

FIRE AND SWORD:

A STORY OF THE MASSACRE OF GLENCOE.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE "OATH" RECEIVED—RETURN TO GLENCOE.

The clear light of day was streaming through the strong bole-window of the shepherd's cot at Cladich when M'Ian awoke from his feverish and restless slumbers.

In anxious and troubled dreams he had anticipated the purpose of his mission by securing an audience of Sir Colin Campbell, the Sheriff of Argyllshire, and had in fancy tendered and had his oath of submission accepted. Waking up from his slumber his heart again sank within him on finding that he was still ten or twelve miles distant from Inverary, and that the success of his mission had been but an illusive dream, and the common superstition of the rule of opposites usually attaching itself to dreams still further raddened his mind, and sank the fire of hope which still smouldered in his distressed heart.

The Cladich shepherd's cot consisted simply of the ordinary "but an' ben" of the respectable Scotch peasant, and M'Ian, hearing voices in the kitchen, guessed the family to be stirring, and made an effort to get up and join them. In this, however, he was unsuccessful, the exposure and protracted hill journey of the previous night having completely benumbed and stiffened his aged limbs.

Turning his head where he lay, he noticed that Malcolm and his son John were still asleep, so he spoke to them and roused them from slumber. Malcolm was the first to spring from his humble pallet, and was speedily followed by John, neither of whom was in any way affected by the exertions of the road, both being young men of splendid and unwasted muscular force and nerve.

"God help me," sighed the aged Chief, when Malcolm stood by him; "I am unfeared for the rest of the journey, I fear, short as it is. My limbs are stiff as posts. Give me something warm to drink."

Thus instructed, Malcolm promptly secured the assistance of the shepherd's young wife, whose family consisted of one promising cradle child; and by virtue of her kindly ministrations, and his own indomitable power of will, M'Ian was soon able to sit up in a chair and partake of a hearty and refreshing breakfast.

"Lads, lads," he suddenly exclaimed, recollecting the urgency of his life or death mission, "we cannot waste any more time nursing our tired limbs before this woman's kindly hearth; we must be up and ganging while the snow holds off and the roads remain clear; to your staffs, lads—to your staffs! Fasten my plaid about my shoulders, John, and we'll once more face the road."

"You feel once more strong for the road?" said Malcolm. "The distance is short, lads," replied M'Ian; "and spent though I be I shall manage to cover it."

Thus prepared, the old Chief bent kindly down and putting a gold coin into the chubby hand of the occupant of the wicker-cradle, took thereafter a friendly leave of his host and his "braw young guid-wife," and set out once more on the road.

The walk from Cladich to Inverary was a comparatively level and east one. The morning air was refreshing, if cold, and strengthened by the short rest they had had, with the end of their weary journey at hand, they held firmly on. Malcolm speaking cheering words by the way, and M'Ian with heroic unselfishness, making light of his exhausted and aching limbs.

For several miles they kept the open road, and sweeping along the side of the romantic Glenora, they passed within view of Dundarraw—a castellated stronghold of the Argyll Campbells—and finally entered, with high hopes, the snug little township of Inverary.

civic sense it was locally an important township. It was a royal burgh, and was the seat of the Courts for country towns, its Magistrates possessing both civil and criminal jurisdiction by virtue of the hereditary authority of Sheriff of Justiciary being vested in the Argyll family.

Curious eyes were turned on the Glencoe men, who were at once known to be strangers, as they, passed through the town, and a great spluttering of tongues followed on the discovery that they were the tartan-check of the Glencoe Macdonalds.

The Sheriff chambers were in the immediate vicinity of the old Castle—a strong edifice, the ruins of which were yearly cleared away within the last fifty years.

Approaching the half-dozen of low, broad steps fronting the entrance door, M'Ian desired the others to remain behind a moment until he had learned whether the Sir Colin could be seen.

He had not been absent many minutes when he returned, with a staggering step and such an expression of countenance as foreboded ill tidings.

"Bad news, lads; bad news," he said, leaning on the arm of his son John for support. "The Sheriff returned to his seat at Ardinglass yesterday, not feeling well, but is expected in town to-morrow." Thus in a moment of time the extraordinary effects which the heroic old Chief had made to repair the fatal consequences of his omission in the matter of taking the "oath" within the prescribed time, had been set at naught, and his self-denying exertions rendered apparently futile. Barcalaine and his associate in duplicity, Captain Drummond, had played their heartless game well, and accident had made the card they handled a winning one.

Stepping down in the direction of the little stone quay, M'Ian, feeling weakly, rested for a moment on the base of the old Ionian Cross, which then stood in the centre of the old town of Inverary, as it now does in the new.

The show was now slowly but surely drifting down, and the waters of Lochfyne, stretching for miles seawards, looked inky black by contrast with the fast-whitening shores.

