

Notches on The Stick

Still fancy and affection linger among these haunted homes of loveliness. We are loth to turn away from that shore to which our thought is ever returning.

"To Lother's fair and fertile strand,
And Pentland's mountain blue."

Not vainly, or without reason, did their poet praise them, and learn us to love them, till Tweed and Terrot and Yarrow and Ettrick; yes, and "Eke's fair woods" and silver stream are all replete with his magic.

"Through woods more fair no stream more sweet
Rolls to the eastern main."

Sweet are the paths, O, passing sweet!
By Eke's fair streams that run,
O'er airy steep, by copewood deep,
Impervious to the sun.

There the poet's step may rove,
And yield the muse the day;
There hushed by twilight love
May shun the tell-tale ray.

From that fair dome, where suit is paid
By blast of bugle free,
To Auchendinny's hazel glade
And haunted Woodhouselee.

Who knows not Melville's beechy grove,
And Roslyn's rocky glen,
Dalketh, which all the virtues love,
And classic Hawthornden."

Howitt, at the time of his visit, ranged through all the Abbotsford plantations, from the mansion "to the foot of the Eildon hill, down by the Rhymer's glen and Huntly burn." He was more amazed at the extent of the manor—the "large stretch of poor land Sir Walter had got together," rather than the use made of it. He declared it "not particularly romantic, but accounts for all defects by the supposition that Sir Walter saw the scene as a poet sees, and though "the eyes of poetic tradition;" that he "saw things which had been done there and sung of; and all was beautiful to him." Doubtless, as he predicted they would, these slopes have become more beautiful, with the increased growth of deciduous trees. At that time, he says, "down at the house the trees have so grown and closed up the prospects, that you can scarcely get a glimpse of the river, but when you ascend the woods and come to an opening on the hills, you see up and down the valley far and wide. Near a mound on the plantations, on which an old carved stone is reared, and held upright by iron stays, probably making the scene of some border skirmish, there are seats of turf, from which you have fine views. You see below Abbotsford, where the Gala-water comes sweeping into the Tweed, and where Galashiels lies smoking beyond, all compact, like a busy town as it is. And in another direction, the towers and town of Melrose are discovered at the foot of the bare but airy Eildon Hills; and still farther, the back summit of the Cowden-koones."

Let us pursue the course of our guide a little farther for he will lead us to a haunt we cannot afford to miss. Going beyond this sightly summit, "after issuing out of the first mass of plantations, and ascending a narrow lane, I came to a farm house. I asked a boy in the yard what the farm was called; and a thrill went through me when he answered Kae-side. It was the farm of William Laidlaw, the steward and friend of Sir Walter. We have seen how, in his earlier joyous days, Sir Walter fell in with Laidlaw, Hogg and Leyden. The expeditions into Ettrick and Yarrow, in quest of old border ballads, brought Scott in contact with the two former. He found not only poetry, but actual living poets, amongst the shepherds and sheep farmers of the hills. I know of nothing more beautiful than the relation of these circumstances in Lockhart's Life of Scott. In Chamber's Edinburgh Journal of July and August, 1845, there is also a very interesting account of Laidlaw, and especially of the coming of Scott and Leyden to Blackhouse farm, in Yarrow, and Laidlaw's farm, and of their strolling over all the classic ground of the neighborhood; to St. Mary's Loch, to the thorn, at Whitehope, Dryhope tower, the former abode of the Flower of Yarrow, Yarrow church, and the Seven Stones, which mark the graves of the Seven Brothers, slain in the Douglas Tragedy. How Laidlaw produced the famous ballad of 'Auld Maitland,' and how Leyden walked about in the highest excitement while Scott read it aloud. Then follows the equally interesting account of the visit of Scott and Laidlaw to Hogg, in Ettrick. These were golden days. Laidlaw and Hogg were relatives and old friends. Hogg had been shepherd at Blackhouse, with Laidlaw's father. The young men had grown poets from the inspiration of the scenes they lived amongst, and their mutual conversation. Then comes the great Minstrel of the time, seeking up the scattered and unedited treasures of

