

Oban, the beautiful capital of the Western Highlands. Here at least, the office of the "Bell-man" is not yet extinct. He takes the place of the evening paper, retailing at the top of his voice, from door to door, a variety of information: *inter alia*, he advertizes the "Pioneer" to sail for Staffa and Iona the next morning at eight o'clock—"wind and weather permitting."

Wednesday, July 25, 1877. It was blowing a gale of wind! The sea and the sky both looked dark and angry. The skipper was heard to mutter between his teeth as he turned his weather-beaten face to windward, "we're going to have a dirty day." So, in the nautical sense, indeed, it proved; yet, it seemed almost appropriate to the weird grandeur of the Sound of Mull.

"Where thwarting tides with mingled roar
Part thy swarth hills from Morven's shore."

Alternate cloud and sunshine, and pelting rain, attended our progress through the Sound. On either side the everlasting hills looked bleak and barren. On almost every projecting promontory was perched the ruins of a feudal fastness. What memories they awakened! How, in and around these fortresses, lived and fought the Macleans of of Duart, Carsaig, and Lochbuy, and other haughty lords of the Manor—lawless and unaccountable to mortal man. How travellers, presenting themselves before the gates of such "keeps" as these, would be closely interrogated before the port-cullis was raised, and how, when admitted, they might be seated as a guest at the table of the petty monarch, or thrust into the "dunjon" as a spy, just as it suited his caprice!

It was a relief even for a few minutes to get into the quiet haven of Tobermory, near the head of the Sound. It is a beautiful little land-locked bay, from which one gets a glimpse of Drumtuin, the princely estate and castle purchased by the late Mr. Bryce Allan of Liverpool, a short time before his death; and, on the opposite shore, of the manse of Morven, or, as it used to be called, "the house of Fuinary"—the home of the McLeods for a hundred years back, whose present occupant, the Rev. John McLeod,

"the high priest"—so called on account of his great stature—is one of the most revered ministers of the Church of Scotland.

Now we are out on the Atlantic ocean, toiling through a heavy sea. Some of us become prodigiously sea-sick, others complacently affect to admire the grandeur of the waves breaking on the bare mounds of granite that bound the coast.

STAFFA, at length looms in sight, and about mid-day we drop anchor under its lee. It is a small island, not more than a mile in diameter, and rising out of the sea to a maximum height of about 300 feet. The object of our intense curiosity is at the further side, but, owing to the tempestuous state of the weather, we land here, scramble up the rugged strand, and proceed on foot across the island, through rank wet grass—for it has rained here every day for the last month; and it rains now. Our party numbers about forty—including Principal MacVicar and his wife, the venerable Dr. Schaff, of New York—the learned author of the "History of the Creeds of Christendom," and altogether a most lovable man—and other "Pans" whose names I cannot now recall. We descend a long stair-case and pick our way for 600 yards along a basaltic causeway, amid the roar of waters, till we come to the grand entrance of Fingal's Cave. I have no words to express the awful feelings with which we penetrated its innermost recesses—two hundred and thirty feet. As we groped our way along a narrow ledge, now looking up to its vaulted roof, seventy feet above us, and again, down into the narrow gorge beneath, where the Atlantic billows chase each other, till, finally dashing themselves in wildest confusion against the rock, and with a noise like thunder, they fall back in clouds of spray, as white as snow, we felt that we could better appreciate now the power and pathos of the familiar lines,—

Where, as to shame the temple decked,
By skill of earthly architect,
Nature herself, it seems, would raise
A Minster to her Maker's praise.

Yet, Staffa, more I felt His presence in thy cave
Than when Jonas' cross rose o'er the western wave.