, and our little hollow under the rock was lit up by the lightning that glimmered above the hills of Ardnamurchan.

"That looks bad," said Gillespie with concern.

"It's a wild night we're in for," Wat agreed. "Is it far you're going, gentlemen?"

"Loch Shiel," Gillespie told him. "But I don't suppose we'll manage it to-night now. Is there a cottage hereabouts where they'd take us in? My friend's feet are giving him absolute gyp, so we can't go far."

Yes, there is a shepherd on the hill," said Wat. "He would take you in."

"How far?"

"About four miles."

"No good." Gillespie shook his head.

"It's bad feet you've got?" said Wat, touching one of my shoes with a sympathetic hand. "You should put crotal on your feet. It grows on the rocks, and you rub it into a powder. Man, it's good for the feet." I told him I was afraid it was a little late in the day to apply his remedy, and besides crotal couldn't improve ill-fitting shoes.

"Isn't there any cottage nearer than the shepherd's?" asked Gillespie.

Wat scratched his head. "Ay, but they wouldn't take you in-they have no room. The shepherd's is the only place." He cast little curious glances at us. "You're welcome to bide here for the night."

Gillespie turned to me. "What do you think?"

The rain was still coming down hard. Trickle of water that had been drip-dropping over the mouth of our shelter had now increased to steady rivulets. Steam was rising from Gillespie's jacket on the side that was next the fire, and I had pulled mine off and was drying it. The four miles to the shepherd's cottage meant an hour's walk, without taking into account either the gathering darkness or my lameness. It would have been folly to arrive there like a pair of drowned rats when we could stay where we were; and I said so.

Wat's eyes lit up. "That is good," he said, with a nod; "I can sing you some more songs." If anything would have induced me to change my mind, it was this; but to my relief, he set about making some tea, pushing aside the blazing logs, and setting a pan of water on the red embers. He told us he had some food, enough for us all, but he mentioned the matter diffidently, as though he doubted in his mind whether we would care to touch anything of his: at least, I could think of no other reason for his hesitation. "There's a wee shop along the lochside," he said, and his voice tailed off vaguely.

To go to the shop for food, I felt, would have hurt his feelings, and Gillespie seemed to think the same, for he replied that it wasn't worth a wetting. Our assurance that we would add our food to his and all share alike got us out of the difficulty, though I had a slight revulsion at the idea of eating stuff that he had handled. I took from my rucksack the cardboard box with what rations I had left over from the last two days, oat cakes, a hunk of cheese, some apples, and dates. But my eyes opened when Wat set about preparing his contribution to the meal. He moved aside the water to make room on the embers for a flat pan, into which he dropped a lump of butter. Bacon and sausages followed, clean and fresh-looking, and soon our little cavern was filled with the appetising smell of frying. From a packet he tilted a small handful of tea-leaves into the water, which was now beginning to boil, and kept turning over the food in the pan; giving each piece of bacon a little friendly pat with the fork as he did so. When he produced half a loaf of bread he apologised for its staleness, but added that it was more wholesome so. The tea was potent stuff, and there was barely enough milk in Wat's half-mutchkin bottle to go round, and Gillespie and I ate our bacon and sausages from the point of our penknives, but nothing detracted from our good appetite. Afterwards, we lay back with pipes alight - Wat did not smoke - and listened to the rain and the waves which the wind was beginning to drive up on the rocks thirty yards away. When there came a lull in the storm, I thought it was beginning to blow over, but presently the thunder and lightning started again, this time much nearer at hand. One flash, brighter than the others, made the surface of Loch Moidart look like a sheet of white flame, while a crack of thunder seemed to split the very hillside above us, and went rolling up among the mountains on either side of the glen. The storm brought home to us the folly of trying to go further that night.

By nine o'clock the rain eased off. Wat announced that he had an errand down the loch which would take about half an hour, and when he returned he was carrying under his arm a roll of sacking and some old newspapers. He assured us that a sheet of paper spread between the sacking would make a warm covering for us, and he scooped some bracken from his own bed, and made up ours on either side of the fire. Half an hour later, with my pack as a pillow, I crawled under the improvised coverlet and fell into a sound sleep.

Twice I awoke in the night: the first time, I sat up with a start wondering where I was, but settled down again when I heard the slow breathing of the other two; the second time, a [whaup](#) on the marsh a little way up the loch sent its whooping call across the water. The fire was out, except for one little red eye that still glowed in the darkness. I did not know what the hour was, but I felt completely refreshed and wakeful, and had an odd longing for a cigarette - a thing I never smoke. Slipping on my shoes, I crept out without disturbing the others. Wat was sighing uneasily in his sleep, as though the final verse of his new song was running in his head and the rhymes were refusing to come right, but Gillespie's breath was as steady as a healthy pulse. Outside, the rain had stopped, and everything was very quiet. I could distinguish the Isle of Shona, a dark mass upon the water. In the opposite direction, dawn was beginning to break, there was a pale streak over the hills around Glen Moidart, and the clouds were slightly tinged with red. My ear, keyed up to the silence, began to detect many tiny

sounds that I had not heard on waking: the soft gush of little streams in the woods behind me, the faint rustle of leaves, a curious ticking noise which stopped and went on again like a hesitating clock, and the soft wash of the receding tide on the mud flats below me. I could make out the winding channel of the river Moidart where the whaup that had wakened me was probably feeding. As I crawled back to the warmth of my bed, after my glimpse of the ending of the night and the beginning of day, I was grateful to the whaup for his timely summons.

It was bright daylight when I woke again. Wat was twisting pieces of newspaper into little balls, and piling dry twigs on them, to light the fire. The air was chilly - more chilly than when I had emerged before dawn -and I was glad to get into the open and beat my hands to restore some warmth to my blood. Soon Wat had what he called "a fine lowe" - one of the few Lowland words I had heard on his tongue - and was boiling some water he had taken from a burn in the birchwoods. He warned us that the tea would taste earthy with the spate, and there was no milk to subdue the flavour, but the hot drink was welcome-and so indeed was the remainder of his bacon which he fried for our breakfast. Our united larder was cleaned bare to the last crumb by the time we had finished; and I unfolded my map, and traced out the road over the hills to Loch Shiel. Gillespie asked me about our plans.

It was a little difficult to decide. The pain had quite gone from my feet. But I knew very well that before I had covered many miles, my shoes would be giving me the old familiar twinges. I was bound to be a drag upon my companion, and it seemed to me that it would be well if he went on alone at his own pace to join his friend at the inn at [Acharacle](#).

There was another thing. [Acharacle](#) was not my destination. From [Kinlochmoidart](#), Prince Charles Edward Stuart had crossed the hill on the [Acharacle](#) road, but had struck down to Dalilea on the lochside. Thus, for me to go to [Acharacle](#) at all would take me several miles west of my fixed route; in addition, it would make my day's march a good deal longer, and to no purpose.

"I was hoping you'd come on to [Acharacle](#)," said Gillespie, when I put this to him. "There's supposed to be a comfortable pub there, and you'd like Grant -he's a good chap. You'd have a lot in common - he's in the book-trade. You could come out fishing, and quack about books with him all day. Hang it, it would give your feet a rest, and maybe you could get these damned shoes attended to-stretched or something ... What about it?"

He paused in the act of stuffing back into his haversack the cardigan he had worn under his jacket during the night.

"No good," I told him. "You'd better push on alone. They'll be sending out a search-party if you don't turn up soon. Besides, as I've said, [Acharacle](#)'s a good many miles off my route. It's Dalilea I'm making for, on this side of Loch Shiel." I opened the map and pointed to it. "[Acharacle](#)'s right round on the south side of the loch, miles away."

"I'm sorry," said Gillespie. "I dare say you're right. I was hoping you'd come along with me, but I suppose you may as well stick to your route. Damn Prince Charlie and all his Highlanders!" He strapped up his haversack and got to his feet. "Look here, it was fine of you letting me come. You'll ring me up in London one day? You've got my address. I'll be going back on Monday or Tuesday, though I don't suppose you'll be south for another month or so. Well, good luck."

Wat and he went off together, Wat carrying my shoes which he was taking to a man who might be able to soften them with grease; and rain was falling when he returned with them half an hour later. Over these shoes a London shoemaker had made purring noises which were no doubt meant to express a craftsman's pride, but the lovely brown leather was now black with hot lard. The shoes certainly felt easier when I hauled them on, but I knew that the test would come after I had walked a few miles. I said I would wait with Wat until the shower blew over; and it was in fact nearly noon before the steady downfall of rain ceased and I said good-bye to him. I had had good reason to revise my first impression of the man who grandiloquently called himself Wat the Wanderer; and when we shook hands, far from having to listen to a hard-up story, I had some difficulty in persuading him to accept a few shillings for my board and lodging. I am writing these lines in winter, with snow on the ground, and I hope that Wat is now as snug in his "bit hut" in Argyll as we were on that September night beside him in his hollow below the rock on the shore of Loch Moidart.

## Chapter IV. The Road to Dalilea

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I Leave Kinlochmoidart - How News of the Prince reached Edinburgh - To Dalilea and over the Marsh - The Cottage by the Shore - A Lodging for the Night John Campbell of [Acharacle](#).

**F**ROM among trees, Kinlochmoidart House looks out over the tidal waters of the loch. It was built near the ruins of the old house where the Prince stayed for a week and sent out calls to chiefs and the heads of loyal families to rally to his Standard. [The house was burned down by Cumberland's troops after Culloden, and, according to tradition, the chieftain's aged mother, a Cameron of Lochiel, was carried from her bed into the garden, where she watched the place go up in flames. It has also been said that she died before the embers of the house were cold; but she lived for some years after the Rising and received an annuity of six hundred merks out of the forfeited estate of Kinlochmoidart.] While he was there he got word of the first act of hostility against King George's soldiers. With a guide who knew the countryside, a corporal and a private had been sent out from the garrison at Fort William to glean what information they could at Glenelg; and they had been taken prisoner by the Highlanders, and brought to the Prince's temporary headquarters in Macdonald's house.

That week there also arrived at Kinlochmoidart a man who had seen Charles only once since 1738, but had played a big part in his affairs, and was to play a still bigger one John Murray of Broughton. For five years he had been the correspondent for the Jacobites in Scotland, and of his loyalty to the Prince there can be no doubt. But he had a yellow streak in him. Ten weeks after Culloden, he was captured by dragoons at his sister's house, near his own estate of Broughton, and he saved his own [skin](#) by acting as informer against the Prince's friends. That he could have told a great deal more than he did is certain; that Lord Lovat would have been executed without his evidence is probable; and there are people to-day who would like to add a thin coat of white-wash to his memory. But from the day when his conduct became known he was called "Mr. Evidence Murray," and the name stuck to him until the end of his miserable life. He is said to have died insane.

Sir Walter Scott was never happier than when he was hobbling into his armoury or library at Abbotsford to return to his guests in the drawing-room with some romantic knick-knack with a story attached to it. A favourite yarn of his was about the "Broughton Saucer," and it is worth telling again. To the house of his father in George Square in Edinburgh a sedan chair came each evening, and from it stepped a stranger with his face muffled up. Until a late hour he would be closeted with Mr. Scott, a Writer to the Signet; and to his wife's enquiries about the identity of the mysterious visitor, the Writer made guarded replies. This aroused her curiosity, and one evening she decided to take in a dish of tea for them. The richly dressed stranger accepted it with a bow, but Mr. Scott himself coldly refused to join him. When the visitor had left, Sir Walter's father flung up the window and hurled the cup to the pavement outside, silencing his wife's exclamations with: "I may admit into my house, on business, persons unworthy to be my wife's guests - but neither lip of me nor mine comes after Mr. Murray of Broughton's!"

At Kinlochmoidart and afterwards, John Murray was certainly a keen servant of the Prince, though his suspicious nature was the cause of much bickering among the chiefs, and afterwards the relations between him and Lord George Murray were in part responsible for some of the errors in the campaign. Most historians have said that Murray of Broughton



joined the Prince at Kinlochmoidart on the 18th of August, a Sunday. I believe this to be inaccurate, and I put the date of his arrival in the early part of the preceding week. He gave Charles a list of important Jacobites, and letters to them were hastily written. Early on the Thursday morning, Murray set out as the Prince's messenger. His energy was tremendous. He had been in the saddle for days, yet he was ready to ride across Scotland, to make a circuit which included Perthshire, Angus, Banff, and Nairn, and to return at once to the Prince with replies. On the second day of his eastward journey, when he reached the mouth of Glen Laragain at the river Lochy, he fell in with John Gordon of Glenbucket, who had left his home in Aberdeenshire and was on his way to join the Prince. Glenbucket had with him a prisoner, Captain Swettenham, captured two days before by Lochgarry. Swettenham had been in command at the Ruthven barracks; and since he was an engineer who had special skill in the building of fortifications, he had been ordered by Cope to hurry to Fort William to attend to the defences which were in bad state of repair.

John Gordon of Glenbucket was a remarkable man, seventy-four years old, and had a heart as loyal to the Stewarts as any that beat in Scotland. He had fought in the first line at Sheriffmuir, and, perceiving the mess that the inefficient Mar was making in that engagement, he is reported to have cried in despair, "Oh, for one hour of Dundee!" Eight years before the 'Fortyfive he had sold his estate for £700, to have ready money, it is said, for the Jacobite Rising which he had discussed with the old Chevalier at Rome; and the moment he received word that the Prince had landed, he rode to Moidart as fast as his "little grey beast" could carry him.

The amazing thing about these early days of the Rising is the secrecy with which Charles carried through his plans. He had been in Scotland for over a fortnight before his arrival was known in the military garrison at Fort William, which was no more than twenty-five miles over the hills from Borrodale; and indeed, Cope heard about it in Edinburgh almost as soon as they had an inkling of it at Fort William. The first man to give the show away was a minister in Ardnamurchan, a successor to the Rev. Alexander Macdonald, father of the poet. His name was the Rev. Lauchlan Campbell. On Sunday, 4th August, he was preaching at Kilmory in the north of his parish, and his text was from the first Epistle of Timothy, Chapter II: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." In a letter he wrote afterwards to a friend, he declared that his congregation on that Sunday morning "could hardly hear him with decency." The people scowled and muttered among themselves, and after he dismissed them, a man came to him and said: "Sir, you know I have a regard for you and your family, wherefore do not preach in yon style again, else beware of the consequence!"

When he got home to his manse he found awaiting him a woman, Anna Cameron, who was a Whig in spite of the name she bore. He was a shrewd man, this minister, and on his journey home from the service he had been turning things over in his mind. "I can take my oath upon it," he said to the woman, "that the Pretender is in my parish."

"God be thanked that you can," she replied, "for I was under oath to tell nothing." And then Anna Cameron proceeded to relate everything she knew. The ship which had come to anchor in Loch nan Uamh was not a smuggling vessel, as the crew had given out: it had brought the Pretender to Scotland, and word had gone to the Highland chiefs to join him.

The minister was faced with a pretty problem. His first thought was to write at once to the Sheriff of Argyll, but he had not enough money in the house to pay for an express letter. In the end he hurried with the news to Mr. Campbell of Auchindown, who passed the word that same night to Campbell of Airds, who on the Monday morning sent a letter addressed to the Duke of Argyll at Inveraray. The messenger arrived at six o'clock on the Tuesday evening, having covered eighteen miles by sea, and twenty-eight by land within thirty-six hours. His news was transmitted to Lord Milton, the Lord Justice Clerk who was then at Roseneath, another residence of the Duke of Argyll, and Milton despatched a letter to Sir John Cope in Edinburgh. By the time Cope was pondering over this letter in Edinburgh on the Thursday evening, the Rising was already in progress; Lochiel and young Clanranald, as well as the Macdonalds of Keppoch, Glengarry, and Glencoe, had promised to follow their Prince; and the Du Teillay was sailing back to France.

With a last look back in the direction of Wat's cave, I turned round the head of the loch and crossed a hump-backed bridge. Here began a stiff pull into the hills. On either hand, pine trees swept upward almost to the skyline, leaving bare patches like a priest's tonsure on the heights. In half an hour I was out of sight of the green valley of Loch Moidart, and high on my right three cairns stood on the rolling skyline. But they were not like the cairns on the old funeral road from Glenuig; they had been carefully built of chiselled stone, and had evidently been erected as memorials to local men. Groves of birch trees lined the road, and when I got over the summit and emerged into the open, I saw that I had come to a countryside that was very different from the green sheltered glen where the river Moidart flows into the sea-loch.

Tier upon tier of the majestic hills of Sunart and Morven lay ahead, and I thought I could pick out the high top of Ben More on the Island of Mull. The sight refreshed me; after eating some of the food I had bought at the little shop near Kinlochmoidart, I went down the hill towards the steely blue water of Loch Shiel, which wanders like a great river among the mountains. How cold that water looked, down there in the valley: the coldest-looking water I thought I had ever seen: and had it not been for the gloomy peak of Ben Resipol, which pinned the scene down in the mind as Highland, an iceberg glittering on its pale surface would not have seemed out of place. I consulted my map. The steep track, which went off to the left among the stunted birches and whins, was the way to Dalilea, where the Prince with a guard of fifty Clanranald men took to boats and rowed up the loch to pass the night of 18th August at the house of Macdonald of Glenaladale. I was not sorry when I reached the end of that long straggling descent, and was making my way slowly along the lochside. Wat had told me there was an inn there, but he was not certain; and I was about to stop and enquire at a cottage when I caught sight of the chimneys of a grey house half a mile further on. It was a moderate-sized place, I found, with many gables and some absurd little turrets of the mock baronial style of the last century, and I pushed open the gate and went crunching down the gravel drive and rang the bell.

Indoors, the folk seemed to be in a great bustle. There was the sound of hurrying feet, and through the window on my right I could see that a long table was being set for a meal. Presently, a woman came to the door. Yes, she said, she took in visitors. I gathered from her, however, that the place was not an inn but a private boarding-house, and it was an immense relief to think that I did not need to go any further that day. Before leaving Edinburgh, I had consulted that familiar and invaluable mauve-coloured handbook of Scottish travel called Murray's Time Table, and had jotted down in my note-book the fact that a steamer sailed up and down Loch Shiel once a day, calling at Dalilea at 9.45 a.m. on its way to Glenfinnan. As I had come up the avenue to the house, I had seen a wooden pier a few hundred yards away

on the lochside, so everything fitted in perfectly, and I decided to sail to Glenfinnan in the morning. But my plans, thus rapidly formed in my mind, went crashing down to earth when the woman spoke again. A party of visitors had unexpectedly descended upon her at half-past two that afternoon—they had come off the boat on its return from Glenfinnan - and she hadn't a spare corner in the house. She was obviously sorry at having to turn me away, but her regret was nothing compared with my disgust. She begged me to stay and have a meal, but I had to refuse, for it was now half-past six, and I had the task of finding shelter for the night before darkness fell, and another hour of daylight was all I could count on. I would find some cottages a mile or two along the loch, the woman told me: I might get a bed for the night in one of them. But it seemed to me that her tone was doubtful, and I was beginning to wish I had thrown in my lot with Gillespie, who by this time would be snugly settled with his friend at Acharacle.

I was bitterly loathing the prospect of tackling that long rough climb; but when I came to the foot of the hill I found that a track wound along near the side of the loch, and the sight of it put me in a little better fettle. It was easier going too, for there was a path among the short grass which was better for a lame man to walk on than a stony cart-track. But at the cottages I had the worst of luck. There was sickness in one of them, and at the other the woman told me she had relatives staying with her for a week, otherwise she would have found room for me. She recommended me to make for [Acharacle](#). She was not certain how many miles it was—how seldom are country folk definite about distances! - but suggested that I might reach it in about a couple of hours if I kept up a steady pace. There were one or two other cottages near the loch, but she doubted whether I would find accommodation in any of them. After a few moments' thought, I decided that to head for, [Acharacle](#) would now be my best plan. It would be pleasant-to meet Gillespie again, although he would chuckle loudly when I turned up there after my dogged refusals to accompany him. The woman came out from her door and gave me directions.

A winding road is a pleasant thing to loiter on; but to a traveller eager to reach his destination, each bend makes him wish that it had been made in the Roman fashion, as straight as possible across country. Presently, it seemed to take a curve away from the lochside. I saw this was going to add miles to my journey; and when a man came along on a bicycle, I stopped him and asked if there was no short cut to [Acharacle](#).

He pointed across a wide moor to the foot of the loch. Across the narrow streak of water, a few tiny white houses glimmered in the evening light. Since I was on foot, he said, I needn't bother about the road, which went round by the edge of the moor, and there was a footpath that would take me straight to the Shiel Bridge and [Acharacle](#). The idea of a path, with soft grass under foot, was attractive. He retraced his steps for a quarter of a mile and pointed it out to me, and we separated after we had given expression to our mutual goodwill over the tot of brandy which he accepted from my flask.

Before I had gone very far, however, I began to wish I had offered to employ him as a guide. From the spot where we had parted, the surface of the moor had looked pleasantly flat; but I soon found that it was hacked with dozens of little channels, as though somebody had laid about him with a claymore. At each gully I had to scramble down into a trough, jump across water that had gathered from the recent rain, and climb up the other side. The path wound by many deep black hollows, and in the fading light I had difficulty in tracing it among the tufts of heather. The strong earthy smell of peat rose from the ground; and from the marshes near the loch, whaups were beginning to utter their lonely cries. After half a mile or so, I stopped

and went back a little, realising that I had gone off the footpath, but for the life of me I could not pick it up again, and I saw that I had wandered close to the lochside. To search for the path in the gathering darkness was a hopeless business. In the end, I decided to plough straight forward in the hope that I would emerge in the vicinity of Shiel Bridge.

The ground was becoming spongy now; a little more rain and it would have been under water. Every few minutes I found myself almost up to the knees, and had to jump from one tuft of rushes to another in order to avoid the treacherous moss into which my feet sank with a gentle gurgle. The bank of a creek gave me surer footing, and when this veered off at an angle I was compelled to take to the open again. Dusk was drawing down quickly; how much further I had to go I had no idea. There were stretches of twenty or thirty yards when I could take no more than one step at a time, for I had to test each place with my stick before I ventured to put my foot down. Once I misjudged the solidity of a little stool of moss, and with a gasp of panic I went up to the thighs in that ravenously sucking sludge, so that I had to twist quickly round and fling myself over the tussock from which I had unwarily stepped. It began to look as if I would soon be unable to make any progress at all. But I refused to contemplate the prospect of spending a night in that bleak place, with the wheepling of whaups in my ear and only a thin rubber sheet to cover me. The picture of Wat rose before me - Wat on his warm bed of bracken beside a birch-wood fire, with his supper cooking aromatically in a pan-and I would have given a good deal to be beside him in that hour. It was with great heartiness that I began to curse the man I had met on the road-the man who had told me it was child's play to follow the path, the man who had smacked his lips over my brandy, and had wished me good luck. Did that Highland half-wit really expect that a stranger could grope his way in safety across this water-logged desert? I presently found myself on the side of a ditch. Like the creek I had struck some distance back, it had a fairly firm edge, and for the next ten or fifteen minutes I made better progress. A black hollow opened before me in the gathering darkness, and I knew by the sound of running water that I had come to a stream: this I found to be quite shallow, and I forded it easily. When I had scrambled up on the opposite bank, I saw that I was on slightly higher ground; and I can hardly put into words how deep was my relief as I went stamping around for the sheer pleasure of hearing my heels thud on the substantial earth. If I had to spend the night in the open, here I decided would be my sleeping-quarters, and it would be easy to scoop out a dry bed under the high bank of the burn. And then, looking ahead of me in the darkness, I caught the glimmer of a tiny light.

My first thought was that a man was crossing the moor with a lantern, but presently I saw that the light was stationary, which probably meant that it came from a cottage window. How far away it might be, I was unable to judge, but I decided to reach it at any cost, and with a heart that was warm with hope I set out once more. I found myself now among huge peat-hags; but I preferred the risk of a fall to the chances of going up to the waist in the bog through which I had been threading my way east of the stream. When I came round the shoulder of a knoll, a cottage with a light in the window suddenly loomed up in front of me. I felt like raising a cheer of exultation as I went forward and knocked.

It was not until the door was opened, and my eyes were dazzled by the lamp-light inside, that I realised how dark it was and how great had been my fortune in having reached the edge of the moor before the night had trapped me. A tall square-shouldered man was looking me up and down. I suppose I must have seemed to him a rather fearsome object to come knocking at the door of his lonely cottage at such an hour, for he stared at me under his thick eyebrows in a puzzled way, and said nothing until I asked him if he could direct me to [Acharacle](#).

“[Acharacle](#)?” He gave what seemed to me a gasp of surprise, and, emerging from the doorway, pointed across the foot of the loch to one or two scattered lights on the opposite shore. “It is over there. But you will have to go round by the road, and over the bridge. You have gone far off your way, coming down here.”

I explained that I had crossed the moor.

“Ah-h,” he said, exhaling his breath with a long whistling sound. “That was not the place to be in at night. It was not the place at all! You will have walked far, then. Man, you’re fair done.”

I replied that I was too glad to have got out of the peat-bog to worry much about feeling tired.

“Yes, indeed,” he agreed. “It would be bad for you among the peats at night. You should have kept on the road. It is not a good road, but it is better than the moss. Come in and warm yourself.” He stood aside to let me pass. “You will take a cup of tea, and I will put you over to [Acharacle](#) in my boat.” I went into the little kitchen, which was filled with the sharp smell of burning peats, and a kettle hung on a sooted iron cleek over the fire.

A strong cup of tea laced with brandy from my flask pulled me together, and I ate a piece of girdle scone spread with fresh butter, while a woman made crooning noises of consolation as I described the latter part of my journey across the moor. She echoed the man’s words: “Ah, the moss is no place at all at night.”

My host refused a dram from my flask, saying that I had hardly a drop left, and there was none to be had at [Acharacle](#). “The folk here have to go a long way for a drop,” he said. “You could not buy a drop here, even at Christmas. Man, it is a great shame.”

Both of them abruptly refused to accept money for their hospitality. I saw that they would have been hurt if I had tried to press it on them; and twenty minutes later I was stepping out of the boat on the other side of the loch, and listening to the sound of rowlocks and the dip of oars as the man pulled home in the darkness.

I sent over the water a final shout of thanks, a reply came back, and the quiet thud of rowlocks was the only sound that broke the silence. Near at hand, I could see the black mass of the little loch steamer where it lay warped to a wooden jetty. My host at the cottage had given me directions how to find the inn, and I could already picture the surprise on Gillespie’s face when I walked in and put my hand on his shoulder.

Making towards the jetty, I found the road that took me up the hill, and the lights of the inn on my left had an inviting look that suggested all the pleasant and comfortable things of life: a hot bath, and dry clothes (for in my scrambling journey across the moor I had managed to keep my pack dry), and warm food, and a chair before the fire, and tobacco, and talk - easy desultory talk until one’s drowsy eyes were closing, and then a bed with clean cool sheets.

As I passed in front of the inn I could see into a room where some people sat at food. The place was very different from what I had expected; it looked as if it had once been a private house, and everything seemed very tidy and modern, at the first glance reminding one of a spick and span suburban villa. I rang the front door bell, and after a slight delay a maid came

to the door. She too was very tidy and modern, with a spotlessly white cap and apron, and I enquired for Mr. Gillespie.

Asking me to wait for a moment, she hurried into the hall. From her doubtful tone I concluded that she had taken me for a tramp, and I did not wonder at it. My flannel trousers were dark with wet mud, and I must have looked mightily bedraggled in comparison with these spruce folk I had seen at their food as I had passed the dining-room window. My ambrosial evening with Gillespie and his friend, the three of us alone in an old-fashioned room with a low ceiling and open fireplace, and logs spluttering on the hearth -all this faded away; and I could already see ourselves sitting stiffly in the corner of a trim little drawing-room on three plush chairs, with these groups of holidaymakers around us-no doubt anglers, most of them, who had come for the loch-fishing, and their womenfolk who would look at us with that slightly incredulous stare which anglers' wives and daughters unconsciously acquire. In any other circumstances I would have felt disappointed, but I was too thankful to find myself at the hotel to trouble about the urban atmosphere of the place and the presence of others, who after all had as much right to be there as I had.

The maid returned to the door. "There is no one of the name Gillespie staying here," she informed me, and I racked my brains for the name of the friend he was to join at [Acharacle](#). At last it came back to me.

"There's a Mr. Grant?" I said.

No; there was no Grant either. She was quite sure of it; I must have made a mistake.

"But wasn't there a Mr. Grant staying here last night "I persisted.

There was no Mr. Grant at the hotel last night, the maid assured me, and she spoke with conviction.

This was a blow. What could be the explanation? Gillespie was certainly come here expecting to meet his friend, but where he had gone I had not the least idea, nor did there seem to be any way of finding out. However, if I wasn't to have their company for the evening, at least I had found shelter for the night. And then the biggest bombshell of all dropped at my feet.

"I'm sorry the hotel is full."

I stared at the maidservant incredulously. Was it possible that fate could have played me the same trick twice in the one evening? Had all Scotland flocked to the shores of Loch Shiel during the last twelve hours?

Two motor-cars full of people had arrived that evening from Fort William, she explained. Motorcars! For two days I had been so far away from ordinary roads that I had forgotten that [Acharacle](#) was in touch with the outer world, and the outer world had apparently descended upon [Acharacle](#) ...

The maid went in to make certain, and returned shaking her head. No; there wasn't a spare bed in the place.

I turned away. The lamp-light from the diningroom window streamed out upon a tall monkey-puzzle tree, and its upturned branches had an oddly human look, as if they were the arms of a person who knelt in a dumbly beseeching attitude: they expressed my own feelings exactly: I felt a warm kinship with that tree. The darkness was now intense. Three or four cottages were scattered on the higher ground, but I did not know how far away they were, for lights at night can be deceptive. I was in an awkward predicament, and I knew it. And yet I had foreseen from the start of my journey that this might happen. On that morning of hot sunshine, lying stretched out on the beach at Borrodale, the idea of having to strain my wits to find a bed at the end of a day's march had seemed a romantic thing-part of the glory of the road, genuine vagabond stuff! Well, here it was, the real thing, and in it I could find mighty little romance.

Besides, I was angry. I was convinced I had been turned away from the hotel, not because it was full, but because I was too filthy and wretched-looking to be allowed into that trim little place among these clean pink-faced people. I learned afterwards that I was quite wrong in my suspicion, and that the little hotel was actually full, and was kept by a kindly and hospitable couple; but as I paused in the darkness, trying to make up my mind what to do, I cursed the keepers of all inns as a voracious lot of ruffians who took in only those they thought they could fleece: so warped can one's mind become in moments of despondency. And then I remembered about the little cottage on the edge of the moor across the loch. I felt confident that the folk there would take me in. If they had no bed for me, they would at least let me sit beside the fire for the night, and I wished to heaven the idea had occurred to me before I left them-it would have saved me a two-mile tramp back round the foot of the loch. Two miles! Yet from the wooden jetty where the steamer lay, a good golfer driving long and straight could almost have dropped a ball across that narrow neck of water on their cabbage-patch.

The thought of the jetty raised a sinister notion in my mind. At the jetty there might be a small boat I could borrow - I would return it in the morning! I told myself that I would make a point of suitably rewarding the owner - and when I explained the circumstances, he would surely approve. Indeed, so that there could be no chance of him being put to inconvenience, the man at the cottage could tow the boat back at once to its moorings. I turned and made down to the wooden pier with my anger at the hotel folk already beginning to melt.

The water lapped gently around the steamer, which creaked faintly now and then against the timbers of the pier. Several small boats lay together, and I had to retrace my steps for a dozen yards before I could clamber down the bank to reach them. I had met with so many disappointments since I had limped down the long hill to Loch Shiel that my next discovery made me laugh aloud. There were neither oars nor rowlocks in the boats! I appreciated deeply the mood in which desperate men commit crimes, that mood in which the desired object dazzles the mind with a sweet radiance. I would cheerfully have broken into a barn, or even a house, just then", so desperate was I to find shelter. What in fact I did do was to go up again on the pier, and climb over the rail of the steamer, hoping I might be able to borrow rowlocks and a pair of oars from the small boat on deck.

But here again I drew blank. I saw that my only hope was now to fall back on the people at the cottage round the foot of the loch-unless I could find some cubby-hole on board the steamer which would give me shelter for the night. It was a faint whiff of hot oil that put the idea into my head, and for a second time I groped my way around the deck. The thick glass on a skylight abaft the funnel felt warm to the touch, and there was moisture on it, which made me conclude that the engine-room was underneath; and forward and aft there was a

companion-way with locked doors. On that barren deck there certainly was not a corner where a cat could have curled up in reasonable comfort. And then I made a discovery. The low doors of the after companion-way were locked, but the sliding hatch was loose. I gave it a push, and it moved smoothly back, exposing a hole. I carried a tiny pocket flash-light, but the thing had gone wrong the night before, so I scratched a match and took a survey. Were the Fates, after giving me of their worst, being kind to me in the end? Was there a corner down below where a man could stretch out his tired legs? I decided to investigate. I lowered myself through the hatchway until my feet touched the steps, and with the light of another match I descended.

On the left there was a tiny pantry with a sink and a cupboard built against the bulkhead. By the sink stood a primus stove and a kettle. Next the pantry was a little mess-room, so narrow that I could have spanned its breadth with my outstretched arms. Round the long table, which was covered with brown wax-cloth, there were cushioned lockers for seats. I scratched more matches. Opposite to the mess-room was a little cabin, and on the table I saw an old-fashioned portable typewriter, no doubt used by the purser for his correspondence. In the opposite corner there was a bunk with some brown blankets in a neat pile. This was almost, but not quite, too good to be true.

Was I going to foot-slog round the end of Loch Shiel when I was thus provided for so handsomely? I knew I was trespassing (or whatever the legal term was) just as surely as if I had broken into a house, and I was laying myself open to the ignominy of being convicted in some local court-convicted for theft as well as trespass, for the first thing I did was to light a lamp on the mahogany bulkhead, thus stealing somebody's paraffin oil. However, I took the precaution of drawing the curtains over the porthole.

The criminal aspect of the affair did not worry me for many moments. I went up the companion-way and pushed shut the hatch. Then I dropped my rucksack on the bunk, pulled out my towel, spare underclothes, socks, and flannel trousers. Stripping to the skin, I had a good rub down and changed into dry clothing, wringing out my wet socks and trousers and spreading them out to dry. I felt too tired to eat anything, but I finished the brandy in my flask. Five minutes later the lamp was out, and I had curled up on the bunk under the brown blankets. After a day of the vilest luck, with disappointment piling up upon disappointment, I could hardly believe the good fortune that had come to me at the end.

I awakened with a slight headache next morning, due to the stuffiness of the cabin, and perhaps also to my fatigue of the previous day. When I glanced at my watch, however, I forgot about my headache in the sudden panic I felt when I saw it was nearly seven o'clock. I brushed aside the curtains from the porthole. It looked out under the timbers of the jetty, and the morning sun was dappling the water. I had sworn to myself I would awaken early: five o'clock was the hour I had fixed in my mind, and my last thought before falling asleep had been this urgent injunction to myself. For it would have been a fine kettle of fish if the crew had come on board to find a stranger snoring in the cabin!

I had intended to make a mild raid on the pantry before leaving. There was some water in an enamel flagon, and I had spotted a tin of cocoa in the cupboard. A cup of hot cocoa, together with the remains of the food I had bought at Loch Moidart, was to have been my breakfast, and I could take steps later on to adjust my indebtedness with the owner of the cocoa. But to remain on board for another moment was out of the question. I hastily rolled up my wet trousers and socks, wrapped them in the towel, and stuffed them into my rucksack. I did not



even pause to fasten the buckles, but swung the thing on my back, and, after folding up the blankets on the bunk as neatly as I could, I hurried up the companion-way and pushed open the hatch.

I had been dead scared that the deck of the steamer could be seen from the windows of the inn. But when I stuck my head out into the open air, I thanked heaven that a big black hut on the pier shut out the view from anyone who might be stirring. I hauled myself up, scrambled over the low doors, then slid the hatch back into position. As I did so, I noticed that there were a couple of little catches on each side, and it was the man who had forgotten to fasten them that I had to thank for my night's lodging. Crossing the deck, I hastily stepped from it to the pier.

Once ashore I felt reasonably safe. Nobody had seen me go on board in the darkness; of that I was certain; and so far as I knew, nobody had seen me leave the steamer. I sauntered out from the shelter of the hut, and walked up the lane past the inn as though I were enjoying an early morning stroll.

The little maidservant who had turned me away the night before was washing the doorstep. She caught sight of me, then rose from her knees, and hurried through the gate. She seemed to have something on her mind; and as I wished her good morning, I wondered what she wanted to say to me.

She enquired whether I had found a bed for the night. With a clear conscience I was able to assure her I had been most comfortable, and at this she looked relieved. She explained that, a few minutes after I had gone, she had come out after me to tell me I might have been able to find accommodation in another little hotel up the road, but she had failed to find me in the darkness. She said she was sorry I had been turned away like that—she had forgotten to mention the other hotel.

I thanked her for her solicitude; and, greatly comforted, she returned to the washing of her doorstep.

So there was another hotel in the place! I thought at once of Gillespie. Little doubt he would be there! At the end of the lane I turned left, as the maid had directed, and walked up the hill in the morning sunlight. Presently I caught sight of an old white-washed house standing in a pleasant position among trees below the road, with a fine view of the loch. It looked like a farmhouse, but a notice board on the gate told me it was the place I sought. Smoke was rising from one of the chimneys, which meant that somebody was up and about, and I went through the little iron swing-gate and hastened along the curving drive. As I neared the porch, a man stepped out, and began to light a cigarette, but hearing my footsteps he turned round.

“Hullo,” he said, startled. “Good-morning!”

He spoke in a quick staccato way, and his movements were rapid and energetic. He looked about forty-five years of age, and his build was slight, his face lean and brown. A pair of pleasant grey eyes twinkled behind his spectacles, and he wore a kilt of some dark tartan and a grey tweed jacket.

“I say,” he exclaimed, staring at my rucksack, “you haven't come from the direction of Dalilea, by any chance?”

I told him I had walked from Dalilea the previous evening.

“Then you’re the man Gillespie was talking about? He’ll be glad you’ve come - he was worried about you. He said you were crocked, your feet, or something. Where did you stay the night?”

“You aren’t Grant by any chance?” I enquired.

He nodded, and put out his hand. “Now what the dickens has Gillespie been telling you about me? Nothing good, I’ll warrant.”

“He said that if we met, you’d do nothing but talk about books.”

“I won’t,” said the man vigorously. “I read books, and I try to stop numskulls of authors from writing books, and I sell books. Yes; I sell books. Blast all books! I’m on holiday. But you haven’t told me where you stayed the night.”

When I explained where I had found sleeping-quarters, his sonorous guffaw must have startled into sudden wakefulness any sleepy-heads who were still between the sheets in their bedrooms above us.

“On the steamer! Well, that was a bit of luck,” he exclaimed. “You might have tramped for miles and not found a bed hereabouts. The other hotel’s packed stiff for a couple of days, a fishing-party or something. You haven’t had breakfast, by the way? Oh, we’ll soon fix that, though I don’t suppose it’ll be ready for another half-hour. Hold on a minute, and I’ll dig out Gillespie. He’s a lazy dog in the mornings. I’ve been up since six o’clock reading the manuscript of a confounded ass who thinks he can write about the Highlands.”

“I thought you said you were on holiday,” I ventured to remark.

He blinked at me through his spectacles. “Did I say so? Then I was wrong. I’m never on holiday. I sometimes think I am - for about ten minutes. Hold on and I’ll get Gillespie.” He spun round on his heel and, with his kilt swinging, hurried indoors.

I put down my rucksack near the porch and walked over to the garden seat on the brow of the slope; and standing among the sharp-scented larches, I looked down on Loch Shiel glittering coldly in the sunshine. The air was still. From somewhere at the back of the house there came the clink of dishes, and the soft voice of a girl was humming a song. I was glad now that I had come to [Acharacle](#). I felt that I could stay there happily for a few days till my lame feet recovered, and there might be a cobbler in one of those cottages scattered along the lochside who would be able to tinker up the offending shoes so that I could wear them without feeling that I was doing penance for my sins at every step. Compared with the wooded slopes of the Moidart glen, Loch Shiel was a bleak place, but there was something friendly about this old whitewashed house with many gables, and there was both Gillespie and Grant for company.

Grant himself came hurrying out in high spirits a few minutes later. “Gillespie will be down soon - the lazy dog was still in bed. I’ve fixed up everything for you with Campbell - he’s the boss here, a good chap. You can have a bed to-night if you want. There’s hot water, so you can have a tub now.” He swung round as one of the largest men I have ever seen in my life

emerged from the porch and came forward—a man worthy to have joined battle with the great Fingal himself.

“Here’s Campbell,” said Grant. “He used to farm in Mull before he came here to show the rest of Scotland how to run a hotel.”

The landlord came forward with a smile on his good-natured face. He wore a suit of brown knickerbockers which I am sure could have held two men of average size, and I had never before seen such powerful-looking arms and shoulders. His hand-clasp was gentle and friendly.

“Come away in,” he said. “You’ll be ready for your breakfast. Mr. Grant says you’re walking across Scotland. Man, that’s an awful job. You must like walking, surely! The wife’s busy in the kitchen - I’ll show you to your room.”

He talked with the soft musical voice of the Gaelic-speaking Islesman. Though I have not the Gaelic myself, I spent part of each year as a boy among Gaelic-speaking folk in the Central Highlands, and it seems to me that the Gaelic of Perthshire has a slightly harsher sound and its gutturals are stronger than the Gaelic in the West. But apart from the tone of his voice, the Gael who can talk English uses the English language in a very lovely way. Almost always a vivid word comes to his tongue; his turns of speech are rich and expressive; and even his inversions fall upon the ear with a pleasant sound. Campbell’s vocabulary, I soon perceived, had been strengthened by many a bit of good broad Scots which he had picked up on his travels.

Lifting my rucksack as if it were no heavier than a box of matches, he led the way upstairs to a comfortable little bedroom; and in less than ten minutes I was wallowing in a bath of such size that I wondered if it had been specially built to accommodate Campbell himself. To roll in it was almost like bathing in a hill-loch, and I was loath to wade, as it were, ashore. My tub put new life into me, and I went downstairs to breakfast with a tremendous appetite. Somewhere, a peat-fire was burning, for the sweet pungent incense of it was beginning to creep through all the house, and I traced it to the sitting-room, where I found Grant warming himself in front of the rich black stuff that was smouldering in the grate. Gillespie came thundering downstairs as we went in to breakfast.

Over our porridge, which was followed by a great ashet of fish from the loch, I told them about my bad luck at Dalilea, and how I crossed the moor and in the end found a bed for the night on board the steamer. Grant must have noticed before breakfast that I was limping, for afterwards in my bedroom he insisted on examining my lame feet, with the result that the landlord’s wife was brought into the council. She held up her hands in horror at the broken blisters, and carried up a large basin of hot water, bathing the wounds herself and applying castor-oil, an unguent which she declared would cure nearly every human ill. Campbell himself stood with his hand on the door making quiet chuckling sounds of pity, then demanded to see my shoes. In the end, he took them away to try to stretch them on a last which he kept for repairs to the boots of his young family; and I was not long in that house before I found that he could turn his hand to almost anything. He was looked upon at Loch Shielside as a kind of Admirable Crichton, with a special gift of doctoring sick animals that had gained him the reputation of a wizard in many a West Highland glen.

Gillespie and Grant spent most of their day fishing on the loch, while I loafed happily with a book. A drizzling rain began to come down soon after breakfast; there was a nip of autumn in the air; and although my conscience warned me that I had not earned such luxury, I found it pleasant to take my ease beside the peat-fire. To add to my happiness, the book I had picked from a row of novels turned out to be a remarkable one. It was called Moidart; or Among the Clanranalds, and had been written away back in the 'eighties by Father Charles Macdonald, who was then parish priest of Moidart. When I tried to buy a copy afterwards in Edinburgh, I found that it had been out of print for many years and could hardly be obtained for love or money. In Father Macdonald's book, there was no maudlin stuff about the Spirit of the Gael; but before I had read many pages, I realised that he was a man who loved his people. He made no attempt to interpret them for the benefit of the Southerner, and he certainly did not try to write up the Highlander as a fine fellow. Too often nowadays the Highlander is praised in a defensive tone of voice, as though he were still regarded as a barbarian and required a special leader. Equally nauseating is the gushing voice of the modern Sennachie (often an Englishman) who talks as if tartan and bare knees were practically the same thing as culture and purity of heart. And I liked Father Macdonald for another thing: he did not write in the tone of a democrat who bemoans the fate of a down-trodden peasantry. With him, a laird was a laird - and if he was a good laird and a good Catholic, so much the better. I could not help wondering where Father Macdonald had been educated, whether he was a "heather priest" or had studied at one of the great Scots colleges at Paris, Valladolid, or Rome, where students used to spend as long as ten years before returning to take up their duties in a Scottish parish. I look back on that Saturday when I lingered over Father Macdonald's book as one of the most satisfying days I have ever spent.

## Chapter V. By the Shore of Loch Shiel

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The Drowning of Duncan Malcolm - The Man who did not Believe in Second-sight - The Mystery of the Illicit Still - In an Old Highland Cottage - The Priest of Moidart.

**A**T supper, Gillespie and Grant decided that, after sitting for so many hours cramped up in a boat on the loch, they would stretch their legs by walking to Loch Sunart and back before bedtime. I did not understand the lure that Sunart held for dwellers by the side of Loch Shiel until I was reminded that, while Loch Shiel is dry in the alcoholic sense, whiskey could be bought at Loch Sunart. I had no idea whether there was a licensed house at Ardnamurchan; for all I knew, someone there might have been plying a private trade in liquor on which no duty had been paid to His Majesty; and indeed, judging by the winks and nods of the two adventurers as they set out, whiskey brought down from an illicit still in some corrie of the mountains seemed to be the secret kernel of their quest. In a hushed undertone, they invited me to go with them, but I preferred to remain behind and listen to Campbell's stories of his boyhood in Mull.

I forget how the subject of second-sight arose, but we were soon in the thick of it.

"I don't think you believe in second-sight," said Campbell, his head on one side, his big dark brown eyes looking at me reproachfully.

I told him I had never come across it in my own experience, and that no doubt a lot of superstition was mixed up with it.

"Superstition! Ah, it is more than superstition," said Campbell quietly. His eyes glowed in the lamplight, and he ran his fingers through his thick upstanding russet hair. "It is dying out in the Highlands, but there are folk who still have it. Ah, many good things are dying out here. Even the folk themselves are changing. And the children-they are not so hardy as they used to be. Folk were more hardy in the old days of the black-house, when there was a fire in the middle of the room with a hole in the roof instead of a chimney. When I was a boy we ran barefoot, but now," he added, with a contemptuous snort, "it is nothing but gum-boots from Glasgow! Folk were happier in the old days. But we were talking about second-sight. Come ben to the kitchen, and my wife will tell you something. She knew a man in Mull with the second-sight."

I followed him through to a big room at the back of the house. It had a low ceiling and wooden beams and a bright fire burning in the big grate. Beside this fire sat a man with a brown weather-beaten face. His cap was pushed back on his head, and he smoked a short-stemmed clay pipe while he talked with the landlord's wife, who was busily ironing linen on the kitchen table.

On our entry, Mrs. Campbell looked up in surprise and spoke sharply to her husband in Gaelic. Perhaps she was reproaching him for having brought a hotel guest into the more homely atmosphere of their own quarters. But his reply seemed to satisfy her, and she asked me to sit down on the other side of the hearth.

"We were talking about second-sight," said Campbell presently. "Tell the gentleman about MacNeil in Mull."

She smiled, and then used almost the identical words of her husband: “You don’t believe in second-sight?”

When I replied that I would like to hear about MacNeil, she nodded and went on with her ironing.

“I got a fright with old Mr. MacNeil one evening,” she said. “I was coming up from the shore when I met him. He was walking towards me, walking very quick, with his hands stretched out in front of him, and he had a queer look in his eyes. I said good evening to him, but he passed me as if he had not seen me at all.” She put down her iron on the stand and demonstrated. “He was saying over some words,” she continued. “He was talking about the water, and I could hear him mention the name of Duncan Malcolm. I watched old MacNeil walk down to the end of the pier and stand there looking down into the water, and when I got to the post office I went in and asked what could be the matter with him. You see, I was a stranger there at the time, and I did not know the people well. The post-master told me never to mind MacNeil - he was a queer old man. ‘He was talking about Duncan Malcolm,’ I said, and the postmaster told me Duncan was a fine young man who had left Mull to work in the shipyards- at Belfast. Well, I thought no more about it. But in a few days we heard that Duncan Malcolm had been drowned off a pier at Belfast. It happened the same evening and the same hour when MacNeil had passed me going down to the water talking to himself about Duncan.”

The man on the other side of the fireplace took the clay pipe from his mouth and gave a grunt.

“Hold your tongue, Peter,” said Campbell. “You don’t believe anything at all!”

“I’m not believing in second-sight,” said Peter, pushing his cap still further back on his head.

“Never heed Peter,” said Mrs. Campbell, testing the heat of her iron with a drop of spittle on the point of her finger. “MacNeil could see things that were happening far away, and he often saw them before they happened. Some people I knew were going to have a ceilidh - a gathering for stories and songs - in their house one evening. Mr. MacNeil warned them not to have it, but he would give no reason, and they had their friends in just the same. While they were sitting round the fire telling old stories, the mother of the house passed away in her chair. But I don’t suppose Peter believes that either.”

Peter scratched his head, and in doing so he tipped his cap on one side, which gave him a slightly comic look, though his brown face was very serious.

“I’m not saying it isna true,” he remarked slowly, “but how can any man tell what’s going to happen? It’s no’ natural.”

“Natural or no’,” insisted Campbell, “some folk can tell of things before they happen. I knew an old woman who used to see funerals before there was a death-ay, and she could see the very folk who were at the funeral. And she would sometimes see a wee blue light over the bed of a person that was going to die, and the light would go away over the hills on the road to the graveyard.” He glowered down on the man on the other side of the hearth. “But you’ll not believe in lights, Peter?”

“Me? No; I’m not so old-fashioned,” declared Peter. “Ach, some of you folk are afraid of the dark! I’ve slept out on a hillside for three weeks, and I never saw anybody worse than myself. Would you sleep out by yourself on the hillside?” he asked Campbell.

“I would not,” said Campbell decisively. “Whiles there’s queer things in the hills at night. The old people were very wise, but you’ll no’ believe what they tell you. I knew a woman in Mull with the evil eye. Folk would not let any of their cattle beasts be driven to the byre in front of the beast belonging to this woman. If she saw a fine red cow or a fine black cow, better than her own, she would be jealous and wish it harm, and it would sicken that very night in the byre. I have seen a cow sicken, and I have given it medicine that wouldna act because the beast had sickened with the evil eye. But some can give a bad wish to a person as well.”

Peter shook his head, and Campbell stooped down and stared into his face.

“Man, Peter, what did they say over you when you were born and when they were bathing you with water?” He began to recite in the Gaelic, then put it into English so that I could understand.

A palmful of water for your years,  
A palmful of water for your growth,  
And for your taking of your food;  
And may the part of you that grows not  
during the night  
Grow during the day.  
Three palmfuls of the Holy Trinity  
To protect and guard you  
From the Evil Eye  
And from the jealousy of wicked folk.

“And I’m no’ believing that nonsense!” Peter cried when Campbell had finished.

“You’re no’ believing there are people on Loch Shielside who might say, ‘I hope Campbell will not prosper in his business,’ and could give trouble to me with the bad wish?”

The man on the other side of the fire shook his head. “It’s no’ a bad wish I would ever be giving to John Campbell!”

Campbell thrust his big hands into the pockets of his knickerbockers and laughed. “Peter never did a bad turn to anybody in his life - he’s too good a Catholic! If Peter wished anybody harm, he’d have the priest from Mingarry after him with a big stick, and he wouldna like that at all!”

