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Prophecies and Seers

The Prophecies of the Brahan Seer

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Alexander Mackenzie (compiler); prophecies attributed to Coinneach Odhar

Original English text (4th edition, 1888)

Credits

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About:

The prophecies of Coinneach Odhar (Kenneth Mackenzie), the Brahan Seer, the most famous seer of the Scottish Highlands.

According to tradition he lived in the seventeenth century on the lands of the Earls of Seaforth and saw the future through a blue stone with a hole in it; he foretold, among much else, the Caledonian Canal, the battle of Culloden and the end of the house of Seaforth, whose last chief would be deaf and dumb and see all his sons die before him, fulfilled, in the eyes of his contemporaries, in Francis Humberston Mackenzie, who died in 1815.

For revealing to Isabella, Countess of Seaforth, her husband's infidelity in Paris, the seer is said to have been burned in a tar barrel at Chanonry Point.

There is no contemporary record of the seer: the stories were gathered from oral tradition only in the nineteenth century, and many prophecies were told after the events they announce.

Some scholars connect him with a "Kenneth Owir" accused of witchcraft in Ross in a commission of 1577. Alexander Mackenzie (1838–1898), an Inverness journalist and histo-

rian, published the prophecies in the Celtic Magazine and as a book in 1877; this is the enlarged fourth edition (1888), with the Rev.

Alexander Macgregor's (1806–1881) appendix on Highland beliefs: Druids, fairies, witchcraft, second sight, Hallowe'en and sacred wells.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION: HOW KENNETH BECAME A SEER

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The gift of prophecy, second-sight, or "Taibh-searachd," claimed for and believed by many to have been possessed, in an eminent degree, by Coinneach Odhar, the Brahan Seer, is one, the belief in which scientific men and others of the present day accept as unmistakable signs of looming, if not of actual insanity. We all are, or would be considered, scientific in these days.

It will, therefore, scarcely be deemed prudent for any one who wishes to lay claim to the slightest modicum of common sense, to say nothing of an acquaintance with the elementary principles of science, to commit to paper his ideas on such a subject, unless he is prepared, in doing so, to follow the common horde in their all but universal scepticism.

Without committing ourselves to any specific faith on the subject, however difficult it may be to explain away what follows on strictly scientific grounds, we shall place before the reader the extraordinary predictions of the Brahan Seer. We have had slight experiences of our own, which we would hesitate to dignify by the name of second-sight.

It is not, however, with our own experiences that we have at present to do, but with the "Prophecies" of Coinneach Odhar Fiosaiche. He is beyond comparison the most distinguished of all our Highland Seers, and his prophecies have been known throughout the whole country for more than two centuries.

The popular faith in them has been, and still continues to be, strong and wide-spread. Sir Walter Scott, Sir Humphrey Davy, Mr. Morrit, Lockhart, and other eminent contemporaries of the "Last of the Seaforths" firmly believed in them. Many of them were well known, and recited from generation to generation, centuries before they were fulfilled. Some of them have been fulfilled in our own day, and many are still unfulfilled.

Not so much with the view of protecting ourselves from the charge of a belief in such superstitious folly (for we would hesitate to acknowledge any such belief), but as a slight palliation for obtruding such nonsense on the public, we may point out, by the way, that the sacred writers—who are now believed by many of the would-be-considered-wise to have been behind the age, and not near so wise and far-seeing as we are—believed in second-sight, witchcraft, and other visions of a supernatural kind.

But then we shall be told by our scientific friends that the Bible itself is becoming obsolete, and that it has already served its turn; being only suited for an unenlightened age in which men like Shakspere, Milton, Newton, Bacon, and such unscientific men could be considered distinguished.

The truth is that on more important topics than the one we are now considering, the Bible is laid aside by many of our would-be-scientific lights, whenever it treats of anything beyond the puny comprehension of the minds and intellectual vision of these omniscient gentlemen.

We have all grown so scientific that the mere idea of supposing anything possible which is beyond the intellectual grasp of the scientific enquirer cannot be entertained, although even he must admit, that in many cases,

the greatest men in science, and the mightiest intellects, find it impossible to understand or explain away many things as to the existence of which they have no possible doubt.

We even find the clergy slightly inconsistent in questions of this kind. They solemnly desire to impress us with the fact that ministering spirits hover about the couches and apartments in which the dying Christian is drawing near the close of his existence, and preparing to throw off his mortal coil; but were we to suggest the possibility of any mere human being, in any conceivable manner having had indications of the presence of these ghostly visitors, or discovering any signs or premonitions of the early departure of a relative or of an intimate friend, our heathen ideas and devious wanderings from the safe channel of clerical orthodoxy and consistent inconsistency, would be howled against, and paraded before the faithful as the grossest superstition, with an enthusiasm and relish possible only to a strait-laced ecclesiastic. Clerical inconsistency is, however, not our present theme.

Many able men have written on the Second-sight, and to some of them we shall refer in the following pages; meanwhile our purpose is to place before the reader the Prophecies of the Brahan Seer, as far as we have been able to procure them. We are informed that a considerable collection of them has been made by the late Alexander Cameron of Lochmaddy, author of the "History and Traditions of the Isle of Skye," but we were unable to discover into whose possession the manuscript found its way; we hope, however, that this reference may bring it to light.

Kenneth Mackenzie, better known as Coinneach Odhar, the Brahan Seer (according to Mr. Maclennan), was born at Baile-na-Cille, in the Parish of Uig and Island of Lews, about the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Nothing particular is recorded of his early life, but when he had just entered his teens, he received a stone in the following manner, by which he could reveal the future destiny of man:—While his mother was one evening tending her cattle in a summer shealing on the side of a ridge called Cnoceothail, which overlooks the burying-ground of Baile-na-Cille, in Uig, she saw, about the still hour of midnight, the whole of the graves in the churchyard opening, and a vast multitude of people of every age, from the newly born babe to the grey-haired sage, rising from their graves, and going away in every conceivable direction.

In about an hour they began to return, and were all soon after back in their graves, which closed upon them as before. But, on scanning the burying-place more closely, Kenneth's mother observed one grave, near the side, still open.

Being a courageous woman, she determined to ascertain the cause of this singular circumstance, so, hastening to the grave, and placing her "cuigeal" (distaff) athwart its mouth (for she had heard it said that the spirit could not enter the grave again while that instrument was upon it), she watched the result.

She had not to wait long, for in a minute or two she noticed a fair lady coming in the direction of the churchyard, rushing through the air, from the north. On her arrival, the fair one addressed her thus—"Lift thy distaff from off my grave, and let me enter my dwelling of the dead."

"I shall do so," answered the other, "when you explain to me what detained you so long after your neighbours." "That you shall soon hear," the ghost replied; "My journey was much longer than theirs—I had to go all the way to Norway."

She then addressed her:—"I am a daughter of the King of Norway; I was drowned while bathing in that country; my body was found on the beach close to where we now stand, and I was interred in this grave. In remembrance of me, and as a small reward for your intrepidity and courage, I shall possess you of a valuable secret—go and find in yonder lake a small round blue stone, which give to your son, Kenneth, who by it shall reveal future events."

She did as requested, found the stone, and gave it to her son, Kenneth. No sooner had he thus received the gift of divination than his fame spread far and wide. He was sought after by the gentry throughout the length and breadth of the land, and no special assembly of theirs was complete unless Coinneach Odhar was amongst them.

Being born on the lands of Seaforth, in the Lews, he was more associated with that family than with any other in the country, and he latterly removed to the neighbourhood of Loch Ussie, on the Brahan estate, where he worked as a common labourer on a neighbouring farm.

He was very shrewd and clear-headed, for one in his menial position; was always ready with a smart answer, and if any attempted to raise the laugh at his expense, seldom or ever did he fail to turn it against his tormentors.

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There are various other versions of the manner in which he became possessed of the power of divination. According to one—His mistress, the farmer's wife, was unusually exacting with him, and he, in return, continually teased, and, on many occasions, expended much of his natural wit upon her, much to her annoyance and chagrin.

Latterly, his conduct became so unbearable that she decided upon disposing of him in a manner which would save her any future annoyance. On one occasion, his master having sent him away to cut peats, which in those days were, as they now are in more remote districts, the common article of fuel, it was necessary to send him his dinner, he being too far from the house to come home to his meals, and the farmer's wife so far carried out her intention of destroying him, that she poisoned his dinner.

It was somewhat late in arriving, and the future prophet feeling exhausted from his honest exertions in his masters interest and from want of food, lay down on the heath and fell into a heavy slumber. In this position he was suddenly awakened by feeling something cold in his breast; which on examination he found to be a small white stone, with a hole through the centre.

He looked through it, when a vision appeared to him which revealed the treachery and diabolical intention of his mistress. To test the truth of the vision, he gave the dinner intended for himself to his faithful collie; the poor brute writhed, and died soon after in the greatest agony.

The following version is supplied by Mr. Macintyre, teacher, Arpafeelie: —Although the various accounts as to the manner in which Coinneach Odhar became gifted with second-sight differ in some respects, yet they

generally agree in this, that it was acquired while he was engaged in the humble occupation of cutting peats or divots, which were in his day, and still are in many places, used as fuel throughout the Highlands of Scotland.

On the occasion referred to, being somewhat fatigued, he lay down, resting his head upon a little knoll, and waited the arrival of his wife with his dinner, whereupon he fell fast asleep. On awaking, he felt something hard under his head, and examining the cause of the uneasiness, discovered a small round stone with a hole through the middle.

He picked it up, and looking through it, saw by the aid of this prophetic stone that his wife was coming to him with a dinner consisting of sowans and milk, polluted, though unknown to her, in a manner which, as well as several other particulars connected with it, we forbear to mention.

But Coinneach found that though this stone was the means by which a supernatural power had been conferred upon him, it had, on its very first application, deprived him of the sight of that eye with which he looked through it, and he continued ever afterwards cam, or blind of an eye.

It would appear from this account that the intended murderer made use of the Seer's wife to convey the poison to her own husband, thus adding to her diabolical and murderous intention, by making her who would feel the loss the keenest, the medium by which her husband was to lose his life.

Hugh Miller, in his "Scenes and Legends in the North of Scotland," says: —When serving as a field labourer with a wealthy clansman who resided somewhere near Brahan Castle, he made himself so formidable to the

clansman's wife by his shrewd, sarcastic humour, that she resolved on destroying him by poison.

With this design, she mixed a preparation of noxious herbs with his food, when he was one day employed in digging turf in a solitary morass, and brought it to him in a pitcher.

She found him lying asleep on one of those conical fairy hillocks which abound in some parts of the Highlands, and her courage failing her, instead of awaking him, she set down the pitcher by his side and returned home.

He woke shortly after, and, seeing the food, would have begun his repast, but feeling something press heavily against his heart, he opened his waistcoat and found a beautiful smooth stone, resembling a pearl, but much larger, which had apparently been dropped into his breast while he slept.

He gazed at it in admiration, and became conscious as he gazed, that a strange faculty of seeing the future as distinctly as the present, and men's real designs and motives as clearly as their actions, was miraculously imparted to him; and it is well for him that he should become so knowing at such a crisis, for the first secret he became acquainted with was that of the treachery practised against him by his mistress.

We have thus several accounts of the manner in which our prophet obtained possession of his remarkable stone, white or blue, with or without a hole through its centre, it matters little; that he did obtain it, we must assume to be beyond question; but it is a matter for consideration, and indeed open to considerable doubt, whether it had any real prophetic virtue.

If Kenneth was really possessed of the power of prophecy he more than likely used the stone simply to impose upon the people, who would never believe him possessed of such a gift, unless they saw with their own eyes the means by which he exercised it.

We shall, as far as possible, give the Prophecies under the following headings—Those which might be attributed to great penetration and natural shrewdness; those which are still unfulfilled; those that are doubtful; and those which have been unquestionably fulfilled, or partly fulfilled.

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PROPHECIES WHICH MIGHT BE ATTRIBUTED TO NATURAL SHREWDNESS

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He no doubt predicted many things which the unbeliever in his prophetic gifts may ascribe to great natural shrewdness. Among these may be placed his prophecy, 150 years before the Caledonian Canal was built, that ships would some day sail round the back of Tomnahurich Hill. A gentleman in Inverness sent for Coinneach to take down his prophecies.

He wrote several of them, but when he heard this one, he thought it so utterly absurd and impossible, that he threw the manuscript of what he had already written into the fire, and gave up any further communication with the Seer. Mr.

Maclennan gives the following version of it:—"Strange as it may seem to you this day, the time will come, and it is not far off, when full-rigged ships will be seen sailing eastward and westward by the back of Tomnahurich, near Inverness." Mr.

Macintyre supplies us with a version in the Seer's vernacular Gaelic: —"Thig an latha 's am faicear laraichean Sasunnach air an tarruing le srianan corcaich seachad air cul Tom-na-hiuraich." (The day will come when English mares, with hempen bridles, shall be led round the back of Tomnahurich.)

It is quite possible that a man of penetration and great natural shrewdness might, from the appearance of the country, with its chain of great inland lakes, predict the future Caledonian Canal.

Among others which might safely be predicted, without the aid of any supernatural gift, are, “that the day will come when there will be a road through the hills of Ross-shire from sea to sea, and a bridge upon every stream”.

“That the people will degenerate as their country improves.” “That the clans will become so effeminate as to flee from their native country before an army of sheep.” Mr.

Macintyre supplies the following version of the latter:—Alluding possibly to the depopulation of the Highlands, Coinneach said “that the day will come when the Big Sheep will overrun the country until they strike (meet) the northern sea”.

Big sheep here is commonly understood to mean deer, but whether the words signify sheep or deer, the prophecy has been very strikingly fulfilled. The other two have also been only too literally fulfilled.

Mr. Macintyre supplies another version, as follows: “The day will come when the hills of Ross will be strewed with ribbons”. It is generally accepted that this prediction finds its fulfilment in the many good roads that now intersect the various districts of the country.

Other versions are given, such as ‘a ribbon on every hill, and a bridge on every stream’ (Raoban air gach cnoc agus drochaid air gach alltan); ‘a mill on every river and a white house on every hillock’ (Muillinn air gach ab-

hainn agus tigh geal air gach cnocan); and ‘that the hills of the country will be crossed with shoulder-halts’ (criosan guaille).

Since Kenneth’s day mills were very common, and among the most useful industrial institutions of the country, as may be evidenced by the fact that, even to this day, the proprietors of lands, where such establishments were once located, pay Crown and Bishop’s rents for them.

And may we not discover the fulfilment of “a white house on every hillock” in the many elegant shooting lodges, hotels, and school-houses now found in every corner of the Highlands.

Mr. Maclennan supplies the following:—There is opposite the shore at Findon, Ferrintosh, two sand banks which were, in the time of the Seer, entirely covered over with the sea, even at the very lowest spring ebbs.

Regarding these, Coinneach said, “that the day will come, however distant, when these banks will form the coast line; and when that happens, know for a certainty that troublesome times are at hand”.

“These banks,” our correspondent continues, “have been visibly approaching, for many years back, nearer and nearer to the shore.” This is another of the class of predictions which might be attributed to natural shrewdness. It is being gradually fulfilled, and it may be well to watch for the “troublesome times,” and so test the powers of the Seer.

Other predictions of this class may occur as we proceed, but we have no hesitation in saying that, however much natural penetration and shrewdness might have aided Kenneth in predicting such as these, it would assist him little in prophesying “that the day will come when Tomnahurich,” or,

as he called it, Tom-na-sithichean, or the Fairy Hill, "will be under lock and key, and the Fairies secured within". It would hardly assist him in foreseeing the beautiful and unique cemetery on the top of the hill, and the spirits (of the dead) chained within, as we now see it.

Since the last edition of the "Prophecies" appeared, our attention has been called to the following paragraph published in the Inverness Advertiser, in 1859; that is before it had been turned into a Cemetery—"Tomnahurich, the far-famed Fairies' Hill, has been sown with oats.

According to tradition, the Brahan prophet, who lived 200 years ago, predicted that ships with unfurled sails would pass and repass Tomnahurich; and further, that it would yet be placed under lock and key.

The first part of the prediction verified by the opening of the Caledonian Canal, and we seem to be on the eve of seeing the realization of the rest by the final closing up of the Fairies' Hill." This paragraph was in print before the prediction was fulfilled.

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UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES

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Kenneth foretold "that, however unlikely it may now appear, the Island of Lews will be laid waste by a destructive war, which will continue till the contending armies, slaughtering each other as they proceed, shall reach Tarbert in Harris. In the Caws of Tarbert, the retreating host will suddenly halt; an onslaught, led by a left-handed Macleod, called Donald, son of Donald, son of Donald, will then be made upon the pursuers.

The only weapon in this champion's hands will be a black sooty cabar, taken off a neighbouring hut; but his intrepidity and courage will so inspirit the fugitives that they will fight like mighty men, and overpower their pursuers. The Lews will then enjoy a long period of repose."

It has not hitherto been suggested that this prophecy has been fulfilled, and we here stake the reputation of our prophet upon its fulfilment, and that of the following predictions, which are still current throughout the Northern Counties of Scotland.

Another, by which the faith of future generations may be tested, is the one in which he predicted "that a Loch above Beauly will burst through its banks and destroy in its rush a village in its vicinity". We are not aware that such a calamity as is here foretold has yet occurred, nor are we aware of the locality of the loch or the village.

We have received various versions of the, as yet, unfulfilled prediction regarding "Clach an t-Seasaidh," near the Muir of Ord. This is an angular

stone, sharp at the top, which at one time stood upright, and was of considerable height. It is now partly broken and lying on the ground. "The day will come when the ravens will, from the top of it, drink their three fulls, for three successive days, of the blood of the Mackenzies."

Mr. Maclennan's version is:—"The day will come when the ravens will drink their full of the Mackenzies' blood three times off the top of the 'Clach Mhor,' and glad am I (continues the Seer) that I will not live to see that day, for a bloody and destructive battle will be fought on the Muir of Ord.

A squint-eyed (cam), pox-pitted tailor will originate the battle; for men will become so scarce in those days that each of seven women will strive hard for the squint-eyed tailor's heart and hand, and out of this strife the conflict will originate."

Mr. Macintyre writes regarding these:—"The prophecies that 'the raven will drink from the top of 'Clach an t-Seasaidh,' its full of the blood of the Mackenzies for three successive days,' and 'that the Mackenzies would be so reduced in numbers, that they would be all taken in an open fishing-boat (scuta dubh) back to Ireland from whence they originally came,' remain still unfulfilled."

In the Kintail versions of these predictions they are made to apply to the Macraes, who are to get so scarce that a cripple tailor of the name is to be in such request among the ladies as to cause a desperate battle in the district between themselves and the Maclennans, the result of which will be that a black fishing wherry or "scuta dubh" will carry back to Ireland all

that remains of the clan Macrae, but no sooner do they arrive than they again return to Kintail.

Before this was to take place, nine men of the name of Macmillan would arrive at manhood (assume their bonnets) in the district; assemble at a funeral at Cnoc-a-Chlachain in Kilduich, and originate a quarrel. At this exact period, the Macraes, would be at the height of their prosperity in Kintail, and henceforth begin to lose their hold in the country of their ancestors.

The Macmillans have actually met in this spot and originated a quarrel as predicted, although nothing could have been more unlikely, for in the Seer's day there was not a single one of the name in Kintail, nor for several generations after.

It is somewhat remarkable to find that the Maclennans are at this very time actually supplanting the Macraes as foretold, for the last two of the ancient stock—the late tenants of Fernaig and Leachachan—who left the district have been succeeded in their holdings by Maclennans; and other instances of the same kind, within recent years, are well known.

At present, we are happy to say, there does not appear much probability of the Clan Mackenzie being reduced to such small dimensions as would justify us in expecting the fulfilment of the "scuta dubh" part of the prophecy on a very early date.

If the prediction, however, be confined in its application to the Mackenzies of Seaforth, it may be said to have been already almost fulfilled. We have, indeed, been told that this is a fragment of the unfulfilled

prophecy uttered by Coinneach regarding the ultimate doom and total extinction of the Seaforths, and which we have been as yet unable to procure in detail.

It was, however, known to Bernard Burke, who makes the following reference to it:—"He (the Seer) uttered it in all its horrible length; but I at present suppress the last portion of it, which is as yet unfulfilled. Every other part of the prediction has most literally and most accurately come to pass, but let us earnestly hope that the course of future events may at length give the lie to the avenging curse of the Seer. The last clause of the prophecy is well known to many of those versed in Highland family tradition, and I trust that it may remain unfulfilled."

One of our correspondents presumes that the mention of "Clach an t-Seasaidh" refers to the remains of a Druidical circle to be seen still on the right and left of the turnpike road at Windhill, near Beauly.

As a sign whereby to know when the latter prophecy would be accomplished, Coinneach said "that a mountain-ash tree will grow out of the walls of Fairburn Tower, and when it becomes large enough to form a cart axle, these things will come to pass".

