

(SKETCHES OF
SCOTLAND)

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Edmundston and Douglas
1865.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following sketches are intended to represent a phase of life and feelings common fifty years ago, but now gone by. In order duly to understand and appreciate them, we must not only bear in mind the character of the old forest laws, their exceptional nature, maladministration, undue pressure on the people, and consequent unpopularity ; but also the ideas, habits of thought, and motives of action peculiar to a people in a transition state, who still clung to old associations and customs, in spite of the changes subversive of these taking place around them. In the numerous narratives still current in some parts of the Highlands, are to be found many interesting glimpses of the natural history of both deer and salmon. Mixed up with these are family and local traditions and curious superstitions, that could scarcely fail to be of value and interest to the historian and antiquary ; and any one devoting part

of his time to their preservation would deserve well of all who love such legendary lore.

From the earliest ages, the Chase has been a favourite occupation with man. In Britain, as elsewhere, it was at one time the principal source of his livelihood, when it was pursued with unrestrained freedom. This, however, was at a very early period of the history of the country. At the time of the Norman Conquest, large tracts had been long set aside by the Saxon kings of England for their own especial use, and they were guarded by strict laws, which awarded punishment to all who hunted in them. William the Conqueror, who was much addicted to hunting, not content with these, laid waste a wide tract of country for the erection of a new forest, in the neighbourhood of Winchester, where he principally resided. Thirty miles of Hampshire were depopulated, and nothing was allowed to interfere with or check the desolation thus created. Even churches and monasteries were destroyed, and the population had to shift for themselves as they best could, without receiving any recompense for the injury done them. More rigorous laws were also made for the punishing of deer-slayers, and the forests and forest-laws became instruments of grievous oppression to the people. In the time of King John these hardships had reached a point beyond

which it was difficult to go. He possessed sixty-eight forests, thirteen chases, and seven hundred and eighty-one parks, in different parts of England, and all subjects were prohibited from hunting in any of them under pains and penalties, in some instances more grievous than death. Being spread over the whole country, these forests and parks were a snare to the people, from which it was quite impossible, in the existing state of the kingdom, wholly to escape.

The kings of Scotland were equally addicted to the chase with the kings of England, and also had large tracts set aside in which to exercise the favourite pastime ; but whether the uncultivated and mountainous character of the country allowed a more unlimited scope for the production and pursuit of wild animals, or that its barren sterility made the chase indispensable for the maintenance of the people, who were thinly scattered in the glens and valleys, it is clear that the laws passed for protecting the royal forests of Scotland were not originally so rigorous as those of England. What they were before James I. is not very clear, but after his return from England we find various statutes made for punishing "slayers of deare," etc.; and it is somewhat curious, considering the times, how small the punishment was, viz., a fine of forty shillings.

James' successors, however, improved upon this ; and in Queen Mary's reign an act was passed prohibiting the shooting of "deere, wilde beast, or wilde fowl, with any sort of gun, under the pain of death, and escheat of moveables." There were numerous acts passed in the reign of James VI., awarding various degrees of punishment for shooting at "*Dae, Rae, Hinde, Hare, Cunning, Dove, Heron, or Fowl of river,*" etc. Some of these related to the powers and privileges of the royal keepers, and are characteristic of this king's high idea of the royal prerogative, and the jealousy with which he regarded any approach to, not to say encroachment upon, his territories. One enacted that "none hunt or haulk within six miles of the king's woods, parks, castles, and palaces, under the pain of an hundred pounds." Another enacts "that no man hunt or haulk who hath not a pleugh of land in heritage, under the pain of an hundred pounds." This last act still remains on the statute-book, but is now seldom enforced, except in the case of landless persons who apply for a game certificate, with the object of trespassing on the ground of others, or, in other words, poaching with impunity.

But perhaps the act that led to the greatest oppression is that which provides "that the keepers of forests, and others having right thereto by their infestments,

shall have power and jurisdiction to convene before them the transgressors of the said statutes, and to try them by an inquest, and execute the said acts against them—to wit, the slayers and shooters of deer, rae, and wild fowl, being landed men, under the pain of five hundred merks,” etc. In order to appreciate the severity of this enactment, it is necessary to bear in mind that the royal forests consisted of lands not belonging to the king, except as superior, but usually to a great baron, who was sole heritor or proprietor, and right of forestry conferred a servitude in his favour, in some instances over lands belonging to other heritors or proprietors. The act conferred jurisdiction over these contiguous proprietors, who were not only forbidden the right and privilege of slaying wild animals on their own grounds, under heavy penalties, but were subject to tyrannical prosecutions at the instance of the keeper if they attempted to exercise that right of property. This led to much discontent, and sometimes to actual violence, the use of superior force being found necessary in many instances to secure submission. The great heritor or baron, holding his lands *in baronia*, had the privilege of forestry, which included the right to hunt, kill, and make use of the deer for his own profit. Farther, all cattle found straying in the forest were confiscated—two-thirds

to the king, and one-third to the baron or keeper ; and as the latter deputed his rights to a head-forester, they were often exercised in a harsh and oppressive way. The forests being wide unenclosed wastes, including lands belonging to different proprietors, whose rights were subject to the servitude just mentioned, they themselves or their tenants had cattle roving freely about, constantly trespassing or accused of doing so. Such cattle being liable to seizure, the head-forester, who always lived in the forest, or close to it, had many opportunities of annoying their owners. The office of head-forester was usually held by men of some position and importance ; and, carrying with it not only direct advantages, but immunities from many evils and hardships, it was one of ambition to small proprietors and cadets of more powerful families. The displacing of a head-forester was sometimes attended with difficulty and danger to his successor, as the following instance, handed down by tradition, will illustrate :—

The head-forester of the royal forest of Athole was removed by the Marquis of Athole for some cause, and another appointed in his place. The discarded forester, a man of vindictive disposition, determined to be revenged on his successor, and patiently awaited his opportunity. This in the course of time presented itself, when

the new officer came to make his rounds in the forest, accompanied by one attendant. They had to spend the night in a small hut or bothy in the heart of the forest, and both lay down on a bed of heather, and were soon fast asleep. The discarded forester stole into the bothy in the middle of the night, and stabbed both with his dirk. The master died almost without a groan, but the servant was only wounded. The assassin left the hut, and just as the wounded man had recovered consciousness, he returned again, as if to satisfy himself that he had done his murderous work effectually. He seemed, however, to have been averse to using the dirk any more, and taking a large pin used for fastening the kilt, forced it to the head in the sole of the dead man's foot. Satisfied that there was nothing farther to do as regarded him, but knowing that his safety depended on the death of the servant, he applied the same cruel test to him also. The prostrate man well knew that if by the quiver of a muscle he should betray a sign of life, the dirk would next moment again be used ; but nerving himself by a powerful effort, he withstood the terrible trial without a shudder, and the murderer left the bothy.

The friends of the slaughtered forester determined to have blood for blood, and the assassin fled the country,

and for a long time remained untraced. At last he was discovered in Ross-shire, and a strong party, led by the Laird of Calvine, went in pursuit of him. They followed on his track, till they found him at a wedding-feast, to which he had been invited by the people of Ross, among whom he had made himself somewhat popular. The house was surrounded, and Calvine entered, his drawn sword in his hand. The murderer trembled for an instant at seeing him, and then called on his entertainers to cut down the intruder. They seemed ready enough to resent the intrusion, and stand by their guest; but Calvine in a few words explained how he had come so to present himself, and requested them, as they hated treachery and murder, not to interfere with him in apprehending the foul murderer, who had imposed upon their kindness and hospitality. There were some among them who distrusted and suspected the stranger who had come uninvited, and had remained so long among them, and after a short consultation, they determined to give him up. Upon seeing this, he made an attempt to escape, and aided by the women—who always commiserate the unfortunate—got out by a back window, to fall into the hands of those who surrounded the house. He was taken to Athole, and executed. When in prison he composed a very beautiful Gaelic song, still popular,

describing the scenery through which he passed on the journey from Ross-shire, and alluding to his captor, the Laird of Calvine, under the type of a blackcock, the most precious feather in whose wing he would tear out, if he but once more had his good gun in his hand.

The evils attending this system of forestry continued to increase, and the remedy sought threatened to make them universal. Every proprietor of consequence was desirous to enjoy the immunities a right of forestry carried, and numerous applications were made to the Crown, especially by those whose lands lay contiguous to royal forests, to have them erected into forests. This, however, was put a stop to in the year 1680, when the Laird of Faskally, part of whose lands marched with the royal forest of Athole, obtained a grant of forestry from the king. The Marquis of Athole opposed the passing of the grant by the Exchequer. The matter was remitted to the Court of Session, to consider and report what by law were the privileges of forestry, and whether they were *convenient* or *inconvenient* to the king and his lieges. The report was unfavourable to new erections, and no more of them were granted. Matters remained in this state for some time, but the great barons who owned the royal forests, even after the passing of the Jurisdiction Act, continued to exercise as

ample powers as ever in carrying into execution the act of James VI.

It had been found as early as 1711, that a prosecution at the instance of the proprietor of a forest was incompetent against a person who had killed deer. This decision proceeded on the ground that the forest laws did not create a property in the owner of the grounds in wild animals, which are free to roam about from forest to forest, so that identification is impossible. It never was accounted theft to slay deer in any uninclosed forest. It was different in hained or inclosed ground. Still, prosecutions at the instance of the owners of forests took place up to a very recent period ; and it might be difficult to determine which was more in the wrong—the man of wealth and power, who knowingly wrested the law and turned it from the course of justice to suit his own ends ; or the man who, smarting from an invasion of what he considered his just rights, refused to yield it obedience ; or who, poor, ignorant, and needy, killed deer, because he found it the easiest and most expeditious way of feeding his starving family. The system of clanship then existing served to increase and intensify the hostile feelings thus called into existence. A proprietor who had no right of forestry not only did not scruple to kill deer, when he found them on his own

ground, in defiance of forest rights and privileges, real or imaginary, but offered no opposition to his tenants doing so when they were upon his lands, and even when they had to go to the forest for the purpose. Then most Highland proprietors had near relations among their tenants, to whom they considered themselves bound by ties always held sacred, and who were never denied the right to shoot and kill as much game as they chose. About the end of the last and beginning of this century, some of these kinsfolk of the laird materially helped to maintain their families and retainers by means of the river and the moor, and besides, sold game to the amount of their small rents. The game certificate now required by every sportsman had not been very long imposed,* was not thought necessary, and was seldom obtained. In the case of deer it was not required, the only protection to them being the old forest laws, which had been partly repealed and had partly fallen into desuetude—except in cases where they were illegally enforced, which, as already stated, they continued to be until a more recent period.

The salmon was always held in high estimation by the Highland sportsman, and being a royal fish, a large amount of protection was extended to it. Although

* Game certificates on which duty was paid were first granted in 1784-5.

reserved as a right *inter regalia*, salmon-fishings were very frequently conveyed to proprietors along with their lands, and were consequently less preserved. The acts relating to salmon had reference more to the prevention of its being slain at certain seasons during which the fish spawned, called close or forbidden time. When it came to be of enhanced commercial value, and a change took place in the propriety of the Highlands, tenants who were in the habit of killing as many salmon as they chose felt it a hardship and a grievance to be restrained from continuing to do so. To kill salmon they looked upon as a right following the occupancy of the land. The old forest laws prevented exactly the same feeling being entertained regarding deer, and salmon continued long to be killed at all seasons, notwithstanding the passing of very rigorous protective laws, much as lobsters are, in remote parts of the Hebrides, taken now without the slightest regard to close-time. Salmon-fishing, without possessing the fascination of deer-stalking, was always a favourite pastime, and being more accessible, was more practised. Children who listened to the stirring incidents of the chase, related by those whom they looked up to and admired, longed to distinguish themselves by imitating their deeds, began with the river, and at an early age learnt the mysteries of salmon-

spearing. With small torches made of the never-failing bog-fir, they would start for the river, or more frequently the smaller streams, with a "grape" for a spear, and frequently a superannuated deer-stalker as guide and instructor ; and if they did not do much execution among the fish, they gained knowledge in the craft, and much dexterity in the use of their weapon, which they found available when afterwards they took to the spear. The excitement attending these excursions was very great, and whether as boys with the "grape," or as men with the spear, the sport was pursued with an ardour and spirit none can appreciate except those who have engaged in it. The preparation—the start—the walk over broken and rough dangerous ground in the dark—the kindling of the torch, and the lurid light it throws on the whirling torrent—the noisy rush of the turbulent stream—the first plunge into its rapid current—the struggle to make way against it—the shout to the torch-bearer to hold it right—the noise of the descending spear as it strikes the fish, deadened by the sound of the rushing water—the final and crowning achievement of landing the writhing salmon : these are things never to be forgotten by those who have seen or engaged in them.

This sport had its stories of adventure as well as deer-stalking, and there are narratives still current of

fish of enormous size that year after year frequented the same spawning-beds, and were known by the marks left upon them by the spear. One of these frequented a pool in a river in Perthshire for three or four successive years, and was known to those who fished the river from a large white spot near the shoulder. Such was the idea entertained of its strength, that those who knew it gave up the attempt to capture it, merely saying as they saw it, "There goes the salmon of the rocky pool." It became so apprehensive of danger, that the approach of the torchlight made it rush to the depths of its favourite pool, and it required a dexterous spearman to strike, where the courage to attempt to land it was not wanting. Two young men, famous as the best sportsmen in the district, were out burning the river one night, and saw this celebrated fish. The spearman hesitated, the other cried "Strike!" and the next moment it was struggling on the spear, and the man, shaken off his feet, on his knees in the water. He cried to his companion to come to his assistance, and dropping the torch into the river, he threw himself on the fish, and seizing the spear, both men pressed upon it with all their might. After getting it out of the water, however, the fish worked back to the river again, and it was only at the end of a desperate struggle that they finally landed it

on the other side of the river from that it had been on first. Unfortunately this salmon was not weighed, but in describing it, its captors said, that when lying on the ground the back or dorsal fin "reached half way up between the hose and the kilt," in other words, nearly as high as the knee. There were five marks on its body of wounds it had received at different times from the spear.

The smuggler was also looked upon with no disfavour by the community around him ; and when, in the course of time, stringent measures came to be used for repressing smuggling, a whole country-side would unite to baffle the exciseman. If, as was usually the case, a stranger, he was quite helpless until he had gained a knowledge of the country. Afterwards he was narrowly watched, and his movements were intimated to interested persons in sufficient time to allow them to conceal or carry away everything inferring guilt. Sometimes the office did not fall into very steady hands, and it was no uncommon thing to make the *gauger* so drunk that he did not know what was passing around him ; thus securing the safety both of the precious "materials" and of their lawless owners. If the exciseman were a native—a rare case—he had only by a casual remark to hint where he was likely to go, on a given day ; and

when he went, all signs of smuggling had disappeared, and he would return home at night quite satisfied that he had got no one into trouble, and with the feeling that really the revenue had not suffered very much either.

It is not uninteresting to analyze the feelings of the Highlanders at the period of their history to which these remarks bring us. There were many still alive who had seen clanship maintained unimpaired, when the will of the chief was the law of the clansman—when bloodshed and violence were but too common—when a successful *creach* or foray was accounted an achievement worthy of all praise and imitation ; but so complete a change had come about, that few people respected the law more, in so far as it related to the repression of crime committed in violation of moral obligations, and not merely of fiscal regulations and Acts of Parliament. The law, as administered in more accessible and civilized parts of the country, was unknown, or all but unknown, to them—the only medium through which it was administered being the Justices of the Peace, who frequently had never heard of the statutes they were supposed to interpret, and dispensed justice in their own way, much to their own satisfaction and to the admiration of their people. Of course, there was much clannish feeling evoked ; as in the case of a fiery

young man who quarrelled with another, and in revenge for some imaginary indignity, struck his antagonist a violent blow on the mouth, knocking in his front teeth. For this he was taken before the justices, and at once admitted that he had done what he was charged with. The bench was greatly troubled, for the culprit was nearly related to the laird, and well known to them all; but the case was clear, and he must be punished. A fine was determined on; but just as sentence was about to be passed, an old sage on the bench, against whose principles it went sorely to fine the son of a cherished friend, spoke out: "What is this fine for?" he asked. "For Hector M'Glashan's teeth." "Then he is to pay for the teeth?" "Yes." "Good," said the sage; "produce the teeth, and hand them to the accused, and I will undertake to see the fine paid." The teeth were lost, and could not be delivered. "That being the case," continued the wise man, "I hold the fine cannot be exacted. You cannot make a man pay for what he does not get." The other justices thought the argument irresistible, and decided accordingly. Notwithstanding eccentricities of this kind, the sentences of the justices were held in respect; but in all probability, for the sole reason that they were those of country gentlemen, the natural superiors of the suitors, who still looked upon

them with much of the clannish feelings of earlier days. This appears the most reasonable way of accounting for the docility of the Highlanders in submitting to their pastors, and their undoubted respect for the constituted authorities. Nor is it altogether inconsistent with the pertinacity of purpose with which they evaded the laws relating to stalking deer, killing salmon, and smuggling.

With reference to deer-stalking, the forest laws, as has been shown, were always oppressive and unpopular. In the Highlands they might be made particularly so. People liable to periodical famines, who had occasionally to resort to every possible means for procuring food to preserve their lives, thought it an unbearable hardship to be withheld from using the resources nature had put within their reach. Besides, they were well aware of the feeling of jealousy and antagonism which these laws had engendered between the proprietors of forests and contiguous heritors; and while ready and willing to yield obedience to their own superiors, and to do nothing against their wishes, it was very different when rigorous laws came to be enforced at the instance of others to whom they owed no allegiance. Proprietors and tenants were thus placed in antagonism to the pretensions of the owners of forests. The ownership of

the crown in deer had ceased to be looked upon as a tangible fact. Ownership by any others in deer in a state of nature, and not confined in parks or inclosures, was never established, and they were looked upon as the gift of nature, that might be appropriated without the infringement of any moral obligation. It was therefore considered in no way derogatory to the character of a man, or of a gentleman, to be a known deer-stalker, and if he had become the object of the forester's dislike, and one that had often baulked well-laid schemes for his capture, he was thought all the more of, and excited all the higher respect and admiration. Such being the feelings with which the deer-stalker was regarded, it is not to be wondered at that ardent young men of station and family, who had no right to kill deer, were often addicted to the chase, not only from the excitement and fascination of the noble sport itself, but also as a way to fame among their friends and dependants. The same spirit led these young men not unfrequently to gain honour and distinction in the service of their country; and it was no bad training for a soldier, to have exercised his sagacity and ingenuity in circumventing the natural instinct of self-preservation to be found in the red-deer in a degree unequalled in any other animal. But while deer-stalking and salmon-fishing were prac-

tised by all classes, smuggling, however it might have been winked at by the Highland gentleman, from the feelings of clanship already alluded to, was never engaged in by himself. He would readily enough buy the whisky made by the smuggler, and thought it neither sin nor shame to do so, but he would not engage in illicit distillation himself, nor benefit by the profits to be made by it. Deer-stalking was considered no unworthy pastime for a gentleman under any circumstances, but no circumstances made smuggling an occupation becoming a man of honour and a gentleman. Perhaps the term I have just used in reference to each may account for this distinction. Besides, deer-stalking was pursued by an armed man, who always commanded respect,—and in times of peace arms were usually carried by none but gentlemen; whereas smuggling, though attended with dangers of various kinds, was engaged in by men of peace, and carried on without the aid of any weapon. This stamped it, in the eyes of a warlike race, as an employment unworthy of gentlemen.

Deer-stalking, salmon-fishing, and smuggling were, fifty years ago, the principal misdemeanours in the Highlands. They were seldom attended by violence or cruelty, and the worst that could be said was that a breach of statutory law had been committed—a statement that

carried no condemnation with it, if such breach were unattended by circumstances of a serious nature. Some forty years ago, the young men of a remote glen rose *en masse* against a party of excisemen, whom they attacked with great ferocity. The excisemen at once ran for their lives. Some of them fell over smuggling utensils and malt hid in a corn-field, but such was their terror that they never so much as stopped to look at them, thinking themselves not out of danger until many miles away from the scene of action. This outrage did more to put a stop to smuggling in that glen than twenty excisemen could have done, for it turned the feeling of the respectable and well-disposed against the perpetrators ; and, although no steps were taken by the authorities to vindicate the law, smuggling declined there from that time.

The brutal assaults committed by poachers in England and in some parts of the lowlands of Scotland, were all but unknown in the Highlands. There have been instances of young men discharging fire-arms at keepers, but they were extremely rare. It was no part of the nature of a Highlander, however, to allow himself to be taken without doing all in his power to escape. A long, lanky, sulky-looking Highlander was once caught in a well-known forest by a party of foresters who were in

attendance on their master. He was at once carried to the presence of a nobleman, whose wrath few could stand unmoved.

"Who are you, sirrah?" thundered his lordship.

"No pody," was the answer.

"And what are you doing in my forest?"

"No pody," again answered the Highlander.

Where are you from?"

"No pody."

This scene took place on a slope, at the bottom of which there was a small deep lake, with steep banks of no great height.

"Take the fellow," said his lordship, "and duck him in that lake to see if it will make somebody of him."

Two of the keepers, eager to show their zeal in their master's service, had kept hold of the man in case he might try to escape, and at once marched him down to the water, one on either side, holding by the collar of his coat. He walked quietly between them, looking meek and innocent, till on the brink of the lake, when he suddenly threw himself a step back, and seizing the foresters by the back of the neck, threw them both head-foremost into the lake. Skirting round it, he soon reached the opposite side, picked up the gun

which he had hid there before he had been taken, and went off at a speed that astonished all who saw him. The two foresters had some difficulty in getting out of the water, and had to be assisted by their friends, and the poacher got off without any serious pursuit. His lordship looked on extremely amused, remarking that "Mr. Nobody was, after all, a very smart fellow."

The illicit deer-stalker seldom took a dog with him to the forest, it being inconsistent with the perfect quiet and privacy required to do so. It was, however, very common for young men of family to have at least one deerhound, and many instances are still related of the fidelity and attachment of those noble animals. One of these may be given here :—

About seventy years ago a gentleman tacksman lived in the neighbourhood of a royal forest, whose son, a youth of nineteen, had a remarkably fine deerhound. The young man and the dog were never separate, and a strong attachment sprung up between them. As might be expected, they found their way to the forest, and never went there without the deerhound having a run, which always ended in the death of a deer. A fever broke out in the country, and the young man was seized by it. The dog never left him during his illness,

and when, after a short course, the fever proved fatal, the faithful animal still remained beside the body, and followed it to the grave. After the funeral he attached himself to the youth's father, and accompanied him home. There was a large family and a small house, and the whole of the children having taken the fever, the remains of the dead son were no sooner carried to the grave, than the bed on which he had lain was made up for some of the sick children, who were at once placed in it. When the deerhound reached home, he went to this bed, and, jumping into it, lay down at the foot. One of the children, being pressed on by the animal, began to cry. The father going in and seeing the dog lying on the child, took him by the back of the neck and pulled him roughly out of the bed, ordering him out of the room. The hound turned and looked at him for a moment, and uttering a low moan, dropped dead at his feet.

The sister of the young sportsman, when a very old lady, delighted in telling this instance of the faithful attachment of the deerhound, always finishing off with, "and the brave faithful dog died of a broken heart."

This fine breed of dogs is now becoming scarce. The portrait forming the vignette at the beginning of this volume is from a faithful likeness, by the late Thomas

Duncan, of a dog not more noted for symmetrical and picturesque beauty, than for staunch courage and speed in the forest. He was the property of the Right Hon. Duncan M'Neill, who has perhaps done more than any other person to preserve the breed.

January 16, 1865.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

SOME fifty years ago, more or less, on a fine sunny day in the month of July, a young man was walking quietly up the High Street of Edinburgh. He appeared to be about twenty years old, or probably a year or two more, close upon six feet in height, and remarkably handsome and well formed. There was an easy grace about him that indicated self-possession and confidence in himself, and there was something in his walk and bearing that gave promise of firmness and decision of character. He took little notice of what was passing around until he approached St. Giles or the High Church, when he suddenly stood, and looked half amused and admiringly at a young lady who was walking down towards him. His fine face and clear blue eye lighted up with a bright smile, and he hesitated for an instant, as if undetermined what to do. He then walked quietly to a close near

him, and turning round at the entrance, stood there watching the young lady. She was walking daintily towards where he was, with her dress tucked well up to prevent contact with the not very clean pavement, and looked the impersonation of elastic gracefulness and fawn-like activity. She was accompanied by an elderly female, who seemed divided between dislike to the unmannerly people, as she thought them, that crowded the street, and were in some degree attracted by herself and her youthful companion, and admiration of that young lady. When they came close to where the young man, who continued to watch them with a smile, stood half concealed, he suddenly presented himself before them. There was an exclamation of pleasure from the young lady, who next moment added, "You here, Robert! One meets you in all places."

"And why not in the High Street of Edinburgh, Mary? Surely there is nothing strange in meeting an Edinburgh man, for I have been here now for some months, there. I was amused to see you tripping down the street, the 'admired of all admirers,' and my friend Janet looking as if she wished herself back to Glengarve again."

"Deed, Maister Robert, I wish mysell back there, and dinna much care if I never leave it again, at ony

rate to come to Edinburgh toon, even though it be to tak hame Miss Mary."

"I suppose, Robert, you are become such a man of business that you cannot spare ten minutes to walk with me. I want a few things before I go home to Glengarve, and am out now to shop."

He immediately turned back, and they walked a few steps together without speaking. At last he said—

"You call me a man of business, Mary, and I suppose I should be proud of so respectable a title ; and yet it is not so. I rather dislike it ; nay, I almost hate it. It is a dull monotonous life I am leading, while many of my friends and acquaintances are fighting the battles of their country, by sea and land, in every quarter of the globe ; and at the time that I am perched upon a three-legged stool, scratching paper and parchment with a goose-quill, they are cutting their way with their good swords to fame and fortune."

"Stop, now." She looked serious for a moment, then went on. "Were I Robert Graham instead of Mary Livingston, it is possible I might think and feel as he does ; but I would not readily give expression to my feelings in that event, seeing that Robert Graham gave a solemn promise to his mother, when she mourned the

fall of her brave son, that come what might he would remain at home to comfort her."

"Mary Livingston knows very well that Robert Graham, when speaking to her, gives expression to every thought that crosses his mind. It never occurred to me to break the promise I gave to my mother, and to my father too; but this life will kill me—no excitement, no adventure—but that eternal write, write. Do you forget the kind of life I led the last two years I was in the country?"

"Truly, I do not forget the respectable life you led, and the useful habits you got into. I suppose you will be going home to Dunurn in a few weeks; do you intend resuming your old habits?"

"Where is George just now, and when does he go to Glengarve?"

"I expect him to be here, on his way home from England, in the course of a day or two, and we travel home together."

"Is he to be alone, or is Lord Strathalbane to be with him?"

"Lord Strathalbane is not to be north till about the beginning of August, but I think my brother is to be accompanied by one or perhaps two college friends; but you have not answered my question as to your old habits."

"You know what made '*a poacher*' of me, Mary, and you did not think that I acted unnaturally in seeking a strange sort of revenge, at the same time that I indulged my love of adventure, and my unconquerable love of the chase. I certainly intend pursuing my old courses, and what is more, I expect you to aid and abet me in so doing, as of old."

"And what supposing I do not?"

"I cannot suppose anything of the kind. I have made a sacrifice, which I do not regret, to please my dear mother; and you, my cousin, that mother's only niece, are in duty bound to stand by me, and assist me, in all my undertakings, whether right or wrong. Your brother has heart and soul joined the enemy, and without you I should be left single-handed to contend with fearful odds. What woman ever deserted the weak in his hour of need?—certainly not my own dear cousin Mary."

"Now, if you please, stop that nonsense and listen to me; I am not sure that it is for your good to encourage you in such lawless ways—for such do people now call the pursuit of game without the proper authority and certificates—I do not wish to lecture you, but I would like you to ask yourself the question, Am I acting right in doing this?"

"I am a believer in the morality of our Highland idea, that there is no harm in taking—

'A tree from the wood,
A trout from the stream, and
A deer from the glen,'

without asking any man's leave. But be this right, or be it wrong, I know this—that I can never sit quietly down in the old house at Dunurn and listen to my grandmother's tales of Prince Charlie and Culloden, much as these interest me, when others are 'chasing the wild deer, and following the roe.' I must and shall have my sport, for I have thought of it, and dreamed of it for weeks—long, dull, dreary weeks of writing. I wish you could but see how bright and beautiful old 'Thunder' looks."

"Oh, that horrid old gun! have you got it yet?"

"Have I got it yet? Are you in your senses to ask such a question? The good, the true, the never-failing friend,—I would as soon part with my right hand."

"Will you see George when he is in town?"

"I do not know, but whether I do or not, you will not fail to tell him that I am to go home with powder and shot enough to kill all the game in the county, and that I am determined to kill the finest stag in Lord

Strathalbane's forest, before I am three days in the country. How the two will lay their heads together to plan the surest way of capturing '*the poacher!*' The thought of it makes me feel as happy as I used to be when climbing the rugged sides of Banchaorin."

"Well, Robert, write me when you come home. Good-bye," and away she tripped with her old servant following.

Mary Livingston was the only daughter of Mr. Alexander Livingston of Glengarve. This gentleman was well stricken in years, when he married the aunt of the present, and sister of the late Lord Strathalbane. He was of an old and respectable family in the county of A., and the possessor of a very fine Highland estate, upon which he had constantly resided for upwards of thirty years. He was a quiet man, and troubled himself very little with his own or other peoples affairs. When his wife died, some three years after his little daughter was born, he was very sorry, that is for him, but in less than a fortnight after her funeral, he might be seen going about his grounds, and gathering up all the tittle-tattle of the country from any person he met, exactly as he had done before. The only occasions on which he showed anything like vitality, was when he attended a Justice of the Peace Court. He then did his

best to exclude law and lawyers from this sacred *forum*, and it was a favourite dictum of his, "We want neither law nor lawyers here, sir." Often has he extinguished a pragmatic litigant with that sententious sentence. Of late years, he had given up even attending the periodical conventions of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace, but not until he had on one or two occasions startled his brother justices by saying grace as he took his seat on the bench, evidently under the impression that he was sitting down to dinner. The fact could not be longer concealed, that Mr. Livingston had got into a state of dotage, and was better at home than anywhere else. His only son George had now arrived at the age of manhood, and was a fine handsome young fellow. He was educated in England, and though sensible and clever enough, he sometimes laughed at everything Scotch, and often at everything Highland, but like an inconsistent young man, he became very wrathful if any of his southern friends joined in the laugh. In his secret heart he was proud of the north, and particularly so of everything connected with Glengarve. He had been brought up very much with his cousin the young Lord Strathalbane, and though resembling each other in many respects, it was evident that in most things he was influenced in his views and opinions by the young

lord, not indeed from any undue deference to his rank and title, but from that mysterious influence that a stronger mind exercises over a weaker.

Robert Graham was related to the Livingstons through his mother, who was the youngest sister of Mr. Livingston. He was thus no relation to Lord Strathalbane, and although they had often met and been a good deal together as boys, they never were cordial friends. Graham had never been away from his native glens, and was always clothed in the many coloured tartans manufactured by the old women of Glenurn under the superintendence of his mother, and the tartans and the kilt, if not the boy, were the objects of frequent allusion and supercilious remark from the little lord. Graham was younger by two years, but his tall active form and fearless look prevented his lordship from going too far : at the same time a feeling of dislike was engendered, which circumstances, about to be related, were not calculated to allay. George Livingston was inclined to take a neutral part between his cousins, but neutrals find it difficult on all occasions to be quite impartial, and though by no means a bad fellow, it must be owned that he leaned oftener to the side of Lord Strathalbane than to that of poor Robert Graham. The latter had an ally, however, and a true unswerving one,

in his cousin Mary Livingston. As already mentioned, her mother died when she was about three years old, and her aunt, Robert Graham's mother, came to her father and took the management of his household affairs as long as she could be spared from her own family. When she returned home she carried little Mary with her, and as her father scarcely missed her, and only twice or thrice made any enquiries about her, she remained at Dunurn among her cousins, who looked upon her exactly as one of themselves, until she was twelve. She might have remained there for ever, had not her aunt insisted upon her father's taking steps to have her educated according to her station. Her orphan niece had become as dear to the large motherly heart of Mrs. Graham as any of her own children, and it was a sorrowful day to her and to Robert that saw Mary leaving them. Her father sent her off immediately to a boarding-school, so that she knew no home for many years but Dunurn. That was the home she extolled to her school-fellows, the home she dreamed of and longed to fly to when holiday time drew near, and her father threw no obstacle in the way of her spending all the time she was away from school there. No wonder that she thus came to look upon her aunt as a mother, and upon her cousin Robert, her constant friend and pro-

tector, as a brother, and felt for them, especially, all the love of a very affectionate heart.

But when she grew up, and her brother assumed the duties of head of the house, upon her father falling into a state of imbecility, he took her home to Glengarve for her holidays, and allowed her only to go on short visits to Dunurn. The young people there were indignant at this, but Mrs. Graham saw that George was right, and encouraged him, now that she was capable of superintending the household at Glengarve, to invest her with all the powers pertaining to the onerous position of head of the establishment. She was preparing to leave school finally, to go home for this purpose, when we first saw her in the High Street of Edinburgh.

CHAPTER II.

THE GRAHAMS OF DUNURN.

DUNURN stood upon a dūn or hillock, situated on the north side of the river Urn, which gave its name to the glen through which it flowed. It is a clear rapid small river, with alternate shallows and pools, full of salmon and trout. That part of the glen is not so narrow as the rest, and has well-sized corn-fields, sloping gently towards the river, which were protected from the inroads of cattle and sheep grazing in the upper ground, by rough fences partly stone, partly branches of trees, and partly turf. Above these fences there was a considerable breadth of wood and brush, principally birch and hazel, which grew smaller and wider apart the higher they ascended the hill, until terminating in scrubby half-withered bushes, that were nearly lost among the more luxuriant growth of the heather. The road, such as it was, ran along close above the fences, and a branch

turned off between the trunks of two Scotch fir-trees, from one of which depended a primitive gate that clung to it through the instrumentality of a *withe* or birch rope tied round the end stile of the gate and the tree. The gate opened with a wailing sort of sound, but like an unsteady drunkard that had been got on his feet with difficulty, it went back again with a bang that threatened destruction to itself and everything that might oppose it. The road that led through this gate took the wayfarer to the poor but hospitable house of Dunurn. As might be expected from such an "approach," the house did not present a very imposing aspect to a stranger ; but those who knew the inmates never thought of stopping to remark on the outward appearance of the dwelling, thinking only of the kindly welcome that awaited them within. We, however, cannot yet be influenced by this feeling.

Dunurn Cottage was originally a small building, with white walls and a neat heather-thatched roof. Such it was when Duncan Graham, younger of Glenurn, took his bride to it. In the course of time, misfortunes that had pursued the family for many years, laid their hand on Mr. Graham and his old father so heavily, that it was no longer possible for them to keep up separate establishments, and the old man being turned out of the comfortable mansion-house, was taken

home by the son to his little cottage. The addition of his father and mother to his own increasing family, filled the cottage to bursting ; and as the only remedy to this plethoric condition, he built another cottage with two windows and a door between, white walls, and thatched roof, at the west end of it, for the accommodation of the old people. In a few years more, Duncan's family still increasing rapidly, he found a farther addition to his house indispensable, and a third house of the original type was built at the east end of the old cottage. Duncan Graham was a man that profited by experience, and having found the want of the means of internal communication extremely inconvenient, he upon this last occasion left a doorway in the gable of the new house, in case a further addition should become necessary. A few more olive branches were sent to him, and he again began to feel cramped for room, and a fourth house was determined upon ; but on this occasion a new plan was adopted. The two windows were adhered to, but there was no door between them. It was thought with great sagacity, that as it was built at the end of the last house, the door in the gable would be enough for it, and with this simple departure from the old plan the new house was finished. It is quite unnecessary to describe the general effect produced by this unpretend-

ing building. The description of a straight line—viz., “length without breadth,” very nearly applied to it.

Old Mr. Graham, the grandfather, was no bad specimen of the highland gentleman of a hundred years ago. He was high bred, courteous, and polite, qualities in no small degree natural to the Celtic race, and in him developed by long residence abroad, in consequence of the part he had taken in the rising of 1745. His second son entered the British army, in the course of time rose in the service, and having raised the requisite number of men in his native glens, he was made a lieutenant-colonel. He distinguished himself in the American war, and fell at the head of his regiment, like a gallant soldier as he was. The services of the son, led to the restoration of his forfeited estate to the father, but so heavily burdened with debt, that he only held it on sufferance. He struggled bravely for some time, and sold nearly the half of the estate, which brought a price that amounted to more than the debt. But here ended the only gleam of prosperity that had dawned upon the old family of Graham of Glenurn for upwards of fifty years.

The nearest neighbour of Mr. Graham was Colonel Campbell of Aldourie, who was desirous of adding the Glenurn estate in whole or in part to his own. His

agent in Edinburgh bought up the debts affecting the property, and he became the purchaser of that part of it which was sold. There was a great deal of work among the law-agents, in making up titles, searching for incumbrances, executing of discharges, and the like. Mr. Graham signed a conveyance of the property sold to Colonel Campbell, and was informed that this would be handed over to the Colonel, who was to give up the bonds, and a discharge in full, which would clear and disencumber Mr. Graham of all debt. The next letter from Mr. Graham's agent, was to the effect that he had sent the conveyance of the property to Colonel Campbell, and that that gentleman had been suddenly called away to attend to his military duties ; but that if he had not left the discharge made out, there could be no doubt that he would send it from London, where he had gone. The letter ended with an assurance that Mr. Graham need be under no apprehension, as Colonel Campbell was an honourable man, and would be sure to finish off the transaction before leaving for foreign service, which he was on the eve of doing. Mr. Graham knew Colonel Campbell to be a man of strict honour, though ambitious to add to his possessions ; and having, moreover, unbounded confidence in his own agent, he felt no alarm, and hurried on his son's somewhat de-

ferred marriage with as much ardour as if he had been the bridegroom himself. Shortly, however, before it took place, he received the alarming tidings that Colonel Campbell had been killed by a fall from his horse ; and in a few days more he received a letter from his agent informing him that after every possible search having been made, no trace of the discharge could be found. The next communication was to the effect that he had applied to Colonel Campbell's representatives, who refused to give up the bonds, or grant a discharge, and discussing the propriety of going to law with them. A great deal of correspondence ensued, in the course of which Mr. Graham expressed much virtuous indignation, and his agent threw out hints about long bills, heavy advances already made, and the known uncertainties of the law. Counsel learned in the law were consulted, and doubtful opinions enunciated ; and the end of the whole matter was, that Mr. Graham found himself robbed of half his property, and burdened with a hopeless load of debt. His law-agent, Mr. John Hardy jun., writer in Edinburgh, lost all hope ; and then, and not till then, the Grahams gave up the game as lost ; for Mr. John Hardy was a man of great resources, and had their entire confidence, and if he gave in, there was no use for a longer struggle. He recommended the

remaining part of the property to be sold, and hinted that he knew of a person that he thought would give a fair price for it, whose name he was not at that time at liberty to divulge. The Grahams never suspected that this nameless individual was none other than Mr. John Hardy himself, and they were ready to act upon his advice. But there was one circumstance that postponed the final step—it was not thought possible to prevent it. This was a feeling of dislike to the transaction on the part of Mrs. Duncan Graham. She could not bear the idea of seeing the old estate pass for ever from her husband and son, and clung to some old tradition that predicted that a Graham should be laird of Glenurn as long as the river ran in a certain channel, which it showed no signs of being likely to desert for many a long year. It is not unlikely that Mrs. Graham had some stronger hope than that based upon this old prophecy. Be this as it may, she suggested delay as long as possible, and a suggestion from Mrs. Duncan Graham went a very great way to direct the deliberations of the gentlemen of Glenurn. Mr. Hardy had therefore to wait a long time to see his wishes accomplished; but he could afford to wait, and did so with all the grace possible. The Grahams were, however, reduced to great straits; and in course of time it

became evident even to Mrs. Graham, that the evil day was slowly but certainly approaching. Her eldest son had accompanied his regiment to Egypt, and was slain at the battle of Alexandria. This was a great blow to the family ; and the mother, in the excess of her grief, took a promise from her second son, Robert, that he would never enter the army, or leave his native country, unless for some mere temporary purpose that would not long detain him. Seeing no other opening for him, she applied to Mr. Hardy, who condescendingly, and after impressing her with the great favour he was conferring on the family, consented to receive Robert Graham as an extra hand, or supernumerary, into the office of Messrs. J. and J. Hardy, writers in Edinburgh. Thus poor Robert Graham was compelled to enter a profession he exceedingly disliked. But it never occurred to him to oppose, by the slightest remonstrance, the wishes of his mother.

We shall now enter the long unsymmetrical cottage of Dunurn, which we, from our intimate acquaintance with it, inside and out, have no difficulty in doing, although strangers feel perplexed which of the three front doors to select. We will knock at the centre one. A very tidy pretty little round-about Highland lass opens the door of the house to our left—comes rushing up to

us—and welcomes us with a smile, and asks us in. We enter, turn to the right, and are at once ushered into a small room not over fifteen feet square ; we find a lady sitting near a window that looks out to the back—there is a spinning-wheel before her, and sitting on the floor at her side is a fine curly-headed little fellow, with a small book in his hands, from which he raises a pair of large bright blue eyes to fix them upon us. The lady rises, and receives our salutation with a smile of welcome. She is considerably above the middle height, and at the first sight appears upwards of fifty years old, though several years younger. Her dress is very plain, consisting of black silk, covered by a somewhat large apron to protect it from the dust of the lint or flax she was spinning. On her head she wears a close white fine linen cap, with a broad black ribbon pinned over it, without the ends being visible. The face looks young under this head-dress, which is usually worn by much older women. It is impossible to describe this good lady so as to give even an idea of the charm of her presence. There was a motherly kindness and dignified graciousness of manner, that few could resist. One must be in her presence for some time before he can withdraw his attention from her to examine anything else in the room. And there were

some things there not unworthy of notice. Above the fireplace hung a fine portrait of the great Montrose, and opposite was an exquisite one of the gallant Dundee. This latter appeared to be a copy by a master-hand of the celebrated portrait at Glamis Castle. There were also several portraits of the Grahams of Glenurn, all of them showing traces of a noble race, and a type of features still peculiar to the family. The furniture was old fashioned, and from its massive size must have been made for a much larger house than the one it was now in.

The room on the other side of the door was Mr. Duncan Graham's *sanctum*, and it was a great contrast to the orderly propriety of the one we have seen. It was exactly the same size, and had originally been the kitchen, and was only raised to its present dignity after the building of the third house. The first thing that struck one on entering it was the impossibility of knowing where to look for any given article in it. There was a large table in the middle, with large shelves on two sides, and old worm-eaten dilapidated presses stood against the other sides. The table was covered by a litter of papers, letters, accounts, maps, newspapers, books, fishing-tackle, nails, etc. The shelves were bending under loads of specimens of corn, potatoes,

turnips, powder, shot, fishing-rods, stones, old pistols, and Heaven knows what besides. The floor was covered with greybeards, empty and full; sacks, empty and full; twine, ropes, lanterns, horse-harness, cow-bindings, and an extensive variety of other articles it would be difficult to name. This room was kept locked, but every one got the key at will when not lost, which it generally was, very fortunately, as the door was seldom opened except to add to the already over-extensive store. Mr. Graham, as may be imagined, seldom spent much of his time in his room, preferring the fresh air of the glen, which he enjoyed all day long, either superintending his farming operations—which he imagined were of a scientific character—or shooting or fishing, in both of which he greatly excelled. He was rather a little man, but remarkably handsome and well made, and as active as a roebuck. There never stepped a more truthful honourable man, and though possessed of no great ability, he was liked and respected by his neighbours, and much looked up to by the country people. The only other inmates of Dunurn Cottage are the grandfather and grandmother. The old gentleman we have seen a little of. There he is, now ninety years old and upwards, bent with age and infirmities, and for the last three years blind. His wife, nearly as old as himself, is

sitting beside him. There is a small shawl of fine fabric drawn round her shoulders, and fastened tight across her breast, with a large handsome silver brooch of unknown antiquity. A large piece of fine diaper, white as snow, covers her head, arranged loosely, from under which sparkle a pair of large and still penetrating black eyes. She has a small Bible, which she is reading without spectacles, in one hand; the other rests in her husband's hand, while he listens, with earnest attention, to what she is reading.

The young people, eight or ten in number, are in some other room—the younger ones being taught by the eldest girl: she herself having derived all the education she has had from her mother—so fallen were the fortunes of the once powerful Grahams of Glenurn.

