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From the Metropolitan.

WILLIAM LAIDLAW AND JAMES HOGG. A RAMBLE IN THE HIGHLANDS.

At the close of the grouse shooting, in the latter end of October, I found myself, with several companions, in the inn at Inverness, prepared for my departure south. We ascertained however, that the steam-boat for Glasgow did not sail for two days, and we accordingly set about exploring the curiosities of the town and surrounding country. A noble country it is; "beautiful exceedingly," which, as McCulloch says truly, may well challenge comparison with even the far-famed environs of Edinburgh. At the close of the day, when taking my ease at my inn, I heard that Mr. William Laidlaw, the old friend, steward, and *factotum* of Sir Walter Scott, resided in the neighbourhood of Inverness. I had met the worthy man previously in Edinburgh, and my recollections of the past being awakened anew by the perusal of Lockhart's life, I resolved on hiring a Highland garron, or pony, and visiting his retreat among the mountains. After the death of Sir Walter Scott, Mr. Laidlaw removed to the county of Ross, in the capacity of factor, or land-steward, to Mr. Stewart Mackenzie, of Seaforth, now governor of Ceylon. The situation was not a pleasant one, and the country-people soon prophesied, without much "second-sight," that William Laidlaw was far too good and simple-hearted a man to discharge the irksome duties, and submit to the caprice and restraint, entailed upon him by this new engagement. The tie was soon snapped and broken, and Mr. Laidlaw, regretted and respected, went with his family to the wilds of Strathglass, in Inverness-shire, to reside with his brother, an extensive sheep-farmer.

To Strathglass I now bent my way, winding along the shores of the Beaully Frith with the first glimpse of morning, through a fine fertile district, named the Aird. The day and season reminded me of Laidlaw's song—"Lucy's Flitin."

William Howitt remarks that "the glory of the month of October is the gorgeous splendour of wood-scenery." In this remote region, among Highland mountains, the picturesque beauties of autumn are on a limited scale; yet there are calm bright sunsets gilding the sober vales and blue waters, and the peaked hills, whose strong outlines are defined with such precision on the horizon. The birches were almost wholly of an orange colour, and, intermixed with the dark green pines, had a gay and beautiful appearance. The glowing berries of the mountain ash, hanging over some precipice or ravine, also contributed to ornament the landscape. The oak surpasses all its competitors of the wood in variety and harmony of colour in autumn, and its leaves are the latest in disappearing. But full-grown oaks are rare in this quarter, except in a few favoured spots. I saw none as in the long drawn vales of England, broad, massive, and majestic—none

"Whose high tops, bald with dry antiquity,"

carry back the imagination to the Tudors and Plantagenets, and the merry huntings in the greenwood, rife with chivalry and romance.

A series of waterfalls or rapids lie in the way from Inverness to Strathglass. These are denominated the "Falls of Kilmorack," and are situated about a mile and a half to the west of Beaully. The first view of them excites no great expectation. We see a considerable breadth of water, broken into numerous cascades of from five to ten feet in height with steep banks, clothed with birch-trees and plants. The clergyman of the parish has built a little summer-house at the edge of the lofty bank, and from this point the water, pent between precipitous rocks, and rolling darkly over a ledge of sandstone in its falls below, has a striking appearance. The rocks are rich with foliage, and it is this wild exuberance, joined to their towering height, that lends its chief glory to Kilmorack. The pool below the fall is filled with fish, and the curious or the idle may here witness frequent and arduous attempts made by the salmon to ascend the river. They sometimes light upon the rock and are captured, and are also hooked or speared by men stationed at the different points. The Laird of Lovat used to gratify his visitors with "a self-cooked salmon" at the Falls of Kilmorack. A kettle was placed upon the flat rock beside the fall, and kept full of boiling water. Into this the fish sometimes fell, as they leaped up the cascade, and being boiled in their presence, were presented to the company. This was a delicacy in the gastronomical art unknown to Monsieur Ude! Old Lovat of "the forty-five," was a strange barbarian—a sort of realization of Voltaire's satire on the French character, half-tiger and half-monkey; yet I could not help think-

ing at the moment, that it must have been a luxury to sit on the rock, under a canopy of beech-trees, by the side of this Highland Ali Pasha, and partake of his strangely cooked salmon.