Not long ago, a party informed us that a mountain-ash, or rowan-tree, was actually growing out of the tower walls, and was about the thickness of a man's thumb.

Various other unfulfilled predictions of the Seer remain to be noticed. One is regarding "Clach an Tiompain," a well-known stone in the immediate vicinity of the far-famed Strathpeffer Wells.

It is, like “Clach-an-t-Seasaidh,” an upright, pillar-looking stone, which, when struck, makes a great hollow sound or echo, and hence its designation, the literal meaning of which is the “stone of the hollow sound or echo”. Coinneach said “that the day will come when ships will ride with their cables attached to ‘Clach-an-Tiompain’”.

It is perhaps superfluous to point out that this has not yet come to pass; and we could only imagine two ways in which it was possible to happen, either by a canal being made through the valley of Strathpeffer, passing in the neighbourhood of the Clach, or by the removal of the stone some day by the authorities of “Baile Chail” to Dingwall pier.

They may feel disposed to thus aid the great prophet of their country to secure the position as a great man, which we now claim in his behalf.

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While the first edition was going through the press we visited Knockfarrel, in the immediate vicinity of Loch Ussie, and we were told of another way in which this prediction might be fulfilled so peculiar that, although it is altogether improbable, nay impossible, that it can ever take place, we shall reproduce it.

Having found our way to the top of this magnificent and perfect specimen of a vitrified fort, we were so struck with its great size, that we carefully paced it, and found it to be one hundred and fifty paces in length, with a uniform width of forty, both ends terminating in a semi-circle, from each of which projected for a distance of sixty paces, vitrified matter,

as if it were originally a kind of promenade, thus making the whole length of the structure two hundred and seventy yards, or thereabout.

On the summit of the hill we met two boys herding cows, and as our previous experience taught us that boys, as a rule—especially herd boys,—are acquainted with the traditions and places of interest in the localities they frequent, we were curious enough to ask them if they ever heard of Coinneach Odhar in the district, and if he ever said anything regarding the fort on Knockfarrel.

They directed us to what they called "Fingal's Well," in the interior of the ruined fort, and informed us that this well was used by the inhabitants of the fortress "until Fingal, one day, drove them out, and placed a large stone over the well, which has ever since kept the water from oozing up, after which he jumped to the other side of the (Strathpeffer) valley".

There being considerable rains for some days previous to our visit, water could be seen in the "well". One of the boys drove down a stick until it struck the stone, producing a hollow sound which unmistakably indicated the existence of a cavity beneath.

"Coinneach Odhar foretold," said the boy, "that if ever that stone was taken out of its place, Loch Ussie would ooze up through the well and flood the valley below to such an extent that ships could sail up to Strathpeffer and be fastened to 'Clach-an-Tiompain'; and this would happen after the stone had fallen three times. It has already fallen twice," continued our youthful informant, "and you can now see it newly raised, strongly and carefully propped up, near the end of the doctor's house."

And so it is, and can still be seen, on the right, a few paces from the roadside, as you proceed up to the Strathpeffer Wells. We think it right to give this—a third—with the other versions, for probably the reader will admit that the one is just as likely to happen as the other.

We can quite understand Kenneth prophecying that the sea would yet reach Strathpeffer; for to any one standing where we did, on the summit of Knockfarrel, the bottom of the valley appears much lower than the Cromarty Firth beyond Dingwall, and it looks as if it might, any day, break through the apparently slender natural embankment below Tulloch Castle, which seemed, from where we stood, to be the only obstruction in its path.

We need, however, hardly inform the reader in the district that the bottom of the Strathpeffer valley is, in reality, several feet above the present sea level.

Another prediction is that concerning the Canonry of Ross, which is still standing—"The day will come when, full of the Mackenzies, it will fall with a fearful crash". This may come to pass in several ways. The Canonry is the principal burying-place of the Clan, and it may fall when full of dead Mackenzies, of when a large concourse of the Clan is present at the funeral of a great chief.

"When two false teachers shall come across the seas who will revolutionize the religion of the land, and nine bridges shall span the river Ness, the Highlands will be overrun by ministers without grace and women without shame," is a prediction which some maintain has all the appearance of being rapidly fulfilled at this moment.

It has been suggested that the two false teachers were no other than the great evangelists, Messrs. Moody and Sankey, who, no doubt, from Coinneach Odhar's standpoint of orthodoxy, who must have been a Roman Catholic or an Episcopalian, attempted to revolutionize the religion of the Highlands.

If this be so, the other portions of the prophecy are looming not far off in the immediate future. We have already eight bridges on the Ness—the eighth has only been completed last year—and the ninth is almost finished.

If we are to accept the opinions of certain of the clergy themselves, "ministers without grace" are becoming the rule, and as for a plenitude of "women without shame," ask any ancient matron, and she will at once tell you that Kenneth's prophecy may be held to have been fulfilled in that particular any time within the last half century. Gleidh sinne!!

It is possible the following may have something to do with the same calamity in the Highlands. Mr. Maclennan says:—With reference to some great revolution which shall take place in the country, Coinneach Odhar said that "before that event shall happen, the water of the river Beauly will thrice cease to run. On one of these occasions a salmon, having shells instead of scales, will be found in the bed of the river."

This prophecy has been in part fulfilled, for the Beauly has on two occasions ceased to run, and a salmon of the kind mentioned has been found in the bed of the river.

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Mr. Macintyre gives another version:—"When the river Beauly is dried up three times, and a 'scaly salmon' or royal sturgeon, is caught in the river, that will be a time of great trial." (Nuair a thraoghas abhainn na Manachain tri uairean, agus a ghlacair Bradan Sligeach air grunnd na h-aibhne, 's ann an sin a bhitheas an deuchainn ghoirt.)

The river has been already dried up twice, the last time in 1826, and a 'Bradan Sligeach,' or royal sturgeon, measuring nine feet in length, has been caught in the estuary of the Beauly about two years ago.

The following is one which we trust may never be realized in all its details, though some may be disposed to think that signs are not wanting of its ultimate fulfilment:—"The day will come when the jaw-bone of the big sheep, or 'caoirich mhora,' will put the plough on the rafters (air an aradh); when sheep shall become so numerous that the bleating of the one shall be heard by the other from Conchra in Lochalsh to Bun-da-Loch in Kintail they shall be at their height in price, and henceforth will go back and deteriorate, until they disappear altogether, and be so thoroughly forgotten that a man finding the jaw-bone of a sheep in a cairn, will not recognise it, or be able to tell what animal it belonged to.

The ancient proprietors of the soil shall give place to strange merchant proprietors, and the whole Highlands will become one huge deer forest; the whole country will be so utterly desolated and depopulated that the crow of a cock shall not be heard north of Druim-Uachdair; the people will emigrate to Islands now unknown, but which shall yet be discovered in the boundless oceans, after which the deer and other wild animals in the huge wilderness shall be exterminated and drowned by horrid black rains

(siantan dubha). The people will then return and take undisturbed possession of the lands of their ancestors."

We have yet to see the realization of the following:—"A dun, hornless, cow (supposed to mean a steamer) will appear in the Minch (off Carr Point, in Gairloch), and make a 'geum,' or bellow, which will knock the six chimneys off Gairloch House." (Thig bo mhaol odhar a steach an t-Aite-mor agus leigeas i geum aiste 'chuireas na se beannagan dheth an Tigh Dhige.)

Gairloch House, or the Tigh Dige of Coinneach's day, was the old house which stood in the park on the right, as you proceed from the bridge in the direction of the present mansion.

The walls were of wattled twigs, wicker work, or plaited twig hurdles, thatched with turf or divots, and surrounded with a deep ditch, which could, in time of approaching danger, be filled with water from the river, hence the name "Tigh Dige," House of the Ditch.

It has been suggested that the Seer's prediction referred to this stronghold, but a strong objection to this view appears in the circumstance that the ancient citadel had no chimneys to fall off. The present mansion is, however, also called the "Tigh Dige," and it has the exact number of chimneys—six.

"The day will come when a river in Wester Ross shall be dried up." "The day will come when there shall be such dire persecution and bloodshed in the county of Sutherland, that people can ford the river Oykel dryshod, over dead men's bodies." "The day will come when a raven, attired in plaid and bonnet, will drink his full of human blood on 'Fionn-bheinn,' three times a day, for three successive days."

"A battle will be fought at Ault-nan-Torcan, in the Lewis, which will be a bloody one indeed. It will truly take place, though the time may be far hence, but woe to the mothers of sucklings that day. The defeated host will continue to be cut down till it reaches Ard-a-chaolais (a place nearly seven miles from Ault-nan-Torcan), and there the swords will make terrible havoc." This has not yet occurred.

Speaking of what should come to pass in the parish of Lochs, he said—"At bleak Runish in Lochs, they will spoil and devour, at the foot of the crags, and will split heads by the score."

He is also said to have predicted "that the day will come when the raven will drink its three fulls of the blood of the Clan Macdonald on the top of the Hills of Minaraidh in Parks, in the parish of Lochs". This looks as if the one above predicted about the Mackenzies had been misapplied to the Macdonalds.

"The day will come when there shall be a laird of Tulloch who will kill four wives in succession, but the fifth shall kill him."

Regarding the battle of Ard-nan-Ceann, at Benbecula, North Uist, he said —"Oh, Ard-nan-Ceann, Ard-nan-Ceann, glad am I that I will not be at the end of the South Clachan that day, when the young men will be weary and faint; for Ard-nan-Ceann will be the scene of a terrible conflict".

"A severe battle will be fought at the (present) Ardelve market stance, in Lochalsh, when the slaughter will be so great that people can cross the ferry over dead men's bodies. The battle will be finally decided by a pow-

erful man and his five sons, who will come across from the Strath (the Achamore district)."

Coinneach said—"When a holly bush (or tree) shall grow out of the face of the rock at Torr-a-Chuilinn (Kintail) to a size sufficiently large to make a shaft for a 'carn-slaoid' (sledge-cart), a battle will be fought in the locality."

"When Loch Shiel, in Kintail, shall become so narrow that a man can leap across it, the salmon shall desert the Loch and the River Shiel." We are told that the Loch is rapidly getting narrower at a particular point, by the action of the water on the banks and bottom, and that if it goes on as it has done in recent years it can easily be leaped at no distant date. Prudence would suggest a short lease of these Salmon Fishings.

He also predicted that a large stone, standing on the hill opposite Scallisaig farm-house, in Glenelg, "will fall and kill a man". This boulder is well known to people in the district, and the prophecy is of such a definite character, that there cannot possibly be any mistake about its meaning or its fulfilment should such a calamity ever unfortunately take place.

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PROPHECIES AS TO THE FULFILMENT OF WHICH THERE IS A DOUBT

✦

"When a magpie (pitheid) shall have made a nest for three successive years in the gable of the Church of Ferrintosh, the church will fall when full of people," is one of those regarding which we find it difficult to decide whether it has been already fulfilled or not. Mr.

Macintyre, who supplies this version, adds the following remarks:—The Church of Ferrintosh was known at an earlier period as the Parish Church of Urquhart and Loggie. Some maintain that this prediction refers to the Church of Urray. Whether this be so or not, there were circumstances connected with the Church of Ferrintosh in the time of the famous Rev. Dr.

Macdonald, which seemed to indicate the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecy, and which led to very alarming consequences. A magpie actually did make her nest in the church gable, exactly as foretold.

This, together with a rent between the church wall and the stone stairs which led up to the gallery, seemed to favour the opinion that the prophecy was on the eve of being accomplished, and people felt uneasy when they glanced upon the ominous nest, the rent in the wall, and the crowded congregation, and remembered Coinneach's prophecy, as they walked into the church to hear the Doctor.

It so happened one day that the church was unusually full of people, insomuch that it was found necessary to connect the ends of the seats with planks, in order to accommodate them all. Unfortunately, one of those temporary seats was either too weak, or too heavily burdened: it snapped in two with a loud report and startled the audience.

Coinneach Odhar's prophecy flashed across their minds, and a simultaneous rush was made by the panic-struck congregation to the door. Many fell, and were trampled underfoot, while others fainted, being seriously crushed and bruised.

Among a rural population, sayings and doings, applicable to a particular parish, crop up, and, in after times, are applied to occurrences in neighbouring parishes.

Having regard to this, may it not be suggested that, what is current locally in regard to Ferrintosh and Coinneach's sayings, may only be a transcript of an event now matter of history in a parish on the northern side of the Cromarty Firth. We refer to the destruction of the Abbey Church at Fearn by lightning, October 10, 1742.

We have never seen a detailed account of this sad accident in print, and have no doubt the reader will be glad to have a graphic description of it from the pen of Bishop Forbes, the famous author of the "Jacobite Memoirs," who visited his diocese of Ross and Caithness in the summer of 1762. This account is taken from his unpublished MS.

Journal, now the property of the College of Bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church, and presently in the hands of the Rev. F. Smith,

Arpafeelie, who has kindly permitted us to make the following extract:—

"The ruinous Church of Ferne was of old an Abbacy of White Friars (see Keith's Catalogue, p. 247). The roof of flagstones, with part of a side wall, was beat down in an instant by thunder and lightning on Sunday, October 10th, 1742, and so crushed and bruised forty persons, that they were scarcely to be discovered, who or what they were, and therefore, were buried promiscuously, without any manner of distinction.

The gentry, having luckily their seats in the niches, were saved from the sudden crash, as was the preacher by the sounding-boards falling upon the pulpit, and his bowing down under it. Great numbers were wounded (see Scot's Magazine for 1742, p. 485).

But there is a most material circumstance not mentioned, which has been carefully concealed from the publishers, and it is this: By a Providential event, this was the first Sunday that the Rev. and often-mentioned Mr.

Stewart, had a congregation near Cadboll, in view of Ferne, whereby many lives were saved, as the kirk was far from being so throng as usual, and that he and his people, upon coming out from worship, and seeing the dismal falling-in just when it happened, hastened with all speed to the afflictive spot, and dragged many of the wounded out of the rubbish, whose cries would have pierced a heart of adamant.

Had not this been the happy case, I speak within bounds when I say two, if not three, to one, would have perished. Some of the wounded died. This church has been a large and lofty building, as the walls are very high, and still standing."

It has been suggested that the prediction was fulfilled by the falling to pieces of the Church at the Disruption; but we would be loth to stake the reputation of our prophet on this assumption.

Another, supposed by some to be fulfilled by the annual visits of the militia for their annual drill, is—"That when a wood on the Muir of Ord grows to a man's height, regiments of soldiers shall be seen there drawn up in battle order."

In connection with the battle, or battles, at Cille-Chriosd and the Muir of Ord, Mr. Macintyre says:—The Seer foretold that "Fear Ruadh an Uird (the Red Laird of Ord) would be carried home, wounded, on blankets".

Whether this saying has reference to an event looming in the distant future, or is a fragment of a tradition regarding sanguinary events well known in the history of Cille-Chriosd, and of which a full and graphic account, both in prose and verse, can be seen on pp. 82-86 and 136-139, Vol. I. of the Celtic Magazine, it is impossible to say.

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PROPHECIES WHOLLY OR PARTLY FULFILLED

✦

Here are several additional predictions which have been wholly or partly fulfilled. “The day will come when the Mackenzies will lose all their possessions in Lochalsh, after which it will fall into the hands of an Englishman, who shall be distinguished by great liberality to his people, and lavish expenditure of money. He will have one son and two daughters; and, after his death, the property will revert to the Mathesons, its original possessors, who will build a Castle on Druim-a-Dubh, at Balmacarra.”

The late Mr. Lillingstone was an Englishman. He was truly distinguished for kindness and liberality to his tenants, and he had a son and two daughters, although, we are informed, he had been married for seventeen years before he had any family.

When he came into possession, old people thought they discerned the fulfilment of a part of Kenneth’s prediction in his person, until it was remarked that he had no family as foretold by the Seer. At last, a son and two daughters were successively born to Mr. Lillingstone.

After his death, the son sold the whole of Lochalsh to Alexander Matheson, M.P. for the Counties of Ross and Cromarty, and, so far, the prediction has been realized.

A castle has been built at Duncraig, a considerable distance from the spot predicted by the Seer; but if Kenneth is to be depended upon, a castle will

yet be built by one of the Mathesons oh Druim-a-Dubh, at Balmacarra.

Had this prophecy been got up after the event, the reputation of the Seer would certainly not have been staked on the erection of another castle in the remote future, when the Mathesons already possess such a magnificent mansion at Duncraig.

During a recent visit to the Island of Raasay we received a peculiar prediction regarding the Macleods from an old man there, over eighty years of age, who remembered seven proprietors of Raasay, and who sorely lamented the fulfilment of the prophecy, and the decline of the good old stock, entirely in consequence of their own folly and extravagance.

Since then, we had the prediction repeated by a Kintail man in identical terms; and as it is hardly translatable, we shall give it in the original vernacular:—"Dar a thig Mac-Dhomhnuill Duibh bàn; MacShimidh ceann-dearg; Sisealach claon ruadh; Mac-Coinnich mor bodhar; agus Mac-Gille-challum cama-chasach, iar-ogha Ian bhig à Ruiga, 'se sin a Mac-Gille-challum is miosa 'thainig na thig; cha bhi mi ann ri linn, 's cha'n fhearr leam air a bhith."

(When we shall have a fair-haired Lochiel; a red-haired Lovat; a squint-eyed, fair-haired Chisholm; a big deaf Mackenzie; and a bow-crooked-legged Mac-Gille-challum, who shall be the great-grand-son of John Beg, or little John, of Ruiga: that Mac-Gille-challum will be the worst that ever came or ever will come; I shall not be in existence in his day, and I have no desire that I should.)

Ruiga is the name of a place in Skye. When the last Macleod of Raasay was born, an old sage in the district called upon his neighbour, and told him, with an expression of great sorrow, that Mac-Gille-challum of Raasay now had an heir, and his birth was a certain forerunner of the extinction of his house.

Such an event as the birth of an heir had been hitherto, in this as in all other Highland families, universally considered an occasion for great rejoicing among the retainers. The other old man was amazed, and asked the sage what he meant by such unusual and disloyal remarks.

"Oh!" answered he, "do you not know that this is the grand-grandson of John Beg of Ruiga whom Coinneach Odhar predicted would be the worst of his race." And so he undoubtedly proved himself to be, for he lost for ever the ancient inheritance of his house, and acted generally in such a manner as to fully justify the Seer's prediction; and what is still more remarkable, the Highland lairds, with the peculiar characteristics and malformations foretold by Kenneth, preceded or were the contemporaries of the last MacGille-challum of Raasay.

Here is a prediction of the downfall of another distinguished Highland family—Clan Ranald of the Isles. "The day will come when the old wife with the footless stocking (cailleach nam mogan) will drive the Lady of Clan Ranald from Nunton House, in Benbecula."

We are informed that this was fulfilled when the Macdonalds took the farm of Nunton, locally known as "Baile na Caillich". Old Mrs. Macdonald was in the habit of wearing these primitive articles of dress, and was generally known in the district as "Cailleach nam Mogan".

Clan Ranald and his lady, like many more of our Highland chiefs, ultimately went to the wall, and the descendants of the "old wife with the footless stocking" occupied, and, for anything we know, still occupy the ancient residence of the long-distinguished race of Clan Ranald of the Isles.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century, and during the Seer's lifetime, there lived in Kintail an old man—Duncan Macrae—who was curious to know by what means he should end his days. He applied to a local female Seer, who informed him that he "would die by the sword" (le bàs a chlaidheamh).

This appeared so improbable in the case of such an old man, who had taken part in so many bloody frays and invariably escaped unhurt, that the matter was referred to the greater authority, Coinneach Odhar. He corroborated the woman, but still the matter was almost universally discredited in the district, and by none more so than by old Duncan himself.

However, years after, conviction was forced upon them; for, according to the "Genealogy of the Macraes," written by the Rev. John Macrae, minister of Dingwall, who died in 1704—"Duncan being an old man in the year 1654, when General Monk, afterwards Duke of Albemarle, came to Kintail, retired from his house in Glenshiel to the hills, where, being found by some of the soldiers who had straggled from the body of the army in hopes of plunder, and who, speaking to him roughly, in a language he did not understand, he, like Old Orimanus, drew his sword, &c., and was immediately killed by them.

This was all the blood that General Monk or his soldiers, amounting to 1500 men, had drawn, and all the opposition he met with, although the Earl of Middleton and Sir George Monro were within a few miles of them, and advertised of their coming, Seaforth having been sent by Middleton to the Isle of Skye and parts adjoining, to treat with the Macdonalds and the Macleods, &c."

Regarding the evictions which would take place in the Parish of Petty, he said, "The day will come, and it is not far off, when farm-steadings will be so few and far between, that the crow of a cock shall not be heard from the one steading to the other". This prediction has certainly been fulfilled, for, in the days of the Seer there were no fewer than sixteen tenants on the farm of Morayston alone.