Glenurn is a long and somewhat tortuous glen: mighty mountains thrust forward shoulders from opposite sides, forming passes and gorges through which the river forces an uneven and troubled course. One of the most remarkable of these was M'Gregor's Leap. Here the opposite hills approached so close that they were separated only by a rocky chasm, or gulf, through which the river rushed with tremendous velocity, dashing much of its waters into spray against the rocks and stones forming the sides and channel. A member of

the proscribed Clan Gregor was discovered by his enemies in the neighbourhood ; and, as the only means of saving his life, he must cross the river, which was in flood at the time. He fled, like one who knew that he was pursued by those who thirsted for his blood, in the direction of the river, and came headlong upon this chasm ; and without waiting for an instant's consideration, dashed at it with the energy of despair, and cleared it at a bound, leaving his baffled pursuers behind. At the entrance to the glen the old mansion-house of Glenurn is situated—a large square building of some importance. It has a fine background of Scotch pine, growing naturally, and many of the trees of great age and large size. In front and about three hundred yards from the house there is a lake of considerable size, and scarcely equalled in Scotland for its trout. There was at the time of which we speak a numerous population in the glen ; and it is now a matter of wonder to many how they could subsist, considering the little crop that was grown there. Those who pretend to knowledge of the matter, think that Lord Strathalbanc's forest of Ardmack helped them in no inconsiderable degree ; and as there is no doubt the population was there, and lived in some comfort on very little apparent means, there is some ground for this idea—especially as the forest

formed the one side of the glen, and swarmed with deer. It is undoubted, too, that many deer crossed the river, and did some damage to the crops of Mr. Graham's tenants ; and there is nothing wonderful in the supposition that some of these never found their way back. But suspicion went even farther than this, and alleged that not a few of the tenants on Mr. Graham's side crossed the river to lay the denizens of the forest under tribute, to make up for their losses, real or imaginary. This gave rise to a feeling of hostility towards the people of Glenurn on the part of the guardians of the forest, which extended even to the noble owner, who determined to put an end to the practices which he never for a moment doubted were carried on to a great extent.

Such was the state of matters in Glenurn about a year before Robert Graham went to Edinburgh.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST CHASE.

ONE day, as Robert Graham was labouring hard at some disagreeable Latin author, with such assistance as his blind grandfather, who was a good classical scholar in his day, could give him, a cry was heard that a stag was hunted up the glen. Now it so happened that Robert Graham had some time before been presented with a staghound pup of the purest blood, by one of the Glenurn tenants, who had obtained it, with great difficulty and by means of much subtile diplomacy, specially for the young man ; and if there was any one thing he wished above all others it was a good opportunity of trying the pluck of this pup—or, as he called it, “giving him blood.” So the book was thrown away, and Robert darted out, calling, “Farrum ! Farrum !” that being the name he had given his favourite. The dog—a noble specimen, tall and powerful, a rich cream in colour,

with black muzzle and ears—bounded up to him, as he got to the door. When he reached a small round hillock in front of the house to which he ran, the first thing he saw was a large stag coming, with apparent slow labouring gallop, up through the middle of the corn-fields that lay on the Glenurn side of the river. It was followed at a distance of thirty or forty yards, by a large strong lurcher belonging to Lord Strathalbane, and though the dog laboured with all its might, it did not gain on the deer, which continued its deliberate course in beautiful style. Robert Graham, young as he was, knew what it was proper to do with his untried pup in order to have it properly entered, and though half mad with excitement, he kept quiet, made of his dog, and with a low encouraging voice drew its attention to the deer, now fast approaching him. “Farrum’s” quick eye saw the chase; he raised his head and pricked up his ears giving a short whine. Robert patted him, and walked a few steps as if to meet the deer. The dog ran by his side, and then made a short rush forward, and again stopped, but never took his eye off the stag. Again Robert went on, the chase being by this time nearly between him and the river; and giving the pup a halloo, it sprang forward like an arrow, and made for the stag. Before he could be up to it, however, it swerved, and dashed at the river,

and cleared it with one brave bound. Without altering its slow bounding pace, it made for the opposite hill ; but the young dog, with astonishing speed, gained upon it—which it soon perceived, and again it swerved, wheeled round as quick as thought, and rushing back to the river, plunged into one of its deep pools. The lurcher knew his work, and when the deer took the water, he evidently thought the worst of it was over, being trained not to kill, but bring the deer to, and keep them at bay ; so he kept on the bank and merely watched the stag, setting up a loud barking. With the pup it was different ;—he plunged into the water, and swam towards the deer without a moment's hesitation. Before he could seize it however, it raised itself up, and with its forefeet struck the dog down under the water, and it was some time before his black nose and head came up. He looked about for a moment, and no sooner saw his wily foe than he swam at it again, again to be beat down as before. This was done over and over several times ; and at last, the deer, seemingly refreshed by being in the cold river, sprang once more to the bank, where it stood coolly confronting the lurcher. Now was the time to see whether the pup was true bred, or a mere mongrel : a drop of plebeian blood would make him shrink from pursuing farther the perilous contest ; but right true he



The brave animal caught the dog on its horns, and tossed him high in the air.

proved to be, for he no sooner got out of the water than he flew at the stag with the utmost fury. With a scarcely perceptible turn of the head, the brave animal caught the dog on its horns, and tossed him high in the air over its back, to a distance that sent him to the middle of the river, where he alighted with a force that might have proved fatal but for the depth of the water. The lurcher kept up a furious barking, but never offered to come to close quarters. Robert Graham, seeing his young dog, as he thought, killed before his eyes, rushed forward to avenge him, forgetting that he had nothing in his hand with which to inflict the slightest injury on the stag. Perfectly cool the deer awaited Graham's approach, till within twenty yards of it, when making a rush at the lurcher that made it fly to one side, it charged Graham at the top of its speed. It seemed impossible to avoid it, but with admirable presence of mind the young man stood as if awaiting the thrust; and an instant before it could take effect he sprang rapidly to the right, and the deer missed its aim. Before it could turn round Graham threw himself on his face across its back, and with his right hand caught it by the off, or right flank, and held on with desperate tenacity. The deer, now thoroughly frightened, started off along the bank of the river, jumping and plunging madly; but obstructed as

it was by Graham's weight, its pace was comparatively slow. There was almost immediately a rush, and in a moment the gallant Farrum was up, and seized the stag by the root of the right ear, and pulled it on its knees. Graham let go his hold, and the deer, with a great effort darted forward from under him, and made for the river. the young dog hanging to it. The bank was covered with a smooth green sward, and slightly undermined by the water where the deer came to the river. It gave way under its forefeet, and both deer and dog fell head foremost into the water together. Robert Graham ran to the river as soon as he got on his feet, and caught hold of one of the stag's hind legs, and a desperate struggle ensued. With a knife he could at once have brought it to a termination, but unarmed as he was, he could only hold on, while the stag made frantic efforts to kick him off. But the splendid fellow fought at an immense disadvantage. The dog hung to its neck, pulling its head frequently under the water, until both were nearly choked, and having no proper footing for its forefeet its efforts were robbed of half their strength and vigour. Desperately did it fight for life, but all in vain. When the struggle was at its height a strong hand seized the other hind leg, and Hugh Fraser, the smith of Glenurn, pulling a large

clasp-knife out of his pocket, opened it with his teeth, and put it down on the sward beside Robert. Taking hold of both legs now, the smith quietly said—

“Cut his craig wi’ it, Robert ; cut his craig.”

Robert took the knife with one hand—

“Hold on for your life, Hugh. If you let it go I will give you a ——,” and he looked very savage.

“If I do, just gie me a taste o’ the whittle, that’s a’.”

Robert thus assured let go the leg, and stepping forward, seized hold of the point of one of the antlers, and pulling back the head, got his hand between the dog and the stag, and drew the knife across the latter’s throat. The hot blood gushed out, the head dropped into the water, and the stag’s power to struggle longer was gone. The two men drew it out upon the bank, and gave the gallant Farrum as much blood as it chose to take.

“Blessings on his old heart!” said Robert, as he looked affectionately at the pup, every now and then seizing the stag’s throat as it gave an occasional dying kick, “is he not a brave old dog? Come here, old dog, come and lick me now. That is a fellow! I would not give you for your weight in gold. But the old dog has got wounded too. Come here, sir, till I see your side.”

The dog wagged his tail, looked at his master, and then took hold of a large mouthful of the stag's neck—turning his eyes to see if his proceedings were admired—then let it go, and came quietly up to Graham.

“He got that when sent fleein’ through the air,” said Hugh, after looking at rather an ugly tear in Farrum’s side. “Ye see,” continued he, “the brow antler ga’ed in there, but the deevil raised his heed ower shune, or it wad hae gaen in, richt through the puir fallow’s body, instead o’ turning up under the skin, and rivin’ that scar in’t. He’ll hirple for twa or three days, and then be ready eneuch for anither fecht.”

By this time a goodly number of the people of the glen had gathered round the stag, and admired it exceedingly.

“Hech!” says old Donald Gorm, the herd, “there’ll no be much smoke frae the kail-pat that a rib o’ that chield is boiled in.”

“Ay, Donald, ye wadna objec’ to a ladlefu’ o’ that kail in your brose,” rejoined Sandy MacGregor, the tenant of Tomavaddie.

“Deed, Sandy,” answered Donald, “it wad be no bad kitchen, but if a’ I hear be true, there’s mair nor me that likes a bit o’ deer’s meat; but dootless ye ken best.”

"I dinna care for ony o' him but the legs, to get marrow to grease the mill wi'," said old Robbie M'Dougall, the miller. This raised a laugh, for all present knew that there was not a more inveterate deer-stalker than old Robbie in Glenurn.

"I think," said Sandy M'Gregor, "the braw fellow has brought me a message frae his grandfaither. I mind him weel coming to eat our corn, and he promised to let me ken by the first opportunity when he was to mak it up to me." With that Sandy got astride upon the deer, and taking hold of the horns, began to carry on an earnest conversation with it in whispers. At one time he appeared very loving, then serious. He would then give a loud laugh, and slap the stag on the cheek, as if it had said something very funny and very naughty. Sometimes he would gesticulate as if remonstrating, and then he would get angry. Sandy had much real fun and humour, and was an excellent mimic and actor; and his audience was greatly delighted and amused, and so intent on the comedy enacted by him, that they did not see a new comer in a green kilt and short round gray coat that had got among them, until he put his hand on Sandy's shoulder, and said, with a loud voice—

"In the name of his Majesty King George, and in the name of Lord Strathalbane, you are my prisoner."

It is impossible to describe the consternation created by this imposing address. The bulk of the audience bolted, and were out of sight as quickly and as mysteriously as Roderick Dhu's followers; others went off more slowly, but fast enough to show they were anything but easy in their minds. A few stood to brave the wrath of the man in authority, but they were very few—viz., Sandy, who could not well help himself; Robbie, who was an old soldier, that had been in the wars with Colonel Graham, and had not learned to run away, at least without striking a blow; and Robert, who, at the moment of his own and Farrum's triumph, would not run from a roaring lion, far less from a consequential forester.

Sandy's face was irresistibly ludicrous, and worked as if under the influence of a galvanic battery. He looked at the deer, then at Robbie, at Robert, at Farrum, and at every other object around; and at last raised his eyes, with a look half pleading, half frightened, half roguish, and so entirely comical, to the face of the forester, that that functionary—who was not by any means a bad fellow—found it extremely difficult to maintain his look of severe importance and gravity.

“Good day to ye, freen’,” said Sandy, with a nervous twitch of the right eye and cheek.

“Come, Sandy,” answered the forester severely, “that’ll

no do. Ye are my prisoner, and afore the Justices ye maun go, afore ye're an hour aulder, for I hae caught ye wi' the redhand."

"No more red than yer ain," said Sandy, holding up both his hands, and putting on such a look of injured innocence, as would have been very provoking, had his whole appearance, still sitting astride on the deer, not been so laughable; "but it'll sune be red eneuch," he went on, "if ye'll ask me to *grealoch** this grand stag, as I think ye should do without ony mair talk, as he'll no improve ony mair wi' the inside intill him;" and before the forester could answer him, Sandy had out his knife. "Come, Robbie, and haud him on his back till I grealoch him; do ye no see Mr. Walker wants us?"

"Stop, Sandy, I want naething o' the kind, and if ye are no content wi' what ye hae dune already, I'll hae ye not only put in jail for killin' the deer, but banished for cuttin' him up wi' your knife."

"What hae I dune already?" answered Sandy, who, now that he had got over the first startling fright, was recovering the use of his very glib tongue.

"What hae ye dune? Hae na' ye killed the deer, and did I no find ye on the top of it?"

* To disembowel.

"Me kill the deer! your ain dowg killed him, and we only cut his craig to let the blood oot o' him, to mak him clean meat;—ask them," nodding his head at Robert and old Robbie.

"That's just the truth," said Robbie, in a tone of impartial honesty that was most convincing.

"Weel, what do you say?" turning to Robert.

"I say," answered Robert, unhesitatingly, "that your brute of a dog would not kill a sheep, let alone a deer. My pup killed it, with my assistance. I found it on this side the river, and as you see, killed it on this side. What do you say to that?"

Sandy groaned aloud at this, to his idea, very foolish and damaging admission. "Ye canna deny, young gentleman," replied the forester, with a shade of deference in his tone, "that the deer is my master's; and I will carry it to the castle, and report the whole matter to him, and let him do wi' it what he likes."

"You may just do as you like," said Robert, rather proudly, as he walked away.

"Good-day to ye, Mr. Walker," said Sandy, now quite himself, and speaking rather saucily; "and when ye want a clean-killed deer, send him this gate, and we will do the job for ye. Yon's a braw pup; he'll hain the corn for us this harvest, I'm thinkin'."

"Ay," added Robbie, who had always an eye to business, "and the mair o't will come to my mill, that it is keepit oot o' the stamachs o' your deers, Maister Walker;" and away they went.

"Weel," said Sandy, as they proceeded on their way, "I think the *oir* (heir) was wrang in makin' you and me oot liars, Robbie; but it's just like them a'—aye tell the truth and let the deil into their parridge-pat. I am no sayin' that it's a bad thing to ken that ye can trust a man's word as if he was on his aith on a' occasions; but do ye think, Robbie, that it is athegither wrang to say a word ajee to keep yersell oot o' trouble?"

"Richt or wrang, Sandy, it is the nat'ral way wi' me; and I'm thinkin' it's no far frae bein' the same wi' you. He is no a bad fellow, Jamie Walker the forester, after a', but he is an awfu' chiel for runnin', and amang a' Lord Strathalbane's gillies there is no anither that I wadna suner hae at my heels if I happened to be half a mile across the river on a moonlight night."

"Will he carry yon stag hame at ance on his back to the castle?"

"Carry twenty stane weight ten mile on his back? Strong as he is, he'll no do that. He'll come for it wi' auld Curly afore twal at night. See where he is pullin' it to hide in the bank o' the river. He'll cover it ower

wi' stanes to keep the craws and dowgs awa'. He'll no need to tie his napkin to the horns to scaur the kites, for they're awa' just noo."

"It will tak him till twal to win back wi' the auld horse ; but the day's lang, and it will no be dark afore nine. There's nae mune, and he'll hae a darksome ride o't."

"Ay, it'll be dark eneuch at ten, I'm thinkin'."

"I'm thinkin' sae too, sae I'll bid ye gude afternoon."

"The same to you ;"—and they parted.

James Walker, or as he was usually called "*Sheamus More*," or Big James, had long been forester in Ardmark, and was considered the most trusty, as he certainly was the swiftest of foot and most powerful of Lord Strathalbane's keepers. When the inroads of the Glenurn folk became frequent, and their depredations extensive, several stout men were placed in a lodge built in the great pass leading from Glenurn to the heart of the forest, to check, frighten, or capture them. Notwithstanding these precautions, it was found that many of the deer found their way to the glen, and some time before the circumstance just related the present Lord Strathalbane, young and ardent, as already mentioned, determined to put a stop to all poaching in his forest. The

next step was to place his crack man *Sheamus More*, in the *Camuscoon* Lodge, with as many assistants as he should find necessary to keep off the Glenurn men. This was no sooner known than the deer were left unmolested, and in the course of the following autumn they consequently, at the approach of cold weather, crowded down towards the river, and frequently crossed it, and destroyed the crop of the small farmers there. Still they kept quiet, and by and by it was thought that some of Sheamus's assistants might be withdrawn. The people of the glen still remained well-behaved; and at last Sheamus was left the sole guardian of that side of the forest, his master thinking him the only one of his foresters capable of keeping them on their own side of the river. Honest Sheamus was proud of the confidence placed in him, and continued most faithful to his charge; but when left alone, in a lonely out-of-the-way place, he began to weary, and long for company. This feeling gained upon him, and led him to pay occasionally visits to the proscribed glen; and it so happened that on one of these occasions he met Eever Crawford, the niece of old Janet Crawford, Mary Livingston's old attendant, who happened to visit Dunurn with the young lady, instead of her aunt who was ailing. Eever was a very nice pretty girl, and Sheamus took

great pleasure in her society—first of all as the servant of his master's cousin, which formed a tie between them, and then because he thought her the prettiest and pleasantest girl he had ever seen, and the most likely to cheer his lonely dwelling at Camuscoon Lodge. Eever thought equally well of Sheamus ; and, as might naturally be expected, when two young people of opposite sexes took this view of each other, marriage was the result. The lodge was not above a few miles by a hill-path from Glengarve, so that Miss Livingston was able, when she wished it, to ride her pony by a very rough bridle-path to see her old servant ; and when she visited Dunurn, she and Robert always paid her a visit. This kept up Eever's love for her mistress, and she never lost an opportunity of showing it.

Early on the morning after Farrum, with the help of his master and Hugh Fraser, had killed the stag, Sheamus presented himself at the cottage of Dunurn, with a much more savage mien than he had exhibited the day before, and asked for Mr. Duncan Graham. That gentleman at once saw him, and after inquiring after Sheamus's health, asked him his errand.

" I daursay, sir, ye hae heard o' the deer that was killed doon by here yestereen, and the pairt your son took in the matter."

"I did hear something of it."

"Weel, sir, a' concerned admitted that the deer belonged to my maister Lord Strathalbane, and I gaed for Curly—that is the auld horse—to tak it hame to the castle, after hidin' it under the bank o' the river ; and although I came back for it as sune as I could, some ane else was afore me, and took it aff, sae that when I came back I found nothing but the head and skin, the carcage being ta'en. Noo, sir, I wouldna even sic an act to you ; but that it was ta'en by some o' the folk o' the glen naebody can hae the face to deny, and I'm just come to ask you to mak those wha took it gie it up, or there'll be mair aboot it than they'll like,—that's a'."

"You have put the case very well, James," answered Mr. Graham ; "but you draw wrong conclusions." Mr. Graham was rather addicted to oratory. "I admit that the deer may have been your master's, when it was on your master's land ; but as certainly it was mine, when on my land. And as the deer in question was never—as I have been informed, and have no reason to doubt—meddled with by my son, or any of my people, when on Lord Strathalbane's land, but was chased and killed by them on my land, the only legitimate conclusion to be drawn is, that neither his lordship, nor you, as

his servant, had any right whatever to claim, or in any way to interfere with it. It was wrong to have taken the deer away privately, and without your or my knowledge ; and if I knew who committed that act, I would make them at least restore it—but certainly not for the purpose of being carried to the castle, seeing that I have a preferable claim to it myself. These are my sentiments ; so, James, you and I need have no farther discussion on the subject. I'll send out your morning to you, James, so pray wait a moment."

James did wait, and swallowed his morning, in the shape of a large glass of whisky, with evident relish, before he went away. As he turned to go, his eye fell upon Farrum lying under one of the windows of the house without a door, busy licking the wound in his side. James looked at the noble dog with unconcealed admiration.

"If I'm no' mista'en," said he, half aloud, "there'll be a tale or two to tell o' you yet, my braw fallow. What a chest ; and, eh sirs, what a back ! Weel, I never afore saw the dowg that cam up to that auld haveril body Allan Stewart's rhyme, that he said Ossian made aboot his faither Fingal, and his choice o' a dowg :—

“ Thus did Finn his dog select :
With berry ’—

"Allan used to say that some folk made the eye no' like a berry, but like a slae ; but I think yours, my freen', is more like a blaeberry, and some ither berries that I could name, than like a slae. Hoo was it again ?—

" ' Thus did Finn his dog select :
With berry eye, and ear erect ;
With curved hough and horse-like breast,
Broad the loin, and deep the chest.'

"There is mair nor that aboot the

" ' Nape set far behind the crest—
Such the dog that Finn loved best.'

"I'm no' sae sure o' the twa last lines ; but I'm no far wrang, I ken. Allan used to say something aboot the ears being like a leaf, but doobtless *erec'* was put in because it rhymes wi' *selce'* ; but your ear is as thin as a leaf, and *erec'* too. Sae gude day to ye, my commorad." And away he went to take another look at the place where he had left the deer the evening before.

James was not a man to make mischief if he could avoid it ; and he turned in his mind how he could get over the present matter without vexing his master with it or bringing any one into trouble. It must be admitted that the idea of being baffled by the men of Glenurn, and this being known far and near in the country, was very disagreeable to him ; and while

he vowed to have his revenge in due time, he wished to hush up the thing if possible.' He thought the whole affair over and over again on his way home ; but the conclusion he came to was, that it would not be right, or perhaps safe, to do so, and that he must tell all to Lord Strathalbane, come of it what might.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FINE.

TREMENDOUS was the wrath of the young nobleman on hearing James's narrative. He got a search-warrant, of which the most unscrupulous use was made in Glen-urn; every house was ransacked, but to no purpose—no trace of the deer being found. A summons was then issued, calling Robert Graham, Sandy M'Gregor, and Robbie M'Dougall, before his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the county of A——, at a court to be held by them at the town or village of Pitlarich on the 26th day of August in the year of grace 18—, to answer the charges preferred against them at the instance of James Walker, forester, etc. etc. etc., anent the slaying of a male deer or stag at, etc. etc.

It is difficult to conceive the perturbation of spirit into which this summons threw Sandy and Robbie. They met at the mill, and had a very long consultation,

which ended in nothing definite beyond this—that they would go to Dunurn and get Mr. Graham's advice.

"But, Robbie," said Sandy, "div ye no think we should tell the laird a' about it?"

"Dootless," answered Robbie, whom campaigning had rendered cautious, "if we canna help it; but there is nae use makin' oursels worse than we are, ye ken, if we can get ower doin' sae."

"Ay, but my gudesire tauld me that if ye want a soond coonsel, ye maun tell facts; and as he thinks the deer was his ain, as it was killed on his side o' the river, there's naething to fear, except that he may be angry at no gettin it himsell, and I'm thinkin' he'll no mind that; sae, Robbie, we'll e'en tell him what grand venishin he made."

"The Colonel aye said ye suld keep your enemies as blind as a bat, if ye could; an' he was a cleverer chiel than his brother, though he is no wantin' in sense either,

"But mind ye, Robbie, the laird is no oor enemy, but oor freen', sae I am for followin' my gudesire's plan, and tell him a'."

"Weel, weel, do just e'en sae," said Robbie, in a very virtuous tone, and as if he determined to act a most open and honest part.

As Mr. Graham had had Robert's summons before him for some time, and had thought the business well over before Sandy and Robbie came to him, he was quite prepared with the advice they so much wanted. He did look severe for a moment when the two worthies told him they had quietly taken the stag away ; but he instantly cleared his brow and said—

“Well, without intending it, you did me and mine a service. If the deer had been left, I should be under the necessity of taking steps to vindicate my rights ; but having been taken away, one cause of contention between Lord Strathalbane and myself was removed ; so, although you acted not altogether disinterestedly, or openly, or for that matter properly, I forgive you. My advice to you is one that is easily followed—Do nothing, don't go to the court, and I will indite a letter to the chairman of the Justices that will set things right.”

This advice being really easily followed, and much to the taste of the parties, they highly approved of it, and followed it to the letter—as indeed they would have done, whatever it had been.

Mr. Graham wrote the letter—and a good letter it was—stating how the deer had been found and killed on his property ; that, consequently, it was his and not Lord Strathalbane's ; and that, under these circum-

stances, the summons was incompetent, and that it would be illegal to proceed to try his son and tenants under it. It was duly delivered to the bench of Justices, and it is hard to say what effect it might have produced upon the quorum of magnates composing it, had it not been for the presence of Lord Strathalbane. He was very indignant at the tenor of it, especially that part of it that claimed the deer as Mr. Graham's property, and determined to resent this attempt to rob him of his rights and property, as he termed it. He told the Justices he expected them to do their duty, which clearly was to disregard any such improper interference as the letter was intended to be, and proceed at once to inflict the highest penalty the law imposed for the misdemeanour committed by Robert Graham. His lordship magnanimously concluded by saying that, as regarded the other "poor slaves," they did but what they were bid, and he would not therefore insist on their punishment.

The eloquence of a young nobleman just come of age, and owning one of the finest estates in Scotland, is difficult to resist; and there happening to be no one on the bench who cared much to encounter any difficulty that could be well avoided, it prevailed, and Robert Graham was fined twenty guineas, with five guineas of costs, and Sandy and Robert were admonished—in spirit

of course—and dismissed from the bar, in spirit also, all being bodily some fifteen miles away. Part of the sentence was that Robert Graham should be imprisoned until he made payment of fine and costs.

When this sentence was made known to the Grahams they were extremely indignant ; and had it not been that their circumstances were so hopelessly reduced that they could not afford it, they would have taken measures to have had it brought under review. As it was, what could they do ? An officer of the law was sent to demand payment, and instructed if he did not get the fine and costs young Graham must be apprehended and sent to the common gaol at Pitlarich. Of course the fine was not and could not be paid ; but Robert was from home when the officer of the justices went for it, so he was not carried off to prison. It was ascertained that the officer would soon call back again, and as Robert was persecuted for the whole community of the glen—as they conceived—scouts were placed to give the earliest intimation of the enemy's approach ; and he, of course, was from home on the next occasion also. At this time Mary Livingston had arrived at Dunurn on one of her visits, and was as indignant as any in the glen at the manner in which her cousin and old playfellow was hunted from his home, and determined to do all she could in his be-

half. She told her aunt that she considered the conduct of her cousin Lord Strathalbane most inhuman, and that she would write her brother George, telling him all the cruelties with which he had visited poor Robert.

"I am sure," she said, "if George knew it all he would be as indignant as I am; but he shall know it, that I am determined upon."

"Well, my dear child," answered her good aunt, "there can be no harm in your writing your brother, in whatever terms you like; but as to his being able to influence Lord Strathalbane to take a more kindly view of what has happened, that's a different thing. You may write, dear," continued the poor mother, who, in her anxiety about her son, could not help catching at straws; "but I do not expect much good from your doing so, and you must not be vexed or grieved should you get a less favourable answer than you expect."

Accordingly, Mary wrote her brother a very strong letter indeed; and having greatly relieved her mind by doing so, proposed a long walk to her cousin Jane Graham. This cousin was about her own age, and as sweet a girl as the sun could shine upon;—about the middle height, with auburn hair, and a pair of large hazel eyes, that kept constantly expressing the feelings, whether of joy and gladness, or sorrow and sadness, that

crossed her mind. The two maidens started off and took the direction of the river, by the path that led to the stepping-stones, there being no other way of crossing dryshod. Once across the river they found themselves on the highroad, which, however, they soon left by striking a small footpath that led up a narrow glen. They continued to walk on for about half an hour, and made considerable progress into the mountainous region forming the forest of Ardmark. On taking a sudden turn of the path at the top of a rather steep ascent, they came in sight of a smart little cottage, with pointed gables, and windows with small diamond-shaped panes. On reaching this cottage they were met by the pretty, tidy wife of James Walker, who received the young ladies with every mark of a hearty welcome.

Mary Livingston looked a little cross.

"I have come to scold you to-day, Eever, not on your own account, but on your husband's."

"I would much rather be scolded mysel', Miss Mary, than hear any one say an unkind word of James, if you please, Miss Mary."

"Oh, of course, no one must find fault with James, whatever he may say or do. But was it very grateful of James to go and inform on my cousin and bring him into such trouble?"

*

"Indeed, indeed, Miss Mary, dear, he could not help it. As an honest servant, he must report to his master what had taken place ; but once he did that he did nothing more."

"What more could he do ? and now he goes hunting after a young gentleman to put him in prison, as if he had killed a man, instead of helping his dog to kill a deer."

"And sore has it been on James to go wi' the officer body to do that ; and he told me that he will not go with the folk that are going after Mr. Robert to-morrow night ; for says James, says he, 'I'll not take a man in his bed, as if I was to shoot a hare sleeping in her form—it's no fair not to give him a fair start.'"

Here poor Jane gave an exclamation of terror, but her cousin gave her a look to keep quiet.

"Give him a fair start, indeed !—that is what they call giving him law ; he has had enough of law, but very little justice, and I am certain James will lead every gillie in the forest to Dunurn, and be the first to take Mr. Robert before he has had any start ; that is what he will do."

"No, mem," answered Eever, who could not, even from Miss Mary, bear to hear her husband abused ; "James doesna need to take advantage of any man,

gentle or simple, for I should like to ken wha could win awa if he was after him."

"So then James is to shout when he comes in sight of the house, and show to those he is with that he wants Mr. Robert to escape?—that is a likely story."

"No, no, Miss Mary; he is to bide behind, for he canna thole to see the young gentleman taken prisoner, and the dule and sorrow there'll be in the family. He wad fain keep the others back, but as a' the lads are to be there, and the officer, he daurna say a whisht, as one or other o' them would be sure to tell, and get him to trouble, and perhaps lose him his place."

"Well, that is kind of James," answered the young lady, as if quite satisfied with what she had been told of James's virtues. They then entered the cottage, nursed Eever's baby, and got numerous histories of that young gentleman's cleverness, and talked over various other matters, till the visitors thought it time to take their leave.

When they reached the stepping-stones they found Robert waiting for them.

"You have come thus far to meet us. A longer walk would hurt you, I suppose?"

"No, Mary, but I do not like to put a foot on the enemy's ground."

"You are more considerate than the enemy. He has no great delicacy towards you or yours."

"Mary, I cannot bear to hear you talk so of your noble cousin ; but I see by Jane's face that you have alarming tidings."

They had hold of his arms, one on each side of him, and as he said this, they thought he stiffened himself a little, but there was no other sign of his being in the least moved.

"Yes, Robert," burst out his sister, who kept so long quiet with great difficulty, "they are all coming to-morrow night, and they will take you away to prison, and perhaps murder the whole of us ;" and she looked in great alarm.

"If they can catch me, I daresay they'll carry me off to prison ; but as for you being murdered, there is not much fear of that. But, Mary, will you tell me your version of this alarming story ?"

"My version of the story is a short one : An officer of the law"——

"That is a thief-catcher, I take it."

"Well, then, a thief-catcher is coming to-morrow night to take you prisoner when you are sound asleep in bed ; and as that important gentleman may require assistance, the foresters are coming with him to sur-

round the house, I suppose, and prevent the possibility of escape."

"A very good plan, and I give Strathalbane credit for it, although I must say I scarcely thought he would have gone so far against an old playfellow. Are many of the foresters to be of the party?"

"All of them, from James Walker downwards."

They walked on some time in silence.

"I know what is passing in your mind, Robert."

"You are a prophetess, Mary. What is it?"

"Are you not at this moment counting the number of bullets you have ready, and thinking whether 'Thunder' is in trim, with new flint and sleek well-oiled sides. Are you not, now?"

"You are a fairy. I would call you a witch, only you are not old or ugly enough for one."

"Robert," said his sister, "you are to do nothing of the kind. I know very well what you are contemplating, but instead, you must start this very evening for——shire, where Cousin Ronald has been so long anxious for you to go. They will never go that far to look for you; and if they do, you can get away into some of the islands among Ronald's friends till all this blows by. I wish I could go with you, to see that you do not get drowned in the sea that rolls its big waves up

to their very doors. It must be very grand, but very terrible."

"It is not a bad idea, Jane, and we will talk to our father and mother about it. They will hunt me from home as if I were a thief or a murderer, and the vile wretches come here to bring disgrace on us all. My curse on them!" burst out the lad, in uncontrollable fury. "I shall have my revenge, if hanged, drawn, and quartered. I shall, by all"——

"Stop, Robert," said Mary, putting her hand on his shoulder; "don't say, think, or do anything unworthy of a Graham of Glenurn."

He stood for a moment looking at her, his face flushed, his chest thrown out and heaving, and the large drops gathered in his flashing eyes.

"Mary, it is a dreadful struggle, and half kills me. I care not for myself, but look at my good old grandfather and grandmother. My father and mother, brother and sisters, see them all in sorrow, and feeling disgrace on my account, who should be a support to them in the fallen fortunes of our family. And what have I done? Killed a deer on our own ground—our own only in name, it is true, but still ours"—— He checked himself, was quiet for a moment or two, then continued in an altered tone—"Thunder will do it all, and Farrum will lend his

aid. I'll hit him hard there, and then for the west coast, if my father and mother think it right. But hark, girls, not one word at home of Thunder and Farrum, and I will make my arrangements this evening."

"You may depend upon us," answered Mary, "and leave us to get all the tidings we can to insure security and success."

The heads of the family thought the plan of going on a visit to their cousin on the west coast the best arrangement that could be made, and preparations were at once begun for Robert's departure, which was fixed for next day, early enough to allow of his getting quite beyond the reach of those who were charged with the cruel duty of capturing him.

In the course of the afternoon Robert paid a visit to Sandy M'Gregor, Robbie M'Dougall, and Hugh Fraser; and whatever his business was with these worthies, it seemed, from the nods, winks, and quiet chuckles they dispensed among everything around them, to have been settled entirely to their satisfaction. Hugh closed the smithy an hour earlier than usual—but he closed himself in, and there was some important work going on with sundry lumps of lead and a small iron ladle; and one piece was beat out small on the anvil, and cut into small bits, which some people would call slugs, but

which Hugh called by no name in particular. Sandy cut some jokes at his wife's expense, the meaning of which she was too well acquainted with him not to understand; and a tub of water, an armful of tow, and a bottle of very dirty-looking and disagreeably-smelling oil, found their way into Sandy's barn, where all his secret operations were usually carried on.

In the dusk of the evening Robbie M'Dougall might be seen with a dangerous-looking firelock—dangerous to Robbie, but apparently to nothing else. He walked cautiously to a heap of bog-fir that he had got home for the winter evening's light, and carefully selected a large root with strong branches shooting out at right angles. He put the barrel between two of these branches, and gave it a wrench to one side, after which he ran his eye along the top of it to see if it was straight. He put it again between the branches and gave it another twist, tried again if it was straight, and continued to do this until satisfied that it was all right. The lock of Robbie's gun was a curious invention—how it was kept on, and how made to perform its functions, no one but himself knew—and after one rather erratic performance, no one cared to make the intimate acquaintance of this wonderful implement of slaughter. This was on an occasion of Robbie going out to stalk a covey of partridges he

had been watching in a stubble-field for hours, till he saw them gather in a round lump for the night, when he took out his gun to get them all at one shot. He took a long aim, and then let go a rope that kept up the doghead * with a noise that set up the partridges, but without force sufficient to strike fire and set off the gun. Robbie jumped up, pulled the rope in a rage, and let it go again without attempting to take aim. This time the piece went off with a great noise, giving him a shock that nearly knocked him down. The barrel got away from the stock and went through the air with a most disagreeable noise, and according to his own account, killed two of the birds. No one believed this part of Robbie's story, but after the feat all his friends fled from him when they saw him preparing to fire. On the evening of Robert Graham's visit, he took special care to have his old favourite in great order, and so satisfied was he with it, that he would not give it for the best gun that could be got in Edinburgh, or even London.

Having got all ready, the trio went to their respective beds with clear consciences, to dream of balls, guns, and slaughtered deer.

* The hammer of a firelock, or that part of the lock which holds the flint.

CHAPTER V.

A RAID IN THE FOREST OF ARDMARK.

THE morning after the events we have been chronicling dawned bright and fair, and Robert Graham's preparations having been completed, he loitered about as if very loth to leave home, having a great deal to say to every one at Dunurn, from his old grandfather to his little curly-headed brother, of whom we got a peep when we first saw his mother. His traps, which were not difficult to carry, were put up in a valise, and the old herd was to accompany him until he reached the town of Kilnatroon, where he could get it on by the carrier to within thirty miles of his destination, he himself performing the journey on foot. Robert sent this old retainer off as soon as he could, with directions to leave it at the inn, and not wait his arrival unless he made his appearance before eight in the evening, as he intended taking his gun, and might be drawn off his

road in the pursuit of game. At last he took leave of all, his cousin and sister being the last.

"Good-bye, Robert," said Jane, "and do not go off the road, as something dreadful may happen to you. Will you not now, dear Robert?—promise me."

"We will ask no promise from Robert, Jane, except to be cautious, and not fail to reach Invercorn as soon as possible, and let us know that he has done so. I shall be away in a few days, but I shall hear of you soon after they do so here. Good-bye."

The two girls watched him till out of sight, and very proud they were of him, as well they might. He was dressed in full Highland dress, of dark Glenorchy tartan, with an ample plaid hanging from his shoulder. His tall athletic form and elastic springy step, the proud set of the head, the free and manly bearing—all marked Robert Graham's gentle birth and ancient lineage. He carried his gun Thunder over his right shoulder, and Farrum trotted cheerily at his side. It was a fine clear day towards the end of September, with a somewhat sharp north wind, a gust of which might bring a cold shower or two in the course of the approaching night. His parents were surprised at Robert's not going away earlier, but as there was a full moon, they thought that he preferred travelling at

night to the expense of being at an inn, as he was but scantily supplied with money. He walked on rapidly for some time, keeping towards the river, which he had to cross to get to the highway. He did so at a ford in a quiet part of the glen, by means of a pair of stilts kept there for the use of those who were not afraid to venture across on such very insecure footing. The road ran through a coppice of oak and birch when he came to it, and after looking about him for some little time, and seeing that there was no one near or in sight, he turned sharp off and was lost in the thickly-growing wood. About half an hour afterwards another man came to the ford, with a plaid hanging loosely over both shoulders, and the stilts were again put in requisition, Robert having thrown them back across the river. This man followed almost the exact track Robert had taken, also disappearing at the same place. Another, and still another, took the same direction at some small interval afterwards ; and at dusk the three might be seen with Graham under a small oak-tree in the outskirts of the wood, on the opposite side from that by which they had entered it. They were Hugh Fraser, Sandy M'Gregor, and Robbie M'Dougall, and all in the highest spirits.

"Robert," said Sandy—Mister was seldom used in those times, when an old Highlander conversed with

the laird's sons—"last night I had a word from the grandfather of the stag that paid Farrum a visit a few weeks ago."

"What was it, Sandy?"

"It was that if I cam' to him the night he wad settle wi' me for a' the corn he has taen frae me for the last ten years."

"And did he tell you where to go to him?"

"He gied me an idea o' that too; but the auld thief keeps close awa to the Castle, and it's no often it wad be safe to pay him a visit."

"And you think it might be done without any great risk to-night?"

"There will aye be some risk goin' intill a lion's den, but it's whiles worth the rinnin'."

"Ye may gang to the lion's den if ye like, Sandy, but deil be in my shanks if I gae," said Robbie.

"Na, na, Robbie, ye haena forgotten the fright ye got when they cam' round wi' the warrant and looked into the mill where ye had the half o' the stag put intill a bagfu' o' the minister's meal."

"Weel, the minister, honest man, has done mony a puir man a gude turn, and his meal is no the waur o' the stag bein' a while in't; but I'll no gang the night within twa miles o' the Castle if I am no

made by some ane ye wadna like to hae a crack wi' mair nor me."

Sandy gave a quiet chuckle.

"I take it," he began, "they'll a' meet at the Castle, and get their directions, and they'll then take the shortest way to Dunurn, which is by Craigachat; they'll be leavin' aboot this time so as to be in the glen at midnight, and it will be safe eneuch for us to be in sight o' the Castle aboot the same time; and may be we'll hae as much pleesure in our veesit as they'll hae in theirs. Ye may bide near Toldave, Robbie, and get a chance and a gude ane there, and if so, I'll be glad to be a mile frae ye, Robbie, for that is queer wark ye hae wi' thae ropes."

The three men had carried their guns, stocks and barrels separate, and they were fixing and loading them all this time. The whole party then started, and went straight into the heart of the forest. They all, except Robert, knew every glen, knoll, and valley; and there was no hesitation about their proceedings. They crossed several large burns, ascended and descended several considerable hills, and without a word spoken they continued at a wonderful pace for upwards of an hour. *Sandy, who was the leader, then stopped suddenly.

"They are owre yonder," he said, pointing his hand,

"and no a mile frae us, but we hae the wind, and even Sheamus More himsell will neither smell nor hear us, even though Robbie sends his barrel after his deers. Aye, my fine fallows, ye are beginnin' your braw sang," as he heard at some distance the roaring of a few stags. "We are just comin' to pay oor respects to you and yer leddies."

They resumed their march, and as they went on the roaring became more loud, and ere long it proceeded from all sides, as if they were surrounded by a herd of furious bulls—and yet one would know they were not ordinary bulls. There are few things so appalling as the noise of a forest of deer on a frosty night in the month of October. There is something weird and unearthly in it, and the tyro stalker not unfrequently shrinks terrified by it, and all but abandons his sport. Robert Graham felt his hair bristling, as one great stag challenged with a mighty voice, and a hundred answered in a hundred different keys from glen, corrie, and mountain-side.

"Fine music that," said Sandy; "it beats the band o' the Black Watch, that ye're ay telling us about, Robbie. Aye, man, sae ye're by yersell, are ye? I'm thinkin' ye'll beat Dugall Bane's muckle chanter. I say, Robbie, you and Hugh go quietly alang, and try

your chance awa towards Toldave, and in twa oors be under the brig below Carndu, and I will no be far ahint ye. We'll gang doon to hear what yon bully has to say."

Accordingly they separated. Sandy went cautiously in the direction that the challenging stag was heard, a considerable distance off. He got into a rut, or cut, that ran down towards the place, and followed it for nearly a quarter of a mile; Robert after him, holding Farrum on a leash. The dog trembled, giving a short whine every now and then, but not straining, or attempting to get away. The moon became obscured, which was favourable; but they could only know where the stag was, and whether he remained there, by his roar, which was heard only every eight or ten minutes. They went on slowly; stopping frequently to study the ground, and to avoid being seen when the moon shone with startling brilliancy, which it frequently did. After a pause of this kind, the deer gave a loud lazy bellow, and Sandy whispered, "He's lyin' down. He's a cunnin' auld thief that same; there's no a deer within half a mile o' him; he makes noise eneuch, but little mair."

They continued their slow cautious approach, taking advantage of every cut in the broken ground, every little

hillock and bunch of heather. With much trouble they got to within about two hundred yards of the deer, and found, to their inexpressible annoyance, they could not get a step nearer. They durst not speak, or scarcely move; and there they were, half lying down half sitting, when a sudden squall of wind blew—the moon being obscured for some time—and a few drops of rain fell. In a few minutes a fierce shower of sleet beat in their faces, and for some time they neither saw nor heard the deer. They thought he was off, and Robert was going to get up to shake himself, when Sandy got hold of him, and held him down; the dog at the same time giving a slight cheep, and keeping his face right in the direction of the place where they knew the deer had been. They remained quiet for a few minutes, when they heard a scarcely perceptible noise; and straining their eyes to the utmost, they saw the stag standing gazing intently at them. The slightest motion would have sent him off, as they well knew, but there they lay without moving a muscle, for five—ten—fifteen minutes, until scarcely able to support the tension on their nerves. Ha! what is he doing now? He makes a slow fearful step towards them. He is evidently trying to make out what they are. He seems fascinated—stands for several minutes—makes another step, then another, and another, nearly

a minute between each—it feels an hour to them. But he advances; and soon his branching antlers, and stately head and neck, are seen towering between them and the sky, he cautiously and intently gazing at them. He is evidently in great alarm; but his curiosity seems to have got the better of every other feeling, and on he comes till within twenty yards of them. Suddenly the moon, as it were, starts out between two clouds, throwing a flood of light on the moor, and revealing to the stag his hidden foes. He wheeled round with amazing quickness, and bolted off at full speed. Both men started up, raised their guns, and fired; but not both—only Robert's 'Thunder' went off; and when the smoke cleared away, the stag was gone. The dog strained violently at the leash, and broke away with a bound, and was out of sight in a moment. They looked at each other in wonder, the scene passed so suddenly and so instantaneously. By one accord they walked to the place where the deer had stood; saw where he had sunk in the moss as he bounded off, went a few steps farther, heard a noise beside them, and looking, saw Farrum tearing at something. They found the stag dead, with his antlers sunk to the root in the moss, and lying on his back, having made a somersault when hit. With great difficulty they got the antlers out of the moss; and on doing

so, there lay before them one of the finest royal stags in the forest of Ardmark. They were some time before they found where he had been hit. The ball passed between the antlers, taking its breadth out of the top of the head.

“That was weel dune, Robert,” said Sandy, approvingly; “very weel dune, but there was a good deal o’ chance about it.”

“What became of your gun that it did not go off? There was no chance there, Sandy.”

“That shower wet the poother, ye see I daurna cover the lock for fear o’ the rascal seein’ me. He is a gran’ deer, and beats the tother. No so much tallow, maybe, but look at his horns—sixteen points; and see the cup at the top; and to be got sae cleverly too. But we maun sort him.” And throwing off his coat Sandy soon had the noble stag cut in two, having in the first place *grealoched* it.

“I doobt, Robert, we must leave this braw head behind, for it will be an awfu’ weight to carry, and no worth much to us, for there is no great pickin’s on it, and ye ken if there’s to be another warrant, it will be ill to hide. Robbie’s meal-pokes even wadna make it safe. Sae we’ll e’en put it into one o’ thae gaws* in

* A cut or hollow made by heavy rains carrying away the moss.

the moss, and naebody will be a bit the wiser in the mornin'."

