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For Merrie England.

BY M. RICHARDSON.

As we approach the eastern extremity the fairer features of the lake appear. From its southern shore rises Ben Venue, not the loftiest but certainly one of the most picturesque mountains in Great Britain. Scott thus describes it:

High on the south huge Ben Venue
Down to the lake in masses threw,
Craggs, knolls and mounds confusedly hurled,
The fragments of an earlier world.

Midway in the lake is a rocky islet, thickly covered with trees, called Ellen's Isle, which the genius of Scott has invested with charms far in excess of its natural beauties. As our little steamboat came close into the shore under the shadow of its trees, we peered into the dense wood for a pathway to the retreat of the heroic Ellen Douglas, but in vain.

'Twas all so close with copse wood bound,
Nor track nor pathway might declare
That human foot frequented there.

Apart from the creatures of Scott, this little island has a certain interest; as the ancient asylum of the women and children of the clan McAlpine, or McGregor, when their homes were ravaged by their numerous enemies, and was always used by the freebooters of the clan to conceal the stolen cattle they had driven off in their plundering raids. Passing the islet, we were soon at the landing place, where we found coaches waiting to convey us to the famed pass of Trosacks to Callander, ten miles distant from this point.

After leaving the lake we entered the narrow defile known as the Trossacus Pass extending about a mile eastward. Formerly the entrance from the lake was made by a narrow and difficult path termed "The Ladders," formed by rude steps cut in the steep rocky bank, and here and there supplemented by ropes, hanging from the boughs of trees. A road wide enough for vehicles has been cut through the rock into the narrow vale with its barriers of rugged mountains, piled up rocks and hanging copses of rowan, birch, hawthorn, and oak, all inextricably blended and mingled together with a profusion which seems chaotic, yet with such variety of color and form, and a general air of savage majesty and grandeur, as to impress us with a sense of awe and mystery. I am tempted to quote a few lines from Sir Walter Scott's fine description of this spot, and refer your readers for the full pen picture found in "The Lady of the Lake."

Boon nature scattered free and wild
Each plant or flower, the mountain's child;
Here Eglantine embalmed the air,
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there;
And higher yet the pine tree hung
His shattered trunk, and frequent flung
Where scarce the cliffs to meet on high
His boughs athwart the narrow sky,
So wondrous wild the whole might seem
"The scenery of a fairy dream."

Emerging from the pass our cavalcade stopped for refreshment at the Trossachs Hotel, a stately turreted edifice built on the mountain side, overlooking Loch Achray. The hotel looks like a mediæval mansion, and is not out of harmony with the magnificent features of the scene. Before it is spread the Loch, a minature of beauty; it measures but a mile in length and scarcely a mile in breadth. At its western extremity there is a small but graceful gothic church, and the picture is closed in by the huge form of Ben Venue, 2,800 ft. high. We climbed the mountain side to take in all the beauty of the landscape on the margin of the lake. Near the chapel is a level meadow, the famous gathering place of the clans when hastily summoned to arms by cross of yew, which had first been charred at the points and then quenched in the blood of a goat.

"Speed Malise speed!" he said, and gave
The crosslet to his henchman brave.
"The muster place is Lanrick Mead—
Full fast the fiery cross speed.
Prompt at the signal of alarms,
Each son of Alpine rushed to arms;
So swept the tumult and the fray
Along the shores of Achray.

We had only one more lake to pass, Loch Ventnachar, at the eastern end of which we passed Coilantogle Ford, "Clan Alpine's stand-guard," famous as the scene of the fight between Roderick Dhu and Fitz James. On our left we saw Funeraggan, represented as the first tarrying place of the messenger of the fiery cross.

The lake is past,
Funeraggan hits appear at last,
And peep like massive rocks, half seen
Half hidden in the copse so green.

Following the course of the stream which flows from Ventnachar, which, mingling its waters with another stream of about equal volume, forms the river Leith. A few miles brought us to Callander, which has been designated the "prettiest of Highland villages." It is like a watcher at the opening of the glens, and is at this season crowded with tourists. Looking westward up the long crooked street of whitewashed houses and beyond, we saw Royal Ben Ledi, clothed in imperial purple. The sun was just setting behind his mighty form raying up far into heaven the spokes of splendor, like a halo round his head.

I have heard and read of Highland hospitality. In Callendar it is exemplified in charging the Sassenachs four times the value of what he gets.

Travelling by railway from Callander to Stirling, we catch a passing glance at Doune and its historic castle, and also of the famous old cathedral pile at Dumblaine. What musical names suggestive of such fine old Scotch ballads as "Charming Sweet Bessie, the Flower of Dumblaine."

Our train sped over the battle-field of Sherriff Muir, where in Nov. 1715, the Government troops, led by Argyle, came in conflict with the Highlanders, adherents of James the Chevalier, and where, as the old ballad says,

There's some say that we wan,
An' some say that they wan,
Some say that nane wan at a' man.

Passing the bridge of Allan, I looked out in the direction we were travelling and caught sight of "Stirling's Noble Rock," surmounted with the famous old castle.

To be continued.

Annexation.

To the Editor of The Advance.

SIR—In a late issue of the Toronto Mail, there appeared a communication coming from the pen of one styling himself "Progress." Judging from the opening paragraph of the above mentioned effusion, the writer was writing under the assumed name by virtue of the fact, gleaned from his spasmodic and illiteracy of political not, vulgar epithets, and vituperations. That paragraph reflects the degraded nature of the creature that composed it, better than could the most powerful focus human ingenuity ever invented. He evidently measures the statuts of the public mind by that of his own narrow and diseased brain, otherwise he would never have given publicity to such hallucinations as those appearing in his precious article. Commencing, this clause, "The U. S. is the greatest, grandest, and noblest nation on the face of the earth." Does "Progress" know what constitutes greatness, grandness and nobility as applied to a whole nation? If not, we will tell him. It is the being possessed of all those nobler traits of character as a nation which you lack, Mr. Progress, as a loyal citizen. A nation is *great*, sir, according as she achieves glorious victories or gains historic fame. A nation is *grand* and *noble* according as her Government approaches the Christian ideal of perfection and according as her people as a nation conform to the laws of God and his Christ as found in the individual. Has the U. S. achieved any great feats that will compare favorably with those of Canada, much less with those of Old England? Has she a history emblazoned with fame? Has she shown grandness or nobility in her treatment of the Indian? Was it in her dastardly invasion of our territory in 1812? was it her action in connection with the "Fenian Raid" of '66,? Is it in her desecration of the Sabbath? Is it in the laxity of her civil code? Enough! The blood of our slaughtered defenders answers NO. What then makes her great, grand and noble? Echoes answer, What?

Now Sir, what would be the results, suppose we had annexation tomorrow? We would sink into nothingness: we would lose our identity: we would cease to be a people. Generation after generation would fail to identify us fully with our masters. When the screaming eagle would spread her wings to cover her offspring, we might sit on the fence and sigh for the days when we were protected by the "British Lion." What satisfaction for Canada to be a tadpole in an ocean where the whole reigned supreme. No, Mr. Progress, we as a people are not hankering after annexation. If you are, sip over and annex yourself, you are no good in Canada. You have not stamina enough in your carcass to set any nation on fire. You are like a clump in porridge, neither good nor ill. We would recommend to your earnest attention, the following quotation from Edmund Burke. "My endeavor was to obtain liberty for the municipal country in which I was born, name was to support, with unremitting vigilance, every right, every privilege, every franchise, in this my adopted, my dearer, and more comprehensive country."

Yours,

CANANDIAN.

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