Peter drew himself up in his chair, and pulled his cap straight. “I’ll not have you miscalling Father Patrick,” he said sharply.

“Who’s miscalling him?” demanded Campbell.

“He’s a fine man, and he’s got more sense in his head than you. Go to Mingarry and ask him if he believes in second-sight!”

“And he would tell me not to be a fool, and you too, John Campbell. It’s you Protestants at [Acharacle](#) that are the old-fashioned ones, and you folk from Mull are worse than any. There’s a lot of daft folk in Mull, I’m thinking.”

“Not so daft,” said Campbell good-naturedly. “I know an old man in Mull who will not sink in the water. Duncan MacGillivray is his name, and he’s alive to this day at Kilfinichen.”

“Canna sink in the water? Maybe he’ll be a good swimmer,” said Peter quizzically.

“He canna soom at all,” said Campbell emphatically, “but he will never drown. One day he was helping his son to put some sheep in a boat and take them up the Loch Scridain, and some of the tups took fright and jumped into the deep water, and the old man fell in too. The son was a grand swimmer, and he got the tups into the boat, and then saved his father. There was a man on the shore who saw it, and asked young MacGillivray why he didn’t save his old father before the tups. But young MacGillivray laughed. ‘Ach,’ he said, ‘there was no need to bother about my father. He canna drown if he tried. It would be a fine thing if I had to tell the laird I had lost some of his fine tups!’ And here’s another queer thing about Duncan MacGillivray,” went on Campbell. “You canna shoot him with a gun. There’s no shot from a gun that could hurt him!”

Peter took the pipe from his mouth and stared at Campbell blankly. “Then he must be the black devil himself!” he said. “It’s no’ a mortal man that you canna kill with a gun.”

“You canna kill Duncan MacGillivray,” insisted Campbell.

Peter smoked thoughtfully, and then his brown face lit up, and his blue eyes opened wide. “But have they tried it on him?”

“Ah, I don’t know if they’ve tried it on him,” admitted Campbell. “Maybe he wouldn’t like them to do it. But it wouldn’t harm him if they did,” he added confidently. “And he’s not the only queer man that has lived there. It’s a very wild place, all rocks, and very lonely. You’ll see many a sithean there - that’s a fairy-hill,” he explained to me with a nod, and then he whipped round to Peter. “You have slept out on the hillside, Peter, and have seen nothing. But would you sleep on a dark night beside a sithean?”

Peter hesitated. “If I had a dog with me,” he replied uneasily.

“But would you sleep alone?” cried Campbell.

“I would take a bit of bread and cheese with me,” said Peter, after another pause.

“Not for yourself to eat!” declared Campbell, and then burst out with a low roll of laughter. “Not for yourself to eat, Peter! It would be for the little people after they came out of their hill. And you’ll be telling us you don’t believe in the little people.”

“I do not,” said Peter doggedly, “but a man shouldn’t take risks with them.” He looked over at the window, on which the blind had not been drawn. “It’s a dark night, and I’ll be getting home ... I’m thinking it’ll be more rain before morning.” He put his pipe carefully away in his waistcoat pocket and rose to his feet. “Were you coming along the road, Campbell?”



Campbell and I walked up as far as the gate, where we said good night to Peter. I listened to the sound of his footsteps fading along the road, and suddenly I could hear the distant steps quickening, then the man broke into a run. Peter, in spite of all his scorn of the old-fashioned ones, was taking no chances in the dark ...

When I got upstairs to my bedroom that night, I found an enormous jug of fresh milk awaiting me on the chest of drawers. It was warm and rich and silky, as delicious milk as I have ever tasted, and I, as reminded of the old rhyme:

My cummer and I lay down to sleep,  
With two pint stoups at our bed feet,  
And aye when we wakened we drank them dry,  
What think you o' my cummer and I?

In the old days in Scotland it used to be a custom to put ale or wine in the bedroom of a guest for his refreshment during the night, and Campbell evidently believed that the tradition-with a change of liquor that was appropriate to a dry lochside - should be continued. While I drank my milk, I wondered how Grant and Gillespie were faring at Sunart. As a boy in Breadalbane, I had once been permitted to take a romantic sip of whiskey from an illicit still, and I thought it as vile as any medicine I had ever been compelled to swallow. The stuff scorched my tongue, as if a red-hot cinder had been dropped on it; and if it was the same kind of fire-water that Gillespie and Grant were pledging themselves with at that moment, then I wished them joy of their adventure. For myself, I preferred my sweet innocuous milk which I sipped in bed, with a candle on a chair at my side casting its soft yellow light on the pages of *The Four Georges*. And what more suitable book could there be for the delight of a man on a Jacobite pilgrimage? I read on and on, until the candle burned down, then flickered and went out; and I fell asleep with the echo of Thackeray's rippling music in my ear.

Gillespie and Grant were in high spirits next morning at breakfast. They were so eager to tell me the result of their four-mile tramp to Sunart that it was not easy to sort out the copious details. A man called Angus had acted as their guide, it seemed, and had taken them up to a lonely croft high above Salen Bay. There, a friend of his called John had welcomed them. It had required a good deal of persuasion to make John go out to a hut near the croft and bring in a "greybeard" - that is, a big earthenware jar. He was a fine man, this John, a big lanky fellow of sixty with a wonderful fund of old stories. After swearing his guests to secrecy, he had uncorked the greybeard, and had poured out into tumblers, which had been bought by his niece at Woolworth's in Glasgow, a good stiff three-fingers of the finest whiskey that had ever dodged the gaugers and crossed the lips of man. It had warmed the cockles of their heart so fervently that another peg had gone into the Woolworth tumblers, and John himself had given vent to his elation in song. They had kept it up until after midnight, Grant assured me.. Until nearly one o'clock, Gillespie insisted. And it was a mighty good job they had both gone with Angus, for they had to help their guide home to Loch Shielside. Their scornful laughter went hooting around the little dining-room when I mentioned my jug of milk. But so forced was their scorn that I began to have doubts about the truth of their story: doubts that increased when Grant suddenly changed the subject by asking what I proposed to do that morning.

"Church," I replied; "I'm going to the Catholic service at Mingarry."

"I didn't know you were a Papist," said Gillespie.

I told him I wasn't, and added that I didn't see what difference that made; but they preferred to spend the day on the loch.

Along in the scattered village of Acharacle there lived a man called "Archie-Charlie," and Campbell had a message to take to him, so we set out together. It seemed that Archie's father's name was Charlie, and the old Highland nomenclature was still in use: it did not matter what Archie's surname was, he was the son of Charlie. The moment I set eyes on Archie-Charlie's cottage on the hillside above us I wanted to see inside it, and Campbell took me up to the door. Archie-Charlie himself was not in, but a woman bade me enter. The little place had been built with stones taken from the hills. The walls were about three feet thick, and the roof had been thatched with rushes laid upon the beams. These beams were black and shining like polished ebony with the peat-smoke which had curled among them for many generations. The floor of stone-flags was as clean as the white-washed walls of the room. A log-fire burned in a nest of carefully swept ashes on the hearth-stone, the outside edges of which had been whitened with chalk. Over the fire was a sooty cleek, on which the hanging kettle could be pushed into the heart of the flames. At the wall opposite to the fireplace were a couple of high beds with curtains. The period of the cottage was obviously much later than that of an old "blackhouse," for the roof was high, and sloping beams rested on the outside of the walls. The walls themselves both inside and out were plastered, but this may have been done long after the cottage had been built; and the chimney which separated the two rooms had probably been added later. Altogether, it was as snug a place as one could have wished for; and since it had stood there for at least two hundred years, there was no reason why it would not stand for another two hundred if the thatch were kept in good repair.

"Take a good look at it," said Campbell, "for it is to be pulled down this winter."

"Yes," said the woman, "we are building a fine new house in its place. The old stones are to be used -they are good enough, and it would be a waste to have them thrown away."

I protested against what I called the sacrilege of pulling down a cottage that must be so warm and dry in winter, and cool in the hottest day of summer.

"But it isna much to look at," said the woman. "I would like to see a fine new house here, with nice slates on the roof like the manse."

I protested that, since they would not build it so well as the old one, it would not last so long.

"Ah, I'm not minding that," replied the woman. "It will last as long as we need it. If they do not like it in years to come, they can pull it down and build another."

This silenced me. What were the thoughts in the bullet-shaped heads of the sturdy little Normans when they tore down the Saxon churches and built new ones to their own taste and requirements-what were the thoughts of the Gothic builders, when they in their turn pulled down the Norman churches and built others according to their own desires? But there is this to be said. The old masons did lay stone upon stone in the belief that their work would be permanent, and from this they drew an inspiration that ennobled their labour and made them lavish upon it a care which to the jerry-builder of to-day must seem ridiculous. This conviction has always burned in the heart of men in the great periods of architecture. Who can put his soul into his job when he feels that his work may soon be undone? I had food for thought as I continued on my way to the Catholic chapel at Mingarry.

In the middle of the Shiel Bridge I stopped to look into the river, an ashen-faced stream with many pools and shallows that runs down into the tidal sealoch of Moidart. Near the spot where I stood was a part of the river called Torquil's Ford, which I had read about in Father Macdonald's book. In the twelfth century, a bloody battle is said to have been fought near Loch Shiel between the Gaels and the Norsemen. The Gaelic leader was the great Somerled - from whom many Highland clans are proud to claim descent-and it was this battle which paved the way for his supremacy over the western mainland and isles. According to the Red Book of Clanranald, his grandfather had been driven out of his lands in Scotland by that vigorous and rapacious strategist, King Magnus of Norway, called Magnus Barelegs because he wore the short kirtle or kilt of the Western Countries. Barelegs had swept over the Orkneys and the Hebrides and the Isle of Man pillaging and burning, then sent to the peace-loving King Edgar to tell him that the Western Islands were no longer Scottish soil. One is sometimes apt to forget that it was not until the time of Shakespeare's "gentle Duncan" in the eleventh century that Scotland became a united kingdom, that the southern boundary was not fixed for at least another hundred years, that it was not until the thirteenth century that the Hebrides were given up by Norway, and that Orkney and Shetland did not become part of Scotland until they were given as pledge for the dowry of Margaret, the young wife of James III, in the fifteenth century. So recent and yet so profound is our unity as a nation! But it was the religious disunion of the Scots, and their bloody wars for differing faiths and forms of worship, that occupied my thoughts as I left the river Shiel behind me and made tracks for the Catholic chapel that stands among the pine trees at Mingarry looking down across the moor to the cold waters of the loch.

This chapel is built of grey stone, and is larger than the little place at Glenuig in the quiet coolness of which I had rested for a few minutes on my walk across Moidart two days before. It stands on a bold green mound, and as I climbed the path I saw groups of men in their stiff looking Sunday clothes lingering a little way off. They had calm peaceful faces, browned by the summer sun, and their necks had been burned a rich deep mahogany colour. I thought that they loafed more gracefully than the Lowland and Border farm-servant, who seems always to stand in an ungainly attitude when he is not at work. The day was sunless, and there was little light inside the chapel. At the eastern end, a great dark shadow gave the altar dignity, and two candles burned like tiny gems on black velvet. Twenty or thirty people were already seated on the plain wooden benches, and others entered in twos and threes, each one bowing deeply towards the altar in a way that seemed strange and even foreign to one brought up in the Presbyterian form of worship. I had only once before in my life attended a Roman Catholic service in this country, and my memories of it had been unpleasant. It was in the South, and the priest - an Irishman - had hustled through his duties in a way that had struck me as not unlike that of a bored schoolboy who is mumbling over to himself two dozen lines of Ovid which he had been compelled for his sins to learn by heart; only when it came to the sermon had that priest shown signs of life, and his metallic voice had clanged through the little church in a harsh denunciation of all heretics. Those outside the Catholic Church, he had declared, were heading straight for the flames of Hell: indeed, most of his discourse might have been lifted almost word for word from one of those wild brutal Calvinistic sermons that were preached and printed in Scotland last century. That priest had been a large-faced belligerent man, run very much to beef about the jowl and stomach, and his intolerance and spleen had made me bristle; I had left that Roman Catholic church more doggedly a heretic than when I had entered, and in my ignorance I wondered if his sermon was the usual kind of stuff which was hurled at the heads of all "poor deluded Catholics." I could not help thinking about that experience of a dozen years before, and the priest with his small repellent eyes and brazen voice, while I sat in the hush of the little chapel at Mingarry and watched those folk

from Loch Shielside, with their shy yet dignified ways, and deep shrewd quiet eyes that glanced neither to the right nor the left as each one walked very slowly up the aisle.

The bell tolled in the steeple, and there was the shuffle of many feet at the door as the groups of men I had seen talking outside now came into the chapel. After the last one had taken his place, there was perfect silence, and then the priest entered. He was a short dark man, with a pale eager face and big burning black eyes. His voice was thin and weak, with a reedy note that was curiously pleasant, and though he spoke quietly and at times not much above a whisper, every word was distinct with the lovely modulations of one who apprehends the majesty of the Latin language. As I listened to him, I reproached myself. I felt like a spy in a foreign country, rather than one who had come to worship God. But the guilty feeling passed. I had been brought up to despise ritual; I had hazily gathered in my boyhood that ritual was mummary if not idolatry, a lip-worship of outward things which saved one the bother of digging very deep into one's erring soul: nor had I associated the Presbyterian form of worship with ritual, although it ought to have been plain to me that even to close the eyes and bow the head during prayer, or to stand up during praise, is part of the ritual of Presbyterian worship. And it had not struck me that the value of any rite depends upon the attitude of mind in those who are taking part. A man may be repulsed by an elaborate outward symbolism and yet grapple to his heart an idea like that of the Trinity, which itself is but a verbal symbol of a mystery that he cannot understand.

I soon perceived that every one in the chapel was actively taking part in the service; and I felt that even I, a stranger and an outsider, was one of them. I was profoundly conscious of an emotional link. And although it is easy to scoff at emotion, I somehow or other felt that I understood these people around me, though perhaps not so well as they understood me. It is strange how worship can bind human beings, and how much stronger must be the bonds where there is a common faith. When the priest began his sermon, however, I was ready to revolt, for I could not forget that other priest of the South and his vitriol, but before many minutes had passed, the beefy fellow with the harsh voice was forgotten. In that quiet dimly lit Highland chapel, the priest spoke to his flock in a way that completely captured me. If ever a man had in his hands an opportunity for propaganda of the cruder kind, it was the frail figure at the altar. The Shiel Bridge was but a mile away, and the arches of that bridge are in a very real sense the bulwarks between Rome and Protestantism. When the Reformation swept northward, it stopped short at the river Shiel, so that the north of it and throughout all Moidart no Protestant church has ever been built. To this day almost every family on the south bank of the Shiel is Protestant, and on the north Roman Catholic. And yet, if for once the little Presbyterian church at Acharacle had been closed and the congregation had crossed the bridge to listen to Father Patrick's sermon, not a man or woman would have heard a word which would have given the faintest offence. I have forgotten the text, but I have not forgotten the effect the sermon made upon me. There was a magnificent spirit of toleration about it; and if it is true - and I believe it to be true - that the hope of civilisation in this era lies in the spiritual regeneration of the peoples of the West, it is certain that this regeneration will either sweep all the Churches together into a religious unity, or will be accompanied by a miracle of toleration. To agree to differ is almost as fine a thing as to agree with each other entirely; the point lies in the agreement; and while in many parts of Scotland to-day Roman Catholics and Protestants are hot with the swelter of discord, it is strange that at Loch Shiel, where a river has formed the boundary for three centuries and where you might expect the two groups to glower across this boundary at each other, you find a spirit of exquisite friendliness. I returned to Protestant Acharacle with a feeling of quiet elation. But there was another reason why I was glad I had crossed the river to Mingarry.

## Chapter VI. On The Isle of Shona

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An Invitation - Shelter at Castle Tirrim - The Blood in the Dungeon - John of Moidart - The Thrust of a Dirk in Arisaig - To the Island in a Rainstorm - The Kinlochmoidart Bagpipe - When the Devil came for Donald.

**I**F I had not gone to the chapel at Mingarry that Sunday morning, I would not have seen and handled the old Macdonald bagpipe that is said to have been played at the Battle of Bannockburn, for it was at the door of the chapel that I was invited to take tea in the afternoon at a house on the island of Shona.

Three days before, from the mouth of Wat the Wanderer's cave near the head of Loch Moidart, I had looked across the water to Shona, but I had seen no houses there. Now, however, I learned that Shona was more than a deserted paradise of pines and firs and silver birches. On the isle in Loch Moidart I was surprised to hear there is a population of about fifty, and a dozen children are taught in the little island school at Baramore. The invitation to tea included my two friends at the hotel as well as Campbell himself; but Gillespie decided to fish until dark; so with Campbell and Grant I set out for Loch Moidart.

The road down to the south shore of the sea-loch follows the river beside the wooded shoulder of a hill; and before we had been a mile on the way, the rain began to fall. The sky had blackened in the west, and it was plain that we were in for what Grant called a snorter of an evening. Half a pace ahead of us, Campbell splashed through the long quivering pools on the road, and when we came round the corner of the hill he stopped and pointed.

"Castle Tirrim," he said briefly.

It was then that I blessed the weather. What a picture the stark old Clanranald fortress made in the gloom of the autumn afternoon. I had caught a glimpse of it coming over the pass from Genuig, and from the distance it had seemed like the relics of a child's sand-castle that the encroaching tide had begun to eat away. But seen as it was now, in the battering rain, it made a picture not easily to be forgotten.

It was built nearly six hundred years ago; and is older than the Clanranald family itself. No Highland castle has a more thrilling history. A woman made it: a divorced woman. She had been put away by a Lord of the Isles so that he could marry a daughter of the heir to the throne of Scotland. They called him the Good John of Isla, though one doubts his goodness to Amie MacRuari. But Amie had the blood, of Somerled in her veins, and she consoled herself as the walls of Castle Tirrim rose stone upon stone; and for centuries it remained the chief stronghold of the Clanranalds, the family of which Amie is the mother. I had read somewhere that Castle Tirrim had been impregnable: now I saw why. At low tide a man can cross on a narrow neck of shingle to the huge hummock of rock on which it stands, but there is no cover for an attacking army, and on the north side the grey cliff rises from the water of Loch Moidart. As I approached the gaunt ruin, I felt like lifting my rainsoaked hat to the memory of Amie MacRuari.

The ebbing tide had already uncovered the track; and crossing to the islet, we climbed up in lashing rain to the castle. Its walls are ten feet thick. Pointing upward, Campbell told us that a

few years ago a bed of strawberries had been found growing on the top. Some bird must have dropped the seed which had taken root in that airy bed high among the dirt and moss.

From the terrace that runs round the courtyard you go down into the dungeon and kitchen, and the damp soil of the dungeon floor is red-red with human blood, Campbell explained. A horrible murder was once committed there, and it was said that the blood of the victim would ooze up from that soil for ever. A certain Doubting Thomas actually sent a sample of the soil to a Glasgow analyst, who reported that the red colouring was due to the action of some mineral, and the sneers of the doubting one were heard for many a day in Moidart. "But the Glasgow man was all wrong," declared Campbell. "The stain is blood. You will find it in the soil for as deep as you like to dig."

Only once, according to Father Macdonald, has Castle Tirrim been captured by an enemy. The chief fell foul of the Scots king--a frequent thing in Moidart history--and the Campbells were given leave to carry fire and sword against him. Where a Macdonald was concerned, a wink was as good as a nod for a Campbell; and round the point of Ardnamurchan came the longboats from Argyll. Anchor was dropped in Loch Moidart near the castle walls. A force was sent ashore to cut off Tirrim from the mainland, making retreat impossible if the fortress fell. The Campbells made an assault and failed, so they tried to starve out the garrison. Not until five weeks had passed did they depart, and the jubilant Clanranald men went off to their homes. That night the Campbells stole quickly back to Loch Moidart, rounded Eilean Shona on a flood tide, and battered their way into the now thinly defended Castle Tirrim. Word of the disaster went over all Moidart like wildfire: Tirrim had fallen! Enraged at having been caught napping by so simple a ruse, the Clanranalds came hurrying back to the lochside, retook the castle, and wiped out the stigma with Campbell blood.

Many a dark plot was hatched in Tirrim. Tradition has it that in 1545 Donald Dubh, after spending forty years in prison, came here to meet the seventeen chiefs whom he persuaded to join in a conspiracy with Henry VIII against their own king. They took the oath of allegiance and Henry's money, but the plot fizzled out. And although John of Moidart, the Captain of Clanranald, was pardoned, this did not keep him quiet for long. I doubt if any Highlander or Border chief had a more turbulent life. He was a man of immense strength, brave as a tiger and cunning as a stoat. James IV once managed to get him inside prison walls, but nobody was surprised when John escaped. In spite of all the efforts of the king he was never "dantonit," and he ruled for fifty years in Moidart, to die peacefully in his bed at Castle Tirrim.

But not all the Tirrim chiefs were so clever as John. Several of them ended their days dangling from a rope's end; and another was dirked by one of his own clansmen. As we sheltered from the rain in the doorway of the castle, looking out across the grey choppy water of Loch Moidart, Campbell told us the story of this murder. Before he had gone very far, I remembered that I had read about it in Father Charles Macdonald's little book--there were few Moidart stories the old priest had failed to record but to hear it told under the walls of the chief's stronghold gave the legend a new and romantic glow.

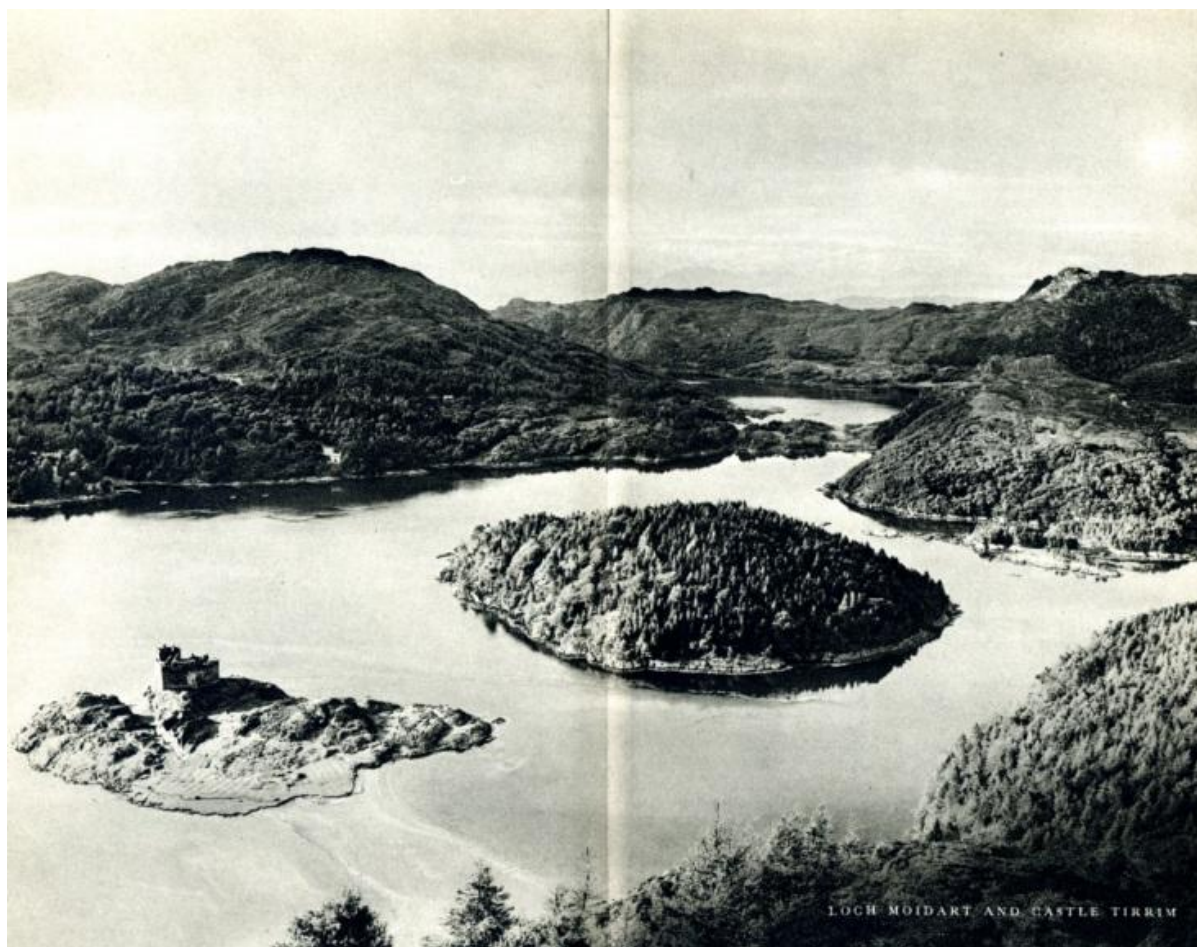


Figure 3 - Loch Moidart and Castle Tirrim

Allan-of-the-Knife was the murderer's name, and the folk at the firesides in Moidart still talk about him with a shiver. There was trouble in the clan, and Allan decided to get rid of the chief. With his helpers, he lay waiting for his victim at Glenuig. Somebody warned the chief, however, and he slipped up to the head of Loch Ailort in Arisaig. Allan followed, and the chief went down with an arrow in his back. Rushing forward, Allan finished him off with his dirk, swearing that any man who dared to give the body a Christian burial would get the same knife between his ribs.

Campbell's voice quickened as he told us of the sequel. The dead chief's infant son was hurried away east into Lochaber, where his mother's kinsfolk, the Camerons, brought him up. The Camerons were eager for revenge, and when the boy reached manhood he came with a party of them to bring Allan-of-the-Knife to justice. Allan was living in Arisaig, they learned, and they arrived on a Sunday morning while he and his friends were busy at their devotions, and the young man had great difficulty in preventing the Camerons from setting the church on fire and slaughtering the worshippers: indeed, they were so disgusted at his lack of manly spirit that they returned to Lochaber. Left alone, the murdered chief's son became a wanderer in these glens, finding food and lodging where he could. Among the hills one day, he met a beautiful girl who was herding her father's goats. She gave the handsome young stranger some food and milk, and they fell passionately in love. At length he ventured to go down with the girl to her father's croft, where he disclosed his identity: he was the son of the murdered Clanranald chief. And then to his horror, the girl's father drew his dirk and, with blazing eyes, announced that he was Allan-of-the-Knife. There was a long silence at the door

of that thatched house in Arisaig as the young man looked into the face of his father's murderer and then turned to meet the bewildered eyes of Allan's daughter.

The scene, as Campbell described it under the walls of Castle Tirrim, sounded like a passage from one of John Webster's gory dramas. In the end, Allan-of-the-Knife shook hands and gave his blessing to the young couple. Indeed, they made their home with the fierce Allan himself, and for some months all went well. But the girl seemed to have inherited her father's wild spirit, and one day she flew into a temper with her husband. I like the homely realism of the tradition, which asserts that in the heat of their quarrel, he gave his bride a push which nearly sent her into the fire. She drew herself up imperiously. "If my father had seen you treat me like that," she cried, "he would be giving to Dugald's son what he gave to Dugald himself on the shore of Loch Ailort!"

Her reference to that old incident can scarcely be called tactful. Love had stifled the vengeance which had been smouldering in the young man's mind for so many years, and now the old hatred burst into flame. He rushed into the next room, where Allan-of-the-Knife was on his knees at his morning prayers—he seemed to have been a great one for his devotions—and plunged his dagger home into the old man's heart. And so the story ends as it began, with the thrust of a dirk in Arisaig.

Castle Tirrim remained the principal Clanranald stronghold until the call went round to the clans for the Rising of 'Fifteen. The Captain of Clanranald, called Allan the Red, felt in his bones that the affair would end in disaster and that he would never return alive. Before setting out, he drew aside an old follower and told him the sad thoughts that were in his mind. After giving some orders, he marched up the glen with his clansmen and climbed Scardoish Hill. Here he paused to say good-bye to the friends who had come to see him depart, and then he looked back at Castle Tirrim on its rock in Loch Moidart. Great clouds of smoke were rising from the battlements. As the group gazed down in consternation, the place burst into flames. Allan's orders had been obeyed. Never again would Castle Tirrim be in the hands of an enemy! With a last good-bye, Allan turned resolutely towards the south. He was killed in action at the battle of Sheriffmuir. Castle Tirrim was never rebuilt.

For fully three quarters of an hour we stood talking over old stories in the doorway of the castle, hoping that at any minute the downpour might slacken. But our luck was out. The rain hissed and snarled round the walls, dappling the water of the loch, and from over the Sound of Eigg a black cloud had crept eastward until it hung almost overhead.

"We'd better go," said Campbell at last. "The tide's going out, and we have a long way to haul down the boat."

He buttoned up his macintosh, and I drew around my shoulders the light waterproof sheet that served me as a raincoat. Making our way back to the shore, we followed Campbell by the side of a pine-wood to the place where the boat lay upon the mud and shingle. Grant untied the oars and rowlocks from a thwart while Campbell undid the end of the painter from the long iron chain that reached down from the fringe of the pine-wood. After baling out the rain from the boat, we bent our backs to the task of dragging it down into the water.

Before many minutes had passed, I was cursing the man who built it. It was a new boat, most beautifully made; but as we hauled it a foot at a time, it felt as heavy as a small barge. The beach was wide and flat, and the harder we slaved the further the ebbing tide seemed to



creep. A sea chaunty would have been the thing to sing if any of us had had the breath to spare for upraising his voice in a working-song, though perhaps on second thoughts a battle-tune would have been more appropriate. Campbell's great muscles and joints seemed to crack under the strain as we stooped and hauled, paused and hauled again. We veered the boat this way and that to get it on little patches of seaweed over which it slithered more easily. We fought like tigers with that boat, until suddenly Campbell drew himself up.

"Wait, gentlemen," he said. "Rest yourselves while I get a bit of stick."

Leaving Grant and myself panting against the gunwale, with sweat mingling with the rain on our faces, he turned and hurried up the beach towards the pine trees. When he came back he had three or four pieces of wood under his arm, and these we used as rollers. The boat at last took the water with a low gurgling splash, and we waded out with it for half a dozen yards-our legs were already wet-and clambered aboard.

Round Riska Island we rowed, with the Deer's Island to the east, and slipped up Loch Moidart to the tree-clad Shona Beag.

The house of our hostess stood among pines a little way from the shore, and below it was black deep water. A couple of small boats lay high on a slip-way, and we crept gently in towards a ridge of stones that were covered with brown seaweed. Fastening the painter to a post, we scrambled ashore in the pelting rain, and ten minutes later were seated around a blazing fire with the steam beginning to rise from our wet clothes.

Already the lamp was lit, for the black sky made the afternoon seem like a midwinter evening. Our hostess was a charming white-haired old lady, and her grey eyes melted sympathetically when she saw we had got a wetting. A Scots tea is always a delightful meal, and as was natural our talk was about the 'Forty-five: nor could I have listened to those old tales in a more suitable place than this island, the last bit of Moidart to remain in the possession of a descendant of the Kinlochmoidart family. During tea our hostess told us about her ancestor Donald, one of the finest of the Prince's officers. A cool-headed man, Bishop Forbes called him, fit for either the council-chamber or the battlefield, and he would probably have Walter Scott heard from the lips of his friend Lady Clerk a story which has often been repeated about Donald Macdonald. The hero of the story, however, was not Donald but his younger brother Ranald, a captain in the Clanranald regiment. When the Highlanders crossed into England and were marching to Carlisle, Ranald set out on the evening of 8th November to find food and lodging for his men. Rose Castle struck him as a suitable place, so he went up to the door and demanded quarters. The servant told him that the lady of the house had just given birth to a daughter, and pleaded with Ranald to make as little trouble as possible. He replied that he would take his men off at once, and asked if he might be permitted to see the infant before he departed. Plucking the cockade from his bonnet, Ranald fastened it on the child's breast.

"This will be a token," he said, "that the Macdonalds of Kinlochmoidart have taken the family of Rose Castle under their protection. Show it to any of our people who may come to your door." Mary Dacre was the child's name-her father was Dacre of Kirkinton, a descendant of the old Wardens of the English Marches-and she became the wife of Sir James Clerk of Penicuik. Once a year until her dying day she wore the white cockade from Ranald Macdonald's bonnet, and beside it she pinned a white rose.

It was near Carlisle that Ranald Macdonald performed his act of gentle chivalry, and at Carlisle his eldest brother Donald met his end. From Edinburgh, before the battle of Prestonpans was fought, Donald had been sent north by the Prince to persuade Macleod and Sir Alexander Macdonald to support the Jacobite cause; and after the failure of his mission he was returning to the Prince, who by this time was marching into England, when he was captured at Lesmahagow by a divinity student named Thomas Linning [Chambers and others have said that Linning was appointed to the church in his native parish as a reward for his capture of Kinlochmoidart. This is most unlikely. He did not become minister there until sixteen years afterwards. The Rev. Thomas Linning, his father, had been minister of the second charge since 1740; and the elder Linning's uncle of the same name, a Chaplain in Ordinary to King George, was one of the best-known preachers in Scotland, and had been in the first charge at Lesmahagow since 1691. The Linnings, under the patronage of the Dukes of Hamilton, were almost a tradition in Lesmahagow.] and an armed rabble. At Carlisle he was condemned to death and hanged.

Before the last breath had left his writhing body, he was cut down and disembowelled, and his head was stuck on a spike over one of the Carlisle gates, where it remained for many years. No Highlander passed this grim relic without saluting it in silent reverence, and a Moidart man actually climbed to the top of the gate and kissed it. For this dreadful act of open rebellion against King George, he was arrested and dragged before the governor of the town. The governor, however, was a member of the Lennox family, and his heart was so touched by the Moidart man's devotion that he ordered him to be released, then gave instructions that the head was to be taken down and decently buried. It was a good thing for the peace of Carlisle that this was done, for a little later a Highland regiment was quartered in the town. Many of the younger men who fought for the Prince joined the British army afterwards, and became the loyal soldiers of King George II; but it would have been stretching loyalty a little too far to expect them to gaze unmoved at the head of Donald Macdonald skewered upon a spike and left to shrivel and decay. After describing the ugly fate of her great-great grandfather, our hostess rose.

"Let me bring you the Macdonald bagpipe," she said, and left the room, to return and place in my hands the instrument that is believed to have been played six centuries ago at Bannockburn. The chanter, the square mouth-piece, and the top of one of the drones are part of the original piob mhor, and the wood is smooth and dark with the touch of so many hands. The chanter has an extra hole which was bored on the advice of a fairy, who said that it would enable the pipe to give forth the most marvellous music man had ever heard-music that would inspire the Macdonalds in battle and strike terror into the hearts of their enemies.

"Thanks to the fairy's advice," said our hostess, with a smile, "this bagpipe has never been played at a lost battle. The tone is beautifully mellow. It is good to hear a fine piper playing it. On a calm evening they say the sound will steal across the loch and be heard far away in the Glen of Moidart."

"Then this bagpipe can't have been played at Culloden?" suggested Grant.

"No. At Culloden, I'm afraid, some of the Macdonalds behaved like spoilt children. Theirs was the place of honour on the right flank of the army, but Lord George Murray had promised this to the Atholl men, and the Macdonalds were put on the left. They say some of them hung back until too late. Nobody can doubt their courage, but when a Gael thinks he has been insulted he isn't a very easy man to handle."

Campbell nodded his assent. "And it's still true!" he cried. His eyes strayed across the table, and he addressed me: "Whiles you must be thinking we are a queer lot. But mebbly we are not so bad after all - though the Macdonalds will not be saying very much good about a Campbell." And he glanced towards our hostess, and they laughed together. "But there was no finer man in the Highlands than Donald Macdonald of Kinlochmoidart. And few worse than another Donald I could tell of," he added. "Donald of the Toad!"

Grant leaned forward in his chair with interest, and Campbell began to chuckle deeply.

"Donald of the Toad!" he repeated. "Ah, he was a bad scoundrel. When he was old and fat he used to sit at the top of Castle Tirrim with his gun, shooting at birds in the loch-ay, and he would fire at a man if he thought he had come for thieving. Donald would shoot anything, but he was afraid to shoot the Toad."

Campbell chuckled again.

"What toad was that?" asked Grant, and Campbell explained that for many years this old Clanranald chief had been haunted by a great black toad-a kind of familiar spirit. He would go on a journey, leaving the toad locked in the dungeon, only to find to his horror that it was waiting for him on his arrival. He believed it had come straight from hell to torment him for his sins. Once he was in his longboat when a storm blew up, and the crew caught sight of the toad in the water, swimming as fast as the boat could sail. As the storm increased the crew were so scared that they pleaded with Donald to take the black brute on board. He refused, but in the end had to give in, so he waved to the toad. It clambered nimbly over the gunwale; and at once the sea became calm. At last Donald got rid of it in an unexpected way. It was eaten by a lion which the Earl of Argyll had sent to Donald as a gift, and a lion figures to-day on the Clanranald coat-of-arms.

But although Donald got rid of his familiar spirit, the devil came to fetch him in the end. He fell ill while on a visit at the island of Canna, and one midnight there sounded a screeching whistle that awoke everyone for miles around and shook the very house where Donald lay dying. When he heard the whistle his friends had to hold him down in his bed. Two of them ventured to look outside, and they saw a dark fearsome figure with pointed ears outlined against the night sky. At that moment a cock in the barn crowed, and at this the tall figure shook his fist in rage and disappointment, then jumped over the precipice into the sea, leaping over the waves with great strides and disappearing in the darkness. When the sick man heard the cock crow he lay back with a sigh of relief and died with a happy smile. But the devil has never forgotten that he failed to get Donald's soul, for he haunts the Sound between Canna and Sanday, and blows up those treacherous squalls that torment the local sailors to this day.

Our talk had strayed far from the old Macdonald bagpipe that lay beside me on a corner of the big tea-table. But we returned to it again, and then our hostess laid it reverently away. An hour later we were rowing back across Loch Moidart in the darkness and the rain. Campbell's wife had hot toddy awaiting us beside the peat-fire in the inn at Acharacle.

## Chapter VII. Glenfinnan

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On Board the Clanranald - A Great Gaelic Poet - The Green Isle of St. Finnan - The Coffin on the Floor - I Reach Glenfinnan - Gregory's Mixture - The Truth about the Notorious Jenny Cameron-The Chapel on the Hillside.

IT was chilly on the deck of the little loch steamer next morning. The day was grey with drizzling rain, and I stood beside the wheel talking to the Captain as the boat took us north-east to Glenfinnan. I was sorry to leave Acharacle, where Gillespie and Grant were remaining for another twenty-four hours before making tracks for home, and would fain have lingered for a few more days listening to Campbell's stories of old Moidart; but the untravelled miles of the journey ahead of me had made me restless.

The steamer touched at the little wooden pier at Dalilea, and we took on board some chickens in wicker coops. Among the trees I saw the grey-walled house, with its funny little mock-baronial turrets, which I had found packed with a boat-load of tourists when I had sought shelter three nights before.

It was at Dalilea that the Prince arrived on foot on the 18th of August, 1745, on his way to Glenfinnan, and he had been rowed half-way up Loch Shiel to sleep the night under the roof of Macdonald of Glenaladale. It was at Dalilea, too, that Alexander Macdonald the Gaelic poet was brought up. His father, the Rev. Alexander, was the Episcopal minister of the church at Kilchoan in Ardnamurchan, nearly thirty miles away, but he preferred to live on his farm at Dalilea, and do the sixty-mile tramp on foot every Sunday. According to Father Charles Macdonald, the Episcopal minister had a difficult time of it at Dalilea, hemmed in as he was by neighbours who were solidly Catholic. They deliberately allowed their herds to stray over his land, and often he was forced to lay a stick across the backs of their owners. But the Rev. Alexander, whose physical strength was prodigious, was not a man to be trifled with. Once he sold a cow to a neighbour who nimbly avoided paying for the beast. Meeting his debtor one day by the lochside, the minister's anger got the better of him, and he seized the man and shoved him into a hole below some crags. He was in the act of blocking up the entrance with a huge slab of stone when Macdonald of Glenaladale came along. The minister faced the Laird and told him why one of his crofters was being treated in a way which at first glance might seem a trifle hard.

"An effective punishment," nodded Glenaladale; "but aren't you making the payment for your cow further off than ever?"

"Not at all," declared the minister. "I'll let the scoundrel out as soon as one of his friends stands surety for the money that's due to me."

Smiling, the Laird took the hint; he promised to see that the debt would be paid at once; and the minister put his huge shoulder to the slab of stone, allowing the offender to crawl from his temporary tomb.

The young poet, his second son, was sent to Glasgow University to study law, but he fell in love with Jane Macdonald of Dalness and married her - Little Jean with the Yellow Shoes she was called. This marriage cut short his legal studies, and he returned to the Highlands, and eventually became schoolmaster and catechist at Kilchoan. On the Loch Sunart shore his industry must have been terrific, for besides teaching in the school he worked a croft to add to his few pounds of salary, and in the evenings he compiled the first Gaelic-English dictionary that was printed in Scotland. He had abandoned the school before the 'Forty-five, and was probably living at Dalilea when-according to the Moidart Muster Roll-he joined the Prince armed with gun and pistol. By this time he was a middle-aged man, though bad fortune had not damped his boyish impetuosity, and he was one of the most fervent Jacobites in Scotland.

Many guesses have been made at the identity of the "Lockhart Chronicler," who might be called the mystery-man of the 'Forty-five. He left a narrative of his experiences, telling among other things how he became the Prince's Gaelic teacher, and how he was sent to recruit in Ardnamurchan, "and soon returned with 50 clever fellows who pleased the Prince." This anonymous chronicler is now believed to have been Alexander Macdonald. And indeed who could have been more able to instruct the Prince in Gaelic than the author of the first Gaelic dictionary-and who could have recruited with more success in Ardnamurchan than the man who for some years had been a schoolmaster there and knew the people well? They say in Moidart that he knelt behind the Prince at Glenfinnan; Charles used the poet's knee as a seat; and Macdonald there and then composed a song in his honour.

A few years after the Rising, he settled down on a small farm in Moidart. But soon they cleared him out of the district. He had published a volume of Gaelic poems, entitled "The Resurrection of the Old Scottish Tongue," which poured vitriol on King George's head, and the public hangman in Edinburgh was ordered to burn the book. But the story goes that there was a double reason for the poet's expulsion. The parish priest, to his dismay, found that Alexander Macdonald had a taste for writing lewd verses, and had been reciting them to his neighbours. Fierce in his enthusiasms, Macdonald was first of all an Episcopalian, then a Presbyterian, and lastly a Catholic.

And it is to his credit that he remained a Catholic when it might have been to his material advantage to revoke. His was the first book of original Gaelic poems to be published, so with this and his dictionary he staked out for himself a double claim of honour in Highland literature. Alasdair MacMhaigstir Alasdair, as they called him, followed the method of the ancient bards, and composed his songs while he was stretched out on his back with his plaid round his head and a big stone on his breast. Those who can appreciate the full flavour of Gaelic verse say that his most beautiful song is "Morag," written in praise of the Prince. Here are some of the stanzas in English:

I would follow you and serve you  
Still unswerving in allegiance.

Cling to you with love compelling,  
Like the shell to rock adhering.

With your love my soul is flaming,  
All my frame with longing eager.

They would come, did you but call them,  
Many a stalwart Highland hero,

Who, with claymore and with shield, would  
Cannon's thunder charge unfearing.

These would boldly gather round you,  
Once they found that you were near them.

All the Gael their love would show you,  
Faithful, though the world should leave you.

Alexander Macdonald was indeed the laureate of the 'Forty-five. Some time after the Rising the Government passed a law that no man in Scotland must wear any part of the Highland garb, plaid or philabeg or shoulder-knot, and that no tartan cloth must be used for coat or greatcoat, under penalty of six months imprisonment without bail on the first offence; and on the second offence the penalty was to be transportation to His Majesty's plantations overseas for seven years. Spurred with indignation, Alexander Macdonald put into verse the feelings of the Highlander:

Give me the plaid, the light, the airy,  
Round my shoulder, under my arm,  
Rather than English wool the choicest,  
To keep my body tight and warm.

Thou art my joy in the charge of battle,  
When bright blades are flashing before me!  
When the war pipe is sounding, sounding,  
And the banners are waving o'er me!

Good is the plaid in the day or the night time,  
High on the ben, or low in the glen;  
No king was he but a coward who banned it,  
Fearing the look of the plaided men!

Let them tear our bleeding bosoms,  
Let them drain our latest veins,  
In our hearts is Charlie, Charlie,  
While a spark of life remains!

Even in this rough translation the plaint of a people can be heard. In 1928, the Clan Donald put a clock in the church tower at Arisaig as a memorial to the poet, and the bronze tablet in the wall was unveiled by Mr. Wiseman Macdonald, that fine old Gael who travelled all the way from Los Angeles for the ceremony. Although his home is on the other side of the world,

this descendant of Reginald, son of Amie MacRuari, who founded the Clanranald family, has his roots deep in Moidart, for he is the owner of Castle Tirrim.

The steamer cast off from the pier at Dalilea; and since Eilean Fhionnan lay around the next headland, I went up beside the Captain at the wheel to catch my first glimpse of the island. Little is known about the saint after whom it is named. His friends called him Finnan the Infirm One; he is mentioned in Adamnan's Life of St. Columba; and a fair which used to be held every year on 18<sup>th</sup> of March in Moidart was named after him. The local tradition that he lived on the island is strong, but it is sometimes apt to be forgotten that many churches of the Celtic period were named after saints who had never been near the place where their memory has been kept green. It is almost certain that later missionaries from Iona lived on the island and preached in the districts around, and it was natural that the Christian converts and their descendants would wish their bodies to mingle with the earth of the island they revered. Until long after the days of the 'Forty-five, penitents were ordered to make a pilgrimage to Eilean Fhionnan; and if the loch was too stormy to be crossed, they knelt on the shore and went through their religious exercises as though they were kneeling upon the sacred island.

The steamer rounded the headland, and from the grey water there uprose a sweet green mound, with clusters of firs and larches growing upon it; and when we drew nearer I could see broom and hawthorn and holly and one or two gravestones. The Captain of the steamer told me that near the ruins of the church there is a small building which was once used by the Kinlochmoidart family as a burial-ground. The old square bell rests upon the rough altar stone; it has lain there exposed to the weather for more than two 'hundred years; and there is a curse upon the one who removes it. As we left the island behind us, the picture that built itself up in my mind was that of a rowing-boat creeping slowly up the loch under a grey sky, with a black pall covering a coffin on the thwarts, and other boats with mourners following in procession. This picture faded, and another one from the distant Celtic centuries took its place: a missionary from Iona, in a grey hand-woven robe, his head shaven from ear to ear in the shape of a curving axe-blade, a man with an eager face and burning eyes, standing at the door of his wattle-hut, gazing towards the east, and then girding up his robe as he strode down to the coracle drawn up above the water edge.

"There used to be sextons on the island," said the Captain. "Big Neil of the island was the last of them. A brave strongman he was. No ghost could frighten Neil."

The Captain had humorous dark eyes, and I could see that there was a story on the tip of his tongue.

"One night, some men from Morven tried to frighten Neil," he went on. "They were a funeral party, and it was a wild evening, and they could not get to the island until after dark. They had a lot of whiskey with them, and they would nearly all be tipsy, I'm thinking. Neil was sound asleep in bed when they came ashore. They had heard he was brave, but they did not believe he was as brave as he was called, so they took the coffin up to the door of his hut, and began to push it across the floor to Neil's bed. One of them was making groans as if he was the dead corpse. This wakened Neil up, and he jumped out of bed with a roar and fell over the

coffin. But in a minute he was after the Morven men, and he caught them before they were in their boat, and gave them the flat of his sword. They went back to Morven with sore backs, and never more did they say that Big Neil of the island was not a brave man. I wouldna like Neil's job myself," added the Captain, with a smile, "and there's few in Moidart that would go near the island in the night. They say that the soul of the dead keeps watch over the island until the next burial, and then it is free to leave. But I don't think I'm believing it," he added, with a shrug, "though some have seen a light on the island after it is dark."

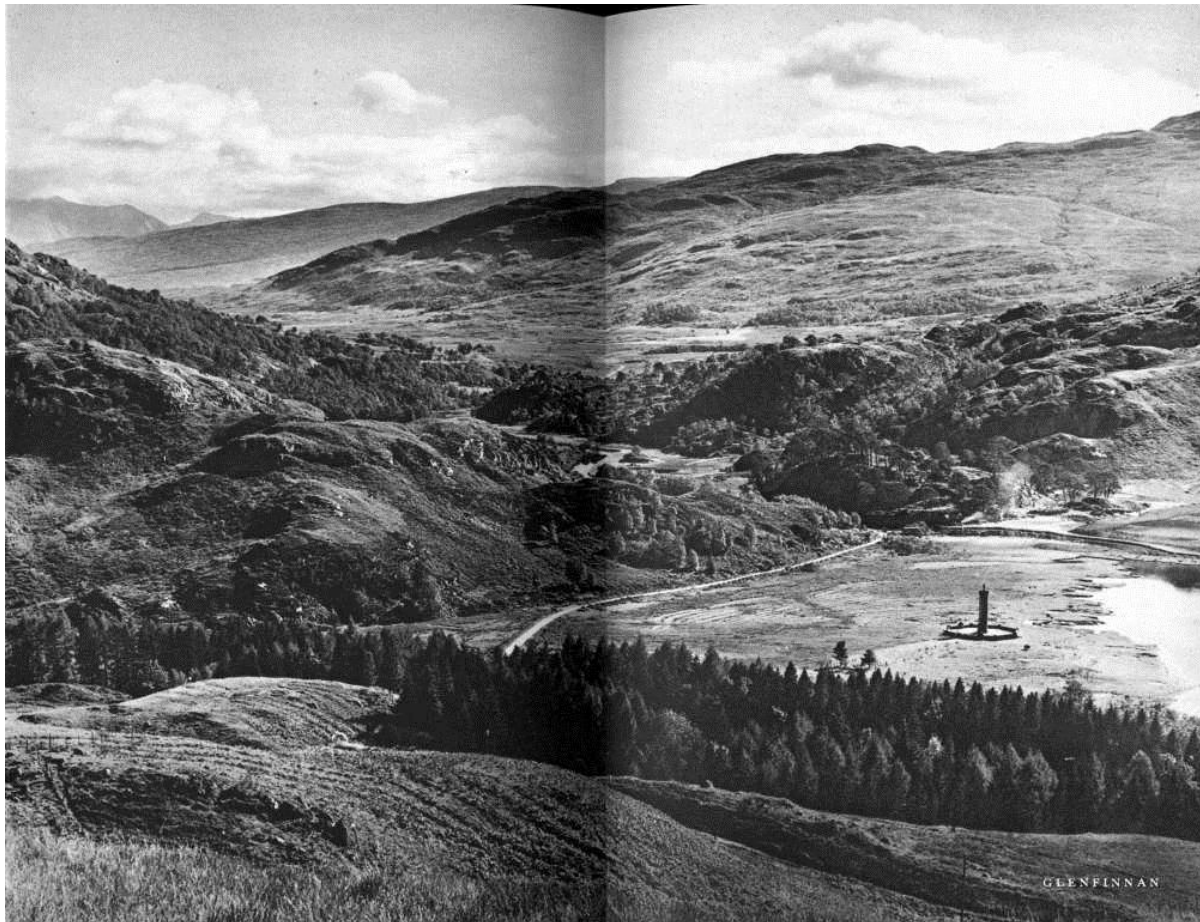


Figure 4 - Glenfinnan

Soon we were passing Glenaladale, a misty glen on the north-west shore, where Charles disembarked. The laird, Alexander Macdonald, was the nephew of Angus Macdonald of Borrodale, the Prince's first host on the mainland of Scotland. After spending the night with Glenaladale, who was given his commission as a major in the Clanranald regiment, the Prince with his attendants and forty of a guard set out early next morning for Glenfinnan. They drew in to one of the beaches further up the loch, and the little company had a hasty meal upon a knoll which is still called the Prince's Mound. The boats grounded among the rushes at Glenfinnan one hour before noon.

