

reached his grand climacteric, and a stalwart son of the mountains, Alister Macdonald by name, right cunning, as Dominic Samson would have said, in the pastimes appertaining unto the fields.

One fine morning early, we had left the little inn of *Skyle Skow*, and after several hours' hard walking over the moors, during which Pantagruel's burden was increased by the desirable appendage of several brace of grouse, we reached the brow of the last hill which separated us from the magnificent valley of Assynt. It was early in the day, nor had the long train of clouds yet ascended from the mountain tops. But the scene below—the winding glen, which terminated the large expanse of waters—the low pasture lands, spotted with herds of cattle—and the surface of the lake itself, waveless and smooth as crystal, except where shattered by the leap of the trout or the plunge of the cormorant and diver, combined to form such a picture of calm and placid beauty, that methought there but wanted the chime of the village bells to make a Sabbath of the day.

Near the termination of the lake, a peninsula projected a considerable distance into the water, and on it there stood the ruin of a castle, or some other ancient building, of considerable size, which once might have been the residence of some powerful chieftain. This was an irresistible temptation to one who in his youth had been inoculated with the antiquarian virus; so, leaving Pantagruel and my dogs to the care of Alister, I descended toward the lake in search of some one qualified to do the honors of the place. Nor was I long in attaining my wish, for close beside the old ruin I found an elderly man, whom I judged by his semi-clerical appearance to be the schoolmaster of the parish, stretched at length on the sward, with his fishing-rod lying idly beside him, and surveying the glassy surface of the lake, whereon there stirred not a breath of wind, with an air of sullen resignation. Him, therefore, I accosted, and I soon found to my great joy that I had lighted on the best possible guide and interpreter.

With one memorable exception in his youth, he, like the old man of Verona,

whom Claudian so beautifully describes, had never wandered beyond the limits of his native country, and, therefore, was his memory stored with many a tale and legend, handed down for centuries from father to son, but which now, from the gradual change of the population, were falling fast into oblivion, and remembered only by a few old men like himself, who knew nothing of the world beyond their solitary glens, and whose records of history were the gray cairn on the mountain top, or the broken wall of the castle, fast sinking into oblivion.

So much was I delighted with the beauty of the place, that a far less temptation than that of hearing the old man pour forth his antiquated lore would have induced me to linger out the day without proceeding further. I, therefore, by signal dismissed Alister from his watch, and along with my companion wandered by the shore of the lake, and held much converse on the scenery that lay around us. Many a marvellous tale did he tell of the raids and forays of the old Sutherlands and Mackays, but one in particular struck me as so remarkable, connected as it was with the history of Scotland, that I shortly afterward committed it to paper, and, although, doubtless, much of its interest arose from the presence of the scene where it was acted, still it may possess some attraction to the reader, as a true story of one of the most gallant leaders whom Scotland ever produced.

Two centuries ago, said my informant, that castle and the country for many a mile round it belonged to a powerful family, the Macleods of Assynt. It was not then a ruin, although you can scarcely now trace its former extent, except by the green mounds, so much of it has fallen to the ground and been covered over by the accumulated growth of years. But the central tower or keep still remains comparatively entire, though it looks not now so proudly as it did of yore, before the Macleod became a traitor to his country and king.

These were the times of the great revolution, and of the civil wars which followed; the royalist party, although almost annihilated, as I have heard, in