"This is truly an unfortunate business, lad," remarked M'Ian after a lengthened pause. "It's as my dream read it to me—then bright and successful, now a dark and foreboding failure. Alas for my poor people of the Glen!"

"There is nothing for it but to accept fate and hopefully await the issue of to-morrow," replied Malcolm.

"Hope!" ejaculated the aged Chief, starting to his feet and placing his hand over his heart. "Alas, it died here on the discovery of this last unlooked for disappointment."

"Arkinglass," said John, the Chief's son, "where is Ardinglass situated?"

"In the Lochgilhead district," answered M'Ian, "somewhere near the head of the Loch, on the eastern side. Let us return, lads, and find quarters in the inn."

Ardinglass, once a stronghold of great power, though now a scarcely noticeable ruin, was situated, as M'Ian had intimated, as the head of Lochfyne, on the eastern side. It originally comprised three massive and separate towers of considerable elevation and great strength, the spaces between which were defended by a strong investing wall fifteen feet high and of proportionate thickness. Around the Castle area and inside the walls were smaller buildings, used as lodgings for retainers, stables, and other like purposes.

Sir Colin Campbell, the Sheriff for all Argyllshire and proprietor of the Castle, did not usually reside there, but occupied with his family a mansion house a little further north, the ruins of which the local antiquary can still point out. The mansion house spoken of occupied a more commanding position than the Castle, but was insecure during times of fierce internecine strife, which were only too common in those days. The Baronet and his family finding a safe refuge within the Castle proper when danger threatened.

It was to this residence that the Sheriff had gone on the previous day, and as the alleged indisposition of Sir Colin forbade a violent intrusion on his privacy, the Glencoe party paced it prudent to await in hope the issue of the next day.

Quarters at the inn were accordingly obtained, and it being yet no more than an hour beyond sundown, the Glencoe men stayed up for dinner, before committing themselves to the much-needed rest and luxury of a bed, consequent on the extraordinary fatigue they had undergone.

Having duly refreshed themselves with a frugal dinner, they afterwards retired to rest, it being yet early in the afternoon, leaving the rest of to-morrow in the hands of Heaven.

his "oath" (from Colonel Hill at Fort-William down to the absent Sheriff of Inverary) was intentional and pre-arranged, the harrowing suspicion was natural and excusable under the circumstances. He had erred, in the first place, in delaying to "submit himself till the last day of grace;" but the error was a high-minded and chivalric one, with nothing mean or cowardly in it, and was in strict keeping with the sentiments and political traditions of the unfortunate but heroic sept over whom hereditary right had ordained him to rule.

M'Ian, however, despite his anxiety, slept soundly and well. The exhaustion of nature had come to his aid, and his slumbers were deep and dreamless.

As forecasted by M'Ian, the morning dawned in a white and prevailing mist of snow—snow everywhere; on hill-top and in hollow; in glen and in glade; on field, and street, and house-top, and lofty castle turret.

It had fallen during the night, and the sky was still full of it. Benbulbin, the highest hill of the district, was thickly fleeced from crown to base, and the lesser but more picturesque porphyritic elevations of Dunningoch and Duntrotal were similarly enshrouded. Not a solitary peak nor black, rugged hill escarpment but was smoothed and outlined into the softest and whitest of slopes and curves. The Loch alone showed black and sterile, save where its wind-lifted waters fell in a fringe of foam all round the sweep of the bay.

But the storm of snow brought with it a fresh disappointment to M'Ian.

In the course of the day word came to the Sheriff's chambers that on account of the impassable state of the roads Sir Colin would not venture out till the following day. And the following day came, but with it came not the Sheriff, and the third day came round, and Sir Colin came not yet. Then M'Ian's heart died utterly within him; and he cursed Fate, and wished to die. But the fourth day brought the delayed Sheriff to his official chambers and the Glencoe party had an audience of him.

Briefly M'Ian stated his mission, urging him to accept his "oath" at once, but Sir Colin declined at first to act, as the time for so doing was expired by six days, it being now the 6th of January.

M'Ian explained the cause of delay, producing in attestation of his words Colonel Hill's passport and interim certificates, and implored him with tears in his eyes to "swear" him, but the Sheriff still protested he had no authority to accept an "oath" rendered so late.

"My God, Sheriff!" exclaimed M'Ian, "are my poor people to suffer for my mistake? I cannot, will not believe it. The Government of the King is power; let them be also generous. I insist on your acceptance of my oath."

Hot arguments and excited words followed on both sides—M'Ian pleading the urgency and justice of his claim, which the Sheriff stoutly repudiated.

"For the sake of your people I will take you within the fold," at last acceded Sir Colin, and having said so he immediately proceeded to "swear" M'Ian and his attendants.

"I shall retain Colonel Hill's letter," said the Sheriff. "It assists my case." The request was promptly acceded to. "God in heaven be praised!" exclaimed the old Chief, overcome with grateful emotion. "Now lads, we may count ourselves out of the lion's den, and make the best of our way back to the Glen."