There were nearly a dozen of us on the little loch steamer that morning, and it looked as if we might have to spend the rest of the day on board. In spite of the recent rain, the level of the loch was low, and when we attempted to come up to the pier we ran aground on a submerged



mud bank. The ship had sturdy engines, but although the crew and indeed some of the passengers helped to push with poles it seemed that we might stick there until a few more days' rain had floated us off the bar. After twenty minutes, during which the noise of the engines rose from a purr to a wild despairing roar, and many strong men with boat-hooks prodded holes in the Loch Shiel mud, the idea of lightening the ship-occurred to the Captain. He sent us all ashore in a rowing-boat, and the cargo after us. And then, with a flutter of the screw, the steamer floated back into deep water.

I went with the last boat-load, and could not help noticing how everybody bustled away from the shore, each on his or her own business. Most of the people, I suppose, were making for the railway station, where the train for Fort William was due at six minutes past one. Standing alone with my pack on my back, I realised I had forgotten to tell the Captain that I had used his vessel as sleeping quarters a few nights before. Because of his kindly dark eyes, and the wistful smile that now and then passed over his pale and rather sad face, I had wanted to make my confession. But now it was too late. The gentle excitement of running aground, and the effort of helping to get the vessel off the mud, had made me forget my troubled conscience. Better, I decided, to let sleeping dogs lie; and turning, I walked slowly along the path towards the monument that marks the spot where Prince Charles Edward Stuart raised his father's standard.

The scene has been described dozens of times, and this lonely green corner of a lonely loch, where four deep glens meet, has been the subject of innumerable engravings, paintings and picture-postcards, most of them entitled "Prince Charlie's Monument at Glenfinnan." But the familiar column is not a monument to Prince Charlie. It was built by Alexander Macdonald of Glenaladale in the winter of 1814 in memory of his own forefathers and others "who fought and bled in the 'Forty-five." Macdonald died while it was being erected, and in the words of the inscription, "this pillar is now, alas! also become the monument of its amiable and accomplished founder."

There are three versions of the inscription on the surrounding wall, in Gaelic, Latin, and English. The Latin one was composed by the man who invented that vile concoction known as Gregory's Mixture. Doses of this greyish-pink powder have been stirred in a little water and administered to the shuddering children of Britain for nearly a century. No doubt it is a wholesome thing after a stealthy feast of green gooseberries, but I know it was one of the nightmares of my childhood. He was as strong as a horse himself, this Dr. Gregory, which probably accounts for the fact that he seldom tasted his own Mixture. Indeed, nothing in all his life seems to have disturbed this serene man, and although he waged many furious battles with his Edinburgh colleagues, he had a wonderful knack of making them all look ridiculous, so that he always came out top dog and smiling. This fashionable Edinburgh physician was anything but a pompous one, for he spent part of his spare time composing verses of the limerick order, and he had the nerve to print them for the amusement of his friends. Here is one of his epigrams in verse:

"O give me, dear angel, one lock of your hair,"  
A bashful young lover took courage and sighed;

'Twas a sin to refuse so modest a prayer  
"You shall have my whole wig," the dear angel replied.

But Macdonald of Glenaladale knew what he was about when he asked his medical man in Edinburgh to help with the inscription for the Glenfinnan memorial, for Dr. James Gregory of 2 St. Andrew Square was one of the finest Latin scholars of his time. Some years afterwards, a stone statue of the Prince was set on the top of the monument. This was the work of John Greenshields, a stone mason who took to sculpture at the age of twenty-eight, produced a bust of George IV which Sir Walter Scott called "a very happy likeness," and made what is probably the best statue we have of Sir Walter himself-the one in the National Library.

From Loch Shiel the Macdonald monument looks like a dirty stump of tallow candle in a candle-stick, with a bit of broken wick jutting out at the top; but in the imagination of many good people, that wick is burning with a flame that nothing will ever quench. As you go nearer, the octagonal wall around the foot of the column gives the impression that it encloses a cemetery - which it does: the cemetery of a young Prince's hopes. I am told that the chambers inside were designed for use as a shooting-box, and this struck me as a quaint fusion of ideas. I have heard of a cottage hospital that was built as a memorial, but I have never heard of a shooting-box. Yet I have no doubt that the Prince himself would have approved with a laughing gesture, for few men have ever taken a more hearty joy in what is called wild sports - "I was bred a fowler," he once said-and no man of his day in Scotland was a better shot. But I would rather have seen the simple cairn of stones that long ago used to stand as a memorial at that lochside, with the shooting-box tucked well out of sight behind the pine trees.

Anyhow, as I gazed on that bleak thing, with its stained and peeling walls, a horrible depression began to settle on my mind. The rain had stopped, but the sky was grey, and the mist made the mountains look hostile. I was cold and hungry, and as I picked my way through the bog around the monument, I hated the raw damp smell of the place: it had the very reek of death. For two pins I would have slunk back to the steamer, and joined the crew at their cocoa and sandwiches, and returned to Acharacle in the afternoon. Shivering, I thought of Campbell's peat-fire in the inn sitting-room, and the cheerful talk of Gillespie and Grant in the evening. I wondered where I would land before the darkness drew down, and I hated with a deep bitterness the thought of the day's tramp that was ahead of me.

Some tobacco in the shelter of the monument wall revived my spirits a little. I thought of the Prince's arrival there at eleven o'clock in the forenoon expecting to see a fine crowd of clansmen awaiting him, and I thought of his despair as the hours passed. The first arrival was James Mor Macgregor, son of Rob Roy and father of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Catriona*. He was a man of many talents, this Macgregor, a treacherous rogue, but a tiger in a battle. Though the Prince did not know it then, James had recently been a spy paid by Government. Not that he had much regard either for King George or anybody else; he was playing for money and a commission in the Black Watch. But he was ready to hold in with the Prince as he did - on the chance that the Rising would turn out to be a success. He was taken to the door of the hut where the Prince sat brooding over the failure of the clansmen to appear at the

place appointed. Charles gave him a courteous welcome, and James assured him that he could count on the Macgregors to a man. Another silence for an hour or more. And then came a trickle of Clanranalds down the rough road among the pine trees on the east, only a hundred and fifty of them all told under Macdonald of Morar. But there was better news to come. The Clanranald guards beside the hut caught the sound of distant bagpipes, and soon along the defile from the north came the Camerons, with young Lochiel at their head, two long columns, three deep, with a rabble of prisoners between them - prisoners from the two companies of Scots Royals captured beside Loch Lochy in the first skirmish of the campaign. It was a brave show these Camerons made coming down beside the river Finnan from Glen Pean, and although many of them carried no arms - and indeed a hundred and fifty of them were afterwards sent home - a lot of them wore the Cameron tartan that Lochiel had bought in Glasgow so that on the day of the rallying his men would appear on the field with fine new plaids around their shoulders. The Prince's spirits rose. In his enthusiasm at the sight of these seven hundred Camerons, he ordered the Standard to be unfurled, and the Duke of Atholl, crippled with rheumatism and supported by two men, held the staff while the exiled king's commission appointing Charles as his Regent was read over. After the ceremony the Prince made what Murray of Broughton called afterwards "a very Pathetick speech." He did not propose, he said, to talk about the justice of his father's title to the throne, because his friends around him would not have come to meet him there on that day if they had not been convinced of it. He spoke about the noble example of their predecessors, of their country's honour, and the protection of "a just God who never fails to avenge the cause of the injured," and he did not doubt that they would bring the affair to a happy issue. He then retired to his hut.

A little later, other groups arrived, three hundred Macdonells from Lochaber with Keppoch at their head, and some MacLeods who had come against the orders of their chief - a man who had promised to join the Prince, and was in fact sending to the Government what information he could glean about the progress of the Rising. According to Aeneas Macdonald, a group of ladies and gentlemen had assembled to watch the ceremony at Glenfinnan, among them Jenny Cameron.

Will the "notorious" Jenny Cameron never be allowed to sleep in peace? During the campaign yarns flew around the country that she was the Prince's mistress. Before he had left Scotland, no less than three ridiculous books about her life had been published, and her name was bandied about in pamphlet and newspaper as a Scarlet Woman. One of these books sets forth that she was in the habit of masquerading in a man's clothes, and had been the queen of a band of robbers before she became the Prince's mistress at Glenfinnan. Even in Tom Jones, one of the greatest novels in the English tongue, she is referred to as Charles's paramour, and the fable has persisted steadily to this day. A few years ago, at a Scottish Exhibition in London there was a print entitled "Bonnie Jenny Cameron of Lochiel," and in the catalogue she was described as "Mistress of Bonnie Prince Charlie." She was certainly not a Cameron of Lochiel - her father was Cameron of Glendessarry - and I doubt if there is a shred of evidence that she ever exchanged a word with the Prince in her life. At the time of the Rising, she was between forty and fifty years of age, "a genteel, well-looking woman with a pair of

bright eyes and hair as black as jet ... and very agreeable in conversation." A keen Jacobite, she sent the Prince a gift of cattle, and during the campaign she managed her brother's estates in Strontian while he served as an officer in the Highland army. The rumour that she was present at Glenfinnan no doubt started the scandal, and Grub Street did the rest.

Now, it happened in the following February that an Edinburgh milliner called Jenny Cameron set out to visit a relative who lay wounded in the Prince's camp near Stirling. Cumberland's troops arrested her, and Cumberland himself expressed delight at her capture. Convinced that the famous Jenny Cameron had fallen into his hands, he decided to use her as evidence against the rebels, with the result that the poor milliner was locked up in Edinburgh Castle for eight months, when she was released on bail. Her imprisonment was the best piece of publicity she had ever received, for all Edinburgh crowded to buy her ribbons, gloves, and fans.

But there was yet another Jenny Cameron, a crazy old woman who years later dressed herself in men's clothing, and went hobbling about Edinburgh on a wooden leg begging for alms, assuring the credulous public that she had been the Prince's mistress in Scotland. The poor old maniac died in Edinburgh Infirmary, but the myth has been kept alive by babbling tongues for nearly two centuries, and will no doubt live by the same medium for several centuries more.

At Glenfinnan, the Prince had certainly neither time nor inclination for dalliance. For two days he remained at the head of Loch Shiel, supervising a multitude of details and sleeping in the hut at night. One of his officers said afterwards that during all the months Charles was in Scotland he was never more happy than during those two busy days.

I climbed the hill to the Catholic chapel that stood above the monument. Behind it, sweeping up to the horizon, there was a wood of many trees, Scots Pine, Austrian Pine, Douglas Fir, Larch, Cedar, Cypress and others I cannot put a name to. The walls of the chapel were built of a light grey granite, and the west door looking down the loch stood open. I went in, and entered a new world.

That small chapel, with its white-washed walls and coloured reliefs, its plain wooden roof and unvarnished benches, its clean-scrubbed wooden floor and the little loft with its narrow corkscrew stair, struck me as uncannily beautiful. A cool clear light, like the light on a pale Arctic sea, dwelt in that place. A rich red hanging behind the altar was the only bit of high colour, and it drew the eye back to it again and again. I sat down on the bench beside the door and wondered who had built this chapel - who had made it so perfect, so austere, so white and clean and cool. To eyes weary of these green barbaric hillsides and the zigzag of the horizon, here was a place so orderly and simple that it was a sweet lenitive to the mind. A brass tablet on the wall has the words: Charles Edward Stuart, R.I.P.

I had climbed up to the chapel half afraid that I might find it hideous with tinsel and paint, and so noisily crowded with things that it would look as if there was no room for the congregation, an impression one often gets in Catholic churches on the Continent. But the

silence and the lovely fitting emptiness of this chapel at Glenfinnan had an effect on me that it is impossible to describe.

I lingered at the door, which is always open, and looked past a clump of larches to the blue-grey water of the loch below and the jagged hills beyond that shut off the mountains of Ardgour and Morven. Turning, I gave a final glance into the chapel, with its white walls and bare benches and that red splash of colour behind the altar, then I hurried down the path.

## Chapter VIII. The Country of the Camerons

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On to Lochaber - I Lunch with a Road-mender - The Lonely Glen - By the Shore of Loch Eil  
- The Flesh-pots of Fort William - Around the Fire with Commercial Travellers - In Quest of  
Ben Nevis -The Stranger and the Stuarts - Seven White Roses.

**L**INING this path were many mossy blocks of granite, probably left over when the chapel was built; and down beside the gate, a huge bell hung between stout pillars of stone, a bell I would like to hear echoing among these hills as the country folk gather for Mass.

Glenfinnan had saddened me; but now, as I set out on the next stage of my journey, I was filled with a quiet exultation. That cool grey chapel, with the brass tablet on the wall, is the Prince's true memorial. If on his journey he glanced back, as I did, at the point where a mound like a fairy-knoll shuts off Glenfinnan, his last glimpse of that place would have been the tree-clad island at the head of Loch Shiel and the sodden ground where he had raised the Royal Standard.

My way led eastward, and after the hill-paths of Moidart it was an ordeal to tramp on a road again. Thanks to Campbell, however, my shoes were now easier, and I made good progress. There were pleasant glimpses to be had of the river, lined with scraggy larches; and then the land opened out into a wide cauldron of moorland. The West Highland line from Fort William to Mallaig runs close to the road; and I sat in the lee of a railway-bridge and ate my lunch of oat cake, cheese, and dry dates, and talked to a road-mender, who gave me some cold tea from his flagon. He was a big powerful man with a quiet voice, but had little to say at the start, and sat staring into the blue distance where the hills opened out at the head of Loch Eil. I made a remark about the bad state of a thatched roof I had noticed, and he was interested to hear that I lived in a seventeenth-century English cottage with a roof thatched with straw.

"You have a man who can make a thatch down there in England?" he said, and I told him that a thatcher lived but a mile away from me, and that nearly all the cottages in the district have thatched roofs.

"It is a hard trade to learn," he remarked slowly. "It is like learning to be a piper."

"The Wisbeys of Langley have been thatchers for generations," I explained, and I told how I liked to watch Charles Wisbey splitting hazel-branches with a skill that looks miraculous, and binding the great trusses of straw one upon another, and teaching his boy the old craft.

"Ah, it is good to watch a man who can do his work," said the road-mender. "But here there is nobody who can make a thatch. They will put a tarpaulin over an old roof to keep out the rain. If they want a thatcher here, they must send to Greenock - it is a great expense. So you will see slates or tin on the new houses-not so good as a thatch of heather."

There was a long silence, and then I began to talk about road-mending. It was a quiet life working on the road, he said, but cheerful in midsummer with motorcars passing on their way to Mallaig. I was inquisitive enough to wonder whether he had lived in this glen all his days, but there was something about him that made it impossible for a stranger to ask him point

blank about himself. Our leave-taking was slightly formal; I felt I might have been a newly joined member of his club, and we had lunched by chance at the same table. The road-mender went back to fill a pot-hole with gravel, and I trudged on towards Loch Eil.

The hills closed in, then suddenly opened out into a great hollow glen, with a mountainside on the south like the tawny flank of a lion. That glen, as I passed through it, was overpowering in its bareness and solitude. I half-closed my eyes and tried to imagine the friendly green English fields that lie on the fringe of Essex and Hertfordshire; I thought of a white cottage with latticed windows, and a tall elm tree beside it, and an orchard with a hornbeam hedge, and a pond with ducks and a few wildfowl; but the familiar picture made worse my loneliness. There may have been beauty of a kind in that glen, but behind the beauty there was a shudder. You felt that if you raised your voice the echo of it would roll for ever around that empty place. I was glad when Loch Eil came into my view, and I shall always think of it as a companionable sheet of water.

This loch is long and narrow, and last century great shoals of herring came up every summer. Fifty thousand pounds worth used to be taken from it each year, more than is caught nowadays on all the west coast of Scotland. I saw a fringe of yellow seaweed on the shore, and it was strange to think that one could sail in a boat for seventy miles between the mountains, going east and then south-west, and coming out at last into the Atlantic between Ardnamurchan Point and the Island of Coll. But this very fact was a danger to the Prince, for Government warships had been sent up the west coast after him, and his movements were becoming known to those in authority.

In the Prince's time, so bad was the road from Glenfinnan that the Highlanders took a whole day to drag their baggage down the glen. There had been a lot of rain, and their twenty swivel-guns had kept sticking in the mud, so they had been compelled to bury a dozen of the heavier ones in a bog a mile from Glenfinnan. Panting and weary, the little army drew to a halt at the head of Loch Eil and settled down for the night.

I paused and looked around me with interest. I have no idea where Charles slept that night; he may have lain down beside his men among those tumbled rocks above the road. But it is pretty certain that he was up at the peep of day, for there were many plans to be made. They had not more than twenty saddle-horses in the camp, and they were deficient in transport-ponies and baggage-wagons. At about forty shillings each they bought as many "garrons" as they could find in the surrounding district, and collected farm-carts from the friendly Cameron crofters. Some of Lochiel's men had been sent with Macdonalds into Moidart to bring forward the remainder of the weapons that had been landed from the Du Teillay, and these had not yet made up on the main body.

It was while Charles was here that a messenger arrived from the South with two vital pieces of news. The first item caused a stir in the camp. There was a price upon the Prince's head. King George was absent on one of his long visits in Hanover, leaving a Council of Regency to look after the kingdom; and even before they knew definitely that the Prince had landed in Scotland, the Lords of Regency had published a proclamation offering a reward of £30,000 "to such person and persons who should seize and secure the son of the Pretender." It was a futile measure, and showed how little they understood the temper of the country. The Prince himself treated the proclamation with the contempt it deserved. He called it "a mean barbarous principal among princes, and must dishonour them in the eyes of all men of honour." But it angered his companions, and they urged him to issue a counter-proclamation

setting the same 'price on the head of King George. Charles protested; he repeated that it was beneath the dignity of a Christian prince; but his friends were persistent. "Then let the price be thirty shillings!" he said, trying to turn the matter aside with a laugh. In the end he gave in. His old tutor, Sir Thomas Sheridan, wrote out the proclamation, the Prince signed it, and it was sent off to Edinburgh to be printed.

But the second piece of news which the messenger brought was that Sir John Cope had left Edinburgh on Saturday morning on his way to the North. They questioned him about the proposed line of march, but the man could tell them nothing more. Few things are more tearing to the nerves of a commander than to be informed that the enemy is moving against him along an unknown road. Charles knew one thing, however, and this braced his spirits. Cope's army was small, and many of his soldiers were as raw as the two companies of Scots Royals that had been so easily captured after the skirmish at High Bridge exactly a week before. But whatever Cope's game was to be, the Prince was determined to march towards Fort Augustus, and pick up on the way some loyal Stewarts from Appin, the Macdonalds from Glencoe, and the Macdonells of Glengarry, and to join the men who were coming to meet him from Glen Urquhart and Glenmoriston.

The next day, which was Friday, saw him as far as Fassifern House, where he stayed the night. The owner was John Cameron, a brother of Lochiel. This Glasgow business man had already tried to dissuade his brother from going near Charles. He had reminded Donald that their father had spent thirty years in exile for a foolish Jacobite dream. "If this Prince once sets his eyes upon you," he had declared, "he will make you do whatever he pleases." You may hear in Lochaber that he afterwards offered to lead the Camerons if Donald would stay at home; the fact remains that by the time the Prince reached Fassifern, John had prudently slipped away to his father-in-law's at Breadalbane.

Donald Cameron of Lochiel, one of the finest men in Scotland, had devoted his life to the peace and prosperity of his clan; he was now a man of fifty, and he knew what had happened in the Highlands after the Rising of 'Fifteen. He had nothing but contempt for the fashionable king-across-the-water romanticism; his loyalty to the exiled James went as deep as a Gael's loyalty can go; but when he had heard that Charles had arrived without an army, he had seen disaster ahead, and had hurried to Borrodale to persuade him to go back to France. John Cameron of Fassifern, however, had been right: the Prince had won him over. The Macdonalds had made the Rising possible: Lochiel's assent had made it a certainty.

When I reached Fassifern, the farmer's wife showed me over the old house. Since John Cameron had declined to take a hand in the Rising, his estate was spared when the Government troops were burning and pillaging, and Fassifern is one of the few inhabited houses in Scotland where Charles is known to have spent a night. I was taken to the Prince's room, a tiny chamber with a window that looks down on the waters of Loch Eil. The eye strays across to the green fields on the opposite shore, and then sweeps up to the brown top of Ceann Caol. No man will ever know the Prince's thoughts as he lay in this small room. They say there is something eerie about the house, and that at certain times the dogs act in a queer way. But as I was told about it with reluctance, I will leave it at that. It would be a pity if this pleasant whitewashed farmhouse, set snugly among beech trees and rhododendrons beside the burn that gushes down from Druim Fada and slides over slabs of grey rock to the lochside, should be called a haunted house.



A few miles from Fassifern, I sat down by the roadside and opened my map; and as I stared at it, a wave of something very like horror crept over me. Here was a dilemma indeed. A devilish awkward dilemma, which a pipe of tobacco did nothing to solve. The gist of my trouble was this. From Fassifern the Prince sent on the baggage with a strong guard of Camerons to Moy in the Great Glen; but when the main body of his army came into view of the garrison at Fort William, Charles decided to take a different route. At Ach-da-Shlighe - which means the Field of the Two Ways-he climbed the hillside on the north, coming down towards Moy through Glen Laragain. Little wonder I was staring in perplexity at my map, for it was now half-past four in the afternoon. Ahead of me there was a stiff climb over the pass between Meall Banavie and the ridge of mountains beyond, and after that there was the descent into the Great Glen. With luck, I would reach Moy by eight o'clock; in other words, after sundown. What would happen if I failed to find a lodging at the farmhouse? My map told me that if I kept to the Prince's road I would have to walk another twenty miles before I came to a village. To hunt for a night's lodging was one of the things I had been prepared to face with good humour; but now I foresaw myself trudging along in the darkness hoping that each new bend in the road would bring into view the blink of light from a cottage window.

I glanced up that grim hillside, and then looked down the loch towards Fort William. The songs the sirens sang to Ulysses were not more alluring than the tune Fort William piped to me: it stole across the water, that music, with a dying fall. I called myself a degenerate, a poor runt of a fellow; I told myself I had sworn to walk over every yard in Scotland and England that Prince Charles Edward Stuart had trod. Was this to be my first surrender?

It was. I rose, hitched up my [pack](#), smothered my protesting conscience, and set out in the direction of Fort William. But as I trundled along by the lochside, I swore I would return on the following day and pick up the Prince's route at the point where I had so weakly given in to the risk of a night below a whin bush: I would have taken a Highlander's oath upon a dirk if I'd had one, but my pocket-knife served instead.

Darkness was drawing down when I went past the ruins of Inverlochry Castle and came into the little grey town of Fort William, the town which is still known to some old Highlanders as the "Garrison" and which has borne so many other names in its recent history, Inverlochry, Maryburgh, Gordonsburg, Duncansburgh. Has any other town in Europe, except perhaps. St. Petersburg, come popping up so often and so blandly with a new name? It was called Fort William in honour of William III, that little shrewd unpleasant king whose painted wax effigy is perched on a foot-stool beside his queen in a turret-room in Westminster Abbey-a quaint relic of the days when the principal object in the funeral procession of an English monarch was a kind of Madame Tussaud exhibit which revealed to the gaping public in the streets the life-like figure and features of the royal corpse.

I had hoped to find a lodging in some cottage where I might learn a little about the countryside. But a march of eighteen miles on a purgatorial road had knocked the curiosity out of me. When I saw the open door of a hotel in the main street I lurched wearily into it and climbed the carpeted stair. I knew nothing about the hotels in Fort William, so this was a shot in the dark. But I was in luck's way, for while I was scratching my name in the register I mentioned to the proprietress that I had come from Acharacle, and her eye brightened. "Not the Campbells? ..." she began. "Why, they're cousins of mine!" My heart responded with a thump. I was among friends indeed!

I dropped the pack from my back, and somebody picked it up; somebody else took my hat and stick; and from nowhere there floated to me one of the largest and most flavoursome tumblers of whiskey-and-soda I have ever consumed. Twenty minutes later I lay dreaming in a hot bath of astounding depth. I had no idea that such a hotel existed in this distant corner of Lochaber. From railway posters and leaflets, I had dimly gathered that Gleneagles had cornered all the good chefs in Scotland, and from truculent newspaper articles I had derived the impression that luxury in a hotel was not to be found north of the Highland line. But by the time I was half-way through dinner, which was accompanied by a more than adequate burgundy, I realised that there are flesh-pots to be found beyond the confines of Egypt.

Afterwards, in the smoking-room, I found myself in the middle of six or eight commercial travellers. Some of them were sitting at small tables making up their orders for the day. I know little or nothing about commercial travellers, but I had not been in this group for an hour before I came to the conclusion that they are a shockingly maligned race of men. Perhaps the stage and the comic papers are partly responsible for this. On the stage, the stock figure of a commercial traveller is one who bounces about with his chest out, browbeating people into buying things they don't want. But as I listened to the talk of these men around me, I could not imagine them browbeating a fly. Most of them were obviously rivals in trade; I think they all came from Glasgow, and they seemed to cover the inner isles and western mainland. They all spoke well of the shopkeepers they dealt with, although they admitted that a Highland shopkeeper needed careful handling-Scots canniness was not confined to the Lowlands and Border country, they said. The folk in the little general stores in distant glens had the quaintest notion about business and bookkeeping, and some of them were as slow and suspicious as they were honest.

"There's good and bad among them," said a young fellow of twenty-five with a pale, eager, nervous face. "But I'd rather work in the Highlands any day than go down into Ayrshire. A hard life up here? Ay, it's a hard life, and bad in winter. Some of the roads are fearful, and when there's frost after a fall of snow ye've got to look out. Last winter my Cowley skidded on the ice, and I spent a night in a ditch Loch Cluanie way. Oh, ay, we've all got cars nowadays - except John there. John'll no' touch a car. His firm's fought him about it for six years, but they haven't beat him yet."

"And they never will," said John, his ruddy face wrinkling in a smile as he ran his fingers through his short white hair. "A railway train for me, and I can hire for the out-by places."

"John's the richest traveller on the road," explained the other, with an ostentatious wink. "He's got the Highlands in his waistcoat pocket. When are ye going to retire, John, and give us a look in? If only ye drove a car, John, ye'd put the rest of us clean out of business."

"Mebby I would," admitted John, with a chuckle. "But I'll die in a railway train - or in one of these dawmed damp beds ye sometimes get in the out-by places. Lord sakes, I mind of a damp bed I got two winters ago - I'd sooner sleep in a peat-bog. It was up in ... well, I'll no' say where it was, but ye ken the place fine. Jimmie Hendry was there too - ye mind poor old Jimmie? We were snowed up," he explained to me, "and there was only one bed to be had. We got into it together, but in half an hour I said to Jimmie, 'This bed's damp.' And it was too. `Ach, the bed's right enough,' Jimmie said. I had some whiskey in my bag, so I got up and had a good dram, and put on my underclothes. I tried to make Jimmie take a drop of whiskey, but he was a firm teetotaller and he wouldnae touch it. Man, I could feel poor Jimmie shaking wi' cold the long night through. I got a chill that lasted a month, but Jimmie

was dead in a fortnight. That's what ye've got to risk when ye're a commercial in the Highlands."

There was a dance in the town that night, following a swimming gala which had taken place in the late afternoon. The gala was an annual affair, it seemed, and the competitors had to swim across Loch Linnhe. The first man to come ashore at the Fort William pier was the local hero for the next twelve months; and while we sat talking in the smoking-room, he was no doubt sunning himself before the admiring eyes of the local belles to the lilt of scraping fiddles. Two of the younger travellers got up from the fire rather reluctantly, with the remark that they had promised to put in an appearance at the dance, and soon the others began to trickle off to bed. The last nightcap was drunk, the last good-night exchanged, and I found myself nodding alone before the red embers in the grate. Tired out, I crawled upstairs. A few minutes before I slept, I remember, I got up on one elbow and said to myself: "Here I am at Fort William, under the very shadow of Ben Nevis - and I haven't seen the mountain ..."

I was wrong, of course, quite wrong. I had seen Ben Nevis; it had been in full view for the last five miles of my journey, and I had not realised it. When I went out next morning after breakfast I perceived that the huge grey mound I had seen on the south-east must indeed have been the Ben itself.

I was profoundly disappointed. One has a right to expect the king of British mountains to be a majestic spectacle, but Nevis is merely a hump on the ground - a big hump certainly, but still a hump. Give me Ben Lawers, viewed from the south shore of Loch Tay, and I am ready to worship, for it not only seems to tower into the clouds, but it looks immeasurably far away, almost a fitting nut for an Everest Expedition to crack. Ben Lawers is like a proud Highland chief standing at bay with a "tail" of foothills defending him; but as I looked up at Ben Nevis I felt that a clever boy with a catapult could flip a pebble over the top. And when a little bright-eyed man, who saw me staring, told me proudly that he had driven an old motor-bike to the summit, my admiration went out to the machine rather than to the mountain. And yet the Fort Williamites are proud of their hill - ridiculously proud. It is odd to read in the record of the Tour which Pennant made in the eighteenth century that there was then considerable doubt whether Nevis was really the highest mountain in Britain. In Fort William, they have no doubt about it to-day. An Englishman, quoting the poet Southey, once remarked to a shopkeeper in the main street that the greatest Ben of all was not Nevis - it was Ben Jonson. "Not at all," declared the shopkeeper. "Ye're wrong. Ben Nevis has it easy! "I warn travellers not to be facetious in Fort William at the expense of the "Ben."

But my disappointment was soon swallowed up by my delight in the tiny West Highland Museum in the centre of the town. These two or three rooms are full of Jacobite relics, among which an enthusiast can browse for days. One of the first things that caught my eye were the trews - or long hose - that Prince Charlie wore in Scotland. The cloth is tough and hard, like the stuff used for the kilts of Highland regiments until the end of last century, when the modern soft cloth was adopted. The tartan of the Prince's trews is that of plain black stripes on a red background. In the 'Forty-five, many of the officers were mounted, so the trews were a more suitable garment than the kilt - a curious reversal of the habits of the ancient Caledonians, against whom the Romans fought, for they wore trews on foot and a kind of kilt if they were mounted.

I saw that I was not alone in the Museum. A short man with quick small black eyes was staring at some letters from the Cluny Charter Chest, and he moved over and peered eagerly at the Prince's trews.

"The Devil himself was in them!" he said abruptly, and turned away. I was tempted to ask him if he was referring to the breeks, but he swung back and glared at me. "Do you know anything about the Stewarts?" he demanded.

I fobbed him off with a remark about the Stewart kings being gentlemen, even if some of them were fools, adding that James VI was probably the only cad among the lot, and he was certainly no fool.

"The Devil was in their blood," declared the man. "The Devil's chequers were on their coat-of-arms, and the Devil dogged them to the end."

I admitted that the Devil seemed to have dogged Prince Charlie, and at this the man snapped his white restless fingers. As I looked into his bright eyes, I thought he must be slightly crazed.

"I'm a Stewart myself," he said, moistening his lips, "and I know what I'm talking about. You don't believe in destiny, I suppose? No, I thought not. But you're wrong!" He stared in silence through the window for a few moments, his eyes half closed, and then pointed to the Prince's clothes in the cabinet at our side. "The young man who wore these never had a chance," he went on. "The Devil saw to that. If Charles Edward had won in 1745, there would have been less of the Devil's work done in this land to-day."

"Perhaps you're right," I murmured, and began to edge away.

And then he laughed.

"Have you ever thought how the number seven kept cropping up with Prince Charles?" he asked.

I couldn't understand what he was driving at, but it was soon made plain.

"Seven!" he repeated. "Didn't you know that it was his unlucky number? You've heard of the Association of Seven? A few years before the 'Fortyfive, seven Jacobites in Scotland made a band to support the king across the water. Then the Prince landed here with seven companions. It was seven Macdonalds who first agreed to help him, and if they hadn't done so there would have been no Rising. You see how the number seven keeps turning up? After Culloden, the Seven Men of Glenmoriston swore they would die rather than yield to the Butcher Cumberland. But I'm not finished, my friend! Read in your history books and you'll find that the seventh Steward of the kingdom became the first Stewart king. There were seven Stewarts on the throne before Queen Mary, and if Charles Edward had become king he'd have made another cycle of seven. He'd have been spared his miserable end if he had fallen at Culloden - and then he would have been the seventh Royal Stewart to die a violent death. Do you believe now that seven was his unlucky number?"

“It looks like it,” I confessed, now quite certain that the stranger was slightly crazed. I wondered whether he also believed that Bacon wrote Shakespeare; but I had no chance to put the question to him, for he snapped his fingers again.

“You may smile, my friend,” he said, “but I know why seven was his fateful number. It was the fateful number of all the Stewarts! Are there not seven letters in the name Stewart? Count the letters in Charles. Seven again! What were his Christian names? Charles Edward Lewis John Casimir Sylvester Maria - seven once more! Coincidence, you say? It is no coincidence. There was a number seven on the Prince’s dice - he was dicing against the Devil himself - and the Devil won.”

“Just a moment “I began, but he glanced at his watch, a gold hunter with a crest on the lid.

“I wish you good-bye,” he said, and, turning on his heel, he hurried from the room. Slightly dazed with the odd encounter, I watched him go at a quick walk across the square below and step into a waiting car. With some curiosity, I asked the attendant who the stranger was, but the man shook his head.

“I mind he came here two months ago,” he said, and tapped his forehead meaningly.

I spent several happy hours in that little Museum, which contains relics that surely deserve a better shrine, but I could not forget the dark eyes of the stranger, and his earnest voice, and the superstitious nonsense he had talked. When I sat down to my solitary luncheon in the hotel dining-room, I wished I could have called him back to show him the bowl of white roses on the table in front of me. I wonder what dark omen he would have seen in it! For I counted the roses, and by an odd coincidence there were seven.

## Chapter IX. Good-bye to Lochaber

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Neptune's Staircase - On Board a Trawler from Lowestoft - The Keppoch Bard - I Sail up Loch Lochy - Sir Ewen Cameron - A Hot-tempered Chief - Tinkers de Luxe at Invergarry - The Man who Saw a Water-Bull - Forward to Aberchalder.

**H**OW powerfully a good square meal can affect a man's outlook! My feet were comfortable for the first time in days, for I had bought a new pair of shoes at a little shop in the main street, and made a gift to the hotel porter of the wretched instruments of torture I had been wearing. I felt ready for anything, and I decided to get a lift back towards Fassifern and make for Moy by the hill-path which I had funked at half-past four the previous afternoon. I had heard that a tradesman's van was due to go in the Fassifern direction in about three-quarters of an hour, and I decided to beg a lift, so I went down to Banavie to have a look at the Caledonian Canal until the van turned up.

I wonder if it is realised how close the connection is between the Caledonian Canal and the Rising of 'Forty-five. It was the trustees of the Forfeited Estates who, in an effort to improve the Highlands and give employment to the crofters, first put forward the idea of building the Canal. They asked James Watt, the steam-engine man, to have a look at the Great Glen and make a report. Watt said that a canal could certainly be made, but the idea was dropped, and thirty years passed before anything more was done. Nowadays the Canal may be thought no great shakes as an engineering triumph, but a century ago it was one of the wonders of the world.

Thomas Telford was the man who built it, and if ever anyone deserved his tomb in Westminster Abbey, it was the civil engineer who was born in a shepherd's hut on a Dumfries-shire hillside. Apprenticed to a stone-mason, he became so deft with the chisel that his gravestones gained him as much fame in the parish of Westerkirk as the Scots verses he wrote under the name of Eskdale Tam. He taught himself French, German, and Latin; and when he had saved a little money he studied architecture in Edinburgh, and then went to London to hunt for a job. According to the song, you can't keep a good man down: in a short time Thomas Telford had found his feet; and there is hardly a county in Britain that does not to-day carry his work upon its landscape. He was called abroad to plan the inland navigation system of Sweden, and the Scot who began life in a shepherd's hut in Eskdale found himself with a Swedish order of knighthood. Some say that his greatest work, greater even than the Menai Suspension Bridge or the St. Katherine Docks at London, is the road that runs from Inverness into Sutherland and the North; but he will always be remembered by his countrymen as the maker of the Caledonian Canal. If he had cared much for money, he could have built up a vast fortune and lived like a Ruritanian prince. But for years his only home was a room in the Old Ship Inn at London. It was there he entertained his many friends, and in his old age they persuaded him to move into a house of his own. He used to relate with a quiet chuckle what happened when he informed the landlord of this decision. The inn had just changed hands, and the new innkeeper was struck dumb with horror. "But you can't leave, sir!" he gasped out. "Why, sir, I have just paid £750 for you!" He explained that he had been charged this additional sum for the inn because of the custom Telford brought to it. And I am

told that in the Great Glen some of the people still repeat the tales their grandparents told of him how he used to sew on his own buttons, and patch his clothes, and how he liked to walk about in the evenings among his Highland workmen, and have a dram with them beside the fire after each day's work on the Canal was done.

The task that faced Telford, as he cut that long channel between the North Sea and the Atlantic, was a pretty grim one. He had to blast and dredge his way up from Fort William at one end, and from Inverness at the other, to a meeting-point in the Great Glen that is one hundred feet above sea-level. He had estimated the cost at £350,000; but the war with France sent prices soaring. When he began work, his labourers were paid eighteen pence a day, but ten years later their wage was half-a-crown, and timber rose from ten-pence a cubic foot to three shillings and sixpence. At one time it looked as if the sea-lock at Inverness would beat him completely, for he had to run it out into the open Firth for over half a mile and build an artificial mound on a bed of mud sixty feet deep. Before the Canal was opened it had cost nearly one million sterling more than he had anticipated. He had hoped to finish it in seven years, but it took nearly twenty-and another twenty after that before the final improvements were made. It was planned to accommodate the biggest British and American trader afloat, but times have changed, and to-day most cargo vessels must take another route. Even the sturdy old Leith salvage-ship, Bullger, when hurrying to a wreck on the west coast, had to go round by the Pentland Firth, for she would have scraped her bottom plates on the sills of some of the locks. There is, however, one class of vessel that passes through the Canal every year-the trawlers from the east coast - and when I got round to "Neptune's Staircase," Telford's name for the eight locks at Banavie, I found a score of these trawlers jammed as tight as a shoal of the herring they had been seeking in the western waters. They were returning home to the North Sea, and I wondered how the fishing had gone. Having twenty minutes to spare, I strolled along the lock-side and spoke to a cherub-faced young man who was smoking his pipe beside the tiny wheel-house of a trawler.

"Fishing?" he said. "No fish to be got. It's been a poor year. These damned foreigners are killing the trade. Still," he added, "we shouldn't grouse at the foreigners. They eat about three-quarters of the fish we catch."

"It beats me why we don't eat more herring in Britain," I remarked.

The young man smiled, eased the red handkerchief that was round his neck, and shrugged his shoulders. "I haven't got much use for a herring myself," he admitted.

It certainly wasn't a Scots tongue he had in his head; and when I asked him where he came from, he named to my surprise an inland Essex village a few miles from where I live. Presently I learned, again with surprise, that this young man with the cherubic countenance was the skipper of the boat, and most of his crew were on sharing terms with him. "Care to come below?" he asked, knocking out the ashes of his pipe on the low bulwarks.

I stepped aboard and picked my way among the piles of fishing-gear. The lifeboat was warped down aft; and above the engine-room, some washing had been hung out to dry. Ducking my head, I entered the deck-house, in the corner of which was an open trap. Down

through this the skipper went, and I followed him on the iron ladder, to find myself in a tiny dug-out, with a table in the middle and bunks all around. The atmosphere was fetid with human breath and sweat.

“Tea?” said the skipper. “We’re always ready for tea on this boat.”

He shouted up the ladder, and in a few minutes two huge enamel mugs of black tea were put on the table by an earnest-faced young man who looked more like a City clerk enjoying a rough holiday than a cook on a trawler. Where, I wondered, were the old salts of yesteryear—the grim old teak-faced shellbacks of square-rig days? Do all herring fishermen look like amateur yachtsmen out for a spree? The skipper was intelligent, a reader of books, and we talked about Prince Charlie. He was interested to hear about my walking-tour; and when I told him my journey would take me up the Great Glen as far as Loch Oich, he offered me a lift in the tone of one who invites you to share a taxi-cab. A lift on a trawler. It sounded attractive, but I explained that it was out of the question. I was going back towards Fassifern to walk over the hills to Moy. There is, however, an adage about the affairs of mice and men; and we climbed up on deck in time to see the tail end of the tradesman’s van disappearing westward.

Here was a blow. I stared after the van until it had rounded the distant corner. I had solemnly vowed to return and walk to Moy by the hill-path; and now it seemed that I must either trudge back over these miles of hard highway or hang about in the hope of finding another conveyance.

With a sudden impulse, I turned to the skipper and told him I would sail with him up the Great Glen. As for the hill-path to Moy, all thought of it went whistling down the wind, and the poor fragments of my broken oath splashed overboard into sixteen feet of water. I smothered my conscience with the thought that from Moy onwards I would be following the Prince’s tracks—not indeed upon the road, but on the sea-road that runs beside it. The lock-gates swung slowly open, propellers thrashed the water, and the covey of trawlers began to move.

An hour later we had climbed up fifty feet above sea level and were steaming slowly up the Canal towards Loch Lochy. The leading boats left an enormous wash, which we picked up and sent splashing high on the artificial banks. I noticed that several mountain streams flowed into the Canal by sluices, while others ducked under it through culverts and fell into the river Lochy below. I will admit that, from the deck of the trawler, Ben Nevis was a more imposing sight than from the road near Fort William. Perched high on the mountainside like a raven’s nest there is a little house which marks the entrance of the tunnel through the Ben, and you can trace the pipe-lines that carry the water from Loch Treig down to drive a team of turbines, each of which develops nine thousand horsepower. I am told that the tunnel through Ben Nevis is fifteen miles long, one of the largest of its kind in the world, and before it was finished a million and a half tons of rock had been excavated. The completion of the new Laggan scheme will mean that so much water will be artificially carried down to the powerhouse at Fort William that it would be enough to supply the domestic demands of half



the population of Great Britain. This will flow from the turbines into Loch Linnhe, and one wonders what Loch Linnhe will think about it. It will certainly provide the pleasant folk of Fort William with an alternative topic of conversation when they are tired of telling visitors about the prodigious height of their Ben Nevis.

Behind, we had left the ruins of Inverlochy Castle, where Iain Lom the Keppoch bard looked down upon the battle that was fought on the plain below and made that impassioned poem, "The Battle of Inverlochy." Although Montrose lost but one officer and three men, Argyll's army was so smashed up that the Campbells as a fighting force never recovered, and Iain Lom revelled in the soil being fattened by the best of the Campbell blood. But there was a much older fortress than the present ruins at Inverlochy, and folk say that there the Auld Alliance between Scotland and France had its beginning over a thousand years ago, when one of the northern kings entered into a bond with Charlemagne. Historians may scoff, but some fables take a long time to die.

We sailed on between mountains that were piled up to the sky on either hand. To the north-east, Auchnacarry - the seat of Cameron of Lochiel - nestled somewhere among the trees; and since the skipper showed an eager interest in old stories about the glen, I tried to tell him about one of the greatest Camerons of that great clan, Ewen Dubh - the Sir Ewen of the seventeenth century. I described how little patience he had with anyone who was less of a Spartan than himself. One night he was storm-bound among the hills, and he ordered his followers to lie down beside him and sleep in the snow. As he was wrapping himself in his plaid, he saw that one of his young relatives had rolled a snow-ball to rest his head on. Leaping to his feet, Sir Ewen kicked the snow-ball aside. "What!" he cried, roused to fury at such degrading effeminacy. "Can't a Cameron sleep without a pillow?"

But the yarns about Sir Ewen are innumerable. Perhaps the best-known of all is the story of his encounter with an English officer from Cromwell's garrison in Inverlochy Castle. The Camerons were a thorn in the flesh of the Government troops, and in one of the many skirmishes Sir Ewen and this officer met in a hand-to-hand combat. The officer must have been a doughty fighter, for he managed to parry the chief's whirling broadsword, and the pair of them finished up on the ground locked fiercely in each other's arms. At last the Englishman got hold of his dagger, and a moment later the fight would have ended, but his throat was exposed, and the Cameron's teeth went into it like a terrier snapping at a rat. Scrambling to his feet, Ewen Cameron looked down at the crimson throat of the expiring Englishman. "God put it into my mouth," he said; "the sweetest bite I ever had in my life!" But the story ends far from Lochaber. After Charles II came to the throne Sir Ewen was received at Court, and London rang with his exploits. One day he was in a barber's shop; and the barber, noticing that his customer was from the North, began to talk about the Highlands of Scotland. "There are savages there, sir!" he cried, his eyes glinting with rage as he peered down into the swarthy countenance of the man lying back in the chair. "One of them tore out the throat of my own father with his teeth. I wish to heaven I had that fellow's throat as near my razor as I have yours!" The Cameron chief did not blink an eye, but he never entered that barber's shop again.

He lived until he was over ninety, and the skipper was interested to hear of Sir Ewen's gift of second-sight. He had it right to the end; and I told how, in the Rising of 'Fifteen, he called out from his bed to his attendants. When they hurried in to him he declared that his king had landed in Scotland. "Summon the household," he ordered, "so that they may drink the health of His Majesty!" At that very hour the exiled James was disembarking from a ship at Peterhead to join the Earl of Mar.



Figure 5 - Loch Lochy and the Great Glen

It was a happy voyage I made on the Lowestoft trawler. With the help of my map I had been able to locate Moy, a little white-washed farmhouse up on the roadside, where the Prince stayed during the nights of Saturday and Sunday. As we passed a tiny head land on the south shore of the loch, I picked out Letterfinlay, once a coaching inn. It was here that Charles, after marching from Moy, decided to spend Monday night, for the weather was vile. But a messenger arrived to say that Sir John Cope's army was within sight of the Corrieyairack, and was about to march over the mountain pass and come down to Fort Augustus. This news, which was not accurate, inflamed the Highlanders; and in spite of the torrents of rain, Charles decided to hurry on. By eight o'clock in the evening he had reached the head of Loch Lochy, and there he found awaiting him four hundred Glengarry men led by Donald Macdonell of Lochgarry. At the head of the loch, the Prince was also joined by men from Appin under Stewart of Ardshiel. Sending a party of scouts to keep watch on the Corrieyairack Pass, the Prince marched on, and arrived after dark that same night at Invergarry Castle.

It was at the head of Loch Lochy that I disembarked from the trawler. The skipper invited me to look him up one day in the South, and to come fishing with him in the North Sea if I felt like roughing it for a week, but that is another story. I continued on my way, warmed by my unexpected meeting with a man whose home was not many parishes distant from my own, and headed for Invergarry. I was now tramping within half a mile of Ben Tee, called Glengarry's Bowling Green, and it overlooks the flat green strath where one of the most desperate of all clan battles was fought four hundred years ago. John of Moidart took part in it, though Laggan-an-droma is a far cry from the Atlantic tides that creep up round Castle Tirrim. John was Captain of Clanranald; and Lord Lovat, who had fostered the son of a previous chief, was determined that young Ranald Galda would become chief in Moidart. But John was too clever to give battle, because Lovat had Huntly's men to help him. The Frasers went home, and John followed at a safe distance. Huntly had branched off by Glen Spean, and John of Moidart saw his chance. On a hot July day, he swooped down on the Frasers and their allies the Grants. After discharging their arrows, the clansmen stripped off their plaids and rushed together clad only in their linen shirts. And so the Battle of the Shirts was fought to an end. Lovat himself and nearly all the Frasers were dead by nightfall, and the old people who still talk of Blar nan Leine will tell you that only four Frasers and ten Clanranald men survived the battle. But Providence must have been on the side of the Beaully men, for the wives of no less than eighty of the fallen Frasers gave birth to a man-child, each to become a warrior in the place of his dead father.

As I looked at the streams that came splashing down the mountainsides and flowed into the Canal, I remembered the story about a woman who lived here in the days before the Canal was built. One of these hillburns formed the boundary between Glengarry's land and Lochiel's, and at a point above her cottage it could easily be deflected from its course and made to flow either into Loch Lochy or Loch Oich. When the factor came from Glengarry to collect her rent, he found the stream flowing down to the east, which put her outside his boundary; and when the Cameron factor arrived, the water was tumbling down westward towards Loch Lochy. An hour's work with a shovel now and again enabled this adroit old body to live rent-free for years.

When I came to the shore of Loch Oich the smoke of the trawlers hung like a tiny cloud in the distance. Loch Oich is small, about four miles long, and it is one of the loveliest inland lochs I have ever seen. The wind had fallen, and the water was like a glittering sheet of mica between the mountains.

I found it a little difficult to adjust myself to the scenery in the Great Glen. In the west country, among the grey jagged mountains, I had felt almost all the time that I was alone-indescribably alone -in the heart of a desolate and fairy-haunted land. But in the Great Glen, the high hills are softly rounded, and there are many young plantations of trees that keep reminding you of the handiwork of man. Compared with Moidart and Arisaig, the Great Glen has a well-manicured look. In the West, the sight of a cottage in a corrie had made me blink, as though it were a miraculous thing to see there a wisp of smoke and signs of life. But here, although few houses can be picked out on the hillsides, I did not gaze upon any of them with

surprise: it seemed natural that folk should live in this more homely place. The oceangoing ships on the Canal, and the motor-buses that daily race up and down the glen, remind you that you are in touch with the world of cinemas and sixpenny-stores. As I trudged eastward, I wondered if many people spoke Gaelic in this place. And then I was brought up short at the sight of a long Gaelic inscription on a .damnably ugly monument by the roadside.

I found that there was not only Gaelic carved on this thing, but French and Latin and English as well. I hadn't read many lines of the English before I knew that this must be the notorious "Well of the Heads." The incident of the Seven Heads is usually referred to as a barbarous piece of Highland cruelty which would be better forgotten. I disagree. The episode was less barbarous than the monument, and the chief who erected it was so ill-informed about it that he had the wrong date carved upon the wretched obelisk. In the seventeenth century, the killing of the seven Keppoch murderers was no more than a reasonable act of justice which the Glengarry chief himself had refused to carry out. It was Iain Lom the poet who had the courage to exterminate the seven rogues that had murdered the young Keppoch chief, and the fact that the murderers were his own nephews did not hold him back. There is at least one thundering lie in the Gaelic inscription, which is quite different from the English, for Lord Macdonell and Aros certainly did not order this act of vengeance; and the severed heads of the murderers, which were washed in the water of this well, were in all likelihood flung at the feet of Lord Macdonell as a gesture of contempt, since he himself had refused to make any move in the affair. It was in fact Sir James Macdonald of Sleat who backed Iain Lom, and moreover they had the full approval of the Privy Council. But why a monument should have been put up for what was no more than a sound bit of police work it is hard to understand; and we have the word of Lord Cockburn that Thomas Telford, when he was building the Caledonian Canal, saw it soon after it was erected and could scarcely keep his hands off it. Alexander Ranaldson Glengarry was the man who had it built, and it is little more than a monument to his own arrogance. Lord Cockburn, a pretty sound judge of men, called him a paltry and odious fellow, selfish, cruel, base, dishonest, with all the vices of the bad chieftain and none of the virtues of the good one. Cockburn declared that Glengarry's only act of physical courage was one which he and Telford watched by the side of the loch, and the chief was driven to it by his own insolent fury. He wanted to cross the loch in a boat which had already put out from the shore. He shouted angrily to the men at the oars, but their only reply was a laugh. With a howl of rage, Glengarry spurred his pony into the water to swim after the boat. Telford remarked to the group beside him that he hoped Glengarry would drown, and the place would be well rid of him. But the sturdy pony carried him more than half-way across the loch, and at last the dripping figure clambered into the boat.

