

Pure as the white-winged image,
Of Him whose stores are full,
Who scattereth frost like ashes,
And giveth snow like wool.

So seems the downy rustle,
So gleams the silver sand,
So shines the ermine mantle,
Spun by the snow's white hand;
Dream of the early innocence
That dwelt in Eden's bowers,
Type of the glorious raiment,
We hope may yet be ours.

HALIFAX, MARCH, 1863.

M. J. K.

Notes and Impressions of a Missionary Tour in Shetland.

I MAY take this opportunity of saying a word or two about the difficulty of travelling in Shetland, premising, however, that I was there in the best of weather, and was told on all sides that I could form no conception of some parts of Shetland in winter. Travelling by land is very much confined to riding on the well-known ponies of the country. In Lerwick are a few private carriages, and the roads in the neighbourhood are excellent; but carriages are, I believe, unknown out of the capital, and in many of the islands there are no roads whatever. However, the turf is so dry and springy that for a ride on a summer day, a metalled road would be anything but an improvement. In former days it used to be said that ponies in Shetland were half-wild; and I think it is Sir Walter Scott who speaks of the custom of travellers to catch first of a herd he could find on the hill-side, ride with it as far as he wished, and then leave it to discover its way back by the fine instincts of nature. If this were ever true in Shetland, it certainly is not so now; in fact, the ponies are in many of the islands the source of their chief wealth, and bring, even in Lerwick, considerable prices. A large number of them are needed to carry home peats from the hill, which is in some places almost a summer's work; and very picturesque, at a distance, is the long line of ponies, with their *muyshas* and *cayshas* carrying loads of peats; finding their way in single file down the steep side of a hill, one boy leading the first of the line, and reminding us of the pictures of the Spanish mules, with their burden crossing the Pyrenees. These little ponies are wonderfully swift and hardy. Two of our friends rode one afternoon from Lerwick to Hillswick, some forty miles, one of them leaving after three o'clock and reaching his destination after eleven that evening. Fancy beginning a ride of forty miles at three o'clock! The only difficulty in travelling with these animals is how to manage with luggage. I have a letter from the missionary who has been recently sent to the parish of Walls, saying that he arrived safely, but had left his portmanteau in Lerwick, and

could hardly say when it would reach him. It is also not very easy to catch the ponies after they had been set loose. Naturally preferring the liberty of the green field to the companionship of a rider, they are very unwilling to be caught. We were selfish enough to enjoy a hearty laugh at the expense of a friend who went through the process of catching our ponies as well as his own, his plan being (and I am told an excellent one, and perfectly safe) to steal up behind the unsuspecting pony in the field, suddenly to seize its bushy tail, and hold on very vigorously till the animal submits to be held in a pleasant quarter. It really must have been provoking to a friend, who (in a shower of rain too) was holding fast by a pony's tail to hear the two men whom he was obliging, shouting with laughter at this kindly but unheroic action.

Travelling by water, however, is still more characteristic of Shetland life, and here the difficulties are many and sometimes serious enough. Wind and tide are the great enemies of the Shetland boatman. When the tide runs strongly between some of the islands, nothing can stem it but steam. We were told that it often runs six or eight miles an hour; and in Yell Sound we saw ugly-looking breakers, which we were glad not to be near, resulting from a yesterday's breeze, driving down lazy waves against to-day's tide. The wind, however, is the great bugbear, or the great friend. In Shetland almost everything depends upon the wind. Engagements there are most uncertain, and are everywhere conditional on a favourable breeze. One day we ran a certain distance in three hours; a few days afterwards we took seven hours to do a part of it. Sometimes the storm is so great that no boat can venture out. Sometimes out at sea the vessels lie for hours, and, as we found, days together, "as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean." In former days, when travelling to Shetland was wholly by sailing vessels, as travelling through Shetland is still, this evil was of course much more felt. Many have heard Principal Lee's story of a Shetland brother sent to Edinburgh to a General Assembly, who stayed so long that the Presbytery requested him to continue over the next year rather than come home. We used to laugh at the story as a joke, but I can almost believe it now; for in former days the Shetlanders went to Edinburgh by way of *Hamburgh*, there being no direct communication; and sometimes they got home by the Greenland whale-ships, which often called at Lerwick if the weather were fair. This, however, was not always an expeditious alternative, as a former minister of Yell knew to his cost, who was carried on to Greenland and landed on the return voyage! In the Session Records of the parish of Tingwall there is an account of a minister leaving for the Assembly, going round by *Hamburgh*, who expected to be nine months from home,