And the next day saw them begin their homeward journey. But the terrible tragedy of blood which was soon to follow showed how greatly M'Ian had misapprehended the generosity of his wily foe.

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The sunken eye, the pallid complexion, the disfiguring eruptions on the face, indicate that there is something wrong going on within. Expel the lurking foe to health. Ayer's Sarsaparilla was devised for that purpose, and does it.

Druggists throughout the Country all speak highly of Dr. Carson's Bitters. The general opinion expressed is that it gives the best satisfaction of any medicine they sell, and never hesitate to recommend it in all cases of Disordered Stomach, Bilelessness or Indigestion. Price 50 cents a Bottle.

Thoughts on Books.

Of making many books there is no end.—Bible.

A book's a book although there's nothing in it.—Byron.

A good book is the best of friends—the same to-day and forever.—Tupper.

We are as liable to be corrupted by books as by companions.—Fielding.

The book to read is not the one that thinks for you, but the one which makes you think.—Dr. McCosh.

Without grace no book can live, and with it the poorest may have its life prolonged.—H. Walpole.

Books that you may carry to the fire, and hold readily in your hand, are the most useful after all.—Johnson.

The quantity of books in a library is often a cloud of witnesses of the ignorance of their owner.—Oxenstiern.

A taste for books is the pleasure and glory of my life. I would not exchange it for the glory of the Indies.—Gibbon.

Of the things which we can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful and worthy are the things we call books.—Carlyle.

Every book is good to read which sets the reader in a working mood. The deep book, no matter how remote the subject, helps us best.—Emerson.

It is books that teach us to refine our pleasures when young, and which having so taught us, enable us to recall them with satisfaction when old.—Leigh Hunt.

The books which help you most are those which make you think most. The hardest way of learning is by easy reading, but a great book that comes from a great thinker—it is a ship of thought deep freighted with truth and with beauty.—T. Parker.

Mr. Sutherland Johnston, a Sarnia Druggist, has sold an enormous quantity of Dr. Carson's Stomach Bitters. He says they give splendid satisfaction. They act promptly in relieving all disorders of the Stomach, Liver or Kidneys and are the "Best Blood Purifier." For sale by all Druggists at 50 cents a bottle.

Arthur Sullivan, the well known music composer; George Grove, editor and writer, and George A. MacFarren, Mus. Doc., have been created knights.

Over Driven Horses. J. E. Mercer, Madoc, Ont., says: Last summer I over-drove a very fine horse which was perfectly sound when I bought him; the over-driving caused a bone spavin. Hearing of Dr. Dow's Sturgeon Oil Liniment from the proprietors of the stable, I purchased a bottle, the use of which made him perfectly sound. I have driven him ever since without any sign or return of the spavin. This is conclusive.

Every child's name and address should be written on its clothing. If this were done it would be a great convenience to the police, and would save its parents many an anxious hour. Nearly every day there are instances of policemen picking up stray children, who are not old enough to tell their names or where they live. There is no other course in such cases but to take the little ones to the police station and await the arrival of the parents. It is easy to see the advantage of having a child's name and address on its clothes. The police could tell at once where to take it, and the parents would not be consumed with fear lest it had fallen into the hands of some unscrupulous street trader. The little ones frequently stray away and are not missed for an hour or two, and then there is an excitement and everybody becomes alarmed. All this could be avoided by parents writing the names and addresses of their children on their clothes.

McGregor's Speedy Cure. From the many remarkable cures wrought by using McGregor's Speedy Cure for Dyspepsia, Indigestion, Constipation and Affection of the Liver, and from the immense sale of it without any advertising, we have concluded to place it extensively on the market, so that those who suffer may have a perfect cure. Go to Geo. Rlyns Drug Store and get a trial bottle free, or the regular size at fifty cents and one dollar.

A DESIRABLE BOOK.—The Passenger Department of the Detroit, Lansing and Northern Railroad, of Michigan, has published for gratuitous distribution among the patrons of the line, a pamphlet of eighty-eight pages, containing a large amount of information valuable to the tourist and business man. The work contains descriptions of the more notable pleasure resorts of Michigan, all of which are to be reached by means of this line of railroad and its connections, and is replete with illustrations. In addition it gives the game laws of Michigan, and indicates the places where game is known to abound. The pamphlet may be had on application to Wm. A. Carpenter, General Passenger Agent, at Detroit, Mich.

No household should be considered complete without a bottle of Dr. Van Buren's Kidney Cure in the closet. It is the only remedy that will positively, permanently and promptly cure all forms of kidney diseases. Sold by J. Wilson.

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Advertisement for New Arrivals of Spring & Summer Goods, featuring Scotch, English, Irish & Canadian Tweeds by Hugh Dunlop.

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Advertisement for Chas. A. Nairn, featuring New Fruits, Groceries, Provisions, etc., and an inspection invited.

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