"We will not leave it here, Sandy. I have use for it, so cut it clean off."

"It may be as weel to leave it till we come back for the deer."

"We shan't come this way any more to-night, and if we do not carry the deer with us, you must hide it well to keep it safe till the breeze blows by."

"You are right, Robert." Sandy then took careful observations of the place, and proceeded quickly to conceal the deer in a place where it was little likely to be discovered by any person. He covered it carefully with heather, and obliterated all traces of what had taken place, and then took up the magnificent head, saying, "Sae we are to take this wi' us. Are ye goin' to take it wi' ye a' the way to your freen's house? Odd I'm thinkin' you wad sune tire o' it, even if it didna get ye into trouble, which it wad be pretty sure certain to do."

"I do not mean to take it very far, Sandy, but I would like to leave my compliments for Lord Strathalbane; and as he admires a stag's head above most things, it will be gratifying to him to have such a fine

one as this left where he can see it when he gets up in the morning."

This idea tickled and pleased Sandy extremely, and with a chuckle of satisfaction he got the head on his shoulder, and the two set off direct for Strathalbane Castle.

CHAPTER VI.

ROBBIE AND HUGH'S ADVENTURES.

WHEN Hugh and Robbie parted from their companions, they followed the course they had been on for some twenty minutes ; then struck off to the left, and in about twenty minutes more they could see the outskirts of the pine plantations of Strathalbane, where they knew deer were always to be found, being much encouraged to resort there all the year round. They proceeded very cautiously, keeping a sharp lookout for anything that might turn up. Robbie, who dearly loved talking of his adventures in America, astonished his companion by telling wonderful escapes from Indians, and stalking and shooting them much as they were trying to stalk the deer that night. On reaching the wood they looked about in all directions, and being on elevated ground they could see glades of green grass, the favourite resort of deer, at some

distance below ; and the roaring noise that proceeded from all directions left no doubt that they were surrounded by what they were in search of. There was a considerable opening below them, some distance to the right ; and loud bellowing coming from the direction, and a dark wood lying between, through which they could creep along without disturbing the deer, they determined on going that way. When they got into the thick of the wood, leaving Toldave on the left, they were overtaken by the shower that had proved so injurious to Sandy's powder, and seeing a large tree lying on the ground with a thick top, they crept in, and when they had got comfortably under the branches, Hugh said—

“ It's an awfu' eerie place this, Robbie ; I don't like it very much. Ye dinna ken what may be about ye in sic a darksome hole as this.”

“ It's no so bad as Peter Robertson's kiln.”

“ I dinna ken onything about his kiln or himsell, and if it was mair gruesome than this, the less I ken about it the better.”

“ Weel, I heard o' Peter langsyne when I was a bit laddie, when mony folk that kent him were living, and the story o' the kiln was spoken o' too, but no so aften, for it wasna thocht chancy.”

"Weel, Robbie, ye needna say onything mair about it the nicht. Ye'll tell it to me some ither time."

Robbie, however, was in the humour to talk, and it is possible the tone of Hugh's voice, which sounded a little timidly, may have tempted him to go on.

"Maybe aye, and maybe no. Ye ken the 'chapel?'"

"I ken it weel enouch. It is no sae lang since you and me was there thegither."

"Aye, it's no a bad place for findin' a deer, for there are quiet wee corners and neuks about it that they are fond o'. Peter lived there for a lang time, and wad hae been sorry to leave it, if it werena that the Lord Strathalbane o' his time made him his head-forester, and he could gang to see it as often as he had a mind."

"He micht weel like a' that."

"Ou aye, he liked it; I'm no sure but I would like to be head-forester here mysell, but I doobt I maun leeve lang or that comes aboot."

"I'm thinkin' so too."

"It is a pleasant life, but for a' that Peter saw things that I would as sune be blin' as look upon."

"What were they?" asked Hugh, his curiosity getting the better of any qualms he may have felt.

"Well, the only ane o' them I mind the noo is about his kiln," said Robbie, lowering his voice and

dropping^s much of the broad accent he had acquired when a soldier. "Ye see, after Peter had been head-forester for a good many years, his master sent for him one day, and told him that he wanted a stag to send to England, which must be one that would not be a discredit to the forest, and that there was a young English gentleman at the Castle that wished to go with him, as he wanted to kill a deer himself. Peter was very glad to hear this, for he was a very good hand at the gun, and liked to be after the deer, and he liked nothing better than to have a young gentleman as his companion. He was ready in half an hour, and went off along with the Englishman, and a lad Donald Fraser, who I mind a very old man when I was a callant. They went straight to the 'chapel,' but the wind was from a bad airt, and no a deer was there. They kept on in the face o' the wind, thinkin' that they would come up with the deers, for Peter well knew that they were going up the wind, and would be before them ; but after travellin' till the evenin' they did not overtake them. They then struck to the right, and went away to the east, at the back of the forest, a good bit beyond the head of Glenbuie. Never a deer did they see the whole day, except about a dozen, who went off like the wind before they were within half a mile o' them. Peter made

up his mind no to get a deer that day, and was awfu' vexed, for he did not like to disappoint his master and the Englishman ; and, most of all, he did not like to be beat himsel'. He went over ground that he never missed getting deers in before, but no a hoof was there that day ; and at long and at last he was going to turn home, when from the top of a height he saw about a score of stags grazing quietly in a wee corrie about half a mile off. He looked well over the ground, and soon saw that they were hard to get near, but he well knew how to set about it ; and after an hour of creeping, and wading burns and bogs, and dragging of their bodies through sloughs and holes, they got near enouch to try a shot. Peter told the Englishman that he was to fire the first shot ; but as his master wanted a stag, he must himself fire, if no just at the same time, immediately after. In the middle of the small herd there was a grand old stag, that looked as big as two of the others, and Peter thought he had gotten the very king of the forest. The horns werena an inch short of four feet, and bristling with points, three sharp ones with white ends at the top of each. He whispered to the Englishman, ' We must have that one—fire.' The gentleman raised his gun to take aim, but in a minute took it down again, and looked queer at the stag. He raised it again, but let it down quicker than before,

and began to tremble all over. Peter thought he was nervish ; and no wishing to lose the stag, he up with his gun—but he too let it down without firing. He shut his eyes tight, and then up with it again. Well, this time he let it down with a noise, saying, 'Their protector is with them, and we will leave them in the name of God.' At that moment the Englishman's gun went off; and although he was not looking at the deer, and it went off from his finger touching the trigger in his fright, it was easy known that the ball had struck some o' the deer from the thud it gave. The stags all bounded off, and were soon out of sight, leaving Peter and the gentleman looking at one another, as if they had seen something uncanny ; and there is no doubt they did that."

"What did they see?" asked Hugh, who felt the deepest interest in Robbie's narrative.

"Well, I'll tell ye that as it was told to me. When they ran their eye along the barrel to take aim at the stag, what should they see behind him, and between him and them, but an old, old man, with long white hair hanging down about his head. He looked as if he was five hunder year old, and was no more nor three feet high. There was something like a deer's skin tied round his middle, and hanging down to near his knees ; the rest o' him had nothing on but a covering of thick

short hair, of the colour of the deer he was with. His arms were long and small, and he put up one of them in a threatening way when the gun was pointed at the deer first, but every other time they looked along the barrel, he was seen, as driving away the deer, and running and jumping about them as if he was demented."

"It was an awfu' sight to see," said Hugh.

"Ay, it was a sight one would go a good bit no to see."

"Did they see ony mair deers that day?" asked Hugh.

"No a hair," answered Robbie; "and, as it was getting late in the day, Peter counselled the gentleman to go home to the castle with Donald Fraser, and said that he himself would try another beat, no to disappoint his master if possible. So the gentleman went off with Donald, and Peter tried one or two places where he thought he would get deer. But no; and it began to get dark when he was fifteen miles from home. This he did not much mind, as he was well acquainted with every bit of the forest, and he never feared losing the way. It came on a drizzling, dark night, and the mist began to steal slowly along the hill-tops. A man that did not well know the ground Peter was on would have lost himself in five minutes, and even he began to find it no easy to get along.

His way home took him near the chapel, and he thought, Well, I have seen the day that I could make myself comfortable there. At that moment the night got so dark, that he thought he would just go to the old friendly place, and bide there till it cleared up, or maybe till the morning. Ye must know he had his two good dogs with him, and they were namely in the country as the best deer-hounds in't. Away to the chapel he went, but when he got there he could not find a place of shelter except his old kiln, and the whole of it was down except the place for the fire, which was still covered over with flag stones. In there he crept with his two dogs and his gun, and found that no a drop of rain could get to him. He lay down, his dogs lying beside him and keeping him warm, which he needed, as he was wet to the skin. Well, as he was lying there, thinking what excuse he would make to his master in the morning, and no sure whether it would not be right to take another turn before he went home, the darkness became so great, that he just thought he could feel it. His dogs, which he had never seen frightened for man or beast, began to tremble and whine, as if in great fear, and crept away from him as far as they could into the chimley of the kiln. The darkness got waur and waur, and at last he felt it like a weight upon him. He felt something coming to him, and heard

a sigh at the entrance to where he was. It came nearer and nearer, till he felt a cold damp hand touching him, which made his blood run cold through him. Whatever it was it crawled over and over him, sighing, and sobbing, and groaning, as if in great pain. The dogs were shaking, and trying who would get farther ben away from the thing, and Peter felt more than the bitterness of death upon him. After creeping over him from head to feet, and back again, whatever it was began to take himsell away, and repeated three times, '*It's no the man ! It's no the man ! It's no the man !*' It went slowly away, sighing and groaning as if ready to give its last gasp, and the dogs began to bark. The farther it went the angrier they got, and they began to follow after, and Peter heard as if both were fighting with all their might. At one time they seemed to be getting the better of their enemy, and other times they howled as if getting the worst of it, and at last all was quiet. After a while, Peter got so much of his strength back as to be able to call to his dogs, but they did not come near him, and he lay there alone till the morning in a state of great fear and trembling. With the first blink of daylight, he went out of his lair, and about a hunder yards from it he found one of his brave dogs stark and dead. He saw nothing of the other till he got to his own house, when he found him there before him ; but when called to

him, instead of coming, he began to shake and whine, and soon hid himself, and he never followed him again till his dying day. Nobody doubted that if Peter had not taken his leave of the deer and their 'protector,' in the name of God, he, and not his dog, would have been found dead in the morning."

Robbie's voice got so low and solemn as he went on with his narrative, as to be scarcely audible, and by the time he came to the end of it, he felt a creeping of the flesh that he would not like to confess to. As for Hugh, his hair stood on end, and he would have given the best stag in the forest, if he had him, to be in his warm bed at home.

They, however, remained there for some time listening to the raving of the wind among the trees, which swung and creaked in a dreary manner. Of a sudden there was a *too-loo-loo* right over their heads, in a clear loud voice, that made them nearly shout, so strange and startling it was.

"What is it, Robbie, for gudesake?" asked Hugh.

"A d——d hoolet," answered Robbie, whose nerves were considerably shaken.

Immediately another owl answered from a distance, and the two carried on a conversation, which disgusted Hugh extremely. He and Robbie were

now getting over the fright they had had, and thinking of proceeding on their way, when there was a terrific roar behind them, and so near that they thought they felt "the blast o' it blawin' their hair aboot," as they afterwards told, and before it ceased—indeed simultaneously with it—there was a crash among the branches of the tree, that brought them in showers of broken fragments about their ears.

"Michty be here!" cried Robbie, rushing out from his place of shelter.

"O Lord, mercy, mercy!" shouted Hugh, who thought the end of the world had come. The next moment a large stag struggled violently for an instant among the branches, and sprang out between them as terrified as themselves. A branch caught its feet and tripped it over within a yard of them. It rolled over, leaped to its feet, and bounded off before they could realise what had taken place.

"The son of the unblessed!" said Robbie, looking for his gun, which had dropped from him in his fright.

"Let's awa' frae this awfu' hole o' a place," said Hugh.

"The Colonel used to tell us no to be in a hurry when before the enemy, and he was not often wrong, I take it," said Robbie, who had been in too many real dangers,

not to recover his presence of mind in an instant in the presence of mere imaginary ones. "So we'll just go quietly down a bit this way to see what's in the wind."

Hugh's nerves were much shaken, but he walked alongside his companion till they reached the margin of the opening they had seen from above. There was a wall, now much broken down, that had been originally intended for protecting the wood that skirted round the glade or opening; and creeping alongside it, they continued still to descend towards the great valley in which the castle is situated. They had not gone far when they saw three or four deer grazing quietly, near the opposite side of the glade, and about sixty yards from them. The moon was shining brightly at the time, so that they could see them perfectly. The deer were grazing down towards the vale, and going pretty quickly, as if to get under cover, or to join some others in advance. The men went a little back into the wood, and walked down a short way, keeping them in view, and when near the end of the glade they again crept to the wall.

"Do ye see yon big chiel', Hugh? That one is yours, if ye're worth yer kale. I'll take the one that's leadin'—the colonel o' them, ye ken"—said Robbie, with a scarcely audible chuckle. "Now ~~make~~ ready," and Robbie com-

menced to twist his fingers among the intricacies of his ropes. Being quite up to them, he was ready as soon as Hugh, or nearly so, and they took a long aim, so long that an impatient man might think they had fallen asleep. Both guns went off at the same moment, Robbie's with a noise that was deafening, and the two deer marked rolled on the grass, the others dashing wildly away. Each man rushed upon his own victim. Hugh's started on its forefeet, but in the effort to get on its hind feet it fell forward; again started up in the same way, again to fall as it had done before. The ball had touched the spine and paralyzed the deer, and Hugh had it by the antlers in a few seconds after it had been hit. When caught it roared with pain and terror, but Hugh's knife soon quieted it effectually; and taking it by the antlers, he dragged it down into the wood with perfect ease, its sleek hide sliding over the heather.

Robbie had shot his deer—a large stag—through the heart, so that it was dead ere it had touched the heather. He cut its throat to bleed it, after which he stood up and looked about him, when he saw another deer on its side and giving an occasional kick, about ten yards beyond the one he had killed. He flew at it, and found a fine hind so badly wounded that she could not rise. He bled this one also, and, like Hugh, dragged both

under cover of the wood. The three deer were soon *grealocked* and dragged to the burn, and within a short distance of the bridge where the whole party was to meet. It still wanted half an hour of the time of rendezvous, so the two crossed the burn and went along in the direction of the Castle, and so near it that they heard the great clock strike one. They found themselves on a height overlooking the vale of Strathalbane, in the centre of which they could trace the course of the Albane river by the flashes of its rapids in the moonlight. In the middle of a wide plain the stately towers of the Castle reared their turreted heads, with dark masses of trees scattered around. They looked on for some time.

"I wonner what he's dreamin' about," said Robbie.

"No about you or me, Robbie," answered Hugh ;
"that ye may be sure o'."

"Perhaps about his deers. He's got eneuch o' them to serve himsell and us too, Hugh, if he would but think so,"

"I say, do ye see onything doun yonder, a wee bit on this side o' yon clump o' trees. I'm thinkin' it's a deer, Robbie, and a tame one too."

"Maybe no the waur o' that, Hugh. To my thinkin' a tame deer may carry as much white on his brisket as

a wild ane, and maybe a little mair. But he is unco near the Castle, and some o' the folk there may be prowlin' about, as is aye the case in big houses, where there is every day in the year some *jewkery-pawkery* goin' on."

"I dinna think there is ony ane stirrin' the noo, and there's a grand chance frae ahint yon tree, which is as round as the Toor o' Babel."

"Hoo do ye ken that the Toor o' Babel was round, man?"

"I thoct a' toors were round, or should be."

"Ye ken naething about it. But yon fallow would be the better o' a ball through his wame—and what's mair, he'll sune hae it too. But bide ye here, Hugh, and if ye see onything stirrin' gie a whistle. I'll keep weel under cover, as the Colonel used to tell us we should do when skrimmaging wi' the enemy."

Away Robbie went, dodging about from one clump of trees to another, and keeping as much as possible in the shade. The deer continued to browse quietly, edging towards a large clump of trees, which if Robbie gained unobserved, he could not miss getting an easy shot. The only danger was, that the deer might get into the wood before he could be there, and so escape. This, however, Hugh saw was not likely to happen, as it was going

very deliberately, and as if under no apprehension. A considerable time elapsed, and he was becoming impatient. The animal had gone into the shade of the trees, and he all but gave up the hope of a successful issue to the adventure, when he saw a flash, and a mighty noise followed, as if a twelve-pounder had been fired. He felt disposed to rush to the spot, but he knew the danger of being taken unawares, so he kept his place of observation.

Robbie stalked his deer in the most scientific way possible, and got within easy range of it, his only difficulty arising from its getting so close into the wood, that he could see it but indistinctly. He determined, however, to do his very best, and after aiming long, he slipped his rope, and the result was that already mentioned. Robbie was again successful, and tumbled over his deer, and ran at it with all his might, and got hold of it as it was just getting up again. A great struggle took place, and Robbie was so hard pressed that he could not get out his knife. He held on, however, by the hind leg, though the animal nearly kicked the life out of him. Both fell several times, and rolled on the ground, and it is hard to say how the struggle would have ended had not other parties made their appearance. This so frightened Robbie, that he let go his hold, and off went his antagonist, with a lumbering, ungainly gallop, and set

up a very loud and triumphant bray as it got twenty yards off. Robbie stood as if petrified for some time, then dashing his fist at his own ear, he cried, "Oh! gosh bless me! a cuddy."

Those who had come so opportunely for the poor donkey, set up a shout of laughter, and Robbie found himself confronted by Robert Graham and Sandy.

"What for did ye let him aff, Robbie? he wad mak fine venishon."

"Venishon here, venishon there, the brute nearly brak' my ribs," answered Robbie, trying to put a good face on what he considered a very bad job.

"What'n sort o' grist was that ye were goin' to take to yer mill?"

"I wish I had your tongue 'tween the millstanes," says Robbie, picking up his gun, ropes and all.

Robert and Sandy were on their way to the bridge where they were all to meet, after placing the stag's head on a fine old dial-stone in front of the Castle, where it must be seen by the first person that opened the hall-door, when they saw Robbie crossing a clear space between two clumps of wood, and at once recognised him. On doing so, they made for the opposite side of it, and saw the whole of Robbie's proceedings, which they found too amusing to think of interrupting, even

to save the donkey. That unlucky quadruped had a very narrow escape, the ball going through one of its ears, which made it start so suddenly, that it fell as if shot through the heart—otherwise it got off scatheless.

The three soon joined Hugh, and they all went at once to where the deer lay ready to be removed. This was a work of some difficulty, and they thought of abandoning one of them, as it would be dangerous to remain much longer so near the Castle, and out of the question to return there when the foresters were at home. Robert felt but little interest in this part of the night's work, but his companions felt the keenest; and to abandon a fat deer, was the very last thing they would think of doing, except under the last necessity. They consulted together for a few minutes, when Sandy said, as if in continuation—"I saw him away ahint the Castle, and I could hae him here in five minutes."

"Aff wi' ye, then, as if the de'il was ahint ye," said Robbie.

"Aye, or Sheamus More," added Hugh, laughing; and instantly Sandy went off at a killing pace.

"Where is he going?" asked Robert.

"He's awa for Curly, the auld horse, to help us on a wee wi' the deers. We canna get them aff in time ony ither way."

In about a quarter of an hour Sandy was heard approaching, urging the respectable Curly to a speed that he was but little accustomed to. Two of the deer were soon tied securely on the back of the horse, by means of ropes which the men carried coiled round their waists; and Robbie led the way with him, followed by Hugh with the fore part of one of the deer, and Sandy with his head stuck between the two hind legs, and carrying the other half comfortably over the back of his neck, with his arms round the legs, which stuck down one on either side nearly to the ground.

There was a road that ran alongside the burn, through the wood, which, about two miles further down, opened by a gate into the public road, and they made all the haste they could to reach this gate. They found it unlocked, and opening it quietly, for fear of rousing the inmates of a small cottage near it—who had orders to see that it was always kept shut—they got to the road without meeting with accident or cause of alarm. They hurried along, and crossed the burn by another bridge, then turned sharp to the left by a country road. This was also soon left; and on their arrival at a quiet little hollow, with thick hazel brushwood, they took the deer off Curly; and turning it loose, Hugh gave it a lash with a rope and sent it scampering away, not doubting but

it would soon find its way back to its favourite neuk at the Castle. The party thought themselves now pretty safe, having got off Lord Strathalbane's property, there being ample means at hand to conceal the deer, until the following night, when they could return with assistants enough to carry them home without fatiguing themselves. They were ten good miles from their homes, and had to make a detour, which took them there from the opposite direction of that by which they left the glen. Graham bade them good-bye here, and set off for the west coast to visit his cousin Ronald.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. GRIPE'S NOCTURNAL VISIT TO DUNURN COTTAGE.

WHEN Lord Strathalbane got up the morning on which the occurrences just narrated had taken place, one of the first questions he asked was, if James Walker was waiting, and being answered in the affirmative, he ordered him immediately into his presence. The young lord was rather below than above the middle height, and slight, but a very active and well-made man. His face was handsome, the features being small and very regular, but the expression, naturally good, was marred by his not wearing glasses, though short-sighted, which gave him the look of always frowning. His manner was dignified, self-possessed, and somewhat cold.

When the forester presented himself he said, "Well, Walker, what have you done with him?"

"Nothing, my lord."

"How is that?"

"We didn't find him."

"Proceed."

"We went to Dunurn, as your lordship directed us, and surrounded the house, not to allow him or anybody else to escape. We then knocked at one of the doors, which after some time was opened by Mr. Graham himself. He asked us what we wanted. The officer body took out his warrant, and showed a bit stick that he called his baton, and said that he came in his Majesty King George's name, to carry off the person of Robert Graham, as his lawful prisoner, to the prison of Pitlarich." Mr. Graham said, very proud-like, 'I am sorry you have had the trouble to come so far for nothing. My son left his home this forenoon, and is, I should say, at the least five-and-twenty miles from this.'

"'I canna tak yer word for that,' says Maister Gripe, a little uppish-like.

"'I think,' said Mr. Graham, 'a gentleman's word might pass for that much. It did so in my young days, but times are changed. My wife is within here, having retired some hours ago, as are some of my younger children. In that house,' pointing to another door, 'are my father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Graham of Glenurn—the one over ninety years of age, and the other wanting but little of it; the only other person there is

their servant. In that other house,' pointing to the door on the other side, 'are my daughters, with their cousin, Miss Livingston of Glengarve. These are all the inmates of my dwelling, except servants. Are you satisfied?"

"'I'm just thinkin' no,' says Mr. Gripe, in a way that made me feel hot in the face.

"'Impertinent scoundrel!' burst from Mr. Graham, and he was just going to dash at the body, when some one got hold of him behind—I think it was the lady herself—and half pulled him into the house.

"'Ye'd better no meddle wi' me in the discharge o' my duty, or I'll return executioner,' or something like that, says Mr. Gripe.

"'Oh, let him search the whole house,' I heard the lady say. 'Poor Robert is away, and we can therefore submit to the indignity.'

"'Aye, ye had better tak her advice, and the business will sune be ower,' says Mr. Gripe.

"'Never!' said Mr. Graham, in a voice I'll not forget this month or two.

"Well, my lord," continued James, "I knew that Mr. Graham was telling the truth, for no man could say that he ever heard him tell a lie, and I knew that Mrs. Graham would never be so mean as tell one to save her very life; so I went forward and said—

“ ‘Do you say on the word of a gentleman, Mr. Graham, that your son Master Robert is not within, and that he left home in the course of the day ?’

“ ‘I have said it already, and say it again.’

“ ‘And will Mrs. Graham say the same ?’

“ ‘Certainly, I say with all truth that I believe my son to be upwards of twenty miles from this house.’

“ ‘Well then,’ says I, ‘I’ll take on me not to search the house, nor disturb the family, and be accountable to my lord for what I do.’ Mr. Gripe grumbled something, but said nothing in particular, so I told Mr. Graham to shut the door, and just go to his warm bed again, and said I was sorry for disturbing him, although we had our walk for nothing. I then called together the lads, and just as we were moving away I saw some one coming along to the house. One of the lads caught him, and he looked very much frightened. It turned out to be the old herd. I asked him where he had been.

“ ‘I hae been awa’ wi’ Robert’s valise,’ says he.

“ ‘Where is he ?’

“ ‘Wad ye like to ken that, my man ? Ye’ll hae to walk twenty miles and mair or ye see him the nicht.’ We let the body go to his bed, which he was glad to do, for he was tired enough.

“ ‘With that we came away straight here, and got to the

castle about six o'clock. And now, my lord," continued James, looking straight in his master's face, "I want to know whether I did right in not allowing the house to be searched. My place depends on its being right or wrong, and I would not like to lose it. But if I was wrong in trusting the word of Mr. and Mrs. Graham, and lose my place for doing so, the less I have to do with gentlefolks after this the better."

Lord Strathalbane's countenance underwent various changes during this narrative. When he heard what Gripe had said, he frowned, and even clenched his fist when the man would persist in rejecting Mr. Graham's assurance of his son's absence ; and when James told the part he acted himself, he looked admiringly at his honest broad face, but so intent was the latter on his story, that he never looked up until near the end, and did not see these signs of approval.

His lordship answered, slowly and coldly—

"You took a great deal upon you, Walker—more than can well be justified ; but still I forgive you, as I think you judged correctly, that Mr. and Mrs. Graham are incapable of telling an untruth, and believed that their son had left home as he said. And as I think enough has been done to prevent my deer being disturbed or destroyed when they stray out of the forest, you can

tell Mr. Gripe that it is my wish that in the meantime no farther steps shall be taken for apprehending Mr Robert Graham. It may be as well to have this warrant to imprison him in reserve, in case of future inroads from the people of Glenurn."

"I doubt, my lord, the warrant will not have the effect of keeping the deer safe."

"What makes you say so?"

"Some things I have seen this morning."

"What were they?—tell all."

"I'll even do so, my lord. After we left Dunurn we came the shortest way through the forest here. This brought us down above Toldave, and that being the nearest road to Willie M'Bean's house, he went that way. The rest of us came down here, and while the others stopped a little above the castle, I walked down to the front, when I noticed something on the dial-stone. I went to see what it was, and there I found a royal stag's head placed so as to face the hall door. It was just taken off the stag, and was warm—at least so I thought. I looked sharp about and saw something written on the stone, and made it out to be 'A fine of'—, the rest I could not make out. I at once went back to the other lads, and just as I was going to speak to them, we saw Willie coming, running with all his might. Well, as soon as he could

speaking, he told us that from the height above his house he saw the old horse Curly, that is used for bringing home the deer, coming along the road to the gate that opens to the highway below Toldave. He thought it queer seeing the old brute there, so he went down, and when he came on the road near the gate, he saw the traces of the horse going down, and also the traces of three or four men—he could not make out the number so as to be certain of it. He traced them past the gate, but when they got out on the highway he could do so no longer; but he ran a bit along the direction the horse was coming from, and found he could make nothing of it, so he came to tell us as fast as his legs could carry him. We at once started off, and some of us went one way and some another. I went up to near the bridge, and there I found where three deer had been *grealoched*. They had been shot a good piece up, and pulled down to the river. I took a good look at the place where they were shot, in a clear piece of ground below Carnvadie, and there I found another fine hind that had been killed, but was not observed. I have just returned, as I knew your lordship would be wanting me; but I have sent all the lads to see if any trace can be found of the scoundrels. If I got a sight of them I would take the impudence out of them, or my name's not James Walker."

Lord Strathalbane never moved a muscle of his face, and when he spoke it was in a low calm voice.

"I will give £100 to any man that will find out who the men were, and get proof enough against them to make their guilt clear. So if you wish to win the money, be off."

James lost no time in leaving his master's presence, and before twelve o'clock he had all the means at his disposal—and they were numerous and ample—in full operation to detect and bring our adventurous friends to condign punishment.

When left alone, Lord Strathalbane paced up and down the room ; he neither cursed nor raved, but looked not the less determined or dangerous on that account. His kindly feelings—and he had both generous and kindly feelings—were touched by James's account of the scene at Dunurn, and he resolved not to bring further molestation on an old respectable family of fallen fortunes, with whom, moreover, he considered himself connected ; and if Robert Graham had then appeared before him he would have cordially offered him a friend's hand. The latter part of James's story grated dreadfully on this frame of mind, and turned it into a vindictive and determined craving for revenge. So soon are we turned from good to evil by an unexpected inter-

ference with our favourite pursuits and hobbies ! Lord Strathalbane had not the shadow of a doubt that Robert Graham was at the bottom of what he considered the gross insult that had been offered to him. And the first impulse was to order the warrant for his apprehension to be put in execution at any cost. But this would look inconsistent and vacillating, after the directions he had just given to his forester about it, so that idea was given up. He thought the reward he had offered, and the sagacity of his own dependants, very likely to lead to the discovery of Graham's connection with the indignities that had been offered him ; and if they failed, then the warrant could be fallen back upon. His lordship well knew the inability of the Grahams to pay the fine ; and it never occurred to him that his intended prey should escape him by that means.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROBERT GRAHAM VISITS COUSIN RONALD.

ON the fourth day after these occurrences—in the afternoon of the day—Robert Graham might be seen marching rather wearily along a narrow long glen, with many turns, but apparently no end, his good dog by his side, and his gun on his shoulder. There was a small river running in a contrary direction to that he was going, and a good deal of brushwood hanging over the road, which was a practicable enough bridle-path. High hills and mountains reared their scaured heads on either side, with here and there a deep ravine or pass opening a way between, and striking off at right angles from the tortuous but more considerable glen through which his road lay. Frequent mountain-torrents descended, crossing his way, and in some instances forming themselves into small deep lakes at the bottom of the glen. After a rather steep ascent, that extended with

little interruption for half a mile, he reached the highest part of the road, from which a view of the district at the south-west end of the glen was gained—and a more magnificent one can scarcely be imagined. An arm of the sea or loch ran in among mountains, that in many places sprang from the water's edge. These frequently looked as if about to dovetail into each other from opposite sides of the loch. In other places there were beautiful small bays, with soft thick and short grass growing to the rim of white sand, on which the never-ceasing waves broke in gentle ripples; or hazel-brush grew down to the black stones among which the troubled water crept with a rolling noise, drawing hither and thither the slimy wrack and tangle that clung to them. In some places there were more gentle ascents from the sea, on which were perched small cottages with patches of corn and potatoes. On the south side, there was a greater number of these than on the other, and about five miles down there was a low-lying headland, beyond which branched off the principal loch, another narrower one, which ran for some miles behind the hills that formed its side. On this headland, half-hid among natural wood—oak, hazel, and birch—the traveller could see the house of Invereorn, the residence of Cousin Ronald. The situation was very beautiful—a fine slope to

the sea all round, except to the back, where a wooded hill rose abruptly to some height.

There could be nothing more hearty than Robert's reception. He had not written that he was to go, and he had never seen Cousin Ronald, or any one belonging to him ; but he no sooner presented himself, and told who he was, than his kinsman, whose relationship, by the way, he never exactly knew—and being no genealogist, we cannot conscientiously undertake to throw any reliable light upon the subject for any curious person's satisfaction—came forward, with a "How are ye, lad? I am right glad to see a Graham of Glenurn in my house;" and with that Robert was ushered in by his hospitable host, and presented to the lady of the house, and to two or three young cousins, the eldest of whom could not count more than three or four winters.

Ronald M'Phail of Invereorn was about thirty-five years of age, and a stout well-set-up man—a little too fat for fast work, but active and strong as one of his own Highland *gearrans*.* His shoulders were broad and round, his legs were thick and round, and his face was broad and very round, with hearty good-humour oozing out at every pore, and beaming from every feature. His hair was short, fair, very thick, and very

* Small horses.

curly ; and there was a fine reddish border of whisker that ran from ear to ear in a graceful circle round his chin. He never could sit quiet for two minutes, if his life depended upon it. In a corner of the room he had a neat wooden press set up, in which he kept guns, pistols, dog-collars, dog-whips, powder-flasks, shot-belts, fishing-rods, tackle, and many other etceteras ; and he was constantly working among these, cleaning, oiling, splicing, mending and making, and the dexterity with which he handled them was astonishing, considering that he had but one hand—the other having been shot off in Sir Robert Calder's action off Cape Finisterre, in which he gallantly fought as lieutenant of marines in the good ship 'Thrasher ;' the guns of the said ship being at last so heated, that they were more dangerous to friends than foes. But, being a man of many resources, he had the hand replaced by a large iron hook, or, as he called it, "cleek," which he found nearly as useful and handy as the lost member. Indeed one of his favourite subjects of laudation was the cleek, and how it had saved his life one stormy night two years before when out seal-shooting. His boat was upset, and he held on to it with the cleek for three hours after his man had given in from cold and exhaustion, and would have been drowned had he not contrived to get him up on the keel of the boat, where he kept

him with his remaining hand, until they drifted ashore not very far from his own house. Ronald always finished this story with a flourish of the cleek, and declared it "was not one blessed bit the worse next day, barring a little rust that appeared upon it, and which was very easily got off ; no fingers of flesh and blood could have held on as that good cleek had done on that occasion." Soon after he lost his hand, Ronald's father died, and he wanted to go home for a short time to see how things were left ; but he could not get leave, which exasperated him so much, that he threw up his commission, declaring that many a fellow, if wounded as he had been, would have been sent home to recover, and be paid and coddled for six months ; whereas he could not, because he was not a soft lubber, get home for a few weeks to cheer his widowed mother. That part of the narrative always brought the tears to honest Ronald's eyes, and he would have recourse to one of his guns, which he would rub as bright as steel ; but the gun was always thrust into its place with considerable noise, as he finished off by saying, "And to this blessed day, I have not got pay or pension for my good left hand." Ronald, however, was incapable of keeping up for five minutes a breath of wrath enough to dim the clearest glass, and always added cheerfully, "But, thank Providence, we can do

without either, and have a drop to our bite to the bargain." Ronald's language, besides largely indulging in metaphor, was beautifully idiomatic, being—especially when excited—a literal translation of the purest Gaelic. Being the second son, when he quitted the service his prospects were by no means brilliant; but his eldest brother dying from the effects of a cold caught when out shooting wild-fowl, he succeeded to the property, which, although heavily burdened with debt, enabled him to live in comfort, and in the enjoyment of the pursuits he most delighted in.

When Robert Graham came downstairs the morning after his arrival at Inverearn, he found his host walking in front of the house, and in great glee.

"I hope, lad, you slept well and feel refreshed. Why, you don't look in the least the worse of the wear. Eh, that is a noble dog! Young, eh—a pup? Has he got blood? What a loin, and what a chest! Well, I have been all my life among dogs, and I never saw a finer. Ha, ha, ha! what a contrast to my kennel; but I find the little fellows useful—not an otter could be got without them. That little wiry beast is unequalled in a cairn, but he is always in danger, for he squeezes himself in with the hair, where he can't get himself back against it; and about a month ago he was for six days

in a cairn below that slope you see to the right, and all that time it took me and three men to get at him ; and when we did we found he had jumped down into a narrow hole and got jammed, so that he could not turn, and another day would have finished him, for he was starved to the marrow of his bones. That long-haired one, though not so keen, is equally sure, and that split in his nose he got in a cairn two years ago. But they're calling us in to breakfast, and you must be hungry enough after your long travel, for you took next to nothing to your supper last night ;" and into the house they went, followed by a swarm of terriers, some with wiry short hair, some with soft long, some red, some gray, some blue, and some white—Farrum walking among them with a look of majesty in which there was a strong dash of contempt.

After breakfast, Ronald proposed a sail round *Sker-bredaig*, a rock that lay several miles off, which was seldom at that time of the year without seals on it—thinking this the least fatiguing thing they could do until his visitor had got quite rested. They took a lad with them, and setting a sail they slipped away from the shore, with a rapidity and easy motion that delighted Graham, who had never before been in a sailing-boat ; but when the breeze became stronger, and he felt the

boat heeling over as if to upset, he felt himself taking a firm hold of the gunwale, and he at the same time looked at his companion, who sat so perfectly at his ease, and so unconscious of the boat not being on an even keel, that he at once perceived there was nothing unusual in what had startled him. He learned a great deal about the management of a boat before he left Invercarn. There could not be a more willing or better instructor than Ronald; and so constant were the two out in all kinds of weather, that ere long the pupil was nearly equal to the master. When they came near the *sker* they shortened sail, and got their guns ready—the boy taking the tiller, and steering exactly as Ronald by a motion of his head directed him. They approached the rock slowly and silently, and were not long in marking several seals lying on it basking in the sun—one of them, a large comfortable-looking fellow, lazily eating a salmon which he had taken there to enjoy at his leisure. By signs they agreed that this one should be Robert's portion; and the boat being dexterously steered so as not to alarm the seals, and as much as possible to keep the sportsmen out of sight, at the same time that they had the best chance of a deadly aim, they got to within 150 yards of them before the creatures manifested any

alarm. Then, however, a seal that was a little higher than the others, began an energetic but awkward progress down the slope of the rock, and just as the others had taken alarm both guns went off. The splutter that ensued is quite incomprehensible to any one who has not seen something of the same kind. Such jumping, and rolling, and splashing, no other creatures but seals in an extremity of hurry and alarm could make. In a few seconds they had all disappeared, and the only thing left to show where they had been were the mutilated remains of the salmon ; but both gentlemen were decidedly of opinion that two of them had gone off mortally wounded. The echo of the shots had scarcely died away when the seals raised their black round heads above the water and moved silently about as if to discover what had taken place ; but, the guns being empty, they did so without incurring the least danger.

Robert felt disposed to be vexed, but his more experienced friend cheered him by assuring him that it was much more lucky not to kill with the first shot, as there would then be a chance less of his missing with the second—"Besides," continued Ronald, "we'll get plenty of them yet ; there is plenty in the loch, and they'll not remain long under the water." They continued their sail, but without seeing any seals. This

neither seemed to care much about ; the day was so fine, and even hot for the time of the year, and the motion of the boat so enjoyable, and they chatted so pleasantly, that it was getting late before they thought of steering their course homeward. The sun was still hot as they made for Invercorm, and Robert was learning the use of the tiller as they were crossing a beautiful little armlet of the sea that ran in between two high hills for a considerable distance. "You are doing uncommonly well, Graham," said Ronald, "and in a short time you will steer as well as any man ; but mind you always keep an eye on your boat, and never allow a squall to strike you unawares, which is the great fault of young hands. You see they gape about them, and never see what is coming till it is down their throat, and well for them if the salt water is not down with the wind. Be sure not to make fast your main-sheet when sailing a small craft like this ; just hold it in your hand, and let it go if necessary when the squall strikes you, and allow your boat, if on a wind, to luff well up when hard pressed. Eh ! what's that floating yonder ? do you see it near the middle of the bay ? hold her off a little, and we'll run in to see."

They had not gone far in when Ronald said in a whisper—"It's a seal, and I think it is either dead or asleep."

He motioned the boy to take the tiller, and, stepping quietly forward, he held up his hand, and by it guided him how to steer, and the boat stole noiselessly through the water, and passed the seal—for such it was—within a yard of its tail, which was towards them. Ronald, without a moment's hesitation, stretched out his cleek, and, putting it under the seal, he with a sudden jerk hooked it. Being sound asleep, and thus rudely wakened, the creature sprang out of the water with such force, that Ronald was pulled head-foremost out of the boat as if propelled from the muzzle of a cannon, and in an instant disappeared. Robert flew forward to assist his friend, but he was gone, and the very place where he had disappeared could not be made out, the boat having passed over it. He was thinking of jumping into the sea, but it occurred to him this would be of no use, as he would not know where to look for Ronald in the water more than where he was. He thought of shouting, but he knew this would be equally unavailing. The boy, who was a smart intelligent fellow, brought the boat round so as to keep near the spot, in order to give assistance should his master ever come up again—which, as he had been a considerable time under the water, seemed doubtful. Robert was fast getting into a state of despair, when he heard a great noise behind, and, on turning round, to his

infinite joy he saw Ronald's round face about fifty yards off, looking towards them, and redder than he had ever seen face before. The first impulse was to jump into the water and swim to where he was, but the boy cried out, "Take the oar, and help me round with her, quick !" and in a few seconds the boat was gliding in the direction where Ronald floated. When it came alongside of him, he put up his left arm to catch it with the "cleek ;" but the cleek was gone ; and so affected he seemed by this discovery, that he nearly sank again. In an instant Robert had hold of the collar of his coat, and he and the boy got him with difficulty hauled up into the boat. Ronald had not yet uttered a word, finding enough to do in discharging the salt water he had just shipped. After some time he began to blow and cough violently, and with some difficulty got out the word "*Jonah* ;" a few minutes more, and he was able to declare it as his opinion that Jonah had a more desirable berth of it than he had just vacated. He then looked ruefully at his *cleekless* stump, and announced that, when fixing on the cleek that morning, he noticed that one of the straps was nearly worn out ; that this same strap must have given way, otherwise he and that seal had not parted company until it was decided which was the better man of the two. Before they reached home, he told Robert in con-

fidence that he felt extremely uncomfortable as he was dragged at the rate of fifty knots an hour through the water, and that any keel-hauling he had ever heard of was a mere joke to it. The first thing he did after he got home was to swallow a large glass of brandy, after which he said he felt as if nothing had happened to him, and that even the taste of the salt water had left him. The only thing he continued to deplore was the loss of his cleek, which he thought was to last him all his life, as a cut or knock went for nothing, and a little rust could be easily got off with a small drop of oil. He was quite unhappy for two days, until he got it replaced by a new one made by old John M'Gillivray the blacksmith, with whom he sat up half the night explaining and modelling, before the stupid body could take the whole thing in ; and, indeed, had it not been for the quantity of good whisky John imbibed, it is doubtful if he could ever have made a worthy successor to the cleek that had been lost in so unexpected and untoward a manner. Ronald did not get altogether reconciled to his new cleek as long as Robert remained with him, but attributed to it all the little mishaps that happened to him, especially any misses he made when out shooting.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAIRN AND THE RIVER.

A FEW mornings after his submarine adventure, Ronald was still of opinion that only a small amount of exertion would be good for Robert, as he could not have altogether so soon recovered from the fatigue of his long journey.

"You see, Graham," he said, "although no man likes coddling less than I do, I am by no means blind to the necessity of a certain amount of rest. I daresay you would not much mind starting off on a two days' expedition, but there is no occasion for anything of the kind, and we will get the weariness out of your bones by a turn to *Carn beis du* (the Otter's Cairn), where we are pretty sure to find an otter. We have spring-tides, and by twelve o'clock the water will be so low as to give us a chance with the guns if the terriers succeed in getting one out of the cairn. It is quick work, once

that an otter makes up his mind to take the water, to shoot him before he disappears among the tangle and sea-ware. Sometimes he and the terriers come out together, and then if they cannot get hold of him and keep him till we come up, or worry the senses out of him, which—as he is as tough as bend-leather—is not easy, the chances of escape are greatly in his favour. But we will just try what we can do, and as the weather has been dry and clear, and the river is low, we will take a couple of salmon-spears with us, and if we do not get anything in the cairn, we will try the river.”

Carn beis du lay near the head of the loch that ran off the main arm of the sea, behind the hills forming the background of Inverearn, and the two sportsmen set out, accompanied by the lad who always attended Ronald on his expeditions, and about a dozen terriers of various breeds, sizes, and ages, all bent on a day of enjoyment. The dogs scampered in all directions, and with the exception of three or four thoughtful-looking little fellows—who comported themselves with quiet, matter-of-fact propriety—behaved as ill as terriers could well do, which is saying a great deal. When the cairn was nearly reached there was an attempt made by Donald and the attendant to bring them to order, as it

was feared the noise should scare away any otters that might be hiding there, and make them seek the protection of the sea. The cairn consisted of a number of stones of immense size, which had fallen from the hill above, or been riven from the rocks bordering the sea by the never-ceasing action of the waves, which break on and among them, opening up holes, chinks, and crevices, that form a safe retreat for otters at high-water, and are most difficult of approach in any state of the tide. The space between high and low water marks was rough, and consisted of large stones covered with sea-weed. This made shooting an otter there, after it had been forced out of its stronghold, a matter of great difficulty, indeed of mere chance.

Before the party got quite to the cairn the old steady terriers began to show symptoms of excitement, and the little animal, Dodaig by name, that had so recently nearly met his death in a cairn, ran forward, and disappeared among the loose stones and rocks that lay above the reach of the sea. The one with the split nose would have followed, but Ronald got hold of it, and tucking it under his arm continued to walk on, remarking "it was always right to reserve one of the dogs and keep it at hand, as once they got on the scent, one might as well speak to the waves as to them ; and sometimes

an otter escaped, by all the dogs being beyond reach and control."