The truth probably is that Glengarry had shown his truculent side to Lord Cockburn and Telford, as he did to all strangers who failed to kow-tow to him. The poet Southey went with Telford when he paid his duty-call on the chief, and they were received with great civility, but Thomas Telford was too blunt a man for Glengarry's liking. And Sir Walter Scott, an even better judge of men than Lord Cockburn, said that Glengarry was warm-hearted, 'generous, friendly, full of information about his own clan and the customs of the Highlanders. So we can take our choice.

Glengarry may have been a popinjay, but he was no poltroon. Charmed with the bright eyes of Miss Forbes of Culloden at a dance in Inverness, he pressed his attentions upon her, and a young Black Watch officer protested. Afterwards in the mess, Glengarry slashed him across the face with his cane. The officer, a grandson of Flora Macdonald, challenged him to a duel. On a sunny afternoon they met with loaded pistols on the links near Fort George, and Glengarry wounded his man, who died a month later. When he was charged with murder, his first impulse was to show a clean pair of heels; but Henry Erskine who had been briefed for the defence urged him to stand his trial. Never did anyone have a closer shave, and it was Erskine's eloquence that got him acquitted. But this did not tame him. He was seldom out of the Law Courts over petty rows with his tenants, and he almost always lost his case. It was his custom to strut about with an entourage like the "tail" of a Highland chief of an earlier age, and he claimed to be the hereditary chief of all the Clan Donald. Some years before his death he had a public row with Clanranald; and I have in front of me as I write, a pamphlet of over a hundred pages of vitriolic argument entitled *Vindication of the Clanronald of Glengarry* which he published in 1821. In this he said he found it incumbent upon him to make a "public disclosure of the bastardy of John MacAlister of Castel-Tirrim." This was the famous John of Moidart, and Glengarry declared that John and all the succeeding captains of Clanranald were usurpers. The feud, if it can be called a feud, lasted until 1911, when a treaty was drawn up between the present descendants of Glengarry, Clanranald, and Macdonald of Sleat. It is an astonishing document. It mentions the great jealousy and dissension among the different branches of Clan Donald in the past and the consequent "great injury and prejudice suffered by our whole race and kin." In this treaty, none of them abandons his claim to the supreme chiefship of Clan Donald, but each agrees that when more than one of them are present on any occasion when the question of precedence arises, they will draw lots to decide who will have the preeminence for the time being. One might be pardoned for wishing to be present when these modern descendants of dead chiefs spin a coin to decide which will walk in first to dinner! And, finally, they agree that Macdonald of Sleat shall be permitted by custom to use the designation "of the Isles." And so ends an old and trumpery family squabble. When this document was signed and sealed in 1911 by the three Macdonalds, at Bridlington, at Bordeaux, and at Tuapse in South Russia, Alexander Ranaldson Macdonell of Glengarry must have turned in his grave with a groan of despair.

In the pine-woods I stopped a cyclist to ask him where Invergarry Castle was to be found, and he pointed to lodge gates along the road. At the lodge I was given permission to enter the private grounds of the present Invergarry House, and made my way down to the ruined castle at the lochside.

It was here that the Prince arrived in the darkness of that stormy Monday night in August after a march of about fifteen miles from Moy. But it was not the chief who welcomed him; for John Macdonell of Glengarry was a weak drunken fellow, and he was skulking in Perthshire. He had indeed visited Sir John Cope in his camp at Crieff on the previous Wednesday and assured him of his loyalty to the Government. He was playing a double game. If the Rising failed, he was ready to swear that the clan had come "out" against his wishes; if it were successful, he was prepared to skip nimbly forward and make his obeisance

to Charles. His ruse was plain to everyone in the Prince's army, and they were all glad he was well out of the way. With such a chief, it is not surprising to learn that a good many of his clansmen hung back and had to be forced out by threats. Lochgarry issued the orders. Before the Rising he had been commissioned as an officer in King George's army; although he had his doubts about the wisdom of the Prince's enterprise, he tore up his commission and joined the Jacobite force; and with Glengarry's second son Angus, who had been on a visit in Rannoch while the clan had gathered, he entertained the Prince on that tempestuous night at Invergarry Castle.

But long before the days of the 'Forty-five the old glory of this fortress had departed. Built upon the Rock of the Raven (the war-cry of the clan), it was gutted under General Monk when he made his victorious march against the loyal clans in June 1654. The Glengarry of that time rebuilt it—he was the great Alastair Dubh who had led the attack under Claverhouse at Killiecrankie - and he narrowly escaped the same fate as the Macdonalds of Glencoe. Indeed, the infamous Stair wrote to General Livingstone a month before the Glencoe massacre: "These troops posted at Inverness and Inverlochie will be ordered to take in the house of Invergarie and to destroy entirely the country of Lochaber, Lochiel's lands, Keppoch's, Giengarie's, and Glencoe ... and I hope the soldiers will not trouble the Government with prisoners." But Glengarry had signed the oath of allegiance within the allotted time, and his people were spared. His castle, however, was used for many years as barracks for a Government garrison: a bitter pill for Alastair Dubh. After the Rising of 'Fifteen, it was burned again; and finally it was roofed over to become the lodging of the manager of some iron-works that the York Buildings Company had set up in the glen. Thomas Rawlinson was his name, and some say it was he who invented the philabeg or little kilt, because the long plaid impeded the Highlanders he employed, and he was shocked to find them at their work indecently naked. But whether or not it was this Rawlinson who was the only begetter of the modern kilt - and his claim to this fame is doubtful - the fact that he took up his lodging in the old castle was resented by the Glengarry men. He invited some of them to dinner one evening, and after the usual toasts had been drunk Rawlinson rose to his feet and said in a grandiloquent voice, "Be welcome to anything in my house." At this an old clansman jumped to his feet, and cried, "Damn you, sir; I thought it was Glengarry's house!" They knocked out the candles and made a rush for the man at the head of the table. It was fortunate for Rawlinson that he managed to escape in the darkness, and later on the old place came back into the hands of its rightful owners.

On that Monday night in August 1745, when the Prince arrived at Invergarry, the scene in the castle was perhaps the most romantic in all its history.

Until a late hour, Charles discussed with the chiefs his immediate plan of campaign. King George's army under Cope had arrived at Dalwhinnie, about a day's march south of the Corrieyairack, and the Prince had a pretty fair idea how weak that army was. Cope had marched north from Stirling, with a great rattle of drums, but what was his next move to be? If he tried to make a forced march over the Corrieyairack Pass, the Prince's scouts who lay up in the mountains would have the word down to Invergarry within a few hours, for they were local men and knew every corrie and sheep-path in the darkest night. The discussion in the

castle was interrupted by the unexpected arrival of Thomas Fraser of Gortuleg. He said he had come with a message from Lord Lovat, and Lochiel presented him to the Prince. He spoke of his own loyalty and Lovat's, but he was there to play Lovat's dangerous game of keeping a foot in both camps. He told the Prince how Duncan Forbes of Culloden, although a sick man, had posted north to keep some of the most powerful clans in the Highlands from joining in the enterprise; and he said that Lovat wanted the Prince's warrant to take Forbes alive or dead—a difficult task, because the Lord President had a hundred armed men in his house, with artillery mounted outside. But the suggestion of a raid on Culloden House was at that time mere bluff, for Lovat was almost daily sending fervent letters of friendship to Duncan Forbes.

Fraser of Gortuleg then asked for the commission of Lord Lieutenant and Lieutenant-General for Lord Lovat which James had signed two years before. These documents were in the baggage that had not yet come on from Moy, where the Prince had slept the previous night. Not that this mattered a whit; the request for them was but another part of Lovat's bluff; for if the Rising succeeded, and James came to the throne, it was a dukedom that Lovat was after, and he knew that the patent was already signed and sealed.

Gortuleg went on to explain why Lord Lovat had not called out his clan: Forbes of Culloden had his eye upon him, and the garrison at Inverness and Fort Augustus were ready to come down on him if he made the slightest move—in fact, to the old man's sorrow, his loyal hands were tied.

The oily-tongued Fraser of Gortuleg then slipped away home to Loch More, a few miles east of Foyers, to sit down and write to Forbes of Culloden, giving all the information he could about the Highland army. He had not only lied to the Prince, but had been a spy in his camp.

But something else happened on that Monday night at Invergarry Castle. John Murray of Broughton came strongly into the limelight. Two days before at Moy, he had been appointed secretary to the Prince, but previous to his appointment he had drawn up a bond of loyalty for the chiefs to sign. This he now produced, and they all put their hands to it, each pledging himself that he would not make a separate peace without the consent of the others. If ever a document was unnecessary, it was surely the one which the over-shrewd Murray of Broughton folded away so carefully; and there is a grim irony in the fact that the only man in the castle that night who turned traitor was the one who had written out the bond.

I stood within the broken walls of the castle. Some of the stones are still black from the gunpowder and flames that finally put an end to the place after Culloden. Ivy is climbing skyward, smothering the place in a green pall, and a rowan tree has taken root high in the walls where the Prince had so poor a shelter in the lodging of the departed Rawlinson.

The decay of a noble building damps the spirits, and I was glad to get away from Invergarry Castle. Set on its Rock of the Raven, this castle must have been a fine sight when Alastair Dubh gathered below the walls the flower of his clan and marched them off to join Claverhouse and play their gallant part at Killiecrankie. But I would rather have seen it—half-ruined as it then was—on the bleak dawn of Tuesday, 27th August 1745, when more than

seventeen hundred Highlanders rose from the wet grass where they had slept, and unwrapped their plaids from about them, while the Prince looked down upon them from a high window, with eyes that were 'still heavy with sleep.

I climbed up the hill into the tiny hamlet of Invergarry. A hotel, a few cottages, and a church are strung out on the roadside above the burn that flows down from Loch Garry among the hills. It is a pleasant place, with a Macdonald here and there, but few of the old clan are now living on these hillsides. I found a lodging in one of the cottages, and after tea I sauntered down to the hotel to sample the whiskey. At the door, I fell into talk with a man in brown knickerbockers. We exchanged a pipeful of tobacco and sat in the porch. In the course of our talk he learned about my intention to walk to Edinburgh, and when I explained that I was on a Jacobite pilgrimage, we began to talk about the 'Forty-five. He refused to hear a good word about the Prince. A poor fish, he called him, and a damnable Papist. I tried to point out that, although Charles was a Catholic, the first church service he attended in Scotland was conducted by an Episcopalian clergyman, which at least showed his toleration in religious matters. Then the man in the knickerbockers went on to say that the Prince brought nothing but bloodshed and oppression to the Highlands. I admitted the bloodshed and the oppression, but suggested another point of view-that the 'Forty-five was a pouring out of the spirit of loyalty to one whom many Highlanders regarded as their king by divine right. I also suggested-or rather I flatly declared-that Prince Charles was a better man than George II, and would have made a better king, but the reply was an explosive "Bah!" The Prince came to Scotland with a few Irish scallywags, he retorted: since he was such a fine fellow, why did he not find better men than these to bring with him?

I pointed out that the story about his companions being mere Irish adventurers was picturesque but untrue. Granted, he would probably have been better without Sir John Macdonald, who was fond of the brandy bottle and had a vile temper, and granted also that the exiled James took a strong dislike to Colonel Strickland, who fell ill and died at Carlisle; but the worst of the lot was not a foreigner at all -he was a man born in Moidart. There to this day they will tell you that Aeneas Macdonald, the Paris banker, got cold feet after the landing, and skulked around the cottages persuading the Clanranald men to stay at home. He admitted as much, and a good deal more, after he gave himself up to the Government: indeed, he declared that he had been on the point of coming to Scotland on private business when the Prince offered him a free berth on board the Du Teillay, and he accepted out of curiosity. Perhaps it was his curiosity afterwards in the French Revolution that lost him his head in the guillotine, but it was no great loss, anyhow. ... As for the other men who came on the Du Teillay, they were pretty good fellows, and there can be no doubt about their loyalty to the Prince.

"But what about the Prince's loyalty to the clansmen who followed him?" demanded my companion.

"Before he came to Scotland, it's said, he enrolled as an officer in the Spanish army. If he'd been captured, he could have claimed to be treated as a prisoner of war. But the men under him were bound to be treated as rebels, and sent to the gallows - as many of them were."



“Whig historians are fond of raking up that yarn,” I replied. “If the Prince enrolled in the Spanish army, it was to try to put his father’s mind at rest. The Pope certainly never believed it could save him. In coming to Scotland, he was risking his neck, and he knew it.” In his later life, I admitted, he slid downhill from one disappointment to another. He sometimes lacked money to pay for his food and lodging, but in his wanderings on the Continent he carried a little purse of gold that even hunger did not force him to spend: this was to take him back to Scotland in case the call for his return should come.

But my arguments were lost upon the man in the brown knickerbockers, and I was rather thankful when by a happy accident the subject was changed. He jumped to his feet and pointed at a battered motor-car that was chugging up the hill from the bridge.

“Heavens, man, look at these tinkers!”

And tinkers they were. Tinkers, not straggling along the road behind a dirty tilt-cart, but packed into a Morris Cowley that had been shining with new green paint around about the year 1920: a Morris Cowley that had a regular haystack of gear piled up in the back, with a two-wheeled trailer bumping behind. And with the passing of it, a romantic picture went up in smoke, and I foresaw that the old-fashioned tinker who goes shuffling along with his shaggy pony and even more shaggy family may soon be gone from the roads of Scotland, and in his place we will see a brown-faced plutocrat in his motor-car.

A plutocrat the gentleman in the driving-seat certainly was. His filthy hands gripped the wheel in a manner that was regal, his elbows jutted out importantly, and his head was cocked back as he peered through the splintered windscreen. He had a yellow moustache which curled so hugely round, his jaws that it might have concealed mutton-chop whiskers below its tea-stained trusses. His bowler hat was dented and green with age, but the brim had the same august curl as his moustache, and perhaps one day it had adorned the head of some douce elder of the Presbyterian kirk. His bedraggled squaw, with gold ear-rings and spotted neckerchief, sat beside him clutching two children to her bosom. Packed among the luggage behind was a black-eyed young man with a loudly checked cap, the snout of which was almost adrift from its moorings, and on his chin was the dark incipient moss of a beard which was difficult to distinguish from the grime on the rest of his face. Beside him was a third youngster with the glittering eyes and the wise brooding expression of an elderly chimpanzee: I could not make out whether it was a boy or a girl. The ragged cavalcade rumbled past, the burst silencer of the car sounding like a long roll of kettle-drums. Tinkers *de luxe!* - bound for some favourite eyrie in the West. We watched them until they were out of sight, and then we ordered another whiskey-and-soda and drank to their fortune. They deserved it, these modernists, who believed in keeping pace with the times: and perhaps, as they asked for pots to mend and tried to sell clothes-pegs to reluctant housewives, their mendicant whine was already giving place to a blustering bravado which fitted their rise in the social scale.

After we had finished our drink, the man in the brown knickerbockers asked me to dine with him. I refused, and then compromised by saying that I would have dinner at the hotel, and we

could feed together. I had made- no arrangements at my lodging for an evening meal, and I was glad of his company. But I was more pleased still when he rose at the end of an excellent dinner and invited me to join him on a visit to an acquaintance of his who lived in a cottage up the road.

“The Sennachie, I call him,” he said. “The most interesting old boy in Invergarry.”

We stumbled up a lane in the darkness. At the back of a row of houses, my companion knocked on a door. I could hear the whimper of dance-band music from a wireless loud-speaker inside. It was shut off, and presently the door opened.

Silhouetted against the light in the room beyond stood the man who had been described to me as the most interesting old boy in Invergarry. He blinked at us for a moment, recognised my friend, and upraised his hands in welcome.

“Come away in with you.”

He was a little old man, with dark brown eyes, and his black hair and pointed beard had a touch of white. He was very broad in the shoulder, and he walked across the flagged floor of his kitchen with an odd rolling dignity. He looked up at us in the lamplight, his head tilted back, his cheeks wrinkled in a smile. “And I am very pleased to see you,” he said in his soft old deliberate voice, and pulled forward chairs for us beside the fire. “I was listening to the wireless, but it is not very good to-night. I would rather be listening to your stories.”

“We’ve come to hear some of yours,” said the man in the knickerbockers. “I was telling my friend here I call you the Sennachie.”

“The Sennachie!” The old man put back his head, in the sudden way he had, and laughed again. “Ho-ho, that is good - the Sennachie! Well, sit down, and I will get a little drop of something in a bottle, and we will drink a toast together.” I was fascinated by his voice: it was so quiet and precise. He spread a white napkin on a chair and brought out three wine-glasses. And then he very carefully carried a black bottle from a cupboard. He evidently believed in taking whiskey neat, for he filled the glasses to the lip; and then when we were served he raised his own and wished us good health. “Yes, it is a good dram,” he admitted, when I complimented him on the quality of the liquor. “You will not get a bad dram in Invergarry.”

I remarked that Invergarry struck me as a pretty good place to live in.

Our host nodded. “It is a good place for an old man to end his days. But it was a better place, I’m thinking, before all the Macdonells went across the sea ... All of them? Ah, yes, nearly all of them. There is more Gaelic spoken in Glengarry in Canada than you can hear in this glen to-night.” He shook his head. “The old sentiment has passed away. Once a month we have our ceilidh here - it is good, very good, but it is not like the old ceilidh when friends are around the fire talking and singing together.”

The man across the hearth asked whether it was for sheep or deer that the Macdonells were turned out of their homes.

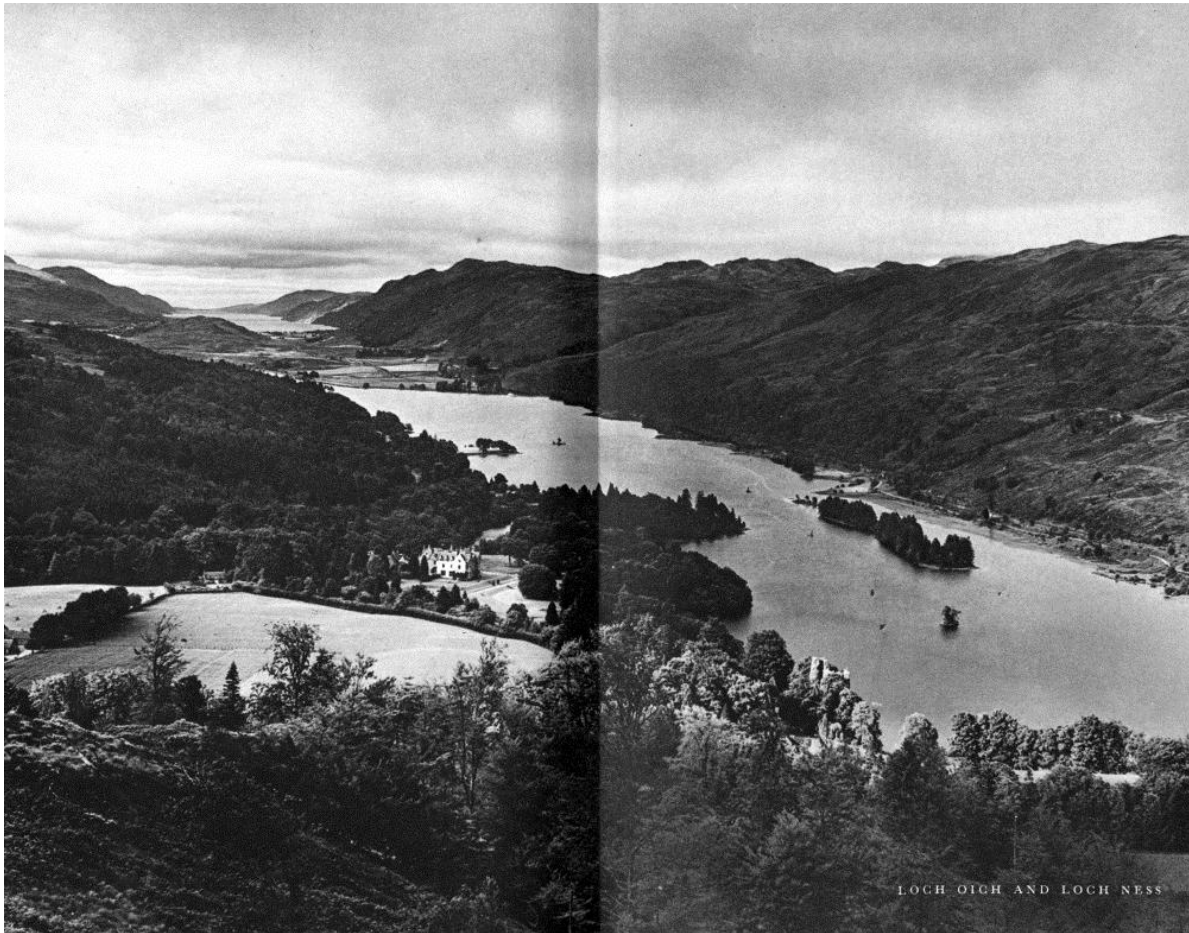


Figure 6 - Loch Oich and Loch Ness

“It was the sheep - the big sheep from the south country. The Highlandmen called them the ‘small cattle.’” The old man paused to take another sip from his glass, and then lay back in his chair, the tips of his fingers together. “But there was a great man in Glengarry at that time, a fine man. He was a Catholic priest. Father Macdonell was his name. When the people were turned out of their crofts, it was Father Macdonell who got them work. The only work he could find was in the Glasgow factories. And he went there to live with them. But soon the work stopped, and the poor people from Glengarry had not a crust to eat. It was Father Macdonell who helped them again. He got a regiment raised - the Glengarry Fencibles - and himself joined as chaplain. But soon the Fencibles were done away with, and it was sad days once more for the Glengarry men. Father Macdonell saw there was only one thing to do now. If there was no living for them in this country, there was a living across the sea. He took the people to Canada, and he called the district Glengarry to keep them in mind of their old home, and it is full of Macdonells to this day.”

He replenished our glasses, and flung some more logs on the fire. We talked of many things, and the old man’s knowledge of the world was astonishing. He lived alone; he fended for himself; and when my friend with the brown knickerbockers called him the happiest man in

the Highlands he chided him gently: "In all Scotland!" he said, with a laugh. "And why not? I have everything I need - even a friend who can talk the Gaelic."

I told him some of the old stories I had heard in Moidart, and he was able to correct me on more than one point of history; then, as was almost inevitable, we strayed towards the subject of second-sight.

"Ah, there are more wonderful things in the Highlands than some folk are believing to-day," he said slowly. "They laugh at us for our superstition, as they are calling it. But I'm thinking they are beginning to take notice of us. They have written in the newspapers about great monsters in the Highland lochs. Monsters!" He chuckled and shook his head. "There may be great monsters in the lochs, I do not know, I have not seen one. But I know there are kelpies in some of them."

"You believe in the water-kelpie?" asked the man in the knickerbockers, lighting his pipe with a pine-splinter.

"Why not? There are surely water-bulls and water-horses in, some of the lochs. Each uisge and tarbh uisge, we call them. When I was a young man a laird in Wester Ross tried to drain one of his lochs to kill a water-cow that lived in it. They worked for more than a year, but they could not empty the loch, so they put tons of lime into the water to poison the poor animal. But it did not die, for it was seen after that. Ah, yes, there are water-cows and water-bulls in some of the lochs and tams."

"But why are you so certain?" I asked.

He sat upright in his chair, and looked me straight in the eye. "Because I have seen one myself."

"You have seen one?" I repeated, wondering if he was trying to pull my leg.

He gave a slow nod. "I have seen a water-bull. It was beside a tarn in Glen Barrisdale. It was, a beautiful summer day, and the bull had come out of the water, and was standing near some cows. No, they were not afraid of him. He was a gentle-looking creature. I went closer so that I could see him plainly. Ah, he was a lovely animal. His skin was dark and smooth and shining, and he had big soft eyes. He had two black horns, turned inward. Black and bright they were, and his hoofs were smooth and black too. He was the loveliest animal I have ever seen. So strange and gentle-looking, with his wet skin and big eyes, big as the palm of my hand ... No, I made no mistake," he went on deliberately. "I was too close to him for that. He was like no other creature I have ever seen. I watched him for a long time, and then I had to go on my way, for I had to meet a friend. I went back to the same place in the evening, but by that time the animal had gone down into the tam where he lived."

The quiet tones of the old man's voice, and the gleam of his brown eyes, filled my last thoughts as I lay that night between cool sheets in my tiny bedroom. There are more wonderful things in the Highlands than some folk are believing to-day! For a little while I

listened to the hum of the Garry river in the glen below, and then blew out the candle. I was asleep before the smell of the extinguished wick had quite faded in the darkness.

I loafed next day. I loafed in the manner of one who has all eternity in front of him. The sun was blazing, and I passed the golden hours by the lochside staring lazily at the summit of Carn Dearg and at Craig nan Gobhar, from the top of which they say you can catch a glimpse of both the North Sea and the Atlantic.

It was after lunch before I buckled on my pack and set out down the hill for the Bridge of Oich. There are two bridges now, one over the river and another spanning the Canal; but the Prince's army forded the Oich at the shallows, and then crossed the road that Wade had built thirteen years previously. The clansmen were in high fettle. Within twenty-four hours they hoped to confront Cope's men and to show them the deadly force of a Highland charge. But the Prince decided to halt for the night at Aberchalder, on the hillside, so that two or three small parties, already on their way, would have time to join him. He slept in a farmhouse that no longer exists, and was moving about by the peep of day. He called for his Highland clothes, and as he fastened the latches of his shoes he was heard to declare that he would be up with Mr. Cope before they were unloosed. Officers and men, to quote from the letter Fraser of Gortuleg wrote to the Lord President, were "in top spirits and make sure of Victory in case they meet." By nine o'clock in the morning they were up in the Corrieyairack.

There was one thing I was quite determined upon: I was not going to be caught in my predicament of the evening before. It would have been utter folly to try to cross the Corrieyairack starting so late in the day. To reach Laggan in the Spey valley before dark, it would be necessary to breakfast early and lose no time in setting out. So I decided to halt for the night on this side of the Corrieyairack Pass; and if I failed to find a lodging in a house I saw above the bridge, I knew I could easily make tracks for Fort Augustus, which was less than five miles up the Great Glen.

The house was empty; at least, no one answered my repeated knocks; and I descended to the road and headed for the Fort-or Kilcumein, as the old village at the head of Loch Ness was once called. I was exhilarated by the thought that I was now tramping along "Montrose's mile," for it was here his little army had encamped on the night before it made one of the most astonishing marches in military history. Everybody was dog tired and in low spirits. Seaforth with five thousand men lay at Inverness, when Iain Lom, the Keppoch bard, burst into Montrose's camp with the news that three thousand Campbells and Lowlanders had reached Inverlochy: thus both ends of the Great Glen were blocked. It was then Montrose made his great decision. He roused his followers and they plunged up into the snows among the hills. The men were cold and hungry, oatmeal and water was their only food and drink, but all day they struggled along behind their indomitable leader. Up Glen Tarff they went, crossed the river Turret which was choked with snow, and plunged down through the snowdrifts in Glen Roy, to reach the hillside above Inverlochy in the chilly dusk of a February evening. When Argyll was told that the enemy was approaching, he refused to believe it: Montrose was known to have been at Kilcumein the night before; only a magician could have wafted them to Inverlochy; these fellows on the hillside must surely be a few

raiders from Keppoch! ... All night Montrose's men lay up there on the hillside, they lit no fire, they had no food, and at dawn the tired and hungry little army joined battle with a force of twice their number and smashed the Campbells to pieces. Such was the Battle of Inverlochy. And it was at some spot in this green strath where I was now tramping that Montrose, caught as it were between the jaws of nut-crackers, decided to attempt the impossible. If a Montrose had been by the side of Prince Charles, a Stewart king would almost certainly have been upon the throne of Britain by December 1745.

I reached the outskirts of Fort Augustus as five o'clock chimed out from the tower of the Benedictine monastery.

## Chapter X. The Benedictine Monastery

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Fort Augustus - At the Monastery Door - The Bearded Monk - In the Catacomb Chapel - I Meet the Father Abbot - Dinner with the Monks - The Corridor of Silence - Poverty, Chastity, Obedience - A Talk with Father Cyril - The Peace of the Cloister - I Sleep in a Monk's Cell - The Man from Cambridge - In the Sacristy with the Father Prior - On the Monastery Tower.

**W**ITH an early start next morning I had hoped to cross the Corrieyairack Pass and be down at the hamlet of Laggan Bridge in Badenoch by nightfall. But by a pleasant series of events, I became the guest at the monastery in Fort Augustus, and I remained there for several days, living in a monk's cell above the Cloister.

It was one of the most fortunate things in all my journey; and it came about thus. Under the control of the Father Abbot there is a College with several lay masters. As I entered the village, I remembered I had met one of them in the South, and I thought how greatly I would like to renew our acquaintance. Douglas was his name; he was a young man, with a fine gift of quiet and entertaining talk; and he was both a Marian and a Janeite. But his admiration for Jane Austen was a mere whimsey compared with his enthusiasm for Mary Queen of Scots, and when he spoke of John Knox his eye scattered battles. We had talked far into the night about Mary, and I decided to remind him of our meeting in the South, and to ask if he could get me permission to see something of the monastery.

As I have already said, I was brought up from my earliest days as a Protestant: a rampant Protestant. In my youth I had a vague idea that the Jesuits were a secret society with a Black Pope at their head, that they worked in strange channels, and gained their ends by machinations not unlike those of international crooks in detective stories. Naturally, this gave the very name Jesuit a glamour for me, and it cast upon the Catholic faith and everything connected with it an air of romance and mystery. In my young days I had always thought of a monastery as a place like those gloomy castles described so shudderingly by Mrs. Radcliffe in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* - a place with secret passages, and shadowy figures in black cowls, and strange religious rites being performed in a darkened chapel at midnight. Thus when I entered the monastery grounds, all my early impressions rose up within me, as early impressions will do until a man's dying day; and as I made for the doorway under the arches, I felt as if I were approaching the grim portals of Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*. It was with some trepidation that I rang the bell.

There was a long pause. At last the door opened, and there stood before me a monk with a magnificent grey beard. He wore a black habit, with a tiny black skull-cap upon his head, and he had large clear grey eyes and the smooth complexion of a child. This was certainly not the gaunt and pallid figure I had expected to greet me; and when I asked how I could get in touch with my friend in the College, I was relieved by his amiable reply. He led me round by the gravel path outside to another part of that intricate mass of buildings, and asked me to wait in the big vestibule. A few minutes later, the young man I had met in the South came hurrying downstairs. He said he remembered me quite well, and he took me up to his room, where we talked for nearly an hour about my journey, and then he asked if I would care to see over the monastery. Presently, to my great satisfaction, he returned with permission to show me round. "The monks are going to Vespers now," he said, "so we won't be interfering with any of their duties."

The first place he led me to was the Catacomb Chapel, with its low vaulted roof and red-brick floor. The Abbey had been built upon the foundations of the old military Fort, and this chapel was one of the guard-rooms. In an alcove stands a stone lamp found in the catacombs at Rome; and in caskets there are relics of various saints, some of them the gift of Pope Leo XIII, and they include a piece of bone from the body of St. Clemens, who was a companion of St. Paul. Like Paul, he wrote an Epistle to the Corinthians, although it is not included in the Holy Writ, and the only manuscript of it is now in the British Museum. The paintings on the walls of this chapel, I learned, were done by one of the present monks who had been an artist before he took vows; and this led my friend to describe something of the life of the community in the Abbey.

Each day is divided by a rigid time-table of duties. At half-past four in the morning the monks rise from sleep, and between five and six hours of the day are spent in prayer and religious devotions. This is an essential part of the Benedictine Rule, a rule that has lasted for fourteen hundred years. In addition to his religious exercises, each monk has certain tasks to perform, and the nature of his work depends upon his talents. Some are musicians, some teach in the College, some are historians and work in the Library or Scriptorium, and one of the Fathers attends to the financial affairs of the community. As far as it is possible, the monastery is self-supporting: lay brethren in the bakery and kitchen prepare the food; some are stone-masons and carpenters, and keep the buildings in good repair; some are printers, and produce books and pamphlets, as well as the *Corbie*, an excellent magazine issued by the College. Some of the lay brethren are gardeners, some electricians. Indeed, the village of Fort Augustus is lit by the monastery powerhouse, the current for which is carried down half a mile from a little mountain stream, and this plant was the first of its kind in the Highlands. From half-past four in the morning until the day's end, the monastery bells ring out an old tune from an invocation to St. Benedict and mark the hours for devotion and labour. All this my friend told me as we stood in the tiny Catacomb Chapel where the feet of Cumberland's soldiers had tramped during the dark days after Culloden.

"Perhaps you would care to meet Father Placid," said my companion. "He's in charge of the Library, and is interested in the 'Forty-five. I've been given permission to take you into the Cloister."

He led me down a passage, opened a door through which no woman visitor may go, and I stepped into the monks' quarters. Below one of the arches I could see the grassy courtyard that is enclosed on its four sides by the monastery buildings, and we walked slowly round to the Library, a noble chamber with archways leading to three other rooms beyond. I suppose there are thirty or forty thousand volumes stored around those walls, besides many precious manuscripts, Lives of the Fathers, books of theology, philosophy, science, archaeology; and the historical section at the far end I found to be a treasure-house of good and rare things. Many of the books had been bound in the monastery; it was obvious that they were attended to with loving care; and even the floor of the Library shone like old and well-kept pewter. My friend from the College had left me to browse alone for a little while, and when he returned he was accompanied by Father Placid himself; who told me that I might (if I so desired) pay my respects to the Father Abbot.

In the monastery the Father Abbot is in supreme control. No bishop or archbishop may command him: only to the President of the Benedictine Congregation is he responsible. So I was told when I was taken upstairs, and I entered his quarters with awe. The room into which I was ushered was small and rather bare, with no carpet on the floor. Beside the narrow white



bed was the desk at which the Father Abbot himself sat working. There was a quality in his handclasp, and in the expression of his dark hazel eyes behind the double-lenses of his spectacles, which I am sure would have made a Hottentot, far less a heretic, feel that he was welcome. We talked at a window which looked down across the graveyard to which each monk at the end of his days is carried by his chanting brethren, and beyond that green place with its yew trees are the waters of the largest inland loch in Britain. We talked about all kinds of things, but mostly history and religion-these all too briefly-and about the journey I was making on foot across Scotland. I entered the room as a stranger: I left it, to my surprise and delight, a guest of the community, with permission to take up my quarters in the monastery and rest there for a few days.

Another fortunate thing happened to me that evening. Guests as a rule live in the Hospice, which is apart from the monks' quarters, but it was being used as an isolation-ward for someone in the College who was engaged in a boyish tussle with measles. I was brutal enough to bless the infection, for thus the Hospice was closed to me, and I was allotted the cell of a monk who was away on some special duty. I suppose the Catholic Church is the most highly organised unit in the world: its efficiency has certainly penetrated as far as Fort Augustus, for when I returned to the vestibule for my pack I found that it had been removed. A lay brother had already carried it upstairs to my room above the Cloister: within less than five minutes the machinery for my comfort had been set in motion! How this little miracle had been worked I did not understand until I learned that a house-telephone system brings the most distant corner of that great labyrinth of buildings into immediate touch with a central switchboard. Though the Rule of St. Benedict is fourteen hundred years old, his followers in Fort Augustus have kept abreast of the times, and my next discovery was that my little room had central-heating and a wash-hand basin with running water. A monk's cell with central-heating! I blinked. The twentieth century had indeed arrived in the Highlands.

An inscription painted in gilt letters above my door told me that my room was dedicated to St. Michael. There was no carpet on the floor, but the bare boards were virginally clean. A plain deal desk was in the middle, with a cardboard box as a waste-paper basket, and a narrow bed stood in the corner, a crucifix above it. Many pictures were on the walls, pictures of Christ and of the Mother of Christ, and of many Saints I had never heard of. In the wide bookcase was the personal library of the monk to whom this small room was the only home he would ever know. I hope I may be forgiven if I am so personal as to express my admiration of the rich catholicity of his taste. He was a classical scholar, I could see, and in particular a Latinist. He apparently knew the eighteenth century well; he., was a Fielding man; but he had tried Swift and found him little to his liking, for some of his Swift was unopened. He read the sonorous prose of Sir Thomas Browne with gusto, and some of Milton's too, though I could not believe he had much relish for some of Milton's opinions. From his well-thumbed Donne I gathered he had a palate for that older gloomy Dean of St. Paul's, high priest of the Metaphysicals; and he appreciated Gerard Manley Hopkins, which I confess is more than I can do. As I made a voyage of discovery among his books-a liberty I felt sure their owner would not have resented-a picture of him began slowly to take shape. He was a man who dwelt much in the past, but kept a shrewd eye upon the movements of to-day. He was just a trifle scornful about what is called popular education; he regretted the trend of things in India; he knew something about Minoan civilisation; and when he was young he had read the stories of Mrs. Ewing with such pleasure that he brought them with him to be at his hand for the rest of his days. I sat down at his desk. He was not a fluent writer, for he has prodded much with his pen in the wood beside the ink-pot, but no doubt he comforted himself with the thought that hard writing makes for easy reading, and I felt sure his talk was

discriminating and rich. I could almost imagine I already knew him, that unknown monk into the peace of whose chamber I had broken: I felt he was a ripe man with a deep and humorous mind, a man I would have loved to listen to and share a joke with. An imprint of his personality was in every corner of his bare but pleasant cell, and I unpacked my rucksack with a glow of friendliness towards him. While I was pulling on a clean pair of socks, there was a knock on the door. It was Douglas; he had come to tell me that the evening meal would be ready in the Refectory in about twenty minutes; and while I washed (with running water) he told me some of the rules of conduct I was expected to observe.

The monks' rooms were along this corridor; and in the corridor, talk was not permitted, not even a good-night in passing - the monks bow to each other and continue on their way in silence. There was also a rule of silence in the Refectory; during meals a monk mounts the pulpit and reads from the Fathers of the Church. It was not expected that I should rise at half-past four and attend the early morning offices, but I might do so if I wished, and should make my way to the place in the Church reserved for the public during the ordinary services. I was warned to be back in my room at night by half-past nine, after which there is complete silence in the monastery. If I wished to hold a conversation with any of the monks during certain hours, I must make the request beforehand, so that permission might be obtained from the Father Abbot. As for the Library, I could work there as much as I liked, provided I retired to my room at the hour for sleep. Douglas told me that he and another lay master from the College had their food in the Refectory, and sat at the guest-table; and as we went downstairs, it was a relief to me that I would not be alone at this my first meal within the Abbey.

The Refectory, with its panelled walls and high wooden roof, its stained-glass windows, and its pulpit perched beside a tall Gothic arch, was profoundly impressive to the mind of a stranger like myself. The guest-table was at right-angles to the high table of the Father Abbot and his attendants: these two tables were covered with white linen, but on all the others the dishes were laid upon bare polished wood. One by one the monks entered and took their places, standing in silence, until presently fifty or sixty motionless figures were in the Refectory. Heads were bowed as the Father Abbot entered and walked slowly to his place at the high table. He began the blessing in a soft musical voice, and the monks joined in the praise; the grace was sung in Latin, richly and fluently enunciated; and as soon as it was ended, the silent meal began. While the food was being served by monks and lay brothers, who were as skilful as any West End waiter, a voice from the pulpit began to read. It was an American voice, I noted with surprise, and then I remembered what Douglas had told me: within these walls were gathered men of many nationalities, including French, German, and Russian. On the left of the Father Abbot sat a man in a white robe which was a vivid contrast to the black habit of the other monks: I learned afterwards that he was a member of the Missionary Society of the "White Fathers" from Africa, and his garments were based upon the Arab costume.

I looked around me at the faces of the monks. I knew from a remark of Douglas that each had served a period of probation of four years before he had been permitted to make a final decision to join the community and take vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty; and it was strange to think that not one of these men owned anything in this world, not even the habit he wore and in which he would one day be carried to his grave by the lochside. Some of the faces around me were bronzed with the sun; some were strong and square and keen-eyed, the faces of men of action; some were thoughtful, the faces of students. But in not one of them could I see any hint of gaunt and hungry asceticism. Yet there was one thing in common to

them all; it escaped me at first; and then I knew. I saw it in their quiet eyes: it was tranquillity.

Water was served in metal flagons. The food was simple but plentiful, and I supped with an excellent appetite, while the American in the pulpit read to us of martyrdoms for the Faith and of monastic discipline from the Rule of St. Benedict. At the end of the meal the tinkle of a tiny silver bell on the high table was the signal for us to rise, and a chant of thanksgiving was begun. The singing monks drew their hoods over their heads and filed out two by two, the lay brothers leading the way, the Father Abbot himself going last.

I joined the end of the procession which was moving along the Cloisters where, after a mutual bow between the Abbot and the community, a short recreation was begun. After this the final offices for the day were sung in the Church. With Douglas I sat in the nave and listened to the service in the semi-darkness. The voices of the chanting monks, the candles on the rich altar, the shadows among the arches, the last of the twilight outlining the narrow windows-these made upon my mind an impression of unique beauty. I was already beginning to understand a little of the fascination of the monastic life, that strange mingling of fellowship and solitude.

Afterwards, in Douglas's room in the College building, we were joined by Father Cyril, who had received permission from the Father Abbot to converse with us for an hour. I found him to be a man of deep learning. He was a Russian; he had acquired English; then he had tackled Gaelic with such success that he was persuaded to give to the world the results of his study of that lovely but difficult tongue: odd to think that a Russian should be the author of a standard Gaelic-English dictionary! His study of the early races of Britain has gained him a place of honour among modern ethnologists. At the first glance you would not have taken him to be a student at all; strip him of his black robe, and you might have judged him to be a City man, or perhaps the director of some big business, for the lines of his face showed power and decision of mind. His short figure was strongly built, his step was firm, he had a healthy skin and clear blue penetrating eyes, the eyes of one accustomed to command rather than to obey. But the moment he spoke, his face lit up with good-humour; and soon I discovered that his modesty was as profound as his erudition. Although he had come to talk about history, we strayed into religion and the monastic life. I told him I knew several Anglican clergymen who simply spluttered with rage at the very mention of a monastery: to them, monachism was the very negation of all that Christianity stood for.

Father Cyril laughed. "May a man not live according to his own choice?" he said. "And we believe it to be God's choice. Some may say it is a selfish life we lead, worshipping God in our own way. Selfish? The word is difficult to define; it has many implications. Each of us in this community has his own work to do, but our first duty is to worship. Would your Anglican friends call the Carthusian monks selfish? There is only one Carthusian monastery in Britain, and those in the Faith look upon it as a spiritual power-house of the Catholic Church in these islands. The duty, and the only duty, of the Carthusian monk is to pray. Each one lives apart in his own house within the monastery wall. He knows that when he enters the door to take his final vows he will probably never look upon the outside world again. It is a complete dedication of the self to God ... A strict rule of silence is imposed," Father Cyril went on. "He takes his food alone; he meets his fellow monks only in the sanctuary, except once a week when the community dines in the Refectory and assembles for half an hour to converse together. That weekly half-hour is their only personal contact with each other. They live to pray. When the work of our church is going forward well we say, 'Ah, the Carthusians

are praying well!’ But how few men are called to such a task!” His voice was hushed. “It is only the chosen ones who receive such a call.”

I said I had often wondered whether monks felt a desire to break away and mix with the world.

Father Cyril laughed again. “No man who has tasted the happiness of the monastic life would wish for any other. I have lived in this monastery for over forty years. Until I came here I did not know the meaning of the fullness of the spiritual life. In the bustle of the world I did not get an opportunity of studying the deeper aspects of that life.” He raised his hands with a slow gesture and smiled. “But each to his own vocation. Some are called into the world, some into the Cloister. My life here is as attractive to me as on the first day I came: I wish for no other. You, who so much enjoy the world, cannot comprehend the peace a man has inside these walls, a peace that passeth understanding. But make no mistake! We aren’t a gloomy lot—we have our jests. We meet for one hour and a half every day at Recreation. Besides this, a variety of duties provide their own type of recreation. I myself have had the good fortune now and then to assist an old parish priest in Moidart in his work among the Gaelicspeaking population. Ah, that is a lovely country, where the people are simple and courteous and unspoiled. I have many good friends in Moidart.”

“But I have just come from there!” I exclaimed. “I walked through Moidart, and I went to the Catholic service at Mingarry beside Loch Shiel last Sunday.”

“And my friend Father Patrick was preaching!” cried Father Cyril.

“He was.”

“And were you at Glenuig - and did you see the chapel by the shore?”

“Yes, indeed.”

“Then you have seen the country I know so well! And did you meet Campbell—my good friend John Campbell? Oh, this is most excellent! Why did you not speak of Moidart before? We would have had much to talk about. But now my hour is all but finished! I am sorry, I must go. But if we can meet again, we will talk of that lovely land ...” As he rose to his feet, the chime of the bells outside marked the hour.

A handclasp, a smile, a quick bow, and Father Cyril was gone.

Douglas and I sat staring into the glowing embers of the fire. Father Cyril had left me much to think about.

“How utterly contented he seems,” I said.

Douglas smiled. “They’re all like that. Pax is the Benedictine motto, and there can be no doubt that ‘peace comes dropping slow’ in this corner of the Highlands. The spirituality of the monks and the beauty of the place affects us all, you know. My chief is an old naval man - he was Number One at Keyham in the War - and even he feels it. It steals over you a queer tranquility of mind. Why, the Abbey itself is a romance: we’re only a few yards away from the ramparts of the old Fort, a citadel of war—and now a citadel of peace ...”

It was an eerie journey back to my room. I had insisted that I knew my way, but when I reached the Cloister I found the lights had been extinguished, and I did not know where to look for the electric switch. I lit a match, a poor bead of yellow light amid the blackness of the arches. It was a long walk down two sides of the courtyard, until at last with the help of more matches I came to the foot of the stairs, and then I stole upwards to the corridor above. No glimmer of light was shining at any door, and quietly I reached my own room. I crawled into my narrow bed as ten chimed slowly in the high clock tower; the sound of it faded in the still air; and then a great silence settled down.

It was still dark when I awoke, and I could hear a quiet shuffle of many feet. For about two seconds I could not think where on earth I was, and then I remembered. I knew it must now be after half-past four, and the sound I heard was the choir monks down the corridor to begin the day with their chanted psalms. I thought of them in the sanctuary, singing Matins before the day had broken, with candles upon the altar, and the lighted chancel making the darkness of the nave more profound. I listened during several minutes for the sound of their voices, but the Church was too far away for the chant to reach me, and soon I had slipped back into sleep.

Like the other meals, breakfast was taken in silence, but silence was the only formality. By the time I entered the Refectory, most of the monks had finished their food and had departed to their duties. Afterwards in the Cloister I met Douglas, who had come to enquire for me, and it was then I met Father Martin, the oldest monk in the Abbey. He was over ninety; he had been born but ten years after the death of Sir Walter Scott, and he spoke of the fact with an amused equanimity. "I have been here for over half a century," he said, with a quiet chuckle. "It sounds a long time! But it does not feel it! I've had a very happy life-and why not? Here, I've had everything I wanted-everything. Twenty-five years ago, some of my old friends in the neighbourhood made me a gift of a watch. Look, here it is. ... They said, 'Ah, the poor old man, he will soon be gone, let us make him a gift while he is still alive.' And what has happened?" He put back the watch in his pocket with a laugh. "Now these friends are all dead, all of them-and I am still using the watch!"

I complimented him upon his age and his happy life, and he nodded.

"I do not feel very old," he said, "except for one thing. I can remember so little of what happened yesterday or last week. But it is strange how clearly I can picture what happened when I was young. I can remember how I rode the first bicycle that was made in England. I was up at Cambridge at the time-Emanuel. I knew the man who was making that strange contraption on two wheels, and I said I wanted to ride on it. I did so-and had a spill. But not so bad a tumble as another Emanuel man who rode it down the hill at Bridge Street! You know that hill above Bridge Street in Cambridge?"

"Yes; there are traffic-lights now on the hill at Bridge Street."

"What are traffic-lights?" he asked.

"Extraordinary!" he said after I had explained how town traffic is now controlled by coloured robots. And he went on with his story:

"Well, the man who made the queer machine with two wheels asked me what to call it. I said, 'Why, of course-a Bicycle!' When I got back to my rooms I thought, 'What a hybrid name

I've given it-part Latin, part Greek!' But it was too late. The man had told everybody it was a Bicycle, and a bicycle it has remained. But the sin is still upon my conscience. Queen Mary said the word Calais would be engraved on her heart-I need not tell you the dreadful word that will be written upon mine!" With a chuckle he moved off along the Cloister.

"And I know what he's been telling you," said a voice in my ear. I swung round, and Douglas introduced me to the Father Prior, a monk with quick, twinkling, humorous eyes. "I was wondering if you would like to see the Sacristy," he continued; "it's where the vestments and so forth are kept. Come along. There's just time for it before Conventual Mass. I don't know whether the Sacristan is there just now if he isn't, I'll show you the vestments myself." And the Father Prior, in whose lively frame the spirit of good humour seemed to have found a permanent home, went bustling down the Cloister with a gesture for me to follow.

"He's the second in command here," whispered Douglas in my ear, "one of the best fellows in the world-and one of the merriest. A fine musician and an expert bookbinder. You'll like him."

We made a happy party in the Sacristy, where we were joined by Father Benedict, who was the Procurator of the monastery, which meant that he had charge of its financial affairs, a task which gave him full scope for the talents he had exercised as an Admiralty official in Whitehall before he became a monk. With the help of Father Flood, a historian and philosopher who had graduated as Doctor of Divinity at Rome, the cabinets in the Sacristy were opened and vestments of the most gorgeous colours were taken out and displayed. Each colour has a meaning in the ecclesiastical year: red signifies the blood of the Martyrs, the Love of God, and the fiery tongues of Pentecost; green symbolises hope in the growing life of nature; purple is worn during penitential seasons and fast days; black is used at funeral services and on Good Friday; white signifies Christ, the Light of the World; and gold may be worn at any time except at a funeral service and during Lent. Most of these vestments have been the work of nuns-there was once a Convent at Fort Augustus-and they reveal in their own way as exquisite an art as the tapestries from Oudenarde, a name which can be placed beside the more famous Gobelins. These tapestries were shown to me by Father Benedict, who told me their history. They belonged to the Earl of Wintoun, who had joined in the Rising of 1715. But before going "out" with Mar he had deposited the tapestries with a kinsman of his, Seton of Touch. Wintoun was captured, sentenced to death, but he made a daring escape from the Tower and got away to France. Many years afterwards he was permitted to return, but with his title and estates forfeited. He went back to Seton of Touch and asked for his priceless tapestries. "Go to the devil," said Seton of Touch. "My dear fellow, you're supposed to be dead!" They remained with the Touch family, until they passed by bequest into the hands of the Setons of Abercorn, of which family Father Benedict is a member. The tapestries have been surrendered to the Abbey for safe keeping by Sir Alexander Hay Seton, tenth baronet of Abercorn; and one of them hangs behind the high altar.

"What extraordinary people these Catholics are!" I thought as I looked round upon so much beauty and remembered some of the grim Presbyterian churches where I had been accustomed to worship. "And yet not so extraordinary either. How absurd to make so sharp a division between the secular and the sacred! Does visual beauty detract from the solemnity of the worship of God?" And it seemed to me a fitting thing that one of those exquisite Seton tapestries should have a place of honour in the sanctuary.

We passed into the side chapel, and I looked upon the shrine of the Blessed Sacrament, with its magnificent pavilion of deer skin, dyed a rich crimson, hanging over the golden tabernacle.

