



A land of purple mountains and solitary glens; of towering crags and thundering cataracts; of brown moors and rushing streams; of changeable skies, beautiful and terrible as the ocean. A people among whom patriarchal simplicity, and feudal devotion, and wild romance, still linger. A language that transfigures the simplest thought with the grace of poetical expression. All that is but a tithe of what we, Highlanders, see to love in the Highlands. And it adds to our loyalty—there is no denying it—that Our Most Gracious Sovereign sees highland people with highland eyes.

It was in the late summer of 1842—just one year less than half a century ago—that the Queen first visited Scotland. On both sides it was a case of love at first sight. The impressions made upon the youthful sovereign and the Prince Consort are recorded in the *Journal*. First, even before they touch land, the long, beautiful twilight charms them. Then “the grey metropolis of the North” exercises its spell. “Beautiful—totally unlike anything else I have ever seen,” writes the Queen; “and what is more, Albert, who has seen so much, says it is unlike anything he ever saw.” Then the flowing hair of the Scotch lassies—“a good deal of it red”—and the close-fitting matches of the old women attract the royal eye; even the porridge and finnan haddies have honourable mention in the chronicle. Bye-and-bye, longer descriptions are given. “The view of Edinburgh from the road, before you enter Leith, is quite enchanting; it is, as Albert said, ‘fairy-like,’ and what you would only imagine as a thing to dream of or to see in a picture. There was that beautiful large town, all of stone (no mingled colours of brick to mar it), with the bold Castle on one side and the Calton Hill on the other; those high, sharp hills of Arthur’s Seat and Salisbury Crags towering above all, and making the finest, boldest background imaginable. Albert said he felt sure the Acropolis could not be finer; and I hear they sometimes call Edinburgh the Modern Athens.”

From Edinburgh the Queen went to the Highlands, and found matches *ad libitum*, and kilts and highland ponies, and, above all, “the dear hills” and “quiet and liberty.” “The English coast,” she writes on her return, “appeared terribly flat. Lord Aberdeen was quite touched when I told him how I was so attached to the dear, dear Highlands, and missed the fine hills so much. There is a great peculiarity about the Highlands and Highlanders, and they are such a chivalrous, fine,

active people. Our stay among them was so delightful. Independently of the beautiful scenery, there was a quiet, a retirement, a wildness, a liberty, and a solitude, that had such a charm for us.”

In 1848 the royal family took possession of Balmoral. A simple, almost humble residence for royalty was the Balmoral of those days—in striking contrast to the magnificent seats of various highland potentates. Here is the Queen’s description of it: “There is a nice little hall with a billiard-room; next to it is the dining-room. Up-stairs (ascending by a good broad staircase) is our sitting-room, (formerly the dining-room), a fine, large room, next to which is our bed-room, opening into a little dressing room, which is Albert’s. Opposite, down a few steps, are the children’s and Miss Hildyard’s three rooms. The ladies live below and the gentlemen up-stairs.”

The estate of Balmoral was at that time the property of the Earl of Fife, who had obtained it from the Farquharsons of Inveray, long its possessors. In 1852 Prince Albert purchased the property; and, shortly afterwards, began the erection of the present castle. With that admirable taste for which he was distinguished, the Prince chose the Scottish baronial style of architecture for the new residence. Perhaps, if Canadian architects were given a chance, we might find *climate* and *material* taken into consideration in planning Canadian buildings. The Renaissance style of architecture, however beautiful in itself, is entirely inappropriate for cold, grey, hewn stone. The Romanesque is admirable for public buildings; but unless a stone of warm colour is used it is too grim and prison-like for the private mansion. The Scottish baronial style is specially appropriate for this climate and for the material in most common use here. At Balmoral two separate blocks of buildings are connected by wings, at the east angle of which a massive tower, thirty-five feet square and eighty feet high, supports a turret a hundred feet above the level of the ground. The royal apartments occupy three sides of the quadrangle; the Queen’s private room facing the west, and looking up the valley of the Dee on the wild pass of Invercauld. The property originally contained about ten thousand acres, but a deer park of thirty thousand acres was added by purchase of hill ground from adjoining proprietors. The region around affords some of the best deer stalking, grouse shooting, and lake and river fishing in the kingdom.

In the old Castle began the idyllic life which has been so often described. No state business was ever neglected. The Queen, from the first moment of her reign, was far too conscientious for that; and the Prince Consort was the very prince of workers. But business accomplished, the daily life of the royal family was simplicity itself. The Queen’s love for the Highlands, and the Highlanders’ love for the Queen, grew steadily. In Edinburgh they fancied that Her Majesty brought sunshine; all through Scotland fine weather is called Queen’s weather to this day. In the Highlands they discovered she had a “lucky foot,” and gave to that the credit of the magnificent stags—the “royals”—that were sure to fall whenever she graced deer-stalking with her presence. The Prince took lessons in Gaelic. The Queen herself records with all the enthusiasm of a discoverer that Hamish is the Gaelic for James, and that “Nis! nis! nis!” (the “Hip! hip! hip!” of a Celtic cheer) is pronounced “Neesh! neesh! neesh!” There are Highland games, in which certain chivalrous wearers of the tartan, burning to distinguish themselves in the eyes of their liege lady, overtaxed their strength and burst blood vessels, so that they are never again quite the same men they were. There are torch-light balls, and building of cairns and bon-fires; and there are long days of wandering among the hills. There are visits to the cottages on the estate, and friendships formed with the humble cottagers, whereby hang many tales. I am sure no one has forgotten the hotch-potch incident. Hotch-potch, one of the most popular of national dishes, is, as everybody knows, a soup which is almost solid with vegetables. Happening to enter a cottage where an aged dame was cooking the delicacy, Her Majesty, probably recalling her royal grandfather’s interest in the apple dumplings immortalized by Peter Pinder, inquired with much interest how it was made. “Please Your Majesty,” said the delighted old body, “I pit barley intilt (into it), and carrots intilt, and neeps intilt, and inguns intilt—”

“What is *intilt*?” interrupted the Queen.

“Please Your Majesty,” repeated the old woman, “there’s *barley* intilt, and *carrots* intilt, and *inguns* intilt—”

“But what is *intilt*?” asked the Queen again.

“Waes me,” said Goody *sotto voce*, “the Queen’s deef!” And then she roared, “There’s *BARLEY* intilt, and *CARROTS* intilt, and *NEEPS* intilt, and *INGUNS* intilt, and *KAIL* intilt, and *PEAS* intilt.” And then, before the astonished sovereign quite