In a few minutes little *Dodaig* was heard to yelp sharply from the very bowels of the earth, and the whole fry, young and old, instantly opened chorus, and rushed viciously about, poking into holes and crevices, till in the course of not many seconds they had all vanished ; one would appear every instant, but only again to disappear into another hole or cleft. The one Ronald had hold of made some desperate efforts to escape, and finding he could not do so, gave an occasional short sharp bark, which was usually succeeded by a whine of dissatisfaction. Every cranny of the cairn was searched by the terriers, Ronald and Graham standing so as to have a chance of a shot should the otter spring out of his hiding-place. This continued for near ten minutes, when Ronald, whose quick and experienced ear enabled him to detect the peculiar and very irascible barking a terrier makes when he has discovered a victim, said—

"Dodaig has found him, and he has got up far through the stones—so far that I doubt his being able to reach him."

The barking from the staunch little animal was so continuous and fierce, that it by degrees attracted the other dogs, and like a swarm of bees ascending to join

their queen at the top of the hive, they crawled and scrambled up towards him, and soon was heard such a concentrated yelping and barking, as can only be heard from a colony of excited terriers.

"Wait you here," said Ronald, "and I will go up to see if I can make out whether the otter is shifting his quarters. Here, Norman," to the attendant, "hold my gun till I come back."

He ascended among the loose lichen-covered stones and rocks till above the din of the dogs, still carrying the terrier under his arm, and began to look down the openings, as if expecting to see the cause of the noise. He had not been long thus employed when Graham heard an exclamation from him, and looking up he saw him trying to shift some large stones, and on finding he could not do so, putting down his hand and arm to the shoulder as if to take hold of something.

He then took the terrier by the hind legs and let him down head-foremost as far as his arm could reach, and then hauled with all his might. He had no sooner done this than the noise became altogether deafening.

"He has him by the back," shouted Ronald, still pulling till red in the face; "Hach! the villain, the opening is too small to get him up. Hold on, Shealagair; hold on, puppy." And the little fellow did hold on,

worrying with all his might, though nearly drawn asunder by his master. But even the enduring powers of Shealagair had their limits, and Ronald gave a tug so strong and quick that to save being divided in two the terrier had to let go, or more properly speaking he was torn from his enemy. This unfair way of taking him in the rear seemed at once to have determined the otter to follow a new course, for it instantly on getting loose disappeared, and such a row followed as showed that he had got among his persecutors. Besides the furious barking, yelping, and howling of the dogs, stones were heard rolling about, and the turmoil drew down with great speed towards the sea. Ronald cried to Robert to be on the lookout, and had scarcely got out the words when the cairn, as it were, vomited forth the whole pack of dogs, all aiming at something that was too quick or too cunning for them. The sportsmen knew that the otter was making a desperate rush for the sea, and that he was in advance of the dogs, but the tumult was such, and the scramble among the rocks and stones and slimy sea-weed so frantic, and the dogs made such a splutter as they hurried tumbling and slipping and knocking against one another, until they were actually in the water, that they really did not know exactly where to look for him. Robert got just one glimpse as the

otter entered the sea, Dodaig being within a foot of him, and following so keenly that he found himself floundering in the water before he was aware of it.

"Well, Graham," said Ronald cheerfully, "he has escaped us now, but he may not fare so well next time. Norman, stay here till you get all the terriers together, then take them home, and come back to us as soon as you can ; we'll take Dodaig and Shealagair with us. We cannot have a quiet decent piece of sport with so many of them. Then we can go to the river and look for a salmon."

They walked leisurely towards the head of the loch where a small river discharged its waters into the sea. This river had its source in a lake of some size which was surrounded by high hills, and lay only about three or four miles from the sea. On the south side a high rugged mountain reared its peaked head to the clouds, throwing forward mighty shoulders, bare and scaured at the top, but softening down towards its margin, until by the time their base was washed by its clear waters their savage grandeur had melted into green glades, over which waved the graceful form of the birch, the sturdy branches of the oak, with here and there a holly glistening in the sunshine.

The sportsmen proceeded up the river side-until the scenery of the lake was in view.

"That is very beautiful," said Robert, looking across as they neared it.

"There is not a better place for deer in the whole country," answered Ronald, who usually looked at scenery only from a sportsman's point of view. "The stags make a great bellowing there in frosty nights, and before we are many days older we will visit them in their lairs. Look at that rock just a little above the water. There is a cave under it where my brother took up his quarters often, during August and September, to have a quiet shot without giving himself much trouble. But at last he was obliged to leave it, although he had it fitted up very comfortably, and had spent many a happy day and night in it."

"What obliged him to desert it?"

"Well," answered Ronald, looking straight before him and walking rather fast, "I think the reason a foolish—at least a queer—one; but you can judge for yourself. You know there has long been a story connected with the cave which made people avoid it at night. Niel, my brother, did not mind such stories, and used to laugh at his gillies, and do and say things to frighten them. One evening he was crossing the lake to the cave in a small

boat, and said suddenly to the lads—‘Look at that old fellow at the cave. The old thief, he is after no honest errand.’ They looked and could see nothing, and thinking he was playing them a trick, they laughed; and one of them said he could not see the old fellow for want of his spectacles. Niel got angry, and asked them if they did not see the man standing facing them, but looking straight over their heads as if at something far away behind them. They looked again, and could see nothing but a long shadow which slanted to the east, a little above the mouth of the cave. ‘See, see;’ my brother cried, ‘see how he moves away; holloa! you old rascal, stop a moment, for I want a few words of you. Stop, I say. Heavens and earth, see how he glides away across the corner of the lake;’ and Niel, who had started to his feet, fell back into his seat in the boat, while large drops stood on his forehead, and he looked as pale as a ghost. The next moment there was a roaring noise heard rolling up the lake-side, and on looking they all saw a whirlwind rushing along towards the cave, tearing up heather and ferns, and bending the birch and oaks to the ground, and stripping them of their leaves, which whirled wildly in the air. It entered the lake just where Niel had seen the *likeness* passing over it, and followed his very track, ploughing deep in

the water, and making it rise in spray and foam that mixed with the clouds. It struck that bluff you see away to the left there, and tore up everything in its course, carrying them in swirling eddies high up out of their sight. They gazed at one another for a time in great amazement. The lads then turned round the boat, and pulled hard till they reached this side of the lake, and returned home as fast as they could. Niel never opened his lips, and they wondered whether he would soon again venture to the cave. He never did; and it was some time before they got anything home from it; and, it is curious, that anything they did get home could not be turned to account. The cooking utensils had mostly disappeared, and those that had not were useless with rust. The bed-clothes had vanished, and a shooting-coat of Niel's had got into tatters—the very colour of it having changed, so that his own man could not have recognised it. I have often wished and intended going to the cave, but somehow I have not made it out yet. We will, however, explore it one of these days.”

“It is a curious adventure, and I feel a great desire to see the cave. Who could the old man be?”

“That is more than I can tell you. Some people maintain that it was all imagination and moonshine, and it may be so, but I confess for my own part I have no

fancy for such moonshine, and would rather sit for an evening alongside of a fire-ship ready to explode, than within hail of that same old carle. But here we are at the end of the lake. I see there is too much water in the river, and we must dam up the lake, otherwise we shall not be able to spear a salmon this day. We have no spade, and we cannot get on without one. Stay you here, and I will go to that shepherd's house across the river. You see it beyond that large bend round which the water rushes so rapidly."

Away Ronald went, crossing the river without any attempt to keep his feet dry. Robert sat down and looked long and wistfully at the cave. Like most Highlanders he was strongly tinged with superstition, and the story told by his companion interested him and impressed his mind more than it could possibly have done if he had heard it anywhere else than in view of the place that formed the scene of it. He went over it all in his own mind ; pictured the old man at the cave, the young man in the boat, the evening beginning to lower, the rugged mountain-tops tinged with the rays of the setting sun, while the lake lay dark in the shade of the approaching night, the roar of the whirlwind. At this point he was much startled by an unearthly sound that came floating up the river, and made him spring to



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YOUNG CATTLE STARTLED.

his feet. He gazed in the direction whence it came, and for some time could see nothing. The same sound came again louder and more wonderful than before, and he saw a number of young cattle, that had been grazing quietly at the river-side, whisk their tails and fly off as fast as they could. Just at the bend, the bank of the river was high on one side, and the water was thrown down with considerable force upon it, and formed into a pool of some depth. The bank was very steep, with a small ledge a little above the river, on which grew a vigorous hazel-bush. In the centre of this bush Robert's quick eye detected something very strange-looking, the figure of a man terminating in a small spiral body that rose tall above the bush. The silence was again broken by a holloo-oo-oo that ended in a dreadful haw-haw-haw. The cattle fled wildly, and Robert seized his salmon-spear, looking the very picture of a startled young man, which he undoubtedly was. A moment or two afterwards he saw the spiral body descending, and the figure of the man moving out of the bush, and Ronald walked towards him carrying something with which he was evidently much pleased. Robert, however, only breathed freely after hearing his friend's cheery voice bawling out—

“Isn't that a grand speaking-trumpet? By George,

I think it astonished you. I finished off that last blast with a laugh that would have cost a fellow a watch at the mast-head of the 'Thrasher,' if he so far forgot himself as to utter it on board of her; but for the life of me I could not help it, you looked so taken aback."

"What is it?"

"What is it? Why, it is a piece of smuggler's gear called a worm, and it shows clearly that the rascals, poor devils, still make a little of the pure 'water of life' without asking his Majesty's leave,—God bless him, and them, and the whole of us for that matter," said Ronald piously.

"Well be it what it may, you and it have given me as big a fright as I ever was in, and be hanged to you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Ronald, in great delight; "you did look scared, but dangerous—ha, ha! Do you know, Graham, I like to hear a fellow admit that he was frightened, because it is only a plucky fellow that can afford to do it. Here is the spade, but what am I to do with this affair. It was hid somewhere near the river, and the last spate carried it down and left it in that bush. Well, I think, the best plan is to leave it with the spade, and Bauldy the shepherd will dispose of it: so let us set to work." The lake was soon dammed,

but the sportsmen must wait for some time to allow the water to become clear.

"It will take some time for the river to get into a proper state for spear-fishing," said Robert.

"Longer than we are likely to give it on this occasion," answered Ronald. "By rights the lake should have been dammed last night, and then by this time the river would be very low and very clear, and we would see the salmon better and easier than we can possibly do now."

"Well, suppose in the meantime we go to have a look at the cave?"

"Just the very thing; pick up your gun and let us be off. We may get a chance shot at a black-cock or something as we go along."

They started at once, crossed the river where it leaves the lake, and skirting along the side of the latter, they soon reached the woodland slopes at the far side of it. In less than half an hour they were in the neighbourhood of the cave. It was a quiet secluded spot, and the tangled dell that led to it might escape the observation of the passing stranger for ever. They made their way through it, and, gaining the foot of the rock pointed out by Ronald, they found several bundles of small sticks carefully tied up, and piled against the rock,

"Well," said Robert, "I see no cave here."

Ronald looked rather uncomfortable.

"The rascals!" he said, half to himself. He then threw the bundles aside, and revealed a small irregular opening, by which a man in a stooping posture could enter. He at once went in, followed by Robert, who soon found himself groping in perfect darkness. In a few moments he heard a grunt from Ronald, who said—

"Just as I thought; the confounded blackguards!"

Robert now felt something soft under his feet, and putting down his hand he found that he was standing up to the ankles in barley. He laughed heartily as he said—

"I am glad there are smart fellows here as well as elsewhere. This is the best malting-floor I ever saw. Why, if the knaves are true to themselves, as I have no doubt they are, they may escape detection from all the excisemen in the country for a thousand years."

"That is more than they deserve," answered Ronald savagely. "See if I don't have every mother's son of them banished out of the country."

"Whom will you banish?" asked Robert, laughing.

"Why, the fellows that dare turn my cave to their unlawful smuggling purposes. As a Justice of the peace I am bound to do so."

"So you are ; but I suspect you shall find it no easy matter. Do you know who they are?"

"By George, neither I do. But I'll tell you what it is, Graham, it is very awkward ; and I would rather than a trifle we had not come here to-day."

"On the contrary, I would not for a great deal we had not come. I should not have known half the clever things you do here had I missed this."

"That is true, I daresay, and may be all very well ; but what am I to do ? That is the question I see no satisfactory answer to."

"Well, I do not see that you can do anything, for up to this time you are very much in the dark—at least I am, and have neither seen nor heard anything that I could find fault with a man for. What have you heard or seen ?"

"True, true," answered Ronald ; "so let us out of this place."

"And take care you carry nothing in your shoes that will tell tales."

"Not a grain."

"Hush ; why, you will betray your secret to yourself, and get into trouble."

They left the cave, and Ronald walked away a short distance, looking very angry. Robert put up the bundles

of sticks as neatly as they found them, and following Ronald they were soon on their way back to the river. Before they had gone a hundred yards, they heard the terriers barking a short way up the road, and walked to the place. Some time before they reached them, they saw both standing at the foot of a holly of considerable height, and barking at something in the branches. On looking, they saw a large blackcock sitting on the top shoot, coolly watching the terriers, and so intent upon them that he did not notice the sportsmen till within a long shot of him. Just as he was going off, Robert fired, and the bird dropped to within six feet of the ground, then rose above the trees, and, fluttering wildly, flew across to the ravine, through which lay the opening to the cave, and fell about three hundred yards above and some way to the left of it. Robert darted off to pick it up. When he got to the side of the ravine, he was met by a quiet-looking elderly Highlander, who took off his bonnet, and saluted him with self-possessed respect.

"Ye'll pe after the plackcock that fall near this?" he said.

"Yes ; did you see the place where he fell ? it cannot be far from this."

"Ye'll pe veesiting at Invercorm ?" he asked, in his turn.

"Yes, I am," answered Robert.

"And ye'll be able to speak the Gaelic?"

"Plenty of it," said Robert.

"Then I'll show ye where the plackcock fall—
come away."

He dived down the steep ravine, and turned up the side of a small burn that ran in the bottom of it. A minute or two brought them to a place where the glen widened, leaving more space at the side of the burn, than any he had seen, and at the foot of a little waterfall, there was a small wretched-looking hut, the roof of which consisted of the branches of trees, covered over with turf, ferns, rushes, and long grass. A few yards from the door lay the blackcock dead. Robert picked it up, and without looking at the hut, he said to his guide in Gaelic—

"I should like to try whether yours or the Glenurn whisky is the best."

"You are come at the right time, then ; so come away." And with a look of perfect confidence, he led the way into the hut. The door was at the lower end. On the right hand at entering, was a tall cask, vomiting out at one side into a low broad cask or large tub a frothy liquid with a sour yeasty smell. Opposite to these, with a narrow and not very clean passage

between, were sundry tubs, barrels, creels, and sacks. Beyond there was a copper kettle of gigantic proportions, placed on a bed of stones, neatly built, with a space of considerable size left in the centre for the fire. This kettle was wide below, and closed in at the top with a large round copper helmet, from one side of which branched out a large hose of the same metal. This hose disappeared, in spiral curves, like a huge corkscrew, in a cask, into which there was a small stream of cold water pouring from a hollowed tree which entered at the upper end of the hut, and was so placed as to convey a portion of the burn into the cask under the still, for such is the name by which the copper kettle is generally known. There was a clear bright fire of birchwood, which is thought to give a peculiar and very superior taste and flavour to whisky ; and opposite to the fire there was a by no means uncomfortable turf-seat on which two people could sit. From near the bottom of the cask containing the big corkscrew, or as it is usually called, "the worm," which is hollow, there issued out of a small spout the tiniest and clearest possible stream. It fell into a dish placed there for its reception.

"Now, sir, sit ye down there," said his companion to Robert, pointing to the turf-seat, "and I'll give

you a taste of the real thing. Just the real, real thing."

He looked at the small clear stream narrowly, and went on—

"That same makes very goot trink by the time it is two or three years old—but we'll have something petter nor that—ou aye, something petter nor that, just for our two selves."

He looked about for some time, and found a small bag, which he took to the burn and saturated with water. This he placed on the hose, quite close to the copper helmet, and then put a small wooden bicker or quaich, which he took off the wall behind the seat—under the small clear stream—but it was no longer a stream after the application of the wet bag, it only came out in clear drops which followed each other in quick succession. His entertainer then placed himself beside Robert, and they chatted pleasantly for about five minutes. At the end of that time, the wooden bicker was about half full, and replacing it with a bowl, the old smuggler, for such he was, took it to Robert.

"Now, sir," he began, "you'll tell me what you think of this. I have pleased many a goot judge pefore now, and I'm thinking you'll no find fault with that drappy."

Robert Graham did not on ordinary occasions pretend to any eminence as a judge of whisky, but now he felt called upon to be critical—so he smelt it, tasted it twice or thrice, and then swallowed a small quantity of it. It was unexceptionable. The flavour, the taste, the mild softness, the absence of fiery particles, were all wonderful in spirits not five minutes out of the bowels of the still. It was altogether wonderful and admirable. At this point both were startled by hearing a shout from the top of the bank right over them, and Robert recognised Ronald's voice. He told his entertainer who it was, and was amused to see how quietly he took the approach of one of his Majesty's justices of the peace. He evidently knew that Ronald would never bring a poor man into trouble, if he could help it, but he also knew that it would not be pleasant for either party to meet under present circumstances. However he was quite cool about it, and thought he would greatly like to give him, if there was any way of doing it with propriety, a taste of the "real thing."

Robert ran out and answered Ronald, who had lost patience, and gone to look for him. He scrambled up to where he was, holding up the blackcock for him to see.

"I thought," said Ronald, "you would find it difficult

to make out where he fell, and was on my way with the terriers to assist you."

Robert told him he had found the bird without any great difficulty ; and, moreover, that he had found something else, worth going some distance out of his way to see. He then launched forth in praise of what he had got ; and after a very glowing eulogium, finished off by saying that he had never tasted anything like it before, and never expected to do so again. It was evident that his eloquence had made an impression, for Ronald looked about him, examined his cleek, rubbed it against the sleeve of his coat, and shifted from one foot to another.

"Was it very good?" he asked.

"I never tasted anything like it. A man may get such an opportunity only once in a lifetime."

"Well, if I thought that—but the thing is out of the question."

"Out of the question?" said Robert, who enjoyed Ronald's scruples, and the penance they imposed upon him ; "just leave it all to me. Come down this way, and do not look about you, and stop when I tell you."

Ronald allowed himself to be led down near to the hut. Robert then asked him for his pocket-handkerchief, which he tied tight about his eyes ; and

putting his arm within his, he walked with him to the door.

“Now,” said Robert, “stoop.”

Ronald gave a groan, but did as he was told, and they entered the hut. The smuggler stood aside, and looked with approving admiration on Robert. Ronald was seated on the turf seat and the bicker handed to him. It was edifying to see him tasting the whisky and smacking his lips. He was winking to Robert, but as he did so under the handkerchief, he was little the wiser. When the contents of the bicker had disappeared, the bowl was put in his hand, and he took two or three sips out of it and then put it from him—for though by no means averse to good liquor, he seldom forgot himself so far as to take what would do him harm. He got up and called Robert to him, took hold of his arm and prepared to go. But before doing so he thought it incumbent on him to show his disapproval of what was going on around him.

“I do not know,” said Ronald, with severity, “who is breaking the law in this barefaced manner, and it is well for him that I do not, as I would have him banished out of the country ; and I leave this warning for him—that if I find him or any one else here when I come back, he need look for no favour from me—I can tell

him that." And Ronald walked out, leaving the smuggler grinning his admiration and satisfaction at his virtuous sense of duty.

"Well," said he, as Ronald disappeared up the steep bank, "it's a pity to make a justice of such a man as that, for it spoils him for many of his virtuous enjoyments."

The sportsmen returned now in all haste to the river, and sat down for a few minutes to rest before beginning their sport. Just as they were about to commence, they saw something near the end of the lake rising above the water, and float slowly towards the opposite side.

"Look at him," said Ronald; "whatever may be the case with us, that fellow has secured a good salmon for his dinner, and you see how coolly he goes ashore to devour it in peace and quiet."

"Is it an otter?"

"It is, and no mistake; the place is full of them, and that is a sign there is no scarcity of salmon. That fellow is too far from us to kill, and there is no use making a row which must end in nothing, so let him eat his dinner, hoping we may make his acquaintance on a future occasion. Bauldy will be here immediately, so we may begin operations."

They accordingly walked down the river-side

examining every pool and shallow minutely, and poking under the bank and about large stones to start any salmon that might hide there. In a short time Bauldy joined them, and anything less sportsman-like can scarcely be imagined. He was about sixty years old, and a small shaky-looking creature, with gnarled knees, and straight legs with no more calves than a walking-stick. He was very bald, but combed his long, lank, rusty, dusty hair, carefully over the top of his head in a hopeless attempt to impose upon the public. He was born with a harelip, which had been clumsily reduced, leaving one side of his upper lip about half an inch higher than the other. He wore a blue cloth kilt, and a coat of a very ancient square cut, and on his head a broad blue bonnet which flapped lazily about his ears every step he walked. With one hand he fed his nose with snuff, and the other found constant employment in the management of his short black pipe. His only dog was worthy of such a master. A queer-looking cur, half gray half brown, with ears always on end; one eye black, the other silver, a lank lean long body with head and tail in a state of chronic depression woeful to look upon. Bauldy in conversation spoke in a low, not unmusical voice; but he took exceeding pride in the height to which he could raise it,

and nothing gratified him so much as to be asked to bawl as loud as he could. He would then put up his hand to his mouth, gather himself up, and call out in a most astonishing manner, until his eyes were ready to start out of his head. When he joined the gentlemen he examined Robert rather critically, then without speaking a word went up to him and taking hold of the spear he held in his hands, shifted the one down and the other up, after which he gave a grunt of satisfaction. He then took the lead down the stream, straining his eyes to discover fish. In a short time he turned round, and neither of the sportsmen noticing him, he uttered a tremendous cry that made both start. He then beckoned them towards him. They both went quickly, and Bauldy pointed at a large stone in the middle of the stream, around which the water formed a sort of eddy.

"She pe there, take her out,"—to Robert, who at once stepped into the river and waded to the stone. He looked carefully, and in the smooth water below the stone, saw the waving of a salmon's tail. The next moment he launched the spear where he guessed the dorsal fin should be, and raising it high in the air, exhibited a salmon writhing upon it."

"Well done, old fellow," cried Ronald heartily; "that is not your first salmon, I'll be sworn."

"No," answered Robert, "but I always speared them by torch-light, when they are much more easily seen, and one thinks nothing of stemming a stream that by day-light he should think it madness to go into."

Another fish was soon seen and landed, and after about an hour's sport they found they had at least a score of fish large and small. At last they came to the great pool of the river. The water rushed into it with much force and from a considerable height, spreading out afterwards into a broad sheet. There is a rock close beside the water as it enters the pool, dry except when the river is in flood, that looked as if made for the spearman to stand upon. It is difficult, however, in such a position, for any but a practised eye to distinguish the fish from the shadow of the swirling water. Robert went to this perch first, and after looking long and intently, he left it saying he could not see any fish. Ronald followed with the same result. Then Bauldy took his master's spear, and with a very important air, descended to the rock. He also looked long, then poised the spear, and struck it down forcibly close in upon where he stood. He pitched forward, made a great but unsuccessful effort to recover himself, and then fell with a splash into the pool, which closed over him. Almost immediately afterwards his feet appeared above the water.

"By George," shouted Ronald, "he shall be drowned, for he holds by the spear, and shall never get his head above the water. That is always the case with fellows in the water, they keep their hold even if it should be of a sheet-anchor at the bottom of the sea. Give me your hand quick."

Robert and he jumped to the rock, and Ronald slipped down into the water which was two fathoms deep three feet out, taking hold of Robert's hand, and bending over in the direction in which they had last seen poor Bauldy's feet. Again the feet rose to the surface, and Ronald clipped one of them cleverly with his *cleek* and hauled in with all his might. Bauldy, still holding the spear was dragged ashore more dead than alive, and made a great noise about his dip as soon as he was able. At first he seemed disposed to think that one of the gentlemen had pushed him into the water ; but as he recovered his composure and saw the spear beside him, he took great credit to himself for bringing it safe to land, and said none but a man of resolution could have done so.

During the whole time the gentlemen were fishing the terriers were hunting about, and poking their sharp noses everywhere. Bauldy's dog kept a surreptitious eye upon them, and seemed to have made up his mind that they were exceedingly foolish not to keep quiet

when they might. Now, however, they set up such barking and yelping, and rushed about so frantically, that his curiosity was roused, and without raising his head or his tail he trotted off to see what was going on. Ronald's experienced ear detected the sound of something unusual having been discovered by Dodaig and Shealagair, and looked up to where they were, a short distance above the river, in a somewhat rugged part of the hill. On a large stone he saw something sitting, coolly watching the dogs, who were making all the noise they could. Bauldy's dog joined them, and after sneaking round the stone till he got above it, he jumped upon it without any apparent aim or object. The previous occupant, which happened to be a very large, powerful wild-cat, at once sprang at the intruder and fixed its claws in his back. The astonished brute set up a howl that for loudness might rival Bauldy's bawl, and in a frenzy of terror fled towards his master followed by the terriers in full cry. The wild-cat did not let go its hold till close to the party, when it ran for a rock that overhung the river, the dog continuing to run and howl till he reached his master. The terriers made great exertions to catch the wild-cat, but could not do so until it sprang to get at the rock. Then Dodaig sprang at it, and without getting hold brought it

down at the foot of the rock. In an instant they were locked in a close embrace, and rolled over and over, howling, screaming, and barking in a very astonishing manner. It is hard to say how the battle would have ended if the combatants had been left alone. The wild-cat was heavier and more powerful than Dodaig, and was cutting him up cruelly, and he bit and worried with a will, and with all the might with which nature had endowed him. Before the power of either was impaired, Shealagair joined in the fray, and soon turned the tide against the wild-cat. The fight, however, was long and desperate, and though the cat was killed he left marks on his antagonists that they carried about for the rest of their lives.

"I never saw such a monster as that," said Robert, as the wild-cat lay dead before them.

"He is a good specimen and fought well, but do you know I am not quite sure that the terriers should not have more trouble in killing a strong house-cat than that fellow."

"Surely not."

"I do not know, for you see though not nearly so strong or powerful to attack, a house-cat takes a terrible deal of worrying, and will bite and scratch as long as there is a gasp of life in him."

Soon after this Norman rejoined the party and the salmon-spearing went on. As they were about giving up for the day, Robert saw what he took to be a salmon disappearing under the bank of the river, where long heather grew over the stream. He struck at it with his spear and fixed it to the ground. He found it more difficult to secure than any he had yet speared, and thought it must be a very large fish. Whenever he tried to raise it up on the spear he felt as if it would slip off, and after some unsuccessful attempts he called to Norman to come to his assistance. He did so, and at once plunged his arm up to the shoulder in the water to seize the salmon by the gills. He no sooner did this than he roared—

“It’s a beast, it’s a beast, and he wiinna let my hand go.”

Robert put down his hand and found he had speared an otter. He got hold of its hind legs and raised it out of the water, Norman shouting and roaring all the time. The otter had his hand across in its mouth, and remained perfectly quiet, but would not relinquish its hold. They tried to open its jaws, but could not without injuring the hand. They knocked it on the head till insensible, but the jaws remained immovable. Ronald at last called to Bauldy to cut its throat, still the creature held

on, and only relaxed its hold when gasping out its last breath.

"Of all the beasts I know," said Ronald, "an otter keeps the surest hold. A terrier that could hold on like that fellow would be worth any money."

"Aye," said Bauldy slowly; "but if it would not pe for my dog the wild-cat would not pe killed the day, put pe living and scratching—the sloogard."

This was too much for Ronald, who gave the unfortunate brute a poke with his spear that sent it off howling.

Norman's hand was tied up, and the fish gathered preparatory to going home.

"We have had a fair day's sport," said Ronald; "but the salmon are badly maimed in the killing when the spear is used, and spoiled for kippering or boiling. I do not much mind this myself, but the cook makes a great outcry about it."

Thus Robert's time passed most pleasantly with his genial friend Cousin Ronald, who was a delightful companion to a youth of twenty. Otter-hunting, seal-shooting, fishing with long lines, bag-nets, scringing-nets, and herring-nets; salmon-spearing, shooting and stalking, were their constant occupation. One evening as they were discussing the events of the past day, Ronald enunciated various opinions on various subjects, and

there was only one subject, he said, on which he had not just quite made up his mind.

"You see," says Ronald, "the question whether any dog is able single-handed, and without any assistance from knife or bullet, to pull down and kill a first-rate stag, has never been answered to my satisfaction. I have heard that dogs have killed not only one but three, the one after the other, out of the same herd, before they could be caught after being slipped ; but you might as well tell me that a smart corvette would sink or take three seventy-fours. A good dog, barring accidents, might cut up one 'full stag,'* but killing him is a different matter. That dog of yours is about the most likely I have seen, and although I have seen him do very clever things to wounded deer and hinds, I doubt his being able to kill a regular royal stag."

"I would like to see him get a fair chance," answered Robert, rather warmly, not liking to hear the powers of his dog doubted.

"Well, do you know, Graham, so should I, for I think him a first-rate dog ; and the only difficulty would be to get a first-rate stag : those on this side are not strong enough, being generally young deer, without any

* "Full stag," a literal translation of the Gaelic *lan damh*, or full-grown, perfect stag.

great heads. I have never seen a royal stag in Inver-eorn hill."

"There would be no difficulty about that in Ard-mark," answered Robert, and a smile lighted up his face.

"As to that I could not say, never having been there, and for that matter I do not think there will be any very great difficulty nearer hand, for at this time of year stray stags come to the opposite hill, that I think good enough to set the question at rest ; and I am quite sure that Lachlan M'Donald of Drumsoiller is not the man to say nay to us, if we wish to look out for them."

It was accordingly determined that a messenger should be sent next day to Lachlan M'Donald, to tell what was wanted, and to ask him to join in the sport. A satisfactory message was returned, notes not being thought so indispensably necessary between neighbours then as they have become since.

CHAPTER X.

THE RESPECTIVE POWERS OF DOG AND DEER.

THE day fixed for setting the question of the respective powers of dog and deer for ever at rest in Ronald's mind was bright and fine as could be wished, and Farrum being in excellent heart and condition, the party—consisting of Ronald, Robert, and two stout active young men—started in great spirits, and crossed the loch in a boat to a point where they were to meet Lachlan M'Donald. That gentleman, true to his word, was there before them, and had the gratifying tidings for them of several stags having been seen, a day or two before, among the corries of his wide range of hills; and he thought there would be no difficulty in beating up one that would try the wind, speed, and courage of any dog. M'Donald was accompanied by two gentlemen who were visiting him, and two men; so that the party was a large one when they

set off for the ground where they expected to find the deer. They struck off right inland, crossing several high ridges and traversing narrow valleys and glens; and after several hours of hard walking, they came to a group of rugged hills, from which issued innumerable little streams that fell into a small river that skirted round their base, the opposite side of which was more tame, being rather flat and mossy. There were many quiet little corries and neuks among these hills, with long heather on the sides, and tall rank ferns at the bottom, forming excellent cover for deer. M'Donald and his men being perfectly acquainted with the ground, divided themselves into parties—Robert, with his noble-looking dog walking quietly at his side, his mild brown eye lighted up, and catching at once everything that moved, were it only the waving of a stalk of fern or bush of heather, going along with M'Donald; and Ronald—for whose special satisfaction the entertainment was got up—keeping close to the river with some of the men, rightly judging that if a deer was found, and the dog proved too fast for him, he would make for the water; while the others followed either party at some distance as they chose. As they moved cautiously along, minutely examining the ground, M'Donald recommended Robert to have his dog on a slipping-

collar ; but he said that it was quite unnecessary, as he had trained him not to start till he got the word, under any circumstance. They continued their close survey of every hill-side, glen, neuk, and corrie, for about an hour, and had gone over the places where they expected to find deer, without meeting with any, and had started away a considerable distance from the river. They now turned back on a rather lower level to join the rest of the party, having all but given up the hope of falling in with deer, when suddenly M'Donald stopped. He looked keenly about him for some time, then said—

“Do you see that round hillock that looks as if cleft in two? Just below it there is a small hollow, with long ferns, the outlets from which are by that ravine which divides the hillock, or by another somewhat similar ravine below. It is a place where I have been often baffled by a cunning *udlich* or solitary stag. If I came from above, he darted down the one ravine ; if from below, he darted up the other, and was out of sight before I could lift the gun to my eye. I could almost wish, for the sake of your good dog, that one of these stags may not be there to-day, for by my honour he shall find him a dangerous playmate.”

Robert's heart sank at the idea of anything happening to Farrum, and he patted him affectionately, the

tear coming to his eye. M'Donald was touched ; but Robert said cheerfully next moment—

“ There is no fear of him. Two months ago he first saw a stag : since then he has been at the death of a dozen, and is now as cool and knowing as he was then rash and reckless.”

“ Come then, we will go to that little dip to the left of the hillock. When we reach that we are within fifty yards of the top of the steep bank that forms that side of the hollow where the stag is lying, if there at all. We can then creep to the edge of the bank, and you will require to be ready with your dog, otherwise he will slip off without being seen by him, on the slightest noise reaching his sharp ear.”

They soon got to the place pointed out by M'Donald, and then crept cautiously to the edge to get a view of the bottom of the hollow. This they accomplished without disturbing any deer that might be there. They looked for some time without seeing anything, the dog lying beside his master, looking intently at the hollow, but too far back to see the bottom, which would be about fifty yards off. After remaining for five minutes without moving, the gentlemen saw a slight movement of the tall ferns in the centre of the hollow, and then slowly a horn, terminating in three sharp white points,

was seen slightly to rub the ferns. Robert's heart gave a bound, and he put his hand on his dog's back, drawing him forward. He seemed to comprehend what was required of him, and without raising himself up he slipped forward, and advancing his head quickly, looked down the hollow. Apparently without noise as this had been done, the stag heard it, and without raising his head, or even standing up to his full height, he dashed down the ravine, and as quick as lightning disappeared. With less noise and equal rapidity Farrum slipped down the bank, and was lost sight of at the same place a few seconds later. This was all of the chase that M'Donald and Graham saw.

About five minutes after this, as Ronald was sitting quietly, a short way from the river, discussing the merits of his old ship the Thrasher, with one of M'Donald's friends, who it seems was a sailor, and thoroughly understood the qualities of a good craft, one of the men shouted "Look out!" in an excited and exciting manner. They started to their feet, and away to the right, and considerably above them, they saw the stag tearing along at a tremendous pace. He was slanting down towards the river, and, if he held on his course, must pass within a very short distance of where they stood. The men wanted to throw themselves in his way, but

Ronald cried out that they were not to stir or make the least noise on peril of their lives. "I look upon this as a single combat, and I will see fair play," says Ronald, virtuously. On came the stag, thundering along the hill-side, and Farrum within forty yards of his haunches, straining every muscle to lessen the distance. Without looking at the men, the deer held on his course, his head thrown back and his antlers nearly touching his back ; his nose well up and the nostrils open and crimson red. It was not a bounding or a labouring gallop, but a spanking trot, and never man looked on more magnificent action. The dog did not gain an inch upon him, and as they swept past between him and the river, Ronald flourished his cleek, and bounded three times in the air to nearly his own height, and declared that, "By George ! the sight was worth living and dying to see." On they went with unabated speed till they came to the river. When ten yards from it, the stag made three or four bounds up to the brink, and rising high in the air, and stretching himself, he shot across, and landed on the other side, having a margin of only a few inches to spare. Farrum made a bold spring, but fell short, and before he gained the bank the stag was eighty yards ahead. Instead of keeping to the river-side, he struck across the wide flat beyond, which rose slightly from the

river to a distance of half a mile, then dipped into a hollow of some extent, and terminated in soft mossy ground at the foot of a low range of hills some miles beyond. The dog seemed refreshed by the swim he had had, and bounded after the chase with increased speed, the latter still trotting, as if he felt confident of outstripping his pursuer. Before they topped the gentle ascent, Ronald thought the dog was gaining ground, but they were soon lost beyond the low height, and all the rest was conjecture. He followed with all the speed he could muster, as did all with him, but what with crossing the river, and the somewhat heavy nature of the ground, it was some time before they reached the place where the chase had disappeared. It was easy, however, to trace the stag by his footprints, and they continued to do so for two miles. Then the ground became softer, and they began to make out the footprints of the dog also. They were running their best, and much blown, but Ronald stoutly kept the lead. At last he said—

“May I never eat bread or drink drink—of which at this moment I am more needful—again, if I do not think the dog has fastened on him. Look how his track is alongside that of the deer, and the tracks of both look as if they were struggling. Hurra, hurra!” screamed Ronald, again getting excited, and away he went faster

than ever. He had not gone a quarter of a mile when he stopped, and roared—

“Haroo! they were down; see where they rolled over and ~~over~~ again. What a sight we have lost!” And off he went, determined to be in at the death, but whether of the stag, the dog, or both, he did not know. He had not gone far when he found where they had been down again; and now traces of a desperate struggle became so numerous that he did not stop to examine them. These extended over another quarter of a mile, and still nothing of the chase was to be seen, and he continued to run on. After some time he raised his eyes, and saw a heap of something on a bare hard part of the moor. He made towards it as fast as he could. There was the deer, sure enough; but where is the dog?

His excitement carried Ronald on so fast latterly, that he left his companions some distance behind, and they thought he had taken leave of his senses when he began shouting and dancing round something which they could not exactly make out, but which they had little doubt was the stag. “Come on, you lubbers! Can’t you run, you snails! What the —— is keeping you?” And the war-dance began again. He stopped short and cried again, “He’s living, you lubbers; what’s keeping you?”

By this time they were up and saw what had so excited him. The stag lay dead, and twisted nearly double. One of his brow-antlers was fixed in the shoulder of Farrum, who lay half under him, with his eyes closed, and his neck turned round so as to enable him to hold the stag's throat, which he still continued to gnaw. It was very difficult to get the brave dog released from the position he was in, and it required all the skill and power of Ronald and his assistants to do so without the wound made by the brow-antler being enlarged. They thought it mortal when they first came up; but on farther examination they found that the point had not penetrated far, but had run under the skin, cutting rather deep into the fleshy part of the shoulder. In Robert's absence Ronald thought it his duty to take care of the dog, which lay bruised and bleeding on the heather. By degrees he recovered so far as to be able to stand up, and walk to his dead antagonist, and smell it for a little. He then lay down and commenced licking his wound. Ronald watched him with the greatest admiration, and at last burst out with—

“By George! if that dog was mine I would not give him for £500. A week will put him all right again, and make him ready for another chase. May I never

die the death if I thought there was a dog in the world that could have done what he has done this blessed day."

He wanted his men to carry him home, but Farrum demurred to this, showed a case of dangerous-looking teeth, and walked aside ; which greatly delighted Ronald, who declared that "he was a fellow of the right sort, who would do his duty, and stand no coddling nonsense."

Ronald got the head of the deer cut off, saying he "wanted no more of him, but that the head was worth having, because it was a very fine one, and was the head of a gallant stag who fought to the very last ; but especially because he had been killed by the best dog that he had ever seen."

Graham and M'Donald joined them as they were starting on their return, having been guided partly by one of the latter's friends, who was too fat or too lazy to follow the chase, and partly by the footprints of the deer. Robert's delight was unbounded, and he could have taken Farrum in his arms when he came up wagging his tail and looking pleased, wounded and bleeding as he was.

CHAPTER XI.

RONALD TAKES THE MANAGEMENT OF ROBERT'S AFFAIRS.

It was now getting late in the season, and Robert announced his intention of taking leave of his kind and hospitable friend. Ronald got indignant at the mention of such a thing. He had become attached to the young man, and felt really annoyed at the idea of losing him, and got him to put off going for another week. In the meantime Robert had a long letter from his sister Jane, full of Glenurn news. The glen had been greatly disturbed for some time by Lord Strathalbane's foresters, who had got another search-warrant, and searched every house in it for the deer that had been killed the night he left home. His Lordship had been insulted by the head of a stag being stuck on his dial-stone at the castle-door, and had determined to find out and punish the perpetrator of the deed if it should cost him a thousand pounds. She told of the reward, and gave a

circumstantial account of every step taken by the Strathalbane people, having obtained the information partly from the people of the glen, partly from her cousin Mary, who was now, however, going to Edinburgh for the winter. Robert was greatly amused by the contents of this letter. Hitherto he had said nothing about the fine or the performances of the night he left home to his host; but he thought that it would be wrong not to do so now, after having received so much kindness and so many marks of friendship at his hands. He therefore told him all from beginning to end. Ronald listened without once interrupting him, and when he finished he still remained quiet for some time.

“Graham,” he said at last, “I am just thinking if you have proper and sufficient grounds for challenging Lord Strathalbane. I do not yet see my way clearly to a decision. You see, instead of treating you as he ought, and calling you out, if he thought you had taken a liberty in helping your dog to kill the stag, he acted like a sneak and took the law of you. That being the case, you did right to annoy him in every possible way; and in sticking the deer’s head on his very nose, as it were, you gave him a slap in the face that ought to have made him challenge you again—that is, if he knows it was you that did it, of which I can scarcely have a doubt.

He has not done so, but he searches the houses of your tenants, and tries to take you prisoner, confound him ! Now, there is one thing to be done to put you on a footing of equality in any future transactions you may have with him, and that is to pay the fine. Why was that not done at once ?”

This was a question Robert did not expect, and he would fain not have answered it ; but it being no part of his nature to colour facts, he remained quiet.

“ Answer me that question,” persisted Ronald obtusely ; for had he suspected how matters stood, he would rather have lost his other hand than have put the question at all.

“ It was not convenient at the time,” answered Robert in a low tone.

His friend for the first time looked in his face, and saw it colour to the roots of his hair, for the poor fellow was too young not to feel ashamed of the poverty of his family. For a moment Ronald was puzzled. Then an inkling of the truth began to dawn upon him. He had heard that the Grahams were poor, but it never occurred to him that they were so much reduced as not to be able to meet any demand of this kind. He never was distinguished for tact, but he had a strong feeling of delicacy which often made up for it, and this feeling

came so strong on him now, that he had not a word to say for some time. In a little, however, he said—

“Well, I will consider the matter over till to-morrow.”

After Robert went to bed that night, Ronald shut himself up in his business-room, as he chose to call a small closet at the head of the staircase, without a fireplace, where he resorted when matters of importance claimed his attention. He spread a large sheet of damp letter-paper before him, after which he fell into a brown study which lasted for near half an hour. He then wrote a few words in a large straight-up hand, and took another long rest. He wrote again, and never stopped till he signed his name in half-text near the bottom of the first page, having done which he gave a grunt of much satisfaction. The letter was duly folded and addressed to “Dugald M’Phail, Esquire, W.S., Edinburgh,” and sealed with Ronald’s great seal, on which were engraved sundry galleys, lions, bulls, bears, and goats, which composed the armorial bearings of the M’Phails of Invereorn. At daybreak next morning he despatched a man to the post-office of Kilcallum, ten miles off, it being the nearest to him, with the letter, and with instructions to the post-master that a messenger should be sent with the answer whenever it arrived. After this

there was no recurrence to the subject of Robert's affairs, and Ronald was as happy and intent on his sport as before. When the time which Robert had consented to remain with him was expired, and he again adverted to the subject, Ronald told him that he had not yet been able to make up his mind what course was to be taken towards Lord Strathalbane, and that as he had put the matter in his hand—which, by the way, was a mere idea of his—he could not allow him to go until he had time to think it well over, and that he thought another week, or at most a fortnight, would suffice for thoroughly digesting it.

The fortnight was nearly out when Ronald received the expected answer from Mr. Dugald M'Phail, W.S., and he read it with some satisfaction, and immediately closeted himself with Robert for a consultation.

"You see, Graham," he went on, "when I take a thing in hand I like to carry it through. That business of yours, after you consulted me about it, became my business, and I have acted accordingly. I wrote at once to my cousin Dugald, who is my agent in Edinburgh, and as clever a W.S. as any among them, telling him that you were fined by the justices for killing a deer on your own or your father or grandfather's side of the river, and that you were hunted by thief-

catchers to put you in prison because you did not pay the fine. I told Dugald to pay up the fine and get the proper receipt for it, and then you may snap your fingers at Lord Strathalbane and his gillies, and all that belong to him, and be hanged to him. Well, what does Dugald do?—he is a clever fellow Dugald—why he instantly, as he writes, presented a suspension in the Bill-chamber; wrote the justices, threatening to send a messenger from Edinburgh to serve it upon them; and so frightened them with the pains and penalties of the law, that they wrote back he need not send the messenger, that they would hold the suspension as served, and as they merely acted in their magisterial capacity, and had no patrimonial interest, they would not appear to defend their, what I call, iniquitous decision. Is not Dugald the fellow, to do such things with a flourish of his pen?"

Robert was quite overwhelmed, and did not know what to say. He grasped honest Ronald's ready hand—

"I do not know how to thank you, cousin. I am young and inexperienced, and only hope you have not placed me under an obligation that I cannot discharge to your cousin. To you I cannot feel otherwise than grateful all my life."

"Hoot, toot, lad," said Ronald, "don't speak in that way. I am no man of business myself, and what Dugald

has done would never have come into my head. You can send him a few brace of birds, or a stag's head"—looking knowing—"or something of that sort, and he'll think himself more than paid. He is a right good fellow is Dugald, and has done a great deal for me ; but he is a man that will have his own way. He took a promise from me that I would never put pen to paper for any man alive without his consent, and this has made me feel very unkind to some of my friends, who wanted me to do them a turn by signing small bills and security papers for them. My father lost a great deal of money by going security, but he did it rashly, and for men who forgot their promise. I would have taken better care, but Dugald left me no power." And Ronald looked as if he thought that there Dugald was unnecessarily strict if not tyrannical.