It was a descent from the sublime to the material when we entered the power-house. A lay brother is the electrician in charge, and we went into his little den. He looked an ordinary work-a-day engineer, very keen and competent, with oily blue dungarees, although his large spectacles and square-cut beard gave him a slight resemblance to the late Lytton Strachey. Pictures were pinned round the wall, not the pictures of popular actresses and film stars which one usually sees in an engineering-shed, but of saints and martyrs. On the bench lay a periodical he had been reading: it was not a magazine of popular fiction, it was the Weekly Edition of The Times. Through the monastery kitchens we went; the breakfast dishes had already been washed by an electric apparatus with power supplied by the bearded man who read The Times; then down into the cellars I was taken, the cellars of the old military Fort that are now the monastery store-rooms. But there are more than storerooms in those cellars, as I found when we went into the printing-works where lay brethren were busy setting up in type a little book Father Cyril had written. I recalled the clatter of linotypes in London, and the roar of the big Goss machines as they turned out twentyfive thousand copies of a periodical each hour, and I thought that those three lay brethren working quietly at their frames were lucky fellows. From there Douglas led me into the College buildings, and the note of pride in his voice was justifiable. Here, in the shadow of the monastery is a boarding-school for Catholic boys from the ages of nine to nineteen. It would be difficult to conceive of a more romantic atmosphere to be educated in, and it was evident from my companion's talk that cricket and rigger and hockey were taken as seriously here as at Glenalmond and Loretto and Fettes. I would like to have heard the monks around the touch-line of the playing-field upraising their voices in a cheer as the school scored a try against a visiting team, and it must certainly seem odd to the visitors themselves to play before the eyes of those black-garbed spectators. From the school buildings, Douglas took me down and pointed out a low brick archway which is said to have been part of the dungeon where Lord Lovat was confined after Culloden. From here the old rogue was taken to London, tried, and executed. The jests of fate are strange jests. For it was the twelfth Lord Lovat who was thrown into this dungeon, and it was the fifteenth Lovat who gave these buildings to the Benedictine Order.

At the door of the Hospice, I saw a couple of tramps and an old woman departing with bread; each morning, to any poor person who may come hungry to this door, the monks give food and a blessing. My exploration ended in the tower, one hundred and twenty feet above the level of the loch. Pointing towards the Monadhliath Mountains on the south, Douglas showed me where the Corrieyairack Pass led up to the high skyline. In a day or two I knew I would be struggling up that distant mountainside, my pack getting heavier at every step. I wondered how Badenoch would look, spread out before me, when I reached the top of the pass; I wondered where I would find myself at dusk; and then I dismissed the journey from my mind, and descended to the more placid air of the Library.

On Saturday night after Compline, which is the last Divine Office of the day, I said good-bye to the Father Abbot, for I decided to make an early start next morning, and I knew that he would then be occupied. I went to bed thinking how strange a village Fort Augustus was, lying there in the centre of the Highlands, with a monastery bell sounding the hours; the sirens of steamships in the Canal reminding folk in their gardens of the distant sea; a tiny artificial island in the loch recalling the days when our ancestors lived for security in lake-dwellings built upon piles with a secret causeway below the surface of the water linking them

with the shore; and a vitrified fort upon the hillside marking an age which no man has yet been able to determine. I thought, too, of how hospitably I had been received in this place. St. Benedict wrote in his Rule an instruction to his followers that a guest should be treated as though Christ himself had come among them. And I, a Protestant, had been so received. Something of the sweet tranquillity of the Cloister had crept into my mind and body, and I had learned many things I had not dreamed of before. It was with regret that I buckled on my pack next morning and set out on my long day's journey over the Corrieyairack.



## Chapter XI. In the Mists of the Corrieyairack

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I Leave for the Corrieyairack Pass - From Glen Tarff to Lagan a Bhainne - The Barrack-master's Daughter - A Shepherd in the Hills - The Summit of the Pass-Down to the Spey Valley - The House at Garvamore - Tea in the Kitchen - A Stormy Evening-The Light on the Hillside.

**I** FOUND without much difficulty the beginning of the track that led up into the hills. The sky was dull, and there was a drizzle of rain.

I was well aware that the Prince had gone up to the Corrieyairack from Aberchalder; but that was halfway back along the main road to Invergarry; and realising how tough was the journey ahead of me, I had not the fortitude to retrace my steps. I knew I was shirking my duty in taking this short cut up the mountainside: I knew that if I had been strong-minded I would have trudged back to Aberchalder and started from there; but an informal conference on the Canal bridge at Fort Augustus the previous afternoon had left me in a state of mind that was very near to a blue funk. The conference had begun by my falling into talk with the Old Kirk minister; by chance the U.F. minister had come along; and to complete the quorum, we had been joined by a man who was a Wee Free elder. It had amused me to think that I, a guest of Catholics, should have found myself thus hobnobbing with representatives of three different sects of Presbyterians. Anyhow, I had learned from them that the Corrieyairack was even a harder nut to crack than I had imagined. I had to climb two thousand five hundred feet before I reached the top of the pass; my destination was at least twenty-five miles down the desolate Spey valley; and if I ricked my ankle I might lie for days before my plight was discovered in that haunt of deer and moor-fowl. The picture of those grim fastnesses which had been painted to me on the Canal bridge, and the stories of the people who had lost their lives up there, had made me feel that my enterprise of crossing the Corrieyairack alone made Amundsen's dash to the South Pole seem rather small beer. I had heartened myself with the thought that the ordeal could not be so bad as my Presbyterian friends had suggested, and they had probably been pulling my leg just a little; but at the same time I knew I had a stiff day's march ahead of me.

I took it easy on the first steep incline, and began to get my second wind. After twenty minutes of steady going I felt better, and settled down comfortably to the climb. It was a little staggering to think that General Wade had built a road up into the heart of these mountains. His task had needed courage. The Highland chiefs had been antagonistic, because these roads, built after the Rising of 'Fifteen, had been designed to make more easy the movement of Government troops whose job it was to keep a wary eye on the restless clans. Both then and later, the chiefs had protested against bridges being built over the rivers; they said it would make their people effeminate, for if the Highlands were cluttered up with bridges, folk would soon get out of the habit of plunging boldly up to the waist through their mountain streams. I thought of this when I came to the second burn. Wade had built a bridge across it, but the structure was now in ruins, and I found myself over the knees before I reached the other bank. I hear that a foot-bridge has recently been built across this burn (which must be a pretty furious little torrent when in spate) and I am glad to know that we modern "effeminates" can now cross it dry-foot.

For several miles the path followed high upon the west side of Glen Tarff. Down in the hollow, the brown river wound among birches. The contours on my map told me that I had

already climbed over a thousand feet, and after a time I came to the mouth of a lovely green valley tucked among the hills. The rain had been drizzling since I had left Fort Augustus, but now it had stopped. The mist had risen a little, and when I had another look at my map I knew where I was. This was the famous Lagan a Bhainne. It was here that the Prince and his army, after crossing the moors above Aberchalder, joined the military road. I sat down on the parapet of the bridge which Wade had built in 1731, and slowly filled my pipe. It was some satisfaction to know that I was now more than halfway up the mountainside, although by the look of what ground I could see above me in the mist, the stiffest part of the climb was still to come.

It was in this green glen, I remembered, that the young military chaplain at Fort Augustus courted the daughter of the Barrack-master one hundred and fifty years ago. In letters to her bosom friend, Anne Macvicar described the love-making. At the start she referred to her admirer as Pastor Fido, and told of the “whimsical broken starts” of their conversation during those “bright silent noons and sweet evenings.” Then she wrote of his illness: “What if he should walk off to the Elysian fields ... I think it were as well to take the female Quixote’s way, and send him word that he may live if he pleases.” And he did live; he married her six months later; and she became the famous Mrs. Grant of Laggan whose Letters from the Mountains gives such admirable pictures of Highland life in the eighteenth century. But for hundreds of years before the time of Mrs. Grant it was to this glen that the people of Kilcumein came to live every summer with their herds of cattle and goats. The lush grass fattened the animals, and their milk was made into cheese for the winter months. The people lived in huts of boughs and turf, and pipers played for the dancing that made these summer days in the shielings the happiest of the year. Here, too, the Governor of Fort Augustus had laid out a kitchen garden, and put it in charge of a man “versant in the raising of garden crops.” A lonely life the poor fellow would have had to-day, with not a neighbour to yarn with between here and the outskirts of Fort Augustus! I looked around in the drifting mist to try to pick out the hillock on which Prince Charles paused to have a meal, but gave it up as a bad job; and knocking out the ashes of my pipe, I took to the path once more.

The mist made a view of the Great Glen impossible. It drifted up in spongy masses, making strange white shapes above the corries. The rain began to come down again, gentle and persistent, and I drew my waterproof sheet more closely around my shoulders. The loneliness became almost overpowering. I thought of the Highland army straggling up this steep track, hauling with infinite labour their baggage and swivel-guns; I thought of the Prince himself, climbing with that quick stride of his, so quick that the clansmen grumbled among themselves; and indeed later on when a heel came off one of his shoes they nodded and said they hoped it would compel him to set a slower pace.

The track underfoot was now very rough; parts of it were almost overgrown with heather; and it grew steeper as I mounted. With my eyes on the ground I pegged upwards, and when I paused for a breather I saw something that gave me an unpleasant start. On a knoll above me, ghostly in the mist, there stood the figure of a man.

He had already seen me, for he was looking down at me, but he did not stir. At his side a dog sat motionless on its haunches. And then I laughed and waved to him. He had a shepherd’s crook in his hand, and he came down to the path to meet me. He was a tall thin man, perhaps forty years of age, and when he spoke I knew that he was not a Gael.

“Not a very grand day for you,” he said. “It’s none too good for a man up here when there’s mist on the hills.”

We talked for a few minutes. “I’ve been lost more than once,” he told me, “and had to sleep in a peathag. There’s few folk climb over the pass at this time of year.” He said he had come up to meet another shepherd who was living in a bothy up a glen some miles to the east, and he was handing over the sheepdog to him. I bent down and spoke to the dog, but he was stand-offish, a fine lean quick animal with a suspicious eye, and the shepherd had him on a piece of thick string in case he bolted back to his old home down at Cullachy.

The shepherd was casting anxious glances towards the east. “I wonder what’s come over Rory,” he remarked. “The mist looks gey bad over his way. It’s no’ quite so thick over to the west. The wind’s blowing it up from Glen Roy. Look man - there’s deer!”

The curtain of haze had lifted a little, and I was able to make out a herd of deer grazing on the side of a wide corrie. They were moving slowly upward into the wind, and then I saw the leader black against the skyline. “Have a look through my glass,” said the shepherd. “They’ll be rutting soon, and they’ll be roaring like lions. I’ve seen more than one fight between stags in yon corrie.”

But there must have been eyes in the herd that were as sharp as ours, for the beasts began to move more quickly. There was too much haze for me to get a perfect view; and while I was watching them go over the skyline, a voice hailed us loudly from out of the mist behind us.

“Man, Rory, I thought ye were wandered,” cried the shepherd as a big dark broad-shouldered fellow leaped down on the track beside us.

“I was,” grunted Rory, who seemed to be in an ill humour. “Damn the mist! It’s half-way up Geal Charn I’ve been, I’m thinking. I had to go right down to the burn, and follow it, or I’d never have found my way at all.” His hat was sodden; his overcoat, which was buttoned up to his neck, was wet with mist and rain, and the skirts of it were dripping, which showed that he had recently waded through water.

There was a long and rather awkward pause. He did not seem to understand what I, a stranger, was doing there, and he cast puzzled glances at me, and then put out his hand for the string to which the dog was tied.

“Better keep him close for a day or two, Rory,” said the other shepherd. “If ye let him go, he’ll be back home before ye cry knife. But he’ll settle down wi’ ye in the bothy by a day or two.”

There was another pause. The shepherds stood staring thoughtfully at the ground. They did not seem to have anything particular to say to each other; and to cover up the silence I told Rory I was going over the Corrieyairack and was heading for Laggan Bridge down in the Spey valley.

“Ah,” he said, and relapsed into his sombre contemplation of a tuft of heather. “A bad day for it,” he added.

“How’s your meal lasting out?” asked the other.

“Fine,” said Rory. “Awell, I’m thinking I’ll go.”

If I had been in a lighter mood just then, it would have been difficult to prevent myself from laughing. There we were, three human beings forgathered in the heart of the hills, with the mist cutting us off like a prison wall from the rest of the world, and we hadn’t a word in our mouths to utter to each other. We stood like three stunted old Scots pines that had clung there for half a century making no sound except when the wind had whistled through their branches. Abruptly I said good-bye, and went on my way up the path. I did not care to look back, but somehow I felt that the pair of them were still standing silent beside the track.’ But perhaps I was wrong; perhaps they were now chattering blithely enough, glad to be relieved of the presence of a stranger. But I was sorry for the dog; I wondered how he would take to his new life in the bothy after his warm fireside down in the shepherd’s cottage at Cullachy.

When I reached the top of the pass the rain began to come down in dead earnest, and the mist closed in. I was feeling pretty tired, for I had been climbing steadily for nearly ten miles, and I would have given a lot to have been able to shed my wretched pack. I had been told that there was a well of fine clear water on the top, but although I was thirsty I had not the heart to hunt for it, and after another half mile or so the ground opened out and fell away in front of me. I almost raised a cheer, for I knew I had now come to the descent into the valley on the east.

It was a vast relief to go downhill, for it brought a different set of muscles into play. As I picked my way downward, however, the ground became steeper, until presently it had a cant like the roof of a house, and I found myself upon the traverses that Wade had built. Back and forward the track went in short zig-zags, and it was gashed by the channels of mountain-streams that gathered after every thunder-storm. Indeed, the road itself now formed the bed of an oozing burn, and at every step I went over the ankles in the spongy green moss. Wade had built a high wall to protect his road on its swift descent, and had dug a drain on the inside to keep the footway clear; but the drain had long been choked, and the stones of the wall had been scattered. The only living thing I saw was a huge black bird which came out of the mist and was gone before I could blink, and when I reached the foot of the traverses I found myself suddenly below the margin of the mist.

The effect was rather impressive: it was as if I had pushed aside the flap of a tent and had stepped into the open air. I could look a long way down into the valley; and below hillsides that were blotched with black peat-hags I saw the river Spey like a bright white thread trailing upon a sombre carpet. I had to ford one of its tributaries, a burn that came from Geal Charn and then splayed out into a wide muddy delta, a hundred yards across, and as soft as porridge underfoot.

The fickle rain had again eased off a little; and my heart was light as I descended to Meall Garbha, for I had come safely over the Corrieyairack, and there were no more heights over which the intolerable burden on my back had to be carried. I suppose it was this pleasant thought that made me slacken my stride, and I began to realise how hungry I was. The number of hours I had been on the way I did not dare to count. But as I looked down the wide bleak strath between these dark hills, with the bright Spey like a living thing in the hollow, the contrast with the softer contours of the Great Glen was so sharp that I felt as if I had left the monastery many days before and had now come into a new country. Slipping off my pack, I sat down on a stone and ate some food I had bought in the village of Fort Augustus, a couple of oranges that were nearly as dry as walnuts, and a handful of dates to finish with.

For long stretches the track itself was too rough to walk upon. The rains of two centuries had washed the road until nothing but loose stones have been left. It was difficult to visualise Edmund Burt galloping on horseback along these military roads for miles, as he said he did, for now the track looked as if cartloads of stones had been carelessly dumped into the bed of a dry burn. Within living memory this road must have been much better than it is to-day, for on the previous afternoon at Fort Augustus I had talked with an old man who had told me he was the last living person to have driven over the Corricyairack in a dog-cart, and his passenger had been a young man called Hamilton who was years afterwards to command the British forces at Gallipoli. It must have been a brawny cob they had between the shafts that summer's day! A hundred years before, a woman called the Hon. Mrs. Murray of Kensington was hauled up to the top of the pass by four stout horses, and the road was then so bad that she declared it would have knocked a lightly built carriage to pieces, and when Sir Ian Hamilton made the journey it must have been much worse. To-day it is impassable, except perhaps to a caterpillar of the Tank Corps, and I would not like to be the officer in charge.

Picking my way among the heather and the rushes at the roadside, I stepped out towards the south. Although mist floated thinly round the high tops, it was clear enough in the valley to see the tremendous panorama ahead of me. For a little while the sun shone, and the colours of the hillsides would have made the most lurid picture-postcard of Highland scenery look drab. But I came to the conclusion that the gods of these mountains were playing tricks with me, for before I had crossed Wade's big bridge over the river and come to the little old house at Garvamore which was once an inn, high black clouds were rolling up the strath, and raindrops were again beginning to fall. By this time I was long past caring about the wet, for I had begun the day by plunging over the knees through a burn, and the rain at the summit of the pass had penetrated through the thin waterproof sheet over my shoulders, so that almost every article of clothing I wore was soaked. It was, therefore, not so much for shelter against the rain as for a short breathing spell and a drink that I left the road and went over to knock on the door of the dismal-looking house. The place was inhabited, for I could see smoke rising from one of the chimneys.

A tall man with a large greying moustache came to the door. His hat was on the back of his head, and he wore cloth gaiters and strong-smelling tweeds - tweeds that seemed to exhale the quintessence of all the tweeds in Scotland. When I told him I was prepared to barter my very soul for a glass of milk or a dish of tea, he asked me to come in to the fire. My heart sang paeans of joy as I collapsed into a chair and lay steaming before a brisk blaze of logs.

The man introduced me to his sister, a grey-haired woman with tired eyes and a sweet resigned expression; and in spite of my protests, she began to lay a clean cloth upon the table and to set out what was obviously her best china. She brought bread and bramble jam, thick oat cakes and cheese, and a large dish of butter; and while the tea was infusing, I looked around me. The room was big, the full width of the house; and the ceiling, which was the bare floor-boards of the room above, was very high. The fireplace had once been an open one, but now it was bricked in, with a black grate in the middle. On either side there were innumerable shelves, which contained enough gear to fit out the hardware department of a small general store: it was evident that the master of the house was a handy man, and could not only mend his own boots, glaze his own windows, plaster his own walls, but could also physic both himself and his cow, and supply enough candles to light a village. The shepherd's sister lifted the tea-pot from the hob and poured out the strong dark brew. As I drew my chair into the table, I saw an almanac on the wall, and beside it a picture of Lady Seafield which had been cut from an old copy of *The Tatler*. Why Lady Seafield? I wondered

whether this brother and sister had come from Castle Grant way, but when I mentioned the picture- on the wall they cast a quick glance at each other and were silent.

“It is Lady Seafield, isn’t it?” I asked.

“Ay,” said the man, “it’s the Countess.”

But not another word could I get out of either of them on the subject, and I began to talk about the house they lived in:

“Did General Wade build it?”

“So they say,” murmured the man. “It’s old enough.”

And he moved out of the kitchen, while his sister busied herself at the dresser.

It was a homely place, and I was thankful I had been invited to enter; for I felt sure it was here-or in the stone hut Wade had built upon the same foundations-that the Prince stayed the night after his march over the Corrieyairack. The evening before at Aberchalder, the Highlanders had slaughtered twenty of their cows for food, and had driven a herd of eighty over the Pass. They now killed some more of the beasts and cooked the flesh on spits over their camp fires. They had no salt and no bread, and many of them had no more than a handful of oatmeal left. It was perhaps in the very room where I sat drinking tea that the Prince had been compelled to curb the impatience of some of the chiefs. They had learned earlier in the day from a man called Macpherson and some others who had deserted from Cope’s army that the Government forces were not marching to meet them but had made a sudden decision to veer off in the direction of Inverness. If the Prince had not been firm, the Highlanders would have been off to join battle, but Charles was as wise in keeping them in hand as Cope himself was in scuttling from the Highlanders.

It is a little late in the day to white-wash Sir John Cope. For years after the ‘Forty-five he was a figure of derision in Scotland. The truth about him seems to be that he was one of those unfortunates who have many of the gifts that make for success but have not the ultimate gift of achieving it; and in Cope’s hands things certainly had a way of going wrong. He has been blamed for his flight to Inverness, and if he had waited to fight the Highlanders he would have been blamed because his army had been cut to pieces. He knew his force was inadequate-it was smaller than the Highland army-and a number of his men were undisciplined, whereas the clansmen had a traditional discipline of their own. He had no dragoons, and only four fieldpieces, with one old man and three invalids from the Edinburgh garrison to handle them. Because the situation had demanded it, he had gathered an army hastily together and had hurried north, blindly hoping that he would collect recruits on the way. As he said himself in a letter to the Lord President, “I have lugged along with me about zoo arms, not thinking it possible to come thro’ so many friends country without meeting some hands to put them into.” And he adds: “But not one as yet.” This was written from Ruthven after the Dalwhinnie conference with his officers at which he decided to avoid fighting a losing battle. From Ruthven he made two forced marches and reached Inverness, having been seventeen hours in the saddle on the second day. It is incorrect to say that he was afterwards court-martialled for his conduct during the campaign: he appeared before a Board of Enquiry, the members of which exonerated him from any “misconduct or misbehaviour,”

and indeed the Board blamed the rabble under his command for the unholy mess they made later at Prestonpans. But the Battle of Gladsmuir is another story.

I finished my tea. The grey-haired woman with the sweet resigned expression refused to accept any money, so I put a shilling on the corner of the dresser, and with it left much more than a shilling's worth of gratitude. When I got out of doors I found that the rain was coming down in dead earnest. At a rough guess I had covered almost twenty miles since morning. But my tactics had been bad; for I had rushed the early part of the climb, and had been too leisurely in the valley. The hour was now half-past five; I judged from the black clouds above the strath that there would not be more than another hour of daylight; and I knew I had six or seven miles to go before I would reach Laggan Bridge. [Dr. W. B. Laikie was of the opinion that Prince Charles Edward left Wade's road at Garvamore and travelled to Laggan on the north bank of the river. I am aware of no reason for this belief. Before leaving Garvamore, the Prince, learning that Cope was on his way to Inverness, decided to strike south. It would be strange had he turned back from the inn, where he spent the night, and made a detour by the rough path on the north bank, when Wade's road lay open before him.] I knew, besides, there was no inn at that thinly scattered hamlet, and I had no idea where I was to spend the night. My outlook was not exactly a jovial one as I took to the road in the teeth of the driving rain.

The sticky grip of wet clothes is an unkindly thing, and it is particularly loathsome at the fag end of a long day. I tried to raise my spirits by extolling my good fortune, in that this was the first thorough drenching I had had since the start of my journey at Arisaig; and I told myself that an occasional wetting was good for a man. I said: what could be more jolly than tramping through rain with a defiant gesture to the lachrymose heavens? And truly it is pleasant to do so when one is sustained by the vision of a hot bath and dry linen and a leisurely meal in the candle-light of an old room. But I had the hope of no such sweet aftermath. So far as I knew, Laggan Bridge consisted of a kirk, a manse, a village shop, and three or four houses, and even if I found a lodging in one of them I was doubtful whether there would be an unsoaked stitch of clothing in my pack. The wind was rising; it drove the rain heavily up the strath, so that the road was soon speckled with pools of water, and the hue of the bright river below was changed to an inky black.

Past Shirramore I went, where I saw a tiny loch beyond the trees; then down to Shirrabeg, where a conical pine-clad hill jutted high on the west, with what looked like a disused chapel near the foot. It was getting quickly dark, and in the twilight I perceived that the road forked. To the left there was a rough track that seemed to go down steeply into dark meadows, so I took the other. I knew that Laggan Bridge could not be many miles away now, but I was past caring how far it was, or even where it was, for I had reached that state of mind and body when a man walks blindly forward like an automaton. I was not so much tired as numb with fatigue, and the pack on my back seemed to have become part of me. I knew by the feel of the road underfoot that it had been newly made: anyhow, it was a road, and a road must lead to somewhere. And then ahead of me in the quickly gathering darkness I saw the lights of a motor-car sweeping past, and I concluded that I must be approaching the main road that runs up the valley on the south of the Monadhliath Mountains. I was glad to reach it, for as I turned east towards Laggan Bridge I was in the shelter of trees on a steep hillside, and it was good to escape from the lash of the wind and rain. I could not have told whether I walked one mile or five before I saw lights high on my right hand. As I climbed up the path, I had a vague impression of a long low house set upon a knoll, with pines at the side, and I knocked on the door in the darkness of a wooden porch.

Many minutes seemed to pass before at last it was opened. There was no light in the hall behind, and I could not tell whether I was speaking to a man or a woman. I asked if I might be directed to Laggan Bridge.

“Laggan Bridge,” repeated a pleasant voice: it was a woman who spoke. “It’s a good half-mile from here.”

And then a light was brought, and I was asked to step in out of the rain. There was a tall man in the background; I took him to be a farmer and the woman with the pleasant voice to be his wife. She was peering at me with compassionate eyes, and I suppose I must have cut a pretty poor figure with the rain dripping from me in little trickles that splashed upon the clean linoleum of the hall.

“It’s not a night to go looking for shelter,” she announced when I asked if there was a cottage in Laggan where I might find a lodging. “It’s here you can stop, and welcome.” But for the man in the background I might have been tempted to embrace my Samaritan with the compassionate eyes. “Come away in and get off your wet things,” she said without further delay. “I’ve got a young gentleman lodger already. You’ll be company for him. There’s mince and stovers on for supper. I’ll get the other young gentleman’s dressing-gown and slippers. He’ll no’ mind-he’s an engineer.”



## Chapter XII. A night in Badenoch

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With the Road-engineer - Anne Grant of Laggan - The Man at the Churchyard Gate - I Visit the Minister and Leave for Dalwhinnie - The Pass of Drumochter - The Solitary Woman - On to Blair Atholl.

**W**HY an engineer should have been more good-natured about his personal belongings than, say, an architect or a chartered accountant, I did not understand, but I took the word of my hostess for it. To my satisfaction, I found that the spare shirt and flannel trousers in my [pack](#) were dry; and stripping off my wet clothes, which were to hang for the night before the kitchen fire, I shuffled downstairs to the sitting-room in the engineer's dressing-gown and slippers.

He was a young man with a lean pleasant face, and he was filling a huge briar pipe from a tin of "Country Life" tobacco. When I began to thank him for the use of his things, and to apologise for thus breaking in upon his privacy, he laughed and pushed an armchair towards the fire for me. "So you've been over the Corrieyairack?" he said.

Presently, I learned that my companion was a road-engineer, and his name was Melville.

"You were on Wade's road all the way," he explained, "except that new bit from the Catholic chapel at the Dun. I'm on a rather interesting job here, - for I'm re-making Wade's roads, and some of them haven't been touched-except for the potholes-since the old boy made them two hundred years ago ... Are you interested in General Wade?"

If the gods had been unkind to me during the day, they could not have made more generous reparation in the evening. I had been led, as it were, blindfold to a man who knew every contour of that countryside - and who was eager to talk about General Wade! There was no place in all Badenoch where I would rather have spent the night.

"Wade knew his job," said Melville, lighting his big pipe. "Whenever he could, he laid his roads so that an army couldn't be ambushed on them. He would often build a road a little way up the hillside when it would have been easier to put it right down in the valley. A shrewd old chap. When he came to a marsh he didn't try to dig foundations-that would have been a hopeless job-he floated his road on hundreds of bundles of wood-faggots. Come to think of it," Melville continued, "that's just about what we're doing to-day. We float the roads over marshy ground on rafts of concrete. History repeating itself! I don't say Wade was as great an engineer as Thomas Telford - the Caledonian Canal man. Telford knew a lot more about bridges than Wade, but he was a great old fellow all the same." And then he laughed. "Queer to think that General Wade built these roads so that the Government could keep a closer eye on the clans - and it was these very roads that helped Prince Charlie to get to Edinburgh before Johnnie Cope!"

Melville was interested to know that I was walking in the footsteps of the Prince, and was determined to cover all the country through which he passed both in Scotland and England and as a fugitive in the Isles. My present destination was Edinburgh, I told him, and later I

would go to Derby, then turn and walk north to Culloden, and finally follow his tracks through the heather.

The idea fired Melville to sudden enthusiasm. "You know the song called 'The Road to the Isles'?" he said, and began to hum it: "' By Tummel and by Rannoch and Lochaber I will go, by heather tracks I'll foot it in the wild ...' Well, last year I did that walk to the Isles-but it's the Prince Charlie road for me next time! I dare say the Corrieyairack's the worst bit ..."

We were interrupted by supper, and afterwards we talked until the hour of one chimed on the mantelpiece clock-a clock which, an inscription told me, had been a prize at a sheepdog trial - and I went upstairs to my bedroom, where huge sheep-skin rugs lay upon the floor; and I fell at once into a sound sleep.

I was awakened next morning by the sun glittering on the window at my bedside. Whether the rain had gone for good, I could not tell, and after breakfast both Melville and the farmer thought there was more of it yet to come. I was tempted to stop in Laggan for a day or two, but a full week had passed since I had left Moidart, and I had still more than a hundred and fifty miles to cover before I reached Edinburgh, so I decided to push on that morning. Melville said he was going to Laggan Bridge, three quarters of a mile away, and he offered me a lift on the back of his motor-cycle, which I accepted; and while I straddled his pillion seat, like a witch on a broomstick, he took me at a terrific pace across that wide green hollow among the mountains that has given the place its name. Clumps of trees were on the hillsides around us, and to the west I could see the conical hill called the Dun, clothed to the summit with firs and pines. A few cottages were scattered about, but there were more ruins than habitations, and it was a little saddening to think that a hundred years ago the population of this parish was over twelve hundred. Leaning his motor-cycle against a dyke, Melville went to attend to some business in a cottage where he had a temporary office, and I strolled into the kirkyard.

This church was a more recent building than the one which the Rev. James Grant built towards the end of the eighteenth century, and to-day the Rev. James is remembered only as the husband of the famous Anne Grant of Laggan. On the previous forenoon, as I had climbed up the north slope of the Corrieyairack, I had looked into the green glen where their courtship had taken place. What an extraordinary life that woman had. She had been brought up beside the lonely Hudson River in America, where her father settled before returning to Scotland broken in health to become Barrack-master at Fort Augustus. In New England she had learned to speak Dutch, and in Laggan she acquired Gaelic so that she could talk to her husband's parishioners. The manse was a place of hospitality, the stipend was small, and when her husband died she found herself without a penny and eight children to look after. She took a farm, but this failed, and soon she was worse off than before. In 1803 she published her first literary work, a volume of poems, which provided food and shelter for a time, and in 1806 her friends persuaded her to publish three volumes of the letters she had written from the Laggan manse. These Letters from the Mountains brought her both money and fame, and can be read with even greater interest to-day than at the time when they were

written. One of the wisest of the many wise remarks you may read in these delightful pages is that the Highlanders resemble the French in being poor with a better grace than other people.

Later, she published a volume of essays on the superstitions of the Highlands, and there she told a grim story of a Laggan glen that was haunted. A chieftain discovered that his daughter was in love with one of the cottagers, and in his wrath he seized the man and bound him naked on an ant's nest. The lover died in agony and the girl went mad. She roamed up and down the glen until her death, and her phantom remained to haunt the place. The Laggan people, in terror of the Red Woman, refused to go near the sinister glen until Mrs. Grant's husband laid the ghost by holding a religious service at the place where it had been so often seen.

Towards the end of Mrs. Grant's life, Sir Walter Scott had to soothe her feelings, which were hurt by the smallness of the civil pension allowed her by George IV. In his Journal, Scott calls her "proud as a Highland woman, vain as a poetess, and absurd as a bluestocking." But he added: "Catching a pension in these times is like hunting a pig with a soaped tail. Monstrous apt to slip through your fingers." Much sorrow came to her; all her children died except her youngest son; an accident crippled her, so that she was confined to the house for the last twenty years of her life. But she had many friends; her talk was brilliant; and in the end, several legacies dropped into her lap, making her a comparatively wealthy woman. To-day she would be called a reactionary and a romantic, and she even hated the idea of roads being built through the Highlands. These roads, she said, would afford access to strangers who despise the Highlander; and luxuries would be brought into the glens that the people could not afford to pay for, and would be happier without. She knew how little her Red Indian friends by the Hudson River in America had gained by being civilised; and she had the same fears for the Highlander. She foresaw that the ancient culture of the Gael would be destroyed instead of being allowed to grow and sweeten under the influence of an appropriate education; and the many Scottish institutions that are to-day trying to pick up the lost threads, and reanimate the old culture, show how wise were the words of Anne Grant.

There is little of the fine old tradition in Laggan to-day. At least, so I gathered from a stranger with whom I fell into talk at the kirkyard gate. He lived at Kingussie or Newtonmore - I forget which-and he seemed to know the district well. "There's still a lot of bitter Calvinism in the Highlands," he said, when our talk turned to the old and better days. "When the Gael becomes 'unco guid,' he isn't a very pleasant specimen. You see, he's instinctively an artist, he lives emotionally, the old songs and stories are in his blood. But repress him, deprive him of his emotional life, and he's a dry stick, suspicious and self-righteous. I'm not a Catholic myself," he went on, "but Calvinism in the Highlands did a lot of harm to the spirit of the Highlander."

I wondered who the stranger was. His voice suggested that he was a Gaelic speaker; he talked with a quiet intensity; and I liked his thoughtful eyes. "If you're interested in the Highlands," he said presently, "there's a man living up there who can tell you more about them than anybody I know. He's one of the finest men in Scotland - the minister of Laggan." And he

mentioned a name that is known and revered in every corner of the country. "I'm going up to the minister now," added the stranger. "Come and meet him."

I gladly accepted, and leaving my pack in Melville's little office, with word that I would be back in about twenty minutes, I went up the drive with the stranger to the manse of Laggan.

The minister greeted us at the front door. He was an unforgettable figure of a man, with a lock of iron-grey hair across his forehead, the deep eyes of a poet, and a resonant musical voice. He took us in to a pleasant sitting-room, where a bagpipe with a Ross tartan lay on the piano. He smiled when my eye kept straying to it, and we began to talk about bagpipe music. I remarked upon how vile it used to sound in the officers' mess on guest nights, and the minister nodded.

"Of course it would," he agreed. "It's an open-air instrument. The Clarsach - the harp-and the fiddle can be played in the house, but the bagpipe needs God's out of doors. At least it does for the Caol Mor - that's the Pibroch, the classical music of the bagpipe. It's being revived, I'm thankful to say, the Caol Mor. Music and song and the love of all beauty - this is the heritage of the Gael. But many insidious forces have helped to cut us off from that heritage. For example, the Disarming Act after the 'Forty-five; it was a wonder that the classical music of the bagpipe survived, but it did."

I spoke about the age of the bagpipe, how Dr. MacBain the Celtic scholar declared that it appeared first in the Lowlands of Scotland, and was not introduced to the Highlands until the sixteenth century.

"I know," nodded the minister, "MacBain believed that the bagpipe wasn't of Gaelic origin at all, and he's a difficult man to contradict. But this much is certain. It was the Scottish Highlanders, and particularly the Macrimmons of Skye, who made the bagpipe what it is today. Possibly the big drone was added in their time. But, ah, so much of the lovely Macrimmon music has been forgotten. They were the masters of the Pibroch."

I begged him to dispel a little of my ignorance about the Pibroch, and I learned that there are four kinds, the Lament, the Salute, the Battle-piece, and the Pastoral Meditation. "The Pibroch had been perfected centuries before it had ever been written down on paper," said the minister. "The master taught his pupil orally. There was a special notation, a sequence of letters that formed words, and by learning these words the pupil got the actual form of each Pibroch into his head. That was the method of the Macrimmons."

The minister went on to tell me about this great family. "Seven hundred years ago they owned land in the island of Harris. They were conquered by Paul Balkison, and he is said to have bequeathed his territory to the ancestor of the MacLeods, so the MacLeods became the overlords of the Macrimmons. It was the eighth MacLeod chief, Alasdair Crotach, who endowed the college of pipe music at Boreraig, a few miles from the castle of Dunvegan. That was four hundred and fifty years ago, and the college continued until after the 'Forty-five. No music except Caol Mor was allowed to be played at the college of the Macrimmons; they prohibited small music like marches, strathspeys, reels, and the melodies of songs.

“When a piper was composing a Pibroch,” went on the minister, “he fasted for two days beforehand, and would neither eat nor sleep until the tune was completed. This custom probably dates back to the time of the Druids. You’ll find the Pibroch only in the West. I know of but one Pibroch that belongs to the eastern Highlands ... Of course there were other schools of pipers, such as that of the Mackays, the MacArthurs, and the Rankines, but they were only offshoots from the Macrimmon college. You know the old story of Patrick Mor Macrimmon and Charles II -how a group of pipers were brought into the presence of His Majesty, and the king asked why one of them had not uncovered his head. A courtier replied that this was Macrimmon, the king of pipers. ‘Bring forward the king of pipers,’ said Charles, with a laugh, extending his hand to be kissed, and in honour of the great occasion Patrick composed that loud bombastic piece, ‘I have Kissed the King’s Hand.’ But it shows that the Macrimmons did regard themselves as extraordinary men, which of course they were ...

“I’ve often told the story of the blind piper Ian Dall Mackay,” the minister continued. “He was a pupil of the Macrimmons, and had heard how other musicians had interpreted in their music the beauty of the sunset. Well, the greatest ambition of Ian’s life was to compose a Pibroch describing the colours of the rainbow. One fine summer evening he was told there was a rainbow in the sky, and he raised his face in reverence to the beauty his blind eyes could not see. When a lark started singing he cried in sudden exaltation, ‘That’s the tune of the rainbow!’ The same evening he composed his Pibroch ... It’s obvious that in many of their battle-pieces the Macrimmons went to nature for their themes-you can hear the voice of thunder in their music, and the sound of a mountain torrent, the cry of an eagle, and sometimes the roar of the Atlantic breakers on the rocks at Skye ...”

Of the four kinds of Pibroch which the minister had described, I wondered which could be regarded as the finest.

“The Lament,” he said quietly. “In the Lament, the spirit of the Gael touches the highest point of beauty. It springs from the deep sadness in his heart. As a Pibroch, ‘The Lament for the Children’ stands alone ... No, I would rather not play it now-look at the sunshine out of doors. It needs the hour of twilight and the appropriate mood for that great sad music.”

It was nearly eleven o’clock before I left Laggan Bridge, and I hoped to reach Blair Atholl by nightfall. This was optimistic I knew; but since I was now heading for the south on the main road down through the Central Highlands, I had little fear of being stranded for the night. There was bound to be traffic on that road, I concluded, and at the worst I would probably be able to beg a lift for the last few miles into Blair Atholl.



Figure 7 - The pass of Drumochter

On the back of his motor-cycle, my civil engineer swept me up over the hill by Catlodge (which used to be called Cattleack), and past the little lonely grey schoolhouse near the summit. On the fence at the roadside I saw that bunches of heather had been tied to prevent grouse from killing themselves against the wire in flight, and we came down to a few scattered cottages in the middle of a flat plain. I watched Melville on his machine until he was out of sight, and then turned my face to the south country.

I knew nothing about the land that was now before me; and the road that joins Perth with the North had all the freshness of a new countryside. But the very fact that I was on a main road depressed me; I was illogical enough to resent the thousands of other eyes that had stared at those hillsides since the month of June; and as I strode forward, I thought of the fairy-haunted land of the West I had left behind me a week before.

But a surprise awaited me. Far from finding myself in a countryside littered with ugly little teashops, I found myself tramping into the mouth of a strath as desolate as that great hollow glen between Glenfinnan and Loch Eil. At Dalwhinnie, which lies in a saucer among the hills, the Prince halted for the night on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> August 1745. Tradition has it that he slept beside his men in the heather, although near at hand there was the inn that Sir John Cope had occupied three nights before. Why did he not sleep at the inn? No doubt he preferred the heather to a bed that Cope had occupied. This inn had been built by General

Wade, and- the old building now forms part of the present hotel near the road. But before the Prince reached Dalwhinnie that Thursday night, a prisoner was brought to him, a man of importance in the Highlands, and his name was Evan Macpherson of Cluny.

He held a Captain's commission in Lord Loudoun's regiment, which was part of Cope's army. His wife, a daughter of Lord Lovat, was at heart a Jacobite, but she did all she could to prevent Cluny from joining the Prince. She said that his oath to King George could not be broken without dishonour, and Cluny had reported himself to Sir John Cope at Dalwhinnie on the Monday night, when he had received a surly order to gather his clan and be ready to march on the following day, but Cluny had done nothing except nurse his resentment at being treated like a junior subaltern. His home was only a few miles away; and when Cope's army marched past Cluny Castle in the morning the Chief had been ordered to follow, but Cope had gone on to Inverness without him.

The Prince got an inkling of what had happened, sent off a hundred Camerons from Garvamore to take Cluny prisoner. One is tempted to conjecture that there was a twinkle in Cluny's eye that evening. Writing about him afterwards to the Secretary of State, Duncan Forbes of Culloden said: "He was seiz'd by the Rebels that Night in his house, whether with or without his consent did not then appear, nor does it now." But the fact remains that, after having been kept a prisoner for about a week, Cluny returned' to Badenoch and raised three hundred of his clan for the Prince, and there was no more loyal officer in the Highland army- and for his loyalty few men paid more dearly.

At noon the next day, when the Prince was about to continue his march to the South, a company of Camerons arrived with long faces. On the day before, they had left the main body to capture the Ruthven Redoubt under the impression that it contained a great store of meal. The only garrison that Cope had left behind to defend the place was a corporal and twelve men under Sergeant Terence Mulloy; but as Dr. Archibald Cameron soon discovered, Mulloy was a bonny fighter. The Doctor sent him a message advising him to throw up the sponge, but Mulloy made answer that he was "too old a soldier to surrender a garrison without first seeing some bloody noses." In Mulloy's own words, "the Grandee went off with a vast deal of threats." The Camerons attacked at night, but were compelled to draw off with one man dead and a few others wounded. When the Prince heard of the outcome of the affair he was more distressed at the loss of the dead Cameron than at the failure to capture the Redoubt, for he had disapproved of the attempt from the start. Indeed, the one man who stands out strongly in the affair of the Ruthven Redoubt is Sergeant Mulloy himself, and when Cope heard of his dogged resistance he recommended him for a commission, which was granted. Shortly after noon on Friday, the Highland army marched south.

I bought some food at a tiny shop; soon the pagodalike tower on the top of the big distillery was out of sight; and passing the end of Loch Erich, one of the highest lochs in Scotland, I found myself in a great strath with two mountains on my right called the Boar of Badenoch and the Atholl Sow. Their slopes were scarred by gullies in which the morning sun cast black shadows; and beyond them I saw Loch Garry (not to be confused with the Garry north of the Caledonian Canal), with its river racing southward beside the railway-line. Wade's stone

stands in that lonely pass. The rough piece of rock, eight feet high, was erected by the General in 1729 when he finished the road. He was an unusually tall man, and they say that when the stone was set up he placed a guinea upon it, to return a year later and find his coin still there. If this yarn about Wade's guinea is true, then the Pass of Drumochter in the eighteenth century was as desolate as it is to-day, for if any boy had lived within a league of this stone, could he have refrained from climbing to the top of it? As I tramped onward, I noticed that the modern highway here and there takes a short cut, leaving the old military road to wind its solitary way among rocks and heather, soon to be overgrown and to disappear from the eyes of man.

I had expected to meet a lot of traffic, but I was surprised at how little there was. One or two private motor-cars raced north, and there was a long spell when I saw not a living creature except some goats grazing near the road, and a woman pushing a baby in a perambulator. She was young and well-dressed, and I felt an almost irresistible impulse to stop her and ask where in the world she had come from and where she was going to. She looked as if she had stepped straight from among the nursemaids in Princes Street Gardens, yet there she was, with a sleeping infant, miles from any village or any living thing except the goats. At a little distance from Dalnacardoch I halted for ten minutes to eat the food I had bought. The hard smooth road made walking unpleasant, and the blazing sun added to my discomfort; I thought of the mist and rain on the Corrieyairack the day before, and the storm through which I had trudged by the river Spey; and by the time I reached Dalnacardoch, I would have welcomed a thunder-cloud with a shout of joy.

But my depression, I think, was more than physical. That pass, which lies between Badenoch and the Forest of Atholl, is a savage place. Even in bright sunlight, there is something inimical about it. You feel that nothing could grow on those barren mountainsides; you feel that no human being could live there long without becoming hostile to his fellow men. The place does not strike the mind with awe like some of the majestic parts of the Highlands-like Glen Lyon, for example-and it does not stir the fancy like the land in the West through which I had travelled the week before. This central pass through the Grampians was once the home of robbers and outlaws, and they could not have found a more suitable lurking-place. It was late in the afternoon by the time I reached Calvine, where I drank some tea, and was told that the Falls of Bruar were half a mile away - the Bruar that Burns visited, and then wrote to the Duke of Atholl begging him to plant the sides of the stream with trees. The petition was in verse, and ended with the toast to "Atholl's honest men, and Atholl's bonny lassies" which Burns had proposed at the Duke's table during his visit to Blair Atholl - the two happiest days of his life. Twenty-five years later William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy came to see the Bruar Water, and in her journal Dorothy described how the Duke had granted the poet's petition and had planted the glen with firs and larches - "children of poor Burns's song." If the stranger at Calvine who reminded me about Burns's poem had told me about Dorothy Wordsworth's visit, I might have been tempted to go to the Falls of Bruar for her sake, as she had gone for the sake of Rab; and after drinking my tea within sight of Struan - once the home of the chiefs of Clan Donnachie - I set out for Blair Atholl, four miles distant.



The hills on either hand were now low and smooth and green. The hand of man was apparent everywhere-or rather the hand of the landscape-gardener. The sun was low on my right, and I fancied I could see a smug smile on the face of the countryside. I remembered how my first glimpse of the green slopes around Loch Moidart had reminded me of Surrey, and I realised how absurd that comparison had been. Loch Moidart could no more be compared with Surrey than Surrey could be likened to the parade-ground of Edinburgh Castle. But here at Blair Atholl was a bit of Surrey, suave and fat and self-satisfied, ripe for redroofed bungalows and the pseudo-Elizabethan horrors of retired City men. I felt that I was coming to the fringes of some new garden-city, a trim and finicking place where people wore no hats and lived the artificially simple life in rows of little villas ... So my thoughts ran until I pulled myself up. There was nothing wrong with this place, I said: I was dogtired - so tired indeed that everything seemed detestable except a clean bed and the promise of twelve hours of uninterrupted sleep.. A lorry came trundling along behind me, and I acted on a sudden impulse and put up my hand to the driver. "Ay, hop in, sonny," he said, removing the stub of the cigarette that was glued to his lower lip, and lighting another. He glanced at the pack on my back, "A hicker? Ye're fond!" He laughed. "Chaps me no' for the hickin' - I'd rather hae ma lorry."

"There's a lot to be said for a lorry," I agreed fervently, loosening the laces of my shoes and lying back on the jolting seat. A lift in Jove's chariot could not have been more welcome. We rattled forward on a long straight road under a canopy of trees, and around the shelter of a hill I saw the peaked top of Ben Vrackie. Below us, the river Garry crept southward over its bed of pebbles. Not a soul did we meet on that road, not a motor-car. "Aweel," said the driver, drawing up, "here's Blair Atholl for ye. Ay, ye'll get a bed here." He waved his hand, the lorry rumbled on its way, and I found myself in the shadow of a gorgeous hedge of purple-leafed plum that surmounted the top of a high stone wall, with the village ahead of me.

## Chapter XIII. Through the Central Highlands

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Gaelic and English - The Reluctant Atholl Men - The Landscape-garden of Scotland - I Rest beside the Garry - Through the Pass of Killiecrankie - My Flight from Pitlochry.

**H**AD been too tired to eat anything the night I before, and I woke next morning with a stiff body. I had told the old woman who had given me a bed for the night that she was not to disturb me, and I found I had slept the full round of the clock. My bedroom was tiny, with wall-paper on which squiggles of primroses stood coyly among festoons of lilac-blossom; and beside the little iron bed with its feather mattress there stood a magnificent mahogany dressing-table around which the cottage seemed to have been built, for how it had been manoeuvred up the narrow staircase was a puzzle beyond my wit to solve. My landlady was talkative while I consumed my porridge and boiled eggs at breakfast in the kitchen; and when she learned that I had walked from the Western Highlands she said she had a relative in Arisaig and had just been on a visit there.

“Yes, it is lovely country in the West,” she agreed, and added: “but when I got home again, ah, I did not think it was so beautiful as Blair Atholl. You’ll not find many places so beautiful as Blair.”

Which gave me something to think about. It seemed that she had lived all her life among this placid green scenery, but she could not explain why she did not like the West country so well. Perhaps it made her feel restless; perhaps she thought the people outlandish. She glanced out of the little kitchen window at the quiet intimacy of woods and low rolling hills, and I could see a glow of contentment in her eyes. “I like to see the nice big motor-buses pass,” she said. “You can get to Perth and Inverness from here.”

“You go to Inverness sometimes?” I enquired.

“Oh, no, but you can go if you want to. In Arisaig you can go nowhere-it’s that far away.”

Then I began to perceive her point of view. Because Blair Atholl was more closely in touch with the outer world, it had a dignity that Arisaig lacked: not that she had any desire to see the outside world, but the thought of it comforted her.

“Yes, there is some Gaelic spoken in Blair,” she said, “but not much, and everybody has the English too.”

I made the remark that in the county of Inverness including the Isles-there were still over two thousand people who could speak no English at all.

“Ah, yes,” she said, “but we are not so far back in Perthshire. I would not like the Gaelic to pass away, but you must have the English too. You would be a poor creature with only the Gaelic-folk would laugh at you.” Which seemed to me to sum up the Highlander’s attitude of Queen Victoria’s time when Gaelic speakers used to be ashamed of their accent in speaking English in the South. Often I have heard a Highlander use the phrase, “Ach, he’s no’ so Heiland!” By which he meant that So-and-so was not such a dolt a survival of the days when the Highlander knew the Southerner looked down on him; but these days have passed, and

the tendency is now to gush over the Gael and credit him with qualities that he has too much sense to claim for himself.

After breakfast I made my way to the post office, and asked if there was a parcel waiting for me. There was, and I opened it with pleasant anticipation. It was a tin of tobacco, for which I had telegraphed at Fort Augustus because I knew there was little chance of buying my own brand in any Highland shop. I had smoked the last shred in my pouch at Laggan, and I now filled a pipe with great contentment, and crossed the road to look at the War Memorial. Wise and artistic people put it up, for it consists of a huge piece of undressed rock from the hills, and it stands on a low paved platform in front of a stone wall. War Memorials are an old story now; we are apt to think about them only for two minutes at eleven o'clock on Armistice Day, and there are those who would have us forget them altogether. But if there are any memorials in this land that should be passionately remembered, it is those set up for men who died in the greatest blunder into which modern civilisation has led mankind. Sometimes, when I look at one of those simple and poignant stones like the one at Blair Atholl, and think about the next war which we all fear in our hearts will come sooner or later, I wonder what form the new memorial will take. Another stone set up beside the old one would seem out of place. Perhaps the Blair Atholl folk may decide merely to build another metal tablet into the wall with a list of names, but it will probably have to be a larger tablet than the last one. I relit my pipe, with the reflection that another war would be rather unpleasant, and then strolled away from the Memorial with my hands in my pockets which is exactly what millions of other fools in Europe are doing every day.

On the west of the road that runs up Glen Tilt stands Blair Castle, and on the east is Lude House. After halting for a night at Dalnacardoch (which I had passed with no more than a casual glance the previous afternoon), the Prince arrived at Blair on the night of Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> August. In the days of the 'Forty-five, there had been a public-house at Dalnacardoch, but this was pulled down about thirty years afterwards by the Board that administered the forfeited estates, and a new inn was built. The Board thought it would cost them k300, but in the end they spent £1200 on it, and wrote a Latin legend about the "hospitium" above the door. In the eighteenth century, and indeed well into the nineteenth, these inns at short intervals on the road were necessary, and it is difficult now to appreciate what an ordeal it was to travel from, say, Edinburgh to Inverness. In 1740 Lord Lovat's coach was eleven days on this journey. Before the Union there was no postal communication between these two towns, and at the date of the 'Forty-five the mail was carried only once a week by relays of foot-runners, and there was no regular stage-coach for travellers between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Not very much more than a hundred years ago, it took the coach a full two days to go from Inverness to Perth, a distance of a little over a hundred miles. For the axle-springs or harness to break was a frequent thing, and in the floods or snow of winter the roads were impassable. And those who skim about Scotland in small cars, or enjoy the profounder luxury of a motor-coach, have only to read old guide books to realise that, in the days when their grandparents were young, to go on a journey in the Highlands was to set out upon a great adventure.