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On the south of the bay, at Petty, is an immense stone, of at least eight tons weight, which formerly marked the boundary between the estates of Culloden and Moray. On the 20th of February, 1799, it was mysteriously removed from its former position, and carried about 260 yards into the sea.

It is supposed by some that this was brought about by an earthquake; others think that the stone was carried off by the action of ice, combined with the influence of a tremendous hurricane, which blew from the shore, during that fearful and stormy night. It was currently reported, and pretty generally believed at the time, that his Satanic Majesty had a finger in this work.

Be that as it may, there is no doubt whatever that the Brahan Seer predicted "that the day will come when the Stone of Petty, large though it is, and high and dry upon the land as it appears to people this day, will be suddenly found as far advanced into the sea as it now lies away from it inland, and no one will see it removed, or be able to account for its sudden and marvellous transportation".

The Seer was at one time in the Culloden district on some important business. While passing over what is now so well known as the Battlefield of Culloden, he exclaimed, "Oh! Drummossie, thy bleak moor shall, ere many generations have passed away, be stained with the best blood of the Highlands. Glad am I that I will not see that day, for it will be a fearful period; heads will be lopped off by the score, and no mercy will be shown or quarter given on either side."

It is perhaps unnecessary to point out how literally this prophecy has been fulfilled on the occasion of the last battle fought on British soil. We have received several other versions of it from different parts of the country, almost all in identical terms.

"The time will come when whisky or dram shops will be so plentiful that one may be met with almost at the head of every plough furrow." (Thig an latha 's am bi tighean-oil cho lionmhor 's nach mor nach fhaicear tighosda aig ceann gach claise.) "Policemen will become so numerous in every town that they may be met with at the corner of every street." "Travelling merchants" [pedlars and hawkers] "will be so plentiful that a person can scarcely walk a mile on the public highway without meeting one of them."

The following is from "A Summer in Skye," by the late Alex. Smith, author of "A Life Drama". Describing Dunvegan Castle and its surroundings, he says:—"Dun Kenneth's prophecy has come to pass—'In the days of Norman, son of the third Norman, there will be a noise in the doors of the people, and wailing in the house of the widow; and Macleod will not have so many gentlemen of his name as will row a five-oared boat round the Maidens'.

If the last trumpet had been sounded at the end of the French war, no one but a Macleod would have risen out of the churchyard of Dunvegan. If you want to see a chief (of the Macleods) now-a-days you must go to London for him." There can be no question as to these having been fulfilled to the letter.

"The day will come when a fox will rear a litter of cubs on the hearthstone of Castle Downie." "The day will come when a fox, white as snow, will be killed on the west coast of Sutherlandshire." "The day will come when a wild deer will be caught alive at Chanonry Point, in the Black Isle." All these things have come to pass.

With respect to the clearances in Lewis, he said—"Many a long waste feannag (rig, once arable) will yet be seen between Uig of the Mountains and Ness of the Plains." That this prediction has been fulfilled to the letter, no one acquainted with the country will deny.

The following would appear to have been made solely on account of the unlikelihood of the occurrence:—"A Lochalsh woman shall weep over the grave of a Frenchman in the burying-place of Lochalsh."

People imagined they could discern in this an allusion to some battle on the West Coast, in which French troops would be engaged; but there was an occurrence which gave it a very different interpretation.

A native of Lochalsh married a French footman, who died, shortly after this event, and was interred in the burying-ground of Lochalsh, thus leaving his widow to mourn over his grave.

This may appear a commonplace matter enough, but it must be remembered that a Frenchman in Lochalsh, and especially a Frenchman whom a Highland woman would mourn over, in Coinneach's day, was a very different phenomenon to what it is in our days of railways, tourists, and steamboats.

The Seer also predicted the formation of a railway through the Muir of Ord, handed down in the following stanza:—

Nuair a bhios da eaglais an Sgire na Toiseachd,

A's lamh da ordaig an I-Stian',

Da dhrochaid aig Sguideal nan geocaire,

As fear da imleag an Dunean,

Thig Miltearan a Carn a-chlarsair,

Air Carbad gun each gun srian,

A dh-fhagas am Blar-dubh na fhasach,

'Dortadh fuil le iomadh sgian;

A's olaidh am fitheach a thri saitheachd

De dh-fhuil nan Gaidheal, bho clach nam Fionn.

Here is a literal translation:—

When there shall be two churches in the Parish of Ferrintosh,

And a hand with two thumbs in 'I-Stiana,'

Two bridges at "Sguideal" (Conon) of the gormandizers,

And a man with two navels at Dunean,

Soldiers will come from "Carn a Chlarsair" (Tarradale)

On a chariot without horse or bridle,

Which will leave the "Blar-dubh" (Muir of Ord) a wilderness,

Spilling blood with many knives;

And the raven shall drink his three fulls

Of the blood of the Gael from the Stone of Fionn.

We already have two churches in the Parish of Ferrintosh, two bridges at Conon, and we are told by an eye-witness, that there is actually at this very time a man with two thumbs on each hand in "I-Stiana," in the Black Isle, and a man in the neighbourhood of Dunean who has two navels. The "chariot without horse or bridle" is undoubtedly the "iron horse".

What particular event the latter part of the prediction refers to, it is impossible to say; but if we are to have any faith in the Seer, something seri-

ous is looming not very remotely in the future.

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Mr. Macintyre supplies the following, which is clearly a fragment of the one above given:—Coinneach Odhar foresaw the formation of a railway through the Muir of Ord which he said “would be a sign of calamitous times”.

The prophecy regarding this is handed down to us in the following form:—“I would not like to live when a black bridleless horse shall pass through the Muir of Ord.”

“Fearchair a Ghunna” (Farquhar of the Gun, an idiotic simpleton who lived during the latter part of his extraordinary life on the Muir of Tarradale) seems, in his own quaint way, to have entered into the spirit of this prophecy, when he compared the train, as it first passed through the district, to the funeral of “Old Nick”.

Tradition gives another version, viz.:—“that after four successive dry summers, a fiery chariot shall pass through the ‘Blar Dubh,’” which has been very literally fulfilled.

Coinneach Odhar was not the only person that had a view beforehand of this railway line, for it is commonly reported that a man residing in the neighbourhood of Beauly, gifted with second-sight, had a vision of the train, moving along in all its headlong speed, when he was on his way home one dark autumn night, several years before the question of forming a railway in those parts was mooted.

Here are two other Gaelic stanzas having undoubted reference to the Mackenzies of Rosehaugh:—

Bheir Tanaistear Chlann Choinnich

Rocus bàn ás a choille;

’S bheir e ceile bho tigh-ciuil

Le a mhuinntir ’na aghaidh;

’S gum bi’ n Tanaistear mor

Ann an gniomh ’s an ceann-labhairt,

’Nuair bhios am Pap’ anns an Roimh

Air a thilgeadh dheth chathair,

Thall fa chomhar Creag-a-Chodh

Comhnuichidh taillear caol odhar;

’S Seumas gorach mar thighearn,

’S Seumas glic mar fhear tomhais—

A mharcaicheas gun srian

Air loth fhiadhaich a roghainn;

Ach cuiridh mor-chuis gun chiall

’N aite siol nam fiadh siol nan gobhar;

’S tuitidh an t-Eilean-dubh briagha

Fuidh riaghladh iasgairean Aŭch.

Literal translation:—

The heir (or chief) of the Mackenzies will take

A white rook out of the wood,

And will take a wife from a music house (dancing saloon),

With his people against him:

And the heir will be great

In deeds and as an orator,

When the Pope in Rome

Will be thrown off his throne.

Over opposite Creag-a-Chow

Will dwell a diminutive lean tailor,

Also Foolish James as the laird,

And Wise James as a measurer.

Who will ride without a bridle

The wild colt of his choice;

But foolish pride without sense

Will put in the place of the seed of the deer the seed of the goat;

And the beautiful Black Isle will fall

Under the management of the fishermen of Avoch.

We have not learnt that any of the Rosehaugh Mackenzies has yet taken a white rook from the woods; nor have we heard anything suggested as to what this part of the prophecy may refer to.

We are, however, credibly informed that one of the late Mackenzies of Rosehaugh had taken his wife from a music saloon in one of our southern cities, and that his people were very much against him for so doing.

One of them, Sir George, no doubt was "great in deeds and as an orator," but we fail to discover any connection between the time in which he lived and the time "when the Pope in Rome will be thrown off his throne". We were unable in the first edition to suggest the meaning of the first six lines of the last stanza, but Mr.

Maclennan supplies us with the following explanation:—"I have been hearing these lines discussed since I was a boy, and being a native of Rosehaugh, I took a special interest in everything concerning it. The first two lines I was repeatedly informed, referred to a pious man who lived on the estate of Bennetsfield, opposite Craigiehow, when 'Seumas Gorach' (Foolish James referred to in the third line), was proprietor of Rosehaugh.

This godly man, who was contemporary with Foolish James, often warned him of his end, and predicted his fate if he did not mend his ways; and as he thus cut his bounds for him, he is supposed to be the 'diminutive lean tailor'. He is still in life. We all knew 'Foolish James'. The fourth line refers

to James Maclaren, who lived at Rosehaugh most of the time during which the last two Mackenzies ruled over it, and only died two years ago.

He was an odd character, but a very straightforward man; often rebuked 'Foolish James' for the reckless and fearless manner in which he rode about, and set bounds before the 'foolish laird,' which he was not allowed to pass. Maclaren was, on that account, believed to be the 'measurer' referred to by the Seer. The fifth and sixth lines are supposed to apply to the wife fancied by Mackenzie in a 'dancing saloon,' who was always considered the 'wild colt,' at whose instigation he rode so recklessly and foolishly." We wish the realizations of our prophet's predictions in this case were a little less fanciful.

Those in the seventh and eighth lines have been most literally fulfilled, for there can be no doubt that "foolish pride without sense" has brought about what the Seer predicted, and secured, for the present at least, the seed of the goat where the seed of the deer used to rule. The deer, and the deer's horns, as is well known, are the armorial bearings of the Mackenzies, while the goat is that of the Fletchers, who now rule in Rosehaugh, on the ruins of its once great and famous "Cabair-feidh".

Part of the beautiful Black Isle has already fallen under the management of the son of a fisherman of Avoch; and who knows but other fishermen from that humble village may yet amass sufficient wealth to buy the whole. The old proprietors, we regret, are rapidly making way with their "foolish pride without sense," for some one to purchase it.

We are informed that the present proprietor of Rosehaugh is the son of an Avoch fisherman—the son of a Mr. Jack, who followed that honourable

avocation in this humble village for many years; afterwards left the place and went to reside in Elgin, where he commenced business as a small general dealer, or "huckster"; that some of the boys—his sons—exhibited a peculiar smartness while in school; that this was noticed by a lady relative of their mother, an aunt, of the name of Fletcher, who encouraged and helped on the education of the boys, and who took one or more of them to her own home, and brought them up; afterwards they found their way south, and ultimately became successful merchants and landed proprietors.

These are facts of which we were entirely ignorant when first writing down the stanzas already given. The verses were sent to us from various quarters, and they have undoubtedly been floating about the country for generations. So much for the Seer's prophetic power in this instance.

Were we better acquainted with the history of the other families referred to in the stanzas, it is probable that more light could be thrown upon what they refer to than we are at present able to do.

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While we are dealing with the "wonderful" in connection with the House of Rosehaugh, it may not be out of place to give a few instances of the somewhat extraordinary experiences of the famous Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh already referred to.

He was one of the most distinguished members of the Scottish Bar, was Lord-Advocate for Scotland in the reign of Charles the Second, and was, indeed, a contemporary of the Brahan Seer.

His “Institutes” are still considered a standing authority by the legal profession:—On one occasion, while at Rosehaugh, a poor widow from a neighbouring estate called to consult him regarding her being repeatedly warned to remove from a small croft which she held under a lease of several years; but as some time had yet to run before its expiry, and being threatened with summary ejection from the croft, she went to solicit his advice.

Having examined the tenor of the lease, Sir George informed her that it contained a flaw, which, in case of opposition, would render her success exceedingly doubtful; and although it was certainly an oppressive act to deprive her of her croft, he thought her best plan was to submit.

However, seeing the distressed state of mind in which the poor woman was on hearing his opinion, he desired her to call upon him the following day, when he would consider her case more carefully.

His clerk, who always slept in the same room as his lordship, was not a little surprised, about midnight, to discover him rising from his bed fast asleep, lighting a candle which stood on his table, drawing in his chair, and commencing to write very busily, as if he had been all the time wide awake.

The clerk saw how he was employed, but he never spoke a word, and, when he had finished, he saw him place what he had written in his private desk, locking it, extinguishing the candle, and then retiring to bed as if nothing had happened.

Next morning at breakfast, Sir George remarked that he had had a very strange dream about the poor widow's threatened ejectment, which, he could now remember, and he had now no doubt of making out a clear case in her favour.

His clerk rose from the table, asked for the key of his desk, and brought therefrom several pages of manuscript; and, as he handed them to Sir George, enquired—"Is that like your dream?" On looking over it for a few seconds, Sir George said, "Dear me, this is singular; this is my very dream!"

He was no less surprised when his clerk informed him of the manner in which he had acted; and, sending for the widow, he told her what steps to adopt to frustrate the efforts of her oppressors. Acting on the counsel thus given, the poor widow was ultimately successful, and, with her young family, was allowed to remain in possession of her "wee bit croftie" without molestation.

Sir George principally resided at this time in Edinburgh, and, before dinner, invariably walked for half-an-hour. The place he selected for this was Leith Walk, then almost a solitary place.

One day, while taking his accustomed exercise, he was met by a venerable-looking, grey-headed old gentleman, who accosted him and, without introduction or apology, said—"There is a very important case to come off in London fourteen days hence, at which your presence will be required. It is a case of heirship to a very extensive estate in the neighbourhood of London, and a pretended claimant is doing his utmost to disinherit the real heir, on the ground of his inability to produce proper titles thereto.

It is necessary that you be there on the day mentioned; and in one of the attics of the mansion-house on the estate there is an old oak chest with two bottoms; between these you will find the necessary titles, written on parchment."

Having given this information, the old man disappeared, leaving Sir George quite bewildered; but the latter, resuming his walk, soon recovered his previous equanimity, and thought nothing further of the matter.

Next day, while taking his walk in the same place, he was again met by the same old gentleman, who earnestly urged him not to delay another day in repairing to London, assuring him that he would be handsomely rewarded for his trouble; but to this Sir George paid no particular attention.

The third day he was again met by the same hoary-headed sire, who energetically pleaded with him not to lose a day in setting out, otherwise the case would be lost.

His singular deportment, and his anxiety that Sir George should be present at the discussion of the case, in which he seemed so deeply interested, induced Sir George to give in to his earnest importunities, and accordingly he started next morning on horseback, arriving in London on the day preceding that on which the case was to come on.

In a few hours he was pacing in front of the mansion-house described by the old man at Leith Walk, where he met two gentlemen engaged in earnest conversation—one of the claimants to the property, and a celebrated London barrister—to whom he immediately introduced himself as the principal law-officer of the crown for Scotland.

The barrister, no doubt supposing that Sir George was coming to take the bread out of his mouth, addressed him in a surly manner, and spoke disrespectfully of his country; to which the latter replied, “that, lame and ignorant as his learned friend took the Scotch to be, yet in law, as well as in other respects, they would effect what would defy him and all his London clique”.

This disagreeable dialogue was put an end to by the other gentleman—the claimant to the property—taking Sir George into the house. After sitting and conversing for some minutes, Sir George expressed a wish to be shown over the house.

The drawing-room was hung all round with magnificent pictures and drawings, which Sir George greatly admired; but there was one which particularly attracted his attention; and after examining it very minutely, he, with a surprised expression, inquired of his conductor whose picture it was? and received answer—“It is my great-great-grandfather’s”.

“My goodness!” exclaimed Sir George, “the very man who spoke to me three times on three successive days in Leith Walk, and at whose urgent request I came here!”

Sir George, at his own request, was then conducted to the attics, in one of which there was a large mass of old papers, which was turned up and examined without discovering anything to assist them in prosecuting the claim to the heirship of the property.

However, as they were about giving up the search, Sir George noticed an old trunk lying in a corner, which, his companion told him, had lain there

for many a year as lumber, and contained nothing.

The Leith Walk gentleman's information recurring to Sir George, he gave the old moth-eaten chest a good hearty kick, such as he could wish to have been received by his "learned friend" the barrister, who spoke so disrespectfully of his country. The bottom flew out of the trunk, with a quantity of chaff, among which the original titles to the property were discovered.

Next morning, Sir George entered the court just as the case was about to be called and addressed the pretended claimant's counsel—"Well, sir, what shall I offer you to abandon this action?"

"No sum, or any consideration whatever, would induce me to give it up," answered his learned opponent. "Well, sir," said Sir George, at the same time pulling out his snuff-horn and taking a pinch, "I will not even hazard a pinch on it." The case was called.

Sir George, in reply to the claimant's counsel, in an eloquent speech, addressed the bench; exposed most effectually the means which had been adopted to deprive his client of his birthright; concluded by producing the titles found in the old chest; and the case was at once decided in favour of his client.

The decision being announced, Sir George took the young heir's arm, and, bowing to his learned friend the barrister, remarked, "You see now what a Scotsman has done, and let me tell you that I wish a countryman of mine anything but a London barrister".

Sir George immediately returned to Edinburgh, well paid for his trouble; but he never again, in his favourite walk, encountered the old grey-headed gentleman.

⁂

The following two stanzas refer to the Mackenzies of Kilcoy and their property:—

Nuair a ghlaodhas paisdean tigh Chulchallaidh,

‘Tha slige ar mortairean dol thairis!’

Thig bho Chròidh madadh ruadh

Bhi’s ’measg an t-sluaigh mar mhadadh-alluidh,

Rè da-fhichead bliadhna a’s corr,

’S gum bi na chòta iomadh mallachd;

’N sin tilgear e gu falamh brònach

Mar shean sguab air cùl an doruis;

A’s bithidh an tuath mhor mar eunlaith sporsail,

’S an tighearnan cho bochd ris na sporais—

Tha beannachd ’san onair bhoidhich,

A’s mallachd an dortadh na fola.

Nuair bhitheas caisteal ciar Chulchallaidh

Na sheasaidh fuar, agus falamh,

’S na cathagan ’s na rocuis

Gu seolta sgiathail thairis,

Gabhaidh duine graineal comhnuidh,

Ri thaobh, mi-bheusal a’s salach,

Nach gleidh guidhe stal-phosaidh,

’S nach eisd ri cleireach no caraid,

Ach bho Chreag-a-chodh gu Sgire na Toiseachd

Gum bi muisean air toir gach caileag—

A’s ochan! ochan! s’ ma leon,

Sluigidh am balgaire suas moran talamh!

Literally translated:—

When the girls of Kilcoy house cry out,

‘The shell (cup) of our murderers is flowing over.’

A fox from Croy will come

Who shall be like a wolf among the people

During forty years and more,

And in his coat shall be many curses;

He shall then be thrown empty and sorrowful,

Like an old besom behind the door;

The large farmers will be like sportful birds,

And the lairds as poor as the sparrows—

There's a blessing in handsome honesty

And curses in the shedding of blood.

When the stern Castle of Kilcoy

Shall stand cold and empty,

And the jackdaws and the rooks

Are artfully flying past it,

A loathsome man shall then dwell

Beside it, indecent and filthy,

Who will not keep the vow of the marriage coif,

Listen neither to cleric nor friend;

But from Creag-a-Chow to Ferrintosh

The dirty fellow will be after every girl—

Ochan! Ochan!! woe's me,

The cunning dog will swallow up much land.

The history of the Kilcoy family has been an unfortunate one in late years, and the second and last lines of the first stanza clearly refer to a well-known tragic incident in the recent history of this once highly-favoured and popular Highland family.

Mr. Maclennan applies them to an earlier event, and says:—"The second and last line of the first stanza refer to the following story—Towards the latter end of the seventeenth century a large number of cattle, in the Black Isle, were attacked with a strange malady, which invariably ended in madness and in death. The disease was particularly destructive on the Kilcoy and Redcastle estates, and the proprietors offered a large sum of money as a reward to any who should find a remedy.

An old warlock belonging to the parish agreed to protect the cattle from the ravages of this unknown disease, for the sum offered, if they provided him with a human sacrifice. To this ghastly proposal the lairds agreed. A large barn at Parkton was, from its secluded position, selected as a suitable place for the horrid crime, where a poor friendless man, who lived at Linwood, close to the site of the present Free Church manse, was requested, under some pretence, to appear on a certain day.

The unsuspecting creature obeyed the summons of his superiors; he was instantly bound and disembowelled alive by the horrid wizard, who dried the heart, liver, kidneys, pancreas, and reduced them to powder, of which he ordered a little to be given to the diseased animals in water. Before the unfortunate victim breathed his last, he ejaculated the following imprecation:—'Gum b' ann nach tig an latha 'bhitheas teaghlach a Chaisteil Ruaidh gun oinseach, na teaghlach Chulchallaidh gun amadan'.