antiquity, and finds these rustic poets of the hills, and they become friends for life. It is a romance. Laidlaw was of an old and famous but decayed family. The line had been cursed by a maternal ancestress, and they believed that the curse took effect; they all became lawless men. But Laidlaw went to live at Abbotsford, as the factor or steward of Scott; and in him Scott found one of the most faithful, intelligent, and sympathizing friends, ready either to plant his trees or to write down his novels at his dictation, when his evil days came upon him. In our day-dreams we imagine such things as these. We lay out estates, and settle on them our friends and faithful adherents, and make about us a paradise of affection, truth and intellect; but it was the fortune of Scott only to do this actually. Here, at his little farm of Kae-side, lived Laidlaw, and after Scott's death went to superintend estates in Rosshire; and his health at length giving way, he retired to the farm of his brother, a sheep-farmer of Contin; and there, in as beautiful scenery as Scotland, or almost any country, has to show, the true poet of nature, this true-hearted man, breathed his last on the 18th of May, 1845.

"Those who wonder through the woods of Abbotsford, and find their senses regaled by the rich odor of sweet-briar and wood-brines, with shrubs often found in gardens, as I did with some degree of surprise will read with interest the following direction of Scott to Laidlaw, in which he explains the mystery:—"George must stick in a few wild roses, honeysuckles, and sweet-briars in suitable places, so as to produce the luxuriance we see in the woods which nature plants herself. We injure the effects of our plantings, so far as beauty is concerned, very much by neglecting under wood." In the woods of Abbotsford the memory of Laidlaw will be often recalled by the sight of these fragrant plants.

"Descending into a valley beyond Kae-side, I came to the forester's lodge, on the edge of a little solitary loch. Was this cottage formerly the abode of another worthy,—Tom Purdie, whom Scott has, on his grave-stone in Melrose abbey-yard, styled "Wood forester of Abbotsford?"—a double epithet which may be accounted for by foresters being now-a-days keepers of forests where there is no wood, as in Ettrick. Whether this was Tom Purdie's abode or not, however, I found it inhabited by a very obliging and intelligent fellow, as porter there. The little loch here I understand him to be called Abbotsford loch, on contradiction to Cauldsields loch, which is still further up the hills. This Cauldsields loch was a favorite resort of Scott at first. It had its traditions, and he had a boat upon it; but finding that it did not belong to his estate, as he supposed, by one of his purchases, he would never go upon it again, though requested to use it at his pleasure by the proprietor. By the direction of the forester, I now steered my way onward from wood to wood, towards the Eildon hills, in quest of the glen as the Rhymer. The evening was now drawing on, and there was a deep solitude and solemnity over the dark pine woods through which I passed. The trees which Scott had planted were now in active process of being thinned out, and piles of them lay here and there by the car tracks through the woods, and heaps of the peeled bark of the larch for sale. I thought with what pleasure would Scott have now surveyed these operations, and the beginning of the marketable profit of the woods of his own planting. But that day was past. I went on over fields embosomed in the black forest where the grazing herds grazed wildly at me, as if a stranger were not often seen there; crossed the deep glen where the little stream roared on, lost in the thick growth of now lofty trees; and then passed onward down the Rhymer's glen to Huntly burn: every step bearing fresh evidence of the banished romance of Abbotsford. How long was it since Miss Edgeworth sat by the little waterfall in the Rhymer's glen, and gave her name to the stone on which she was seated? The house at Huntly burn, which Scott had purchased to locate his old friend Sir Adam Ferguson near him, was now the house of the wood-factor; and piles of timber and sawn boards on all sides marked its present use. Lockhart was gone from the lovely cottage just by at Chieftwood. And Scott himself, after his glory and his troubles, slept soundly at Dryburgh. The darkness that had now closed thickly on my way, seemed to my excited imagination to have fallen on the world. What a day of broad hearts and broad intellects was that which had just passed! How the spirit of power, and of creature beauty, had been poured abroad amongst men, and especially in our own country, as with a measureless opening of the Divine hand; and how rapidly and extensively had then the favored ministers of this intellectual diffusion been withdrawn from the earth! Scott, gone and almost all his family who had rejoiced with him—Abbotsford was

an empty abode—the very woods had yielded up their faithful spirits—Laidlaw and Purdie were in the earth—Hogg, the shepherd poet, had disappeared from the hills. And of the great lights of England how many were put out!

"Every mortal power of Coleridge
Was frozen at its marvellous source.
The rapt one of the god-like forehead,
The leaves-eyed creature sleeps in earth;
And Lamb, the frolic and the gentle,
Has vanished from his lonely hearth.
Like clouds that robe the mountain summits,
Or waves that own no curbing hand,
How fast has Brother followed Brother,
From sunshine to the sunless land!"