There were two Dukes of Atholl at the time the Prince was in Scotland. One was William, the duke by right, and he was usually called the Marquis of Tullibardine because he was attainted for having taken part in the Rising of 'Fifteen, while King George bestowed the title upon his brother James: Duke James the Jacobites called him in derision. William had lived in exile abroad, and he came to Scotland with the Prince, although stricken with gout, and was given the honour of unfurling the Standard at Glenfinnan.

He had of course lost his father's estates as well as the title, and on arriving with the Prince at Blair Castle he came to the old home he had not seen for nearly thirty years. He had left it as a young man of twenty-eight; he was now fifty-seven.

His brother James, on learning what was afoot, had hurried south to pay his respects to Sir John Cope at Crieff, and was now preserving his health at Edinburgh. He had left the house in the charge of his steward, a sharp-tongued old fellow called Thomas Bissat. Bissat had received orders to give no trouble if the Highland army came, and on the Saturday afternoon he walked along the road to meet his master's elder brother. William, Duke of Atholl, gave him instructions about the reception of the Prince and the quartering of the Highlanders, and Bissat hurried back to the castle. The Duke had already sent a message to the Hon. Mrs. Robertson of Lude asking her to act as the Prince's hostess, and she was waiting at the Castle to kiss his hand when he arrived at three o'clock. Bissat sat down that evening and wrote a letter to his master in Edinburgh. He referred to the Prince as "the young Gentleman," and said that he "seems to be good-natured, but I do not think he hath verry much in him." As for the Highlanders, he declared that "two-thirds of them are the poorest naked-like creatures, and very indifferently armed." He did not think that half of their guns would fire, and many were armed with swords alone. There was truth in his news, for on Friday Lochiel had sent back a hundred and fifty Camerons because they were imperfectly armed and would be more a hindrance than a help in battle.

For the first time since they had left home, the Highlanders to their joy found themselves in clover. Their food had been the flesh of the cattle they drove with them; but here in Atholl there was bread in plenty. The keen-eyed Bissat walked among them, and on Sunday again wrote south to his master that if the army remained for another four or five days "all this poor country will be eat up and ruined."

The Prince had hoped that the Atholl men would join him, but they showed no alacrity. Their fathers had been Jacobites, but in the last twenty years Duke James had successfully damped the old spirit. The first Duke of Atholl had one of the largest followings in the Highlands; six thousand men were at his call - men of as pure Celtic blood as could be found in Scotland, for the Norse had no hold upon Atholl. Few of them bore the family name of Murray; this was the country of the Robertsons, the Menzies, the Fergusons, and the Stewarts; and the Murrays of Tullibardine had not become landlords in Atholl until the seventeenth century. Not that their position as the owners of land occupied by other clans was unusual in the Highlands: for part of the country of the Camerons belonged to the Duke of Gordon; the Earl of Sutherland owned some of the Mackay territory; and many of the chiefs of smaller clans were but tenants who held the land under a superior.

The principal chief in the Atholl district was Alexander Robertson of Struan, an infirm man of seventyfive who had joined Claverhouse fifty-six years before and had been a keen Jacobite ever since. This bibulous, good-natured, happy-go-lucky poet threw in his lot with the Prince without delay and appointed Robertson of Woodsheal to lead the clan. Sir Robert Menzies followed suit, and his factor led out the Menzies men. Lord Nairne rode north from Dunkeld bringing his brother and young Oliphant of Gask, as well as the famous John Roy Stewart, a personal friend of the Prince in France, a soldier and a writer of much topical verse and some good Jacobite songs. There were conferences at Blair Castle and dancing at Lude House upon the hillside, and on Tuesday the Prince marched south through the Pass of Killiecrankie to the old town of Dunkeld.

I went into the grocer's shop across the little square to buy food. It was difficult to make a choice, even with the help of one of the brisk young men who stepped forward to attend to me, and for the first time since my arrival in Blair Atholl I realised that there was after all some advantage in living on a main road. That grocer's shop seemed to contain nearly everything a man could wish to eat; the smells in it were multitudinous and delightful, evoking hunger; and in the end I left it so stocked with food that I might have been in Dawson City and about to take a sled across Alaska behind a team of huskies. I stuffed what I could into my pack, left the remainder with my landlady, and about noon set out for Killiecrankie.

It was my intention to make a short stage, for I was tired, and I decided to stop for the night at Pitlochry. I took it easy because the day was like the last one, with a scorching sun and no wind to temper it; and I began to wish I had waited until the cool of the evening, even though it meant arriving in Pitlochry after dark. Somebody - I forget who - has called this part of the Highlands the Garden of Scotland, but as I have said I think the Landscape-garden is a more accurate title for it. As I walked forward between those rounded hills with their neat woods, I felt that not a single pine-needle was out of place; and the cottages, tidy and respectable, had prim little gardens, and Dorothy Perkins roses, and nice rustic trellis-work that might have come from the Garden Department of Gamages in Holborn. But I reminded myself that my landlady in Blair Atholl thought it a beautiful place. Put any Londoner down in that glen through which the Garry flows, and he would tell you at once it was as beautiful as a picture postcard. He would be perfectly correct; it is picture-postcard scenery at its best; and unless you pass through it rapidly, it cloy. Besides, I was beginning to grow sick of the sight of that wide smooth grey road. In the heat it was like a stream of lava, and I felt it was bubbling subterraneously and at any moment would burst with a snarl through the melting film on the top. Admirable for motor-tyres, it is hell for the feet of men and of horses-not that I had seen a single horse, so far as I could remember, since I had left Laggan. To take some rest, I climbed over the dyke on the right, walked across the metals on the railway-line, and dropped down among the bushes beside the Garry. One hundred and sixty odd years ago, Thomas Pennant travelled beside this river and called it "an outrageous stream whose ravages have greatly deformed the valley, by the vast beds of gravel which it has left behind." Tastes differ; myself, I think the gravel bottom adds beauty to the Garry; and at the point where I lay, it was a wide and noble stream. I watched the sky-reflecting waters that had come down from the little loch among the hills in the Forest of Craiganour, and I remembered that hump in the glen at Dalnaspidal which had prevented it from flowing northward to join the river Spey and go hustling through Inverness and Elgin to the North Sea near the mouth of the Moray Firth: whereas, in fact, it meets the Tummel that comes out of Rannoch, and runs southward through Perthshire, mingling at last with the Tay, that sedate old gentleman of a river that once made the town of Perth a seaport and separates the men of Angus from the folk of Fife. It was odd to think that if I pitched a match-box into the water it might in a day or two go bobbing past the city of Dundee and be washed up on the golf -links at Carnoustie. And so I lay dreaming for an hour and more, with my pack as a pillow, and my jacket on the gravel beside me; and after eating a little of the monstrous store of food I had bought at Blair Atholl, I began to feel better. The cure was completed by a pull at a half-mutchkin of whiskey I had purchased, and I climbed back to the road and headed southward again, with my head full of Claverhouse and Killiecrankie, for the famous Pass lay little more than a mile ahead of me.

Of all the well-known battles fought on Scottish soil - Bannockburn, Pinkie, Drumclog, Killiecrankie, Culloden, and the others - Killiecrankie had perhaps the smallest effect upon

the affairs of the nation. Indeed, it could be argued that apart from the death of the great Claverhouse - I prefer to think of him as Claverhouse rather than Viscount Dundee - it had no effect at all; for, although it was a victory for the Jacobites, they were knocked into a cocked hat by some Cameronians a few weeks later, a defeat that was due not to - lack of valour but the want of a leader. With the right man to inspire them, the Highlanders could accomplish miracles; and well might King William have cried: "The war is ended with Dundee!" And so it was. But there was one change that followed the Battle of Killiecrankie. After the Government troops fired their muskets, they had no time to fix bayonets to meet the onset of the Highlanders, and General Mackay invented the device by which a musket could be fired with the bayonet fixed.

The battle was not fought in the Pass of Killiecrankie at all, but a little north of it, and for years the Highlanders called it the Battle of Renrorie. The Jacobites had been leading General Mackay such a dance, skipping here and there among the mountains, that a less dogged man might have been tempted to give up all hope of joining battle; and the reason why the two armies at last met each other is a simple one. General Mackay decided to seize Blair Castle, which I guarded the road and was thus the key to the northern Highlands. Claverhouse was determined to keep it as a Jacobite stronghold; and by the time he arrived, Mackay's troops were already marching through the Pass of Killiecrankie. To have fought in the Pass itself would have been a tactical blunder, for Claverhouse knew his only hope of victory lay in the torrential force of a Highland charge. His army was about the size of the one Prince Charles Edward Stuart led south on that same road fifty-six years later, and he was outnumbered in proportion of about seven to four.

Mackay drew up his troops three deep below the present house of Urrard, then called Renrorie, and Claverhouse's men were on the hill above it. The sun began to set on that Saturday evening in July, and Mackay was anxious to fight at once, but Claverhouse knew that twilight was the best time for him to attack. At last the sun went down over the shoulder of Tulach Hill. In spite of the entreaties of his officers to think of his own safety, Claverhouse rode to the front of his cavalry. The bagpipes began to play, and the Highlanders slowly advanced down the hill.

In spite of the hot musket-fire of the Government troops, they kept their heads. Mackay's artillery consisted of a few guns made of tin and leather, and when a spent ball hit the targe of one of the Jacobite officers and knocked him over he picked himself up with a laugh, crying: "Sure the Boddachs are in earnest now!" One volley only Claverhouse's men delivered at short range, then rushed forward with wild cheers and waving broadswords. On Mackay's left wing, his men ran like startled rabbits, some of them trying to ford the Garry, others going helter-skelter down the Pass, where the Atholl men (who had not joined in the battle) were waiting to slaughter them. Mackay afterwards declared that there were only two units in his force that did not behave like cowards. Claverhouse, who had led the victorious charge in the centre, galloped over to his left wing to direct the battle. Some say he paused for a moment to water his horse at a stream, and leant down to speak to one of his soldiers; a shot struck him in his right side below the cuirass, and he fell into the arms of the man at his bridle.

"How goes the fight?" he asked as soon as he had recovered from the first shock of his wound.

"Well for the king," replied the man, "but I'm sorry for your lordship."

“It is the less matter for me,” said the general, “seeing the day goes well for my master.”

By the time his officers returned from the pursuit, he was dead. Some say his body had already been stripped by a looting Highlander, but the story is no doubt as untrue as the one invented by some fanatical Covenanter who declared that Claverhouse was in league with the devil and had been killed by a silver button fired by a man who knew that lead would have no effect upon one of the devil’s own.

His officers wrapped his body in a plaid, carried it to Blair Castle, and buried it in the church, but it is believed his bones were afterwards removed to Old Deer in Aberdeenshire. Macaulay’s account of the battle is a graphic piece of prose in the big drum style, but his statements about Claverhouse have long ago been riddled. The “bloody Claverhouse” was a monster only in the imagination of the Covenanters; Wodrow’s story about the murder of John Brown of Priesthill before the eyes of his wife is largely false, and the version of Patrick Walker (who wrote better prose than Macaulay) contains more than one obvious error. Claverhouse was a stern and ambitious soldier, and the worst that can be said of him is that he was often as harsh and stubborn as the fanatics he helped to harry. The Covenanters were loyal to their conscience, and Claverhouse was loyal to his king, though the Covenanters would no doubt have refused to believe that the man they called a blasphemous monster was as devout as many a one who groaned with spiritual fervour at the conventicles, and indeed conducted family worship regularly morning and evening in the privacy of his own house. Taking him all in all, John Graham of Claverhouse was a pretty stout fellow.

As I walked down the steep footpath into the Pass of Killiecrankie, I could not help smiling at the doubtful story about the terror of the German troops who marched north in the ‘Forty-five before Culloden. The place is said to have looked so fearsome in their eyes that they turned tail and marched back to Perth; but there is nothing fearsome about it to-day. A magnificent water-fall drops into a brown pool, and there are graceful silver birches everywhere. I suppose thousands of sightseers step out of motor-coaches and walk through this gorge every summer, and when I climbed back to the road at the other end an R.A.C. man in powder-blue uniform told me that sometimes six hundred cars a day pass in July and August. I was glad the month was now September, and I went into Pitlochry to look for a lodging for the night.

I drank some tea in a tea-shop, which in the chromatic variety of its cakes and sweetmeats reminded me of the vanished Rumpelmeyer’s. The tea itself was excellent, but the cakes I touched not. I gazed at them in puzzled admiration, and then looked at the clean and nimble waitresses, and I began to wonder whether I was still in the Highlands. When I paid my bill at the cash-desk, where the price of my tea bobbed up in red figures from an automatic machine, I was still wondering. But I had not walked ten yards down the main street before I knew without a doubt: I was no longer in the Highlands; I was in the spick-and-span London suburb of Golder’s Green. All the most baggy plus-fours in the United Kingdom, all the most sleek and oily heads, seemed to have been collected in that street. Immaculate coiffures (of two seasons before) glided along beside the oily polls, and beside the plus-fours stalked bare legs that had been slabbered over with what I believe is called liquid-powder. There were tennis-rackets everywhere, and golf-clubs, and shiny Baby Austins; there were cheap cigarettes and expensive-looking finger-nails; but worst of all there was that detestable accent which is called “refained.” In my dolour I glanced at my old tweed jacket and dusty shoes; this was no place, I said, for a tramp like me; I felt like a blot on the landscape and I decided to remove the blot with all speed. An S.M.T. bus stood by the kerb, and the driver was swinging himself up. I stared at that bus for several seconds; it began to move; and with a

sudden leap, I was upon the step. My flight from Pitlochry had begun. I told myself I never wanted to see the place again.

But of course I was all wrong about Pitlochry. A half-blind man could have perceived that Pitlochry was a neat, clean, respectable little town; that the shopkeepers behind their counters were brisk and dapper; that the policemen were models of what policemen ought to be; that the gardens might have been lifted straight out of the Ideal Home Exhibition; and that everything was in fact a terrific success. I have taken the trouble to consult a guide-book, and I have read about the salubrious situation of Pitlochry, and the walks of undeniable charm for young and old; I have learned that Pitlochry is the "Switzerland of Scotland," and has several hotels with excellent cuisine, and a Hydro with a garage for fifty cars and extensive private grounds; I know now that there is fishing to be had at Pitlochry for "devotees of the piscatorial art," and numerous delightful excursions can be made in the surrounding district, which is very historical and romantic. I suspect there is also a cinema-house in this favourite summer resort, where one may relax after a day devoted to a historical and romantic excursion. In short, Pitlochry can be summed up in the fine old Scots phrase which I heard a pair of plus-fours utter in a strong Glasgow accent to a pair of powdered legs as I came out of the tea-shop: "Cutie, it's a wow!"

Why then, in heaven's name, did I decamp from that "wow" of a place? The natives of such a pretty little town are no doubt as charming as any folk in Perthshire; perhaps they are proud of their "toney" visitors, and it would be uncommercial to reproach them for their pride, or the visitors for their presence; but the rugged fact stands that Pitlochry, although it is in the Highlands, seemed to me on that September afternoon no more Highland than the Palace Pier at Brighton. As I left Pitlochry, I tried to picture the Prince and his Highlanders moving down the main street on their march to Dunkeld, but my imagination went topsy-turvy; it was clogged with the atmosphere of Brighton front; and in my sick and twisted fancy, some of the clansmen wore baggy plus-fours, and the bare hairy legs of others had been slabbered over with liquid-powder, and Lochiel in a shiny Austin Seven was smoking a gasper. I discarded the day-dream and unfolded my map.



## Chapter XIV. Evening in Dunkeld

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South by the Tummel - The Minister in the Motor-coach - Queen Victoria's Hotel - At the Smoking-room Fire - A Great Fiddler - Millais and the Carpenter - The Deer-stalker's Point of View - In the Old Cathedral.

**T**HERE was a loud-voiced minister behind me in the motor-bus, and his knowledge was awe inspiring. He boomed information into the ear of his wife (I think she must have been his wife, she was so patient), and those around him got the benefit of his running commentary. Here was a new kind of travel-film, I said to myself as I settled down more comfortably in my plush fauteuil; the countryside unrolled itself beyond the windows of the motor-bus; and instead of the nasal voice of a Hollywood commentator, we listened to the rumbling tones of a dogmatic Scot.

For a long way, the road ran alongside the railwayline, which cut off the river Tummel from our view. But the high hills on the left were worth looking at, and I could see that we were coming into a countryside even more rich in trees than Blair Atholl. When we reached Ballinluig, where the river lay low in the open strath, the minister in the seat behind told his wife that across the burn was Logierait. I gathered that it wasn't much of a place now; and the minister omitted to say that its name had once been spoken with awe from end to end of Atholl, for there the Regality Court had been held, and with fifteen of his tenants, the head of the Atholl family sat by hereditary right and had power to drown or hang a malefactor (pit and gallows, they called it), or to order him to be nailed by the ear to a post-a power which was not abolished until three years after the 'Forty-five. At Logierait, the river Tay comes down from the west, and a mile or two further on it joins the Tummel; from this point onward, although the honour should belong to Tummel, the united streams are called the Tay; and the voice from behind me broadcast the information that this is the biggest burn in Scotland. I have a particular affection for the Tay, having spent some of the happiest days of my life at the foot of Ben Lawers, and I wish the loch and the river had a more noble-sounding name; but perhaps the old goddess after whom it was called would not have wished her worshippers to choose a more suitable title than "the Silent One," for the Tay is a silent stream, and there is a dignity in silence.

We swept at a great rate past a little grey hamlet in a hollow and came to another with the quaint name of Guay. The minister behind me pretended he knew how to pronounce it, but I felt sure he was bluffing. I forget what he told us about Dowallay; and then, for the first time, he said something that made me forgive him for all the twaddle which had poured from beneath his big coffee-coloured moustache. The Duke of Atholl had planted those woods on the hillside (he said), and had been showing them off to a friend, who stared up at the larches on the crags. "And how did you plant trees up there?" he asked the Duke. "Did you fire the seeds from a cannon?" That pleased me at the time, and it pleased me still more afterwards when I found out for myself that the minister's little anecdote was true, and the man who cracked the mild joke with Atholl was Thomas Telford, our friend of the Caledonian Canal. I was told the other day that it was not a joke at all-that the Duke did actually scatter these high crags with larch-cones fired from a cannon - but I refuse to believe a word of it.

We saw Birnam Woods ahead; and if they were not the woods that came to Dunsinane and scared Macbeth out of his wits, at least they were growing upon the authentic hill of Birnam. I perceived that the old town of Dunkeld lay in the hollow, and presently the motor-bus had stopped in the main street. I looked about me anxiously, but the anxiety changed to relief. Here were no sleek heads and bare legs; here were no pretty-pretty, damnably ugly, natty little cottages, no chromium shop-fronts or the spurious glitter of the cheap john. This was a good old robust glowering grey Scots town; it pleased me immensely; and I decided to stop at Dunkeld for the night, if Dunkeld would have me. I crossed the street and asked a man if he could recommend a good hotel.

“Guid hotel?” he repeated, and then he pointed. “That yin,” he said, “might suit ye. And what for no’? It was guid enough for Queen Victoria!”

The hotel looked a pleasant old-fashioned place, with its front door opening on the pavement, and the only sign of modernity about it was a petrol-pump beside an archway that led through into a big courtyard at the side. But I wondered why Queen Victoria made a habit of stopping here, and the landlord explained. Last century, Dunkeld was a coaching centre, and it was here the Queen broke her journey on her way to Balmoral. Dunkeld is the gateway to the Highlands; it was not until the ‘sixties that the railway was continued into the North; and within the memory of living people, the pageantry of the eighteenth century survived, and coaches came clattering in and out of the town. In those days, you could get an inside seat in the coach that went from Perth to Inverness for thirty-five shillings, but if you travelled outside, the charge was only twenty-five shillings, while a seat in the mail-gig cost you about twopence-halfpenny a mile. Breakfast in one of the posting inns was a florin at the most; dinner was anything from a florin to three shillings and sixpence; and if you travelled on horseback, you would probably be given a bed in the inn free of charge. A meal for your servant would cost you sixpence, and you could buy whiskey at three shillings the pint. And if you liked your toddy of an evening—which you probably did—you carried a bag of lemons with you. In the eighteenth century, many of the inns were kept by the younger sons of gentlemen; and when German troops were quartered in the Central Highlands in the closing days of the ‘Forty-five, the commanding-officer of the Hessian cavalry found to his surprise that the inn-keeper at Dunkeld was a man of good family and could talk with him in fluent Latin, the only language they both understood.

I had not chatted long with the landlord, a young Edinburgh man, before I saw that he took his job seriously. He told me that the hotel was built a hundred years ago, but there was not a single bathroom in it until 1919, and four years later the rooms were still being lit with candles. “Now we’ve even got central heating,” he added, and then he laughed. “Look at this.” He pointed to a framed notice that hung in the hall. “The landlord who put that up must have been a comic.”

Here is the notice I read:

“This hotel has been built and arranged for the special comfort and convenience of its visitors. On arrival, each guest will be asked how he likes the situation; and if he says that the

Hotel ought to have been placed up upon the knoll, or farther down towards the river, the location of the house will be immediately changed. ...

“Baths, gas, hot and cold water, laundry, telegraph, restaurant, fire-alarm, bar-room, billiard-table, daily papers, sewing machine, grand piano, a clergyman, and all other modern conveniences in every room. ... Every guest will have the best seat in the dining-hall and the best waiter in the house.

“Any guest not getting his breakfast red-hot, or experiencing a delay of 16 seconds after giving his order for dinner, will please mention the fact at the Office. Children will be welcomed with delight, and are requested to bring peg-tops to spin on the velvet carpet, and hoop-sticks and shinties to bang the carved rosewood furniture specially provided for the purpose. They will be allowed to bang on the piano at all hours, yell in the halls, slide down the banisters, fall downstairs, and make themselves as disagreeable as the fondest mother can desire.

“A discreet waiter who belongs to the Masons, Oddfellows, Knights of Pythias, and who has never been known to tell even the time of day, has been employed to carry milk-punches and hot toddies to the ladies’ rooms in the evening.

“The office clerk has been carefully selected to please everybody, and can lead in prayer, match worsted at the village store, play billiards, waltz, amuse children, and is a good judge of horses. As a railway and steamboat reference he is far superior to ‘Layer’s’ or any other Guide, and can answer questions in Hebrew, Greek, Choctaw, Gaelic or any other polite language. ...

“Dogs welcome in every room in the hotel.”

The name of the dead wag who composed this genial squib for the education of his guests, I do not know; but I doubt whether it made one troublesome visitor the less; troublesome, so ready are we to chuckle over satire in the assumption that it is directed at some other fellow, never at ourselves.

After a plain but admirable dinner, I felt better; I had successfully shaken off the Central Highlands. I knew there was no good in ignoring the fact that during the last two days I had been depressed and cynical, and I realised what was wrong with me. That long deep glen through the Grampians and the southern foothills had outwardly been picturesque enough for any epicure, with barbaric mountainsides as far as Blair Atholl, and with woodland nearly all the way to Dunkeld, but it had lacked the glamour of the West. And I disliked being upon that wide, hard, sophisticated highway. Not that I had seen as much traffic as I had expected. But I had longed to get away from the road, to find myself once more among people who lived quiet lives out of the sound of motor-horns. That road from Dunkeld to the North is to-day a motorist’s paradise: not a walker’s.

Afterwards at the smoking-room fire, I had the good fortune to fall into talk with a local man who had come to discuss some business with the landlord. He was proud of his native town, and he knew a lot about its history. This pride in one’s own district is keener, I believe, in

Scotland than in England. The Englishman will shout lustily for his own town at a local football match, but I feel that the Scot has his roots more deeply in his native place, and I have often been surprised to find how many of them take a pleasure in its past. This brisk ruddy keen-eyed little man told me, among other things, that the Society of Chapmen used to meet every two years in Dunkeld: these chapmen were wandering merchants who had received a charter from James V, and they hawked their wares through the shires. Their meeting was called a "Court," and every chapman was compelled to display his weights and measures, which were checked by some office-bearer of the town. The Dunkeld man advised me to take a walk up Strath Bran, a glen in the parish of Little Dunkeld that runs eight or nine miles westward as far as Amulree. Less than a hundred years ago there were three thousand people in this parish who spoke nothing but Gaelic; and against the wishes of the people, the patron of the living put in a minister who could preach only in English. The folk protested again and again, and at last they took the matter to court. The judge's decision is still remembered. "Little Dunkeld," he said, "is the mouth of the Highlands, and a Highland mouth should have a Highland tongue." And so they got their Gaelic-speaking minister in the end. But I wonder how many folk can talk Gaelic in Strath Bran to-day.

"You know the picture called 'Bubbles'?" asked my companion beside the fire. "Ay, the one you used to see on the advertisements of Pears' Soap. Millais painted it here in Dunkeld. The wee boy in the picture was his own grandson - he's now Admiral William James. Millais lived in Dunkeld for years - and he was very well liked. I used to know an old joiner here called Jackson. Jackson made the packing-cases that Millais's pictures were sent away in. He was ordered to go up to the house one day to take the measurements of a new canvas - it was the picture of a beautiful young lady that everybody in the town knew. Jackson told me he went into the studio, and he drew back and cried out, 'Beg pardon, mum!' He didn't say how complete was the costume the young lady had on ... Man, you should have heard Jackson tell the story. He would leave you guessing for a minute, and then he'd laugh. It wasn't the young lady at all - it was her picture! A picture so life-like he could hardly believe it in the half-mirk. I don't know whether you'll think Millais a great artist nowadays," he added, "but old Jackson the joiner thought so then."

He began to talk about Niel Gow, Scotland's most famous fiddler, who lived at Inver, on the other side of the Tay, and I had always thought it was his birthplace as well as his home.

"Na," said my companion, "he was, born at Carrody, a deserted village in Strath Bran. He was a great character, Niel. There was never a fashionable ball in Perth or Edinburgh chat Niel wasn't asked to fiddle at. Talk about Jack Payne's band! If folk knew that Niel was to play for the dancing, they went in crowds. Oh, ay, and he liked his dram. Mind you, he was as sober as a judge when he had fiddling to do, but when the dance was over the fashionable folk used to offer him plenty. He was a great friend of the Duke of Atholl's, and Niel could say anything to him without giving offence. One day His Grace was talking about the fine new road he had made from Perth. The old military road had been a gey twisted one, but the Duke's road ran straight. 'I like the auld yin better,' said Niel. 'When I was walking home from Perth at night after a drop whiskey, the zig-zags suited me fine!' Another time an elder of the kirk took Niel to task: 'I'm afraid ye were the worse of drink last night,' he said. 'The

waur o' drink!' cried Niel. `Ye're wrang, man, ye're wrang! I may have been fou o' drink, but I've never been the worse of it!' He was a good man for all that, and had family worship in his cottage every night and morning. He made a lot of money, but he lived as simple as when he started, and his son Nathaniel made money too: he followed his father as a fiddler, and he was worth twenty thousand at one time. But he couldn't look after it like the old man, and died without a penny. But for the Gows, father and son, many a fine old Scotch tune would have been lost."

And from one thing to another our talk drifted, until presently we were joined by two other men.

One was an Englishman, a big bronzed broad-shouldered man of about fifty with a manner that was a little over-confident. The other was a Scot; and I learned that they had motored up that day from Newcastle. The conversation became general for a time, until the Scotsman - a little man in dapper brown tweeds - mentioned that they were heading for Ross-shire and the deer-stalking. I made some remark about deer which caused the Englishman's eye to glitter.

"You aren't one of those fellows," he said, "who would have the red deer cleared out of Scotland?"

I told him I felt it would be a pity to clear anything out of Scotland except rats, grey squirrels, half the rabbits, and all the Communists.

"Not even the Irishmen from the Clyde?" he asked, cocking a quizzical eye at me.

It was the Dunkeld man who answered. "We brought over the Irishmen ourselves," he declared, "and they were useful on the Clyde in the War. But mebbly a few more priests to keep them in order wouldn't be a bad thing."

"They say the Irishmen are responsible for nearly a third of the crime in Scotland," remarked the Scot in the brown tweeds.

"What about the English?" said the Dunkeld man quickly. "I'm told there's more Englishmen living in Glasgow than Scots in London. It seems as if the English found Glasgow a pretty good place. And not only Glasgow - the Highlands in the autumn!"

"Don't they bring good money with them?" demanded the Englishman. "Look at the rents they pay for the deer forests."

"True," nodded the Dunkeld man, "and a lot of that siller goes into the pockets of absentee landlords. Which means it's really spent in the South or abroad. Absentee landlords are one of the curses of the Highlands. And so," he added stoutly, "are the deer forests."

The Englishman laughed. "My good fellow! It was the deer forests that saved the Highlands after the price of wool slumped and lairds were on the point of going broke. About a hundred years ago, I doubt if you'd find half a dozen deer forests in all Scotland. I happen to know what I'm talking about. I'm not defending the Clearances of the people - in Sutherland it was a filthy business. But what about the thousands of Highlanders who emigrated on their own?"

They simply couldn't scratch a living out of the land. In fact, at one time the Government tried to stop emigration, and the people simply had to make a bolt for the emigrant-ships. As for the deer forests, good lord, can you blame the landowners? They had to do something. The fact that deer-stalking became a popular sport saved lots of them from bankruptcy when tenants on the sheep farms defaulted."

The Dunkeld man leaned forward. "Do you happen to know how many men are employed in the deer forests of Scotland to-day?" he asked.

"Not many, I'll admit. About a thousand, I suppose. Another thousand or so are 'taken on as gillies' in the autumn. But that's better than giving work to nobody."

"A thousand men permanently employed," repeated the other, "and what's the area of the deer forests? More than a quarter of the Highlands, I'll warrant!"

"You can't blame the landlords for that," said the Englishman quickly, "any more than you can blame a sheep-farmer for the few men he employs. A shepherd can look after a couple of thousand sheep. But something is being done for the Highlands. Take afforestation. That employs a man for every fifty acres. I was reading about it in *The Times* the other day." He made an impatient gesture. "We all want to see more people back in the Highlands, but this talk about re-populating the glens makes me sick. When the glens were crowded, the people lived on the edge of starvation. I grant you, it's better for a man to scrape a poor living out of the land than to hang about the street corners of a slum drawing the dole. But, believe me, farming needs skill-and specially in smallholdings! What's the good of shoving people back on the land, simply to go bust? Take the experiment at Erriboll in Sutherland - a flop! It'll need years of training to do any good, and pots of money-yes, and better conditions than we're likely to have for years to come. You'll hear some reformers shout that cattle are the solution, others say sheep. But neither sheep nor cattle alone will solve it." He turned to the man in the brown tweeds. "You ought to know something about this, Jim."

"It's a difficult business," agreed the other. "You have heard the old saying, cattle for the black ground, sheep for the green. It's true. Local conditions must be studied. There's fishing on the west coast, but the Highlanders were never great fishermen. As for dairy-farming, lots of places are too far away from the markets. There it is, a hard situation all round."

"A hard situation," repeated the Englishman, "and meantime I'm all for the deer forests. If you can afford it, it's the best sport in the world. And I don't see why anybody but a damned Communist can object to other people's pleasures."

"Other people are welcome to their pleasures," said the Dunkeld man. "That's one of my objections to deer forests. More than a quarter of the Highlands is fenced off for the sport of a few folk. Damn it, man, that's helping to make Communists! How many mountains in Scotland are folk like me forbidden to climb? Over four hundred, I'm told. Mountains that should be free to everybody."

"Free?" The Englishman shrugged his shoulders. "It'll ruin the forests. Why? Deer are nervous animals - a single hiker can scare them into another district if he walks to windward

of a herd. Take my own case. I share a forest in Ross-shire with a friend, and I don't care who tramps over it up to the end of July. But I want nobody after that. If the landlord - I won't mention his name - threw the place open in the autumn then he'd have to find a new tenant next year. I wouldn't touch it; no stalker would; and the Laird would just about go broke. There's many a place in the Highlands where sportsmen contribute eighty per cent of the local rates - the rates, mark you, that keep things going! And that's why the deer forests are closed to walkers. I'm sorry, but as things are, you can't help it."

"And a pretty sorry state of affairs," was the Dunkeld's man comment as he finished his drink and rose to go.

Soon afterwards, I left the Englishman thumping on the arm of his chair and the dapper little Scot agreeing with him, and I went upstairs to sleep in the room that Queen Victoria used to occupy. But whereas her late Majesty had climbed up into her high four-poster by a little wooden platform with steps, as though she were entering the portico of a temple, I slipped into a comfortable modern bed to dream that I was tramping over every deer forest in Scotland with an angry Englishman stalking me from glen to glen and taking pot-shots at me with a high-velocity rifle.

It was not the rustling brocade of a Victorian lady-in-waiting that awakened me next morning, but the brisk knock of a chambermaid with shaving-water; and a good Scots voice with a faintly Highland lilt told me that the hour was eight o'clock.

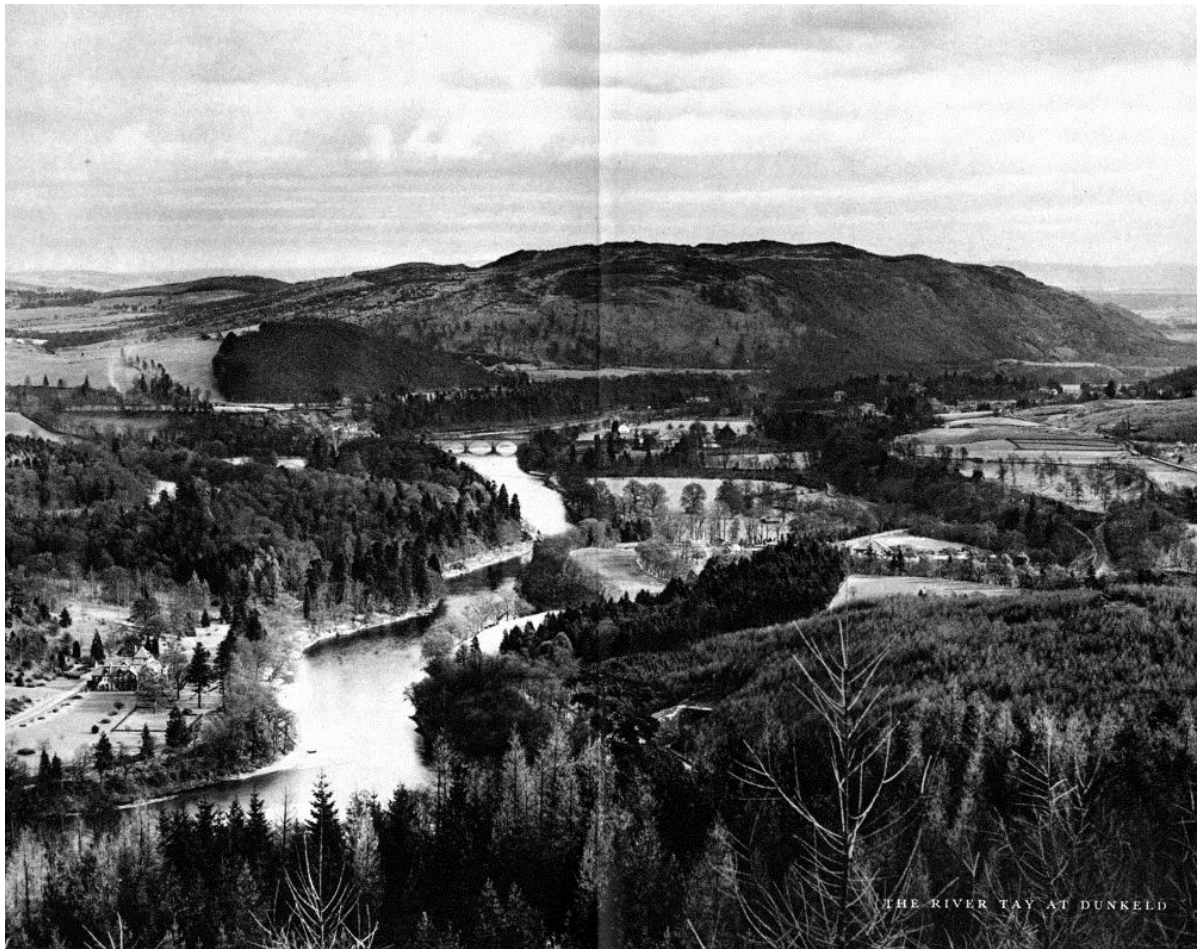


Figure 8 - The River Tay at Dunkeld

It was a fine morning; and I could hear someone in the street below switch off the engine of his motor-car to fill up the tank with petrol. The two men who were bound for Ross-shire were finishing breakfast as I entered the coffee-room-I have never been able to understand the name "coffee-room" in a hotel - and they came over to say good-bye. I wished them good sport in the hills, and hoped that no erring walker would get on the windward side of any stag they might be stalking, and finally I promised to read the works of both Scrope and Charles St. John.

After breakfast, the landlord asked me if I was going to have a stroll through the "policies" of His Grace the Duke of Atholl. He described the gardens, and the artificial paths that had been made through the woods over a hundred years ago, and I asked him how long the walk might take me.

"Maybe a longer time than you've got to spare," he said, with a smile. "There's fifty miles of footpaths -and another thirty of carriage drives, forbye." Instead of setting out on a four days' tramp through the duke's gardens, I decided to have one glimpse of the cathedral, and then turn my steps southward.

I arrived before the hour when the place was open for visitors, but the custodian deserted a baking of girdle-scones to come and unlock the church for me; and leaving me alone, she



hurried back to her kitchen fire. I do not think it possible for a man to look upon what is left of Dunkeld Cathedral without being moved. It is one of the noblest ruins I have ever seen; and the history of its site is linked up with the history of Scotland for more than a thousand years, for this place must have been a religious centre long before the beginning of the ninth century when the Norsemen sacked Iona, and Dunkeld became the religious capital of the Pictish kingdom. To go still further back, it is probable that about the year 600, St. Fintan (a companion of Columba) founded a monastery near here, and at that time Dun Chailleann was the capital of the Caledonians. So the place has antiquity. The old idea that the name Dunkeld meant the Fort of the Culdees is no longer held; nor is the notion that the tribal name Caledonians meant the Men of the Forests: these have gone into a limbo of dead theories along with the old contention that the Picts were so called because they were painted men. The first church building at Dunkeld was probably of wood and wattle; the foundation stones of the cathedral were laid either in the twelfth or thirteenth century; and the present nave was completed in the fifteenth. A hundred years later came the order from the Privy Council of Scotland, an interesting document that is still in existence:

“To our traist friendis, the Lairds of Arntilly and Kinvaid.

“Traist friendis, after maist hartie commendacion, we pray you faill not to pass incontinent to the Kyrk of Dunkeld, and tak down the haill images thereof, and bring furth to the Kyrkzayrd, and burn them openly, and siclyk cast down the altaris, and purge the Kyrk of all kynd of monuments of idolatrye; and this ze faill not to do, as ze will do us singular empleseur; and so committis you to the protection of God.

“From Edinburgh, the xii of August, 1560.

“Faill not, bot ze tak guid heyd that neither the desks, windocks, nor durris, be ony ways hurt or broken - eyther glassin work, or iron wark.

“AR.

ERGYLL.

“JAMES

STUART.

“RUTHVEN.”

But the two lairds did not stick to their orders. The Reformation had gone to their heads, and they not only smashed the “glassin work,” but made havoc of the “windocks and durris.” It has often been said that the destruction was completed when the victors of Killiecrankie came to Dunkeld and joined battle with a small force of Cameronians which they would have mopped up in twenty minutes if Claverhouse had been alive to lead them. The Cameronians entrenched themselves around the cathedral, and the Highlanders came down from the hills and occupied the town. Both sides kept up a brisk fire for three or four hours, and the officer commanding the defenders decided that his quickest way to clear the enemy out was to set the town on fire, so he sent out men with burning faggots, and in a short time Dunkeld was in flames. Many of the Highlanders were burned alive; and the clansmen retreated north, crying out - to each other that the Cameronians were not men but devils. Three hundred dead were left behind in the smoking ruins of the town, but the cathedral was not touched by the flames, and I doubt whether the musket-fire of the Highlanders did very much harm to it. It is more

likely that the havoc of the Reformers was completed by the tooth of time. The choir has been roofed over and restored, to be used as the present parish church, and one of the first things that caught my eye was the effigy of the notorious “Wolf of Badenoch.” He was the fourth son of Robert II, the first Stewart king, and in the fourteenth century few men in Scotland lorded it over greater estates than this Alexander, Earl of Buchan. Badenoch and Strathavon he owned, and lands in Banff, Aberdeen, Inverness, Sutherland, Atholl, Fife, Galloway; the islands of Skye and the Lewis; and in addition to these, some of the lands and the Earldom of Buchan and of Ross came to him through his wife. And yet he was almost always in debt. Possibly his career has been a little over-coloured in the chronicles of the monks whose pleasant nests he harried, but there is no doubt that he was a turbulent and vicious scoundrel, and the only man who had control over him was his father. After Robert II died, the Wolf of Badenoch snapped his fingers at the world. In the end his brother brought him to his knees, but not before the Wolf had burned the town of Elgin to the ground, and there went up in flames the cathedral that was “the mirror of the country and the glory of the Kingdom.” One hundred years ago, Stewart of Garth said there were four thousand direct descendants of the Wolf living in Atholl. Though the inscription below the effigy begins with the words “Hic Jacet,” it is doubtful whether he was buried in Dunkeld; and as I walked back to the open nave, my thoughts strayed to a man of different temper - Gavin Douglas, the most famous of the Bishops of Dunkeld, who turned Virgil’s Aeneid into braid Scots over four hundred years ago, completing the task in the leisure hours of eighteen busy months. This was the earliest metrical translation into the English or Scots language of any classical work, and it helped to brighten Scotland’s lustre beyond the Tweed. Nobody would claim for Douglas that he was as great a poet as his contemporary Dunbar, but all of his poetry can be read with pleasure. I could not help wondering what he would think of the roofless nave and the ravaged windows of his great cathedral if, in some new avatar, he returned to visit it to-day.

A little west of the cathedral stands a house of the Duke of Atholl. The old house where Prince Charles stayed during the night of Tuesday 3rd September on his southward march was pulled down about a hundred years ago; it was a pleasant-looking place with tall narrow windows, a little like a French chateau, and the Atholl family used it in the winter months. Lochiel and Lord Nairne with four hundred men had already pushed southward, and on the day the Prince arrived in Dunkeld the city of Perth was in their hands.

Strapping on my pack in the hotel, I crossed the Tay by Telford’s magnificent bridge; and entering a glen of trees, I left the Highlands behind me.

## Chapter XV. Across Strathmore

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Below the Woods of Birnam Hill - The Chantrey Bust of Sir Walter Scott - I Arrive at Perth -  
The Cobbler's Story-Ships on the River - The Bandy-legged Smith of St. Johnston - The  
Sheep-farmer from Ross-shire - Early Morning at the Ram Sale.

**W**ILLOW-HERB is a lovely weed; its pale purple colour made bright the sunlit side of the road, but was sombre in the shadow. Around me was a sea of green trees, which I hoped would spread south for many miles and give me shelter in the heat of the forenoon. I have often tried to put myself in the place of people who have lived all their lives in the heart of a forest. A horizon of tree-tops that is no more distant than a stone's throw has within a few days a powerful effect upon the mind of a man, and some are gripped with a queer terror in a wood. I know a Caithness man who hates the sight of a tree; his ideal scenery is a bare rolling upland. In his Edinburgh University days, he went long country walks, and would rather make a detour of miles than take a short cut through a belt of woodland. If, like his ancestors, he had looked upon every gathering of trees as a sacred grove through which a man may not carelessly wander, he could not have paid the oak a more deliberate and sinister tribute. Probably people worshipped in a grove before they built temples, for the Greek word for a temple meant originally a forest-clearing, and I have read somewhere that the old Irish word for a chapel came from the same root as the Latin for a grove. Although the name Druid may not have been derived from the Greek word for an oak, the gathering of the mistletoe from the oak was certainly an important rite in Druidic religion. Mistletoe is not often found growing upon the oak; it is far more frequent on the apple, the poplar, and the willow; and this may have given a special sanctity to the few oak trees on which it was found. Some say that in Britain the oak was venerated in the Bronze Age, which is a far enough cry from the twentieth century, and we still venerate it for the almost uncanny length of life of its timber. In the room where I write these words, the oak beams are as strong as when they were built into a tithe-barn for a parson's use more than five hundred years ago. But little wonder the oak tree is a tough fellow, for his growth is so leisurely and confident that he does not trouble to produce an acorn until he is three score years of age; it is wasteful to cut him for timber before he has passed his second century; and I have heard of an oak tree from which the woodmen stripped a thousand pounds weight of bark. But for beauty I maintain he cannot be compared with the beech, and I wish Shakespeare had written a sonnet about the silver birches of Arden.

Dr. Johnson grumbled about the lack of trees in Scotland, and if he had made his tour a couple of hundred years before, he would have had even better reason to complain. In the sixteenth century, the southern part of Scotland was a bleak and treeless place. Under James IV, the shore of the Firth of Forth resounded like an arsenal; even in the night, ships of war were being built by the light of candles; and James stripped nearly all Fife of big trees for his Great Michael. It was not until well after the 'Forty-five that tree-planting in Scotland was seriously begun, and there was opposition from many of the country people, who declared that trees and hedges gave shelter to birds that ruined their crops. Often, the tenants on an estate would steal out in the dark and pull up the saplings put in by the Laird. But in spite of opposition, tree-planting soon became an epidemic. The enthusiastic Grant of Monymusk put in fifty million trees in his lifetime; the "planting Duke" of Atholl - the son of Lord George Murray of the 'Forty-five - was responsible for nearly thirty million larches; and several others passed the ten-million mark. No longer could Sir Anthony Weldon's old sneer be repeated in Scotland: "Had Christ been betrayed in this country, Judas had sooner found the

grace of repentance than a tree to hang himself on.” But after a- vigorous beginning in the eighteenth century, tree-planting in Scotland fell out of fashion, until to-day we have a Government Forestry Commission carrying out the work that a previous generation of lairds should have undertaken; and if they had done their duty, we would probably have been spared the sight of hillsides laid out in draughtboard patterns of unbroken Sitka and Douglas Fir, so that in a few years’ time some of the loveliest scenery in Scotland will be spoiled by trees grown for wood-pulp: the ugly utilitarian forestry of the shopkeeper.

Out of that lovely glen of birches I tramped, and passed another walker who was going northward; and soon I could see ahead of me the low blue outline of the Sidlaw Hills, which creep down from Angus into Perthshire, with the Ochils making a rampart further south. Before noon I was looking at a blaze of climbing roses in a village that had christened itself Waterloo in a glow of military pride, and I was a little startled to catch sight of a reproduction of one of the Chantrey busts of Sir Walter Scott in a window on my left. Sir Walter was gazing reflectively out into the roadway, and I wondered why he had been stuck up in such a position. The problem worried me all the way to Bankfoot, so prone is one’s mind to seize upon a trivial thing when the body is engaged upon some rhythmic and monotonous task. I painted a fanciful picture of the owner of that bust: he had placed it there to proclaim to passers by his devotion to Sir Walter, and in a bookcase behind were the Waverley novels, the ten volumes of poems, and the twenty-eight volumes of the miscellaneous prose works, and he excelled even the late Lord Birkenhead in the zeal with which he read them. He was a ruddy-faced portly man, I decided, with thoughtful eyes and a humorous mouth; he went fishing on the Ordie with a volume of Guy Mannering in his pocket to sweeten his thoughts if the trout were shy; and he liked old-fashioned things, and solitary evenings by the fire, and good strong hot toddy. His picture faded, and his place was taken in my fancy by an old maid who had put the bust there as a gesture of defiance: if her neighbours refused to read the works of her literary hero, at least they would look upon his features every time they walked down the street; she was thin and spectacled, that old maid, with a cat she had christened Di Vernon, and she had taught her parrot to say Pro-dee-gious! ... But perhaps I was wrong: perhaps there was not a single Waverley novel in the house, and the bust may have been placed in the window merely because the curtains did not quite meet in the middle!

Bankfoot is a long low village, rather like Lauder in the Lammermuirs, but there is a red tinge in the stone with which it has been built, and the place has not the darkly Scottish look of Lauder. I noticed that the saddlers called themselves on their signs “Sporran Makers,” and with the increasing popularity of the kilt, and the equally rapid increase of machinery on the farms, I wondered how far distant was the day when these saddlers would be making two sporrans for every set of harness they now repaired. It was a low smiling land I walked through that day as I went into Strathmore: the fields were cultivated and rich-looking; and the sun came out again, making the world green and gold as I ate my lunch on a gate by the roadside.

The Ochil Hills, twenty miles to the south, were much in my mind that afternoon. I remembered wistfully the green folds of those hills that for two years were my home, and I pictured Craigfarg where as a small boy I used to play cricket with the Laird’s son, and the Chapel Burn where I “guddled” for trout. And then I thought of the little grey kirk where my father preached every Sunday morning, with a precentor in a box below the pulpit. Mr. Ogilvie was his name, a little, quick, bird-like man; and while the psalm was being announced he produced from a mysterious box at his side a big strip of cardboard inscribed with the name of the psalm-tune and stuck it on a little swivel in front of him, moving it

slowly round so that everyone could see it. Then his tuning fork went ping! and he began to lead the praise. As I slowly lessened the distance between me and his grave on a hillside in the Ochils, I wondered if they still had a precentor in Pathstruie kirk, or if they now had an organist to play what old-fashioned folk used to call a “kist of whistles:”

For the last hour or more I had been tramping through the parish of Auchtergaven, and I realised that I had passed the place where the great house of Lord Nairne had stood in the ‘Forty-five. Nairne’s father had begun to build it thirty-five years previously, and, indulging a quaint fancy, had ordered the builder to give it as many windows as there were days in the year. But the elder Nairne came “out” in the ‘Fifteen Rising, the house was never finished, and some years after the ‘Forty-five it was pulled down. Here the Prince paused to dine on Wednesday 4th September, then continued on his march past the site of the battle of Luncarty, fought about seven hundred and fifty years before, between the Scots and the invading Danes. I like the old yarn about the Hay family, the ancestors of the Earls of Errol: how the Hays founded their fortune in this battle. It was going badly with the Scots, so runs the story, when a man called Hay hurried from his plough with his two sons and rallied his countrymen. Their only weapons were plough-yokes, and King Kenneth was so delighted that he called the peasant before him, and as a reward promised him all the lands over which his falcon would fly before alighting. The falcon was released on Kinnoull Hill, and flew for six full miles before coming down on the Falcon Stone at Errol. And so the peasant became a great landowner; and to-day the Earl of Erroll has for his crest a falcon, with two men bearing plough-yokes as supporters. I like the yarn, I say, but there is probably no more truth in it than in most yarns devised to explain the armorial bearings of other old families.

I came down into Perth through an open strath with many trees. The St. Johnstone football ground was on my left: my feet were at last on the pavements of the city; and weary and contented, I settled down with a large whiskey-and-soda in a deep leather armchair in the Salutation Hotel.