"You might take this view of it," said Robert, "that it saves you the odium of refusing your friends."

"Aye, but I don't always wish to refuse them, when by signing my name I could do them a good turn, and the risk, if there ever was any, would be over in a few days. I would like to be a free agent, but Dugald won't give me back my promise."

Dugald was right, but Ronald thought otherwise, and chafed under the wholesome restraint. If a similar

one had been laid on some of his neighbours, it is probable that their descendants would not be now landless.

"Am I now," asked Robert, "to be no more molested by Gripe or the foresters?"

"Molested! they dare not put a foot on your land without your leave, and as to their search-warrants, I know this, that though I have been for some years a justice myself, I have never signed one, and I never will, for Dugald, in the directions he sent me when I was made one, told me not to do so, unless names were given. 'Don't sign blank warrants,' is what he said. So if Lord Strathalbane ever sends his fellows with their warrants, just ask you to see them, and if there is no name mentioned let me know, and Dugald will be down upon them again."

"I am glad you told me all this. But if they catch one in the forest"——

"But why the —— should a fellow allow himself to be caught? It would not be easy catching a young man I know of the name of Robert Graham, for I have been watching his style of running for the last few weeks, and it reminds me of a young soldier I saw running a race in Yorkshire, where there were several thousand men in camp, and no competitor could keep him in sight. In little more than a month afterwards

he perished in a burning house into which he rushed to rescue a child that had been at first forgotten. He saved the child at the expense of his own life."

"Well," said Robert, "your friend Robert Graham, however much he may admire the young soldier, hopes a different fate awaits him."

"I hope so too, but that is more than he would deserve if he allowed himself to be caught by any forester that ever wore a kilt. The only forester that I ever heard of, that I would not mind being caught by, is old Duncan Bane M'Intyre. I would pay him a fine for the pleasure of hearing him sing his *Bendourain*. He is no forester now, however, but one of the old town-guard of Edinburgh, and lives in the Canongate, which he will find to smell differently from Glenorchy."

"I have seen him."

"So have I, and a decent-like old carle he looks—too sonsy for my idea of a bard. I would rather than a dozen of wine he had seen Farrum at work the other day. He would make a song about him that would make him as famous as Ossian made Fingal's dogs."

"I would like that very well."

"Well, then, make him famous yourself. All you have to do is to give him the chance. Lord Strathalbane's deer, you told me, cross the river to your side

after this time of the year. When they do so they become yours, so says Dugald. If they don't cross the river you can ; for after his conduct to you, you need not be particular in showing him the courtesy he denied you. He did all he could to vex you. Just pay him back in his own coin. I would like to be with you for a turn," said Ronald, enthusiastically ; "it would be equal to a cutting-out expedition into a French port," and he waved his cleek over his head.

This view of the matter, though perhaps not the most correct, was extremely acceptable to Robert, who, independently of retaliating on Lord Strathalbane, delighted in the excitement of such adventures. Indeed, the life he had led with Ronald gave him a taste and liking to sport of every kind that stuck to him for years, and in some degree gave a bias to his habits during these.

A few days after this interview, Robert bade adieu to his kind and hospitable kinsman and his family. He had endeared himself to every one in the house. The eldest of the young Ronalds made a great outcry at the leave-taking, and Mrs. Ronald sent many kind messages to Mrs. Graham, and loaded Robert with provisions for his journey that would suffice had it been twice as far.

When he went out Robert found a man waiting him

holding a gray pony ready saddled, with his valise properly secured behind the saddle.

“I want you to ride home, Graham,” said Ronald, “and that is why I made you wear your sailor’s dress”—which had been skilfully shaped and made by a local tailor from materials provided by Mrs. Ronald—“your kilt not being a comfortable dress for horseback any more than for boating. You will find the little gray will carry you as if you were in a cradle. We call her Sybil. Her sire was as fleet an Arabian as ever carried a heathen, and her dam I got from my friend M’Lean of Diraness in Mull, and is of the true *Gochcan* breed of Torloisk. The sire belonged to General M’Donald of Drumsoiller, Lachlan’s uncle, who brought him home from the East, and told many stories of his feats. If she has a fault in wind, limb, or temper, I am not acquainted with it. You will keep her, and be kind to her, if not for her own, for my sake. Not a word now, and remember, lad, you are to come back again ere long to see us—you promise that? Good-bye, lad.” And next moment Ronald was inside the house and the door shut.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DEER CROSS THE RIVER.

THERE was great rejoicing in Glenurn when Robert returned, and when he told his father how Cousin Ronald had, besides the most kind hospitality, got him out of the disagreeable position he was in, by the non-payment of the fine, the gratitude of the poor man was unbounded, and he set about considering what suitable return he could make for so much disinterested friendship. After worrying himself about this for a whole day, and not being able, out of his limited resources, to fix upon anything worthy of the occasion, he consulted his wife on the subject. She, like a good wife, as she undoubtedly was, went minutely into the matter with her generous husband, and after a full discussion gave it as her idea that the most suitable return he had it in his power to make, was to write a letter to Ronald warmly thanking him for all he had done for Robert.

She made this so clear to him, that he at once determined to indite a letter in his best style, merely remarking that that was his own original idea ; and he really thought it was, from the manner of putting the thing, adopted by his wife. The letter was written, but by whom concocted never transpired. Mrs. Graham, as she had a good right to do, approved, and then it was read to the old gentleman, who also highly approved, and the letter was sealed, and despatched to Ronald, who was so pleased with it, that he placed it in a secret drawer in his curious old *escritoire*, where it remained as one of his most cherished treasures.

It was not alone in his own family that Robert was welcomed home. He no sooner made his appearance in the glen, than Sandy, Robbie, and the smith, had a meeting, and made instant arrangements for placing scouts again to give timely warning of the approach of the old enemy Mr. Gripe ; and having done so, they went to see their favourite. There was a great shaking of hands, and general inquiries, and it was some time before the subject uppermost with the visitors was broached.

"How did you get home the morning I left you?" at last asked Robert.

"Ou, we got hame very weel," answered Sandy. "We didna keep much o' the road, but we kent the

gate weel ; and although it took us some time to put awa the deers into a safe place, we were hame afore the sun was up. Robbie was gay'n tired, but Hugh and me thocht naething o' it."

"Ye thocht as much about it as I did, Sandy," said Robbie, rather indignantly ; "I am no afraid to try ane or baith o' ye ony day or nicht in the forest."

"Robbie has been awfu' proud since he couped the cuddie."

"Aye, and weel I may be proud o' that nicht's wark, for did I no kill three deers wi' ane shot?—twa we got, and the tither we didna see, but it was found by the forester lads when they went hame that same mornin', and a pretty wark they've made aboot it a', the dirty loons."

"And how did you get home the stag we left in the moor, Sandy?"

"That was a sair job. We daurna so much as look ower the river for some days, and I was feared it wad take legs again and be mair difficult to catch than ever. I was very anxious like to get ower, and at last one dark nicht us three gaed aff about twelve o'clock, and after makin' the acquaintance o' half the holes and unchancy wall-ees (well-eyes) in the hill, we found the deer and brought him hame—and strang smellin' meat

it makes, but there's mair sap in't, and its better worth chowin' than a stick, so we rive at it."

"Were you not afraid when the search-warrant came round again?"

"Ou aye, but we hae some snug little places that nane kens o' but oursels, where we can hide a deer or twa very weel—and Robbie's meal-pocks would hold half a dozen."

"Aye," said Robbie, "mair than's like to come into them for a while. Are there ony deers where ye were awa'?"

Robert told them that he had had excellent sport, and gave a full account of Farrum's performances, which delighted them above expression. He finished off by telling them that there was no more danger of his being carried off prisoner, as the matter had been arranged without his having to pay the fine.

"Weel, that is the best thing I ever heard o' Lord Strathalbane," said Robbie.

"He is not entitled to much praise in the matter," answered Robert. "It was more because he could not help it. Have the deer commenced crossing the river yet?"

"A wheen o' them has been ower, but we ha'ena looked near them. There'll soon be plenty o' them."

“And what about the reward?”

“Naething at a’. I dinna think there’s ane on this side the river that would win it if he could; but nane has had the chance, and we just ‘jouk and let the jaw gang by,’ as the auld sayin’ is.”

“If we could get some of the deer cut away from the herd when they come across, and hunted up to Benachaorin, we might have some sport before they could make their way back to the forest again.”

“We’ll soon do that,” said Robbie, briskly. “I mind doin’ it lang syne, and I’ll do it yet as easy as take my dinner.”

“How will you do it, Robbie?”

“Well, I’ll tell ye that. We’ll—that is Sandy, Hugh, and me—houk three holes in the ground along the river-side, and the deer will no mind them much after a while, but pass by them up to the corn. When we get them up we’ll set fire to some straw near the holes, and make a noise, which will sae frighten them that they’ll tak to the hill on this side, and no think o’ returning the way they cam. They’ll soon stray about in twas and threes, and we can take our will o’ them. The stags will no be worth killin’ after this, but the does will be as good as ever till past Yule time.”

“Well, you can do this as soon as you please, and

say nothing about it till you have Benachaorin covered with deer."

The three went off highly satisfied with their visit, and particularly so with the commission Robert had given them, which they set about executing with hearty good-will.

In the meantime, Robert, who had been since a child fond of horses, amused himself riding about on Sybil, and found her so docile, and at the same time so spirited, that he soon liked her almost as well as he did Farrum. He petted her constantly, and carried oat-cake, bits of sugar, etc. etc., in his pocket, with which he fed her. In a short time there was a perfect understanding between them, and he trained her to do almost anything he wished. She would answer to his call, and come running to him. She would follow him like a dog, or stand at any place he left her until his return. And on the hill, in soft or rough ground, she was matchless. Often, with the speed of a deer, he would scour along the mountain-side, on his beautiful little gray, until the people of the glen looked upon them with almost superstitious admiration. It is difficult to give an idea of the pride they felt in Robert, Farrum, and Sybil ; and very exaggerated stories about the trio were soon freely circulated over the country.

But it was at this time that the pressure of actual poverty on the family made it necessary for Robert to quit the idle, pleasant life he was leading, and betake himself to some useful employment; and, as already mentioned, he had to leave the pleasures of his active exciting pursuits, for the drudgery of Messrs. J. and J. Hardy's office in Edinburgh.

Two days before he set out, Robbie came to him and told him that the deer from Ardmark Forest were every night across the river in the crops, which had only been partially secured although it was well on to Christmas, and that the pits were all ready, and had been made for some time, without attracting the notice of man or deer,—that they were sure to be across that night, and if he was ready, they might be driven up among the Glenurn hills in considerable numbers. Robert was of course ready, and wished nothing better than some sport before he left the country. Guns were got ready, and preparations made for an onslaught on Lord Strathalbane's cherished hobby, such as had not been attempted for several years. Robert was not to go to any of the pits, and he was not to take Farrum out that night, as he would be sure to bring some of the deer to the river, where a discovery could scarcely fail to take place from its proximity to the high-road; but he was to hide in a quiet spot

with a collie dog, with which he would hunt the deer to Benachaorin, without giving them time to turn back to the forest after the first alarm was over. In the course of the evening the men took their different stations, and waited patiently for the expected approach of their intended prey. Nor had they to wait very long. It was a dark drizzly night, so that little could be seen, but the quick ear of the watchers heard the deer before they even reached the river. They made no great noise, however, as they rapidly crossed the stream, and after a momentary pause, as if reconnoitring, they advanced past the pits to the stooks of corn still remaining in the fields. There was no apparent stir in the pits for some time, but suddenly there was a glimmer of light seen in each, and then a bright flame rose high, casting a glow of light to some distance. The deer, much alarmed, ran up from the light till they reached the outskirts of the brushwood that covered some breadth between the hill and low grounds, where they stopped to gaze down upon the flames below. It is very probable that they would have made a circuit and again returned to the forest, but Robert, just at the proper time, started up with the collie, and the deer, seized with renewed alarm, rushed up the hill in the very direction the wily poachers wished.

In a few minutes Sandy joined Robert.

"There's no a hoof less than half a hunder o' them, and we'll find them quite happy in the glens and corries of Benachaorin in the mornin'. You may do what you like, but I'll no warm my bed this night."

"Warm your bed!" said Robbie, who now came up. "Pretty thing that to talk about when there's picket duty to do in advance. Na, you and Hugh maun watch the enemy, and tell us where to find them in the mornin'. We'll be wi' ye before six o'clock."

"I wonder if there's a cuddie amang them, Robbie?"

"There's ane no very far frae us just now, ony gate," answered Robbie, with a gurgling sound expressive of internal satisfaction.

"There's a wheen does amang them, I'm thinking," said Hugh, who was the last up.

"So much the better," answered Robbie. "The kale-pat will no like them the waur o' that."

It was arranged that they should meet at a certain place next morning, to have as much business as possible done before any one should know of the deer being on that side, as the first whisper of it would raise the glen, and set every man, boy, and dog in it in violent commotion.

At the appointed time our friends were at the place

fixed upon, and, as soon as they could see, commenced looking out for the deer. They discovered them, on rather an exposed part of the hill, where it was impossible to stalk them. They were seemingly apprehensive of danger, and kept very much on the alert. The only chance—and that not great—of getting at them was from the opposite side ; but there was danger of their at once making for the forest if scared from that quarter ; and, after much consulting, it was determined to keep between them and the river, and approach as near as possible, and then slip Farrum, who, now quite recovered from the wound he had received in the west country, was in fine condition for another run. They knew that he would break up the herd, and scatter the deer over the district, when they could be hunted down and killed almost at will by the shepherds' dogs.

Robert Graham did not altogether like this idea ; for he had an enthusiastic feeling about deer, and thought them the most beautiful creatures in the world, and would rather they lived, except they fell to his own gun, or were pulled down by Farrum ; with this farther, and, it must be confessed, unamiable exception, viz., in so far as killing them annoyed Lord Strathalbane, towards whom he entertained feelings of hostility and deep dislike. Had it not been for Farrum, Robert Graham

would have at once gone home when it was ascertained that he could not get within range of the deer; but when he looked at the deer on his own ground, and having been taught by Ronald that when there they belonged to him and not to Lord Strathalbane, and saw Farrum's keen brown eye fixed upon them, with his head slightly held out, and one fore-foot in advance of the other, and the tail half up and half down—the body slightly depressed, and trembling all over—it was not in human nature to stand it. He could scarcely restrain himself sufficiently to stalk near enough to the deer to give the dog a chance. No stalking could bring them within three hundred yards of them, which was a great start. When the nearest possible point was reached, Farrum was slipped.

Straight as flies an arrow from a bow, and with scarcely more noise, the gallant dog flew at the herd. The deer, terrified, rushed to a common centre, and wheeled wildly around one another, until the dog was all but among them. Then a fine hind burst away, followed by the rest, and in a compact body they went thundering along the moor. They had not gone a hundred yards when the dog was up with those in the rear, but without noticing them, he pressed on, scattering the herd in all directions. When about the centre of

the herd, a young stag kept straight on without going out of the way, and the dog being prevented by him getting forward to the leading deer, he seized him by the hough with such force as to paralyse the limb; the stag swerved round, and the dog, retaining his hold, wheeled him about three or four times as if on a pivot, and brought him on his side with great violence. Letting go the hough, Farrum flew at the throat, took hold of a mouthful of it, making his tusks meet through it, and giving several furious shakes, he quitted his hold, and bounded off after the herd. Now speed you, ye dun denizens of the forest; no lagging mongrel is at your haunches! You have a fleet leader, and the fleetest deer that ever left a corrie might well fear your pursuer! He gains upon you at every bound, and soon again he will be in the middle of you, and woe betide the prey that he takes in his ruthless fangs! On bounds the noble hound, and, scorning less worthy antagonists, he passes on for the leading hind. Seeing herself singled out, she stretched her neck, and increased her speed, yet though few animals match a strong hind in speed, the dog gains upon her. She still faces the hill, and the top of it is not two hundred yards from her. He nears her fast, but not fast enough to turn her till she got her head down hill in the glen beyond. Graham was fol-

lowing the chase as fast as he could at first ; but when he saw the deer was to gain the glen beyond the height, he stopped, and turning off to the right, he made for the lower end of the glen, well knowing that the hind would not turn down the stream until compelled to do so, and calculating that he might be well on for the point he had in view before the chase should reach it. His companions ran like mad till they reached the young stag, which was disabled but not killed, and there they stopped short, evidently thinking one deer in hand, though not a large one, worth two scudding along the hill at the rate of fifty miles an hour.

As Robert had guessed, the fleet hind went down the side of the glen against the run of the stream, and the dog gained nothing upon her. She crossed the stream, and pushed up the opposite side, but soon found that this was beyond her power, as he then gained rapidly on her. She turned down the stream, and, slanting alongside of it, she continued her headlong career, sometimes in the stream, sometimes on the stony rugged sides of it—always keeping to the hard ground, which hurt the dog's feet, and impeded his speed. Robert gained the bottom of the glen in time to see them pass. The hind was running on the banks of the stream, which rose to a considerable height. The dog was running alongside

of her, and about ten yards above her. It seemed a neck-and-neck race, more than one animal flying and another pursuing. The dog rather led, and was going evidently within his speed, and keeping a wary eye on the hind. They continued thus to run for some time, the ground being still hard and stony, and the bed of the stream considerably below them and very rugged. They soon came to a place where the bank sloped away, leaving a margin of grass at the side of the burn, and just as the hind descended to this margin, the dog shot at her with an astonishing spring, and catching her behind the ear, brought her to the ground, where she went heels over head with such force that she rolled over and over before she stopped. The dog never let go his hold, and though stunned and bruised, he was the first up. The hind strove to rise, but Farrum pinned her to the ground, and after a short and violent struggle, in the course of which she several times got on her knees, the dog prevailed, and by the time Robert reached the spot, she was powerless. He bled and grealoched her, and then went home, Farrum following limping, and bleeding about the feet. As might be expected, few of the deer ever found their way back to Ardmark.

It is easier to conceive than describe Lord Strathal-

bane's feelings, when he heard of his deer being hunted about the country, and slain by the score. A search-warrant, in the circumstances, was out of the question, but he had a number of men placed in the forest opposite Glenurn, who perambulated up and down the river-side night and day, to prevent deer crossing over, and to watch any person that might cross to see if he carried a gun. The people of Glenurn, however, took good care not to cross the river, having no special reason to do so, in search of deer, seeing that many a larder was unusually full of venison, which, although not always of prime quality, was a great deal better than none at all. A parcel of deer crossing to them in this way, was very much what a batch of stranded whales is to the people of some of the Western Isles—a regular godsend.

CHAPTER XIII.

ROBERT GRAHAM GOES TO EDINBURGH.

ROBERT left for Edinburgh the day after he had seen Farrum kill the hind, and great was the grief of those he left behind. Indeed there was nearly a rebellion in the glen the morning he left. The people not seeing any necessity for their young master going away, and feeling grieved at losing him, many waylaid him, to bid him farewell, and few did so empty-handed. None of them had much to give, but all gave something—some a few pence, some a sixpenny-piece, some a shilling, one or two a halfcrown-piece, according as they had. Our friends—Sandy, Robbie, and Hugh the smith—were inconsolable. They met their favourite when he was a mile on his way, accompanied by his father, upon whom they looked with more unkindness than they had ever done before. Robbie would not actually return his greeting, but going up to Robert, took a firm hold of his hand, put

a golden guinea into it, saying, "May it bring you luck *a chree* (heart); God bless ye! the glen will be waefu' and dull without ye;" and off he went without another word. Sandy then went forward with a similar luck-offering. His face twitched violently, and without opening his lips, he wrung Robert's hand and went off. Hugh never had much to say on any occasion. He placed his guinea in Robert's hand, looked him in the face, and said, "I could greet—upon my soul I could;" and went after his friends, giving unmistakable proof that he really could greet. Poor, primitive, kind-hearted people! they have their faults, and who has not? but among their number are not to be found ingratitude or want of respect and love to those they look up to as their natural guardians and superiors. They often received of the bounty of their chief, and dire would be the disappointment they would feel were their little offerings now rejected. It was not, however, in the nature of a Graham of Glenurn to hurt the feelings of his own people, or to throw back a kindness springing from pure attachment, however humble might those be that offered it.

Robert Graham was well aware of the desperate state of the fortunes of the family, and though extremely disinclined to the profession to which, at his mother's request, he was to devote himself, there being no alternative, he

determined to give his whole mind to it ; and well aware how much depended on his success, he set about carrying out this determination with all the energy of his nature. His application and intelligence were such that he made as much progress in acquiring a knowledge of his intended profession in a few months as most young men do in thrice the time. He commenced an earnest study of the law, and before that day in July when we first saw him, he had a fair general idea of its principles, and had mastered many of the little details of his office work. He soon lost much of the boyish look and manner of his deer-stalking days, and in their stead had acquired a quiet, collected, and even gentle demeanour, which a considerable appearance of firmness and decision of character served rather to set off to advantage than impair.

The office of Messrs. J. and J. Hardy was not one in which the clerks had many indulgences. The hours were long, and must be kept with perfect exactness and regularity. Every clerk had his own allotted work, and woe betide the one that neglected it. Mr. John Hardy senior had, by dint of hard, persevering, unflagging industry, worked himself into a large business ; and so constant was his attention to his desk, that he scarcely allowed himself time to sleep. He was not a favourite

in the profession, for he was hard, exacting, and unyielding ; but there was no whisper of dishonesty against him, and he carried a good deal of weight in the consideration of weighty matters. Except as a plodding man of business, he was nothing. In society he was not known, and in this perhaps neither society nor Mr. John Hardy senior were great losers, for they were not at all suited to each other. He married no one knew when, and no one knew whom. He had a son, and became a widower, no one knew when, and no one cared a pin's head to know. He was known to be making money, and everyone thought a great deal of that, and accorded him more honour for this than for all his other qualities, whatever they were. When Robert Graham entered the office, the old man had long worked himself into a state of helplessness. Indeed, for upwards of twenty years the business of the office had been entirely done by Mr. John Hardy junior. He followed the footsteps of his father pretty closely, but at one time he struck out a new path, and went into society. He was not, however, destined to shine, or remain long there. He was never a handsome man. As a young man, he was dark, sallow, and awkward ; as a man well up in years, he is still dark, sallow, and awkward, and forbidding besides. Bald at the top of the head, he gathered his

hair up to conceal this, but the hair was bristly and impracticable, and instead of lying flat as was wished, it pricked up contumaciously on either side of the bare cranium, something as the ears stick up on the sides of a wolf's head. The brows were most portentous, beetling over a pair of very light gray eyes, till their glance was lost in the black pointed tuft of hair that projected over each pupil. The nose short, rough, and round. The mouth, half a mile below it, was large, coarse, and well stored with long irregular yellow teeth, and the chin nowhere. The shoulders were round and sloping, and the figure swelling out towards the hips, which were the broadest part of him. He was short and paunchy, consequential and pragmatic. He was a young man when the idea seized him of mixing with his fellow-men, and though by no means prepossessing in manner or appearance, he had no reason to complain of the reception he met with, particularly in certain matrimonial quarters where it was known that he was the only offshoot of a wealthy old screw. One unfortunate night Mr. John went to a ball, and by some accident found himself involved in a quarrel with a young fire-eating gentleman from the Borders, and having always a ready supply of abuse on hand, he launched it liberally at the Borderer's head.

That gentleman pulled John junior's nose, and kicked him down stairs. Mr. Duncan Graham, a gay bachelor at the time, was at the ball, and next morning called at the office of Messrs. J. and J. Hardy, his family agents, and was for some time closeted with the junior partner. The object of Mr. Graham's call was to get the junior partner to put himself right with the world by calling out the unruly Borderer, but the junior partner could not see the benefit of putting himself right by such a course. "It might prove very injurious to him as a man of business," he said. "His father always set his face against all such bellicose proceedings, and his own principles led him to concur in his father's views." Mr. Graham tried hard to combat these peace-loving doctrines, but the junior partner took his stand upon them, and would not yield an inch. Mr. Graham became eloquent first, and then angry, and ended in characterising the junior partner's doctrines as those of no man of honour, nor indeed of any man but an arrant coward.

"Do you call me a coward?" asked the junior partner.

"Will you call out that fellow that so grossly insulted you?"

"I will not."

"Then," answered Graham deliberately, "I call you a coward."

Even this did not elicit a spark from the damp feelings of the junior partner ; but he did not the less feel that it was a grievous indignity ; and although incapable of openly retaliating when insulted, he was just the man to treasure up intense hate against all who offered him an insult. No one more cordially hates being called a coward than the man who has not one atom of courage ; and no one feels so imperatively called upon as the greatest liar, to shoot any man that tells him he diverges from the truth. And the most curious thing of all is, that public feeling is altogether on the side of the liar, and will bear him out in shooting the man who tells him nothing but the truth.

After his interview with Mr. Graham, society was no more graced by the presence of the junior partner, who devoted himself sedulously to his profession ; and at any hour of the day he might be found buried among dusty papers in his dusky chambers, up five pair of stairs in one of the closes off the High Street. He had no friend or associate, except the corpulent, long-legged spiders that made his room their home ; and as they cast their treacherous meshes over every available chink and cranny in his dirty chambers, to catch their unwary

prey, he wound his around many a hapless client to their utter ruin.

The senior partner—old, helpless, and paralytic in person, and senile in mind—daily sat among old papers no longer required for any other purpose, and went through an imaginary routine of business, as purposeless as the character traced upon the sand within reach of the advancing tide, or as his life had been regarding everything that did not centre in himself.

The clerks in the office of J. and J. Hardy were not numerous—two of them were elderly, and two young, besides Robert. The oldest clerk was a curious-looking man, who had been for upwards of thirty years in the office, yet he “wasna farther ben wi’ Maister John than the first day he clapped eyes upon him,” as he himself expressed it. “I hae worked for them and slaved for them for thretty years, yet when I gang in till his room he looks as if he thocht I was there to rob him, and he never yet asked me to sit doon and hae a crack. Just do this and do that, and then yokes himsell to his wark again.” Honest John was not altogether correct here. He had had many “lang cracks” with the junior partner, but the crack was mostly all on John’s side. Indeed, from him the junior partner derived all the gossip he knew or ever listened to; and his knowledge of what was

done in society in general, and in the Parliament-House, to which he never went, in particular, came to him through this fertile source. John made a rule, to which he had been faithful for twenty-five years, which was to tell his employer not one word but strict truth in everything connected with business, and not one word of truth on every other subject. John reconciled this to his conscience by saying, that he was paid for the business, and was therefore bound to strict veracity and fidelity, but as he got nothing for his gossiping news he might give them in any shape he liked ; and finding fiction, when properly served up, more agreeable to all parties, and less calculated to hurt any person, he thought it politic to patronise it to beguile his idle minutes, few and far between as they were, in the office.

John from the first took a great liking to Robert Graham ; got a seat for him at the desk next to himself, and took much good-natured trouble to teach him how things should be done. He took much delight in taking him to the Parliament House, and marching up and down the outer house holding the young man's arm, looking all the time very proud of his companion. And although there was nothing in his own appearance to be proud of, Robert liked to be with John, finding him not only entertaining in his unceasing talk, but also able

and willing to give him much useful professional instruction.

Little as the other clerks saw of the junior partner, Robert saw still less. When he had occasion to go into his room, he observed that he looked fidgety and uneasy, and dismissed him as soon as he could. He wondered at this, and determined to see as little of him as possible. John, on various occasions, *gossiped* about Robert to his employer, and told such fabulous anecdotes of him as might set him up anywhere as a hero of romance. The junior partner, having implicit faith in his veracity and knowledge of the world, looked upon Robert as a sort of prodigy, which, however, he thought it more safe to distrust than admire; and hence, probably, his uneasy manner to the young man. The office was managed very much through John, and when the time for going to the country came, he at once procured for Robert a more extended leave than usually fell to the clerks of Messrs. J. and J. Hardy. Indeed, had it not been for him, it is doubtful whether he could have got away at all, as the junior partner never went to the country except on business, and could not see the good of any other person doing what he did not do, or care to do. Everything, however, was settled to Robert's satisfaction, when he met his cousin Mary Livingston in the High Street,

and he only awaited the rising of the Court to fix the day of his departure for the longed-for pleasures of his home. The very moment he was able, he wrote home how and when he was to travel, and the reading of the letter gave more unmixed pleasure at Dunurn than any tidings received there since he had left it.

CHAPTER XIV.

RASPER AND SYBIL.

CONTRARY to his expectation, Robert Graham had a pleasant interview with his cousin George on his way from England, and was introduced to his friend Mr. Henry Heathcote, a young Englishman who accompanied him to Glengarve. So well pleased were they with one another, that Robert promised to take Glengarve on his way home, and in writing to Dunurn he desired Sybil to be sent there to meet him.

On reaching his uncle's house, he found not only George and Heathcote, but also Lord Strathalbane there, and his meeting with him was cold in the extreme. He felt his face flush, and an irascibility of feeling taking possession of him, as the young nobleman slightly acknowledged him as an acquaintance. But he, as well as he could, suppressed all appearance of hostility, watching vigilantly, however, for anything like an open

slight, which, it is possible, he would have at once resented. Lord Strathalbane was too much a man of the world, and, to do him justice, too high-minded and generous a man, gratuitously to insult any one ; and much as he disliked Graham for the injuries he considered he had done him, through his hobby, he could not but remember many circumstances of former times that brought his old playmate vividly before him ; and although there never was much cordiality between them, yet there was enough of regard, or respect, or esteem, to prevent matters, when they were face to face, going so far as might be the case had there been no previous personal acquaintance at all.

There was no one at Glengarve that was so delighted with Robert as his uncle. It took the old man some considerable time clearly to understand who his young guest was, but when, in the course of the first evening, he really made out that Robert was his nephew—his sister Jane's son—he would scarcely let him from his side. It is possible this might have been at least partly owing to Robert's pleasant and deferential manner to old people. This, besides being natural to him, was increased by constant intercourse with his grandfather and grandmother, in whose society he had spent much of his time since his childhood.

“You are much grown since I saw you, Robert ; why you are now as tall as your mother. I am quite certain that you are,” becoming positive as he saw the young people smile. “Jane was tall, and do you know she was a very handsome girl. Yes, Jane was very handsome. I would say the handsomest girl I ever saw except one, and that was your mother, my beloved wife ; but she was not your mother—no, no, she was my wife.”

“You must not talk too much to Robert, as he is tired after his journey from Edinburgh,” said his daughter, wishing to stop his garrulity.

“Tired ? what should tire him ?—a journey from Edinburgh—that would not tire any one. The only thing that tired and bored me, when I was a young man, was a day in the forest with Lord Strathalbane. That was wearisome work, stalking after fleeing deer, that would not let human beings near them. I never could fancy that sport, and I am sure neither could you. What do they call you, eh ?”

“Robert, sir.”

“Yes, yes, I remember. You were telling me you did not like going to the forest to stalk fleeing deer—quite right. I never liked it, and I never knew a man of sense who did. Lord Strathalbane thought he did, but I knew better. I hope his son, when he grows up,

may not be a fool, and go after fleeing deer that wish to have nothing to say to him."

"My cousin Philip, sir, wishes to tell you about the splendid horse Heathcote has brought north with him. He has few matches in Yorkshire."

"Your cousin Philip—O yes, there he is. Were we talking about horses, fleeing horses? No, it was fleeing deer. Eh, yes, that was it; you were telling me you did not care about them, and that your father made a fool of himself running after them. Eh, yes; that is it—you made a fool of yourself, and some one stuck a fleeing deer upon a dial to tell the hours."

"These would be flying hours, sir," put in Heathcote, who was fond of a pun, and did not feel any of the awkwardness the others were suffering from.

"Flying owls, flying owls! You keep them to kill mice with—very good—they see in the dark, and scream very loud—uncanny birds some folk think them,—and although I do not agree with them altogether—still I would rather a good cat."

Next morning, when Robert and his cousin Mary met, she said—

"Do you know, Robert, I thought the look you gave Philip when you met last night would have knocked him down. What queer creatures you men are."

"I suppose you women, under the same circumstances, would have flown into each other's arms, and vented your enmity in floods of kisses?—more philosophic, but scarcely so natural."

"It is as natural for you to be cross and quarrelsome as for us to be good-natured and forgiving—that is what you wished to say, but you did not know how. But tell me, are you still determined to fight another campaign in Ardmark?"

"Except upon one condition."

"And what may it be?"

"That Lord Strathalbane will acknowledge that he cannot prevent me, and beg of me, as a personal favour, to spare his deer."

"Suppose I do all that for him."

"Then, Mary, you can take that much upon you for Lord Strathalbane?"

"Don't be foolish, Robert. Seriously speaking, I wish you would give up the project of carrying the war farther. It may vex and annoy Philip, but it is done at a great cost to you."

"No cost to me, but much pleasure and satisfaction."

"Is it no cost of self-esteem to you to fly before the hirelings of my cousin, not daring to look them in the face, and to be hunted like an outlaw?"

“ Mary, you do not understand my feelings in this matter. There is something so adventurous and exciting in the sport of deer-stalking, that it is to me almost as irresistible as the gaming-table is to the gamester ; and when you add the satisfaction of setting your amiable cousin at defiance—of killing his deer on his own ground, almost before his face—of paying him back in some measure, the indignity put upon my family,—you must admit that another campaign, as you call it, has irresistible charms.”

“ I admit all that, but”——

“ I shall have no buts, Mary—and, do you hear, this much I promise you, that after this year, I will not set foot in the forest of Ardmark ; and that, although every antlered stag and slim-limbed hind in it should feed up to the door of Dunurn, they shall be as safe from me as if they were so many donkeys.”

“ Well, that is something, and as there is no use reasoning with an unreasonable man, I will say no more to dissuade you, but do not get into any scrape or trouble. Preparations have been made to prevent inroads from Glenurn, and it is thought that they are such as to make it impossible that even an attempt at one can end in anything short of the capture of all concerned in it—now you are warned.”

"To be forewarned is to be forearmed," said Robert, gaily, and the interview ended.

"I say, Livingston," said Heathcote, a few days afterwards, "I have arranged with Graham to ride over to Glenurn House with him to-morrow to see Tom Unwin, who has come down for the shooting season. You told me it was fifteen miles off; he says it is not more than the half."

"Strange as it may sound to you, we are both right. Across the hill it is only seven or eight miles, but there is no road, except a villanous path that I would recommend you to shun. Is your friend alone?"

"I should think not. He would scarcely venture to the Highlands without at least a dozen of men, women, and children, to keep up the racketting he delights in."

"How long do you intend to racket with them?"

"A couple of days. I will be back in good time to accompany Strathalbane and you."

"So be it then."

Next morning when Heathcote got up from the breakfast-table and looked out, he saw a primitive-looking figure standing under a large oak-tree a short way from the house, with a gray pony and a large dog for company.

"Hilloa!" cried Master Heathcote, "what have we got here? That is the queerest turn-out that I ever saw."

The other gentlemen went to the window. Robert Graham instantly recognised his old friend Robbie, who stood very unconcernedly holding Sybil by the bridle, while Farrum quietly lay on the soft sward taking little notice of anything. He went to the door and called "Farrum!" and the noble dog sprang to his feet, as if touched by the wand of a magician. He did not notice his master until Robert again called him by his name, when he bounded towards him, and nearly overpowered him with his obstreperous joy. In a little he sat down with his rough side rubbing against Robert's leg, and holding up his head howled with excitement and delight. Heathcote, when he saw the dog running up, went to the door, and looked on in wonder, which broke out in exclamations of admiration when he examined Farrum.

Robbie came quietly forward, but seeing Robert with a stranger, and others looking out at the window, he stopped short with Sybil at a little distance from the door, and drawing himself up, made a military salute that would not disgrace a sentry at the door of a king's palace, and stood as if fixed to the ground. Robert walked quickly up to him, holding out his hand.

"How are you, Robbie? I am delighted to see you."

Robbie took the proffered hand, and looked into the

young man's face for some time without saying a word. At length he said, "Welcome hame, sir. 'Od, I'm as glad as ever I was in a' my life!"

Robert then called to Sybil, and the sagacious little creature at once knew him, and coming up with a low whinnying, rubbed her nose coaxingly on the sleeve and breast of his coat. He clapped her arching neck, and said to Robbie that she had been taken good care of in his absence.

"Care!" says Robbie. "She'll tak unco good care o' hersell. She gaed away, near three month syne, when turned to the hill for the summer, and was never heard o' till the day before yesterday, when she was found in the heart o' the forest, or rather ayont the heart o' it, not far from where it marches wi' the next shire, and brought in for you. Hugh took awfu' pains wi' the shoeing o' her, and I came ower wi' her mysell, just to be the first to meet ye, and to carry hame your baggage. I brought Farrum wi' me—and he wasna very willing to come—thinking maybe ye would like to see him too."

In this way did poor Robbie show his attachment to his young master.

Robert then went into the house, closely followed by Farrum, and Mary came forward and claimed his acquaintance. He slightly wagged his tail, as much as

to say, I have seen you before, and then took his station beside his master.

"I say, Graham," said Mr. Heathcote, "do you really mean to ride that little pony? It will be rare sport to see her toiling under your weight."

"She will not mind it much."

"Why, she will sink under it. She is not above thirteen hands high."

"Not much; but she is good of her inches."

"So she would require. It will be slow work travelling with you."

"You shall not be detained long on the way for little Sybil and me, or she is not what she was eight months ago."

"I say, now, Graham, what start will you take, and we will have a steeple-chase from here to Glenurn House?"

"We had better not."

"I thought you would say that—distance eight miles—thirteen hands, as against sixteen. Well, to make a fair thing of it, I will give you two miles."

"I do not think that would be fair, for I know the road and you do not; and you will go so fast that no one can keep up with you to point it out to you."

"That is a good get off. I shall have rare fun, at all events."

"Do not be too sure of that," answered Robert, getting a little hot.

"You had better," said George, laughing, "give him fifty to one, and start equal."

"Fifty to one! why, I will give him a hundred to one and a mile's start."

"Were I a betting man, I would take you up."

While this talk was going on, Lord Strathalbane was sitting near the window, and frowning out at Sybil, trying to make out her size and appearance, which, however, he could not do owing to his being so short-sighted. He had a good eye for a horse, and was fond of riding, so Heathcote's keenness and Robert's apathy about a steeple-chase amused him. He would like nothing better than to get Robert involved in an adventure that was pretty sure to end to his disadvantage, and having no doubt that a contest between the splendid high-bred horse that Heathcote had with him and the Highland pony before him, which he could see was a small one, would have that termination, he said quietly—

"The odds offered are very unusual, but perhaps not too much in this instance. I would put the matter on its proper footing, and say I had no chance, rather than say I was no betting man."

"I know," said Robert, a little haughtily, "that I am no betting man. I have yet to learn that I should have no chance. I think crossing the hill my pony has an advantage over Heathcote's horse, having been bred among the hills, and therefore better up to hill-work than his can possibly be."

"Oh! then your ground is that you do not wish to win Heathcote's money?—that is considerate."

"I have no wish whatever to win Heathcote's money, or," he added pointedly—the fine coming across his memory—"to take any man's money to which I have no right in any shape or form."

"You do not want to win my money?—bah!" said Heathcote. I here offer to run my horse Rasper, now in Mr. Livingston's stable at Glengarve, against your mare Sybil, now standing in front of Mr. Livingston's door at Glengarve, from that place to Glenurn House by the hill-road this day, and bet one hundred pounds sterling to one pound sterling that my horse Rasper will beat your mare Sybil, and be the first to reach the said Glenurn."

"Now, Robert," said George, "there's a chance for you. But with all the advantages you say your pony possesses, I cannot advise you to accept the bet."

"Then," said Robert, "I accept it without your

advice, on the understanding that Heathcote rides his horse, and I my little pony."

"Done!" cried Heathcote, exultingly.

"I again say," continued Robert, "that I have no wish to win your money, or to lose my own, and that I would not have betted were it not that I am in a manner forced to it."

"All right, old fellow. Let us get ready, otherwise we shan't be in for Tom's luncheon at one o'clock."

"I have nothing to do but mount."

In a quarter of an hour Rasper was brought round to the door, and a superb animal he was—immensely powerful, with fine free action. He was in the finest condition, and so sleek and glossy that his bright bay coat would make a looking-glass. The whole party went out to look at the noble animal, and loud and universal was the admiration expressed.

Lord Strathalbane particularly admired Rasper, and patting his arched neck, said—"I would like to see you properly matched. It would be worth going a hundred miles to see."

"He is a magnificent horse," said Robert, who admired him as much as the rest.

"You are beginning to rue your bet."

"Not a bit from the fear of being beaten; but I

should be sorry to see that superb horse come to misfortune."

"I am no more of a betting man than yourself, yet I shall be glad to depart from my rule like you, and give you the same odds."

Robert's face flushed, and there was an expression of triumph came over it for an instant.

"You are not afraid to lose your money."

"Not in the present instance."

"Neither am I, so I take you."

"Done!"

"And done!"

"Capital, Robert!" cried George. "Why, I had no idea you were such a sporting character. Heathcote and Strathalbane booked for a hundred apiece, is no joking matter."

"Perhaps," said Robert, laughing, "you would like to take me up upon the same terms."

"No, thank you, I know something of the road across the hill, and I have been for the last five minutes admiring as perfect a specimen of her class as I ever saw. Where did you pick up Sybil? She does look a cross between a witch and a fairy."

This drew the attention of all on Sybil. She had been for some time looking at Robert, and chafing to get

to him, and when he went up she arched her beautiful neck, from which her dark, almost black mane, hung down on one side like a fringe of silken drapery. Her small pointed ears, dark also, with a light stripe or two running down the back of each ; her small proud head, wide nostrils, and lustrous large eye, told that Sybil was no ordinary opponent, or one to be altogether despised, even by Rasper, if she got but fair play. A glance at her compact and vigorous form, and fine clean limbs, confirmed the idea of matchless courage and strength given by the first casual examination of her head. Lord Strathalbane examined her first superciliously, then admiringly, and finished off by saying, half aloud, "Most exquisite—faultless."

"You do not regret your bet, Philip?" asked George.

"Who, I? no ; but that is no reason why I should not admire that very beautiful little mare. She has none of the usual faults of the Highland pony—that is, the heavy head and shoulder, and drooping croup. She has these points in as great perfection as the highest-bred Arab."

"So she should," said Robert, "for her sire was of the purest blood of the desert."

"I could have sworn it," said Lord Strathalbane, pleased at hearing his judgment so fully confirmed.

"Were she mine, I would be careful not to put her to work beyond her powers."

"It is by no wish of mine she is to be so severely tried to-day," answered Robert ; "and to prove this I can only say that I shall willingly cancel the bets I have taken—not, however, that I am afraid of her winning."

"I cannot let you off," said Lord Strathalbane, "although I think your expectations not so unreasonable as I did a quarter of an hour ago. The bets were of Heathcote's and my seeking, and we cannot consent to their being cancelled, because we find our chance of success not so great as we expected. I can fancy that little mare hard to match on a rough hill-road, or in soft ground ; but she is no match for that horse under almost any circumstances."

Heathcote and Robert now mounted their horses and went off at an easy canter, and were soon out of sight.

"You are destined to lose your money, Philip," said George.

"I do not care very much for that ; but I think I was precipitate in taking the bet, and regret it less on account of the money than for having forced it as I did on Graham. Both Heathcote and I deserve to lose."

"And you shall get your deserts ; the hill-road between this and Glenurn is simply atrocious—in some

places rocky, and dangerous to every four-footed animal, except, perhaps, a goat—in others soft ; but all could be got over by such a horse as Rasper, till they come to the black moss that covers the level at the top of the hill. Rasper will have no more chance there than a fly in a pitch-pot. Robert Graham and his spirited little mare will have Heathcote and Rasper at their mercy in just half an hour. What an enviable position to be in ! ”

The riders continued their canter along the road for a quarter of a mile, when they came to a gate. Sybil turned off there, followed by Rasper, but as soon as they passed through, the road became narrow and stony. Heathcote, however, pushed up alongside of his companion, and they continued their course at unabated speed. Suddenly they came to a small burn which ran clear at the bottom of a deep narrow hollow, with sloping rocks on both sides. Robert, without tightening his reins, allowed Sybil to go down, which she did with scarcely a perceptible change in her pace, and lightly jumping the burn, she climbed up the opposite bank like a deer. Heathcote, taking his good horse well in hand, followed, and although in descending he slipped down the rock in a dangerous manner, and came with a splash into the burn, he scrambled up on the other side without any casualty.

"That is a nasty bit," said Robert, "and I almost dislike it as much as any part of the road."

"I dislike it extremely," answered his companion, cordially.

The road continued to become narrower as they advanced, and in a short time they could not ride abreast.

"Now, Heathcote," said Robert, "I will allow you to lead, so pass on."

"No ceremony, Graham ; you know the road, I don't, so I willingly, though your senior, yield the precedence to you."

And away went Sybil, her neck arched, and her head rather down, the better to see the obstacles in the way, and as if she really enjoyed having her master once more on her back. The road, now a mere footpath, slanted up a steep hill-side.

"Are we to go up to the top of this?" asked Heathcote.

"Yes ; our road lies between these two high points."