(Let the day never come when the family of Redcastle shall be without a female idiot, or the family of Kilcoy without a fool.) It appears, not only that this wild imprecation was to some extent realised, but also that the Brahan Seer, years before, knew and predicted that it would be made, and that its prayer would be ultimately granted."

⁂

Who the "fox from Croy" is, we are at present unable to suggest; but taking the two stanzas as they stand, it would be difficult to describe the position of the family and the state of the castle, with our present knowledge of their history, and in their present position, more faithfully than Coinneach Odhar has done more than two centuries ago.

What a faithful picture of the respective positions of the great farmers and the lairds of the present day! And what a contrast between their relative positions now and at the time when the Seer predicted the change!

In the appendix to the Life of the late Dr. Norman Macleod, by his brother, the Rev. Donald Macleod, D.D., a series of autobiographical reminiscences are given, which the famous Rev. Norman, the Doctor's father, dictated in his old age to one of his daughters. In the summer of 1799 he visited Dunvegan Castle, the stronghold of the Macleods, in the Isle of Skye.

Those of the prophecies already given in verse are, undoubtedly, fragments of the long rhythmical productions of Coinneach Odhar Fiosaiche's prophecies regarding most of our Highland families, to which

the Rev. Norman refers, and of which the prophecy given in his reminiscences is as follows:—

"One circumstance took place at the Castle (Dunvegan) on this occasion which I think worth recording, especially as I am the only person now living who can attest the truth of it. There had been a traditionary prophecy, couched in Gaelic verse, regarding the family of Macleod, which on this occasion, received a most extraordinary fulfilment. This prophecy I have heard repeated by several persons, and most deeply do I regret that I did not take a copy of it when I could have got it. The worthy Mr. Campbell of Knock, in Mull, had a very beautiful version of it, as also had my father, and so, I think, had likewise Dr. Campbell of Killinver.

Such prophecies were current regarding almost all old families in the Highlands; the Argyll family were of the number; and there is a prophecy regarding the Breadalbane family as yet unfulfilled which I hope may remain so. The present Marquis of Breadalbane is fully aware of it, as are many of the connections of the family. Of the Macleod family, it was prophesied at least a hundred years prior to the circumstance which I am about to relate.

"In the prophecy to which I am about to allude, it was foretold that when Norman, the Third Norman ('Tormad nan 'tri Tormaid'), the son of the hard-boned English lady ('Mac na mnatha caoile cruaidhe Shassunaich') would perish by an accidental death; that when the 'Maidens of Macleod' (certain well-known rocks on the coast of Macleod's country) became the property of a Campbell; when a fox had young ones in one of the turrets of the Castle, and particularly when the Fairy enchanted banner should be

for the last time exhibited, then the glory of the Macleod family should depart; a great part of the estate should be sold to others; so that a small 'curragh,' a boat, would carry all gentlemen of the name of Macleod across Loch Dunvegan; but that in times far distant another John Breac should arise, who should redeem those estates, and raise the power and honours of the house to a higher pitch than ever.

Such in general terms was the prophecy. And now as to the curious coincidence of its fulfilment.

"There was, at that time, at Dunvegan, an English smith, with whom I became a favourite, and who told me, in solemn secrecy, that the iron chest which contained the 'fairy flag' was to be forced open next morning; that he had arranged with Mr. Hector Macdonald Buchanan to be there with his tools for that purpose.

"I was most anxious to be present, and I asked permission to that effect of Mr. Buchanan (Macleod's man of business), who granted me leave on condition that I should not inform anyone of the name of Macleod that such was intended, and should keep it a profound secret from the chief. This I promised and most faithfully acted on. Next morning we proceeded to the chamber in the East Turret, where was the iron chest that contained the famous flag, about which there is an interesting tradition.

"With great violence the smith tore open the lid of this iron chest; but, in doing so, a key was found under part of the covering, which would have opened the chest, had it been found in time. There was an inner case, in which was found the flag, enclosed in a wooden box of strongly-scented wood. The flag consisted of a square piece of very rich silk, with crosses

wrought with gold thread, and several elf-pots stitched with great care on different parts of it.

"On this occasion, the melancholy news of the death of the young and promising heir of Macleod reached the Castle. 'Norman, the third Norman,' was a lieutenant of H.M.S., the 'Queen Charlotte,' which was blown up at sea, and he and the rest perished. At the same time, the rocks called 'Macleod's Maidens' were sold, in the course of that very week, to Angus Campbell of Ensay, and they are still in possession of his grandson.

A fox in possession of a Lieutenant Maclean, residing in the West Turret of the Castle, had young ones, which I handled, and thus all that was said in the prophecy alluded to was so far fulfilled, although I am glad the family of my chief still enjoy their ancestral possessions, and the worst part of the prophecy accordingly remains unverified.

I merely state the facts of the case as they occurred, without expressing any opinion whatever as to the nature of these traditionary legends with which they were connected."

The estates are still, we are glad to say, in possession of the ancient family of Macleod, and the present chief is rapidly improving the prospects of his house. The probabilities are therefore at present against our prophet. The hold of the Macleods on their estates is getting stronger instead of weaker, and the John Breac who is to be the future deliverer has not only not yet appeared, but the undesirable position of affairs requiring his services is yet, we hope, in the distant future.

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The Seer predicted that "when the big-thumbed Sheriff-Officer and the blind [man] of the twenty-four fingers shall be together in Barra, Macneil of Barra may be making ready for the flitting" (Nuair a bhitheas maor nan ordagan mora agus dall nan ceithir-meoraibh-fichead comhla ann am Barraidh, faodaidh MacNeill Bharraidh 'bhi deanamh deiseil na h-imirich.)

This prediction, which was known in Barra for generations, has been most literally fulfilled. On a certain occasion, "the blind of the twenty-four fingers," so called from having six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, left Benbecula on a tour, to collect alms in South Uist. Being successful there, he decided upon visiting Barra before returning home.

Arriving at the Ferry—the isthmus which separates South Uist from Barra,—he met "Maor nan Ordagan mora," and they crossed the kyle in the same boat. It was afterwards found that the officer was actually on his way to serve a summons of ejectment on the laird of Barra; and poor Macneil not only had to make ready for, but had indeed to make the flitting.

The man who had acted as guide to the blind on the occasion is, we are informed, still living and in excellent health, though considerably over eighty years of age.

The following is said to have been fulfilled by the conduct of the Duke of Cumberland at and after the battle of Culloden. The Seer was, on one occasion, passing Millburn, on his way from Inverness to Petty, and noticing the old mill, which was a very primitive building, thatched with divots, he said:—"The day will come when thy wheel shall be turned for three suc-

cessive days by water red with human blood; for on the banks of thy lade a fierce battle shall be fought, at which much blood shall be spilt".

Some say that this is as yet unfulfilled; and it has been suggested that the battle may yet be fought in connection with the new Barracks now building at the Hut of Health.

Coinneach also prophesied remarkable things regarding the Mackenzies of Fairburn and Fairburn Tower. "The day will come when the Mackenzies of Fairburn shall lose their entire possessions, and that branch of the clan shall disappear almost to a man from the face of the earth. Their Castle shall become uninhabited, desolate, and forsaken, and a cow shall give birth to a calf in the uppermost chamber in Fairburn Tower."

The first part of this prophecy has only too literally come to pass; and within the memory of hundreds now living, and who knew Coinneach's prophecy years before it was fulfilled, the latter part—that referring to the cow calving in the uppermost chamber—has also been undoubtedly realised.

We are personally acquainted with people whose veracity is beyond question, who knew the prophecy, and who actually took the trouble at the time to go all the way from Inverness to see the cow-mother and her offspring in the Tower, before they were taken down. Mr.

Maclennan supplies the following version:—Coinneach said, addressing a large concourse of people—"Strange as it may appear to all those who may hear me this day, yet what I am about to tell you is true and will come to pass at the appointed time. The day will come when a cow shall give birth

to a calf in the uppermost chamber (seomar uachdarach) of Fairburn Castle. The child now unborn will see it."

When the Seer uttered this prediction, the Castle of Fairburn was in the possession of, and occupied by, a very rich and powerful chieftain, to whom homage was paid by many of the neighbouring lairds. Its halls rang loud with sounds of music and of mirth, and happiness reigned within its portals.

On its winding stone stairs trod and passed carelessly to and fro pages and liveried servants in their wigs and golden trimmings. Nothing in the world was more unlikely to happen, to all appearance, than what the Seer predicted, and Coinneach was universally ridiculed for having given utterance to what was apparently so nonsensical; but this abuse and ridicule the Seer bore with the patient self-satisfied air of one who was fully convinced of the truth of what he uttered.

Years passed by, but no sign of the fulfilment of the prophecy. The Seer, the Laird of Fairburn, and the whole of that generation were gathered to their fathers, and still no signs of the curious prediction being realised. The Laird of Fairburn's immediate successors also followed their predecessors, and the Seer, to all appearance, was fast losing his reputation as a prophet.

The tower was latterly left uninhabited, and it soon fell into a dilapidated state of repair—its doors decayed and fell away from their hinges, one by one, until at last there was no door on the main stair from the floor to the roof.

Some years after, and not long ago, the Fairburn tenant-farmer stored away some straw in the uppermost chamber of the tower; in the process, some of the straw dropped, and was left strewn on the staircase. One of his cows on a certain day chanced to find her way to the main door of the tower, and finding it open, began to pick up the straw scattered along the stair.

The animal proceeded thus, till she had actually arrived at the uppermost chamber, whence, being heavy in calf, she was unable to descend. She was consequently left in the tower until she gave birth to a fine healthy calf.

They were allowed to remain there for several days, where many went to see them, after which the cow and her progeny were brought down; and Coinneach Odhar's prophecy was thus fulfilled to the letter.

"The day will come when the Lewsmen shall go forth with their hosts to battle, but they will be turned back by the jaw-bone of an animal smaller than an ass," was a prediction accounted ridiculous and quite incomprehensible until it was fulfilled in a remarkable but very simple manner.

Seaforth and the leading men of the Clan, as is well known, were "out in the '15 and '19," and had their estates forfeited; and it was only a few years before the '45 that their lands were again restored to Seaforth, and to Mackenzie, 11th Baron of Hilton. The Rev.

Colin Mackenzie, a brother of Hilton, minister of Fodderty and Laird of Glack, in Aberdeenshire, was the first in the neighborhood of Brahan who received information of Prince Charlie's landing in 1745. Seaforth had still a warm feeling for the Prince.

His reverend friend, though a thorough Jacobite himself, was an intimate friend of Lord President Forbes, with whom he kept up a regular correspondence. He decided, no doubt mainly through his influence, to remain neutral himself; and fearing that his friend of Brahan might be led to join the Prince, he instantly, on receipt of the news, started for Brahan Castle.

Although it was very late at night when he received the information, he crossed Knockfarrel, entered Seaforth's bedroom by the window—for he had already gone to rest for the night—and without awakening his lady, informed him of the landing of Charles. They decided upon getting out of the way, and both immediately disappeared.

Seaforth was well known to have had previous correspondence with the Prince, and to have sent private orders to the Lews to have his men there in readiness; and Fodderty impressed upon him the prudence of getting out of sight altogether in the meantime.

They started through the mountains in the direction of Poolewe, and some time afterwards, when there together in concealment near the shore, they saw two ships entering the bay, having on board a large number of armed men, whom they at once recognised as Seaforth's followers from the Lews, raised and commanded by Captain Colin Mackenzie, the great-grandfather of Major Thomas Mackenzie of the 78th Highlanders.

Lord Seaforth had just been making a repast of a sheep's head, when he espied his retainers, and approaching the ships with the sheep's jaw-bone in his hand, he waved it towards them, and ordered them to return to their homes at once, which command they obeyed by making at once for Stornoway; and thus was fulfilled Coinneach Odhar's apparently ludi-

crous prediction, that the brave Lewsmen would be turned back from battle with the jaw-bone of an animal smaller than an ass.

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Mr. Maclennan supplies us also with the following:—"In the parish of Avoch is a well of beautiful clear water, out of which the Brahan Seer, upon one occasion, took a refreshing draught. So pleased was he with the water, that he looked at his Blue Stone, and said—'Whoever he be that drinketh of thy water henceforth, if suffering from any disease, shall, by placing two pieces of straw or wood on thy surface, ascertain whether he will recover or not. If he is to recover, the straws will whirl round in opposite directions; if he is to die soon, they will remain stationary.' The writer (continues Mr.

Maclennan) knew people who went to the well and made the experiment. He was himself once unwell, and supposed to be at the point of death; he got of the water of the well, and he still lives. Whether it did him good or not, it is impossible to say, but this he does know, that the water pleased him uncommonly well."

With reference to Lady Hill, in the same parish, the Seer said—"Thy name has gone far and wide; but though thy owners were brave on the field of battle, they never decked thy brow. The day will come, however, when a white collar shall be put upon thee. The child that is unborn shall see it, but I shall not." This prediction has been fulfilled a few years ago, by the construction of a fine drive right round the hill.

The Seer said, speaking of Beauly—"The day will come, however distant, when 'Cnoc na Rath' will be in the centre of the village". It certainly would appear incredible, and even absurd, to suggest such a thing in Coinneach's day, for the "village" then stood at a place south of the present railway station, called, in Gaelic, "Bealaidh-Achadh," or the Broom field, quite a mile from Cnoc na Rath.

The prophecy has to some extent been fulfilled, for the last erection at Beauly—the new public school—is within a few yards of the Cnoc; and the increasing enterprise of the inhabitants is rapidly aiding, and, indeed, will soon secure, the absolute realisation of the Seer's prediction.

In connection with this prophecy we think that we have discovered a Celtic origin for the term Beauly. It is generally supposed to have been derived from the French word "Beaulieu".

The village being originally at "Bealaidh-Achadh," and so called when the present Beauly was nowhere, what can be more natural than the supposition that the inhabitants carried the original name of their original village along with them, and now present us with the Gaelic "Bealaidh," anglified into Beauly.

This is not such a fine theory as the French one, but it is more likely to be the true one, and is more satisfactory to the student of Gaelic topography.

We have several versions of the prophecy regarding the carrying away of the Stone Bridge across the River Ness, which stood near the place where the present Suspension Bridge stands. Mr. Macintyre supplies the following, and Mr.

Maclennan's version is very much the same:—"He foretold that the Ness bridge would be swept away by a great flood, while crowded with people, and while a man riding a white horse and a woman 'enciente' were crossing it. Either the prophet's second-sight failed him on the occasion, or tradition has not preserved the correct version of the prediction, for it is well known that no human being was carried away by the bridge when it was swept by the extraordinary flood of 1849."

As a matter of fact, there was no man riding a white horse on the bridge at the time, but a man—Matthew Campbell—and a woman were crossing it, the arches tumbling one by one at their heels as they flew across; but managed to reach the western shore in safety, just as the last arch was crumbling under their feet. Campbell, who was behind, coming up to the woman, caught her in his arms, and with a desperate bound cleared the crumbling structure.

The Seer also foretold that before the latter prediction was fulfilled "people shall pick gooseberries from a bush growing on the stone ledge of one of the arches". There are many now living who remember this gooseberry bush, and who have seen it in bloom and blossom, and with fruit upon it.

It grew on the south side of the bridge, on the third or fourth pier, and near the iron grating which supplied a dismal light to the dungeon which in those days was the Inverness prison.

Maclean, "A Nonagenarian," writing forty years ago, says nothing of the bush, but, while writing of the predicted fall of the bridge, states, with regard to it, that "an old tradition or prophecy is, that many lives will be lost at its fall, and that this shall take place when there are seven females on the

bridge, in a state poetically described as that ‘in which ladies wish to be who love their lords’.”

This was written, as will be seen by comparing dates, several years before the bridge was carried away in 1849, showing unmistakably that the prophecy was not concocted after the event.

“The natural arch, or ‘Clach tholl,’ near Storehead in Assynt, will fall with a crash so loud as to cause the laird of Leadmore’s cattle, twenty miles away, to break their tethers.”

This was fulfilled in 1841, Leadmore’s cattle having one day strayed from home to within a few hundred yards of the arch, when it fell with such a crash as to send them home in a frantic fright, tearing everything before them. Hugh Miller refers to this prediction, as also to several others, in the work already alluded to—“Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland,” pp. 161, 162, 163.

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About sixteen years ago, there lived in the village of “Baile Mhuilinn,” in the West of Sutherlandshire, an old woman of about 95 years of age, known as Baraball n’ic Coinnich (Annabella Mackenzie).

From her position, history, and various personal peculiarities, it was universally believed in the district that she was no other than the Baraball n’ic Coinnich of whom the Brahan Seer predicted that she would die of the measles.

She had, however, arrived at such an advanced age, without any appearance or likelihood of her ever having that disease, that the prophet was rapidly losing credit in the district.

About this time the measles had just gone the round of the place, and had made considerable havoc among old and young; but when the district was, so to speak, convalescent, the measles paid Baraball a visit, and actually carried her away, when within a few years of five score, leaving no doubt whatever in the minds of the people that she had died as foretold centuries before by the famous Coinneach Odhar.

The Seer, one day, pointing to the now celebrated Strathpeffer mineral wells, said:—"Uninviting and disagreeable as it now is, with its thick crusted surface and unpleasant smell, the day will come when it shall be under lock and key, and crowds of pleasure and health seekers shall be seen thronging its portals, in their eagerness to get a draught of its waters."

Regarding the "land-grasping" Urquharts of Cromarty he predicted "that, extensive though their possessions in the Black Isle now are, the day will come—and it is close at hand—when they will not own twenty acres in the district." This, like many of his other predictions, literally came to pass, although nothing could then have been more unlikely; for, at the time, the Urquharts possessed the estates of Kinbeachie, Braelangwell, Newhall, and Monteagle, but at this moment their only possession in the Black Isle is a small piece of Braelangwell.

That "the day will come when fire and water shall run in streams through all the streets and lanes of Inverness," was a prediction, the fulfilment of

which was quite incomprehensible, until the introduction of gas and water through pipes into every corner of the town.

"The day will come when long strings of carriages without horses shall run between Dingwall and Inverness, and more wonderful still, between Dingwall and the Isle of Skye." It is hardly necessary to point out that this refers to the railway carriages now running in those districts.

That "a bald black girl will be born at the back of the Church of Gairloch" (Beirear nighean mhaol dubh air cùl Eaglais Ghearrloch), has been fulfilled. During one of the usual large gatherings at the Sacramental Communion a well-known young woman was taken in labour, and before she could be removed she gave birth to the "nighean mhaol dubh," whose descendants are well known and pointed out in the district to this day as the fulfilment of Coinneach's prophecy.

That "a white cow will give birth to a calf in the garden behind Gairloch House," has taken place within the memory of people still living; that, in Fowerdale, "a black hornless cow (Bo mhaol dubh) will give birth to a calf with two heads," happened within our own recollection. These predictions were well known to people before they came to pass.

The following are evidently fragments regarding the Lovat Estates. He said:—

Thig fear tagair bho dheas,

Mar eun bho phreas.

Fasaidh e mar luibh,

’S sgaoilidh e mar shiol,

’S cuiridh e teine ri Ardrois.

(A Claimant will come from the South

Like a bird from a bush;

He will grow like an herb;

He will spread like seed,

And set fire to Ardross.)

“Mhac Shimidh ball-dubh, a dh’fhagus an oighreachd gun an t-oighre dligheach.” (Mac Shimidh (Lovat), the black-spotted, who will leave the Estate without the rightful heir.)

“An Sisealach claon ruadh, a dh’fhagus an oighreachd gun an t-oighre dligheach.” (Chisholm, the squint-eyed, who will leave the estate without the rightful heir.)

“An tighearna stòrach a dh’fhagus oighreachd Ghearrloch gun an t-oighre dligheach.” (The buck-toothed laird who will leave the estate of Gairloch without the rightful heir), are also fragments.

We do not know whether there has been any Lovat or Chisholm with the peculiar personal characteristics mentioned by the Seer, and shall be glad to receive information on the point, as well as a fuller and more particular version of the prophecy.

We are aware, however, that Sir Hector Mackenzie of Gairloch was buck-toothed, and that he was always known among his tenants in the west, as

"An tighearna stòrach".

We heard old people maintaining that Coinneach was correct even in this instance, and that his prediction has been actually fulfilled; but, at present, we abstain from going into that part of this family history which would throw light on the subject. A gentleman is trying to assert rights to the Lovat estates at the present moment.

Before proceeding to give such of the prophecies regarding the family of Seaforth as have been so literally fulfilled in the later annals of that once great and powerful house—the history of the family being so intimately interwoven with, and being itself really the fulfilment of the Seer's predictions—it may interest the reader to have a cursory glance at it from the earliest period in which the family appears in history.