To the Falls of Kilmorack succeeds a fine reach of mountain-scenery, called "The Dream," extending about three miles up the glen. The hills are here steeper, but wooded to the top; masses of rock, shaped in fantastic forms, project into the middle of the stream, which exhibits a succession of falls, pools, and caverns, worn in the dark sides of the rock. The valley is narrow but luxuriant—as nearly all the passes into the mountains are—and opens up occasionally, by the windings of the river, into soft green spots, sheltered by lofty banks, and the light branches of the birch-tree—spots which reminded me of Campbell's delicious description of Wyoming, or some of the sequestered woodland scenes in the "Faery Queene."

After a ride of twenty-six miles, I arrived at Comar, in Strathglass. Mr. Laidlaw was working in the garden, amusing himself by taking into cultivation a "bit by-corner of land." We shook hands cordially, and I found myself at home. Ten years had not passed away without leaving their traces on the countenance of my friend. He looked thinner, but quiet and cheerful—his step alert and springy—and I noticed that he now wore a fine brooch—a precious memorial, for it was on the person of Sir Walter Scott when he died, and contained some of his hair, and that of his family.

It is not my intention to *Boswellise* Mr. Laidlaw, or extract from his varied and picturesque style of shapely narrative, materials for praise or blame of living individuals. We discoursed much of his departed and illustrious friend. Deep is the reverence entertained by William Laidlaw for the memory of Walter Scott—his guide, philosopher, and friend, with whom he spent nearly twenty years of happiness and honour. "The course of Sir Walter's life," he said, "often seemed to him like a bright and glorious dream, terminating suddenly in darkness and desolation." He expressed a strong admiration and affection for Mr. Lockhart; but considered that by dwelling so much, in his *Life of Scott*, on the transactions of the latter with booksellers and publishers, and schemes of money and ambition, he had failed to bring out sufficiently the bland benevolence and generosity which formed the staple of Sir Walter's character. "A more benevolent heart," he said, "never beat in a human breast. His philanthropy extended to all the animal creation. You know," said he, "Hogg's beautiful song,

"Tween the gloaming and the mirk,
When the kye come hame!"

Sir Walter loved to see 'the kye (cows) come hame,' which he always spoke of as affording him an indescribable pleasure." It conveyed to his mind an image of rural peace and plenty—of perfect animal enjoyment. Campbell, in his description of a Swiss scene, uses a similar illustration:—

"A downward world of pastoral charms,
Where by the very smell of dairy-farms,
And fragrance from the mountain herbage blown,
Blindfold his native hills he could have known!"

Sir Walter Scott's habits of composition are well known. His stores of antique learning, his genius, and imagination, his knowledge of life and manners, seemed all to be ready marshalled, waiting their master's nod—ready to burst forth like the prophet's rod, into bud and blossom. He wrote without effort. He was the unconscious "sovereign of the willing soul." Mr. Laidlaw never saw him so much elated as during the composition of a little *paucity* Scotch song, "Donald Caird's come again." He strode along the hill-side, flourishing his trusty oak-staff in gleeful humour; and on his return he recited to him, with comic emphasis, the little lively lyric,

"Donald Caird's come again."

As we talked of the Tweed, and the Yarrow, and Ettrick banks, the conversation naturally turned to the bright yet melancholy story of the Ettrick Shepherd. It was Mr. Laidlaw that first introduced the Shepherd to Sir Walter—a circumstance which formed an era in his life, and gave him a spring forwards, which scarcely any other event could have so readily accomplished. At the time of George the Fourth's visit to Edinburgh, Sir Robert Peel made kind inquiries after the Shepherd, and evinced an acquaintance with his works. He said jocularly that he would never forgive Hogg for selling his dog, as described in his "Shepherd's Calendar." Laidlaw mentioned that the shepherds are as much given to trafficking in their dogs as in their sheep.