"Get on then, or I will take the lead from you."

"You are perfectly welcome to it, so pass on."

He pulled up Sybil, and she very unwillingly allowed Rasper to go past her. Heathcote rather pushed his horse, and thought his power and strength would tell in the ascent ; but after five minutes' pull, he found that

Sybil was at his heels, and he again moderated his pace, which was beginning to tell. Indeed, up to this time, Rasper showed no superiority over the little mare, and perhaps, by the time they passed between the pointed hills, he was the warmer of the two. Now the road ran along the top of the right side of a very deep green glen, on the verge of a slope so steep that it was enough to make one feel giddy to look down at the sheep that were seen moving about below, appearing not larger than white mice. In some places it was a mere deep wet rut, so narrow that a horse could scarcely walk in it. When they got towards the head of the glen, it became slightly better, and they again cantered on briskly; but soon getting into rocky broken places, they were obliged to go slower, as they began to round the head of the glen to the left, passing at some height above great cuts in the side of the hill, where heavy spates of rain had washed away moss, earth, stones, and gravel, in some instances to the depth of a hundred feet. It was frightful to look down upon these from the rugged path the travellers were on. They now got on the wide moor, and the path became so faint as to be followed with difficulty, and Robert again took the lead at his companion's request. Up to this time, without actual racing, which was out of the question, the pace was excellent. There was a gentle declivity or

slope at the head of the glen, which broke suddenly into a precipice. They had to follow the curve at the head of the glen, and the slope became more and more difficult as they advanced, from its being soft, and Sybil instinctively avoided every dangerous place ; but at last she came to a spot that looked extremely ugly, which there was no possibility of avoiding. There was a wide cut in the moss running across their path, down in the direction of the precipice, and when Heathcote found himself on the verge of it, his heart sank. Without hesitation, little Sybil gathered herself up, and placing her forefeet on the very edge of the cut, slipped slowly into it, carrying the breadth of her hoofs of the moss down from the side. It was hard at the bottom, but the way out nearly as high as herself. With astonishing strength and activity she sprang up at the opposite side, and though almost beyond her power with the heavy weight on her back, she scrambled out, and walked lightly over some wet soft ground that lay in her way. Rasper's great weight made him sink up to the fetlock in the moss, at the side of this dangerous cut, and he seemed greatly to dislike the work before him, showing a strong disinclination to go at it, owing, doubtless, to the soft nature of the ground ; but Heathcote was a bold rider, and would not lose his money without a

struggle, so he put spurs to his fiery horse, which made him spring forward to clear the gap. It is certain he would have succeeded had the ground been firm, but sinking as he did, when in the act of leaping, half-way up to the hough, he fell far short, and came violently with his breast against the high perpendicular peaty bank opposite, and the shock sent Heathcote right over his head, with such force as to roll him near where Sybil stood quietly eating the coarse deer's-hair grass that grew in the moss. Rasper fell back on his haunches half against the side he had been on, and rearing furiously, and wheeling down the chasm, he was just in the act of bolting to the precipice, when Graham, who had watched the scene, with one bound was at his side, and seizing hold of the bridle, with a powerful effort checked the maddened animal just in time to save him from being dashed to pieces. Heathcote got to his feet immediately, looking a good deal shaken, and seeing that his companion was leading his horse up the gap, to where the mare had jumped out, he gave himself a shake, saying quietly—

“That your roads are infamously bad, I think I may say without the fear of contradiction.”

His lugubrious look was very ludicrous, and Robert could not help laughing. The horse, trembling all over

with fear, soon calmed down in his hands, and bringing him gently to the proper place, he got him to spring up, and landed him uninjured, alongside of Sybil, his companion looking on, and interfering no more than if he had not a horse within a hundred miles of him.

"I say, friend Graham," he began, "it occurs to me that I have been a great ass this day, and that I have had the fate that all such donkeys deserve. I was confident over much, and behaved to you in a way I am heartily ashamed of. I now give up this precious steeple-chase, with the full consciousness that I was a fool in ever engaging in it, and congratulate you on your victory."

"Why, we are not half-way yet, and surely you will not give in before a casualty has overtaken either of us."

"A casualty ! call you it no casualty to be shot out of the saddle like a ball from a cannon, and to have my horse first buried in the bowels of the earth, and then barely saved, but by no earthly thing I could have done, from going over that precipice, which I take it cannot be less than a thousand feet of sheer descent ? Give me a christian country, and hard footing, or even heavy ploughed fields, and rasping hedges, and five-barred gates, and even walls and canals, and I will ride like my neighbours—but these infernal roads, rocks and

ravines, ruts, bogs, and hags—why, Graham, I leave these to you, and wish you joy of them. I have lost my bet, and Strathalbane has lost his, which latter I do not much regret, seeing he ought to have known better than to expect poor Rasper to go over these places as if made of air.”

“That is your view of the matter ; mine is, that the race is only half run, and that I have no more right to claim a victory than you have. But this I will do with you :—I will make it a drawn battle. It was a foolish bet on both sides, and as I entered into the thing under the influence of a momentary pique, I now heartily regret having done so. You could not confer a greater obligation on me than make it a drawn bet, dead heat, or anything else of the kind you like.”

The two young men led their horses quietly on, with difficulty avoiding some ugly places that Rasper could never have got over, had not Robert taken him in hand, until they reached the wide level moss at the top of the high ridge that separated Glengarve and Glenurn.

“There are some bad places to get through before we reach the far side of the ‘Black Moss,’” said Robert. “This little fairy can go over it as if she had wings. See her footprints of this morning. My man crossed over with her as the crow flies, and I have often done

the same on less trusty hill-ponies than Sybil, but I would not make the attempt with your splendid bay for twenty guineas. So we will take to the right, and skirt the moss, though it is two miles round and anything but pleasant riding."

"Do you know, Graham," began Heathcote, as they went on in the direction pointed out by Robert, "I envy you more than any man I ever met?"

"Envy me! There is no accounting for fancies. I think myself as little to be envied as any person in the country."

"And as I believe that you speak in all sincerity, when you say you regret this bet," he went on, without noticing the interruption, "I consent to make it a drawn bet. If you wished really to have gained it, there is nothing easier for you than to do so even yet. But you so put the matter to me that I feel that I can best imitate your own manliness and generosity by doing as you wish me. I have been thinking over in my own mind, whether I could consent to this unusual course without laying myself open to a charge of backing out of the matter at the expense of my character as a man of honour—matters of this kind being peculiarly susceptible of sinister interpretations; but with you I have no doubt of perfect exemption from improper motives being

attributed to me, and I think the highest compliment I can pay you is to agree to your proposal and let you have your own way."

It is unnecessary to follow them through the intricacies of the different mosses and bogs they had to traverse. Suffice it to say that when they came to Glenurn House, they were so evenly abreast that Mr. Tom Unwin, to whom the matter was referred, could not possibly say who had won, and he, with much pomp, declared the steeple-chase to have terminated in a dead heat between Mr. Heathcote's horse and Mr. Robert Graham's mare.

Tom Unwin was a small active restless man, that was himself in a constant bustle, and kept every one about him in constant commotion. He was hospitable, possibly because he wished to have something to do, and found a great deal of employment in making preparations and knocking his people about when on "hospitable thoughts intent." He was delighted when Heathcote arrived, and cordially received Robert on his being presented to him. "Luncheon was just ready—they had arrived at the proper time," etc. etc. But Robert became so excited as he approached his home, and so anxious to hasten there, knowing how he must be longed for, that he could scarcely be prevailed on to

dismount. There was a large party present at luncheon, and many proposals discussed for disposing of their time that afternoon and the following day or two, and Robert was invited to join them. He, however, declined to make any engagement until after he had been at home, and taking his leave as soon as politeness permitted, he mounted Sybil again, and galloped off at a much faster pace than he had gone at any time in the course of the steeple-chase. How his heart bounded as he got the first glimpse of the lowly little house of Dunurn—and how he flew down from the green gate that swung between the two trees—and how giddy with delight when his little brother and sisters came running to the door, striving whose loving arms should first encircle his neck—and, oh! how sweet, when he broke away from them and rushed into the house, to feel his mother's tears of joy and gladness drop on his face, while the soft accents of prayer and praise fell on his ear!

CHAPTER XV.

THE DRIVE IN THE FOREST.

GRAHAM spent a few days of much happiness at home. The young people could not bear him out of their presence, and the old people were nearly as anxious to have him in theirs. The grandfather and grandmother were particularly so, and the good old lady would sit beside him, looking wistfully in his handsome face, and wondering how many great people had been attracted by it, who were but waiting an opportunity of giving remarkable proofs of their admiration. The old man would put some leading questions about the principal men of Edinburgh, and listened with delight to his grandson's account of them, and to the many anecdotes he had heard of their sayings and doings; and these were not the less appreciated that they were derived to a great extent through the questionable medium of his friend and fellow-clerk, John—whose surname of

Stout, by the way, few became acquainted with under a twelvemonth's acquaintance. Then Sandy, and Robbie, and Hugh, had an immensity to tell him, and many other humble and very attached friends came to see the *young* heir, as he was called—his father being *the* heir ; and he had brought home so many trifling little presents, whose principal value, in the eyes of the recipients, was the proof they afforded of his kind remembrance of them, that nearly a week had run its course before he had got through such a mass of business. He had not even thought of looking to see how ' Thunder ' had held out during his absence. Sybil had not been seen or heard of by him since the day of his arrival, having been a day or two afterwards turned again to the hill and betaken herself back to her summer haunts ; and probably Farrum would have been equally neglected, had it not been he never let his master out of his sight, and made frequent calls on his attention, by pushing his hairy black nose and muzzle into his hand. Then his father claimed Robert's attention, and they had delightful strolls over the farm, and famous angling in the river, besides a couple of days' excellent sport in Benchaorin, where the birds were numerous and strong. There were also consultations on more serious matters—to wit, the finances of the family. These were in a very unsatis-

factory state ; so much so, that the prospects of the future were exceedingly depressing. Even the strong faith and hope of Mrs. Duncan Graham, that the estate was to descend to her son, were beginning to wane—there being no gleam of sunshine in the cloud that enveloped them. All this weighed heavy on Robert's mind, and all the more so, that he saw clearly his inability to do anything for a long time to redeem the fallen fortunes of his house. He saw that all looked to him as their only hope, and feeling that this hope had its origin in their utter helplessness, it was almost more than he could bear. There was a gloom beginning to settle down upon him after a few weeks at home, of which he was for some time unconscious ; but he no sooner perceived it, than he determined to shake it off. This, however, was not easy ; and although he struggled with the feeling bravely, he found that he did not do so with perfect success. He tried Benchaorin again—also the river ; and although, as a sportsman, he might well be satisfied, his heart remained heavy, and a pang shot through it every time he observed a look of anxiety and care that frequently passed over his mother's adored face.

“ I can stand this no longer, Jane,” he said passionately to his sister one day. “ Yet what to do I cannot say. I

am moping myself to death, instead of bearing up like a man, and shaking off the incubus. I cannot thus mend matters, so I will banish the whole thing from my mind.— I have it," he cried out suddenly; "I boasted to Mary that I would kill a stag in Ardmark before I was a week at home, and here I have been for three, and have not even looked across in the direction of the forest. Have you heard lately from Mary, and what does she say?"

"I heard from her two days ago. George and his friend Mr. Heathcote are still with Lord Strathalbane, and she says they are to have a great drive in the forest some day this week, and expect to make a thousand deer pass through Glenbuie before two o'clock in the day."

"What day is it to be, Jane—tell me quick; where is the letter?"

"I left it in the house, but I will go for it;" and off she ran.

"That is a chance, old fellow, is it not?" addressing Farrum. "You and I shall see whether age is telling upon us, you old rascal"—taking hold of one of his ears and pulling it—"shan't we, old dog?" The dog gave two or three bounds, as if to express his perfect readiness to do whatever was required of him.

Jane soon made her appearance, calling, as she came near her brother—

“It is to-morrow, Robert.”

“Then, Jane, I will not go to bed to-night.”

“Why, dear?”

“Because I mean to spend the night in Ardmark.”

“O Robert, do not say so. I tremble to think what may happen to you. It would be dreadful to have that horrid man Gripe coming again about us—do not, dear Robert, go any more.”

“Why, Jane, you are not half such a brave girl as Mary. I think she takes as much pleasure as I do myself in vexing and setting that magnificent cousin of hers at defiance. I promised to her that this shall be my last raid to that sacred territory, and I make the same promise to you. She acquiesced in my going on that condition. You will do the same, and then the thing is over for ever. I believe the information in the letter is for my benefit, and it is most valuable to me, as I can hang on the outskirts of the drive, and have my sport without any one noticing my presence. And it will do me good, Jane, and rouse me from for ever brooding over these unfortunate affairs of ours.”

“Since it is to be your last escapade, I will say

nothing farther against it—but, dear Robert, take care of yourself.”

“The very best I promise you—and now I will go and tell Robbie to be ready to start at three in the morning. I will not take Sandy or Hugh with me, as they are getting stiff, at least Sandy is, and there may be fast work to do. Robbie knows how to take care of himself, and if he should get into a scrape he is sure to get out of it, as no one else can.” And away he went in the best of spirits.

Robbie felt extremely gratified when Robert told him his wishes, and instantly went to his gun to see if it was straight, and the ropes in order.

“On this occasion, Robbie, it may be as well to leave your gun at home. I will take mine, and, between it and Farrum, I think I can promise as much venison as you will be able to carry home or conceal.”

“Well, sir, as ye will,” answered Robbie, who, rather than not go, would even have left his kilt behind.

There were some farther arrangements made, and the time for starting fixed, and then Robert went home whistling and singing more gaily than he had done for many a day.

Glenbuie was a fine green glen of considerable extent, which had once been, even in the recollection of old people then alive, the home of a thriving and happy tenantry, who

had been removed by the grandfather of Lord Strathalbane in order to extend the forest in that direction, there being some fine hills and corries beyond it, which could not be surpassed for the purpose he had in view. It was now covered with rich green pasture, and a clear river of some size running at the bottom of it. It ran across the other glens of the forest which lay to the right, and poured their waters into this river. Robert Graham knew that foresters and assistants in great numbers would beat down the different glens, driving the deer across Glenbuie at certain passes where Lord Strathalbane and his friends would station themselves with loaded rifles, and where, under ordinary circumstances, they were quite certain of frequent opportunities of using them. It was a question with Robert which side of the glen to place himself on—but after some consideration he determined to take the left—as affording the best chance of sport, and of escaping notice, there being always noise and confusion, and much firing as the deer rushed across the glen and ascended on the far side. It was necessary for him to be early on his ground, as he could not escape the observation of the foresters and drivers, if not in his place before the drive was begun. He had a great way to go, Glenbuie being at the farthest end of the forest from Dunurn, but he had a long night to get there, and as the

morning dawned he found himself with his companion nearly opposite the uppermost glen that opened upon Glenbuie. After consulting with Robbie as to their best course, they lay down in a dry sheltered spot, and were soon sound asleep. Both were cold and stiff when they awoke, and they found the sun high in the sky shining brightly, and knew that the drive must have commenced in the far recesses of the glens. They chose a high position from which they could see several miles of Glenbuie, and the opening into two or three glens, and had a view some way up Glencait immediately opposite them. Soon after ten they could see parties of twos and threes walking up Glenbuie, and taking their places at the different passes, and by and by there was only one party in view, whose destination was the gorge of Glencait. These they watched with curiosity, as it was of some importance to them who their nearest neighbours should be. The party consisted of three men, and before they reached their pass Robert easily recognised Lord Strathalbane, and his stout trusty forester James Walker; the third was an attendant he was not acquainted with. There was a fourth, whose proximity he liked even less than the others—viz., a large dog which Lord Strathalbane had brought from England, and of which he had heard at Glengarve. He was a cross of some kind with a

dash of the bloodhound breed, and enjoyed a reputation for ferocity that would make old Robbie shake in his shoes, had he but heard of it. This unamiable brute was led on a chain by Walker, who had also a rifle in his hand, and the other man had one on each shoulder. They were all dressed in green kilts, and round gray coats, red and white hose, and smart little blue bonnets. They turned off into Glencait, and disappeared behind some large stones and fragments of rock that had rolled from the hill above.

"Well, no doubt," began Robbie, "it is a great honour to be so near a lord, a very great honour; but for my part I would as soon hae Davy *Loist* the tinkler for a neighbour."

"I like James Walker still less," said Robert, "and that dog least of all. He'll track us as if we were wounded hares."

"Deil be in his ugly hide!" answered Robbie, earnestly.

"We must keep out of their sight, and not allow James and that dog to cross our track, otherwise we shall certainly be discovered, and then we shall have nothing to trust to but our legs."

"Mine are not so supple as they have been, but I'll do my best. If they dinna come ower fast on me, I'll do

fine, for I can keep up all day. But Sheamus is unco fast, and his wind will keep him going as long as myself, so I'll keep out of his way."

"I think we could not be in a better place than this, Robbie, for we can see deer and men a far way off, and any deer that come down Glencait, or up Glenbuie, will cross the river below that rock, and come up the gully below us. I can get down in time to pick one off before they can get past."

"The Colonel himself couldna place an outlying picket better. If ye're well down the gully the shot will no' be heard any distance off. But ye mustna let the dog off. That wad spoil a' the day, well as it might do if we had them in Benachaorin."

"Were you ever at this place before, Robbie?" asked Robert.

"Well, I canna say that I ever before stood on this bit of ground, but I have often been near to't. I mind the very first time I ever came to the forest, I went past no far off it."

"That must have been long ago."

"Aye, it's lang syne, and as the song says—

'I've wandered mony a weary fit'

since that day, but I mind it well for a' that, for I have never been in such a fright since."

"What frightened you so much?"

"I'll tell ye that. Ye ken I was but a laddie at the time, may be fourteen or fifteen year old. I had no thought o' the forest, or onything in't at the time, when one evening I met Tam Forbes, brother of the laird of Tomnadrochet, walking quietly along the road. He had a plaid round the back o' his neck with the ends hanging down his sides, which looked queer, as the day was hot, and it was not far off midsummer. But hid under the plaid, he had the stock o' his gun on the one side, and the barrel on the 'tother, the two tied thegither with a rope which went round his neck below the plaid. He was a fine hearty chiel Tam, and having good gentle bluid in his veins, folk liked the free way he went among them, and there was not a lad in the country side that wouldna be proud to keep him company anywhere."

"I have heard of him; was he not afterwards a lieutenant in my uncle's regiment?"

"He was that same, and would have been major, as he well deserved, if he had lived."

"Well, proceed with your story."

"Well, Tam asked me if I knew where such an such a lad was, and I telt him he was from home; so he thought for a moment, and said, 'You're a smart bit laddie

yourself, Robbie, and will do very well, so come along wi' me.' I was too proud o' being asked no to go at once without asking any questions; Tam went off at an awfu' rate, me following and sair forfoughten to keep him in sight. He struck right into the heart of the forest, and never halted till we got into the wood above Strathalbane Castle. I got into a great fright, at I did not well knew what, for I had heard many stories o' the foresters, and thought they were no better nor giants and other bloodsuckers. We went along no far from the place where Hugh and me killed the three deers yon night, and on keeking over the wall, which was no so broken down as it is now, we saw seven deers eating as canny as if they had been old cows, no a hunder yards off.

" 'Which of them is the best?' says Tam.

" 'I dinna ken,' says I, and I said nothing but the truth, for I was blind with fear at the sight, thinking that the foresters would not be far off from them. Tam was quite easy about it, and said, 'Yon dark one is the best,' and with that he put his gun on the wall to fire at him. 'Now's my time,' thought I, so I got up and threw my hands above my head. Well, instead of running off at once as I expected, the deer looked round, and that moment off went Tam's gun, and six o' them ran east

and one west. I thought all was right now, and that they were off, and looked after them quite pleased-like, but Tam turned roond and saw me, and said through his teeth, 'Lie down, ye rascal,' and I was not long in doing as he bade me. The deer that ran west, now ran east, but did not go far when he turned west again, and ran across us, and just as he was forenent us down he came with a smash. Tam knew he was wounded, and that he would have been off like lightning, if he saw anything to run from. With a bound, Tam was over the dyke, and on the top of him, his skiandu in his hand. Just as he was drawing it across the cratur's thrapple, there was a whistle from the wood beyond the neuk where the deer was, and an answer came from a wee bit away to our left on our side o't. Well, if Tam was in a hurry goin' to the deer, he was in twice as much goin' back again. He took up his gun, put his skiandu down between his garter and his leg, and told me to keep close to his heel. He then ran round as if he intended payin' a visit at the castle, but instead o' doin' so he kept away to the left after a while. We hadna gone very far, when I began to fall behind, for Tam was no worse at the runnin' than Sheamus More himself. I heard too, from the crackin' o' the branches behind me, that we were chased, and was a' but out o' my judgment

wi' downright fear. I cried to Tam, 'Dinna leave me, O dinna,' and he stopped till I cam up. 'Take a hold o' the collar o' my coat, mind your feet, and don't let go,' and off again as fast as ever. The hold on his coat was such a help to me that I got along grandly, and though the foresters followed us into Glenbuie they couldna come nigh us. Well, we went up past this place, a wee bit below there, turned into Glencait forenent us, a while after it was dark. We then got into a gully away to the right, and being no longer afraid o' the foresters, we lay down in a cozy wee hollow to take a rest, and maybe a while's sleep. Tam rowed me up in his plaid as kind and carefu' as if I had been his sweetheart, and lying down himself among the heather, I was soon fast asleep, the last thing I remember being the squealin' o' the foxes and wild-cats, as they went prowlin' about thinkin' they had the deers all to themsells."

"And how did you feel when you wakened?"

"A wee cold and stiff. The day was just breakin'. Tam said that we would cross the hill to the glen beyond, where, if we got nothing else, we would be sure to get some calves."

"Fawns you mean."

"I mean the wee deers. Well, away we went again, and by the time the sun was well up, we got to the

top o' yon hill ye see yonder, and creepin' down a bit on the other side, we got a sight o' the bottom o' the glen—and such a sight as it was—I have never seen the like o't since."

"What was it?"

"The far side o' the glen is no near so high as this, and rises very gradual, so that it is quite wide and roomy at the bottom, and mostly all moss. Well, the whole glen was alive wi' deers, and except a very few they were all does wi' their young ones."

"It must have been beautiful."

"It was splendid. There was na a hoof under five hunder o' them."

"And what were they doing?"

"The stags were lying down, or slaking and wallowing themselves in the peat holes, and the burn that runs through the glen. The does were grazing, or licking and nursing their young. The wee ones were busy playing and running about in twos and threes. Every now and then a bit wee cratur' would rise out o' the heather, and give a cry, which was answered by a doe. She would come a few steps to meet him, and he would run to her, and would poke his head under her and sook quite nat'ral-like, while she would smell him all over, and look quite proud of him. Some of them, after getting

their drink, would join in the play—others would go back again to the heather, and lie down to have their sleep out.”

“I hope you did not disturb them.”

“Did we no? We crept down as near them as we could, when Tam told me to mark some o’ the calves, and to be sure to see where they should hide when the deers was frightened away, else that we would not get one o’ them. He then ran down, shaking his plaid, and calling out, and just as they were wheeling round and going off he fired his gun, and they required no more drivin’; I couldna help looking at them, and forgot the calves, and when I looked for them, every mother’s son o’ them was gone—vanished. Tam called to me to come down and show him where they had hid, and no liking to disappoint him I went down, looking about as if I knew well eneuch where they were. Being afraid he would find me out, I was running along among the heather, when all at once, a fine wee fellow started up in front o’ me, and went off as fast as he could, me after him. He was much faster nor me, and I couldna catch him, but as I got tired, and was near giving him up, I heard some noise behind me, and on looking there was another running after me, and trying to catch me. I thought the one would do as well as the tother, so I wheeled round and went to meet him, but when he saw me coming, he stopped

short, and before I could get hold o' him, he began to run away nearly as fast as the other. Well, off after him I went, but hadna gone far when I found the first following me. The doited cratur's went on this way running from me and after me, till I was near demented. I threw my stick at one o' them at last, and knocked him heels ower heed, and was on the top o' him before he could get up. To make a long story short, we catched five o' them, and took them a' home—and bonny pets they made."

"Did the hinds never look back after they went off?"

"They did that. At least a few o' them did, and one o' them came so near us that Tam could have shot her, but he said it would be a pity to do so, and let her alone. It was bonny to see her gallopin' about, and calling to her wee ane."

"Was it one of those you carried home with you?"

"Well, I canna say whither it was or no."

"How did you manage to carry so many?"

"It wasna easy. Two o' them followed us for three or four miles, but they got tired, and after that Tam carried three, and I managed two, though it was hard eneuch work."

"And that was your first visit to the forest. Did you like it when it was all over?"

"I could think of nothing else for weeks, and would gie the world to Tam to take me there again. That day's work to me was just like giving blood to Farrum, and I have a pleasure in seeing deers ever since."

"I thought, Robbie," said Graham after a pause, "that the stags separated themselves entirely from the hinds during the latter part of spring and summer."

"Nearly so. There's aye a few daundering stags that stick to the does, just as a tailor will be found among women where another manbody woudna be tholed."

"You do not care much for tailors, then, Robbie?"

"Ooh! they are usefu' cratur's, and we couldna do weel without them. And the stags that hide among the does may be o' some use that we know not o', and, maybe, they are lazy loons that winna keep a lookout for themselves when they can get others to do it for them."

"Do the stags and the hinds go during that time to different parts of the hill?"

"The stags creep into quiet bieldy neuks where there's plenty for them to eat, and no much risk o' being disturbed. The does seek out far-off corries and glens, where they can keep their weans safe till they are well able to follow them. I have seldom seen a doe wi' her calf come near the corn till a while past Lammas. One

may come then, but no often sooner. After that the young ones come as gleg as the lave, and they run awful fast for a wee, and it's no often one o' them is killed—maybe because they are no much worth killin'. A wheen o' them dies in winter if it comes on a hard one, but I hae seen three generations o' them after a doe. That one that came to look after her calf, when Tam and me was carryin' off so many o' them, had a year-old followin' her."

"I have often heard," said Robert, "that a fawn follows his dam very often till his place is taken up by a new comer."

"And that is the truth, but I have never seen one less than a year old with a parcel o' stags. They arena natural fathers at all. I think they are ashamed o' themsells when casting the horns, and keep out o' sight o' their natural wives. They wander about in dozens and scores, and whiles no so many, and when one casts a horn he chows away at it as if he was starving and couldna get anything softer to eat, and what he cannot eat he'll hide. I have found horns half eaten, and I have found them whole, but one couldna make salt to his kale seeking them even in Ardmark, where there should be plenty o' them. When the new horns are growing the stags come prowling about the low grounds

in numbers, and they are to be found in hundreds about the woods and plantings o' Strathalbane Castle. Sometimes they go to a quiet out-o'-the-way corrie or glen in the forest during the day, and come sneaking in the evening down to the wood, and they would like fine if they could get into a well-hained park where the grass was soft and clean. Some old hands prowl about till the corn is well grown, and hide in the middle o' a field all day, and eat as much as they can o' it a' night. I mind a grand stag o' this sort, that took up his quarters in a field of old Finlay M'Craw's. Ye'll no mind Finlay. He was dead before ye were born. The stag was seen often eneuch, but Finlay was never a hand at the gun, and no other body minded him. The brute did so much damage, however, that Finlay could not stand it, so he came to me and asked me to kill him if I could, and if not to scaur him away. I was a young chap at the time, and ready for any bit spree, so I undertook the job, thinking it would be as easy as picking up a preen. But I was mistaken, and after a week o' daundering about, I was as far off as ever. This didna mend my temper, so one night I determined no to go to bed at all, but watch. I planted myself in a safe place, and being quite comfortable, I made sure o' having him before the morn. But I was so snug, that I

couldna have been an hour in my place when I 'went fast asleep, and it was just daylight when I awoke. I sneaked home and said nothing about it. But I was not the better pleased for all that. After I got my breakfast I went quietly along to Finlay's, taking my gun wi' me, and a bonnie bit gun it was—mair by token, it burst soon after when Donald Stewart was out shooting crows with it, and smashed his hand so that the doctors had to take it off altogether. Finlay and me went out to see what we could see. The bodie had a braw field of oats, and we went round and round it. I was looking as sharp as I could, and noticed the footprints of the deer goin' in to the corn. Without letting on to Finlay that I had seen this, I says to him, 'I daursay ye wouldna like me to go through your corn?' 'No,' says he, 'for it would spoil a heap of it.' 'Aye,' says I, 'but the deer will spoil more of it.' 'That may be all true,' says he, 'but who knows that he is there?' 'I do,' says I. 'Well, for once,' says he, 'ye can go in, but take care ye don't tramp down more than is necessary.' 'Turn your back, or steek your een,' says I, 'and ye'll no see, nor miss it.' With that, I followed the tracks as well as I could. I knew the stag would lie close at that time o' the day, and that if I didna chance upon him without knowing that I was doing so, there was no other chance for me.

But in I went, and reached near the far side of the field, when up gets the stag, no twenty yards off. He went away in no great hurry, and turned round to take a look at me. I took a good aim at him, and fired. He fell at once. Finlay no sooner saw what I had done, than he came running up, and they had a regular fight. The deer was shot through both the hind legs, which were broken, but he would not give in, and was soon on his fore-feet and stumps of his hind ones, and turned upon Finlay, who ran away. The deer then ran off, me after him, and I never had such a race, and I think he would have got away but for the fence. He tried to get over it, but fell, and I was on the top of him before he could get up. He fought us both—for Finlay was soon up—and nearly beat us. We mastered him after a while so completely that we drove him before us into Finlay's barn, and we killed and sorted him as if he had been a cow, and very good he was.

"Were you ever attacked by a stag, Robbie?"

"Did I never tell ye what happened to me the day I went with the letter to Strathalbane Castle?"

"No ; you never did. What was it?"

"It's an old story now. Ye see I was sent with a letter to the Castle, and it's the only time I ever was inside o't—and very civil they were to me there, that

I must say. I got as good a dinner as ever I got—plenty of ale, porter, and beefsteak, and nothing said but ‘help yourself,’ and I did even so for good manners, let alone that I was hungry. Well, when I was going down to the Castle, there was a high wall on the one side—so high that I couldna see over it. But I soon came to a gate, and a strong one it was, as it needed. Inside there was about a score of as bonnie does as ever I saw—and along with them as braw a royal stag as man could wish to set his eyes on. It was just a week before Hallowe’en; and there he was walking aboot with his nose in the air, and the cups of his antlers down on each side of his back. Away on a knowe, two hunder yards off, stood another stag—and a grand one too, though young, and nothing to the other. When the first saw me at the gate, he wheeled round, and gave me a look that made me thankful that it was a strong one—every hair on his body stood on end, and he looked as wicked as the muckle deil himself. He came straight to the gate, and stood there ready for any piece of mischief. I struck at the gate with my staff, but this only made him the more angry, and I could not help feeling frightened, although I knew he could not get at me. When he was watching me the does wandered away in the direction of the other stag, and he too was edging

near them, but looking very sharp ; and I soon saw that he had good reason to do so, for my friend noticed them, and went off as if possessed by an evil spirit right after him. It was a grand race, and a long one—for the young stag went round with a wide sweep, and managed to get nearer the does than his pursuer. When he saw this he darted towards them, and was in among them before the big one was within a hunder yards of them. But he did not bide long there, but fled again as if for his life. It was a foolish thing of the creature to have gone at all, but young callants will aye do foolish things to get e'en a rub against a bonny lass's petticoats. The young stag fled to his knowe again, the other after him ; but, as if there was an understanding between them, they both stopped when he got to it. The old stag drove the does back to near the gate, and then stood panting in the middle of them. Whan the stags were running like fools as they were, the does were playing themselves quite like ladies. They would push one another, then stand up on their hind legs, lay down their ears flat on their necks, and walk about—giving one another a crack with the forefeet, which hung doon bent from the knee as if ready for use. If I had not seen it I could not believe it possible that they could have walked about on their hind legs as they did. I am sure I stood an hour looking at

them ; and during that time the stags had four or five runs, which all began and ended in the same way. I did not get away from the Castle till next morning, and awful the row there was about it all night with the roaring of the stags, of which there was a good wheen in the park, up to the windows ; and there was many a story told in the servant's hall of the escapes they had made from one stag that was known above all the rest, for his temper. He caught one of the men, and would have killed him, had it not been for a wee messan of a dog he had with him which frightened him away. When I was starting, a lad in plush breeks and white stockings, who was civil to me, came to put me on the nearest way. The scoun'rel was laughing at me all the time, but he did it with such a mealy mou' that I didn't suspect him till afterwards. 'That's your way,' said he ; 'ye see the bit path that runs alongside the paling ; it will tak ye out of the grounds about a mile west, and save ye a tramp round by the approach. Don't go far in from the paling for fear who ye may meet. With that caution, which I soon found was a very necessary one, although I thought little about it at the time, we parted. As I went quietly along the path, I noticed a wheen deer lying down on a round green hill in the very park I was in. Then, thinks I, the ne'er-do-weel callant has sent me into the

deers' park, just as Daniel was put into the lions' den, so I kept a sharp eye about me. The path ran alongside the lower end of the deers' park, and the fence was a paling of nine spars, and strong it was, spars and stabs. After I passed the deer all was quiet, and I thought maybe the laddie meant no harm after all. Just as this was passing through my mind, I was near a queer-shaped tree, with branches hanging down all round to the ground, leaving about the root o't as black as a kiln's mouth at midnight. Well, I thought I heard something in, and looked quick, and saw two balls of fire in the mirky hole under the branches. I was so dumfounded that I stood glowering at them, and saw they were in the head of a stag. The brute had been lying down quietly there, and was on his knees, getting up, with his mouth open and his tongue half a yard out. The paling was no more nor thirty yards from my back, and I sprang at it with all my strength. I had not reached the top when there was a crash at my feet, and the savage brute was nearly through it. If I had been half a second later, his horns would have been through me. So angry was I that, for want of stones, I tore up the ground to throw at him, and he tried a dozen of times to push himself through the fence to get at me. I lost my staff, and had nothing to strike a blow

with ; and there was nothing for it but to walk along on the outside, he walking on the inside. In a little I came upon some stones. I threw them at him with a will, but he caught them on his horns, and sent them spinning through the air. I thought the hardest horn that ever grew on a stag would have been smashed by the stones I threw at him, but he did not seem to mind them ; but at last one struck him about the flank, and he sprang forward with a roar, and galloped off to a height about a hunder yards away, and there I saw my last of him. I often after that asked for the callant with the plush breeks, but I never saw him more either, and it was as weel for him, for I would have broken every bone in his body."

"Well, Robbie, that was a terrible danger, and I daresay you had few narrower escapes from the Indians."

"I don't know that I ever had ; but I'm sure of this, that I never met with an Indian, or even a Frenchman, that had a greater mind to be unfriendly."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DRIVE IN THE FOREST—*continued.*

THEY had now waited a long time, and even Robbie's patience was ebbing fast. "'Od, I would undertake, if I had the forest to myself, as Lord Strathalbane may have it any day he likes, to have some gude sport in less time than we have been lying idle here. I am thinking, though he is a real lord, and has plenty deer of his own, he kens very little about the killing o' them."

"Perhaps, Robbie, if you lend him your gun, he will do better."

"Maybe aye and maybe no. I couldna say, but I'm sure o' this, that my gun killed two or three o' them before he was born."

"Look out, Robbie, I heard a shot down the glen."

They strained their eyes for some time, looking to the different places where they knew the sportsmen were

placed. Some more shots were fired, and, immediately after, a hundred deer burst out into Glenbuie, and flew up the right side of the river, exactly as Robert expected they would have done. On they came till nearly opposite Glencait, and it seemed doubtful whether they would turn up into it or cross over to the other side. They took the former course, but, as they were about entering the glen, there was a loud howl and bark heard, which made them stop for an instant, and then, breaking off in all directions, they scattered—some continuing up Glenbuie, some going back the way they came, and the majority crossing the river, and up Robert's pass, as if on purpose to be shot. Lord Strathalbane hurried forward, and fired several shots, with no result. At the same time, Robert fired, and a stag rolled on the grass. Robbie descended in great haste to secure it, and Graham loaded again, and returned to his look-out to watch his opposite neighbours. He saw James Walker running up to his master, and gesticulating, and pointing across in their direction, and judged correctly that he had heard the shot, and was telling his master of it. He told Robbie, who, in the most expeditious manner possible, dragged the stag down the hollow, and concealed it in a hole which the small rill that ran down the gully in wet weather had made. There was some long heather growing over

it, so that nothing could be seen, and the hole itself might escape notice for twenty years, unless it were discovered by accident, or by one falling into it. About a quarter of an hour afterwards, Robert saw James Walker, still leading the dog, and accompanied by the other man, leaving the pass, and walking quietly up the glen.

“Keep an eye on these, Robbie, for they mean us no good.”

“Weel, I’m just thinking so.”

“They will cross to this side when they get out of sight, beyond that bend. James has an idea where we are, and hopes to catch us in a trap. You will go down the gully to the river. When they go out of sight, you will cut across, and keep to the right of Glencait till you are well past where Lord Strathalbane is, then slant into it, and make your way up the glen, and if I do not make up to you sooner, wait for me at the head of it. I think there were no deer found in it to-day, and that the drivers have crossed over to the next glen. You are not likely to meet any one; but if you do, hide or run, but do not be taken. Away with you.”

Robbie lost no time, and was soon down at the river-side, and could see the stout forester approaching the bend where he was to lose sight of him. He did not fear making his escape, as there were deep cuts and

ravines in the opposite hill, and once in one of them, he could easily creep up unnoticed. He allowed Walker to be some minutes out of sight before he crossed the river, after which he made a run at a ravine through which a small burn tumbled down to the river. There was some birch and hazel brush growing in this ravine at the foot of the hill, which he gained in safety, and as he dived in among the bushes, a magnificent stag that lurked there dashed out, and made across to the entrance to Glencait in the direction of Lord Strathalbane. Robbie observed for the first time that he had Robert's gun, which he had carried off unconsciously to both, and without an instant's consideration he fired at the stag, but missed him. The report, however, startled Lord Strathalbane, who ran in the direction of it, and met the deer full in the face. He instantly raised his rifle and fired, and also missed. The deer wheeled round, and rushed to the river. Lord Strathalbane had another rifle, which he let drop when going to fire. He picked it up, and, taking a more deliberate aim, fired, just as the stag was entering the stream, and the animal dropped like a stone. The young lord ran to where he lay, and as he got near it, drew a long dagger from his belt, in order to bleed the stag; but before he could reach him, he got upon his feet, apparently stupified, and

tried to stagger away. Strathalbane, dropping the knife, struck the animal a heavy blow with the butt of his rifle, which made him turn round, and seeing his assailant, he put down his head and charged him. The rifle was raised again, and a blow aimed at the stag's head. It struck the antlers, and the stock of the rifle snapped, and fell in the water. The next moment Strathalbane was thrown down heavily upon the stones, and the stag, fast recovering from the stunning effects of the shot, furiously jumped upon him with his feet, and tore at him fiercely with his horns.

Graham had descended towards the river, and saw all that had taken place, and so sudden was the occurrence that he could not prevent it or render any assistance. Now, however, he rushed forward; but Farrum was before him, and scarcely had the stag time to touch Lord Strathalbane, when the brave dog had his favourite hold of him behind the ear. Feeling himself thus caught, the deer threw up his head, and was in the act of springing away, when Robert, nearly as soon up as his dog, seized the point of the right antler with his left hand, and taking up the dagger, which lay within his reach, at the same time, as quick as thought plunged it to the hilt in the breast of the stag. The dying animal reared wildly, the blood gushing out over Strathalbane

and Graham, and mixing with the clear water of the river. There was a moan, a gasp, and the deer dropped dead. Robert raised the rescued nobleman, who lay bruised, helpless, and half unconscious, and carrying him in his arms to the green sward, laid him gently down. The young lord turned his eyes, and they met those of his deliverer for an instant; the next moment he fainted.

There was no time for Graham to attempt restoring animation to Lord Strathalbane, for he knew that Walker would soon be round and upon him, from the direction he had just quitted, so he walked away rapidly to the entrance to Glencait, and, passing the place where the sportsmen had concealed themselves, he continued to ascend the glen by a deer-track on the left side of the burn that ran down the glen. He knew that Robbie had passed up before him, having got a glimpse of him among some low scrub that scattered itself up its side. He was not, however, aware that James Walker—just as the dog he led had scented the deer Robbie had concealed, and was straining on his chain to get to the place—had seen him entering the glen, and, telling the man who accompanied him to hasten down to the river in case his master might require assistance, had taken a straight course to where he had seen

him disappear, and crossed the river so high up that Lord Strathalbane and the dead stag escaped his notice. The dog scented something there again, but, though got for the purpose of finding dead, and perhaps, besides, worrying wounded deer, Walker was too intent on capturing Robert to let him fulfil any such purpose, and, hurrying on, he also soon entered Glencait. Robert, in fancied security, went along the burn-side in no great hurry, and, just as he topped a gentle ascent some short distance up, Farrum, following close at his heel, gave a low growl, and his master turned round and saw the forester not more than two hundred yards off. He at once darted down a gentle declivity that approached the burn, and, in a hollow a short distance before him, he saw Robbie walking along, apprehending no more danger than he had himself done a minute or two before. He had Robert's gun in his hand, and seemed as if meditating to take rest in the quiet snug little spot he found himself in. In a few seconds the young man was at his side, and, seizing his gun, said—

“James Walker is after me, and not two hundred yards off,” and next moment he was off at a pace that soon took him out of Robbie's astonished sight.

Robbie knew perfectly well that he need not trust to his heels, and he went to the forest prepared for any

disagreeable eventuality such as now threatened ; so he sat down, and, pulling a very black and very short pipe out of his pocket, he was proceeding to fill it, when the stout forester appeared above him. His first address was anything but polite.

“Ye old villain, I have caught ye at last !”

“Weel,” answered Robbie, quietly, “it’s naethin’ to brag o’ to catch one that’s no running from ye. But I think, Mr. Walker, ye might keep a civiller tongue between your teeth.”

“Who was that with you ?—tell me, quick.”

“There was naebody wi’ me,” said Robbie, sadly ; “naebody cares to keep company wi’ an old carle like me, Mr. Walker. But every dog has his day, and I I’ve had mine’s. That is an unco ugly tyke ye hae tethered there”—the savage hound was looking fiercely at him, and as if he longed to get the shaking of him. “Keep the brute to yersell, if ye please,” looking uncomfortable for the first time.

“What the devil are ye doing here ?—no palaver, now.”

“’Od, that’s true,” said Robbie, as if recollecting himself. “Can ye tell me whereabouts I can find that English bodie that’s living at the big house o’ Glenurn—pity any one should be there but them it belongs to.

I have a letter for him, that I am to give into his own hand, and I’m wearyin’ to get quit of it.”

“Show it me.”

Whereupon Robbie commenced searching his pockets one after the other, determined to detain the forester as long as possible from following Robert. After he got through them all without success, he began at the beginning again, and, taking out the contents, laid them down carefully on the grass beside him. Walker became impatient, for he knew that every minute he was detained might take him ten to make up.

“Look sharp, ye old thief!”

“It’s well for you, young man,” said Robbie, solemnly, “that there’s naebody here that I could call on to bear witness o’ your words. I have seen the day that I would not take it at yer hands, stout as ye think yourself.”

“Curse ye, can ye no show me the letter?”

“Hurry no man’s cattle, Mr. Walker, and then ye’ll no be blamed for breakin’ their legs.”

“Who was that that went up past ye? was it young Robert Graham?”

“Young Robert Graham! Well, I think ye are beside yourself the day, Mr. Walker; it’s no very likely that *he* would run away from you, for as muckle as ye think of yourself.”

“Who is it, then?”

“Well, there he is—ye can just go and speir for yourself.”

Robert continued his flight, crossed the burn, and appeared on the other side at such a distance as Robbie judged put him beyond the reach of the forester.

“Then you think he’s safe now, do ye? It’s not half a mile that will take him out of my reach.”

“So ye’ll no tell me where Maister Union—do ye call him Union or Onion?—is to be found.”

“I’ll be back with you, my old friend, in time to show you the way to him;” and away he went at a tremendous pace, in pursuit of Graham.

“Well, James Walker,” soliloquized Robbie, “ye’re no a bad fellow, and an awful hand to run all folk know ye to be; but I doubt ye’ll no put salt on Robert Graham’s tail the day; for, if ye are the fleetest among the lads of the forest, he is the fleetest foot in Glenurn, and I take it yer match any day ye put yer kilt on.” He watched both, as long as they were in sight, but without any doubt or fear as to the result, and then disposed of himself till nightfall, when he quietly found his way back to the hole where he had hidden the stag, cut it in two, and, taking the hind half up, he toiled on all

night, and entered the mill with his burthen as the day was beginning to dawn.

It is seldom that two such men as James Walker and Robert Graham find themselves in the relative position that they are now in to each other. The one in the prime of manhood, and enjoying the reputation of being unmatched for speed and endurance—the terror of all illicit frequenters of the forest, the pride of his fellow-foresters, and favourite of his master. The other, young and almost untried ; but tall, strong, and athletic, in an uncommon degree, with the promise of indomitable determination ; and the appearance of pluck and resolution all but inseparable from such patrician blood as flowed in his veins. On such a contest as began between the two, much money could scarcely fail to be staked, if undertaken for a bet ; and, while in all probability the odds would be laid on the forester, as likely to be the hardier and more enduring of the two, it is more than likely that many would back the younger man, because of his free and bold bearing, manly look, and elastic and powerful form.