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SKETCH OF THE FAMILY OF SEAFORTH

✦

The most popularly-received theory regarding the Mackenzies is that they are descended from an Irishman of the name of Colinas Fitzgerald, son of the Earl of Kildare or Desmond, who distinguished himself by his bravery at the battle of Largs, in 1263. It is said that his courage and valour were so singularly distinguished that King Alexander the Third took him under his special protection, and granted him a charter of the lands of Kintail, in Wester Ross, bearing date from Kincardine, January the 9th, 1263.

According to the fragmentary "Record of Icolmkill," upon which the claim of the Irish origin of the clan is founded, a personage, described as "Peregrinus et Hibernus nobilis ex familia Geraldinorum"—that is "a noble stranger and Hibernian, of the family of the Geraldines"—being driven from Ireland with a considerable number of his followers was, about 1261, very graciously received by the King, and afterwards remained at his court.

Having given powerful aid to the Scots at the Battle of Largs, two years afterwards he was rewarded by a grant of the lands of Kintail, which were erected into a free barony by royal charter, dated as above mentioned. Mr.

Skene, however, says that no such document as this Icolmkill Fragment was ever known to exist, as nobody has ever seen it; and as for Alexander's charter, he declares (Highlanders, vol. ii., p. 235) that it "bears the most

palpable marks of having been a forgery of a later date, and one by no means happy in the execution".

Besides, the words "Colino Hiberno" contained in it do not prove this Colin to have been an Irishman, as Hiberni was at that period a common appellation for the Gael of Scotland.

Burke, in the "Peerage" has adopted the Irish origin of the clan, and the chiefs themselves seem to have adopted this theory, without having made any particular inquiry as to whether it was well founded or not. The Mackenzie chiefs were thus not exempt from the almost universal, but most unpatriotic, fondness exhibited by many other Highland chiefs for a foreign origin.

In examining the traditions of our country, we are forcibly struck with this peculiarity of taste. Highlanders despising a Caledonian source trace their ancestors from Ireland, Norway, Sweden, or Normandy.

The progenitors of the Mackenzies can be traced with greater certainty, and with no less claim to antiquity, from a native ancestor, Gillean (Cailean) Og, or Colin the Younger, a son of Cailean na h'Airde, ancestor of the Earls of Ross; and, from the MS. of 1450, their Gaelic descent may now be considered beyond dispute.

Until the forfeiture of the Lords of the Isles, the Mackenzies always held their lands from the Earls of Ross, and followed their banner in the field, but after the forfeiture of that great and powerful earldom, the Mackenzies rapidly rose on the ruins of the Macdonalds to the great power, extent of territorial possession, and almost regal magnificence for

which they were afterwards distinguished among the other great clans of the north.

They, in the reign of James the First, acquired a very powerful influence in the Highlands, and became independent of any superior but the Crown. Mackenzie and his followers were, in fact, about the most potent chief and clan in the whole Highlands.

Kenneth, son of Angus, is supposed to have commenced his rule in Kintail about 1278, and was succeeded by his son, John, in 1304, who was in his turn succeeded by his son, Kenneth. John, Kenneth's son, was called Iain MacChoinnich, John MacKenneth, or John son of Kenneth, hence the family name Mackenny or Mackenzie.

The name Kenneth in course of time became softened down to Kenny or Kenzie. It is well known that, not so very long ago, z in this and all other names continued to be of the same value as the letter y, just as we still find it in Menzies, MacFadzean, and many others. There seems to be no doubt whatever that this is the real origin of the Mackenzies, and of their name.

Murchadh, or Murdo, son of Kenneth, it is said, received a charter of the lands of Kintail from David II.

In 1463, Alexander Mackenzie of Kintail obtained the lands of Strathgarve, and other possessions, from John, Earl of Ross. They afterwards strenuously and successfully opposed every attempt made by the Macdonalds to obtain possession of the forfeited earldom.

Alexander was succeeded by his son, Kenneth, who married Lady Margaret Macdonald, daughter of the forfeited Earl John, Lord of the

Isles; but through some cause, Mackenzie divorced the lady, and sent her home in a most ignominious and degrading manner.

She had only one eye, and Kintail sent her home riding a one-eyed steed, accompanied by a one-eyed servant, followed by a one-eyed dog. All these circumstances exasperated the lady's family to such an extent as to make them ever after the mortal and sworn enemies of the Mackenzies.

Kenneth Og, his son by the divorced wife, became chief in 1493. Two years afterwards, he and Farquhar Mackintosh were imprisoned by James V. in Edinburgh Castle. In 1497, however, they both made their escape, but were, on their way to the Highlands, seized, in a most treacherous manner, at Torwood, by the laird of Buchanan. Kenneth Og made a stout resistance, but he was ultimately slain, and Buchanan sent his head as a present to the King.

Leaving no issue, Kenneth was succeeded by his brother John, whose mother, Agnes Fraser, his father's second wife, was a daughter of Lovat. He had several other sons, from whom have sprung other branches of the Mackenzies.

As John was very young, his uncle, Hector Roy (Eachainn Ruadh) Mackenzie, progenitor of the house of Gairloch, assumed command of the clan and the guardianship of the young chief.

Gregory informs us, that "under his rule the Clan Kenzie became involved in feuds with the Munroes and other clans; and Hector Roy himself became obnoxious to the Government as a disturber of the public peace. His intentions towards the young chief of Kintail were considered very dubi-

ous, and the apprehensions of the latter and his friends having been roused, Hector was compelled by law to yield up the estate and the command of the tribe to the proper heir."

John, the lawful heir, on obtaining possession, at the call of James IV., marched at the head of his clan to the fatal field of Flodden, where he was made prisoner by the English, but afterwards escaped.

⁂

On King James the Fifth's expedition to the Western Isles in 1540, John joined him at Kintail, and accompanied him throughout his whole journey. He fought with his clan at the battle of Pinkie in 1547, and died in 1561, when he was succeeded by his son, Kenneth, who had two sons by a daughter of the Earl of Athole—Colin and Roderick—the latter becoming ancestor of the Mackenzies of Redcastle, Kincraig, Rosend, and several other branches.

This Colin, who was the eleventh chief, fought for Queen Mary at the battle of Langside. He was twice married. By his first wife, Barbara Grant of Grant—whose elopement with him will be found described in a poem in the Highland Ceilidh, Vol. I., pp.

215-220, of the Celtic Magazine—he had four sons and three daughters, namely—Kenneth, who became his successor; Sir Roderick Mackenzie of Tarbat, ancestor of the Earls of Cromartie; Colin, ancestor of the Mackenzies of Kennock and Pitlundie; and Alexander, ancestor of the Mackenzies of Kilcoy, and other families of the name.

By Mary, eldest daughter of Roderick Mackenzie of Davochmaluag, he had a natural son, Alexander, from whom descended the Mackenzies of Applecross, Coul, Delvin, Assynt, and others of note in history.

Kenneth, the eldest son, soon after succeeding his father, was engaged in supporting Torquil Macleod of Lewis, surnamed the "Conanach," the disinherited son of the Macleod of Lewis, and who was closely related to himself.

Torquil conveyed the barony of Lewis to the Chief of the Mackenzies by formal deed, the latter causing the usurper to the estate, and his followers, to be beheaded in 1597.

He afterwards, in the following year, joined Macleod of Harris and Macdonald of Sleat, in opposing James the Sixth's project for the colonisation of the Lewis by the well-known adventurers from the "Kingdom of Fife".

In 1602, the old and long-standing feud between the Mackenzies and the Macdonalds of Glengarry, concerning their lands in Wester Ross, was renewed with infuriated violence.

Ultimately, after great bloodshed and carnage on both sides, an arrangement was arrived at by which Glengarry renounced for ever, in favour of Mackenzie, the Castle of Strome and all his lands in Lochalsh, Lochcarron, and other places in the vicinity, so long the bone of contention between these powerful and ferocious chieftains.

In 1607, a Crown charter for these lands was granted to Kenneth, thus materially adding to his previous possessions, power, and influence. "All the

Highlands and Isles, from Ardnamurchan to Strathnaver, were either the Mackenzies' property or under their vassalage, some few excepted," and all around them were bound to them "by very strict bonds of friendship".

In this same year Kenneth received, through some influence at Court, a gift, under the Great Seal, of the Island of Lewis, in virtue of, and thus confirming, the resignation of this valuable and extensive property previously made in his favour by Torquil Macleod.

A complaint was, however, made to his Majesty by those of the colonists who survived, and Mackenzie was again forced to resign it. By patent, dated the 19th of November, 1609, he was created a peer of the realm, as Lord Mackenzie of Kintail.

Soon after, the colonists gave up all hopes of being able to colonize the Lewis, and the remaining adventurers—Sir George Hay and Sir James Spens—were easily prevailed upon to sell their rights to Lord Mackenzie, who at the same time succeeded in securing a grant from the king of that part of the island forfeited by Lord Balmerino, another of the adventurers.

He (Lord Mackenzie) now secured a commission of fire and sword against the islanders, soon arrived with a strong force, and speedily reduced them to obedience, with the exception of Neil Macleod and a few of his followers.

The struggle between these two continued for a time, but ultimately Mackenzie managed to obtain possession of the whole island, and it remained in the possession of the family until it was sold by the "Last of the Seaforths".

This, the first, Lord Mackenzie of Kintail died in 1611. One of his sons, Simon Mackenzie of Lochslin, by his second wife, Isabella, daughter of Sir Alexander Ogilvie of Powrie, was the father of the celebrated Sir George Mackenzie, already referred to.

His eldest son, Colin, who succeeded him as second Lord Mackenzie of Kintail, was created first Earl of Seaforth, by patent dated the 3rd December, 1623, to himself and his heirs male. Kenneth, Colin's grandson, and third Earl of Seaforth, distinguished himself by his loyalty to Charles the Second during the Commonwealth.

He supported the cause of the Royalists so long as there was an opportunity of fighting for it in the field, and when forced to submit to the ruling powers, he was committed to prison, where, with much firmness of mind and nobility of soul, he endured a tedious captivity during many years, until he was ultimately released, after the Restoration, by authority of the king.

He married a lady descended from a branch of his own family, Isabella Mackenzie, daughter of Sir John Mackenzie of Tarbat, and sister of the first Earl of Cromartie.

To her cruel and violent conduct may undoubtedly be traced the remarkable doom which awaited the family of Seaforth, which was predicted in such an extraordinary manner by Coinneach Odhar, fulfilled in its minutest details, and which we are, in the following pages, to place before the reader.

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SEAFORTH'S DREAM

✦

Before proceeding to relate the Seer's remarkable prediction, and the extraordinary minuteness with which it has been fulfilled, we shall give the particulars of a curious dream by Lord Seaforth, which was a peculiar forecast of the loss of his faculties of speech and hearing during the latter part of his eventful life.

It has been supplied by a member of the family, who shows an unmistakable interest in everything calculated to throw light on the "prophecies," and who evidently believes them not to be merely an old wife's tale. We give it verbatim et literatim:—"The last Lord Seaforth was born in full possession of all his faculties. When about twelve years of age scarlet fever broke out in the school at which he was boarding. All the boys who were able to be sent away were returned to their homes at once, and some fifteen or twenty boys who had taken the infection were moved into a large room, and there treated.

After a week had passed, some boys naturally became worse than others, and some of them were in great danger. One evening, before dark, the attendant nurse, having left the dormitory, for a few minutes, was alarmed by a cry. She instantly returned, and found Lord Seaforth in a state of great excitement. After he became calmer, he told the nurse that he had seen, soon after she had left the room, the door opposite to his bed silently open, and a hideous old woman came in. She had a wallet full of something hanging from her neck in front of her.

She paused on entering, then turned to the bed close to the door, and stared steadily at one of the boys lying in it. She then passed to the foot of the next boy's bed, and, after a moment, stealthily moved up to the head, and taking from her wallet a mallet and peg, drove the peg into his forehead.

Young Seaforth said he heard the crash of the bones, though the boy never stirred. She then proceeded round the room, looking at some boys longer than at others. When she came to him, his suspense was awful.

He felt he could not resist or even cry out, and he never could forget, in years after, that moment's agony, when he saw her hand reaching down for a nail, and feeling his ears. At last, after a look, she slunk off, and slowly completing the circuit of the room, disappeared noiselessly through the same door by which she had entered.

Then he felt the spell seemed to be taken off, and uttered the cry which had alarmed the nurse. The latter laughed at the lad's story, and told him to go to sleep. When the doctor came, an hour later, to make his rounds, he observed that the boy was feverish and excited, and asked the nurse afterwards if she knew the cause, whereupon she reported what had occurred.

The doctor, struck with the story, returned to the boy's bedside and made him repeat his dream. He took it down in writing at the moment. The following day nothing eventful happened, but, in course of time, some got worse, a few indeed died, others suffered but slightly, while some, though they recovered, bore some evil trace and consequence of the fever for the rest of their lives.

The doctor, to his horror, found that those whom Lord Seaforth had described as having a peg driven into their foreheads, were those who died from the fever; those whom the old hag passed by recovered, and were none the worse; whereas those she appeared to look at intently, or handled, all suffered afterwards.

Lord Seaforth left his bed of sickness almost stone deaf; and, in later years, grieving over the loss of his four sons, absolutely and entirely ceased to speak."

We shall now relate the circumstances connected with the prophecy, and continue an account of the Seaforths' connection with it to the end of the chapter.

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SEAFORTH'S DOOM

✦

Kenneth, the third Earl, had occasion to visit Paris on some business after the Restoration of King Charles the Second, and after having secured his liberty. He left the Countess at Brahan Castle, unattended by her lord, and, as she thought, forgotten, while he was enjoying the dissipations and amusements of the French capital, which seemed to have many attractions for him, for he prolonged his stay far beyond his original intention.

Lady Seaforth had become very uneasy concerning his prolonged absence, more especially as she received no letters from him for several months. Her anxiety became too strong for her power of endurance, and led her to have recourse to the services of the local prophet.

She accordingly sent messages to Strathpeffer, summoning Coinneach to her presence, to obtain from him, if possible, some tidings of her absent lord. Coinneach, as we have seen, was already celebrated, far and wide, throughout the whole Highlands, for his great powers of divination, and his relations with the invisible world.

Obeying the orders of Lady Seaforth, Kenneth arrived at the Castle, and presented himself to the Countess, who required him to give her information concerning her absent lord. Coinneach asked where Seaforth was supposed to be, and said, that he thought he would be able to find him if he was still alive.

He applied the divination stone to his eye, and laughed loudly, saying to the Countess, “Fear not for your lord, he is safe and sound, well and hearty, merry and happy”. Being now satisfied that her husband’s life was safe, she wished Kenneth to describe his appearance; to tell her where he was now engaged, and all his surroundings.

“Be satisfied,” he said, “ask no questions, let it suffice you to know that your lord is well and merry.” “But,” demanded the lady, “where is he? with whom is he? and is he making any preparations for coming home?”

“Your lord,” replied the seer, “is in a magnificent room, in very fine company, and far too agreeably employed at present to think of leaving Paris.” The Countess, finding that her lord was well and happy, began to fret that she had no share in his happiness and amusements, and to feel even the pangs of jealousy and wounded pride.

She thought there was something in the seer’s looks and expression which seemed to justify such feelings. He spoke sneeringly and maliciously of her husband’s occupations, as much as to say, that he could tell a disagreeable tale if he would.

The lady tried entreaties, bribes, and threats to induce Coinneach to give a true account of her husband, as he had seen him, to tell who was with him, and all about him. Kenneth pulled himself together, and proceeded to say —“As you will know that which will make you unhappy, I must tell you the truth. My lord seems to have little thought of you, or of his children, or of his Highland home. I saw him in a gay-gilded room, grandly decked out in velvets, with silks and cloth of gold, and on his knees before a fair lady, his arm round her waist, and her hand pressed to his lips.”

At this unexpected and painful disclosure, the rage of the lady knew no bounds. It was natural and well merited, but its object was a mistake. All the anger which ought to have been directed against her husband, and which should have been concentrated in her breast, to be poured out upon him after his return, was spent upon poor Coinneach Odhar.

She felt the more keenly, that the disclosures of her husband's infidelity had not been made to herself in private, but in the presence of the principal retainers of her house, so that the Earl's moral character was blasted, and her own charms slighted, before the whole clan; and her husband's desertion of her for a French lady was certain to become the public scandal of all the North of Scotland.

She formed a sudden resolution with equal presence of mind and cruelty. She determined to discredit the revelations of the seer, and to denounce him as a vile slanderer of her husband's character.

She trusted that the signal vengeance she was about to inflict upon him as a liar and defamer would impress the minds, not only of her own clan, but of all the inhabitants of the counties of Ross and Inverness, with a sense of her thorough disbelief in the scandalous story, to which she nevertheless secretly attached full credit.

Turning to the seer, she said, "You have spoken evil of dignities, you have vilified the mighty of the land; you have defamed a mighty chief in the midst of his vassals, you have abused my hospitality and outraged my feelings, you have sullied the good name of my lord in the halls of his ancestors, and you shall suffer the most signal vengeance I can inflict—you shall suffer the death".

Coinneach was filled with astonishment and dismay at this fatal result of his art. He had expected far other rewards from his art of divination. However, he could not at first believe the rage of the Countess to be serious; at all events, he expected that it would soon evaporate, and that, in the course of a few hours, he would be allowed to depart in peace.

He even so far understood her feelings that he thought she was making a parade of anger in order to discredit the report of her lord's shame before the clan; and he expected that when this object was served, he might at length be dismissed without personal injury. But the decision of the Countess was no less violently conceived than it was promptly executed.

The doom of Coinneach was sealed. No time was to be allowed for remorseless compunction. No preparation was permitted to the wretched man. No opportunity was given for intercession in his favour. The miserable seer was led out for immediate execution.

Such a stretch of feudal oppression, at a time so little remote as the reign of Charles II., may appear strange. A castle may be pointed out, however, viz., Menzies Castle, much less remote from the seat of authority, and the Courts of Law, than Brahan, where, half a century later, an odious vassal was starved to death by order of the wife of the chief, the sister of the great and patriotic Duke of Argyll!

When Coinneach found that no mercy was to be expected either from the vindictive lady or her subservient vassals, he resigned himself to his fate. He drew forth his white stone, so long the instrument of his supernatural intelligence, and once more applying it to his eye, said—"I see into the far future, and I read the doom of the race of my oppressor. The long-de-

scended line of Seaforth will, ere many generations have passed, end in extinction and in sorrow. I see a chief, the last of his house, both deaf and dumb. He will be the father of four fair sons, all of whom he will follow to the tomb.

He will live careworn and die mourning, knowing that the honours of his line are to be extinguished for ever, and that no future chief of the Mackenzies shall bear rule at Brahan or in Kintail. After lamenting over the last and most promising of his sons, he himself shall sink into the grave, and the remnant of his possessions shall be inherited by a white-coifed (or white-hooded) lassie from the East, and she is to kill her sister.

And as a sign by which it may be known that these things are coming to pass, there shall be four great lairds in the days of the last deaf and dumb Seaforth—Gairloch, Chisholm, Grant, and Raasay—of whom one shall be buck-toothed, another hare-lipped, another half-witted, and the fourth a stammerer. Chiefs distinguished by these personal marks shall be the allies and neighbours of the last Seaforth; and when he looks around him and sees them, he may know that his sons are doomed to death, that his broad lands shall pass away to the stranger, and that his race shall come to an end."

When the seer had ended this prediction, he threw his white stone into a small loch, and declared that whoever should find that stone would be similarly gifted. Then submitting to his fate, he was at once executed, and this wild and fearful doom ended his strange and uncanny life.

Sir Bernard Burke, to whose "Vicissitudes of Families" we are mainly indebted for this part of the Prophecies, says:—With regard to the four

Highland lairds, who were to be buck-toothed, hare-lipped, half-witted, and a stammerer—Mackenzie, Baronet of Gairloch; Chisholm of Chisholm; Grant, Baronet of Grant; and Macleod of Raasay—I am uncertain which was which. Suffice it to say, that the four lairds were marked by the above-mentioned distinguishing personal peculiarities, and all four were the contemporaries of the last of the Seaforths.

We believe Sir Hector Mackenzie of Gairloch was the buck-toothed laird (an Tighearna Stòrach); the Chisholm, the hare-lipped; Grant, the half-witted; and Raasay, the stammerer, all of whom were contemporaries of the last Lord Seaforth.

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THE SEER'S DEATH

✦

Mr. Macintyre supplies the following account of the Seaforth prophecy and the Seer's death, as related at this day, in the Black Isle:—

Coinneach's supernatural power was at length the cause which led to his untimely and cruel death. At a time when there was a convivial gathering in Brahan Castle, a large concourse of local aristocratic guests was present.

As the youthful portion were amusing themselves in the beautiful grounds or park surrounding the castle, and displaying their noble forms and features as they thought to full advantage, a party remarked in Coinneach Odhar's hearing, that such a gathering of gentlemen's children could rarely be seen.