In his early days, when about eighteen years of age, Hogg was

a fine-looking young man—rather above the middle size, of faultless symmetry of form, and of almost unequalled agility and swiftness. His face was then round and full, and of a fair ruddy complexion, with bright blue eyes, that beamed with gaiety and humour, the effect of the most exuberant animal spirits. His head was covered with a singular profusion of light brown hair, which he wore coiled up, like a girl's, under his hat. When entering the church on Sunday (which he attended regularly all his life) he used, on lifting his hat, to give a slight touch to his long hair, which rolled down his back and fell below his loins, while every female eye was bent upon him as with light step, he ascended the stairs to his seat in the gallery. The aged part of the congregation used to shake their heads in pity and wonderment at the "thoughtless light-headed youth." Had Hogg continued always thus, he might have rivalled Appolo or Byron in personal attractions; but, alas! it soon vanished. He was inoculated for the small pox, and from the effect of carrying home a sheep one day, in intense hot weather, his face, head, and neck, swelled to a prodigious size, and he had nearly lost his life. The illness, or disease, changed the very form of his features. The metamorphosis was complete.

Hogg was always full of enterprise—the poetical temperament never lulled him into dreamy indolence. His love of field sports, or rather, his love for the enjoyment of the open air, was in him an inextinguishable passion; and when he found that he was becoming unable to fish and hunt, and amuse himself out of doors, he declared his belief that he would not live long—and the presentiment was a true one.

Mr. Laidlaw, upon one occasion, took Sir David Wilkie with him to the Shepherd's cottage. He did not mention the name of the distinguished stranger, but it transpired in the course of conversation. No sooner did the Shepherd hear it, than he asked if the gentleman was Mr. Wilkie the painter? Being answered in the affirmative, he said, with some agitation, "Mr. Wilkie, I cannot tell you how proud I am to see you in my house, and how happy I am to find you so young a man!" A very happy compliment, full of kindness and courtesy. Sir Walter Scott often quoted Hogg's salutation to Wilkie, as an instance of native propriety of taste and delicacy of feeling.

The poet was not always so felicitous in his first interviews. Being one day promised a meeting with Thomas Moore, and having a high idea of Moore's gentility and intellectual refinement, he prepared himself with a dram or two, the consequence of which was, that he was rude and boisterous, and Moore took his leave of him with a false and unfavourable impression. I may remark, that latterly Hogg's holiday dress was a suit of black, and when first seen by strangers he was generally taken for a clergyman. He used also to wear a ring, and to sport a curious snuff-box, presented to him by Allan Cunningham.

In the pastoral districts of Scotland, families of shepherds continue in the same service, generation after generation, as the *statemen*, or small proprietors, of Westmoreland and Cumberland inhabit their native dales, son succeeding father in the same humble home, each,

With its little patch of sky,
And little lot of stars.

Hogg was descended by the maternal side from an old family, of shepherds, noted for centuries in Ettrick for their fidelity, skill, and devoted attachment to their masters. His father was also a shepherd, but afterwards became a drover, and failed. His mother was a great collector and reciter of ancient legends and ballads, and was admirably calculated to shine in that school of old-world stories and fervid imagination which her son has described in an address to the late Duchess of Buccleuch, with so much picturesqueness and pathos.

"O list the mystic lore of time
Of fairy tales of ancient time,
I learned them in the lonely glen,
The last shades of flying men:
Where never stranger came our way,
By summer night or winter day;
Where neighbouring hind or cot was none,—
Our converse was with heaven alone,—
With voices through the cloud that hung,
And brooding storms that round us hung.
O, lady, judge, if judge you may,
How stern and ample was the sway
Of themes like these when darkness fell,
And gray-hair'd sires the tales would tell!
When doors were barr'd, and elder dame
Pled at her task beside the flame,
That though the smoke and gloom above
Op'd dim and number'd faces above."