I have no idea what name the “Salutation” bore in the days before the ‘Forty-five. The story goes that during his week in Perth the Prince shook hands with the landlord, a man called John Burt, who was so delighted at the honour that thereafter he called his inn the “Salutation.” There is not the slightest evidence the Prince ever slept in this inn; and I have no hesitation in saying that for at least part of the time his quarters were in the “King’s Arms,” the principal hostelry in the town. It no longer exists, but it stood behind Lord Stormont’s house, which was in the High Street on the present site of the National Bank, I next door to the City Chambers. At nine o’clock at night on 3rd September, Lochiel and Lord Nairne had arrived in the town; they took over the King’s Arms Inn for the Prince’s use; and afterwards the landlord was arrested and charged with helping the rebels. He attempted to commit suicide, and then turned King’s evidence. Lord Stormont, who cleared out of the town when he heard of the Prince’s approach, was a Jacobite, and brother of the Prince’s one-time tutor James Murray, but he lacked the courage of his inclination, and played the usual game of leaving his womenfolk behind him to do the honours. His sister helped to entertain the Prince, and threw open the house to the attendants and officers.

At the time of the ‘Forty-five, the inn that is now called the “Salutation” was a third-rate place, but it is an uncommonly good hotel to-day; and after I had finished my drink, I lit my pipe and set out to look for a cobbler who would put a thicker sole on my Fort William shoes, which had served me well enough on the Corrieyairack, but were too light for the roads.

A cobbler was not difficult to find in this town that once had a Corporation of Shoemakers and a street called the Shoegate. The man, into whose dark little cavern I penetrated, evidently thought himself a bit of a wag. He sat working under a tiny gas jet; and although he was a small man, he had as huge and capable a pair of hands as I have ever seen, hands that appeared to regard leather as their natural enemy. When I seated myself on a bench and took off my shoes, he seized one of them as if he were about to throttle a weasel. I told him I had walked that day from Dunkeld, and I wondered if he could do something to make the soles more serviceable. He gripped the other shoe and proceeded to wring its neck. "Thae's nae guid," he said, "nae guid for a hard road-you'll soon knock hell oot o' them. I'll put on a clump." I told him to fire ahead with a clump, whatever that was, and I would wait until he had finished, for I was to leave Perth the next day.

"Ye're in a hurry to get awa'," he remarked. "What's wrong wi' Perth?"

I told him that, so far as I could see, Perth was a most admirable town, a town of honest-looking men and good-looking women.

"The bonniest lassies in Scotland," he agreed, and began to wreak his vengeance on my shoes. "Thae shoes werenae made in Perth, I'll warrant," he continued. "It's guid shoes ye'll get here - as guid as the gloves they used to make."

I assured him I had heard about the old Glovers of Perth: their gloves were famous.

He nodded. "Their buckskin riding-breeks forbye. Once upon a day, every shop in the Skinnergate was a Glover's. When a Glover could make breeks, he put out a sign wi' a pair of breeks on it and the likeness of a buck between the legs. But there's been nae Glovers in Perth since my grandfather's day." And then he began to chuckle, and he told me one of his grandfather's favourite stories about a Glover in Perth who was well-known for two things, his skill in cutting breeches and the amount of food he could eat at a sitting. An officer of a cavalry regiment ordered a pair of buckskin breeches from him, but they were so tight he could hardly get them on his legs, and in the George Inn he was telling his brother officers what he thought of the Glover. He said he had a good mind to make the fellow eat his damned breeches, and the landlord (who disliked the Glover) overheard the remark. A plot was hatched, the Glover was told to come round the next day for his money, and he was brought up into the room where the officers were assembled. He was duly paid, and then asked to have a drink. "And of course you'll have something to eat?" said the officer. The landlord blandly remarked that he had just finished cooking an excellent dish of tripe. "Bring it in," said the officer, "and another glass of brandy." And so the gormandising Glover sat down and made a hearty meal of his buckskin breeches, now cut into shreds. "My grandfather kenned him fine," added the cobbler, "and folk never let down the joke on him till his dying day."

In my new clump soles, I wandered round Perth. It is a city full of surprises. Every now and then, you are pulled up in -a modern street with a delightful glimpse of a long cobbled vennel through a low archway; and of all the streets in Scotland I have seen, the one that comes next in my estimation to Edinburgh's Princes 'Street is Tay Street beside the river in Perth, with the backs of the houses on the eastern bank, and the arched bridge three hundred yards long that put more than two dozen ferry-boats out of action when it was built. It was odd to think that I was walking upon streets that were now six or eight feet higher than they had been in the seventeenth century, for the Tay and the Almond had a habit of overflowing their banks,

and sometimes in rainy seasons the townsfolk went downstairs in the morning to find themselves up to the waist in water. But it was the river that helped to make Perth prosperous, and a thirteenth-century Abbot of Exeter wrote: "Go on, great Tay, through fields, through towns, through Perth: the wealth of that city supports Scotland." To-day it is difficult to believe that Perth was once a prosperous port. Though it lies a full twenty-five miles from the North Sea, ships of four hundred tons burden sailed from it to America and the West Indies, and the Customs revenue on the cargoes that went downstream was over twelve thousand pounds annually. The Perth shipbuilding yards were famous, and the first iron steam vessel made on the east coast of Scotland was launched here by Macfarlane from a slip-way in this inland city. For some time, the pearls from river-mussels brought in £3000 a year; and not long after the Rising of 'Forty-five, there was an annual turnover of £150,000 from the linen bleached on the fields beside the river.

For Sir Walter's sake, I walked down Curfew Row and looked at the Fair Maid's House with its bottle-glass window panes and the empty niche that had once held an image of St. Bartholomew, the patron saint of the Glovers. Then I strolled over the green turf of the North Inch, where Robert the Bruce presided over a combat between an English and Scots knight who had quarrelled over their coats-of-arms, and where eighty-four years later the crippled Robert III watched with horror the fierce battle in which thirty picked warriors of two clans fought to a finish within an enclosure of timber and iron which cost £14 2s. 11d. to erect. Sir Walter makes Hal o' the Wynd, the bandy-legged smith of St. Johnstoun, the hero of this combat. One of the clansmen had bolted before the fight began; Hal took his place; and when the battle was over he confessed he had not been quite certain on which side he had been fighting and had laid about him with impartial vigour. But whether the bandy-legged smith of St. Johnstoun ever existed is doubtful: the earliest chronicle of the fight does not mention him, and perhaps Fordun got the yarn from a romantic spae-wife.

Looking across the green Inch to the river are the windows of Perth Academy, a school that was founded a few years after the 'Forty-five. The folk of Perth thought their town a particularly suitable place for a big school because, as they frankly announced, Perth was the most sober and industrious town in Scotland, "so that the manners of youth," they said, "are here in less danger of being corrupted." That it was industrious I am confident; that it was relatively sober we will accept, in spite of the fact that there were sixty public-houses in Perth in those days, and ale was two-pence a Scots pint, which was equal to half an English gallon, while whiskey cost one and four-pence a Scots quart.

Back at the hotel, I had the good luck to dine at the same table as a tall sheep-farmer from Ross-shire, who had come down to buy "tups" at the Ram Sale next day. He was a good fellow, the sheep-farmer, and he offered to take me with him to the market. "But we'll have to be up early," he warned me. "I want to look at the tups before the bidding, and we'll need to leave here by eight o'clock." I promised to be ready in good time, and went off to bed early, but before going to sleep I got out from my pack some of the notes I had made before leaving home, and I spent a pleasant half-hour conjuring up pictures of the Prince's week in Perth.

Perth was then a town of eight or nine thousand people, a quarter of its present size; and Prince Charles spent a busy time there. He entered it with but one louis d'or in his pocket; he raised £500 of public money, took arms and ammunition from Dundee and elsewhere, and travelled up to the Sma' Glen on the river Almond to inspect a body of men that had been raised there 'for his service. James Crie, the Lord Provost, who had bolted to Fife before the

Prince's arrival, wrote a letter to the Lord Advocate (Craigie of Glendoick, who owned the house next door to Lord Stormont's) and told how the city wrights had been pressed by Lochiel's men to make targets for the Highlanders. On the North Inch the troops were drilled; and for the first time since the Standard had been raised at Glenfinnan the army was organised in a soldier-like manner. This organisation was put in the hands of Lord George Murray, who came to Perth from Tullibardine. Next to Charles himself, I doubt whether there is any figure in the 'Forty-five about whom people argue more hotly. The Prince distrusted him, although he recognised that Lord George Murray was the best soldier in his army, a fearless leader in battle, and a good tactician. He has been called a mediocre strategist because more than once the Prince's instinct proved to be better than the advice of his lieutenant-general, and I am one of those who believe that the retreat from Derby-upon which Lord George insisted-was a vital blunder.

The Prince's distrust of Lord George was largely the work of John Murray of Broughton, who hated him; and his position was not improved by his impatient manner at the council-table. He had a stern heavy face with a slight cast in one eye, and he spoke his mind as gruffly as though he were reproving a stupid ensign. His presence was often the cause of muttering and strife; but of his loyalty to the Prince there can be no doubt.

In the Rising of 1715, at the age of twenty-one, he had commanded a regiment and fought at Preston; at Glenshiel in 1719, he is said to have been wounded, and he lurked for ten months in the Highlands before escaping to Holland. Later, when he was pardoned and came to Scotland, he lived quietly in Fife and afterwards at Tullibardine, the old home of the Murrays, and he kept out of politics. At the time of the 'Forty-five, he had a sixteen-year old son at Eton who held a commission in Loudoun's regiment and was eager to leave school and fight for the Government (this was the boy who afterwards became the "planting Duke" of Atholl). Lord George himself had just accepted the post of Sheriff depute for Perthshire, and from Dunkeld on 20<sup>th</sup> August he wrote about the Rising in a letter to his old friend Craigie, the Lord Advocate. In this letter one can see no enthusiasm for the Whig cause; he merely gave some information, partly wrong, which Craigie could have got from other sources; and on the next day, he went with his brother and Glengarry to visit Sir John Cope at Crieff. Andrew Lang calls him an "informant" of Cope, but Glengarry was the informant. Lord George's conduct has been described as two-faced; but at this time, I do not think he had finally decided to join the Prince, though his mind was certainly made up by the end of the following week. Three things may have helped to hold him back; the dangerous illness of his wife, his uncertainty about what was happening in the North, and his frankly acknowledged fear of disaster. The letter to his brother James Duke of Atholl, written on the evening of Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September and laid aside while his sick wife was being bled, tells of his resolve to join Charles and reveals his mood of desperation: "Suppose I were sure of dying in the attempt, it would neither deter nor prevent me." One might criticise him for having hesitated to do what he knew in his heart to be his duty; but from the moment he joined the Prince at Perth until his dying day, he was a loyal adherent to the Jacobite cause. The temperaments of Prince Charles and Lord George Murray were antagonistic; vintage claret will not mix well with Scots whiskey, and whiskey is the more potent liquor.

Other men had joined by this time, Oliphant of Gask and his son, as loyal Jacobites as there were in Scotland; Lord Strathallan, who died at Culloden and on the field received the Blessed Sacrament from the hands of an Episcopalian chaplain who used for the sacred elements oat cake and whiskey; and Lord Ogilvy, who later commanded a regiment in France; and among other accessions was that of the Duke of Perth, who six weeks before had



escaped capture after entertaining to dinner his treacherous friend Sir Patrick Murray of Ochertyre with Campbell of Inverawe, both captains in the Black Watch. The Duke of Perth had lived so long in France that he could with difficulty speak English, and conversed as a rule either in French or the broad Scots tongue. He was a tall slender man of fair complexion with a constitution ill-fitted for a hard campaign. His spirit was stronger than his fragile body, and after Culloden he escaped from Scotland, a sick man, to die on board the ship that was carrying him to France. At Perth, the Prince made him lieutenant-general, the same rank as that of Lord George Murray, retaining in his own hands the supreme command of the army.

The fourth day after his arrival in the town was a Sunday, and the Prince attended the Episcopalian service at one of the city churches. Nominally he was a Roman Catholic, although five years afterwards during a secret visit to London he was received into the Anglican Church at St. Mary le Strand by a clergyman who did not know that Mr. Charles Stuart was Prince Charles Edward. So complete was his “renouintiation” of the Church of Rome after his London visit that he even sent away his mistress because she was a Papist. He died in the Catholic Faith, but one would gather from Elcho’s remark that religion did not occupy much of the Prince’s thoughts in the ‘Forty-five, and there is no evidence that he attended a single Roman Catholic service either in Scotland or England. Major Eardley-Simpson in Derby and the Forty-five suggests that Charles may have thought of renouncing the Roman faith on his arrival in Scotland, but hesitated when he saw that this would probably have offended his Catholic supporters not only in Britain but in France and Spain. The Clanranalds were Catholic, so were the Macdonells of Glengarry and the majority of the Keppoch men; but the Camerons, the Macdonalds of Glencoe, and the Appin Stewarts were Episcopalian, and all the others of much account were Presbyterian. Thus the notion that the Rising of ‘Forty-five was mainly a Catholic affair is absurd, for most of the Prince’s army was Protestant; and from the crudely material point of view, if Charles had played the Protestant card in 1745, he would have swept into his ranks a large number who held back. As for the three Catholic clans, they would have fought for a Protestant Prince as loyally as the’ Episcopalian Camerons fought for a Papist.

As I sat up in bed that night looking through my notes, I realised that even a superficial glance at Perth would occupy me for a full week. A hundred yards away from me was the site of the Dominican monastery where the first and best of the Stewart kings called James was murdered, and a woman used her arm as a doorbolt in an effort to save his life; and in this monastery the Wolf of Badenoch, bare-footed and clad in sackcloth, did penance for his savage destruction of the town and cathedral of Elgin. A few minutes’ walk from me was the church where an English king stabbed his brother to death at the high altar; in the same church the spirit of the Reformation burst into flame after an incendiary sermon by John Knox. Within a stone’s throw of my bedroom there had stood Gowrie House, where - if one could believe James VI, which one cannot - another Scottish king was all but done to death. Across the river at Scone had stood the abbey where the kings of Scotland were crowned, and where the Stone of Destiny had lain until it was stolen and taken to Westminster. I fell asleep thinking about that stone. There was a mild hullabaloo over it in Parliament a few years ago, and folk have believed it was Jacob’s pillow at Bethel and St. Columba’s pillow in Iona, which is about as credible as the suggestion that it was Rip Van Winkle’s pillow in the Katskill Mountains. Around it there has been woven a legendary history of the early Scots, and it has become the symbol of Scottish greatness: this in spite of the fact that there is no evidence of its having been used more than twice at the coronation of a king of Scotland.

I was up early next morning, but by the time I got into the dining-room the sheep-farmer from Rosshire was finishing his breakfast. I could see he was impatient to be off, so I made haste with my bacon and eggs. To keep me company, he ordered a pint of beer, a breakfast drink which I thought had died out with the eighteenth century, but it seemed to give a flavour to his pipe' of strong tobacco. A little after eight o'clock, we were in the auction market, away from the bright autumn sunshine.

Under the glass roof the light was pale and cold. Both the sheep-pens and cattle-pens were filled with rams, fifteen hundred of them, and the little tickets pinned above the pens told me they had come from all parts of the north country. I read names I had never heard of before, strange names like Rannagulzion, Glendamph, Corrychrone, Stronchrubie, Ascreavie, Muirpearsie, Derculich. Men were brushing the long thick wool of the rams, and fluffing it up with their small walking-sticks; others were anointing with whale-oil the horns that swept round in a gorgeous curl like the inverted mustachios of a circus-master. I had not realised what a noble-looking animal a ram is until I gazed into these big liquid eyes set back in their dark patrician faces. Some of them returned my scrutiny with contempt, others with a stare of satanic insolence. A few were lying down, and every now and then my friend would lean over into a pen and jerk one of them by a horn to make him rise and show himself. What a wild panegyric the late D. H. Lawrence could have written about the throbbing masculinity of these fifteen hundred male animals imprisoned under the glass roof of that market! Many of the shepherds had slept all night in the straw, and I began to wish I had been there when the first light of dawn broke up the darkness among the enclosures, and men and rams rose and shook themselves. At a quarter past nine I went with my friend to watch the bidding.

The auctioneer sat in a little square pulpit, while we took our places on raised benches that reminded me of a university lecture-room. The rams entered through a low swing-door, and I thought of bulls coming into an arena under a blazing Spanish sun. Round the floor they skipped, sometimes almost jerking a brawny young drover off his feet; the bidding was quick and decisive; and then out went the ram through another swing-door, his place being quickly filled. I liked the look of the men around me, brown-faced healthy fellows with quiet eyes and cautious gestures. They moved with the same slow swing of the body as my friendly sheep-farmer from Ross-shire, and there was none of the excited talk that one wrongly associates with a farmers' market-place. It must have been a great day for most of them, that Ram Sale in Perth, but they did not seem to be enjoying themselves, although perhaps they felt a quiet rapture that I failed to detect in their placid faces.

## Chapter XVI. The Old House of Gask

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I Meet a Road-mender from the Fraser Country - The Oliphants of Gask - The "Auld Hoose"  
- "The Land o' the Leal" - The Girl in the Motor-car - Down Strathearn and Past Carsbreck -  
"Jessie, the Flower o' Dunblane" - I Obey an Impulse and Make for Doune.

SOON after I had swung my pack upon my back at the door of the Salutation Hotel, I saw against the sky the huge red-brick building of Dewar's distillery. In the hotel the evening before, I had been told that the old man who had started the business used to hand out a religious tract with every "greybeard" of whiskey he sold. Little did he dream that his grandson would one day become a peer of the realm and would die leaving behind him, not a further litter of tracts, but several hundred yards of newspaper columns recording the most daringly witty after-dinner speeches of the Georgian epoch. I passed out of Perth through the suburb that rejoiced in the name Cherrybank, and followed the road to Crossgates; there I came to a low cottage with arched windows that gives it the look of a chapel. At this cottage, the main road goes to the left, but I branched off to the north of Dupplin Loch past a Roman camp, and before I drew level with the House of Gask I halted to talk to a tall fair-haired road-mender, a Shaw from the Fraser country near Beaufort. He had come south many years ago to Strathearn, he said, and it was a fine countryside; he liked the people, but he missed the Gaelic. He brightened up when I told him I had travelled from the Great Glen and had been on the fringes of the Fraser land; and when I switched round our talk to the 'Forty-five, he spoke about it intelligently.

"Some of my folk were out with Prince Charlie," he said, "though the 'chief stayed at home. You should have a look at the Auld House of Gask-the Laird's a fine man, he'll be pleased to show ye round." Thereupon I told him the story of how the Prince on his march from Perth had seen the ripe corn uncut in the fields of the Gask estate, and asked one of his attendants for an explanation. Laurence Oliphant of Gask had ordered his tenants to come out in support of their rightful king, but some of them had refused, and in his anger Oliphant had declared that no sickle should touch the corn until they came to their senses, nor must they feed their cattle upon it, although the beasts were now starving. The Prince's unexpected reply became the talk of Strathearn. Dismounting, he pulled a handful of the corn and gave it to his horse, saying that since he himself had broken the Laird's orders, the farmers could now begin to harvest their crops.

The road-mender laughed. "Fine do I ken the story," he said. "Ay, and it's true, and it wasna far from here it happened. Prince Charlie made himself a weel-liked young man. But I'm thinking it's no' many of the Gask tenants that hung back-for there was - no better lairds in Scotland than the Oliphants. Long after the trouble was past, and some landlords were clearing folk off their estates to make big farms, the wee men on Gask were permitted to bide on. They tell me some paid but three pounds a year in rent-ay, and when a woman was left a widow, she was given a cottage for the rest of her days. That's something like a laird!"

He scrambled hastily to his feet as a Rolls Royce swept up the long straight road between the trees, and he touched his hat. "That was the lady of Gask," he said; "ye'll find the Laird alone - he'll be glad to see ye." Since it was time to eat, I had my lunch on the grass beside him, and when we parted we shook hands; and I thanked him for the hint that I might venture to ask a stranger to let me see the ruins which had been the home of the Oliphants.

As I made my way towards the house, the skyline on the north was cut like a saw-edge by the tops of thousands of Scots pines, while on my left were old woods of larch and oak. Now and then, in a clearing of the trees, I could see the hills above Glen Almond, with Ben Lawers and Schiehallion in the north. Bracken and heather were thick by the roadside where I turned in to the avenue and went down to the mansion-house of Gask, a big square grey downright place with none of the decorative gewgaws that make hideous so many houses of the early nineteenth century. The manservant took my message, and the Laird himself approached, a youngish man in tweeds with a charming frankness of manner. He was not an Oliphant, he told me at once, but it was evident that he regarded the name with veneration, and he led me to the ruins of the Auld Hoose less than a hundred yards from the modern mansion. There is not much more left of it now than a crumbled wall with a turret room thatched with reeds from the Carse of Gowrie. The old road in front of it has disappeared, and the place is paved with stone slabs green with moss. Beyond a pool into which a burn tinkles there is an old brew-house with tall narrow windows, and some of the holly bushes and yew trees were there when the Prince himself paused to eat a late breakfast with Laurence Oliphant on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> September 1745. The Laird pointed out some of the larch trees that had grown from seeds sent to Gask by John, the "planting Duke" of Atholl. A little way through the woods stands a chapel and the old burial-ground of the Oliphants. Here the "auld laird" of the 'Forty-five was buried, and his famous grand-daughter, Lady Nairne, who wrote *The Land o' the Leal and Caller Herrin'*, *The Rowan Tree* and *The Hundred Pipers*, as well as Jacobite songs like *Charlie is my Darling* and *Will Ye no' Come Back Again?* and *Wha'll be King* but *Charlie*, which begins with the line, "The news frae Moidart cam' yestreen." Below the chapel is the placid strath with the river Earn winding among green fields, and beyond are the Ochil Hills where the Water of May tumbles down from the heights—the May from which the sweetest trout in Scotland are taken, or so they said when I was a boy in the Ochils, and they always added with pride that Queen Victoria's first breakfast at Balmoral each year was an ashet of May trout.

Over a glass of port, I talked with my host about the auld laird, his son, and his grand-daughter. Laurence Oliphant was one of those who suffered deeply for his loyalty to the Stuarts; and nearly half a century after the 'Forty-five, when Charles himself was dead, the younger Oliphant in his old age still hoped that Prince Henry might one day become king. In the prayer book he gave his daughter Caroline, he followed the example of Lord Wemyss and many other Jacobites in pasting over the names of the reigning family with tiny slips of paper upon which were written the names of the Stuarts; and when George III came to the throne, and many Scots Jacobites gave him their allegiance, Oliphant dismissed his Episcopalian chaplain for taking the oath. When his sight at last failed, he liked to have the newspaper read aloud to him, and if any reference was made to King George or his queen the reader was ordered always to use the initial letters K and Q.

All this was reported to George, who sent a message to the sturdy Jacobite: "Give my compliments - not the compliments of the king of England but those of the Elector of Hanover - to Mr. Oliphant, and tell him how much I respect him for the steadiness of his principles."

It was in this atmosphere that Caroline was brought up. She became the mistress of Gask, a tall dignified woman with dark eyes and aquiline features. At a ball in the South a Royal Duke fell in love with her, but she waited loyally until the day when Captain Nairne (a son of Lord Nairne of the 'Forty-five) would be able to marry her. That day was long in coming; she was forty-one before her wedding, and had waited nearly twenty years; and since her husband

had been appointed Assistant Inspector-General of Barracks in Scotland, the bride of forty-one and the bridegroom of fifty took up their residence in the state apartments at Holyroodhouse. When George IV paid his visit to Edinburgh, they moved out so that he could live there, and went to Caroline Cottage in Duddingston. It was during this visit of George IV that Sir Walter Scott drew up a memento pleading for a restoration of the honours forfeited in the 'Forty-five. The general pardon to those who had taken part in the Rising had been given in the Act of Indemnity nine months after the Prince left Scotland, but there had been an enormous list of exceptions: as well as those attainted, over eighty lairds had been named. Sir Walter induced the king to sponge clean the slate, and so Caroline Oliphant's husband became at last known by his father's title of Lord Nairne. By this time she was fifty-seven. A strange reserved woman, she kept her poems a secret even from her husband, and it was not until long after her songs had been sung in Scotland that the name of the author became known. When they were printed by an Edinburgh music-dealer, she signed them with false initials, and on her personal visits to him she dressed up as an old country lady. That was an age of anonymity in Scots literature: Sir Walter himself was denying the authorship of the Waverley novels; Blackwood's Magazine was publishing articles and squibs that evoked many a wild guess at the dinner-tables of Edinburgh; and Lady Anne Barnard was guarding the secret of "Auld Robin Gray." After Lord Nairne died, Caroline spent many weary years of travelling abroad for the health of her son, but returned in the end to Gask. Often she had sat in the room where I was talking with the Laird; often she had looked down from these windows through the trees to Strathearn; and on an autumn day, one hundred years after Prince Charles was the guest of her grandfather at Gask, she died and was buried at the chapel near the house.

I declare that port is not a good wine to walk on, and the heat of the afternoon helped to make me drowsy. By the time I was a couple of miles from Gask I surrendered and lay down beneath an oak tree for half an hour's sleep. By the time I awoke, it was nearly four o'clock, and I decided it would be well to think of the place where I was to spend the night. I saw from my map that after I had crossed the Earn at Kinkell Bridge, there were several hamlets where I might possibly get a lodging; and then as my eye roved a little further, I noticed a name that made me blink-Gleneagles Hotel. Gleneagles, with its two hundred and fifty bedrooms, its garage for a hundred Rolls-Royces and Bentleys, its American cocktail bar, its orchestra, its dining-room and its grill-room, its lifts and all the other expensive gewgaws and whig-maleeries that used to dazzle the eyes of Arnold Bennett. But I was just as dazzled as Arnold Bennett had been at the idea of lying for a night in the softest lap of luxury. So far as I could gather, the hotel was but a few hundred yards away from the route Prince Charles followed on his way to dine at Lord George Murray's house at Tullibardine. My only doubt was whether the hotel people would take in a dusty tramp like me; but I told myself that a dusty tramp was not much worse than an oily company-promoter, and his money just as good. It was worth having a shot at, anyhow. They could turn me away by swearing upon the beards of their board of directors that the hotel was full; but at least they could not refuse to serve me with a drink, and they could not prevent me from slowly sipping it in the depths of an armchair until the hour when the bars were closed. After that, if I refused to leave, they could certainly sling me down the front-door steps, and indeed would probably do so with vigour. But the whole enterprise had a romantic flavour; it had a then-and-now touch about it: the Prince sleeping in the heather among his shaggy-headed clansmen, as he did twice on his march to Edinburgh, and I sleeping among the scented darlings of a decadent plutocracy and all that sort of thing. But my whimsey was snatched from me, and in as romantic a manner as an entry into the Gleneagles Hotel or exit there from. For the first (and last) time in my journey, I was offered a lift by the owner of a private motor-car.

It was an extraordinarily attractive-looking young woman of about twenty who pulled up and spoke to me. She was in fact beautiful, with eyes of forget-me-not-blue, fair hair, and a complexion that Ouida and Bulwer Lytton used to call peaches-and-cream. She had a pleasant Scots voice, with nothing of a gurgling brogue about it; and if she had been educated in England-which I half suspected-she had certainly not been at one of those detestable English boarding schools where girls pick up ugly tricks of clipped pronunciation that turns a word like "same" into "sem." There was two guineas' worth of crest painted on the cream-coloured door of the car.

"Poor devil," she said, smiling. "You look all in."

Now, I call that a good way for a stranger to begin a conversation. I slung my pack into the back beside a black Labrador pup with pathetic amber-coloured eyes, and got into the front seat with my hat on my knees. The girl cast puzzled glances at the hat; it was a black Trilby, and, like myself, very dusty. I confess I detest black hats, except perhaps upon the heads of statesmen, barristers, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, one or two of my friends, and certain publishers. In particular I detest a black hat when it is sported by thrusting young careerists, of whom London is the chief ant-hill. I had bought this funereal hat of mine only because it was the lightest thing I could find in any shop: it weighed exactly three ounces, and could be sent through the post for two-pence; it was airy upon the head; it could be rolled into a ball and carried in the pocket; and although you danced upon the thing, it would come up smiling. But there was no getting away from its colour. "Are you a parson on holiday?" asked the girl, with another glance at the hat.

I felt like embracing her; for she agreed with me about black hats. And I presently found that this can be as powerful a bond between two human beings as a common aversion to black cats, and a love of black dogs, like the one that was now licking the back of my neck and whimpering. "He wants to come in the front," said my charioteer, "and he knows he isn't allowed." But the Labrador pup decided to take the risk; with a sudden leap, he floundered over my shoulder and landed on my knees, obliterating the hat and obscuring most of my view. The girl frowned. "Well, just this once," she said, melting, and added firmly: "Never again!" We talked of the training of Labradors, and from Labradors we veered to sheepdogs which will round up sheep at the age of a few months because the herding of sheep is in their blood; and all the time we were skimming up out of Strathearn, so that before I realised it we had passed the place where the old house of Tullibardine used to stand. This had been the seat of the Murrays who became Dukes of Atholl; and in the sixteenth century, if any stranger doubted the size of James IV's Great Michael, the largest ship afloat, he had only to go to Tullibardine and look, for there one of the Michael's shipwrights had planted a hawthorn hedge to record its dimensions.

We swept past the grounds of the Gleneagles Hotel, leaving behind my resolution to wallow in luxury, and came to the main road that runs down Strathallan. Past Blackford we went, a long village of small houses huddled together on both sides of the street, and over a hump-backed bridge. "Carsbreck," said my companion, pointing to the bleak wide hollow and the grey sheet of water where men congregate in frosty weather with their curling stones, their brooms, and their whiskey, and call the spree a Bonspiel. My companion looked at me with respect when I remembered to tell her that Bonspiel was a word used for a meeting of archers in the days when a Scots king was so worried about the popularity of football within his realm that he barred the game and ordered every boy at the age of thirteen to practise archery instead. In his youth, Prince Charles was expert with the cross-bow, and I am sorry to say he

amused himself killing blackbirds and thrushes at the Villa Borghese at Rome; and I regret that he also played “Goff because it was a Scotch game,” but I doubt if he had the patience to excel in that dull method of frittering away eternity which I wish had died with his ancestor James I.

There is a story about Carsbreck which I believe still lingers in local tradition. From Blackford there was a loch that filled the strath as far as the bridge of Kinbuck, and since it had the finest trout in the country it was preserved for the use of the king. His queen, the “Fair Queen Helen,” was drowned when the royal fishing boat was upset. She was the most popular lady in the land, and for many days the king mourned for her. One evening he was standing at Kinbuck near the foot of the loch when he cried out to his attendants that he knew how he could recover the body of the queen. He collected a great army of workers, and drained off the water, so that only the deep hollow at Carsbreck remained to mark the loch. Near Blackford they found the queen’s body, and over it they raised a mound. This mound, they say, is to be seen by the riverside two miles below Blackford, and the river Allan was called after the Fair Queen Helen. I was in a romantic mood that afternoon, and I told the story to my companion as if it were gospel truth; and I hope she took my word for it.

At Greenloaning, a pleasant hamlet, the traveller is vigorously reminded by advertisements that the Gleneagles Hotel exists, and indeed on this road one is not permitted to forget it. Many a motorist, I am sure, on his journey northward must turn in to the hotel in spite of himself, so strong is the steam-hammer of suggestion. Past Balhaldie we went, in the ‘Forty-five the home of William Drummond, a Jacobite of the ‘Fifteen who spent the remainder of his days hanging near the coat-tails of the Old Chevalier in Rome. He was a worthless fellow, this Drummond, whose real name was Macgregor, and he was never happier than when he was in the middle of some stupid intrigue. If he was not a traitor to the cause, he did a lot of harm, and seemed to be incapable of telling the truth when a childish lie would give him vent for his spleen against better men who despised him. The road from Balhaldie to Dunblane is grey and desolate, with lonely groups of Scots pines near the battlefield of Sheriff muir; and one wonders what was in the Prince’s thoughts as he passed near the tragic hillside in the evening of Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> September 1745.

As we came down the strath, clouds had concealed the sun. The barren-looking countryside had taken on a black look which accentuated the steely gleam in the sky above the Touch Hills ten miles to the south. Soon we were below the high building of the school for the sons of sailors, soldiers, and airmen; and then down we went past low white-washed cottages into the town of Dunblane.

In Dunblane, the place I wanted most of all to see was Balhaldie Close where Charles remained for two nights as the guest of Alexander Drummond, and I asked my companion if she would like to see it before she continued her journey to Stirling. I believe I made an excellent guide that afternoon in a town I had never seen before. Without difficulty we found Balhaldie Close, an old Scots house with its walls washed in pink “caum” and a high crow-stepped gable facing the street. It was not until then that I ventured to confess the object of my walk across Scotland, and I tried to describe my journey while we drank tea at the inn which was once the home of Jessie Tennant, a young woman whose memory is preserved in that saccharine song, “Jessie, the Flower o’ Dunblane.”

After my companion had said good-bye, I strolled alone through the streets of the town. In the seventeenth century, a facetious Englishman called Richard Franck rode through Scotland

with his nose in the air and wrote scathingly about the “pittiful peddling corporation of dirty Dunblane.” He said there was little trade in this place, “except now and then a truck with a brandy-man, a tobacco-merchant or a brewsterwife; for ale, tobacco, and strong waters are the staple of the town.” As for the women, he declared, they even pawned their petticoats-one of them pawned her husband’s breeches-to pay their reckoning in the innumerable ale-houses. I think Franck must have been badly snubbed by one of the “Cummers of Dunblane”; anyhow, I found it a clean and attractive little place, with a gem of a cathedral that looks down over the housetops in the valley of the Allan Water. When Archbishop Laud came here and looked at the ruins of this cathedral, a bystander remarked that it had been a brave kirk before the Reformation. “Reformation?” cried Laud, as his eye travelled over the roofless nave and broken masonry. “No-Deformation!” Within recent years it has been lovingly restored. I had looked forward to seeing in one of the aisles a Celtic cross which is at least a thousand years old; but the place was closed, and I wandered back to the inn where I had left my pack. It occurred to me to halt in Dunblane for the night. I was feeling depressed, at a loose end; I wondered how I would spend the hours until bedtime, for I felt too restless to read. I knew what was wrong with me; I was missing my cheerful companion. I did not even know her name, where she had come from, or her destination; I only knew that she had driven off in the direction of Stirling; and had left me to kick about Dunblane alone. With a sudden impulse, I slung my pack on my back and headed along a street called Springfield Terrace which took me to a road that went rolling westward among green hillocks.

The country opened out as I strode towards the sun that hung above the horizon. On either hand were woods, with low hills on the south shutting off the valley of the Teith and Forth, and in the north I could see the mountains above Glen Artney. One hour and ten minutes later, I stood in the twilight below the battlements of Doune Castle, listening to two rivers swishing and muttering among the stones as their waters joined in the darkness of the dell below.



## Chapter XVII. The Vale of Menteith

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The Old Coaching Inn - The Earl of Moray's Meal Mill - I Explore Doune Castle - The Prince at Old Newton - Beside the Loch of Watson - I Cross Kincardine Moss and Meet the The Most Fervent Jacobite in Scotland - Over the River Forth.

**T**HE hotel where I slept that night had once been a coaching-inn that belonged to the Earl of Moray. The old stables had been beaten, as it were, into garages, and the water-troughs into petrol-pumps: and a very handsome job has been made of it all. Every few weeks you will read in some newspaper a letter, devotedly signed "Lover of Nature," wailing about the ugliness of petrol-pumps on the countryside. I always disagree, because I can see nothing ugly about a petrol-pump. Sensitive aesthetes object to them because they so brutally catch the eye. But surely that is part of their function: the petrol-pump that coyly hides behind a woodshed would be of little service to the passing motorist. Besides, the opinions about beauty in any generation are often sneered at in the next. For example, I personally can see no beauty whatever, but only a chaotic mass of disjointed ideas, in Mr. T. S. Eliot's famous poem, *The Waste Land*. Petrol-pumps, I take it, are a little like modernist verse: some of us have not yet got accustomed to them. That they are necessary in the countryside cannot be denied, and the first man who put a clock on a church tower was probably told that he was spoiling the look of the church. Often we use the word ugly when we mean unfamiliar.

As soon as I had finished breakfast I went to explore Doune Castle, which had left upon my mind the night before so vivid an impression of vastness and strength. After crossing a hundred yards of green turf to the knoll above the meeting-place of the rivers Ardoch and Teith, I found the big oak door locked. Beside it I read a notice announcing that "Visitors inspecting Doune Castle do so at their own risk and must therefore EXERCISE DUE CARE." Another notice told me that I must apply to the castle-keeper before I could get in, so I began to retrace my steps to his cottage. It was then that a happy clatter across the Ardoch caught my ear, and I saw a mill with its water-wheel spinning beside a dark pool. The drumming of it was good to hear, and I made for the bridge and descended the opposite bank. A collie dog dashed out of the door and cut friendly circles round me, and I hoped that his warning bark would bring out the miller himself. But the noise inside was so loud that I had to raise my voice to a yell before he appeared. He was a short man with grey eyes that twinkled under his dusty eyebrows, and he invited me in with a friendly gesture. He led the way up a ladder, pausing to shout a warning in my ear not to "bash my croon" on the beams, and I emerged into a dim chamber with dozens of bags set around the walls.

The miller's boy was working like a black, staggering across the floor with bags of oats, and fastening them to a chain that came down from above at quick intervals for fresh supplies. "Come and see the kiln," said the miller, opening a door. We stepped into the semi-darkness of a big room, the floor of which was six or eight inches deep in oats, and the heat was terrific. Steam began to settle on my face like wet mist as the miller stooped and scraped aside the oats. I saw that we were standing on thin wire-netting laid across iron beams, and in the chamber beneath I discerned the red glow of an inferno. That sudden glimpse through the wire floor was slightly terrifying, and I thought how that kiln would have made an exquisite torture-chamber in the Middle Ages: I pictured a pair of ruthless eyes looking through a slit in the door at prisoners writhing upon that wire grill as the flue was opened in the furnace room underneath and the great crimson mouth of the fire belched up its blinding heat: I would have

preferred the thumbikins or the boot any day, and I was glad to get back into the cool air. I tried to pick up the different noises, the swish of the grinding-stone, the thud of the wooden levers, the whirr of spindles, and the bang-bang of trap-doors that opened and closed. I was amused at the distance the oats travel before they emerge finally as meal. From the kiln on the second floor they are shovelled into a chute down which they drop to the ground level, to be carried on a tiny elevator to the sifters, from which they fall to the first floor to be cleaned in a riddle; then up they go once more to the roof, to drop to the "shieling-stone" where the husks are crushed and blown off. Up again they go, and fall through a pipe to the oatmeal-stone, from which the meal itself goes down in a steady stream through the riddles. The stuff that fails to pass makes another journey to the roof, to be recrushed, while the perfect oatmeal sets out on its final ascent and then drops down to the waiting bags. An amazing process: a lighthouse keeper's work is a flat crawl compared with the journeys of the oats before they reach the storeroom. As for the miller himself, it was obvious that he loved his job. At each bin, as he raised his voice to explain the process, he scooped up handfuls of the stuff that earned him his living and let it trickle through his fingers with pride as though each oat were a pearl, and the meal itself he tasted and rolled round his tongue like a man savouring a vintage port. "There's no' a healthier job in Scotland," he declared. "D'ye see yon boy that's helping me? Ay, a fine big chap. Aweel, he came here a poor-like thing, but he's off next month to join the police. It's the healthy work and the good porridge that's set him up. Ay, it's a grand life."

The miller came to the door and stood in the morning sunshine. We talked of the days when people burned the husks from the grain, and beat it into meal in a "knocking-stone," or ground it in the hand-mill they called a quern. There was a time when a tenant held his land on condition that he had his crops ground at the laird's water-mill, and the profits of the mill went into the laird's pocket. To-day at Doune it is the farmers themselves who have clubbed together to keep the old mill going for their mutual benefit. The water is taken from the Ardoch about half a mile upstream, and glides swiftly down the "lade" to the wheel at the riverside.

I said good-bye to the miller, and went to the castlekeeper's cottage. He had recently been appointed, I found, and had not acquired the irritating habit of - spouting forth his story in the turgid stream that usually flows from the mouth of an official guide. Far from being a peripatetic hose-pipe, he was human, and answered my questions in a simple way; and he was as proud of his job as the miller across the burn. "If ye like old castles," he said confidently, while he unlocked the door below the arch, "ye'll like Doune." For half an hour I became a boy again, the same boy that had cycled out from Edinburgh scores of times and had scrambled dangerously upon Craigmillar's ruined walls.

Doune is one of the most impressive castles I have ever explored. It is built of the same reddish sandstone I had noticed in the village, and it gives a vivid idea of the lay-out of a medieval fortified palace. There is the guard-room, the prison, the baron's hall, the banqueting-hall, the living-rooms, the cellars, the lodgings for domestics, the kitchens, the chapel with its piscina and credence-niche and ambry, and the courtyard with its well. When a medieval nobleman travelled from one of his castles to another, one of the items in his baggage was tapestry for the bare stone walls, and in the banqueting-hall at Doune you can see the hooks where these tapestries were hung. The castle was built five hundred and fifty years ago by the first Duke of Albany (brother of the rascally Wolf of Badenoch), and his son Murdoch may have added to it. Murdoch was the king's cousin, and soon after James I came to the throne he arrested him and seized the castle. Convicted of many crimes, Murdoch was

executed with two of his sons on the Heading Hill at Stirling, and the last view that met his eyes was his own castle of Doune looking down over the wide valley of Menteith. Thereupon James gave the castle to his queen, that "high born English lady" Joan Beaufort; afterwards it was owned by three other Scots queens, the fickle Mary of Gueldres, the young Margaret of Denmark, and Margaret Tudor, sister of Henry VIII; it passed back to a descendant of the Duke of Albany who had built it; and for several centuries it has been handed down in the family of the present owners, the Earls of Moray. It has no ghost, this old fortress; no famous battle was fought around it; it withstood no impetuous siege. The centuries have dozed away peacefully while it has stood there on the "Doune of Menteith," a fortified place long before history began, with the Teith and the Ardoch prattling amiably below its walls. And yet the absence of wild legend matters nothing. Doune has its own peculiar fascination: the sad glamour that steals over a man in a solitary moment when he thinks of the slow passage of time-birth and manhood and death-and the wheel of life inevitably turning. This, I think, is the mood of Doune Castle; at least, it was the mood that settled upon me that mellow autumn morning. But it passed away like mist before the wind when I mounted the battlements and looked down across the Ardoch to the red-stone house of Old Newton, where Prince Charles Edward paused on his southward march. The Edmonstones lived there, loyal Jacobites whose ancestor had fought and died on Flodden field. They asked the Prince to come in to take refreshment, but time was short, and he would accept only a stirrup-cup. Greatly daring, a cousin of the pretty Edmonstone girls burst from the group, ran to the Prince, and asked if she might be allowed to "pree the mou" of His Royal Highness. The Prince was puzzled as he looked down into the dancing eyes, for he understood little of the broad Scots tongue, and then the request was explained to him. With a laugh, he leant from his horse and gave her the kiss she had begged for. Some say he gave her more than one; probably he did. I wonder if Robina Edmonstone ever saw him again.

Half an hour later, I was crossing the Teith by the big stone bridge that was built by Robert Spittel. According to the inscription carved upon the parapet, he was tailor to "the most noble Princess Margaret, spouse of James IV." Evidently Robert Spittel was proud of his appointment, for he ornamented the bridge with a pair of scissors, but I refuse to believe the story that he built it to pay off an old score with a slack and surly ferryman. The charge for being rowed across the river was a doit, or one-twelfth of an English penny, and one day Spittel found he had no coin smaller than a bodle, which was two doits. The ferryman, who may have come to life again as a taxi-driver, swore he had no change. Spittel whipped out his scissors, cut the bodle into two, handed a half to the ferryman, and stepped out of the boat. Evidently the Scots nation cracked this kind of joke about itself long before the days of Harry Lauder. I looked again at the inscription. "In God is all my trust," wrote Spittel. "The tenth day of September, in the year of God, 1553 years, founded was this bridge, by Robert Spittel." After saluting this careful old Scot (who could be as generous as he was careful, for he built two other, bridges, as well as a hospital in Stirling, out of the profits of his shears), I set out southward across the Vale of Menteith. But I have no idea whether I should blame the map or myself for the fact that I had not gone many miles before I realised that I was lost.

I had clearly marked out the Prince's route, and it ran near the Loch of Watson; but while my map showed a road going past the loch, I could find only a footpath. I knew I was in the estate of Blair Drummond (which by marriage became the property of that famous Scots judge Lord Kames), and since the ground immediately ahead of me was thick with woods, I decided that my best plan would be to push ahead blindly in the hope of picking up the road further on. Soon, towards the right I caught a glimpse of the blue water of the loch, bright in the morning sunlight, with a wide field to cross before I reached it.

I have reason to remember the crossing of that field. There was a herd of cattle in the middle of it, and I veered a little to the right, passing between them and the margin of the loch. The short thick grass was pleasant to walk upon, and I was telling myself I could tramp all day without fatigue over such magnificent turf, when I glanced towards the herd and saw that one of the animals was coming slowly towards me. I stopped and stared, but I did not stare long: it was a bull. That was an unpleasant moment. I wondered whether I should retreat, but I decided I had better push quickly forward. I was close to the edge of the loch now, and the nearest fence was a good hundred yards away. I began to run, and the bull came after me. Panic is an ugly thing; I felt its hot agony in my vitals. I had read of how a matador in the ring faces a charging bull and deflects the animal by a swing of his red cape; but I had no red cape to swing, even if I had possessed the courage to halt and face the brute, which I certainly had not. I could hear his hoofs on the turf behind me. With twenty yards still to go before I reached the fence, I slipped the heavy pack from my back and scuttled like a rabbit, wriggling through the strands of the wire in a sweat of terror. I shall never forget my relief when I turned round and looked at the animal with the fence between us, and then in sudden self-contempt I wanted to shout aloud with laughter. The black fellow was not a bull. He was a "stot," or what I believe the English call a steer - as friendly a steer as I could have hoped to see, with big brown eyes that had an expectant and even benign expression. Either he had followed me out of curiosity, or had imagined I was an old friend, or perhaps it was my terrific rush to safety that had made him amble in my wake. He stuck his big black head over the top strand of the fence and gazed at me, as though he expected me to put out a companionable hand and pat him. Climbing back into the field, I retrieved my rucksack. To show that there was no ill-feeling, I wanted to give him a parting gift, and I remembered that cattle and deer are fond of salt. With obvious satisfaction, he licked from my palm the contents of the tiny packet of salt I carried with my food, and we parted the best of friends. Though I swore I would never run from a bull again until I was quite certain he was a bull, I am not at all confident that I shall keep this vow.

That morning had one other surprise for me. Beyond the loch, I got into some woods on the south, and when I came to a clearing I looked upon a scene that made me think hard. Myself, I do not shoot wild things, and I do not help to hunt the fox, although I have taken part in the dismal sport of hunting the hare and the less dismal one of coursing with greyhounds in the open. A man is entitled to hold his own opinions about those matters. I think they are more a question of feeling than of logic, and surely the logical attitude is that, while hunting is cruel, it is good fun. Now, to go ratting with a terrier strikes me as excellent fun, but a fox-hunter can reasonably argue that this is cruelty to rats, although less cruel than getting rid of the rats by poison. The fox is a wily devil, much more wily than the hounds; and the main reason why I dislike beagling is that the hare is a fool, and he screams like a child when killed. To shoot grouse and the swifter black game upon a moor cannot be called an unmanly sport even by those who dislike shooting any wild thing, but I fail to see the fun in hunting a caged deer, capturing it, and hunting it again. Nor do I see the fun in shooting at pheasants which have been reared by hand and have become almost as tame as barn-fowls. It was such pheasants that I saw before me in that pretty clearing of the woods.

On the ground were dozens of wooden coops, and the lovely birds were wandering about like peacocks on a terrace. They scuttled away when they saw me, but I stood still, and they soon came back, their brownish feathers and green tails glistening in the sunlight. I broke up some biscuits for them; and so, having nobly done my share in helping to fatten them for the guns, I made my way through the trees and came out upon the road beyond. I was now upon the edge

of the old Kincardine Moss, and twenty minutes later I had picked up the Prince's route and was heading for the Forth.

Kincardine Moss is at the eastern end of the Vale of Menteith, and it is set out like a "dambrod" with neat fertile fields, the river on its southern edge, and the hills of Gargunnoch and Touch beyond. But it was not fertile one hundred and fifty years ago; it was a barren place, and it was Lord Kames who transformed it. He was an amazing man, that judge of Session. Tall, thin, and awkward, he took pleasure in his broad Scots tongue, which claret loosened and made more racy, although I am sorry to say he afterwards gave up claret for port because he thought it patriotic to drink what the English recommended. At the age of eighty-three, his sight and hearing were perfect, and he was as nimble on his feet as at twentyfive. He had a cruelly witty way with him at times, and they used to tell a story of a murder trial over which he presided at Ayr. He personally knew the man he was trying, and had often played chess with him; after he had pronounced the death sentence, he leant forward with a chuckle and exclaimed: "That's checkmate for ye, Mathie!" He seemed to regard the word "bitch" as a term of endearment, to be applied to one of either sex, and his usual salutation was, "Weel, ye bitch, how are ye the day?" When he realised in the end that his strength was going, he decided to retire from the bench, and he took an affectionate farewell of his colleagues in Parliament House at Edinburgh; then he paused at the door as he was going out, and in a low voice that was full of emotion he said, "Fareweel, ye bitches!" He was a terrific worker all his life and turned out books on philosophy, religion, criticism, history, law, farming, and I know not what else. He believed that if you want to understand a subject you should write a book about it, and he followed his own advice, with quaint results. I wish Boswell had had a retort ready when, trying to stand up for Scotland, he said to Dr. Johnson, "But sir, we have Lord Kames," and Johnson, who at times could be a most kickable man, replied: "Keep him; ha, ha, ha!"

That Scotland did keep him was a good thing for Scotland, because Kames was one of the greatest farmers of his day. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, farming in Scotland was in the doldrums; the methods used were far behind those in England; and it was people like Lord Kames who gave the impetus which in a few generations sent Scotland so far ahead that men came up north to learn, and Scotsmen went south to take over farms on which Englishmen had failed. So keen was Lord Kames that, if he arrived home in the dark, he would go out with a lantern and walk round his fields to see how his crops and young plantations were doing, and he would be up at six o'clock next morning urging his men: "On, ye bitches, on!" Perhaps his greatest achievement was the clearing of the Kincardine Moss. For centuries this had been waste land, and Kames discovered that deep below the moss there was good clay soil. He hit upon a plan which his friends told him was a ridiculous dream. Under his orders, several burns were diverted into new channels, and the moss was hacked up and floated to the river Forth. Hundreds of acres were cleared, and small-holders (called the Moss-lairds) were settled with their families at a rent of threepence per acre on a long lease. The son of Lord Kames continued the work; and Andrew Meikle of Alloa (the threshing-machine man) devised for him a huge wheel which lifted the water from the Teith at Doune and sent it down across the plain to help in the job of floating away the peat. Ramsay of Ochertyre, the laird of a neighbouring estate, had scoffed at the project of clearing Kincardine Moss, but he lived to watch the peat bobbing down on its journey to the North Sea, and to look upon a fertile land. Kincardine-in-Menteith is a thinly populated parish now, but a century ago (thanks largely to Lord Kames) it supported over a couple of thousand souls. As I walked over the countryside that had once been a waste, I thought of the old Court

of Session judge stumping about late at night with his lantern, and noting the work that had been done since his last visit, and muttering to himself, "Guid, ye bitches, guid!"