The great start Graham had got, through the wily tactics of old Robbie, was immensely in his favour, and might be expected to leave his pursuer scarcely a chance. He was well aware of this advantage, and well

aware, also, that he was engaged in no child's game, and saved himself by going at a pace which he could long keep up. He kept straight on end, along the wide forest; and fifteen miles of it lay before him, ere he reached the far boundary of it, which marched with another county. On he went; his spirits rising as he felt the fresh breeze of the mountains upon his face, and realised his own power of passing over the moor as he knew few could do. He distinctly saw the forester on his track, but seldom troubled himself to look back; continuing an even pace, that he thought would weary his pursuer before he could make up the distance he was in advance.

After a long pull he looked back, and thought the forester nearer him than when he looked before; but, thinking it might be owing to the conformation of the ground, he felt no uneasiness. When he looked again, however, there could be no doubt about it; his pursuer was gaining upon him perceptibly.

"Well," he thought, "I will shake out another reef, as my good cousin Ronald would say, and see whether this fellow may not be distanced." But no; the forester still continued to gain, and Robert, determined to keep him at as great a distance as possible, began to put forth his utmost strength—still the forester gained. He was

going along the top of a high ridge that separated two glens, and slanting down to the left, he hoped, before he reached the bottom of the glen, to regain at least part of the ground he had lost. But no—he still lost, though not so much. He then determined to ascend the other side to see whether he might not be more successful going up the hill, and more severely test the wind of his pursuer. Bravely he breasted the hill-side, but before he was half-way up, he found to his dismay that the forester was not three hundred yards from him. Now he began to make the most desperate efforts to escape—meditated throwing away old ‘Thunder,’ the weight of which was telling upon him, but he disliked this idea so much that he dismissed it from his mind at once. He was in astonishment at the speed and endurance of the forester, and began to lose heart when he found with all he could do he was gaining upon him. There must be something in it which he could not understand—with the start he had had, and the pace he was going at to be overhauled in less than an hour was inconceivable. Before he reached the top of the hill, he heard the panting of a dog, and Farrum, with his bristles up, trotted alongside of his master, taking frequent looks back at the approaching pursuer. Robert gave a quick look back, and saw the secret at a glance. The

large powerful dog the forester had been leading all day, was still with him, and, the length of the chain in advance, he traced Robert or Farrum, or both, from the beginning of the pursuit, and straining with all his might on the chain, dragged the forester at a pace that no unassisted man could rival in speed or endurance. Robert's courage nearly failed when he understood how matters were, and knew how hopelessly he strove ; but, trusting to the chapter of accidents, he still held on. The panting of the savage dog became more and more audible, and at last he even imagined that he felt his hot breath about him. As he topped the ridge there was a small rocky knoll over which he passed with a bound—and he had not got a hundred yards beyond it when the forester reached it. In passing over it Walker's foot struck a loose fragment, and he stumbled, but not so as to lose his balance, had it not been that his dog made a sudden spring forward, with such force as to bring him on all fours. The chain slipped from his grasp, and the dog, feeling himself at liberty, flew forward with something between a bark and a howl. Robert at once understood what had taken place, and calling Farrum to his side, he suddenly wheeled round, grasping his gun by the muzzle to dash out the brute's brains. He did not wish his own dog to be detained, which he

should certainly be, if a regular fight was to take place, as it must be a desperate one, from the great strength of the dogs, and the ferocity of the forester's. He stood with his weapon upraised, Farrum standing beside him with his keen eye fixed on the advancing dog. When he was about ten yards off, Farrum darted forward to meet him before Robert could say a word to restrain him, and the other dog, seeing him coming, rushed furiously upon him. With marvellous quickness and activity, Farrum avoided his savage antagonist, and his own great weight and the force of his onset carried him past. The deerhound sprang at him, and taking him by the flank in his cruel fangs, he with one shake tore him open, and laid him sprawling on the ground, his entrails about his feet. All this passed with such rapidity, that it was over before the forester had got well to his feet, and running forward he was just in time to witness the last gasp of his dog. He stopped to examine him, but soon seeing that he was past curing, he with a malediction started off again in pursuit. Robert at once had gone away, and had gained some forty or fifty yards upon the forester during the moment he was examining his dog. He felt a new strength and vigour at getting rid of the savage animal, and at being now on more equal

terms with his powerful pursuer. His own dog was again trotting at his side, still looking raised, and panting slightly after the conflict in which he had just been engaged, short as it had been ; and determining now not to be overtaken, he continued his flight with increased resolution. The forester, at the same time, made a great effort to close upon him ; and, putting forth all his strength, he darted forward at a pace that no human power could long keep up. He found himself, in five minutes, beginning to be blown, without making any material advance upon Graham ; and again, changing his tactics, he tried what a continuous strain upon the energies of the pursued would effect. He had the advantage of carrying nothing, whereas Robert carried a by no means light gun, and the dog had so powerfully helped him forward, that he was the fresher of the two ; he therefore had no doubt of running his antagonist down, if he could not, as he now began to think might be the case, run into him. He had plenty of daylight, and the forest was wide, so that he could safely follow whatever plan he thought would suit best, and try new plans if he found old ones fail. On they went, like men terribly in earnest—settling down to their work as if determined to play the game out. There seemed to be no advantage on either side ; and all they could do was

to keep their relative distance. The one did not gain, the other did not lose—was the only result of half an hour's struggle, which took much of the elasticity of the step of each away. They now approached the far boundary of the forest, and the ground became more broken, and intersected by narrow and deep hollows, so that Robert sometimes was out of his pursuer's sight, when in the hollow, or when the forester was in the hollow, and he himself passing along the heights, and he began to turn in his mind how he might best turn this to advantage. Nothing but his pluck could have carried him so far ; and, with that as strong as ever, he could no longer hide from himself that his physical powers were nearly exhausted. He was well aware that Walker was not only a powerful man, but also a sagacious one ; and that if he wished to outgeneral him he must try other than ordinary tactics. With his mind full of this, he came upon a deep hollow that ran right across his course, which lay along the side of a long slant that terminated below, as these almost invariably do, in a stream of water. He dived into the hollow, and was in a moment out of his pursuer's sight. He then turned to the right, and, putting forth his remaining strength, he faced the ascent, and got round a scarcely perceptible projection of the side before the forester could see him.

When the latter came to the hollow, and not seeing Graham, he for an instant examined the ground, and seeing a bend in the hollow to his left and below him, and the projection behind which the other had disappeared being about the same distance, he at once concluded that, exhausted as he must be, Robert would naturally go down and not up the hollow ; so, without hesitation, he ran down, in order, as soon as possible, to regain sight of him. The farther he went the more broken became the ground, and there being two or three windings in the hollow near its termination towards the river, he continued to run on, expecting every bend would once more reveal the other to him ; and it was not until he reached the river that he began to suspect he had been outwitted. Determined as a bulldog, he again faced the ascent, and made all the haste he could to the place where Robert had been last seen by him, and then again followed the track he had taken ; but now he had nothing certain to direct him, and although he continued to make all possible haste, he well knew that he was like a man groping in the dark—unaware whether he was going nearer to, or farther from, his object. He gained a high point, from which he had a clear view of a large extent of moor, and sitting down he examined it minutely, in case Robert should attempt

to cross it. At about a mile's distance, a fine wide corrie faced him, being the farthest one in the forest, just beyond which lay the boundary of it, and where terminated one county and began another. He had not been there above a minute or two when he noticed some deer grazing quietly in the centre of the corrie, and he at once saw, from the position they were in, that if Graham took that direction he must necessarily disturb them. He watched them, therefore, intently for about five minutes, when suddenly he saw one of them bound away, and a loud whistle, weird and shrill, came on the wind, which he well knew was the alarm sounded by the startled hinds. The whole herd went off to the left, and soon disappeared behind a knoll that rose to some height on that side of the corrie. They had scarcely done so, when Graham appeared close to where they had been, walking at an easy, but by no means slow pace. The forester started at once to his feet, struck off to the left, taking advantage of the inequalities of the ground to keep out of sight, and made all the haste he could, in the expectation, if not of intercepting, at least of closely approaching Graham. In a very short time he reached the place he had in view, but looked in vain for him. He thought he must be before him, and hastened on with all the speed he could, little sus-

pecting that Graham was lying quietly in the heather watching his movements. These were now guided by no deliberate plan, and were no longer attended by much chance of success. Robert got up to the top of the knoll, behind which Walker had seen the deer disappear, from which there was a view of some extent, and saw with much satisfaction the ineffectual efforts made to capture him—a satisfaction that increased as the distance between them was unconsciously increased by his powerful antagonist. Walker beat about for a little, then sat down again, and waited patiently for some time in the hope of again seeing Graham. He, on the other hand, having remained in his place of vantage until rested, slipped down on the far side of the knoll from the forester, and cautiously made his way from the corrie, and by a circuitous route found his way back to Glenurn.

CHAPTER XVII.

GRAHAM'S RETURN TO EDINBURGH.

LORD STRATHALBANE was severely injured by the stag, two of his ribs having been broken, besides contusions and bruises innumerable, and was much exhausted and very weak when he was got to the Castle. Those that had been at the various passes, met, after the drive was over, at the place where the man detached by Walker found his master ; and, seeing the deer slain, and the dagger beside him, and the young lord lying bruised, and his clothes torn to shreds, they, not unnaturally, concluded that he had, after a desperate struggle, killed the deer with his own hand, and lauded his determination and courage in no measured terms. Lord Strathalbane was not a man that would take credit that was not his due, and, though scarcely able to speak, he said he had no hand in it. The man told how he had found him, and that there could not have been a human being near

him, James Walker being with himself at the time. So his friends thought his lordship's mind was wandering, and did not advert to the subject again, seeing it rather displeased him than otherwise.

For ten days Walker could not see his master ; but, at the end of that time, he was able to be up, and sent for the forester. They had a long interview, and James gave a circumstantial account of his pursuit of Robert Graham. He got excited and angry when he came to the death of the dog, ashamed of himself when describing how he had been thrown out at the hollow, and half mysterious when narrating his final disappearance. His master heard him to an end without interruption. He then, to the forester's astonishment, quietly said—

“ I would not for all the deer in Ardmark you had caught him. I suppose you have an idea who it was ? ”

“ I have no doubt on that point, my lord. I knew that he was clever, but I did not think he or any other man in Glenurn would have got off from me as he did. ”

“ He did more that day than leave you behind, Walker ; he saved my life. ”

“ Was it him that killed the stag in the river, my lord ? ” asked the forester, forgetting, in his excitement,

that his master did not allow a servant to take such a liberty as to ask any questions that had not direct reference to his duty.

“It was. When I was helpless, and the stag tramping and goring me to death, he was upon him like a thunderbolt, and with one well-aimed blow laid the savage animal dead. His good dog was first up to my rescue, so I heartily forgive him the death of the bloodhound.”

“Well, they are an unco pair, and I forgive them too.”

“Be prepared to go to Dunurn with a letter in half an hour.” And the forester, making his bow, walked out, wondering at what he had heard, and what the letter would contain; and from the turn matters had taken reconciled to having been beaten, which had been weighing upon his mind. “Well, I have gotten a lesson or two in this business,” thought James; “but all things have turned out for the best, so I have reason to be thankful.”

The evening of the same day, Robert Graham was wandering by the river Urn, chatting pleasantly with his cousin Mary and his sister Jane. It was a beautiful still evening, so still that the lowing of the cattle and the voices of the shepherds could be heard along the

elevated side of Glenurn at a mile's distance, giving life to the quiet serenity of the approaching night.

"What a different life from this I shall be leading before the end of next week," said Robert. "The prospect is not a pleasant one."

"I wish you had not to go," said his sister.

"I wish so too," he answered ; "but what must be must ; and though I do not like the idea to-night, when we are so happy and peaceful here, I am aware that I can turn my time to better account in the dark, dingy, abominable office of Messrs. J. and J. Hardy, than I could possibly do here."

"You are right, Robert," said his cousin ; "an idle man is a wretched being, who cannot enjoy life himself, or allow those about him to do so."

"If that is the case when a man can afford to lead an idle life, it must be ten times worse in a man that has not a sixpence in the world. What you say, Mary, almost reconciles me to being poor, for I must work, and have no time to worry any one. But a poor man has much to undergo. He cannot enter into many of the amusements of his fellows ; he must deny himself many pleasures and occupations for which nature has fitted him ; and above all," he continued, more gloomily, "he must carry, locked up in his own heart, feelings which

he dare not give utterance to, however much they may prey upon his mind."

This was said quietly and sadly, without his eye being raised, or his manner changed ; and while it passed with his sister as mere talk, his cousin interpreted it correctly as the true sentiments of a heart determined not to gratify some secret and powerful longings. She would like to have asked him what he meant, and cheer him up, but somehow she could not, so they strolled on silently for some time.

"Who can that be," asked Jane, "coming across the river, and that will not take the trouble of going to the stepping-stones ? He seems to have an errand to us. See, Robert."

Robert accordingly looked, and could not help giving a start when he recognised James Walker, the forester. He smiled as a feeling came over him as if he would take to flight at the very sight of this man, but he felt uneasy as to what brought him there. The forester saluted the party respectfully, and handed a letter to Robert, and then answered the questions of the young ladies about his wife and son. It was impossible for him, however, to keep his eyes off Robert, who stood a little apart reading the letter, and Farrum, lying listlessly at his side, came in for a share of the scrutiny. When he satisfied

himself as to what he was to think of both, James drew a very long breath, as much as to say, "There is a pair of you." Robert, having finished the reading of the letter, said, in his turn, taking a minute survey of his late pursuer, "You must not go without taking some refreshment, Walker ; go up to the house. I will not detain you while I write an answer to this letter, as the night will be dark, but I will send it to your house to-morrow morning."

"Thank ye, sir," answered the forester. "I'll no mind the night being dark, as I know the road ; so I'll just do what ye like, wait for the answer or no." And away he went to the house.

"What is in the letter ? Who is it from ? Read it, Robert," came upon Robert from both sides.

"It is too dark ; I can't see."

"Nonsense ! give it to me," again from both sides.

"It is private and confidential."

"Show me where that is put upon it ? Nowhere ; don't be provoking ;" still from both sides.

"Listen then :—

" ' Strathalbane Castle, Sept. 24th.

" ' MY DEAR GRAHAM,—I believe we have all our lives misunderstood each other—at all events I am satis-

he knew they would like. When he went in he found them sitting alone, with a bright cheerful peat fire, and he sat down with them as naturally as if he had no other home. The conversation turned on his departure, how he was to get to town, and who he should see and most associate with there. His grandmother had been there but little since a girl, but she had a distinct recollection of the town, and delighted in old stories of Mistress Buchanan's boarding-school, where she had spent some very pleasant as well as profitable years ; and she asked her grandson about many places and people long since changed or passed away. She remembered the memorable night the whole school was taken to see the play, and the very fine gentleman that sat before them, with his frills, white breeches, and silk stockings, and gold buckles, and how he was attracted by the joyous laughter of the school girls, and how, after a little, he went out and brought in quantities of the finest fruits, comfits, and sweetmeats, that were to be had in town ; and how the young ladies stood on their propriety, and declined taking any of these, although their little fingers itched to get hold of them ; and how they laughed at her for taking whatever he offered to her ; and how the fine gentleman, when they were leaving the house, gave her

his arm, and handed her out as if she were a duchess ; and how he called next day with a carriage, such as none of them had ever seen the like of, and wanted to take her and Mistress Buchanan out a drive ; and how cruel the said Mistress Buchanan was in refusing the gentleman's courtesies ; how he turned out to be a great and good English nobleman, who was travelling in Scotland on an errand of benevolence, and how she had never seen him afterwards, but was a sort of heroine from having been noticed by him, and how she had even forgotten his name, like an ungrateful giddy girl, as she then was, in a few weeks. Robert had heard all this before, but both he and his grandfather enjoyed it all the more on that account, and were all the more jealous that it should be given in its integrity. Some other well-known old stories, all of a strong Jacobite tendency, were gone over, and at a pretty late hour Robert said to the lively old lady, "I should like, before I go away, once more to hear John *Lome* M'Donald's song on the battle of Killiecrankie. You have not forgotten it, grandmother?"

"I wish, Robert dear, I remembered my Bible as well as I do these things. I have not forgotten it, and never shall ; but the power to sing has left me, and I can ill give the spirit of that fine song. As, however,

you may never hear it from me again, my child, I will sing it for you to-night."

She began in a low voice a stately recitation rather than singing of this masterpiece of the Highland bard ; started Dundee's army in Inverness-shire, conducted it through the pass of Drumuachdar to Athole, and to the heights above the small plains of Rinrory, where the onslaught on Mackay's army was made, and where the gallant Dundee fell. The song became more and more exciting as the armies approached, and when the Highlanders, under the leadership of him who understood them so well, made their headlong charge and routed their foes, it burst out in a strain of sanguinary triumph almost unequalled. Suddenly it changes, and a wail of inexpressible woe is raised over the dying leader. The old lady had forgotten her age and infirmities in the excitement of reciting this wonderful song—or, more properly speaking, poem—her voice became clear as in her prime, her black eyes flashed, and the flush of her youth came back to her faded cheek ; but when the strains of triumph gave place to the wailing for the dead, the reaction was too much for her. She stopped, covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears. Robert was powerfully affected, and could with difficulty restrain his own tears as he saw hers, and watched the large

drops coursing each other down the withered cheeks of his grandfather. When his grandmother recovered herself she said, half aloud, "The most foolish thing I ever did in all my life." Such follies are out of date now-a-days, but others, with perhaps less merit, have taken their place.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. JOHN HARDY JUNIOR TAKES A DECIDED STEP.

THE routine of Messrs. J. and J. Hardy's office varied but little from one year's end to another. There were letters to copy into the "Letter-book;" copies to make of old and new deeds; deeds to draw and extend, some on paper, some on parchment, most of them in English, a few in bastard Latin. A few good clients they had, but some had left them and gone to other and more agreeable agents. John Stout knew the affairs of every client as well as his employer—the only business of which he knew nothing being that of the Grahams of Glenurn. He sometimes wondered at this, though his mind was not much directed to it until Robert had gone into the office. He then, for John had a large dash of curiosity in his composition, made sundry subtle but weak attempts to learn more of the affairs of that family than he had hitherto done, but Mr.

John Hardy jun., took the sole management of these on himself, and even the letters relating to them were not copied into the letter-books like the others. John Stout brooded over the matter during the whole time Robert was away, and determined to question him on the subject when he returned. And soon after that event, having an opportunity, he asked him how long J. and J. Hardy had been their agents.

"I cannot tell you ; long before I was born."

"I suppose the auld gentlemen are quite satisfied with John junior's management?"

"I suppose so," cautiously, for Robert did not know John's object, and determined to say nothing to commit himself or those at home.

"Did ye never hear anything to the contrary at home?"

Robert thought this impertinent but did not show it.

"What makes you ask that?"

"Nothing particular. I like to hear what folk think of John junior as a man of business. No one else has anything to do with the Glenurn business."

"We should feel the more obliged to him for taking so much personal trouble."

"Aye," said John with a peculiar drawl, "There's no a client among them all I do not know something

of except the Grahams of Glenurn, and why I know nothing about their affairs is more than I can make out. There's a mystery about it that I don't understand. It may be to the advantage of your family, though I cannot see how that can be. Does he send in accounts regularly?"

"I cannot well tell you. I was so young and inexperienced that I was not thought likely to give advice or express an opinion worth having, and was not consulted, or told anything about our affairs."

"For my part I don't understand it, and I'm no likely to be soon enlightened I'm thinking."

The matter dropped, but it left an impression on the minds of both. John thought it a point of honour to know all that was to be known of his employers' clients, and their affairs, and resolved if possible to know something of the affairs of the Grahams. Robert wondered if proper states and accounts had been sent to his father regularly, and why their business had not gone regularly through the office, the same as the other clients'. There was something peculiar in it, but whether it was or was not for their good he could not say. All he could do was to watch now, and by and by find out how matters stood from his father. In the meantime he applied himself with persevering assiduity to the study of his

profession, and continued to make rapid and steady progress. He could quite realize the fallen position of his family and the relative effects on his own, and knew that he must work for it if he meant to maintain his place in the class in which he was born. This he resolved to do, and the winter passed rapidly, and the spring vacation was announced without his tiring or wearying for it. The only interruption to his studies was at Christmas, when John Stout took a very severe illness which laid him up for several weeks, and at one time threatened even his life. He lived in lodgings, and had no one to care much for him, and Robert, one night he went to see how he was, found him suffering acute pain from rheumatism, and offered to sit up with him. The poor fellow was so desolate, and appeared so grateful, and so appreciated the kindness, that Robert could not find it in his heart to keep away from him, so every night saw him ascending the high narrow steep stair in one of the closes in the High Street that led to John's uncomfortable quarters, and he seldom left before the morning. By the time he was able to crawl back to the office, he regarded Robert as a being of superior order to himself or any one he had ever met before, and became touchingly attached to him. The first thing John junior did when the poor clerk presented himself

was to growl out something about useless hulks not suiting his book, and that he must make up for lost time, or submit to a considerable deduction of salary. John Stout made no reply, but he vowed in his heart that if he should ever be in a position to do so, he would pay the "Junior" off in his own coin and with compound interest. However, externally, the work of the office went on as formerly, but John Stout never again enlightened John junior on the ways of the world and usages of society.

In the course of the spring vacation a great change became manifest in the "Junior" as he had been long called in the office. He went out more, and dressed himself up, and gave other unwonted indications that half led to the idea that he was again to "go into society." He was more curt and peremptory with John Stout and the other clerks, and when Robert had occasion to go into his room, he observed that he looked at and examined him in a way he had not done before. The next thing that struck his clerks as strange was his buying a fine house in Princes Street, for which he paid a large price. And by and by it spunked out that he was to occupy the new house, and to remove the office there at the term. But what took them all most by surprise was his announcing to John that he was going to the

country for a week or ten days, and not mentioning what part of the country he was to honour with his presence, much curiosity was felt upon the point. Robert was the first enlightened, who, on going into his room one day for some purpose, was asked in a cheerful and what was meant for a friendly tone, if he had any commands to Dunurn, as he was to go there next day, and would be happy to be made the medium of conveying any letter or message to his parents. Robert, very much surprised, thanked him, and begged he would tell them that he was well.

“Your grandfather is an old man, Mr. Robert?”

“Yes, he is an old man.”

“Your father is not so young a man as he was either?”

This great fact also remained undisputed.

“You have several brothers and sisters, I believe?”

“Only one brother—several sisters.”

“Your brother is younger than you?”

“He is the youngest of the family.”

“How old is he?”

“Between six and seven.”

“Then your sisters will range from eight or nine, to eighteen or nineteen, I suppose. You see Mr. Robert, I wish to know something about them all before I go

among them ; mothers do not like to see visitors ignorant of their children's ages."

"I venture to assure you that would make no difference whatever in my mother's feelings towards you."

"Yes, you know, but it is better to know these things."

It is not likely that the "Junior" would think of going to Dunurn without some great object. It is possible, too, he had a farther object in making the inquiries about Robert's mother and sisters than the mere desire to appear to Mrs. Graham well informed on such an important matter. Whatever it was, the office were well aware, would only come to light when the course of events naturally left no objection to its being known. So the office waited patiently, knowing there was nothing else for it.

In due time the "Junior" returned from the Highlands, and even John's penetrating eyes found him impervious. He brought a letter to Robert from his sister, but of course she knew nothing of business matters, and left him, so far as the "Junior" was concerned, exactly where he was before. A few days afterwards, however, he had a letter from his father telling him that Mr. J. Hardy junior, had been at Dunurn, and after going fully into the affairs of the estate, clearly proved to them

all that it would be for their advantage to sell the property, and so get rid of the burden entailed on them. There would be no reversion, but the getting rid of all responsibility was worth a good deal of itself. His mother was not altogether satisfied, but she had too high a sense of duty to oppose anything calculated to benefit the family. Robert could not see where the benefit to the family lay ; but what could he do ?

In a fortnight after his return to town the "Junior" advertised the estate of Dunurn for sale on the 30th of May following. There was evidently a tide in his affairs, and he determined to take it at the full, laying his plans so as to leave little doubt on his mind that it would lead to fortune. So he made his next move, which was to write to Mr. Duncan Graham, younger of Glenurn, soliciting the hand of his daughter Jane in marriage. He entered more fully on his own plans and prospects than he was ever known to have done before ; frankly stated that he was worth a very large sum of money, that he would himself be the purchaser of the Glenurn estate, would assume the name of Graham along with his own, and make handsome settlements on Miss Graham. All which would keep the estate in the family—only in the female, instead of the male line—and that his eldest son should take the name of Graham,

and so preserve and perpetuate the honoured name of Graham of Glenurn.

The receipt of this letter, which was written in Mr. John Hardy junior's best hand, and sealed with an enormous seal, bearing the coat of arms of no one knew what illustrious house, caused a very great sensation at Dunurn. The recipient read it over without remark—indeed it seemed to have taken away his power of utterance—and handed it to his wife. She read it also, and her astonishment almost equalled her husband's, but not quite—ladies being less easily moved to excessive amazement in such matters than the lords of the creation. When Mr. Graham had recovered his speech, he asked his wife in a supernaturally calm voice what she thought of it.

“It is in some respects,” answered that lady, quietly, “a very advantageous offer of marriage to our daughter.”

“Advantageous offer of marriage!—the low-bred, infernal, cowardly, impudent, upstart. I would sooner carry her to her grave.”

Mr. Duncan Graham was very fiery and hot; and, moreover, had more family pride about him, than, perhaps, any other man in the county. He snatched the letter from his wife and spat upon it, and then left the

room with it, and hurried to the presence of his father. Here he again discharged a volley of hard names at the "Junior," but his father's passions had been tempered by old age, and a long course of adversity, and though indignant enough, he expressed himself calmly, and went on to discuss the *pros* and *cons* of the proposal with perfect coolness and self-possession. His wife, who had been very quick and fiery in her day, expressed herself more forcibly than he did, and declared he might take all they had of worldly substance, but that he should never call her lamb by his odious name. Mrs. Duncan Graham was well pleased to see how the proposal was spurned by the whole family, for she liked it as little as any of them ; but her mission was to soothe and throw oil on the troubled waters, which occasionally—but, considering their sad position, very seldom—disturbed the temper of the Grahams. It took her husband four whole days to put sufficient indignation within so small a compass as three pages of letter paper. By the end of that time he had visibly cooled down into a state of extreme loquacity, and enlarged on the subject for five weary hours, to his patient wife, who spun and listened in a manner that gratified the outraged feelings of her husband in a remarkable manner, and he finished off by telling her that he really

could not undertake to reply to such overweening impudence. She said that her idea was that the reply should be very short, and not unworthy of the dignity of the family.

"That is exactly my idea. The family must not be lowered in any way by any means the dirty fellow may use. I would write, but my hand is a little out of practice, so I beg you will write a few lines in your own or my name—the one is as good as the other,"—and away out went Mr. Duncan Graham, inexpressibly relieved at having got rid of a very disagreeable business.

When the Junior received Mrs. Graham's letter—for she wrote in her own name, though conceived in more courteous terms than most people would think him entitled to—he was very angry indeed, and his unfortunate clerks being the nearest objects on which he could practise, they came in for a large amount of unreasonable blame and ill-humour. Robert Graham's services were at once dispensed with, and poor John Stout was several times driven to the verge of open rebellion. The "Junior" for the first time gave free vent to his natural disposition, which was that of an essentially cruel tyrant, and bad as Robert's condition was—thrown out of employment—the other clerks almost envied him his liberty. He had ever since he went to Edinburgh

been on a friendly footing with cousin Ronald's cousin, Dugald, from whom he had a general invitation, and now he went to him for advice. He told of his dismissal without any reason being assigned, and of the tyrannical manner in which the other clerks were treated. He had heard nothing of the honour intended for his sister, so that the "Junior's" conduct was altogether unaccountable. Dugald, who was a quiet, cautious, and sagacious Highlander, listened till Robert made an end of his story, then said there was some reason for the change in the man, which might or might not forbode evil to the Grahams, "though, confound the animal!" he went on, "I suspect he has gone the whole length of his tether in the direction of evil already. I am rather busy just now, and my lads have to work extra time, so if you come to help us, till we can look about for another office, I shall be obliged to you."

Robert understood and appreciated this invitation of the kind Highlander, and gratefully accepted a seat in his office, and before he was three weeks there, Dugald, in a postscript to a letter to Ronald, told him he was the most promising youth he had ever had through his hands.

On the 26th of May, the Whitsunday term-day, as Robert was sitting in his lodgings late at night, amusing

himself reading for a short time before going to bed, Farrum—he and Farrum could not part when he left home, so he took him with him to town—lying at full length on the rug, when the door-bell rang. Not expecting any visitor at that hour of the night, he continued his book, and was so absorbed in it that he scarcely noticed his door open. He looked somewhat vacantly up, and beheld his old friend John Stout enter. He shut the door carefully after him, and then sat upon the nearest chair, and wiped his face, without uttering a word. John had very queer ways, but Robert saw at a glance that he was not acting now, and asked, with some anxiety, if anything had happened. He only replied by putting his hand in his bosom. Robert became alarmed, and going up to him kindly, asked if he was ill.

“No, no, answered his visitor—no ill ; but I have found him out.”

“ Found whom out ? ”

“ We can hang him any day we like.”

“ Who, in the name of wonder, do you mean ? ” asked Robert, beginning to think that John had gone mad.

“ Who do I mean ? who should I mean, but the d—d Junior ? ”

“ What has he done to you, John ? has he turned you off, as he did me ? ”

"Turned me off! I'll turn him off the drop, and see him hang till he is dead, dead, dead!" imitating the way he had heard the justice-clerk of the day passing sentence of death on a criminal.

"Have you lost your senses, John?"

"Listen, Robert Graham, and then ask that question. We have been moving to the new house for the last two days, and beastly, dirty, dusty work it has been. I have been amang papers on which the dust of fifty years has lain undisturbed until this day, and such trash and rubbish has been sent to the new house as never went into new house before. The Junior never left his ain room, but had me in with him, and made me lay parcel after parcel into large boxes and trunks, which he carefully locked when full, and put the key in his pocket. In this way the papers in the auld ugly oak-press were disposed of, and when they were all out and packed—he watching all the time like a terrier at a rat-hole—he looked into every hole and corner of the press. It is lined at the back with canvas and no boards, these being unnecessary, as it stood against the wall, and the canvas was put on merely to keep out the dust, which I ken ower weel it failed to do. Weel, when the contents of the press were all packed and secured; and it weel looked over by the

Junior, off he went to the new house, telling me to stop behind to see it carefully removed by the joiner and porters. They at once set about pulling the worm-eaten rubbish to pieces, and as a preliminary dragged it to the middle of the floor. The joiner tore down the canvas, and when he did so, I saw through the shelves that two or three papers had dropped down on the floor, and escaped the sharp eye of the ras—, Junior I mean. I felt curious to see what they were, and ran and took them up. What do you think, Robert Graham, was the first paper I looked at?" Here John again became agitated, and pulling a paper out of his bosom, where he had placed it in an inside pocket of his waistcoat, he put it in Robert's hand, who no sooner looked at it than he became, if possible, more agitated than his visitor.

"What is this?" he said. "Is it possible?" and his sight half failing him, he took it to the candle, and read slowly, and very distinctly, "Discharge and Renunciation by Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Campbell of Aldourie, to and in favour of Andrew Graham, Esq. of Glenurn."

"Great heavens ! can it be ? Glenurn free and unencumbered for twenty-five years, and the owners consigned all that time to abject poverty !"

Yes, it was just so. The "Junior" had all that time

drawn and appropriated the rents, and would have done so to the end, but for the discovery made by honest John Stout.

There was a long consultation held as to what was to be done next. The property was to be exposed in three or four days, and something must be done in time to prevent a sale. It was arranged that John should go to the office as usual, and keep a watch on the "Junior's" movements, and that Robert should take the discharge to Mr. Dugald Macphail, and put the matter into his hands.

"I'll give three cheers when I see the thief hanged," said John, as he was going away. "It was not for nothing that the robber managed the Glenurn business himself, and was so jealous of any one going into his dirty hole of a room. That paper must have been thrust in too far, and fallen down between the canvas and the bottom of the press, and so lost until now. What a state of apprehension and terror he must have lived in for the last twenty years! Faugh! I would not stand it for one day for all he is worth in the world. If the monster had shown me a spark of kindness during the thirty years I have faithfully served him, I would feel troubled in spirit this night, and would save him in as far as I could do so in honour and honesty,

but I am absolved from all obligation towards him. He has treated me with much less consideration than you bestow on that long-legged dog of yours ; and did he not, at the last settlement I had with him, deduct so much from my earnings for the time I was sick, and would have died but for your four quarters, Robert Graham ? He has had his day, like another dog. I shall have mine, so good-night."

Much earlier than usual next morning Robert went to his office. There was no one there. He knocked at Dugald's business-room door ; he had not gone there yet. He then knocked at the dining-room door, and was told to "come in." He found his friend finishing his breakfast, with a heap of letters, read and unread, beside him, and dressed in dishabille—his neckcloth not on, and his round comfortable person enveloped in a tartan dressing-gown of the true Macphail type. His shoes were upon a footstool opposite the fire—Dugald never dispensed with a "small spunk of fire" at breakfast, summer or winter—and beside them lay a cantankerous little terrier, well stricken in years, a present from "Cousin Ronald," who always saluted Farrum with a fit of asthmatic noises which might pass for either coughing or barking, or a happy combination of both.

"Well, Mr. Robert,"—Dugald's accent was as purely

Celtic as the first day he quitted his native glen at the foot of Benachullaculloch—"you are early afoot this morning. Nothing wrong, I hope? Have you breakfasted? Ah, just sit down then; what is it all about? for I am sure you have not come at this early hour for nothing."

"I am afraid I have disturbed you."

"Don't mention it; always glad to see you at any hour, as you ought to know by this time; but I don't know your errand yet."

Robert shortly told him what had happened, and ended by laying the discharge before him on the table.

Dugald looked at it for some time without touching it, then opened it, and glanced at its contents; and starting to his feet, he walked three times round the table, then facing his visitor, cried with tremendous energy, "The d—dest villain on the face of the earth, sir!"

Dugald went himself early that day to the Register-House with the discharge, and deposited it there, and ordered a certified copy of it to be got ready for him with all despatch.

On the morning of the day of the sale he and Robert repaired to the new office of Messrs. J. and J. Hardy, and found the "Junior," spider-like, settling himself there,

and weaving treacherous nets in which to catch unwary victims. His reception of the visitors was ungracious. He did not even offer them seats.

"You are to expose the estate of Glenurn for sale to-day at twelve o'clock noon?" said Dugald, his Celtic origin bristling out in every tone of his voice.

"You ought to know then that I must be too much engaged now to have time for anything else."

"It is not about anything else Mr. Robert Graham and I have called, and therefore you will excuse us for claiming a little of your attention. We'll not keep you long."

It just struck the "Junior" that they had come with the view of making arrangements for stopping the sale, and making up his mind on no consideration to accede to any proposal calculated to attain that object, he answered instantly, "To the point—what is your proposal?"

"That you will stop the sale," answered the doughty Dugald, coming to the point sooner than the other expected.

"Then you may go home ; I will do nothing of the kind."

"The devil you won't," said Dugald, on whom the rudeness of the "Junior" was beginning rather to tell.

"I won't."

“What is the upset price?”

“You may go to the sale, when you shall find that out. Good-morning to you.”

“What is the rental? Will you let me look at the title-deeds?”

The “Junior” coolly began to write without deigning to notice the question.

“Mr. Robert, call in the messenger,” said Dugald; whereupon Robert left the room, and the “Junior” looked up in considerable astonishment.

The door opened immediately, and a short squat individual, with an important and business-like air, entered, with a thin wretched satellite at his back. He held a paper in his hand, which he gave to the junior, who was beginning to get extremely angry, and said, in a loud imposing voice, “Personally apprehended;” and looking at Dugald, as much as to say “That is about the right thing,” he and his follower walked out again. Dugald called him back, and said—

“Go direct to the —— Bank, and arrest the monies and other property deposited there by Mr. John Hardy, junior, and by the firm of J. and J. Hardy, on the dependence of this action.”

“It shall be done, sir, instanter—which is to say, within ten minutes from this present time.”

"You will find that," said Dugald, addressing the "Junior," "a summons of count and reckoning, at the instance of Mr. Graham of Glenurn, against you and your father, and concluding for the sum of one hundred thousand pounds sterling, being the rents of the estate of Glenurn for twenty-five years, which you have embezzled and appropriated, with termly interest up to the date of payment being satisfied and made. You will scarcely go on with the sale in the face of that summons, I should think."

"So this is a conspiracy to concuss me? Get out of my office, otherwise I will hand you over to the police. You will rue this, for I can now have you transported for illegal conspiracy and invading of me in my premises. Get out, you dirty Highland stot! get out, or I'll have you kicked from this to the Tron Kirk." And the "Junior" started up in a fury that astonished the Highlander, who with difficulty kept from flying at his throat. Indeed, it is more than likely that he could not have done so had he not seen Robert looking as if about to pounce upon him. This he thought so unbusiness-like a step, that he got hold of his arm and shook it energetically, venting the rage that suddenly possessed him upon his friend, which gave him time to cool, and he so escaped doing what he would have

regretted all his life. He put his hand in his pocket, and pulling out the certified copy of the discharge, placed it on the table before the infuriated "Junior," who stamped and foamed at the mouth like a mad bull. And as the same animal is attracted by a scarlet rag, so was he instantly by this paper. He gazed at the title on the back of it for half a minute, his hands stretched out, and his eyes nearly starting out of their sockets. Then, with a yell, he grasped at it with both hands, and tore it with all his might, and fell with his whole weight upon the floor like one dead.

Dugald and Robert, much shocked, left the house. Next day they learned that the wretched man had tried to get his money from the bank, and had failed, in consequence of the arrestment so judiciously laid on by Dugald. Subsequently they heard that he had disappeared, and they never heard certain tidings of him again. It was supposed that he had found his way to North America, but never having appeared in any of the legal proceedings adopted against him, and having no clue by which he could be traced, everything concerning him, from the day of Dugald Macphail and Robert's visit, was mere conjecture.

CHAPTER XIX.

REJOICINGS AND ANXIETIES.

SHORTLY after these events Robert Graham went to Dunurn to make arrangements for the removal of his grandfather and grandmother to Glenurn House, and to have them installed in the home from which they had been so long and so unjustly expelled. This was done at once, and the rest were to follow afterwards. It is impossible to describe the state of excitement the good people of the glen got into when they heard of the young heir's arrival. They flocked to Dunurn to see and congratulate him, and shook his hand until they nearly shook it from the shoulder. There was a great feast given by Mr. Duncan Graham, to which all comers, —and they were by no means few—were welcome; and he made many fine speeches, much to his own and his auditors' satisfaction. Indeed, upon this occasion he shone to greater advantage than either his father or his

son—the speechmaking days of the one being past, and of the other not yet come. And so hearty and hospitable he was, that all were agreed that he was well worthy of the good fortune that had been restored to him. And for that matter, they were right ; for in adversity and poverty he was never known to do or say anything unworthy of his lineage ;—he was kind to his inferiors, and pleasant and agreeable among his equals in birth ; and, above all, he bore his fallen fortunes with a degree of uncomplaining equanimity that won the regard and admiration of all who knew him. Upon the occasion of this feast he explained to his numerous guests how the family was indebted to his son for bringing to light the villany that had so long deprived them of their rights ; and his auditory willingly took the son at the father's estimate, and cheered the toast of his health as they did none of the other toasts ; but when he got up to thank them, he did it so awkwardly that the contrast to the easy flow of words from his father was rather startling and unfavourable to him. Robbie, to be sure, told his friend Sandy that one deed of Robert's was worth all the fine words ever spoken by his father, and Sandy agreed ; but added, that it was “grand to hear the father making a speech, for there was a sound and a sough about it that was pleasant to listen till.”

As might be expected, no one rejoiced more than Mary Livingston at the good fortune of her relatives. To the whole of them she was much attached, and her aunt she looked upon with peculiar veneration. She well remembered the part the good lady had acted towards her, and she continued to regard her with the love of a devoted daughter. It is not to be wondered at, then, that Mrs. Graham exercised a great influence over her niece, for no one could approach her without being influenced by her motherly kindness and gracious manner; and unconsciously both Mary Livingston and Jane adopted her fine dignified demeanour, though only so far as was becoming in girls of their age. This was almost all that poor Jane possessed of the ladylike accomplishments in fashion, for owing to the poverty of her father her education was very limited; but now it was determined to amend this, and, though late, give her the benefit to be derived from attending a first-rate boarding-school. Accordingly, as soon as the old people were settled in their old home, Robert went back to Edinburgh, taking his sister with him to be placed at the boarding-school in which her cousin had been educated.

Lord Strathalbane spent the whole of this summer in the country, and as his cousin, George Livingston, also remained at home, his lordship was a very frequent

visitor at Glengarve. Any even unconcerned spectator could not be long in the society of the young people without seeing, that however intimate the two young men were, there was an attraction there for Lord Strathalbane, different from his cousin George, in the society of Mary Livingston. He scarcely seemed conscious of this himself, and he came and went, and came and stayed, without any apparent object. He talked of feeling dull at home—of being fond of riding—and of having something to see on that part of his property that lay nearest to Glengarve; and when there, he thought he might as well go to his uncle's as home, and so there he went very often. Such a thing, however, as making love to his cousin never entered his head; and as the country was dull and scarce of visitors during the summer months, she and her brother rejoiced to see him, and sometimes they spent days together on the most easy terms. No two young people could have a better opportunity of falling in love, and nothing could be more natural than that they should do so. Mary was now a very beautiful girl, graceful and high-bred in her appearance, but with a softness of expression and manner that was extremely captivating. Lord Strathalbane was, notwithstanding the habit of frowning he had, a fine-looking man, and he had, in an eminent degree, that

dignified bearing and courtesy of manner so becoming his high position. This, combined with his princely estate, made him no mean match for any lady in the land. Thus the summer passed at Glengarve, and the shooting season was well-nigh upon them before they were aware of its approach.

Robert Graham and his sister Jane left Edinburgh for Dunurn in the end of July, and although she had not been quite two months away, her father thought her wonderfully improved, and the tears stood in his eyes as he gazed at and kissed her by turns. He was very proud of his daughter Jane, and being of an imaginative turn, he thought her altogether peerless. This might be, partly at least, owing to her being like her own and like his mother—a curious combination of two people that were in most ways dissimilar, but one that was very dear to him, for no man ever loved mother and wife with more devotion than Duncan Graham. Robert and Jane had no sooner got home than preparations were begun for the family leaving a place associated with the most miserable and the most happy circumstances of their lives, to join the old people at Glenurn, where they were all to live together. The 10th of August was fixed upon as the day of the *flitting*, and at an early hour of that day Mr. Duncan Graham left the dear little

ugly uncomfortable house of Dunurn ; and it must be confessed that, notwithstanding the many associations connected with it, he did so without much pain. But he had so much to attend to in making the younger members of the family comfortable for the short and pleasant journey, which he arranged to make with them himself, that he had not time to indulge in regrets, even had he felt any, which he did not. Robert was to escort his mother and Jane at a later hour of the day to their new home.

Mrs. Graham had much more romance and poetry in her nature than her husband, and although rejoicing perhaps as much as he did in the restoration of the family to their proper position, she did so more on account of her children than from any more selfish feelings of her own. Leaving Dunurn, where her whole married life had been passed ; where she had felt so much joy, and care, and sorrow ; where so much had happened to her that appealed to her woman's nature,—was like breaking asunder one of the ties that bound her to life. She had been so occupied for some days with preparations for their departure, and her mind so absorbed with the reflections conjured up by these, that she had not observed a great change that had taken place in Robert's appearance. For several days he felt very unwell, with

frequent shivering, and alternate cold and feverish fits. He thought it would pass away, and said nothing about it ; but after his father had left Dunurn on the morning of the 10th, he became so ill that he could no longer conceal it, and he went into his mother's room, and nearly fainted before he could tell her that he had been ailing.

About a fortnight after this, one very wet disagreeable day, Lord Strathalbane sat with his cousins, George and Mary Livingston, at Glengarve. The young men fretted at not getting to the moors, and the young lady sat quietly plying some female occupation, and apparently unmoved by the fast-falling rain. What a happy resource these little accomplishments are to ladies ! and how men ought to envy them for having wherewith to lighten the tedium of dull days, and of the companionship of restless, unhappy, dull men ! When twelve o'clock passed without any signs of clearing up, they knew there was no hope for the next few hours, and the gentlemen took books, which they pretended to read, but did not. After a time George got up and yawned wearily, and throwing down his book, walked to the window.

"I wonder," he said, "if it rains in any other place as it does here. That mist rolling along the mountain's

side looks as if determined to exclude sunshine for ever, and consign us to a muggy darkness for the rest of our days."