The seer answered with a sneer, "that he saw more in the company of the children of footmen and grooms than of the children of gentlemen," (Is mo th'ann do chlann ghillean-buird agus do chlann ghillean-stabuil na th'ann do chlann dhaoin' uaisle), a remark which soon came to the ears of Lady Seaforth and the other ladies present, who were so much offended and provoked at this base insinuation as to the paternity of the Brahan guests, that they determined at once to have condign punishment on the once respected seer.

He was forthwith ordered to be seized; and, after eluding the search of his infuriated pursuers for some time, was at last apprehended. Seeing he had no way of escape, he once more applied the magic stone to his eye, and ut-

tered the well-known prophetic curse [already given] against the Brahan family, and then threw the stone into a cow's footmark, which was full of water, declaring that a child would be born with two navels, or as some say, with four thumbs and six toes, who would in course of time discover it inside a pike, and who then would be gifted with Coinneach's prophetic power.

As it was the purpose of his pursuers to obtain possession of this wonderful stone, as well as of the prophet's person, search was eagerly made for it in the muddy waters in the footprint, when, lo! it was found that more water was copiously oozing from the boggy ground around, and rapidly forming a considerable lake, that effectually concealed the much-coveted stone.

The waters steadily increased, and the result, as the story goes, was the formation of Loch Ussie (Oozie). The poor prophet was then taken to Chanonry Point, where the stern arm of ecclesiastical authority, with unrelenting severity, burnt him to death in a tar-barrel for witchcraft.

It is currently reported that a person answering to the foregoing description was actually born in the neighbourhood of Conon, near Loch Ussie, and is still living. Of this I have been credibly informed by a person who saw him several times at the Muir of Ord markets.

We see from the public prints, our correspondent humorously continues, that the Magistrates and Police Commissioners of Dingwall contemplate to bring a supply of water for "Baile-'Chail" from Loch Ussie.

Might we humbly suggest with such a view in prospect, as some comfort to the burdened ratepayers, that there may be, to say the least, a probability in the course of such an undertaking of recovering the mystic stone, so long compelled to hide its prophetic light in the depths of Loch Ussie, and so present the world with the novel sight of having not only an individual gifted with second-sight, but also a Corporation; and, further, what would be a greater terror to evil-doers, a magistracy capable, in the widest sense of the word, of discerning between right and wrong, good and evil, and thus compelling the lieges in the surrounding towns and villages to exclaim involuntarily—O si sic omnes!

They might go the length even of lending it out, and giving you the use of it occasionally in Inverness.

When Coinneach Odhar was being led to the stake, fast bound with cords, Lady Seaforth exultingly declared that, having had so much unhallowed intercourse with the unseen world, he would never go to Heaven.

But the seer, looking round upon her with an eye from which his impending fate had not banished the ray of a joyful hope of rest in a future state, gravely answered—"I will go to Heaven, but you never shall; and this will be a sign whereby you can determine whether my condition after death is one of everlasting happiness or of eternal misery; a raven and a dove, swiftly flying in opposite directions will meet, and for a second hover over my ashes, on which they will instantly alight. If the raven be foremost, you have spoken truly; but if the dove, then my hope is well-founded."

And, accordingly, tradition relates, that after the cruel sentence of his hard-hearted enemies had been executed upon the Brahan Seer, and his

ashes lay scattered among the smouldering embers of the fagot, his last prophecy was most literally fulfilled; for those messengers, emblematically denoting—the one sorrow, the other joy—came speeding to the fatal spot, when the dove, with characteristic flight, closely followed by the raven, darted downwards and was first to alight on the dust of the departed Coinneach Odhar; thus completely disproving the positive and uncharitable assertion of the proud and vindictive Lady of Brahan, to the wonder and consternation of all the beholders.

Mr. Maclennan describes the cause of Coinneach's doom in almost identical terms; the only difference being, that while the former has the young ladies amusing themselves on the green outside, the latter describes them having a grand dance in the great hall of the Castle. The following is his account of the prophet's end:—

In terms of her expressed resolution, Lady Seaforth, some days after this magnificent entertainment, caused the seer to be seized, bound hand and foot, and carried forthwith to the Ness of Chanonry, where, despite his pitiful looks and lamentable cries, he was inhumanly thrown, head foremost, into a barrel of burning tar, the inside of which was thickly studded with sharp and long spikes driven in from the outside.

On the very day upon which Coinneach was sent away from the castle to meet his cruel fate, Lord Seaforth arrived, and was immediately informed of his Lady's resolution, and that Coinneach was already well on his way to the Chanonry, where he was to be burned that very day, under clerical supervision and approval.

My lord, knowing well the vindictive and cruel nature of his Countess, believed the story to be only too true. He waited neither for food nor refreshment; called neither for groom nor for servant, but hastened immediately to the stable, saddled his favourite steed with his own hands, for lairds were not so proud in those days, and set off at full speed, hoping to reach Chanonry Point before the diabolical intention of her ladyship and her religious (!) advisers should be carried into effect.

Never before nor since did Seaforth ride so furiously as he did on that day. He was soon at Fortrose, when he observed a dense smoke rising higher and higher from the promontory below. He felt his whole frame giving way, and a cold sweat came over his body, for he felt that the foul deed was, or was about to be, perpetrated.

He pulled himself together, however, and with fresh energy and redoubled vigour, spurred his steed, which had already been driven almost beyond its powers of endurance, to reach the fatal spot to save the seer's life. Within a few paces of where the smoke was rising the poor brute could endure the strain no longer; it fell down under him and died on the spot.

Still determined, if possible, to arrive in time, he rushed forward on foot, crying out at the height of his voice to those congregated at the spot, to save their victim.

It was, however, too late, for whether Seaforth's cries were heard or not, the victim of his lady's rage and vindictive nature had been thrown into the burning barrel a few moments before his intended deliverer had reached the fatal spot.

The time when this happened is not so very remote as to lead us to suppose that tradition could so grossly blunder as to record such a horrible and barbarous murder by a lady so widely and well-known as Lady Seaforth was, had it not taken place.

It is too much to suppose that if the seer had been allowed to die a peaceful and natural death, that such a story as this would have ever originated, be carried down and believed in from generation to generation, and be so well authenticated in many quarters as it now is. It may be stated that a large stone slab, now covered under the sand, lies a few yards east from the road leading from Fortrose to Fort-George Ferry, and about 250 yards north-west from the lighthouse, which is still pointed out as marking the spot where this inhuman tragedy was consummated, under the eyes and with the full approval of the highest dignitaries of the Church.

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THE FULFILMENT OF THE SEAFORTH PROPHECY

✦

Having thus disposed of the seer himself, we next proceed to give in detail the fulfilment of the prophecies regarding the family of his cruel murderer. And we regret to say that the family of Seaforth will, in this connection, fall to be disposed of finally and for ever, and in the manner which Coinneach had unquestionably predicted.

As already remarked, in due time the Earl returned to his home, after the fascinations of Paris had paled, and when he felt disposed to exchange frivolous or vicious enjoyment abroad for the exercise of despotic authority in the society of a jealous Countess at home. He was gathered to his fathers in 1678, and was succeeded by his eldest son, the fourth Earl.

It is not our purpose to relate here the vicissitudes of the family which are unconnected with the curse of Coinneach Odhar, further than by giving a brief outline, though they are sufficiently remarkable to supply a strange chapter of domestic history.

The fourth Earl married a daughter of the illustrious family of Herbert, Marquis of Powis, and he himself was created a Marquis by the abdicated King of St. Germains, while his wife's brother was created a Duke.

His son, the fifth Earl, having engaged in the rebellion of 1715, forfeited his estate and titles to the Crown; but in 1726 his lands were restored to

him, and he, and his son after him, lived in wealth and honour as great Highland chiefs.

The latter, who was by courtesy styled Lord Fortrose, represented his native county of Ross in several Parliaments about the middle of last century. In 1766, the honours of the peerage were restored to his son, who was created Viscount Fortrose, and in 1771, Earl of Seaforth; but those titles, which were Irish, did not last long, and became extinct at his death, in 1781.

None of these vicissitudes were foretold in the seer's prophecy; and, in spite of them all, the family continued to prosper. That ruin which the unsuccessful rising in 1715 had brought upon many other great houses, was retrieved in the case of Seaforth, by the exercise of sovereign favour; and restored possessions and renewed honours preserved the grandeur of the race.

But on the death of the last Earl, his second cousin, descended from a younger son of the third Earl and his vindictive Countess, inherited the family estates and the chiefdom of the Mackenzies, which he held for two short years, but never actually enjoyed, being slain at sea by the Mahrattas, at Gheriah, in the south of India, in 1783, after a gallant resistance.

He was succeeded by his brother, in whom, as the last of his race, the seer's prophecy was accomplished.

Francis Humberston Mackenzie was a very remarkable man. He was born in 1794, and although deaf, and latterly dumb, he was, by the force of his

natural abilities and the favour of fortune, able to fill an important position in the world.

It would have been already observed that the "Last of the Seaforths" was born in full possession of all his faculties, and that he only became deaf from the effects of a severe attack of scarlet fever, while a boy in school, which we have previously noticed in connection with his remarkable dream.

He continued to speak a little, and it was only towards the close of his life, and particularly during the last two years, that he was unable to articulate —or perhaps, unwilling to make the attempt, on finding himself the last male of his line.

He may be said to have, prior to this, fairly recovered the use of speech, for he was able to converse pretty distinctly; but he was so totally deaf, that all communications were made to him by signs or in writing.

Yet he raised a regiment at the beginning of the great European war; he was created a British peer in 1797, as Baron Seaforth of Kintail; in 1800 he went out to Barbadoes as Governor, and afterwards to Demerara and Berbice; and in 1808 he was made a Lieutenant-General. These were singular incidents in the life of a deaf and dumb man.

He married a very amiable and excellent woman, Mary Proby, the daughter of a dignitary of the Church, and niece of the first Lord Carysfort, by whom he had a fine family of four sons and six daughters.

When he considered his own position—deaf, and formerly dumb; when he saw his four sons, three of them rising to man's estate; and when he

looked around him, and observed the peculiar marks set upon the persons of the four contemporary great Highland lairds, all in strict accordance with Coinneach's prophecy—he must have felt ill at ease, unless he was able, with the incredulous indifference of a man of the world, to spurn the idea from him as an old wife's superstition.

However, fatal conviction was forced upon him, and on all those who remembered the family tradition, by the lamentable events which filled his house with mourning. One after another his three promising sons (the fourth died young) were cut off by death.

The last, who was the most distinguished of them all, for the finest qualities both of head and heart, was stricken by a sore and lingering disease, and had gone, with a part of the family, for his health, to the south of England. Lord Seaforth remained in the north, at Brahan Castle. A daily bulletin was sent to him from the sick chamber of his beloved son.

One morning, the accounts being rather more favourable, the household began to rejoice, and a friend in the neighbourhood, who was visiting the chief, came down after breakfast full of the good news, and gladly imparted it to the old family piper, whom he met in front of the Castle. The aged retainer shook his head and sighed—"Na, na," said he, "he'll never recover.

It's decreed that Seaforth must outlive all his four sons." This he said in allusion to the seer's prophecy; thus his words were understood by the family; and thus members of the family have again and again repeated the strange tale. The words of the old piper proved too true. A few more posts brought to Seaforth the tidings of the death of the last of his four sons.

At length, on the 11th January, 1815, Lord Seaforth died, the last of his race. His modern title became extinct. The chiefdom of the Mackenzies, divested of its rank and honour, passed away to a very remote collateral, who succeeded to no portion of the property, and the great Seaforth estates were inherited by a white-hooded lassie from the East.

Lord Seaforth's eldest surviving daughter, the Honourable Mary Frederica Elizabeth Mackenzie, had married, in 1804, Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, Bart., K.B., who was Admiral of the West India station while Seaforth himself was Governor in those islands.

Sir Samuel afterwards had the chief command in the Indian seas, whither his lady accompanied him, and spent several years with him in different parts of the East Indies.

He died while holding that high command, very nearly at the same time as Lord Seaforth, so that his youthful wife was a recent widow at the time, and returned home from India in her widow's weeds, to take possession of her paternal inheritance.

She was thus literally a white-coifed or white-hooded lassie (that is, a young woman in widow's weeds, and a Hood by name) from the East. After some years of widowhood, Lady Hood Mackenzie married a second time, Mr. Stewart, a grandson of the sixth Earl of Galloway, who assumed the name of Mackenzie, and established himself on his lady's extensive estates in the North.

Thus, the possessions of Seaforth may be truly said to have passed from the male line of the ancient house of Mackenzie. And still more strikingly

was this fulfilled, as regarded a large portion of these estates, when Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Mackenzie sold the great Island of Lewis to Sir James Matheson.

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After many years of happiness and prosperity, a frightful accident threw the family into mourning. Mrs. Stewart Mackenzie was one day driving her younger sister, the Hon. Caroline Mackenzie, in a pony carriage, among the woods in the vicinity of Brahan Castle. Suddenly, the ponies took fright, and started off at a furious pace. Mrs.

Stewart Mackenzie was quite unable to check them, and both she and her sister were thrown out of the carriage much bruised and hurt. She happily soon recovered from the accident, but the injury which her sister sustained proved fatal, and, after lingering for some time in a hopeless state, she died, to the inexpressible grief of all the members of her family. As Mrs.

Stewart Mackenzie was driving the carriage at the time of the accident, she may be said to have been the innocent cause of her sister's death, and thus to have fulfilled the last portion of Coinneach's prophecy which has yet been accomplished.

Thus we have seen that the last chief of Seaforth was deaf and dumb; that he had four sons; that he survived them all; that the four great Highland lairds who were his contemporaries were all distinguished by the peculiar personal marks the seer predicted; that his estates were inherited by a white-coifed or white-hooded lassie from the East; that his great posses-

sions passed into the hands of other races; and that his eldest daughter and heiress was so unfortunate as to be the innocent cause of her sister's death.

In this vary remarkable instance of family fate, the prophecy was not found out after the events occurred; it had been current for generations in the Highlands, and its tardy fulfilment was marked curiously and anxiously by an entire clan and a whole county.

Seaforth was respected and beloved far and near, and strangers, as well as friends and clansmen, mourned along with him the sorrows of his later years. The gradual development of the doom was watched with sympathy and grief, and the fate of Seaforth has been, during the last half-century of his life, regarded as one of the most curious instances of that second-sight for which the inhabitants of the Highlands of Scotland have been so long celebrated.

Mr. Stewart Mackenzie, the accomplished husband of the heiress of Seaforth, after being for many years a distinguished member of the House of Commons and a Privy Councillor, held several high appointments in the Colonial Dominions of the British Crown.

He was successively Governor of Ceylon and Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands, and died, universally beloved and lamented, in the year 1843.

Lockhart in his Life of Scott, in reference to the Seaforth prediction, says: —"Mr. Morrit can testify thus far—that he heard the prophecy quoted in the Highlands at a time when Lord Seaforth had two sons alive, and in good health, and that it certainly was not made after the event"; and he

goes on to tell us that Scott and Sir Humphrey Davy were most certainly convinced of its truth, as also many others who had watched the latter days of Seaforth in the light of those wonderful predictions.

The late Duncan Davidson of Tulloch, Lord-Lieutenant of the County of Ross, on reading our Second edition, wrote to the author, under date of May 21, 1878, as follows:—"Many of these prophecies I heard of upwards of 70 years ago, and when many of them were not fulfilled, such as the late Lord Seaforth surviving his sons, and Mrs. Stewart-Mackenzie's accident, near Brahan, by which Miss Caroline Mackenzie was killed."

Tulloch was, he said, during the latter years of Lord Seaforth, a regular visitor at Brahan Castle, and often heard the predictions referred to among members of the family. The letter is in our possession, and it was published, during Tulloch's life, and by his special permission, in Mackenzie's History of the Mackenzies, p. 267.

An attempt was recently made to sell the remaining possessions of the family, but fortunately, for the present, this attempt has been defeated by the interposition of the Marchioness of Tweeddale and Mrs. Colonel Stanley, daughters of the present nominal possessor of the property.

At the time a leading article appeared in the Edinburgh Daily Review giving an outline of the family history of the Seaforths. After describing how the fifth Earl, with the fidelity characteristic of his house, "true as the dial to the sun," embraced the losing side in "the Fifteen"; fought at the head of his clan at Sheriffmuir; how in 1719 he, along with the Marquis of Tullibardine, and the Earl Marischal, made a final attempt to bring the "auld Stewarts back again"; how he was dangerously wounded in an en-

counter with the Government forces at Glenshiel, and compelled to abandon the vain enterprise; how he was carried on board a vessel by his clansmen, conveyed to the Western Isles, and ultimately to France; how he was attainted by Parliament, and his estates forfeited to the Crown; how all the efforts of the Government failed to penetrate into Kintail, or to collect any rent from his faithful Macraes, whom the Seaforths had so often led victorious from many a bloody conflict, from the battle of Largs down to the Jacobite Rebellions of 1715 and 1719; and how the rents of that part of the estates were regularly collected and remitted to their exiled chief in France, with a devotion and faithfulness only to be equalled by their own countrymen when their beloved "bonnie Prince Charlie" was a wanderer, helpless and forlorn, at the mercy of his enemies, and with a reward of £30,000 at the disposal of many a poverty-stricken and starving Highlander, who would not betray his lawful Prince for all the gold in England; the article continues:—But their (the Seaforth's) downfall came at last, and the failure of the male line of this great historical family was attended with circumstances as singular as they were painful.

Francis, Lord Seaforth, the last Baron of Kintail, was, says Sir Walter Scott, "a nobleman of extraordinary talents, who must have made for himself a lasting reputation, had not his political exertions been checked by painful natural infirmity".

Though deaf from his sixteenth year, and inflicted also with a partial impediment of speech, he was distinguished for his attainments as well as for his intellectual activity.

He took a lively interest in all questions of art and science, especially in natural history, and displayed at once his liberality and his love of art by his munificence to Sir Thomas Lawrence, in the youthful straits and struggles of that great artist, and by his patronage of other artists.

Before his elevation to the peerage, Lord Seaforth represented Ross-shire in Parliament for a number of years, and was afterwards Lord-Lieutenant of the county.

During the revolutionary war with France, he raised a splendid regiment of Ross-shire Highlanders (the 78th, the second which had been raised among his clan), of which he was appointed Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant, and he ultimately attained the rank of Lieutenant-General in the Army.

He held for six years the office of Governor of Barbadoes, and, by his firmness and even-handed justice, he succeeded in putting an end to the practice of slave-killing, which at that time was not unfrequent in the Island, and was deemed by the planters a venial offence, to be punished only by a small fine.

⁂

Lord Seaforth was the happy father of three (four) sons and six daughters, all of high promise; and it seemed as if he were destined to raise the illustrious house of which he was the head, to a height of honour and power greater than it had ever yet attained. But the closing years of this nobleman were darkened by calamities of the severest kind.

The mismanagement of his estates in the West Indies involved him in inextricable embarrassments, and compelled him to dispose of a part of his Kintail estates—"the gift-land" of the family, as it was termed—a step which his tenantry and clansmen in vain endeavoured to avert, by offering to buy in the land for him, that it might not pass from the family.

He had previously been bereaved of two of his sons, and about the time that Kintail was sold, his only remaining son, a young man of talent and eloquence, the representative in parliament of his native county, suddenly died.

The broken-hearted father lingered on for a few months, his fine intellect enfeebled by paralysis, and yet, as Sir Walter Scott says, "not so entirely obscured but that he perceived his deprivation as in a glass, darkly."

Sometimes he was anxious and fretful because he did not see his son; sometimes he expostulated and complained that his boy had been allowed to die without his seeing him; and sometimes, in a less clouded state of intellect, he was sensible of his loss in its full extent. The last "Cabarfeidh" followed his son to the grave in January, 1815, and then—

Of the line of Fitzgerald remained not a male,

To bear the proud name of the Chiefs of Kintail.

The most remarkable circumstance connected with this sorrowful tale, is the undoubted fact that, centuries ago, a Seer of the Clan Mackenzie, known as Kenneth Oag (Odhar), predicted that when there should be a deaf and dumb "Cabarfeidh" (Staghead, the Celtic designation of the

chief of the clan, taken from the family crest), the "gift-land" of their territory (Kintail) would be sold, and the male line become extinct.

This prophecy was well known in the north long before its fulfilment, and was certainly not made after the event. "It connected," says Lockhart, "the fall of the house of Seaforth not only with the appearance of a deaf 'Cabarfeidh,' but with the contemporaneous appearance of various different physical misfortunes in several of the other great Highland chiefs, all of which are said to have actually occurred within the memory of the generation that has not yet passed away."

On the death of his lordship, his estates, with all their burdens and responsibilities, devolved on his eldest daughter, Lady Hood, whose second husband was James Stewart Mackenzie, a member of the Galloway family, and whose son has just been prevented from selling all that remains of the Seaforth estates.