Half an hour after noon, I climbed into a meadow, dropped my pack, and settled down beside a beech hedge to eat my lunch. As I looked westward over the flat countryside of Menteith to Ben Lomond, and eastward to the Firth of Forth, I felt that I had at last come into the Lowlands of Scotland. I had, indeed, left the Highlands behind me at Dunkeld; but travelling down the three straths, Strathmore, Strathearn, and Strathallan, I had felt all the time the nearness of the mountains. These mountains had now receded; Ben Vorlich, which I imagined I could see on the skyline, looked very far away; and when I took to the road again, it was with a new feeling in my bones, the feeling that I had passed the climacteric of my journey; and there was a quiet thrill in the thought that the end of it was near.

A note on the margin of my map reminded me of an injunction I had received from Harold Forrester in Edinburgh: I must on no account pass a house called The Coldoch, for there I would be warmly welcomed, and there I would find the most fervent Jacobite in Scotland. Harold Forrester had smiled mysteriously: all I knew was that her name was Veronica.

Without much difficulty I found the house called The Coldoch, for there was no other on the left side of the road. To make quite certain, I asked a girl I met on the drive. She was about ten or twelve years old - I am a poor hand at guessing the age of young ladies-and her blue eyes opened wide when she caught sight of my pack. "You aren't the Prince Charlie man?" she exclaimed.

I replied that I had walked from Moidart on the Prince's road, and she gave a little cry, then drew herself up and held out her hand.

"I am Veronica," she said, and so I was welcomed to The Coldoch by the most fervent Jacobite in Scotland. Word had been sent from Edinburgh that a stranger who had travelled from Moidart would pass that way about the end of the week, and Veronica took me at once to the orchard, where her father and mother were casting critical glances at the ripening fruit; and there, for the Prince's sake, I received a second welcome.

The Coldoch I declare to be a delightful house, part of it probably dating from early in the sixteenth century. The lands of "Coldochis" were given by James IV to Robert Spittel, the royal tailor who built the Breeches Bridge at Doune, and the house was occupied by an uncle of Lady Margaret Drummond, the king's mistress, who with her two sisters died a sudden and mysterious death after drinking the sacramental wine one morning at Mass: a murder which, it was said at the time, was contrived to prevent the king from marrying his lover. The new portion of the house was added by a man with a sensitive taste for the comely. Outside, it is white-washed, and indoors there is some panelling which was built since the War by local carpenters. This woodwork is as fine as anything of the kind I have seen, old or new, and it gives the lie to those who declare that craftsmanship is dead in Scotland. The industrial era smashed a lot of it, but did not kill it, and we have come to a time when men are beginning to think hard about machinery and the good and the ill it has done for the world. The good is staring us in the face every day we live, and the bad is the fault of man, who has lacked the wit to use decently the tremendous toys he has invented. Only a half-blind reactionary, brooding behind medieval walls, can be such a fool as to scoff at the machine, and in painting pictures of the economic paradise of the Middle Ages he forgets that the happy craftsmen and the merchants who bought and sold their handiwork fought like cat and dog. Are things so

essentially different to-day? To be sure, Jack is not his own master, but I do not think Jack ever was. I wish some clever fellow would devise more and more machines of the kind that lighten the labour of poor devils whose job is filthy and sweaty and dangerous. The sentimentalists would be cured of their illusions if they were put into the hold of a schooner and ordered to fill baskets of coal, one after another endlessly, while a chain comes down from the winch on the deck above to jerk the creels up through the hatch and swing them across to the quay. I have watched men at this job; from nine o'clock in the morning until five, they have sweltered in an atmosphere that was black with coal dust, and their pay was eightpence a ton. My point is not that their pay was too little, but that the work should have been performed by a machine. In the dear old medieval days when most things were done by hand, there were many vile jobs which we can do to-day by pressing a button; and I think one of the most thrilling sights in the world is a huge factory going at full blast, with men and women tending the machines, nursing them into efficiency, living day after day with the hum of them in their ears. A smooth-running machine is almost a human thing, and to imagine that the man who tends it has no love for it-has none of the craftsman's pride in its products-is to misinterpret the attitude of the machine-worker. He understands the sweetness of the monotony; his blood flows quietly to the rhythm of the machine; and when he comes to his machine he enters into a waking dream with its own peculiar quality. His state of mind is that of the weaver at his loom swinging his body in monotonous and rhythmic movements; and I look forward to the day when machinery will be so perfect that factory workers will be on duty for no more than four hours in the day, and will have leisure to cultivate their souls. To try to put back the clock is to stop the clock, and one of the things mankind has yet to learn is how to use the leisure that will one day be the greatest product of the machine. But this is a far cry from the wooden panelling made by the hands of local carpenters at The Coldoch, where we sat and drank tea and talked on that gracious September afternoon.

I was taken to look at the remains of a Pictish broch or keir in the corner of the garden. Can there be a more remarkable garden "ornament" in all Scotland? This broch is small, and most of its stones, I suppose, have long ago been used for dykes: but the sight of that thick circular wall took my thoughts into the past, and it was easy to picture men sitting around the low doorway talking in the Pictish tongue about the Roman soldiers, and the roads they had made, and that great rampart they had built and failed to hold, a rampart that ran from somewhere in the west to Peanfahel near Abercorn by the shore of the inland sea.

I had a fine long talk with Veronica, who promised me that one day she would write a book about Prince Charles Edward, and I was driven in a motor-car to the bridge over the Forth. We descended to look at the Ford of Frew beside the farmhouse past which the old road led. [The old name, the Fords of Frew, possibly referred to the two fords at this place, one through the Forth, the other through the Boquhan Burn.] There the Highland army crossed the river. The ford had been a place of importance for centuries; it is referred to in the old Welsh laws, and in the Pictish Chronicle we are told it was fortified by Kenneth the son of Malcolm who died in the year 995. There is no ford across the Forth between here and the causewayed Roman ford at Drip near Stirling, and in the days before men had learned to build bridges it was a key-position. Even so late as the thirteenth century, when the English overran Scotland, Edward I defended it from a peel-tower.

Gardiner's dragoons had come valiantly out from Stirling to the ford; but instead of waiting to meet the Highlanders they had flung into, the river some calthrops - iron crows' feet, brutal instruments for wounding men and horses-and had scuttled back again. The Prince had sent a few hundred men towards Stirling to create a diversion, and the officer commanding the

castle imagined that the Jacobite army intended to force the bridge. He sent out his dragoons; and the group of Highlanders blazed away with their muskets, then hurried eight miles westward to cross the river at the ford with the main body. A man who was there said that the Prince was the first to plunge into the water. If Veronica's mother had not protested against my spending the rest of the day in wet clothes, I might have been tempted to follow. It would have been picturesque to splash waist-deep through the water in the Prince's footsteps, like a lesser Byron emulating Leander in the Hellespont: instead, I flipped a "chuckie" across the river, and with an undeserved reputation for common-sense, I went back to the car. We sedately crossed the Forth by the bridge.

It was a happy thought of my host and hostess to run me up the steep hill into Kippen to see a remarkable little parish church. From a casual glance at the outside, you would never dream there were such glories to be found within. The church was obviously built some time last century, and the fabric was good and plain; but within recent years, enough thought and time and money had been lavished on it to have built three such churches; and the Kippen congregation, inspired by one of the greatest of living Scotsmen, Sir David Y. Cameron, has indeed made this place of worship a place of beauty: the centre of life in the parish, the focus of its inspiration. The walls of the vestibule are of the same unpointed red sandstone you see outside; the exquisite iron door handles were made by the local blacksmith, and so was much of the other ironwork in the building. Beyond the wide arch, the place for the altar has been dug out of solid rock; the oak pulpit is austere and charmingly decorated in gilt, and the reading-desk in gilt and crimson. The floor is of stone slabs, and the walls have a plain cream-coloured wash. The chair behind the altar-table has been made of good Scots oak, and the red altar cloth was designed by the late Lady Cameron, who is remembered in the parish with deep affection. The choir is placed down among the congregation, giving unity to the worship; and the pine-wood pews were stripped of their old disfiguring varnish by the hands of the minister himself. The two lamps of remembrance are of gilded metal with deep crimson glass, and in this church is the first cross to have been displayed in a Presbyterian church since the Reformation. The church-room on the west has walls of oak, a roof of Scots cedar, and the great refectory table has been built of Scots elm; the stained-glass windows are by that fine artist Hendrie. The effect of it all upon the mind of the beholder is one of breathtaking simplicity and beauty. This desire for beauty in the sanctuary is one of the clearest signs of spiritual regeneration; and among the floods of talk about decay in the Church of Scotland, the kirk at Kippen stands upon its hill like a beacon-light.

After my host and hostess from The Coldoch had departed, I talked in his studio with the artist who has lovingly given so much to make the kirk of Kippen what it is. Over a garden rich with autumn flowers, the big windows of his work-room look down northward upon the green Vale of Menteith. He spoke of art and religion and of his confidence that the one will in the near future be a spring of inspiration to feed the other. The old strong sense of nationality is beginning again to assert itself in Scotland both in art and religion. He sees sorrow and struggle in the years to come, but these are the birth-throes of a new and nobler age. D. Y. Cameron (a direct descendant of Dr. Archibald Cameron, younger brother of Lochiel of the 'Forty-five) will be long remembered in Scotland, not only as an artist who has richly depicted the outward aspect of the country he loves, but as a spiritual inspirer during a critical time in Scotland's history. His words were echoing in my ears as I descended to the highway near the Frews and continued my journey on the Prince's road.



## Chapter XVIII. "Dreamthorp"

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The Man from Sutherland - A Cottage at Gargunnoch - Twilight in the Vale of Menteith - Forward to Bannockburn - The Old House at Larbert - The Shepherd in Falkirk - Through the Gap in the Roman Wall - A Night Attack - Dusk in Linlithgow Palace Grounds - I Sleep in "Dreamthorp" - The Murder of the Regent.

SO confused are the old boundaries in this district that I was not certain whether I had entered Stirlingshire or was still in the county of Perth. I believe there is a little island of Perthshire soil tucked away by itself in Stirlingshire, and they say that the dividing-line runs through the minister's garden at Kippen, so that while his dinner is cooked in Perthshire he eats it in the county of Stirling. The present road beside the Forth was made within living memory, and the old road followed by the Prince's army lay several hundreds of yards up on the hillside on my right. I made for Leckie House, where the Prince arrived on the afternoon of Friday 13th September and was entertained to a banquet which George Moir had prepared for him. Unfortunately, Moir himself was not there to give him a welcome. Word of his intentions to entertain the Prince had leaked out, and on the previous night he had been seized by the dragoons and imprisoned in the castle at Stirling, so his wife (the owner of Leckie House) presided at the table. From there the Prince wrote to the city of Glasgow ordering it to provide the sum of £15,000 and all available weapons for his use. Andrew Cochran, the Provost, would no doubt have made haste to comply, but information came through to him that it was Edinburgh and not Glasgow the Prince was making for, and he decided to ignore the letter. From Leckie the old house is now used as quarters for estate workers—Charles marched eastward to Touch, where his army encamped for the night. Touch House belonged to a member of the ancient family of Seton of Abercorn, the hereditary armour-bearers of the king in Scotland, and the present representative is Sir Alexander Hay Seton, Bart., whose tapestries I had admired at the monastery in Fort Augustus the week before. [It was Sir Alexander's father, Sir Bruce Gordon Seton, who compiled *The Prisoners of the Forty-five*.]

Darkness was beginning to fall when I reached the hamlet of Gargunnoch on the hillside, and I wondered if there was such a thing as an inn at that small place. On the road, I stopped a man and enquired about accommodation. When he told me there was only a public-house in Gargunnoch, and he doubted if the landlord could put me up for the night, I asked if he knew of a cottage where I could find a lodging.

He thought for a moment. "I won't see you stretched out beside the dyke," he said in his deep pleasing voice. "There's a spare bed in my house, and you're welcome to it."

Without another word, he led me to a small whitewashed cottage, with thick walls, tiny windows, and a red-tiled roof. The kettle was boiling on the kitchen grate, and the man spoke quietly to his wife in Gaelic. I could not help interrupting; I had been certain, when he first spoke to me, that he had a Gaelic tongue. "Yes," he said, "I'm from Assynt in Sutherland." His wife hurried to the door. "Come in; you are very welcome; everything is poor; we didn't expect a visitor, but you can have what we've got."

Taking off my pack, I sat down beside the kitchen fire. The welcome of these people had been so spontaneous that I found it difficult to tell them of my gratitude. The woman infused the tea, and put the tea-pot in front of the grate, then shook out a white table-cloth and spread

it on the table. I watched her as she set down a plate of home-baked scones and a loaf of bread, some butter, cheese, honey, and homemade gooseberry jam. "The village shop is shut," she said, with a little sigh, "and we have no meat in the house." I told her I wanted no meat when there were scones like those on the table, and I asked her if she also had come from Assynt.

"No, I am a Cameron from Rannoch," she replied, "but we have lived in many places." She began to tell me how her husband's work had taken them far afield. He had been with Lord Cowdray on construction work in his early days, and had helped to build the Bakerloo Tube in London. Later, he had worked on the West Highland Railway; and at this point the man himself leaned forward and asked if I knew a certain famous Scottish preacher. "I gave him his first job on the railway," he said. "It was near Fort William. He was working his way through college. I saw by his hands he wasn't used to rough work, and I got him a job in the office. Ah, he was a fine lad, and a fine Gaelic student ..."

I asked my host if he had ever lived near the Border.

"I do not like the Borderer," he said emphatically. "He's hard and dour, and takes a lot of knowing. I get on better with the English, much better. Yes, I like the English-they are a friendly people-and, man, I like the Cockney. I would go back to London tomorrow if I could get a job there. They say an English husband and a Highland wife is a good mixture." He laughed quietly. "But not the other way round!.. I've been out of a job for nearly six months, but I've heard of something in Lanarkshire, so we may not be in Gargunnoch long ... My son lives near here - he herds five hundred sheep on the Touch Hills, and he'll miss us if we go. The wife helps to make clothes for his children."

During the meal, he told me about the old basket-makers of Gargunnoch. The War killed the industry, and it has never been revived. They made creels for fishwives, and a regular supply went out each year to farmers for the potatoes. Each basket took three quarters of an hour to make, and oak or ash brushwood was used. At first it had been cut from the neighbouring woods, but later some men of the village would go to Loch Lomond and send back supplies by the truckload. One old man living in a small cottage left over a thousand pounds when he died-every penny of it earned at the basket-making. Now-a-days, Gargunnoch is a happy little community, mostly of retired people, and the only work to be had is on the farms. Although it was almost dark by the time we had finished our meal, I went with my host a little way along the road and looked down at the lights that twinkled here and there in the Vale of Menteith. Beyond the strath lay Aberfoyle, where Rob Roy lived, and north of it is the little town of Callander between a mountain and a loch. My host spoke, not without emotion, about his young days in Sutherland, and he repeated some of the stories his father had told him, stories that were continued for an hour beside the kitchen fire; and at nine o'clock my candle was lit, and I was taken into my low-ceilinged bedroom. It was very simple, with linoleum on the floor, but everything had a fresh smell, and the sheets were clean and fragrant. I opened the tiny window and looked out on the peace of the village street and tried to picture the Highlanders marching down that slope on the evening of Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September 1745 on their way to the Touch Hills and the house of the Setons where the Prince slept. But the imagination can be a perverse thing, and the present moment was too vivid for fancy to play freely. A man passed slowly in the darkness; I could smell his tobacco smoke. Perhaps he was the minister out for a last stroll before turning in, perhaps the schoolmaster. A puppy whimpered in a back garden; and high on the lonely hills a bird called, and then there was silence. One after another, the lights in the village street went out, until the candle on the

chair by my bedside was the only thing that broke the darkness. When at last I got into bed and extinguished the candle, I could hear my host and hostess stirring in the kitchen; they were moving quietly so that I should not be disturbed. But I could see no slit of light below the door, and I thought they must have been going to bed in frugal darkness. Perhaps the embers of the fire gave them light enough.

Next morning, as I walked down the tree-lined road to Cambusbarron, I passed Touch House in its wooded ravine. It was not yet nine o'clock, an hour at which it would have been a trifle bold to call upon strangers, so I left unvisited the house where the Prince was entertained by Lady Seton. The army encamped on the moor; and in his journal, Duncan Macgregor tells how Lochiel and Glencarnoch were sitting at breakfast next morning when they heard a gun being fired on the hill. Glencarnoch amiably taunted Lochiel with the remark that, as like as not, it was a Cameron killing sheep. Lochiel retorted that if any sheep were being shot, it was the work of the Macgregors; and at this, Glencarnoch laid a hundred guineas it was the Camerons. The two men rushed out of the house, each swearing that if any of his own people were guilty there would be trouble. To Lochiel's disgust, a Cameron passed with a dead sheep on his back, and Lochiel fired at him point-blank, bringing down the raider with a bullet in the shoulder. This story may not be true, but we have Lord George Murray's word for it that many a sheep was taken in this district.

If the hungry Highlanders looked upon the property of the Lowlander as something Providence had thoughtfully put in their way, I wonder how some of the Border clans or the Englishmen would have behaved if they had been marching triumphantly into the North.

The castle of Stirling is a brave sight on a fine autumn morning, and so is the Wallace Monument on its hillside of pine trees. I was tempted to go off my road to climb up to its high crown of stone, from which I had been told one can have a view that takes in Ben Lomond, Ben Venue, Ben Ledi, Ben More, and Ben Vorlich, and nearly a dozen battlefields; but I decided to push on before the heat of the day made the road like the floor of an oven, and came at ten o'clock to St. Ninian's.

In marching by this way, the Highlanders had been too far south for the guns of Stirling Castle to find a mark with accuracy, but General Blakeney let them have a round or two, and managed to drop a shot near enough to the Prince for several chroniclers to record the incident afterwards. The Highlanders did not pass through the present village of Bannockburn, but bore to the west of it and halted near the ground where Robert Bruce had lain with his army on the day before Bannockburn was fought. The Prince had ordered food to be purchased in Stirling and the country round about, and the Highlanders were given a good meal. At Bannockburn House, which is near the road, Charles himself was entertained by Sir Hugh Paterson, a brother-in-law of the Earl of Mar who had made such a mess of things in 'Fifteen. Sir Hugh's niece was the plain-faced Clementina Walkinshaw who seven years afterwards became the Prince's mistress and shared some of his long exile, but it was not on this visit that he met her. At dinner, word came that Gardiner's dragoons, which had bolted from the Ford of Frew, were now encamped at Linlithgow; and hastily finishing his meal, the Prince hurried on in the hope of meeting them next day.

Flat farmland lay around me. On the right I could see the end of the Kilsyth Hills, on the north the Ochils were dappled in sunlight and shadow; and after eating the food I had bought in St. Ninian's, I got a lift on a lorry which took me past Torwood through a strip of countryside where Wallace and his men had lurked for many a day and night. Back on the

main road it was dull going, but I, can remember how my heart was uplifted on the outskirts of Larbert when I left the lorry and saw on my right a beautiful old grey house high above the road. I believe it is now an industrial school, and I wish I knew who built it and something of the folk who lived there. It sat like a gracious old woman among a crowd of cocktail-drinking bright young things who are neither so bright nor so young as they hope to appear, and I recalled the house with pleasure, for I had once spent a happy month in Larbert: happy because a boy can be happy almost anywhere if, as Stevenson says, he has something craggy to break his mind upon. Ever since, I have carried with me the picture of a dusty little bustling town, with the sky at night incarnadined by the blast-furnaces of Carron; and as I went through it now on foot, I was taken back to those days when I played cricket upon the manse glebe and spent the evenings writing stories of preposterous adventure. With the shadow of a sigh, I left the town behind me; and passing through a grim place with the lovely name of Camelon, I came to Falkirk.

In Falkirk I lingered for as few minutes as possible. At the first glance, the only thing I liked about the place was the causeway-stones of its streets. I tried to assure myself that if I remained until morning in this unpicturesque town, an adventure would befall me more wonderful than any in the Arabian Nights. But it was no use. I disliked the look of the place as heartily as on second thoughts I began to like the manners of the people, and their honest Scots faces, and the strong deliberate accent of their speech. I remembered that Falkirk used to be famous for its trysts, to which cattle and sheep and ponies were brought down from the North every month of the summer, and were taken south on the old drove roads over the hills. But the only hint I got of Falkirk's ancient glory was the sight of a harassed shepherd trying to drive a couple of sheep down the street. I think a herd of antelopes might have given him less trouble; for they dived among the traffic, ducked between the legs of horses, and stared with startled eyes into the radiators of motor-cars. The shepherd's face was red with shame as he dodged back and forward like a fast rugby three-quarter; and his dog, who looked as though he would never hold up his head again, was almost frantic with despair. The incident closed for me when the shepherd dashed round a corner after one of the sheep, while a fat citizen of Falkirk drove the other out of a shop door hooting and waving his bowler-hat. After the man had replaced his hat and recovered his dignity, I asked him the way to Callendar House.

Callendar House, to which the Prince came on the evening of Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September, belonged to the Earl of Kilmarnock. It had previously been the Earl of Linlithgow's, but after the Rising of 'Fifteen he had been attainted and his estates forfeited to the crown. The York Buildings Company had bought the property, but the tenants refused to pay their rent, and with a helpless gesture the Company had transferred it on a long lease to Lord. Kilmarnock, whose wife had the first claim on it. If Kilmarnock had sat tight during the 'Forty-five, the estate would have come to him for good, but he followed his Prince, was captured at Culloden, and beheaded on the Tower Hill in London. Nearly forty years afterwards, the York Buildings Company put the place up for auction. William Forbes, the coppersmith, intended to bid up to £100,000, and at the "roup" it was knocked down to him for £80,000. The auctioneer turned to him and said: "Who are you? I must have a bank reference." At this, the coppersmith whipped out a bank-note for £100,000, and to the consternation of the auctioneer blandly asked for £20,000 change. Forbes, who had a curious sense of humour, had got his bank to print the note specially for the occasion. He had made a fortune when the Government began to sheathe the bottoms of naval ships in copper; but like the York Buildings Company, he found the tenants difficult to deal with, and one day he had a row with a Local minister about the rent of a park. The minister was forced to give in, but he had

his revenge upon the Laird by preaching for several Sundays from the text, "Alexander the coppersmith hath done me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works." Whatever the Lord may have thought of the coppersmith, there is still a Forbes at Callendar House.

I walked up the avenue through a gap in the Roman wall that Lollius Urbicus built in the second century to link up the old forts of Agricola. This rampart was made of turf upon a foundation of stone, but from Falkirk to the point where it finishes at Carriden it was of earth strengthened with clay. It was twenty feet high, with a wide ditch on the north side and a military road on the south. The old forts were roughly two miles apart, and their position determined the line of the wall; if these forts had never been built, Urbicus in some places would have chosen a different route. Again and again the Romans retired from their strongholds in Scotland, until they finally left at the beginning of the fifth century; and while a library of books has been written about their occupation, to my mind one of the most interesting things that has been established is that, from the founding of the line of forts in the first century to the departure of the Romans in the fifth, the longest time they had a continuous hold upon the country was little more than half the lifetime of a man. North Britain did not see much of the grandeur that was Rome.

In Callendar House I was permitted to look at the room where the Prince slept; then I was taken down a great staircase on the south and led to the old wing of the house, and a door was opened in silence. I wonder if Charles himself visited the apartment which Queen Mary of Scots is said to have occupied when she came to a baptism in the Linlithgow family: perhaps his mind was too full of the immediate future to think then about the Queen whose memory he revered. When the Earl of Kilmarnock received him on that Saturday night he told Charles that Gardiner's dragoons were encamped between the Avon bridge and the town of Linlithgow. Kilmarnock had deserted from the dragoons, so his information could be relied upon. The Prince decided to make a night attack. He pretended to go to bed so that news of his intention would not leak out; and an hour or two later, he slipped away to meet Lord George Murray, who was waiting for him with Lochiel and four other Highland chiefs and a thousand picked men. Linlithgow Bridge, where Gardiner had encamped, was four miles distant; the Prince knew it would be strongly held, so he made for a ford a mile and a half up the river near the home of his aide-de-camp, Macleod, of Muiravonside. His object was to cross the Avon, descend on the right bank, and surprise Gardiner on the flank; but to his disappointment he learned on reaching Muiravonside that the dragoons had cleared out at dusk and were by this time far beyond striking distance.

Day had already broken when the Prince marched into Linlithgow and took possession of the town. I myself would have liked to enter it romantically at that brisk hour of the morning when a man's mind is clear and his body is at the apex of its daily strength; but in fact I reached it an hour before sunset, feeling neither brisk nor romantic, with a raging thirst and a hunger like a wolf's.

Linlithgow - the old "Dreamthorp" of Alexander Smith-is a town where a man may comfortably compose his soul: a good substantial Scottish place with some of the peculiar dignity which you catch a glimpse of now and then in capital cities and in towns where there used to be a royal residence. I knew nothing about the hotels in Linlithgow and chose one because it stood beside the Well of St. Michael, which had the friendly inscription, "St. Michael is kinde to strangers." The hotel folk were certainly kinde to me, and after a bath I sat at a window that looked down into the street, and ate an excellently cooked meal and

drank a pint of claret. I was alone in the little dining-room, with its white table-cloths, bright glasses, and the Victorian sideboard of polished mahogany; and I was glad there was no stranger on that Saturday evening to distract me. Linlithgow is a town charged with memories of the Royal Stewarts, and it was with the Stewarts, my thoughts were occupied that evening. A stranger when he comes to this town naturally turns first of all to the Palace, and the maid who attended to me at dinner told me I would not be able to see it until Monday: which meant that I would not see it at all, for I hoped to leave on the morrow. But after I had finished my meal and had dipped into a book she brought me with the compliments of the proprietress - one of the best books of local history I have ever encountered - I began to wonder whether there was some way of getting into the Palace grounds without knocking up the keeper.

There is, but tell it not in Gath or to the Office of Works. At the risk of being sent about my business, I walked through an open gateway in the east of the town, followed a short avenue, climbed a fence, crossed a stream by stepping stones, and found myself looking up at the Palace walls, black against the last glow of daylight in the sky. I went slowly round to the loch (which I found difficult to believe was 150 feet above sea-level) and watched the swans and geese and wild-duck feeding. Was it possible that the eyes of Stewart kings had looked upon the ancestors of those swans: and had they been fed by the hands of Mary Queen of Scots? The twilight was cold and grey on the water, and I could see the lights of houses in the distance. I was glad I had ventured to come at this hour, for so often the stark light of day makes it difficult to evoke the spirit of a place which one has tried to picture tenderly. On this site (as one may read in the book by Dr. Ferguson) there had stood the wooden manor-house of David I, that "sair sanct for the croon," and in the fifteenth century the first James built a palace of stone and roofed it with tiles from Dundee. The second James spent part of his honeymoon here, and kept a boat on the loch with a man to catch fish and eels for the royal table; and the third James and his queen used it as a sanctuary against the plague that in 1474 was decimating Scotland. The fourth James spent many busy days here, hunting and hawking; attending to the gardens and the bees; visiting his "harness mill" where coats-of-mail were made; studying foreign languages in the evening; discussing "the fifth essence in nature" with learned alchemists over quaichs of aqua vitae; and bleeding sick people with leeches, a curious hobby for a king. At night he listened to the music of Italian minstrels; the players of Linlithgow performed before him; and often he would finish the day with a game "at the cards, dice, or the tables," at which he was fond of a flutter, or so one would gather from his treasurer's accounts. For years, he spent every Easter and Christmas at the Palace, and an Abbot of Unreason led the fun and games from St. Nicholas' Eve until Twelfth Day. Much "drink silver" he gave to the workmen who were making the place fit for his young queen, whose jointure-house it was to be. When he brought her as a bride, so much gear did she require that it took eighteen carts to carry it from Holyroodhouse, and no queen of Scotland had ever been received at Linlithgow with greater joy than Margaret Tudor. This generous king-he was as open-handed as his father had been stingy-scattered money in the town; he was received with an acclamation always, and the children kissed his hand in the streets. But ten years later, the clouds were gathering. From Linlithgow, Margaret wrote to her brother Henry VIII that she was in anxiety about her husband's state of mind, for she saw war coming. England was preparing to fight France, and she was afraid James would join in the conflict. She pleaded, with her husband to ignore the appeals of the Queen of France, Anne de Bretagne, who had flattered him by proxy and called him her "chosen knight." Margaret told him she had dreamt of coming disaster, and the ghost that appeared before him at his prayers in St. Michael's Church with words of warning was perhaps a ghost of her own devising, while the voice he heard at midnight after he had joined his army on the Burghmuir at Edinburgh may have proceeded from the lips of the same substantial wraith. But if these

were Margaret's efforts to stop him, they failed, and James marched south to Flodden, while she waited in her bower above the palace walls for news of the battle.

But it is with Queen Mary of Scots that the Palace will always be associated. Mary kindles the imagination even of those who call her an immoral harridan. On the 8<sup>th</sup> day of December 1542, she was born in an upper room six or seven days before her father, James V, died in despair at Falkland. In Linlithgow, she spent the early months of her life, and after she returned from France it became her half-way house when she travelled between Edinburgh and Stirling. At Linlithgow Bridge, a little west of the Palace, she was abducted (willingly or otherwise) by Bothwell, and from that day she never again set foot in her Palace courtyard. Her son, the unpopular James VI, stayed often at Linlithgow: sometimes he came to sulk after the folk of Edinburgh had shown him how little they respected him, and once he came to fulminate and to declare that he would raze Edinburgh to the ground and scatter salt upon its ruins. Here, he had some of his many ructions with the nobility and the clergy; but after he had scrambled eagerly upon the throne of England, and remained away for fourteen years, his return was made the excuse for a tremendous civic spree. He was met at the east gate of the town by a huge plaster lion, in the belly of which crouched the local schoolmaster, and through the open jaws the man spouted a poem to the "thrice royal Sire," a poem of acclamation which ends with the gorgeous lines:

... then, king of men,  
The king of beasts speaks to thee from his den,  
Who, though he now enclosed be in plaster,  
When he was free, was Lithgow's wise schoolmaster.

Nearly a century and a quarter later, the great-great grandson of King James VI, was given a reception no less warm, although it was unrehearsed. So great was the excitement when Prince Charles arrived on a Sunday morning that the minister decided to hold no service in the church. The Provost, John Bucknay, was a Jacobite, as his father had been before him, but he was one of those canny Jacobites who slipped away to leave his womenfolk to salute the Prince in tartan and white cockades. Mrs. Glen Gordon was the tenant of the Palace at the time, and the fountain in the courtyard was flowing with wine. But few of that cheering crowd allowed their excitement to carry them to the point of joining the Jacobite army which had marched through the town and encamped near Magdalens; and as soon as farewells were exchanged in the afternoon, the Whigs in the town sent a messenger to Edinburgh with news that the Prince was on his way to the capital. Many claims were hastily put before the magistrates demanding compensation for the meal, the cows and the sheep which (it was alleged) the Young Pretender's rapsallions had lifted, and one ventures to hope that those claims were carefully investigated: from what we know of the men who were called the Twenty-seven Gods of Linlithgow, they probably were.

Four and a half months later, the Palace was in flames. The Butcher Cumberland's soldiers on their northward march bivouacked there, and the straw they left behind caught alight. When he saw the smoke rising from the courtyard, Provost Bucknay is said to have shrugged his shoulders and remarked that those who kindled the fire had better put it out. So ended as a royal residence this Palace of the Stewarts: broken like their broken hopes.

I walked slowly round the building. The darkness had drawn down; lights were among the trees; the only sound I could hear was the voice of a whaup on the edge of the loch. Above me were the black, windows of the Palace where, on many a night such as this, the Stewarts

had stood and looked out of their heavy-lidded eyes upon the darkening countryside: it did not need much imagination to picture their ghosts among the walls. Retracing my steps, I splashed across the burn, and made my way back to the little hotel in the main street of the town.

I had promised myself a visit to Torphichen and the Priory of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem; I had promised myself a view of many things in and about Linlithgow. But next morning I was eager to get on my way; and after breakfast, I decided to be content with a glimpse of St. Michael's Church, which stands within a stone's throw of the Palace. It is among the finest pre-Reformation parish churches in Scotland, and was probably built by James IV upon the ruins of the "great church" which Edward I of England had used as a storehouse for the provisions of his invading army. It was a borough church in those days, and the magistrates claimed the right of controlling the clergy. They kept an eye upon the behaviour of the priest, told him the hours at which he was to perform the services, gave orders even about the number of candles for the altar and the way he was to robe himself. Indeed, one would gather from the entries in the Liber Curiae (quoted by Dr. Ferguson) that the Bishop of the Diocese had little to say in the parish so long as "the Twenty-seven Gods" were in control; and at the time of the Reformation when the people in the parish joined in the tornado of iconoclasm that swept over Scotland, the "Gods" devised a wily scheme by which they retained the endowments in their own hands. In the seventeenth century, the church was made hideous with galleries and pews; the tradesmen of the town were given their own seats; and the incorporation of tailors, anxious to outdo their rivals, went so far as to decorate their gallery with a pair of shears and a smoothing-iron. In the same century, the church was divided into two by a wall, so that the "Resolutioners" (the Presbyterian royalists) could worship God untainted by their brethren, the Protesters, who worshipped at the other end. The church fell into disrepair, and at the time of the 'Forty-five it was a dirty untidy place with a great part of the floor broken up. That to-day it is one of the loveliest examples of Gothic workmanship to be seen in Scotland is due to the great Dr. Ferguson who spent his life restoring some of its lost beauty. I had a talk with the beadle, and when he spoke about all that "the Doctor" had done, tears came into his eyes. "Dr. Ferguson died too soon," he said. "We need a fine, oak roof in the church-what you see is but painted plaster. One day, perhaps, Dr. Ferguson's work will be finished, but I'm thinking it will be a long time yet."

It was the beadle who suggested that I ought to have a glance at the spot, a few yards down the street, where the half-brother of Mary Queen of Scots was assassinated: the crime, brilliantly conceived and daringly carried out, reminds one of a scene in a modern shocker.

After Mary's flight to England, Moray became Regent of the kingdom, but Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh - whose life Moray had spared on the scaffold after Langside - decided that Scotland would be better without him. That Hamilton's wife had been turned out of her house by Moray's friends, and sent to wander unclothed in the snow of a winter's night, used to be given as the motive for the murder, but the story is apocryphal. According to his lights, Hamilton, in planning Moray's death, was being loyal to his queen and to his own family.

The street where the murder took place is narrow now, but in the sixteenth century it was not much wider than an alley, and this made Hamilton's task easier. He got into an empty house where the Sheriff court-house now stands, and took the lintel from the door in the dyke behind it, so that afterwards he could get away on horseback without delay. Then he blocked the lane with thorn bushes to hold up the pursuit. On the floor of the front room, he placed a large feather-bed, so that his footsteps would be noiseless. To conceal his shadow, he hung



the room with black drapery, and cut a hole below the lattice for his musket, which he loaded with four bullets.

The Regent Moray left his lodging, some way down the street, and began to ride through the press of people that had collected to watch him set out for Edinburgh. When he came opposite the house, Hamilton fired. A bullet passed through the Regent's body, killing the horse of the man on his left, and he was helped back to his lodging, to die during the night. Meantime, Hamilton had rushed to the back door of the house, leaped on his horse, and escaped.

When the news was taken to Queen Mary, she was eager to reward him with a pension out of her French income. In France, he was received as a tremendous fellow-a champion among assassins-and his admirers selected a French general as his next victim, but he declined the honour. Far from helping Queen Mary's cause in Scotland, the murder of the Regent Moray drove the wedge of dissension deeper into the nation, and gave Queen Elizabeth a chance to continue playing the double game at which she was so adroit: a game that ended a few minutes after ten o'clock on a February morning in 1587 upon a black-draped scaffold built beside the hearth, where a fire of logs was blazing, in the great hall of Fotheringhay Castle.

## Chapter XIX. The End of the Road

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Among the Slag-heaps - Within Sight of the Pentland Hills - The Macdonalds at the House of the Stairs - I Cross the Boathouse Bridge - Sham-English Houses in Scotland - I Arrive at Gray's Mill - The Edinburgh Comedy - A Scots Minister's House on the Sabbath - The City from Arthur's Seat - The End of my journey.

**T**HERE was a slight drizzle of rain on that Sunday morning as I set out on the road to Edinburgh. I did not know whether I would reach my destination before dark, but I was determined to make the effort; and the prospect of sleeping in the city which to my dying day I will think of as my home filled me with an elation that made me ignore the rather uninteresting countryside through which at the start I found myself passing. I had never tramped on this road before, although I had gone quickly over it in a motor-car, and I had caught glimpses of it from a railway compartment. I have always agreed with Robert Louis Stevenson that there is no more vivid way of seeing a landscape than from the window of a railway-train, to which must now be added that of the motor-coach; and while one does not travel merely to gape at a picture-gallery of landscapes, and the delicate essences of travel are distilled from many impressions other than those which enter the soul through the eyes, travel of any kind would be a barren affair without its visual background. But where the walker scores over the railway-traveller is in this: his impressions may not be so quick or sharp, but they have time to sink deeper, and they are enriched by a man's contact with the ground over which his own feet carry him. The country I met after Linlithgow is not picturesque in the sense that Blair Atholl is, and only the blind can ignore the slag-heaps which the miners call "duff." Back at Falkirk I had looked upon a land which gave me a fairly good idea of what I had always imagined the Potteries to be like: the horizon had been thick in smoke, with chimneys and the machinery of pit-heads looming up through it in a ghostly way. East of Linlithgow the air was clearer, but again the slag-heaps assault the eye; and as I passed beside them on that Sunday morning I saw in them, almost against my will, a unique beauty. Yellow grass grew upon them, and there was a curious red sheen upon their dark sides, like the blood of an otter drifting a little below the surface of a slow-running stream. Those pit-heads and slag-heaps of West Lothian are a subject for an artist, but they need a man of the calibre of Wadsworth to capture their spirit.

Soon I had passed Kingscavil, and had come to a group of cottages called Three Miletown, where the Prince brought his men to a halt. On the previous night, he had managed to snatch but a few hours' sleep before making the sortie from Callendar House at Falkirk, and now Lord George Murray was eager to push further on, but Charles decided to remain until the next morning. O'Sullivan had selected this place on rising ground, and the Prince slept in a small farmhouse west of where the Highlanders lay in their plaids. After I had passed through the hamlet of Winchburgh, which is unremarkable except for the amount of dullness that is crammed into a few yards, I was brought to a stop by the glorious view of a countryside that rolled to the foot of the Pentlands. Caerketton and Allermuir, Swanston and Glencorse: these names came back to me, bringing the same little wisp of nostalgia that is always evoked by

the name of the street in Edinburgh where I lived, and in high spirits I strode out to Kirkliston.

It was near Kirkliston that the Prince paused on the march next day. To the south-west was the house of Newliston, then belonging to the Earl of Stair whose grandfather the Highlanders blamed for the massacre of Glencoe. The descendant of the murdered Macdonald chief was in the Prince's army with many of his clansmen; and in sudden anxiety the Prince pictured the house of the Stairs going up in flames, with the Macdonalds dancing vengefully around it. He suggested therefore that the Glencoe men should be guided past the place at a safe distance, but so indignant was the Macdonald leader that he threatened to take his clan back to the Highlands if any watch was set upon them. He reminded the Prince that the Macdonalds were men of honour, and at once Charles responded by giving orders that a guard of Macdonalds from Glencoe were to be mounted at Stair's house during the halt. The Prince himself was entertained at the farmhouse of Todhall (afterwards rebuilt and re-christened Foxhall by some man who was not satisfied with the old Scots word for a fox); and in the afternoon the army moved forward in the direction of Edinburgh.

I ate a late lunch in a field by the roadside, and crossed the river Almond at the Boathouse Bridge, when a sprinkling of rain again began to fall. I was beginning to fear I would arrive at the suburbs of Edinburgh too late to follow the Prince's route round the city before darkness came; and so I seized upon the rain as my excuse, and boarded a passing motorbus that was shining and blue and incredibly luxurious. And like a lord among other silent lords and ladies (whose tongues, I noted, were stricken with the same old familiar Edinburgh palsy which arrests talk in the presence of strangers) I rode into Corstorphine.

Old Corstorphine is delightful, but God help new Corstorphine. Those recently built houses scattered around the villages on the road from Stirling are enough to make a man blaspheme: they are as ugly as the worst Victorian abortions; indeed, I think they are even uglier, for many of the new ones are sham-English. On an English countryside, they would have been bad enough, but why in heaven's name must we have them in Scotland? If it is necessary for economic reasons to build thousands of those little gimcrack things, surely they can be designed in a way that does not strike the eye as foreign. The old grey sombre Scots house, however small, has its own beauty, and it should not be beyond the wit of a Scots architect to devise an inexpensive house that is in keeping with the new spirit that is arising in Scotland. Far worse than the red eruption of bungalows around London are those sham-English blemishes on the face of many a Scots town; and as I drew near Edinburgh, I felt my ardour being soured with an angry despair. Down to Slateford I made my way, passing the Stank which used to be a loch, passing the place where Hailes House used to stand and where a village was swept away to make room for a quarry, and coming at last to Gray's Mill. Before me as I write, there is a map printed in 1654, and on it this place is marked Kray, which suggests that the mill was not built by a long forgotten miller named Gray, but was called after the estate on which it stood. It is now the meeting-place of the Union Canal, the Water of Leith, the railway to Glasgow, and a main road. These four channels play an intricate game of leap-frog, and each emerges triumphantly intact and rolls on to its destination. But there

was only the road and the Water of Leith going past Gray's Mill when the Prince took up his quarters on the evening of Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September.

On the afternoon and night of that day a comedy was enacted. Perhaps it would be more accurate to call it a farce, and the scenes of it changed so rapidly that a modern revolving-stage would be required for its presentation. The curtain had been rung up for the Prologue about a fortnight before, when news had been received in Edinburgh that Sir John Cope had failed to intercept the Highlanders, and they were marching south. What was to be done? Archibald Stewart, the Lord Provost of the city, pulled in one direction, some of the magistrates in another, and vague letters came from Whitehall to the Lord Advocate telling him to do everything for the best, and to keep a wary eye on the Lord Provost. As the Highlanders approached, there was a babel of tongues in Edinburgh, and the voices of the few men who were ready to die in defence of the city were drowned in the caterwaul. Gardiner's dragoons, covered with foam if not with glory, had scuttled from Linlithgow and were now with Hamilton's dragoons at Coltbridge. Some of the dashing cavalymen supported by a few Edinburgh volunteers ventured to go out towards Corstorphine, where an advance guard of the Highland army saw them and fired a few shots. The scouts hurried back to Coltbridge and breathlessly announced that the rebels were upon them. This was too much for the stomachs of the dragoons: in a panic they went hell-for-leather by the lanes through Bearford's Parks and the Lang Dykes and did not draw bridle until they were safely on the links at Leith. This "Canter of Coltbridge" was watched from the Castle. It took place at three o'clock on Monday afternoon, and Edinburgh was left undefended except by the untrained rabble of citizens, students, and apprentices who manned the broken city wall.

That morning, between ten and eleven o'clock, an Edinburgh man called Alves had ridden into the town the Prince's army on the road, and the Duke of Perth had asked him to say that if they were allowed to enter Edinburgh in peace the citizens would be dealt with civilly. From Corstorphine, the Prince had sent to the magistrates a formal letter summoning them to surrender the town; and at Gray's Mill, about eight o'clock in the evening, a deputation waited upon him.

It was well known in Edinburgh that Cope's army was on its way by sea from Aberdeen. For days the weather-vanes of the city had been anxiously watched by the Whigs to see if the transports had a fair wind to bring them south. And the four bailies of the deputation, in an awkward group at Gray's Mill, did their best to look innocent of guile, and begged for a little delay. The Prince replied quite simply that he demanded to be received as the son and representative of the king, and that he expected an answer by two o'clock in the morning. Half an hour after two o'clock a second deputation turned up at the Mill with a fatuous message to the effect that the citizens of Edinburgh were now snugly in bed, where all good citizens should be, and so their views about surrendering the city could not be obtained until morning. The Prince, urged by Lord George Murray, saw the deputies; and after he repeated his demand to be received as the Regent of the kingdom, the members of the deputation trundled back in their hackney-coach. It would have been clear to a half-wit that the magistrates were playing for time, and Charles had already ordered Lochiel with nine hundred men to try to take the city by surprise, and if necessary to blow up one of the gates,

but to avoid bloodshed as far as possible. Guided by John Murray of Broughton, who knew the district, Lochiel made his way to the Netherbow Port and sent forward one of his men disguised in, a riding-coat to pretend that he was a servant of an officer in the dragoons, but he failed to get past the guards at the gate. Lochiel drew off, when to his surprise, the Netherbow Port was opened, and the hackney-coach which had taken the last deputation back to the city came clattering out to return to the stables in the Canongate. The Highlanders rushed in. Dawn broke as the capital of Scotland surrendered. It was said at the time that half of the folk were Jacobites at heart: one-third of the men, two-thirds of the women.

During the night at Gray's Mill, the Prince slept for a couple of hours in his clothes; and sending the heavy baggage past Morton Hall by a road south of the Braid Hills, he led his army along the lane that crossed Caanan Muir, near the ruins of the ancient chapel of St. Roque, out of sight of the Castle guns.

Before leaving Gray's Mill on that Sunday afternoon, I went forward to the door of the little house and knocked. I would have liked to see where the Prince spent the night before entering Edinburgh, but to my repeated knocking there was no reply; and I made my way down a side-road to Craiglockhart, passed the Poorhouses, and came out upon the Morningside road. The name of the moor over which the Prince marched still survives in Caanan Lane, and I walked past Grange House, where the Prince paused to drink wine with William Dick, "the third baron, and Anne Seton his lady," and to leave behind him a thistle from his bonnet in exchange for the white rose Anne Seton gave him when she kissed his hand.

I turned into Dalrymple Crescent. There was a gentle thrill in the thought that the house where I had spent so many years of my boyhood stood within a stone's throw of the Prince's line of march, and it made my journey on that last day the sweeter. When I saw Edinburgh again that evening, I was thankful I had lived there and had memories to play with. Folk were going to church, and the sight of them brought back all the strange salt flavour of an Edinburgh Sabbath: the bustle of a minister's house on a Sunday morning; an hour's silence while my father had a final glance at his sermon; the manse pew in the gloomy church; Old Hundred and other tunes that wove themselves into the fabric of my mind; cold midday dinner; the church again at half-past two; Sunday school; late tea and "a good improving book "-with luck, Treasure Island-then a tramp to the Blackford Hill, and bed at ten. A strange sombre day, as I look back on it; and yet on that evening as I passed the old house in the Crescent, I would not have changed a single hour of it for anything in the world.

By Salisbury Road I went, and down to the King's Park. The Prince's army had passed through the policies of Prestonfield House, and by a gap in the wall had gone round to Duddingston, to climb the hill by Dunsappie Loch. In the Hunter's Bog, a shallow glen behind the Salisbury Crags, the Jacobite army bivouacked, and the Prince left them at noon to go down to the Palace where Mary Queen of Scots had spent so many of her days in Scotland, and where the Prince's grandfather had made himself popular with the nation when he was the Duke of York. Near St. Anthony's Well on the hillside, Prince Charles paused for a few minutes and stood looking across at the city on its ridge of rock. He knew he had come

to the first stage in his campaign to recover the British throne for his family. The capital of Scotland was at his feet, but he knew that Cope's army had landed at Dunbar and was marching to meet him. He knew how much depended upon himself; he had already seen how delicate was to be the task of keeping the peace in his own camp. In his hour of triumph, his thoughts were heavy as he descended to the Palace of Holyroodhouse. On the hillside I sat down. The darkness was falling quickly. Deep shadows lay in the valley, and my eye travelled to the skyline of housetops and church-spires and the failing sunset above. I thought of the Prince as I sat there, and the long journey he had made from Borrodale in Arisaig. I recalled the stages of that journey, the roads and the hill-tracks by which I had travelled over the royal road, and the inns and cottages where I had slept, and the people I had met and talked with, and the ups and downs of fortune that make a long journey on foot so like the varied span of a human life. Had the Prince's road been worth my travelling over, I asked myself, and out of a thankful heart I was able to answer. I rose to my feet. My pack seemed to have become lighter, and I was deliciously tired and hungry. At Abbeyhill I sank down on the seat of a taxi-cab: it was good to hear an Edinburgh voice again! Fifteen minutes later, I was in Abercromby Place at the doorway of the Royal Scots Club.

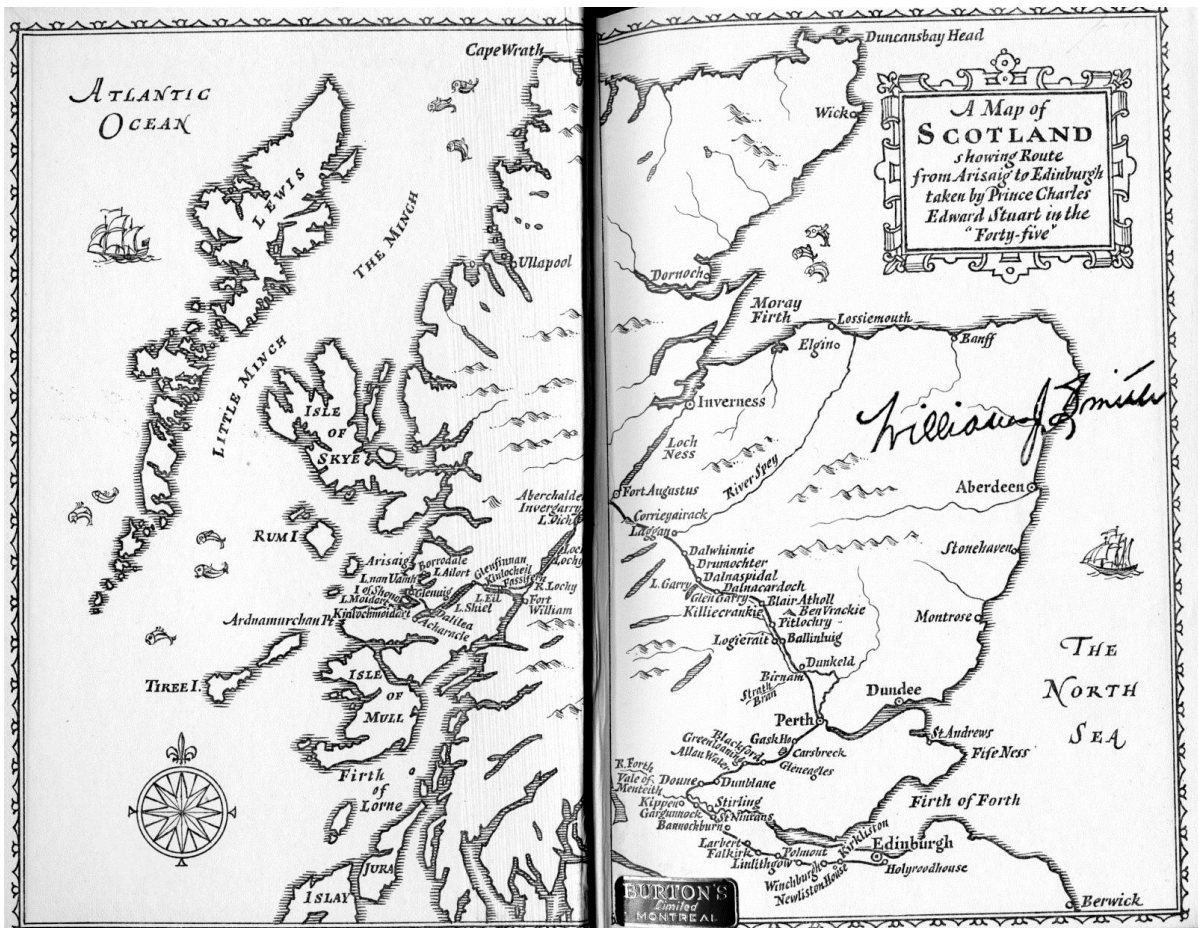


Figure 9 - Map of Scotland showing route

In later volumes the author will describe his subsequent travels in the footsteps of Prince Charlie.