"That is an extreme view, George ; but you do sometimes exaggerate circumstances of comfort and misery, and are not satisfied with merely saying that black is black, and white, white," said Lord Strathalbane.

"Can mortal man exaggerate, or make his imagination carry him further than a glance at the real state of matters opposite this window is calculated to do ? Just look at the ragged edges of that mass of mist,—its opaque centre, and the way it trails its lazy, heavy, inert, damp body along, drenching everything it touches. It is simply abominable !"

"It is very annoying, and we lose our sport in a very provoking way."

"I rather admire Cousin Ronald's philosophy," said Mary. "Robert Graham told me that he never complained of a wet day, or even a wet week, always busying himself among his guns, fishing-rods, dogs, and bairns ; and when there was nothing left to he done to any of these, he polished his 'cleek,' remarking occasionally that the longest lane has an end, and the wettest day is often followed by a fine one. That is the man to be happy in the world. He made

no pretence to learning or reading, yet he occupied his head and his hands, and was ever cheerful and contented. You should try to follow so admirable an example."

"Hang the monster!" answered George, savagely. "Did you hear to-day how Robert is?"

"I have not heard for two days; he was then little if any better."

"Great pity the poor fellow should be so long laid up just now. I doubt he shan't be able to carry a rifle this year."

"Is he a good shot?" asked Lord Strathalbane.

"Capital. He is good at most things; and a good fellow, although he sometimes takes extreme views, and acts foolishly."

"You allude to his raids in Ardmark."

"Poor Robert! I wish he was well enough to go there now," said Mary.

"I wish so too, with all my heart."

"We all wish that," said George; "but for all that, he behaved wildly, to say the least of it, in the matter of the forest, and no one can justify him in that."

"I have changed my opinion of Graham, but I cannot justify his going to the forest as he did, although I owe my life to his having done so."

"What do you mean, Philip?" asked both his cousins at the same time.

"I have said nothing on the subject to any one, as Graham's good name might suffer with people who know nothing of the feelings still strong in Glenurn, if in few other places, regarding killing a deer or a salmon; but he runs no risk of this kind here." Lord Strathalbane then told how Robert had come to his assistance when the stag had attacked him, and passed a high eulogium on his presence of mind and courage, and concluded by acknowledging himself under the deepest obligation to him that one man can be to another.

Mary Livingston listened with breathless attention, and changing colour to the narrative; and her cousin, addressing himself entirely to her, noticed this, and felt a glow of pleasure at the deep interest she took in it, thinking it arose from the great danger he had been in himself, rather than from any she could take in the part Robert Graham and Farrum had acted.

"That was very well done of Robert," said George approvingly, but without any admiration in his tone; "but any one would do and is bound to do what he can to save the life of a fellow-creature. That, however, does not justify his going to the forest to kill your

deer without your permission, and when he knew you were so averse to his doing so."

"Very well done!" said his sister, her eyes flashing with indignation. "Very well done! What any one would do! Would you have done it? Would you have risked your own life to rescue your persecutor, if not your enemy, from danger? Would you do so, and say nothing about it? or if you did it, would you not boast of it? Not justify his being in the forest! You were in the forest that day, and why did you not rescue your cousin and friend? No; it is only the gallant, the ever-ready Grahams that do these things; and, forsooth, those who should but do not, see no merit in it! Philip can admire and be grateful for a gallant act performed in his behalf, even by one he thinks he has cause to dislike. You can see nothing to admire in this, although the actor is your brave loyal-hearted cousin."

After this specimen of female reasoning, Mary Livingston left the room, and her cousin and brother looked at one another in amazement. They sat down and resumed their books without making a remark. About an hour afterwards the door of the room opened, and Mary entered, looking pale and humble, the very opposite of her appearance when she went out. She walked quietly to her brother, who was bending over

the table with his book open before him. Mary had a note in her hand, which she placed on the book, and putting her head down till her cheek touched his, she remained in this position until he had read the note, and then half whispered in his ear—

“Take me to my aunt, George, dear.”

“Poor Robert! then he is worse;” and George got up and walked up and down the room. “You cannot be serious, Mary, in wishing to go?”

“Oh! take me, George!”

“Impossible! His complaint is fever, and is sure to be infectious, so I cannot go or permit you to go; besides, I promised to go to Achadunan this afternoon, to look at some dogs that are taken there for me to see. It cannot be, Mary; it would be folly to put yourself in the way of catching fever.”

She wrung her hands, and looked very miserable.

“What is it?” asked Lord Strathalbane.

“Mary has had a note from her cousin Jane Graham, saying that Robert is worse, and that they are becoming very apprehensive about him, and she wisely wants to go to her aunt, who, I am sure, would be the last to approve of her going.”

“Oh! no, no. Who would come to us if in sorrow, —who came here when dear papa was in the hour of

his need? Who was a mother to me when there was none else to take me to a mother's heart? Who has watched over me with a mother's love, that made me forget that I had lost my own? And now, shall I make no return? Shall I fail in the duty of a daughter? Never, never! Take me to her."

Lord Strathalbane listened and frowned; then, stepped up to his cousin, and with a softness and kindness that went to her heart, said—

"I will accompany you there at once, dear Mary."

"Are you both mad?"

"No, George, not mad; but under certain obligations which we do not mean under any circumstances to repudiate. I think it will clear up in the evening, in time to leave us daylight for the journey, and for you to see the dogs. So, Mary, you can make your arrangements."

"You are so kind, Philip,—a thousand thanks. My pony will be at the door the moment it clears up a little."

As sometimes happens after a dull wet day, the evening was remarkably fine, soft, and warm, with the sun lightly veiled until almost set, when it shone out in brightness, but slightly tempered by the thin yellow clouds that hung over the western horizon. Lord

Strathalbane and Mary Livingston rode rather fast at first, but when they got some distance on their way they slackened their pace, and chatted pleasantly till they came to within a mile of Dunurn. Then Mary began to feel nervous and anxious, and every object recalled some scene in which her cousin Robert was an actor ; and when she came within sight of Dunurn, her heart sank, there was such a quiet stillness about the place ;—not a soul stirring, and all the windows wide open. When they reached the door they found it open also, and the noise of the horses' hoofs brought Jane out. She thought her father had arrived on his daily visit, and ran to meet him. She gave a cry of pleasure when she saw Mary, and the next moment the two girls were locked in each other's arms. Jane had not seen Lord Strathalbane for years, and did not recognise him, so Mary presented him. She then asked how her cousin was. Jane shook her head,—“Very, very ill.” She led the way into the drawing-room, followed by the young lord ; but Mary, who knew the house as well as herself, went to where she knew poor Robert lay. The door was open, and she approached very quietly and looked in. Her aunt sat at the side of the bed with her hand under her son's head, and looking steadfastly in his face. He was half asleep, and looked so weak and

pale. And oh ! how changed. The fine high brow was there, the perfection of spiritual beauty, without a trace remaining of material strength or vigour. It might be the brow of a purified spirit. The fire was gone out of the eye. The cheek was wan and hollow ; and the hand, which rested on the bedclothes, was thin and attenuated, and helpless as an infant's. Mary stole noiselessly into the room, and for a moment gazed at the sad ravages of sickness, and sinking down on her knees at her aunt's side, she buried her face in her lap, and sobbed as if her very heart would break. The good lady did not for an instant notice or recognise her. When she did, without moving her hand from under her son's head, she bent down and kissed the now upraised face of her niece. In a little she stood up, and long and earnestly looked at her cousin. She then touched his forehead with her lips and left the room. She returned in a few minutes, having put off her travelling dress, and kissing her aunt, who had never moved, she gently drew her hand out, and raised her from the chair on which she sat, saying in a whisper, " My cousin Philip is in the drawing-room." The next moment she sat in her aunt's place, and quietly put her hand under her cousin's head, and fixing her eyes on his face, she seemed to forget that there was another

object on earth. Mrs. Graham left the room, and Mary sat over her cousin with a yearning heart for a long time. At last he moved his head, and opened his heavy eyes. For a time he did not notice Mary. He said something which she did not hear. She put her face close to him, and asked, "What is it, Robert?"

There was a shiver went through his frame. His hand moved convulsively, and he looked up in her face.

"Dearest Mary!"

"Hush, dearest; they will take me away if I excite you."

"No, no. O no, Mary."

He lay breathing hard for some time with his eyes shut. He opened them, and again fixed them on his cousin. "I am very weak; so weak I cannot speak."

"Keep quiet, Robert; you shall soon be stronger. Philip has come here with me to see you, and will not go away until he has seen you."

"He is very kind." He then dozed again, holding Mary's hand in his.

Lord Strathalbane went into Robert's room in the dusk of the evening, and spoke so kindly, and inquired so minutely about his ailment, that he quite won the heart of Mrs. Graham. When he went out he spoke to Mary, and told her that he thought Robert had been

too much reduced, and that unless something strengthening was given to him, he must sink. His medical man had ordered that he should get nothing farther than something to moisten his lips, and they durst not go contrary to his directions.

"Not even though your cousin's life is at stake?" he said to Mary.

"Anything to save him, Philip. Anything—anything."

"Well," he said, "I will take the responsibility of acting contrary to the doctor's orders. I would give a thousand pounds for an hour of my old friend, Dr. Stevenson of Lindy."

"What is to be done?"

"Get a bottle of the best sherry in the house, and give Graham a teaspoonful of it every hour, or perhaps two. If there is any food—light and nutritious—that it can be put in, a spoonful of it might be given occasionally, but not too often, or in too great quantities at a time. I have heard much of this kind of fever; and it proves fatal so often, only from the strength being allowed to go before people do anything to preserve it."

The wine revived Robert, and that night he was considered a little better; and the hearts of those about him were full of gratitude to Lord Strathalbane.

It was a warm clear moonlight night, and Mary and Jane walked up and down in front of the house. Lord Strathalbane sat in the drawing-room with Mrs. Graham, whose kind gracious manner made a deep impression on him. She got up to see how Robert was, and he accompanied her. The door and window were still open to admit the fresh balmy air. They looked into the room, and Lord Strathalbane was startled to see a large animal there, which his defective vision prevented him recognising. This was Farrum. The poor animal could not be kept out of the room ; but when any person was there, he would creep in under the bed, coming out, however, the moment he was left alone with his master, and sitting opposite the bed, looking intently at him. On learning this, the young lord was quite affected by the attachment of the faithful creature.

“Your son fascinated all who came near him,” he said to Mrs. Graham.

“The kind and generous seldom fail to be loved ; and my Robert was both. But if you will be good enough to excuse me, I shall now go to him.”

“Do, my dear madam, and I will join the young ladies ;” and he went out to them.

Mary went soon into the house, being unable to

keep away from her aunt and cousin, and Jane and Lord Strathalbane walked up and down in silence for a turn or two.

"Your brother is very weak, Miss Graham," he began. "Have you perfect confidence in your medical man?"

"I believe papa has confidence in him; but I do not think he has done dear Robert any good."

"Poor fellow! I wish some other doctor could be got."

"There is none within thirty miles of us but himself."

"It is a pity. I wonder if a person could be got that would go to Lindy. I have a great desire that Dr. Stevenson should see him."

"How kind you are; how very kind! I am sure Robert will never do anything again to vex you;" and poor Jane looked half embarrassed and half determined.

"I am quite sure he will do nothing but what is good and right."

"Oh, he is the best and kindest in the world; and I have his promise that he will never go to the forest again;" and she stopped short as if she suddenly thought that she might be saying something wrong. She glanced at her companion's face, and met such a good-natured

smile, that she became reassured. "Ah, Lord Strath-albane, if you knew Robert!"

"I do know that he is very good and very generous. But I hope you will not insist on his keeping his promise, as I wish him to go to the forest as often as he pleases."

"That is very kind and generous of you. I should not be surprised, if that is the case, if Robert will care much less about it than he did. He was misunderstood, and went to the forest more in retaliation than anything else."

"There are many inconsistencies in human nature, Miss Graham; but it is curious how many of them could be reconciled if the secret moving-spring of our actions were known. It is not impossible but that the attraction that draws your brother to the forest may lose its influence, when he knows that he can come and go as he likes."

Jane knew very well that Robert went to the forest, partly at least, out of a spirit of revenge, and Lord Strath-albane suspected so also. But neither chose to say so, and after some more conversation Jane left him and went into the house. He continued to walk up and down in front of the house, and went over the events of the day in his mind. He had seen enough to be satis-

fied that Mary Livingston had given her whole heart to Robert Graham, and he sighed when he thought of this. Mrs. Graham had made a very favourable impression on him, and when he recalled her conversation, there was something in it that wakened up new ideas and sensations, and recalled old recollections. He fancied her distress the night Gripe went to take Robert prisoner, and felt no pride in his share of the business. He fancied her in poverty that deprived her of the luxuries, if not the comforts, usually enjoyed by people of her birth and station, and felt sorry that he should ever have derived satisfaction from it, inasmuch as it had put the son in his power. He thought of her as, with all the pride of a mother's heart, she rejoiced in her son's success in detecting the villany that nearly beggared them; and, above all, he thought of her now, restored to her position and fortune, but trembling for the life of that son. He imagined himself in Robert's helpless condition, and asked himself who would tend him when alive, and mourn him if he died, as Robert Graham is tended, and would be mourned. What tender eyes would shed tears over him, what soft gentle hand would smooth his pillow? He was just then passing Robert's window, which was still open, and he drew near it and looked in. Mrs. Graham and Mary Livingston sat at

the bed-side, both earnestly looking at the emaciated form that lay on it. He sighed and walked on, saying, half aloud, "All that I have in the world would not procure for me the love that is centred in that poor, weary, dying youth ;—but who is this ?"

"A braw nicht, sir, after the weet day," said our friend Robbie, who met Lord Strathalbane full in the face as he continued his walk.

"Yes, it is a fine night," and the young lord passed on.

"Can ye tell us how he is the nicht ?"

"Do ye mean Mr. Robert Graham ?"

"Who else should I mean ? I didna come here to speir for any other body."

"He is very ill ; but I think a little better since the evening set in."

"Better, did ye say ? thank God for that ! Ye think there is hope of him yet ?"

"I have known of people as ill as he is getting better ; and I hope he shall do so."

"God bless ye for saying that, young man. I dinna ken who ye be, but there's mony ane will be glad to hear what ye say. Ye'll no be a doctor, are ye ?"

"No ; but I know where a good doctor is, if I could find any trusty messenger to go for him."

“And who may he be?”

“Dr. Stevenson of Lindy.”

“Aye, he is ane of the right sort ; but he is a long way off. He should have been here afore now, that is the truth. Weel, I’ll go for him myself.”

“I will give you a letter to him.”

“In with ye, then, and write it, and I’ll e’en go off with it afore I’m ten minutes older.”

It was new to Lord Strathalbane to be thus addressed and ordered ; but he smiled, and entered the house. Robbie went to the window of Robert’s room, where he stood, as he had done many a night since he fell ill, and never stirred until Lord Strathalbane returned with a note to the doctor. “Well, my friend, here it is, and here is something for you to take refreshment on the way. The sooner you are off now, the sooner the doctor will be here.”

“A golden guinea!” said Robbie, looking at the young nobleman’s offering. “Weel, you must be anxious about Robert Graham, or ye wadna give that same. But do ye know I’m as anxious about him as ye can be, and wad go for the doctor for him were it twice as far, and take no fee or reward for it ; aye, were it to be done on my knees ; so take back your goold, and gude e’en to ye. I wish I could take the gate

through the forest ; that wad save my old shanks good twal miles."

"Then why not go that way?"

"What for no go that way ! Weel, my freend, I tak it ye dinna ken Sheamus More, or ye wadna ask such a silly question."

"Surely he would not prevent you taking the shortest road, even through the forest, if he knew you were on an errand of life and death."

"And who's to tell him?"

"I should say you would have no difficulty in doing that yourself."

"None at all ; but I wad have some in making him believe me. No, no, that'll no do. He wad have me to Strathalbane Castle ; and once there, our freend might be dead afore I could win out of their hands ;—weary fa' them !"

"But I wish you to go that way."

"Ye do, do ye ? Perhaps as ye have written a letter to the doctor, ye'll send your compliments to Lord Strathalbane. It'll make him a proud man."

Lord Strathalbane could not but smile, which rather raised Robbie's ire.

"Aye, man, it's laughing ye are ? Weel, it is losing time to listen to yer havers, sae I'se be off."

"Stop a moment. Did you ever see Lord Strathalbane?"

"No; and, what's more, I dinna care if I never look him between the een."

"I am Lord Strathalbane, and"—

"No!" said Robbie in a tone of intense astonishment. He was not easily made to forget himself, but he did so now, and stood for a few moments looking at Lord Strathalbane, as if he were something very wonderful indeed; he then drew himself up and stood "attention," his military habits coming back upon him whenever he was taken by surprise, and raising his hand, he touched his bonnet with the back of it.

Lord Strathalbane went on without noticing Robbie's perturbed condition, "It is my wish, if you go on this errand at all, that you will do so in the most direct way you can, whether it be through the forest, or through the very castle; so be off."

"I crave yer pardon, my Lord," said Robbie, who soon began to recover his presence of mind; "I hae a mind to do the errand weel, but I ken if I meet with Sheamus More, walkin' in the forest, he'll no let me go without getting something more than my word, that I am there by your orders."

"Perhaps you are right, for James is a trusty fellow,

and I daresay knows you to be one of the Glenurn men, most of whom he has no great liking for."

"We have seen one another once or twice."

"In that event I will give you a pass," said his Lordship, going again into the house. In a short time he returned and handed Robbie a note, saying, "If you meet with James Walker, show him that, and you shall find that whatever he may do to speed you on your journey, he will do nothing to retard you."

"Thank ye, my Lord," said Robbie, making another military salute, and going off double quick.

In less than half an hour, Robbie was on his way to Lindy for Dr. Stevenson. He thought of taking his old gun with him, the temptation to do so through the forest, armed as he was with Lord Strathalbane's pass, being almost too much for him. He, however, as he said, had a "mind to do the errand weel," and left the gun, ropes and all, at home. He went right across the forest, and fell in with several herds of deer, but they scarcely noticed him, getting out of his way as if it was really a trouble to them.

"If it werena that it is so near mid-hairst," said Robbie, looking at a group of stags he had passed without scarcely disturbing them, "ye wadna bide sae near me, altho' I hae naething but a staff in my hand. Ye

say very little now, but before another month is past ye'll be loud eneuch."

By breakfast time next morning Robbie had delivered the note to Dr. Stevenson, and after refreshing and resting himself, he set off home again. He went rather out of his way to pass Strathalbane Castle, and it was late in the day when he approached it. When passing through some of the preserves, he was met by M'Bain, the forester, who pounced upon him.

"Come awa, my man," said that functionary. "I'se gie ye a nicht's quarters, and no speir ony questions aboot payment for it. Ye haena a gun. I daresay it's no hid onywhere. Aye, my auld freen'! that trick will no cheat me, sae come awa wi' ye."

"Weel, my braw fellow," answered Robbie, "I am glad to see ye; I was looking for ye just at the very time that ye cam' to me. I'll tell ye what ye'll do now. Go away and bring Curly the auld horse here, to take me on to Sheamus More's hoose, for I am tired wi' walking. I'll bide here till ye come wi' him;" and Robbie coolly sat down.

The forester was so astonished at his effrontery that he was for some time speechless. At last he said, with a voice trembling with rage,—

"Get up, ye auld brute, and come alang wi' me. If

I haena ye in jail this nicht, may I never taste porridge again."

"Ye should have said venishen," said Robbie, quietly.
"It's better meat ; at least, I ken ye think sae."

This so exasperated the fellow that he took Robbie by the collar, and shook him.

"I'll tell ye what it is, freend," said Robbie ; "I'll tell Lord Strathalbane to turn ye off, afore ye are two days older."

"Turn me aff ! ye dirty auld rascal ; I'll kick the life out o' ye !"

"You will ; will ye ? Look here, my son." Robbie pulled Lord Strathalbane's pass from his pocket, and opening it out, continued, "Were ye ever at schule ? maybe no, and that ye canna read what his Lordship says there. See, man ; can ye read, I say ?" Yes, he could read.

"Where did ye get that, man ?" he asked.

"No matter to you where I got it ; there it is, and I now wish you to do what yer maister desires ye, and send me on my gate in the way I point out to ye. Does his Lordship no say to all his servants to help me on in ony manner of way I point out. Now I tell you to get Curly, and send me on my way, and ye'll come along with me to keep me company, and take him back."

The forester could have throttled him, but his master's commands were imperative, and he well knew the danger of not obeying them to the letter. He therefore, but with the worst possible grace, went off for Curly ; and it was a sight worth seeing, when Robbie got on the old horse's back, and went off, attended by the unwilling forester.

It was past midnight when they reached Sheamus More's house, and they roused him out of his bed. Great was his surprise when Robbie addressed him from the back of old Curly.

"What has happened to him ?" he asked M'Bain.

"Naething," was the short reply.

"And where are ye taking him till ? and where did ye catch him ?"

"I seed him in the preserve ahint the flower-garden, and cam' wi' him here, as ye see."

"Weel, I think ye micht have made him walk."

"Aye, but he wadna do that."

"Ye wadna walk, my man, wadna ye ? Maybe I'll be able to give ye a lesson !"

"Ye're no a bad runner, Mr. Walker," answered Robbie, quite politely, and in rather a complimentary tone ; "and ye should walk weel too, but I am ower tired to take any lessons from ye the nicht. Maybe though, as

ye're so supple, ye'll come along a bit with this braw lad and myself, as the nicht is dark, and I am feared him and the auld horse may lose the gate, or go into some unchancy hole; and I'll no win home in time. Wad ye like to put anything more about ye? The nicht is no very warm, and ye wad be the better of something more nor yer kilt."

"What is the hawering body talking about!"

"I am talking of you coming a bit of the way with me, as the road is no the best, and I want ye to help me on as soon as ye're ready."

"I aye kent ye to be impudent, Robbie, but this beats all. Ye shouldna have brought him here the nicht," to the other forester; "but as ye are here, ye can sit at the fire-side till the morn, and then we'll see our way clearer, to where he may have no great mind to go." With this James turned to go into the house, and to bed again.

"So, Maister Walker," said Robbie, "ye'll no help me on my way?"

"That will I when the time comes; but the way will be of my choosing, and no yours."

"Ye must come with me this minit," said Robbie.

"Is that the way ye got Wully to come wi' ye?"

"'Deed was it, and I'll get you too, and that very soon."

The forester did not deign a reply, but walked into the house.

"Ye had better licht yer creeshy, Maister Walker," said Robbie, "for I have something for ye to see."

"Haud yer lang tongue," was the unceremonious reply.

"Then ye'll no even look at yer maister's letter, far less do his bidding," remarked Robbie.

"Is the body demented?" asked the forester, puzzled by Robbie's words and manner.

"Will ye condescend to read that, Maister Walker?" he said, handing him the "pass."

The forester got a light, and read it very carefully over twice, then said—

"There is no mistake about it. Weel, Robbie, what do ye want me to do for ye?"

"Just put on yer claes and come along with us, to keep us on the way. This ceevil gentleman was going off't every now and then, by mistake of course."

"I'll be ready in a minit," said James, who was shrewd enough to see that Robbie was on some errand in which his master was deeply interested, though much at a loss what it could be. He returned in a very short time ready dressed, and said—"I daresay, Robbie, ye havena been selling bread and cheese since the morning; will ye no have a bite o' something afore ye go?"

"Many thanks to ye, Maister Walker ; what ye say is nothing but the truth, and I'll e'en take a chack of bread and cheese just in my hand."

"Ye'll no mind takin' a wee drap o' gude whisky?"

"I wadna object to that at all, Maister Walker. I aye like to do a thing ceevily whan asked in a ceevil way;" and Robbie condescendingly took a glass of whisky and a liberal allowance of bread and cheese, which he munched, comfortably seated on Curly, for some time after they had started from the forester's house.

"Weel, lads," said Robbie, when they had been for some time on the way, "I think I may weel be a proud man this nicht, to have such fine attendance—a braw forester on ilka side of me, and Curly under me—what more could Lord Strathalbane have himself if he was out in the mirk? Haud the horse a wee bit from ye, Maister M'Bain, for I have no wish to become better acquaint with that hole; canny now, lad—that's the thing. Weel, Maister Walker," went on Robbie, who felt greatly refreshed by Walker's good cheer, and let loose his tongue, "when passing the muir yestreen I saw a good many of yer deers, and they have turned so lazy that they wadna go far out of my gate. I was just thinking that it wadna be difficult for a clever lad to help himself to ane

of them ; but I am getting auld now, and the very deers ken that I canna harm them."

" They don't much mind a lonely traveller the now, but I wadna like much to get into the middle of a herd of them a month after this ; no that I ever saw ane that wadna run awa' frae me, but I heard tell of a stag lookin' very stoor-like when a stranger went near his sweethearts."

" Weel, I heard of such a thing too."

" Did ye ever hear o' Paul M'Kinlay, the auld forester that was sae lang with the late Lord ?"

" I mind him weel, a crabbit auld deevil he was."

" Weel, Paul was one day in the forest to kill venishon, and came upon a stag that had a wheen does in a quiet corrie all to himself, and being no too far away he fired at a braw doe that the stag was ceevil to, and shot her through the heart. She dropped, and the rest, stag and all, went off with a race ; but they hadna gane far when the stag looked about, and no seeing the doe, he turned back and soon stood beside her. He went round her, giving her a push with his nose to make her get up, but this she wadna and couldna do of course. He found where the bullet had gone intill her, and went smelling at it for a while. He then tried again to get her up, and began to get angry, and pushed her roughly. This

went on for a while, till at last he saw Paul standing looking on near the rock from which he had fired the shot, and with a roar he ran at him. Paul wasna long getting up to a safe place in the rock, where he sat down till the angry creatur wad go away, as he had orders no to shoot a stag so late in the season. Weel, after sitting there a good long while Paul got tired, and tried to scaur him away, but no a bit of him. He thought by firing a shot he wad be off ; but no—he only got more angry than he was before. Paul then put a chairge of powther in the gun, and fired it off in his face. This put him wild a'thegether, and he did all he could to get up to him. When he found this wadna do, Paul kept quiet, thinking he wad be off to the does at nightfall ; but after a while, instead of going away, he lay down, and kept sentry there the whole nicht ; and by daylight Paul was near dead with cold and hunger, and was afraid he wad have no strength to carry him home if he remained there longer, so he just sent a bullet through his head, and that settled him."

"He was a dour chiel that, I must say," said Robbie. Some other stories were told, and the travellers became quite interested, and reached the Glenurn river before they were half tired of each other's company. "I'll just take the beast ower the water, for ye

see I dinna like to wet my feet. I canna stand thae things now as I did when I was a young lad like one of you. I must aye keep near the ingle-neuk now ; but I'll turn Curly back ; and now I'll bid ye a good-night, or rather good-morning, and I will no fail to tell Lord Strathalbane, Maister M'Bain, what a pleasant companion ye are ; but the next time I ride Curly I wad like ye to put a saddle on him—it's raither hard riding without one, but I am thankfu' for what I have gotten, and will tell his Lordship."

The patronizing air assumed by Robbie was very grievous to M'Bain, and the only reply he made was a grunt expressive of anything but satisfaction, and he did not altogether agree with Walker when he said—

"He is a fine auld carle that same Robbie, and I'm thinkin' he is a match for a dozen o' such chaps as we are."

Robbie was not a man that boasted, but it was not in human nature not to feel a satisfaction at having made the dreaded foresters his humble attendants ; and the story soon got wind, and raised him yet higher in the estimation of the people of Glenurn than he had stood before, although he always had the reputation of being the keenest and shrewdest man among them.

CHAPTER XX.

DR. STEVENSON OF LINDY.

DR. STEVENSON was a hale, active, wiry man, well nigh seventy years old. His hair, which had been fair, was now white, and hung down in rather thin locks over his forehead, without any attempt to comb it to either side. His face was pale, and he had a habit when speaking of half shutting his eyes, which made people who did not know him imagine that they could laugh and wink at his expense without his being aware of it. This was a very mistaken idea, for few men took the measure of the capacity of those with whom he conversed, with more rapid accuracy than he did, or observed more narrowly their manner and bearing. When very young he quitted his father's house, and, much against the old gentleman's wishes, determined on acquiring a profession. His family was old and respectable, and prided themselves on the length of time Lindy had belonged to them ; and this

was the great objection to the eldest son demeaning himself by becoming a mere professional man. Charles Stevenson had a great deal of pride, but it was different pride from this. He would not receive a favour from any man alive, and severe was the struggle he had before he could write surgeon to his name. He then entered the navy, which was a far less desirable service at that time for a surgeon than it has become in recent years. He had not been long in the service when war broke out, and he had an opportunity to distinguish himself by landing with a party of marines and blue-jackets, who were ordered to storm a fortified position of the enemy. It was very hot work ; and most of the officers having fallen, the men came to a halt, just as they should have entered the enemy's works. Stevenson pushed forward, and, getting to a breastwork, did all he could to get the men to scale it ; but there being no officers to lead them they hesitated. "Forward lads—go on," cried Charles Stevenson. "Who the d—l are you, sir, that says 'go on,' instead of 'come on?'" said a gruff voice at his side, and turning round he found himself confronting the general. "I am the medical officer in charge of these men." "Then, sir, I wish you were any other officer." "So do I, sir ;" and springing on the breastwork, he cried, "Come on, lads."

This was quite enough, and in five minutes they were in possession of the works. That evening Stevenson was sent for by the general, who lectured him severely for being where no medical officer should have been, and doing what no medical officer should have done, and ended by asking him to quit the navy and get into the army, and that he would see to his interests. In less than a twelvemonth he accompanied the general to India, and in the course of time rose to eminence, and acquired a large fortune. Soon after his father's death, which took place when he was in India, he retired from the service, and took possession of his patrimony. He found living quietly in the Highlands, after the busy life he had been leading for thirty years in India and elsewhere, exceedingly dull ; and he began a system of improvements on his property that attracted much attention. But this was not employment enough for his active mind, and finding the neighbourhood very ill provided with a doctor, he began to practise, and in the course of a few years was the most esteemed, respected, and beloved man in the county. He did not profess to give his services gratuitously, but he never asked a fee, nor took one from any that could not well afford it ; and all he made by his profession he applied to benevolent and charitable purposes. He was a very

hospitable man ; and it was not only his wealthy neighbours and those who moved in his own sphere that he kept open house for. The poor, the helpless, the maimed, and the lame, were never turned from his door, and his kitchen was seldom without some such in it. And frequently after being fed and cured there, they took their departure, taking with them largely of his bounty.

The evening of the day after Robbie had given him Lord Strathalbane's note, Dr. Stevenson arrived at Dunurn. He found none there but the ladies. He at once went in to see Robert, and after the most minute examination and inquiry, and getting the whole history of his illness, he went back to the drawing-room with Mrs. Graham, and carried on a most lively conversation with her without making the slightest allusion to the subject nearest her heart. She for some time submitted, expecting that he would come to it of his own accord, but her patience was soon exhausted, and she asked :

“What do you think of him ? tell me at once.”

“Think of whom, my dear madam ?”

“Of my poor sick boy ?”

“Oh, well, we will talk about that again. Tell me when was it Lord Strathalbane left this ?”

“He left this forenoon along with my husband.

They are at Glenurn, and we may expect them early to-morrow, as both are anxious to see you."

"They must be very much so, when they sent for me ten days after my patient should have been buried."

"What do you mean? after he should have been buried?"

"I mean that your son should have been dead and buried ten days ago, if he had not a constitution of iron. Are you aware, madam, that he was within a hair's-breadth of downright starvation, and that were it not for the little nourishment and wine given him by Lord Strathalbane's directions, he would be now past curing—starved to death!"

"Is it possible?" said the astonished lady, nearly overwhelmed by this information.

"It is a fact, madam; but it is just of a piece with much of the practice carried on in cases of this kind. Poor wretches who take an attack of bilious fever are starved to death under the impression that the fever is increased by any nourishment being given to the patient—the strength goes irrecoverably, and at last, when a little food is given, the power to digest it is gone. The patient becomes more feverish for a time, and then dies. This was very near being the fate of your son; but I trust that by judiciously aiding nature,

his fine constitution may yet prevail. He is, however, very weak—very weak—very very weak and reduced, madam.”

Next morning Mr. Duncan Graham arrived early at the cottage, accompanied by Lord Strathalbane, who met the Doctor with great cordiality.

“Many thanks, my old friend,” he said, as they walked out together, “for coming so soon to see poor Graham. I trust you are able to give us hopes of his speedy recovery?”

“Yes, sir,” said the Doctor; “I have strong hopes of his soon being convalescent; but he had a narrow escape, and you just came here in time to save his life. I am glad you have profited by experience, and have not forgotten the last lesson I taught you.”

“Ah! my poor friend Fitzgerald—his was a sad case, and I shall not readily forget the lesson taught by his death and the circumstances attending it. I thought Graham’s illness resembled his, and remembered what you had told me about the necessity of keeping up the strength, and took upon me the responsibility of giving him a little wine.”

“By the by, is not this the same young fellow that I heard of as giving you trouble and annoyance by his incursions to your forest of Ardmark? Why, I heard

that you were ready on the first opportunity to cut each other's throats. But I suppose, like a gallant knight of old, you first cure your enemy in order that you may have the greater merit in killing him after."

"You cure him, and leave the rest to me. I think both Graham and I have been to blame ; but we understand each other now, and I have seen and heard that about him that makes me long to number him among my most cherished friends. He shall hold the place next to the Laird of Lindy in my affections."

"The Grahams of Glenurn were ever a loyal race," answered the doctor ; "and from all I hear of him this lad is not unworthy of his lineage."

The doctor remained a week between the cottage and Glenurn House, coming and going with Mr. Graham and Lord Strathalbane, who became quite domesticated there. During this time Robert made considerable improvement, and though still weak, promised in the course of some little time to be quite restored to health. The morning Dr. Stevenson left, just as his little conveyance came to the door, word was brought to him that a person wanted to see him. Thinking that some sufferer wished to consult him, he went out, and found three men waiting for him. They all looked hale and strong.

"Well, my men," said the doctor, "what do you want with me? Wives or daughters or any one belonging to you ailing?"

Robbie, for he it was, accompanied by his friends Sandy and Hugh, stepped forward, and making his military salute, said—

"Many thanks, sir, we are all well at hame, and the more so that ye have brought round young Robert Graham. We are all obliged to ye, sir, and me and my freends have just come to thank ye; and there's no a man, woman, or bairn in the glen this day but will say God be with ye when ye go."

"I am obliged to you," answered the doctor, greatly pleased with this mark of attachment to the young heir, "very much obliged to you, and I hope you shall ere long see your young master as well and strong as ever he was. Good-day to you."

Instead of going away as he expected, the three stood as if they had still something to say, which, however, they had some difficulty in getting out. Robbie looked as if a word would bring him to "attention." Sandy's face twitched nervously, and Hugh's horny hands opened and closed as if he fervently wished his bellows near enough to be blown with proper energy. Robbie at last mustered courage to speak.

"We are all very thankful to you, sir, for coming so far and biding so long, and for curing the *oir*, and we have just come to say as much."

"Well, you have said so already, and I like to see you grateful for what I have done, because it shows your attachment to your young laird ; but there is no occasion to say it twice over."

"Ye're quite richt, sir," said Robbie ; "but we wish, if it will no offend you, sir, to give ye something more than bare thanks. We have each brought a wee bit compliment, and hope ye'll no think us unmannerly, or out of our duty, in asking ye to take it home with ye."

"Oh ! you think it necessary to give me a fee ! Surely you might have left that to your betters."

"No, no, sir," said Robbie hastily ; "we know ower weel what is due to you and them, to do anything of that kind ; but we want ye just to take with ye a small offering from oursels, because we are more obliged to ye than any other folk in the glen, seeing Robert Graham showed us special favour on all occasions."

"And what is it you want me to take ?"

"We just put them in here," said Robbie, going to the doctor's carriage, and pulling out something from under the seat wrapped up in a small clean bag. Sandy

and Hugh followed, and each pulled out the exact counterpart of what Robbie exhibited.

"What is all this?" said the doctor in some wonder, going at the same time to the carriage and dragging the bags about.

"Say nothing about it, if ye please," said Robbie, somewhat anxiously, "especially to the young Lord, for doubtless he wadna like it, and we wadna like to vex him after he has showed so much friendship for the family."

"But what is it?" asked the doctor again. Sandy gave a wink to his friend Robbie, who thereupon went up close to the doctor's ear and whispered—

"It's just three bit legs of venishin which were put in saut, and hung up in the reek all winter; and since the warm weather came in we have kept them in mealy seeds, and now they are ready for the pot—that's just all;" and he looked as if there need be no more said about the matter.

The doctor burst out—

"You poaching rascals! you will not stop till you are hanged; and I suppose you wish your young master well, that he may aid and abet you in your lawless courses. I have heard of your doings. Which of you was it put the stag's head on the dial at Strathalbane,

and killed the deer and carried them off on Lord Strath-albane's horse?"

This put our poor friends into a state of great fear and trembling, which the doctor seeing, he changed his tone.

"Look here, my friends," he continued, "I should be sorry to hear of your coming to any misfortune, and therefore I advise you, as a friend, to give up the forest; never put a foot in it, and if deer cross the river, hunt them back again. Live honestly on the produce of your farms and your earnings, and then you need fear no man. I am obliged to you for your presents. Your young master must never countenance this work again, and I will tell him so before I go away. And now good-day to you, and remember what I have said to you."

"Then ye're going to tell on us?"

"Who told you that, sir? It is what you deserve, no doubt about that; so be off with you."

He turned into the house, leaving the three friends in a very uncomfortable state of mind.

"Do ye think he'll do it?" asked Sandy, looking at Robbie.

"Do it! Tell on us? He's just no the sort of man to do that. That wad be like 'kissing and telling again,' and the Laird of Lindy is no the man to do that. A soldier kens better than do anything of that sort."

"Weel, if he wasna above taking the legs, he shouldna be above thanking folks for them; and, for all that's said about him, I think he hasna been more nor ceevil to us."

"I dinna care a bodle for what he said," put in the callous smith, "as he has brought round the *oir*, if he doesna tell on us;" and away home they went, not at all satisfied with the doctor.

The doctor returned to the drawing-room in a state of great elation of spirit.

"The handsomest fee I ever got, and come from the most grateful source. Poor fellows! I could scarcely keep up the farce of scolding them. I tell you what it is, sir," he went on, addressing Lord Strathalbane, "I tell you what it is, sir—if one of your foresters molests these poor poaching, generous rascals, I will give him a potion the first opportunity that he shall not forget to his dying day—to his dying day, sir."

"What has happened to you now?" asked Lord Strathalbane, laughing.

"Ah! well, perhaps after all I should say nothing about it. But look you here;" and putting his arm within the young Lord's, he walked him out of the house. "Now, sir"—the Doctor called every one Sir when excited—"I came here to do you a pleasure,

and now I expect you to do me a favour. Say yes or no."

"I say yes heartily. What is it?"

"Three honest Glenurn men came to me just now, and from the love they bear to young Graham, they readily put themselves in my power, and gave me a handsome present. Now, what I want you to do, is to give them yearly a day in your forest without hindrance or molestation, or interference from any person belonging to you. I know I am making what may be thought an unreasonable demand; but with some knowledge of human nature, I venture to say it will in the end be to your advantage, as I have no doubt it will be a source of much gratification to the poor fellows, and perhaps to others you may have more pleasure in showing consideration to."

"I freely and readily grant your request, and will, without asking you a question, give immediate directions for carrying out your wishes. I must get the names of your men."

"Thank you, thank you. I must see about the names."

Great was the astonishment of our three friends, Robbie, Sandy, and Hugh, when this yearly privilege was intimated to them; and it may be here said, as we

shall see little more of them, that they lived many years to enjoy it, and that the day in Ardmark was ever after the one great day of the year to them. They looked upon themselves now as on honour with Lord Strathalbane, and no more thought of going to his forest to kill his deer, except on that day, than they would of going to his castle to steal his plate. The advantage was thus on his lordship's side—his deer being unmolested, and his foresters having less trouble in watching the forest.

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

Two years have passed over the heads of the Grahams of Glenurn and their friends since we last saw them ; and we now find them on a bright evening, in the month of October, assembled in the sumptuous drawing-room of Glenurn surrounded by a large party of friends. The gentlemen had all left the house some time before, and the ladies are in a state of some excitement and expectation. Mrs. Duncan Graham was sitting so as to command a view of the high road for some short distance from the avenue. Her niece sat beside her.

“ They must be here now, dearest mother, in less than half an hour.”

“ Yes, Mary, and I pray you may live to enjoy the happiness I feel in seeing my children so happy.”

“ I know Philip will make Jane happy ; next to Robert, I think him the best and most generous being alive. Dear Jane, what a beautiful bride she made, and with what just pride her husband looked upon her as he led her to the carriage that took her to her new home.”

At a bend of the road, seen from the window they were looking from, a considerable body of men were seen, who suddenly raised a ringing cheer that reached the ears of the ladies.

"They are coming," cried Mary Livingston, now Mary Graham, and all the ladies flocked to the windows. The crowd on the road was agitated, and gathered around something which they concealed from the view of those in the windows. In a few seconds four horses were seen led out of the crowd by two postilions, and immediately after it moved rapidly along the road towards the house. Thus did Lord Strathallbane and his beautiful countess, Jane Graham, return to visit the house of her fathers, her carriage drawn by the willing and friendly arms of the men of Glenurn.

And what a joyous night that was at Glenurn, What a dinner, and what speeches, and above all what dancing! And who is that merriest and loudest of men, that dances, and laughs, and talks, as if these were the only business of life! That is our hearty old friend Cousin Ronald, come all the way to grace the occasion, and pay a long-promised visit to his friend and favourite, Robert Graham. And who that sturdy purpose-like little man, that looks on as if he would fain join in the dance, but has qualms about doing so, either because he considers himself too old or too stiff, or that he has con-

vinced himself that his dancing days should be over, or that it is an amusement unbecoming the gravity that should characterise a professional man? Why, that is our friend Dugald Macphail, W.S., who, having left the cares of his business for a few days on the shoulders of his honest hard-working partner, John Stout, has come to enjoy the hospitality of his friend and client. And there, too, are our friends Robbie and Sandy, dancing a reel with Lady Strathalbane and Mrs. Robert Graham, who, with that humility and condescension so becoming in ladies of their rank and beauty, received the civilities of the poor old fellows with a frank cordiality that delighted every one. That night was long remembered in the glen; and the challenge Robbie gave to Sheamus More to dance the Reel of Tulloch, and the number of times they danced it without stopping, was related as one of the great events of the occasion, and the story was always wound up as this narrative is, with Robbie's remark after the eighth set-to—"If ye carried thretty more years on yer back, Mr. Walker, ye wad have been out of wind half an hour syne."

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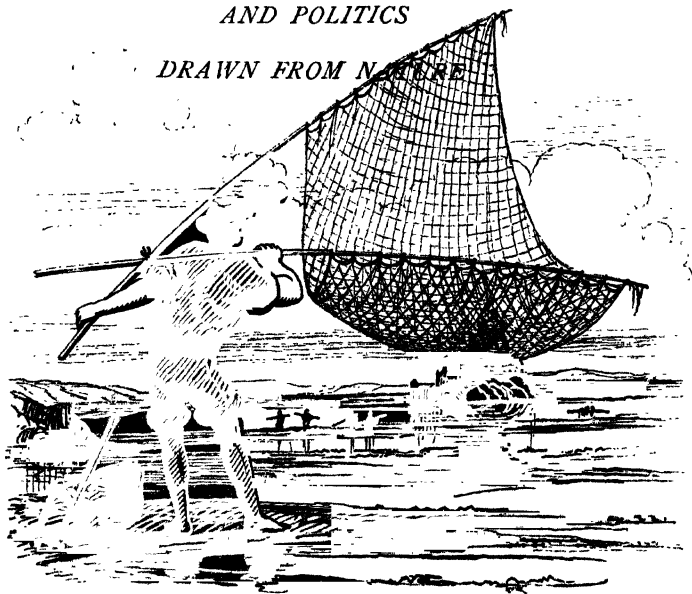
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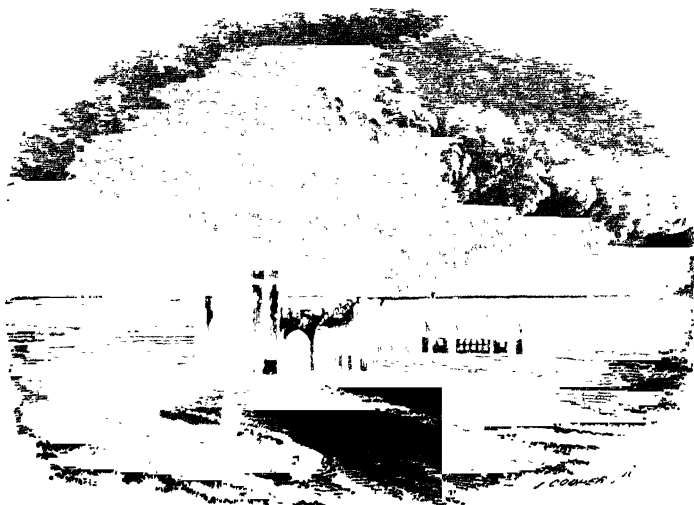
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