Crabb, Southey, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Campbell, Hemans, Landon, Hood,—many of them bidding farewell to earth amid clouds and melancholy, intense as was the contrasting brightness of their noonday fame. "Sic transit gloria mundi." The thought passed through me—but a second followed it, saying, "not so—they only by whom the glory is created travel onward in the track of their eternal destiny."

Here we bid adieu to these scenes of beauty and delight—adieu to our most interesting subject. Not that in memory we shall fail to recur to them, many, many times, but we shall chat no more with our readers, about him, who, in our youth, we learned to love, and whom in our age, we cannot forget. He is like an evergreen bough, on which sunbeams may fall, or snow may rest, but which is ever brightly green and odorous with balsam. While the spirit of "classic beauty and the presiding genius of romance linger anywhere on the earth, their choicest influence will be felt along the Tweed, and along the twilight bras of Yarrow; and the children of the muses, wherever scattered, in the West, or the East, will oft be musing on the glories of the past in Scotland."

Of the Ettrick Bard, and Sir Walter Scott,
And Thomas of Erceldoune;—
Of the band of nameless singers,
Like the sun in the west sunk down,
The magic spell of whose glamour
Still hallows tower and town.

"And their hearts will be moved by Yarrow,
As the night-wind moves the sea,—
By the touch of a far-off, strange unrest'
From the ages of gramerye."

PASTOR FELIX.

FOOD IN THE ARCTIC.

Birds Have no Difficulty in Finding it in the Snow.

The number of birds that go to the arctic regions to breed is 'vast beyond conception.' The go no not by thousands but by millions, to rear their young on the tundra. The cause which attracts them is because nowhere in the world does nature provide at the same time and in the same place 'such a lavish prodigality of food.' That the barren swamp of the tundra should yield a food supply so great as to tempt birds to make journeys of thousands of miles to rear their young in a land of plenty, only to be found beyond the arctic circle, seems incredible. The vegetation consists of cranberry, cloudberry and crowberry bushes. Forced by the perpetual sunshine of the arctic summer these bear enormous crops of fruit. But the crop is not ripe until the middle and end of the arctic summer, and if the fruit-eating birds had to wait until it was ripe they would starve, for they arrive on the very day of the melting of the snow. But each year the snow descends on its immense crop of ripe fruit before the birds have time to gather it. It is then preserved beneath the snow, perfectly fresh and pure, and the melting of the snow discloses the bushes with the uncommenced last year's crop hanging on them, or lying, ready to be eaten, on the ground. The frozen meal stretches across the breadth of Asia. It never decays and is accessible the moment the snow melts. Ages have taught the birds that they have only to fly to the arctic circle to find such a store of 'crystallized foods' as will last them till the bushes are once more forced into bearing by the perpetual sunlight. The same heat which frees the fruit brings into being the most prolific insect life in the world. No European can live there without a veil after the snow melts; the gun barrels are black with them, and the cloud often obscures the sight. Thus the insect-eating birds have only to open their mouths to fill them with mosquitoes, and the presence of swarms of tender warblers, of cliff chaffs, pipits and wagtails in this arctic region is accounted for.—New York Evangelist.

Lighting a Cigar With Ice.

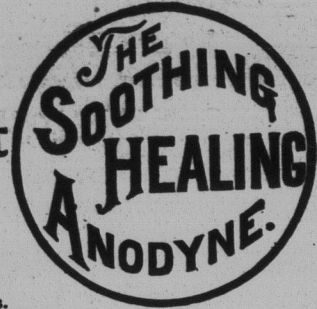
The Albany Journal tells how a patent lawyer, who is naturally an ingenious man supplied the place of a match in an unusual and unexpected manner.

He was consulting with a brother lawyer and in the course of the talk the second man took a cigar from his pocket. Then he looked for a match, but none was forthcoming.

"Never mind," said the first man. "A piece of ice will do equally as well."

Lawyer Number Two laughed, but Number One lifted the cover from the water-cooler, took out a piece of clear ice about an inch thick, whittled it into the shape of a disk, and with the palms of his hands melted its two sides convex, thus giving the form of a double convex lens or burning glass. With it he focused the sun's rays on the end of the cigar, and set it on fire.

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