"Our friend, Lady Hood," wrote Sir Walter Scott to Mr. Morritt, "will now be 'Cabarfeidh' herself. She has the spirit of a chieftainess in every drop of her blood, but there are few situations in which the cleverest women are so apt to be imposed upon as in the management of landed property, more especially of a Highland estate. I do fear the accomplishment of the prophecy that, when there should be a deaf 'Cabarfeidh,' the house was to fall."

The writer concludes thus:—"Scott's apprehensions proved only too well founded. One section after another of the estates had to be sold. The remaining portion of Kintail, the sunny braes of Ross, the church lands of Chanonry, the barony of Pluscarden, and the Island of Lews—a principal-

ity itself—were disposed of one after the other, till now nothing remains of the vast estates of this illustrious house except Brahan Castle, and a mere remnant of their ancient patrimony (and that in the hands of trustees), which the non-resident, nominal owner has just been prevented from alienating. Sic transit."

Leaving these extraordinary prophecies with the reader, to believe, disbelieve, or explain away on any principle or theory which may satisfy his reason, his credulity, or scepticism, we conclude with the following

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LAMENT FOR "THE LAST OF THE SEAFORTHS", BY SIR WALTER SCOTT

✦

In vain the bright course of thy talents to wrong

Fate deaden'd thine ear and imprison'd thy tongue,

For brighter o'er all her obstructions arose

The glow of the genius they could not oppose;

And who, in the land of the Saxon, or Gael,

Might match with Mackenzie, High Chief of Kintail?

Thy sons rose around thee in light and in love,

All a father could hope, all a friend could approve;

What 'vails it the tale of thy sorrows to tell?

In the spring time of youth and of promise they fell!

Of the line of MacKenneth remains not a male,

To bear the proud name of the Chief of Kintail.

And thou, gentle Dame, who must bear, to thy grief,

For thy clan and thy country the cares of a Chief,

Whom brief rolling moons in six changes have left,

Of thy husband and father and brethren bereft;

To thine ear of affection, how sad is the hail

That salutes thee—the heir of the line of Kintail!

Na 'm biodh an t' earball na bu ruighne bhiodh mo sgialachd na b' fhaide.

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APPENDIX: ON HIGHLAND SUPERSTITION, BY THE REV. ALEXANDER MACGREGOR

✦

It is lamentable that mankind in all ages of the world have been prone to the most degrading superstitions. The enlightened ages of antiquity were no more exempt from them than the most ignorant.

We know from the Bible how difficult it was to restrain the Jews from the most idolatrous and superstitious observances, and to confine them to the worship of the only living and true God.

This remarkable tendency of the Hebrew nation was caused, in all likelihood, by their sojourning for the long period of 400 years among the Egyptians, whose system of religion was a mass of idolatrous observances. They had a number of ideal gods, to whom they erected temples of prodigious size and architectural splendour.

Their principal deities, were Osiris and Isis, whom they considered typical of the sun and moon. But they had a great variety of other deities, animals of all kinds—(hence the golden calf of the Hebrews), the dog, the wolf, the hawk, the stork, the cat, and several other creatures.

They also adored their great river, the Nile, personifying it in the crocodile, to which they erected temples and appointed priests to serve at their altars. The Egyptians also believed in dreams, lucky and unlucky days, charms, omens, and magic—in short, they were grossly superstitious!

The absurdities of Egyptian superstition formed the basis of what followed in Greece and Rome. Fifteen hundred years before the birth of our blessed Saviour, Egypt was at the height of its civilisation, but then, too, it was at the height of its superstition.

The mythology and superstitious observances of the Greeks deserve to be noticed, both as a matter of amusement and instruction, but we can, in the meantime, hint at but a few particulars. They had no idea of the only living and true God. Their notions of Divinity were grovelling and contemptible.

Their gods were, as they believed, at one time heroes and rulers on earth, but still having their habitation somewhere within the boundaries of the Grecian territories.

We are made acquainted with the character of these imaginary deities by the numerous allusions made to them in the works of the Greek and Roman poets, as well as by the various sculptured figures which have been brought to light in modern times. Jupiter, the son of Saturn, was the chief God.

But even the great Jupiter himself did not enjoy unmolested his supreme dignity, for the offspring of Titan, a race of terrible giants, set Jupiter at defiance. They piled the mountains of Pelion and Ossa on the top of each other, and endeavoured to ascend into heaven, and to pull Jupiter down from his throne.

The gods, in great alarm, fled from Mount Olympus into Egypt, where they concealed their true character by assuming the form of various ani-

mals; but Jupiter, assisted by Hercules, succeeded in destroying the giants, and in reasserting his sovereign sway. And hence he is always represented on a throne, with a thunderbolt in his hand, and an eagle by his side.

Jupiter's brothers and children were the gods and goddesses of a great variety of distinct things—in fact, under the complicated mythology of Greece, every imaginable thing had its god or goddess.

For example, Jupiter's brother Neptune was god of the ocean, and is painted as a majestic figure, with a crown on his head, and a trident in his hand, and drawn in a car over the sea by powerful water-horses. Neptune has often appeared in his stately chariot on the decks of ships when crossing the Equator.

Then all on board who had never crossed the line before were brought into his presence, laid hold of, and plunged into a bath of water, where they received a smart shave, with tar for soap, and a rusty hoop for a razor.

Only the ladies on board were exempted from this unpleasant treatment, not because they had no beards, but by the powerful talismanic effect of slipping a few sovereigns into the hands of the seamen for grog.

The superstitions of the European Northmen, or Scandinavians (the early inhabitants of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland), were of a kind remarkably accordant with the cold and stern character of the regions which they occupied.

The dread names of their gods Odin, Thor, and other deities of the north are now only perpetuated in the names given to some of the days of the week. Thus, our term "Wednesday" is derived from "Oden's" or

"Woden's" day—the day of the week on which the northern Jupiter was specially worshipped. Our Thursday is from Thor, the second dignity among the fabulous gods.

As this day was called "Dies Jovis" by the Romans, we have a confirmation that Thor, the thunderer, was equivalent to the thundering Jove of the Grecian mythology. Friday takes its name from Freya, the beautiful daughter of Niord, and corresponds with the "Dies Venevis," or "Venus-day" of the Greeks and Romans.

Saturday is derived in the same manner from the god "Saeter" of the Scandinavians, or Saturn of the Greeks. Tuesday, or anciently "Tiesday" (a pronunciation still preserved in many parts in Scotland), is from "Tisa," the wife of Thor; Sunday and Monday were named from the sun and moon, both by the northern and southern nations of Europe, from a remote period.

DRUIDISM.—Interesting as are the ancient superstitions of Greece, Rome, and the northern regions of Europe, we feel a greater interest in the history of Druidism, the great superstition which flourished peculiarly among our own forefathers, the aboriginies of the British Islands.

Druidism was the religion of the ancient Celts or Gauls, and prevailed in France, and everywhere, indeed, wherever that ancient race had formed settlements. Several learned inquirers into the native Druidism have cavilled much about the etymology of the word.

Some writers, as Pliny, derive "Druidh" from the Greek "Drus" an oak; but we think that the proper etymon is the ancient Celtic vocable, "Drù" an

oak tree, from which no doubt "Drus" was taken. The Druids, we believe, had their name before the Greek language was in existence, and it is well known that the Greek itself is partly at least of Celtic origin.

As far as can be gathered from the statements of Cæsar, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, and others, the Druids not only formed the priesthood of the Celts, but appointed to themselves all the offices now usually discharged by the several learned professions.

There appears to have been three orders among their priests—the Druids proper, the Vates, and the Bards—who severally performed different functions. The Bards sung, in heroic verse, the brave actions of eminent men; the Vates studied the productions of nature and the laws; while the Druids directed the education of youth, and officiated in the affairs of religion and justice.

In their hands they commonly carried a long wand, and their arms and necks were decorated with golden chains and bracelets. But the most notable of their ornaments was an artificial egg set in gold, and of miraculous virtues.

They asserted that every one of these eggs, which they sold at enormous prices, was formed by a number of serpents, mysteriously conjoining for its production. When made, it was raised up in the air by the hissing of these reptiles, and was to be caught in a clean white cloth when falling to the ground.

The person who was fortunate enough to catch it had instantly to mount a swift horse, and escape from the angry serpents. Procured in this way, the

egg possessed the property of making the owner successful in all his undertakings. The open sky was the canopy under which they worshipped.

A wood or grove, fenced in by large stones, constituted the scenes where their rites were performed. In the centre of the groves was an open area, encompassed by large, erect stones, closely set together.

Here there were circles within circles, and in the centre of the inner one there was a stone of prodigious size, on which the victims were slain, and offered up to the Supreme Being. The fruit of the oak, and especially the mistletoe bough, were thought to possess a divine virtue.

The mistletoe is perhaps one of the most remarkable parasitic plants in the world, hence it became an object of superstitious regard. It grows chiefly on the oak and chesnut. It is an evergreen, and appears strange in winter, with its brilliant green leaves on an otherwise leafless tree.

It is thought that it springs from a seed carried by birds from tree to tree, landed in a crevice of the bark, where it sprouts, and derives its nourishment from the living wood, like a graft in a fruit tree.

The mistletoe bough grows sometimes as large as a bushel basket—sometimes four or five feet in diameter—of a roundish form, and covered with leaves of the brightest green.

Two white bulls were brought and fastened to a tree by the horns, then the arch-Druid ascended the tree, cropped the mistletoe with his golden knife, and received it in his robe, amid the shouts of the people. Then the bulls were sacrificed on the large stone, and the deity was invoked to bless the gift.

The Druids had an idol of gigantic size, formed of wicker-work in the rude likeness of a human being. They filled it with human victims, men and women. Straw and wood were piled around it, and the unfortunate creatures within perished in the flames by a slow, horrible death.

It is said by some historians that women were more frequently the victims of these superstitious cruelties than the men. Young, innocent, beautiful maidens were dragged to the altar, and sacrificed to the powers above.

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Many Druidical relics still exist. By far the most extraordinary of these remains are those at Stonehenge, on Salisbury plain, in Wiltshire. They are numerous on the Western Isles, and some are near Inverness, such as the relics at Clava, on Nairnside, and the circles at Strathnairn and at Culduthel.

Mona, or Anglesea, as it is now called, was their chief settlement; but it is in North Britain that the Druidical monuments are most abundant. As a specimen of a Druidical cairn, we may mention that on the Moor of Strathardle, in Perthshire—a stoney mound, ninety yards in circumference, and twenty-five feet high. Such monuments are numerous along the Grampian range.

There are also curious stones, called rocking-stones, supposed to be of Druidical origin. In the parish of Kells, in the Stewarty of Kirkcudbright, there is a rocking-stone called the “Logan-stone,” about ten tons in weight; and it is so nicely balanced upon another stone that the pressure of a child’s hand can set it in motion.

A similar stone may be seen on the glebe of the parish of Strath, in Skye. The artifices of the Druids to deceive the ignorant were numerous. For example, among the ancient Britons a meteor was supposed to be a vehicle for carrying to paradise the soul of some departed Druid.

So well did they engraft their absurd ideas on the minds of the ignorant, that, even at this distant day, the appearance of a ball of fire, meteor, or of what are called falling stars, creates, among the more credulous Highlanders, a belief that some illustrious spirit has taken its flight to eternity. From this circumstance we may infer, with Dr.

Smith, that "Dreug," the Gaelic for a meteor, is a contraction for "Druidheug"—a Druid's death. This ingenious antiquarian thinks that this Druidical fantasy had its origin in a tradition of Elijah's fiery chariot.

While Druidical superstitions were at one time prevalent over the continent of Europe and the adjacent Isles, their extinction is enveloped in the mystery of the dark ages. Up to a late period, however, some traces of Druidical customs were perceivable among the Scottish Celts. Dr.

Jamieson mentions that an old Highlander, so lately as the end of the eighteenth century, was in the habit of addressing the Deity by the title of Arch-Druid.

Dr. Smith says that the British Druids owed their decline to the following circumstances:—Trathal, the grandfather of Fingal, being chosen generalissimo of the Caledonian army sent against the Romans, did not feel disposed, on his return, to resign his authority, even at the command of the

Druids; hence arose a civil war, in which the army of the church was defeated in several battles.

These overthrows were fatal to the Druids. They made several attempts to regain their dominions, but all were ineffectual. They retired to the I-thonn (the isle of waves), that is Iona, where their order was not quite extinct on the arrival of St. Columba on that island, in the sixth century.

FAIRIES.—Among the various spiritual beings to whom the credulity of mankind has given an imaginary existence, the fairies occupy a prominent place, and are specially worthy of notice. The fairy is distinguished by one peculiarity from every other being of a similar order.

Other spirits, such as dwarfs, brownies, elves, and such like, are represented as deformed creatures, whereas the fairy is a beautiful miniature of "the human form divine". It is perfect in face, delightful in figure, and more of angelic than human appearance. These points of distinction, with generally a dress of bright green, mark the personal individuality of the fairy.

The origin of the fairy superstition is ascribed to the Celtic race; hence in Ireland, the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and Wales, the fairies are even to this day believed by some to exist. They were usually called "good neighbours," "Daoine-sithe," men of peace, and yet, if offended, they became very inveterate in their spite.

They readily kidnapped unbaptised children, and even adult men and women, particularly young married females, to become nurses to the fairy

children. They lived under ground, or in little green hills, where the royal fairies held their courts. In their places all was beauty and splendour.

Their pageants and processions were far more magnificent than any that Eastern sovereigns could get up or poets devise. They rode upon milk-white steeds. Their dresses were brilliant beyond conception, and when they mingled in the dance, their music was more sublime by far than mortal lips or hands could ever produce. The fairy legends are numerous and various.

From an early period every fairy annalist concurred in giving to the king and queen of the fairies the name of Oberon and Titania. Titania, though not under this name, figures in the tale of Thomas Lermont, commonly called Thomas the Rhymer, one of the earliest traditions relative to the fairy tribe.

Thomas was a distinguished poet and prophet, who lived near Melrose, and was proprietor of Ercildoune. The year of his birth is uncertain, but he was an old man when Edward I. was carrying on war in Scotland. His predictions have long excited interest in his native country.

The following adventure, handed down in the words of an ancient ballad, befell this individual on the Eildon hills, in Roxburghshire:—

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True Thomas lay on Huntly bank,

A ferlie spied he with his e'e;

For there he saw a ladye bright

Come riding down by Eildon tree.

Her shirt was o' the grass-green silk,

Her mantle o' the velvet fyne;

At ilka telt o' her horse's mane

Hung fifty siller bells and nine.

The saddle of this visionary beauty's steed was of ivory, inlaid with gold. She had a quiver of arrows at her back, with a bow in one hand, and the other led three beautiful hounds in a leash.

True Thomas he pull'd off his cap,

And louted low down to his knee;

"All hail! thou mighty queen of heaven,

For thy peer on earth I ne'er did see!"

"O no! O no! Thomas," she said,

"That name does not belang to me;

I am but the queen of fair Elfland,

That am hither come to visit thee."

By some spell this fairy queen made Thomas her slave. She became changed into a hideous hag, yet he was compelled to follow her. They entered a cavern, and after wading through pools of blood, in pitchy dark-

ness for three days, they reached a beautiful orchard, where the lady resumed her former dignity and stateliness.

She took him to a gorgeous castle, where he joined with lords, and knights, and ladies in dancing to the most exquisite music. At the end of what he thought a short time, the queen told him that he had been seven years in the castle, and that he might return home. On parting, she gifted him "with a tongue that could never lie".

There are numberless such fairy legends, but one is enough for a specimen. Some of the poor creatures arraigned in Scotland for witchcraft admitted having had correspondence with the fairies. The trials of Bessie Dunlop in 1576, and of Alison Pearson in 1588, illustrate this statement.

Bessie Dunlop avowed that the ghost of one Thomas Reid appeared to her —a soldier slain at Pinkie in 1547—that he took her to fairyland, and introduced her to the queen. Alison Pearson also admitted her familiarity with the fairies, from whom she had received herbs for the cure of diseases.

It is remarkable that Patrick Adamson, an able scholar and divine, who was created Archbishop of St. Andrews by James VI., actually took the medicines prescribed by this poor woman, in the hope that they would transfer an illness with which he was seized to the body of one of his horses. These poor women were both convicted, and both were put to death at the stake.

No doubt there are some in the Highlands and Islands who still believe in the existence of the fairy race. The "sithiche," or fairy, is the most active

sprite in Highland mythology. It is a dexterous child-stealer, and must be carefully guarded against.

At birth many covert and cunning ceremonies are still used to baffle the fairy's power, otherwise the new-born child would be taken off to fairy-land, and a withered, little, living skeleton of a child laid in its stead. If offended, they are wantonly mischievous, and hurt severely, and perhaps kill with their arrows, such as annoy them.

These arrows are of stone, like a yellow flint, and shaped like a barbed arrow-head. They are called "saighdean sithe," or fairy arrows. These arrow-heads must have been extensively used in their warfare by the aboriginal people of the Isles (and not, of course, by the fairies), as they are still picked up here and there in the fields, and are all much of the same size and shape.

In Skye, and in the Hebrides in general, the fairies dwelt in green knolls or hillocks, called "sitheanan," and there is hardly a parish or district which has not its "sithean," or fairy-hill. I knew an old man in Skye who died about thirty years ago, at the age of about 100, whose name was Farquhar Beaton.

He so firmly believed in fairies and other superstitions that in his "grace before meat" he prayed thus:—

O Thi bheannuichte, cum ruinn, agus cuidich leinn, agus na tuiteadh do ghras oirn mar an t-uisge air druim a' gheoidh.

An uair a bhios fear 'na eigin air gob rutha, cuidich fein leis; agus bi mu'n cuairt duinn air tir, agus maille ruinn.

Gleidh an t-aosda agus an t-oga, ar mnathan agus ar paisdean,

ar spreidh agus ar feudal, o chumhachd agus o cheannas nan sithichean, agus o mhi-run gach droch-shula. Bitheadh slighe reidh romhainn, agus crioch shona aig ar turas.

Which may be translated thus:—

O Blessed One, provide for us and help us, and let not thy grace fall on us like the rain-drops on the back of a goose.

When a man is in danger on the point of a promontory at sea,

do thou succour him; and be about us and with us on dry land.

Preserve the aged and the young, our wives and our children,

our sheep and our cattle, from the power and dominion of the fairies, and from the malicious effects of every evil eye. Let a straight path be before us, and a happy end to our journey.

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Many throughout the Highlands and Islands entertained the same firm belief in the existence of fairies as poor old Farquhar Beaton did. They were generally deemed harmless sprites—"Daoine-sithe,"—beings that loved kindness and peace, yet they had their differences and quarrels; and desperate were their disputes when they took place.

Old Farquhar spoke of many occasions when the fairy fights became fast and furious. The Macleods of Dunvegan, and the Macdonalds (commonly

called the Lords of the Isles) at Duntulm, had their particular pipers, and their pipe-music colleges.

The Macleods had the distinguished race of MacCrimmons for centuries, as family pipers, and they had their college at Boreraig, a tenement near Dunvegan, which they held free. In the same way, the Macdonalds had the famed MacArthurs as pipers, with the free possession of Peingowen for their college.

A continued rivalry existed between the MacCrimmons and MacArthurs for supremacy in the musical art, and both had their particular fairy friends, who were said to supply them with reeds, and even, at times, with sets of bagpipes.

As the famed Muses of Parnassus inspired their favourite bards with poetic powers, so the fairies conferred the requisite power on these family pipers to progress in the proficiency of their art.

But at times, so keen were these gay coadjutors for the success of their particular musical protegés, that they disputed, and actually fought for the victory, thereby causing their “sian” dwellings to ring with the din of the conflict.

Old Farquhar, when questioned as to his belief in these things, would raise his hands, and say, “Mo dha shuil fein a chunnaic iad; mo dha chluas fein a chual iad.” (My own two eyes beheld them; my two ears heard them.) Farquhar was a thin, spare, hard-featured, little man, who prided himself on his ancestry, as a race distinguished for their knowledge of medicinal herbs.

He could trace his genealogy from son to sire, back to ten or twelve generations, as many others in Skye could do in regard to themselves. Poor Farquhar had a superstitious dislike to bacon or pork. For many years before his death he had dinner at the Manse every Sabbath by the minister's special request, when he invariably said the above grace before commencing his meal.

It frequently happened that the servants' dinner consisted of pork or bacon, the look of which Farquhar could not bear, and yet he often dined on it. The servants, knowing his prejudices, had beforehand prepared a quantity of the lean parts of the meat for the old man, which they passed off as mutton, and which he never suspected.

While partaking of it, however, he frequently said, to the no small amusement and tittering of the domestics—"Bu tu fein an fheoil mhaith, cheart, agus cha b'i a' mhuc ghrannda, shalach"; (Thou art the good, right meat, and not the filthy, unclean pig).

The fairies were said to be very fierce and vindictive when altercations and differences took place among themselves, and particularly so, when enemies injured or assailed those with whom they were on friendly terms.

The Jameses, who were jolly monarchs, were in general most auspicious partisans of these fantastic tribes; at least they considered those royal personages as such. Perthshire was of old a noted district for the intrigues of the fairies. The Clan Donnachaidh, or Robertson of Struan, were not generally favourites with them.

During the minority of James V., this powerful clan committed bloody outrages over the district of Athole, at which the fairies were so enraged, that they contrived means whereby the enemy waylaid the laird of Struan, while visiting his uncle, and basely assassinated him in the presence of his relative.

In ancient times, the residence of the Athole family was a lofty, turreted mansion, possessing an air of grandeur characteristic of feudal times. It is said that it was within this lordly mansion that the cruel assassin of our first James meditated his bloody purpose.

If credit can be given to Lindsay, the historian, it was here also, about a century afterwards, that an Earl of Athole entertained, in the most sumptuous manner, King James V. On that occasion, his Majesty entered the district of Athole with a numerous retinue, to hunt the deer of the Grampian hills.

A banquet of extraordinary magnificence and splendour was furnished for the Scottish Monarch. A separate banquetting-hall was prepared, at a vast expense, for the entertainment of his Majesty and his retainers. Lindsay says, "That there was no want of meates, drinkes, and delicacies, that were to be gotten at that time in Scotland, either in brugh or land. So that he (the King) wanted none of his orders mare than he had been at home in his own palace. The King remained in this wilderness (i.e., Athole) at the hunting the space of three days and three nights, as I have shewn.

I heard men say it cost the Earl of Athole every day in expenses a thousand pounds." No sooner had the royal visitor taken his departure than Athole, instigated, as was said, by the fairies, caused his Highlandmen to set fire to

the temporary palace and huts which had been reared for the occasion, “that the King and the ambassadors might see them on fire”.

Then the ambassador said to the King, “I marvel, Sir, that you should thole your fair palace to be burnt, that your grace has been so well lodged in.” Then the King answered,—“It is the use of our Highlandmen, though they be never so well lodged, to burn the lodgings when they depart.”

“It would seem,” says Lindsay, “the next visit the King paid to his Highlandmen, was not marked with so much merriment and banquetting as the former, for when the King passed into the isles, and there held justice courts, and punished both thief and traitor, according to their demerits, syne brought many of the great men of the isles captive with him; such as Mudyart, Maconnel, Macloyd, Mackay, Macloyd of the Lewis, MacNeil, Maclane, Macintosh, John Mudyard, Mackenzie, with many others that I cannot rehearse at this time. Some of them he put in ward, and some bade in court, and some he took pledges for good rule in time coming. So he brought the isles, both north and south, in good rule and peace.”

It was believed by the natives in these times, that the King had acquired power over these chieftains through the influence of the fairies, or some other evil spirits that had not been on friendly terms with the natives of the Isles, on account of some injuries received at their hands. Superstition in those days was at no loss to find a cause for every revolution and change.

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Speaking of the fairies in olden times, they seem to have exercised their various pranks in different localities, still pointed out in the shires of Fife and Forfar, as well as in the counties around. The old Castle of Glammis, a venerable and majestic pile of building, has several fairy legends connected with it.

In an underground part of this old edifice, there was a secret room, which was only known to two, or at most three individuals, at the same time, and these were bound not to reveal it, but to their successors in the secret. It is said to have been haunted, and at times taken possession of by ghosts and fairies.

It has frequently been the object of search with the inquisitive, but the search has been in vain. Tradition gives one account, that Malcolm II. was murdered in this room in 1034, and that the murderers lost their way in the darkness of the night, and by the breaking of the ice were drowned in the loch of Forfar.

Fordun gives a different account, and states that the King was mortally wounded in a skirmish near the Castle, and that an obelisk or large stone of rude design was erected to commemorate the murder, and not to represent the King's gravestone, as he was buried at Iona.

Near the summit of Carmylie hill is a large burrow or tumulus, which was believed at one time by the natives to be a favourite haunt of the fairies, where, with much splendour, they held their nightly revels. It still bears the name of "Fairy-folk hillock".

In the parish of Lunan, in Forfarshire, there is an immense variety of "knaps" or round hillocks, in different places. Very probably the knaps had been used as beacons in ancient times, to give notice of alarm on the approach of an enemy, by means of fires lighted upon them.

It is, however, the case, that various fairy superstitions were connected with these "sians" or tumuli, of which mention is made to this day. One ancient practice existed, that the relatives of the dead, the day after the funeral, carried the chaff and bed-straw on which the body had lain to the knap nearest to the house, and there consumed them by fire. This superstition was prevalent in several parts of Scotland.

WITCHCRAFT.—This superstition took its rise in the East, and at an early period of the world's history. It was regarded as the power of magical incantation through the agency of evil spirits. From an early era, it was pursued as a trade by crafty wretches, who played upon the weakness of their fellow-creatures. Laws were passed against it.

Many wretches were tortured in order to confess to it; and, to avoid these preliminary horrors, hundreds confessed all that they were accused of, and were forthwith led to execution. It has been calculated that, from the date of Pope Innocent's bull in 1484 to the final extinction of these persecutions, no fewer than 100,000 were put to death in Germany alone.

Witchcraft was first denounced in England in 1541, in the reign of Henry VIII. Previous to that time, however, many witch trials had taken place, and severe punishments were inflicted. We are all familiar with the fearful account of the witches near Forres, in the tragedy of Macbeth. Queen

Elizabeth, in 1562, directed a statute exclusively against witchcraft. Many sad incidents are on record of the effects of this statute.

The mind of King James VI. was deeply impressed with the flagrant nature of the crime of witchcraft. Soon after his arrival from Denmark in 1590, to conduct his bride home, the Princess Anne, a tremendous witch conspiracy was formed against his Majesty's prosperity. One Mrs.

Agnes Sampson, commonly called "the wise wife of Keith" (a village of East Lothian), was the principal agent in this horrible work. She was summoned before the King, and in the words of her trial it is recorded:—"The said Agnes Sampson was after brought again before the King's Majestie and his Council, and being examined of the meetings and detestable dealings of these witches, she confessed that upon the night of All Hallowe'en she was accompanied with a great many other witches, to the number of two hundred, and that all they together went to the sea, each one in a riddle or sieve, and went in the same, very substantially, with flaggons of wine, making merry and drinking by the way in the same riddles, or sieves, to the Kirk of North Berwick, in Lothian, and that after they had landed, took hands on the land, and danced this reil, or short dance, singing all with one voice—

Cummer, goe ye before, Cummer goe ye;

Giff ye will not go before, Cummer, let me.

One Geillis Duncan did go before them, playing this reil upon a small trump until they entered the Kirk of North Berwick. These made the

King in a wonderful admiration, and he sent for the said Geillis Duncan, who upon the like trump did play the said reill before the King's Majestie.

Agnes Sampson declared that one great object with Satan and his agents was to destroy the King by raising a storm at sea when James came across from Denmark," and that "the witches demanded of the Divell, why he beare sic hatred to the King? who answered, by reason the King is the greatest enemie hee hath in the world."

Such an eulogy, from such a quarter, could not but pamper the conceit of the easily flattered Scottish monarch!

But we had some cases in the north, which showed that witchcraft was not confined to the lower classes. Catherine Ross, or Lady Fowlis, was indicted by the King's advocate for the practice of witchcraft. She was anxious to make young Lady Fowlis possessor of the property of Fowlis, and to have her married to the Laird of Balnagown.

Before this could be effected, she had to cut off her sons in-law, Robert and Hector Munro, and the young wife of Balnagown. She proceeded to her deadly work by consulting with witches, making effigies of her intended victims in clay, and shooting at them with arrows, shod with elf-arrowheads.

The nature of these effigies of clay may be explained. Such as were intended to be doomed, or destroyed, were formed of clay into hideous figures, or rude statues larger than life-size. These were called "cuirp-creadha," or bodies of clay. Once formed, incantations and spells were uttered over them.

Pins, nails, and feathers were pierced into them, and fairy arrows darted against them, with fearful oaths and imprecations. Such things Lady Fowlis resorted to for destroying her relatives; but when all failed, this abandoned woman had recourse to the poisoning of ales and certain dishes, by which she put several persons to death, though not the intended victims.

By the confession of some of the assistant hags, the purposes of Lady Fowlis were disclosed; she was brought to trial, but was acquitted by a local jury.

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These disgraceful proceedings were not without parallel in other distinguished families of the day. Euphemia Macalzean, daughter of an eminent judge, Lord Cliftonhall, was burned at the stake for witchcraft in 1591. This abandoned woman was found guilty by a jury for murdering her own godfather, as also her husband's nephew, and others, for which she was "burnt in assis, quick to the death".

In the beginning of the reign of Charles II., Morayshire became the scene of a violent fit of the great moral frenzy, and some of the most remarkable trials in the course of Scottish witchcraft took place there. The last justiciary trial for witchcraft in Scotland was that of Elspeth Rule, who was convicted in 1708, and banished.

The last regular execution for this crime took place in Dornoch in 1722, when an old woman was condemned to death by David Ross, Sheriff of Caithness. It is difficult to compute the number of the victims of witch-

craft in Scotland, but attentive inquirers make out that the black list would include upwards of four thousand persons! And by what a fate did they perish?

Cruelly tortured while living, and dismissed from life by a living death amidst the flames! And for what? For an impossible crime. And who were the victims, and who were the executioners!

The victims in most cases, were the aged, the weak, the deformed, the lame, and the blind—those, indeed, whom years and infirmities had doomed to poverty and wretchedness; yes, exactly that class of miserable beings for whom Acts of Parliament have now made comfortable provision—those unfortunate creatures for whose benefit our more enlightened rulers now provide houses of refuge, erect poorhouses like palaces, build large asylums, and endow charitable institutions of every kind.

But who were the executioners? The wisest, the greatest, and the most learned of their time—men distinguished above their fellows for knowledge and intelligence—ministers of religion and of the law, kings, princes, and nobles.

It is rather remarkable that, as late as January, 1871, a trial in regard to witchcraft took place in Newtonwards Quarter Sessions, in County Down. Hugh Kennedy sued his brother John for payment of a sum alleged to be due to him for wages and other services. He stated that his brother's house and land were frequented by witches, and that he had been employed to banish them.

The witches did not belong to the "good people," and were maliciously inclined towards his brother—his land got into a bad condition, and his cows into a state of settled melancholy.

There was a certain charm of great repute in the neighbourhood for putting to flight these unwelcome visitors; but it was only useful when properly applied and performed, and no other person but plaintiff could be got to undertake the task.

The method pursued was thus:—The plaintiff locked himself in the house alone; he stopped up the keyholes, closed up the windows, stuffed up the chimney, and, in fact, left no mode of egress to the unfortunate witches whom he was to summons into his presence.

He then lit a fire and put a pot of milk on it, and into the pot he put three rows of pins and needles, which had never been sullied or contaminated by use. These he boiled together for half-an-hour, during which time the witches were supposed to be suffering the most excruciating tortures, and had at last to take to flight. They had never been seen or heard of since.

The cows resumed their former healthy condition, and the land its wonted fertility. The case being of a rather "complicated" nature, it was left to arbitration. Subsequently, it was announced in court, that the sum of 10s had been awarded to the plaintiff.

SECOND-SIGHT.—This is the faculty of seeing otherwise invisible objects. It is neither voluntary nor constant, and is considered rather annoying than agreeable to the possessors of it, who are chiefly found among the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, the Isle of Man and Ireland.

The gift was possessed by individuals of both sexes, and its fits came on within doors and without, sitting and standing, at night and by day, and at whatever employment the votary might chance to be engaged.

The visions were usually about funerals, shrouds, the appearance of friends who were at the time in distant countries, the arrival of strangers, falls from horses, the upsetting of vehicles, bridal ceremonies, funeral processions, corpses, swamping of boats, drowning at sea, dropping suddenly dead, and numberless other subjects.

Very astonishing cases might be mentioned wherein it would appear impossible that either fraud or deception could exist. Martin, in his book on the Western Isles, alludes to many who were undoubtedly, in his belief, "Taibhsears," or Seers; and even to this day this faculty is believed by many to exist. Dr.

Beattie ascribes it to the influence of physical causes on superstitious and unenlightened minds, such as the effects which wild scenery, interspersed with valleys, mountains, and lakes, have upon the imagination of the natives. Others maintain that it arose from optical illusions, and others from ignorance, the great mother of all superstitions. It is remarkable when Dr.

Samuel Johnson visited Skye in 1773, and had heard much about the second-sight, that he gave credit to it, and expressed his surprise that it was disbelieved by the clergy, while many others were of a different opinion. If space permitted, many wonderful cases of second-sight might be given, but a few must suffice.

It is traditionally stated that the execution of the unfortunate Queen Mary had been foreseen by many Highland seers, and had been previously described by them by extraordinary minuteness. King James alludes to it in his "Demonology"; and it was brought as a charge against various Shetland witches in that monarch's reign.

Mackenzie of Tarbat, afterwards Earl of Cromartie, a talented statesman in the reign of Charles II., wrote some account of this strange faculty for the use of the celebrated Boyle.

He gives one instance, as follows:—One day as he was riding in a field among his tenants, who were manuring barley, a stranger came up to the party and observed that they need not be so busy about their crop, as he saw the Englishmen's horses tethered among them already. The event proved as the man had foretold, for the horses of Cromwell's army in 1650 ate up the whole field.

A few years after this incident, before Argyll went on his fatal journey to congratulate King Charles on his restoration, he was playing at bowls with some gentlemen near his castle at Inverary, when one of them grew pale and fainted as the Marquis stooped for his bowl.

On recovering, he cried, "Bless me, what do I see? my lord with his head off, and all his shoulders full of blood". The late General Stewart of Garth, in his "Sketches of the Highlanders," relates a very remarkable instance of second-sight which happened in his own family:—"Late on an autumnal evening in the year 1773, the son of a neighbouring gentleman came to my father's house.

He and my mother were from home, but several friends were in the house. The young gentleman spoke little, and seemed absorbed in deep thought. Soon after he arrived, he inquired for a boy of the family, then three years of age. When shown into the nursery, the nurse was trying on a pair of new shoes, and complained that they did not fit the child.

'They will fit him before he will have occasion for them,' said the young gentleman. This called forth the chidings of the nurse for predicting evil to the child, who was stout and healthy.

When he returned to the party he had left in the sitting-room, who had heard of his observation on the shoes, they cautioned him to take care that the nurse did not derange his new talent of the second sight, with some ironical congratulations on his pretended acquirement.

This brought on an explanation, when he told them that as he had approached the end of a wooden bridge near the house, he was astonished to see a crowd of people passing the bridge.

Coming nearer, he observed a person carrying a small coffin, followed by about twenty gentlemen, all of his acquaintance, his own father and mine being of the number, with a concourse of the country people. He did not attempt to join, but saw them turn off to the right, in the direction of the churchyard, which they entered.

He then proceeded on his intended visit, much impressed with what he had seen, with a feeling of awe, and believing it to have been a representation of the death and funeral of a child of the family. The whole received perfect confirmation in his mind, by the sudden death of the boy the fol-

lowing night, and the consequent funeral, which was exactly as he had seen.

This gentleman was not a professed seer. This was his first and his last vision, and, as he told me," says General Stewart, "it was sufficient."

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A very remarkable instance of supernatural vision happened a few years ago, in a landed proprietor's house in Skye. On a certain evening, probably that of New Year's Day, a large party of neighbouring ladies and gentlemen, with the youngsters of their families, had been invited to enjoy certain harmless festivities at this proprietor's house, the lady of which had been absent at the time in the south, but her sons and daughters were at home to entertain the happy guests.

After dinner the junior members of the party retired to the drawing-room to amuse themselves. A quadrille was set agoing, but before it had commenced, the figure of a lady glided along the side wall of the room, from end to end, and was seen by several of those opposite to it.

"My mother! my mother!" screamed one of the young ladies of the family, and fainted. The vision put a sudden termination to the hilarities of the evening; but the most surprising fact was, that at the very time the vision appeared, the lady of the house had died in a city in the south.

Besides the many instances of second-sight given by Martin, Theophilus Insulanus, and several others, a great additional variety might be stated of rather remarkable cases. In the village of Earlish, parish of Snizort, in Skye, about fifty years ago, a cottar's wife was delivered of a nice baby.

Soon after the birth, the happy mother was visited by the wives of her neighbours, who came, according to the custom of the place on such occasions, each with a gift of fowls, eggs, and such like. The baby was admired as a nice infant, and the usual hopes were expressed that it might be long spared to the parents.

One female in a corner of the apartment whispered in her neighbour's ear, that she was afraid the infant would not be long spared, and that it would some day be the cause of excessive grief to the poor mother. On being questioned for the reason of such a statement, she said that she had a vision of the child all mangled, torn up, and bleeding.

Her neighbour upbraided her for expressing a thing so ridiculous in itself, and so very improbable. In the course of a month or two, when the infant had progressed in health and strength to the desire of his parent's heart, he was laid to sleep in the cradle, and the mother, being alone at the time, embraced the opportunity of going to the well for a pitcher of water.

After having talked for a few minutes with a neighbour who had met her at the well, she returned to her house, when, to her unspeakable horror, she found her baby on the floor dead, mangled, torn to pieces, with the arms and face eaten away. During the distracted mother's absence, a large brute of a pig had been roaming about.

It entered the deserted apartment, seized upon the innocent sleeping babe, and partially devoured it.

About sixty years ago, one of the annual fairs was to be held at Portree, the Capital of Skye, to which the natives were in the habit of resorting in hun-

dreds from all quarters of the Island.

In the East-side district of Kilmuir, about eighteen miles north of Portree, there lived at that time a female advanced in years, who was reported to be possessed of the faculty of second-sight.

Some time previous to the date of the market, this woman was day after day sitting, sighing, and lamenting the catastrophe, which she said was sure to take place, as she had seen a boat sinking in a storm, and so many people drowned. Few, however, paid any attention to the cause of her grief at the time, but there was reason afterwards to do so.

A large boat left Portree on the market-day evening for the East-side, which was literally crammed with people of all ages, anxious to get home. A storm got up, and all were consigned to a watery grave.

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Here is another remarkable instance. A worthy parish minister in Skye, about seventy years ago, went to visit a brother of his, a Captain Macleod, who had been ailing, and lived near Portree. Captain Macleod had a numerous family of sons and daughters. In the evening, the minister mounted his horse to return home, a distance of about nine miles.

The weather became so boisterous and stormy, that the good old gentleman deemed it prudent to pass the night at Scorribreck, where Widow Nicolson and her family resided. She was a sister of the late Adjutant-General Sir John Macdonald. Mrs. Nicolson welcomed her reverend guest, and was delighted at his unexpected appearance.

At that remote period most of the large farmers' dwellings in Skye, were comfortable thatched houses, with trap-stairs to the upper flats, where they deposited all kinds of lumber. In a certain corner up-stairs in this domicile, the parish mort-cloth was kept for safety, as the burying-place was near by. Mrs.

Nicolson ascended the stairs on some business in the dark, and left the reverend gentleman with her family for a few minutes in the parlour. Immediately thereafter a scream was heard, instantly followed by the noise of a fall on the upper floor. Two or three rushed up with a light, and found Mrs. Nicolson in a fainting fit, quite insensible.

On her recovering, and at a subsequent hour of the evening, she reluctantly told her reverend friend that she beheld a very brilliant light on the mort-cloth, which was spread on a table, and in the middle of the light she saw the distinct image of his niece's face, a daughter of the said Captain Macleod.

The circumstance, no doubt, created some concern in the minds of the family circle, but ere bed-time, the conversation turned on something else. Shortly thereafter, however, the young lady alluded to, took ill, and died, and her bier was the first to require the use of the mort-cloth in question after that eventful evening.

Another instance equally marvellous took place in the northern district of Skye, at a considerably later date than that of the event just recorded. The parish clergyman on his rounds, visited the miller's house, and met the miller's wife evidently in a very excited state, standing on the kitchen floor.

In that part of the Island great quantities of timber were frequently found on the sea-shore, drifted thither from wrecked vessels. On this occasion, the miller's kitchen was benched all round with batons and planks of timber, in order to be seasoned by the heat of the fire, which is placed in these dwellings in the middle of the floor.

The clergyman had scarcely time to speak, when the good-wife, a very respectable woman, told him that she was always glad to see him, but particularly so on this occasion. She explained that Christy Macleod, a female of known repute as a seer, had just been sitting on that plank, warming herself by the fire, when she suddenly fainted and fell on the floor.

She further stated that she carried Christy ben the house, and laid her on a bed until she would recover. "But," said the matron to the minister, "you must go to see Christy, and insist upon her telling what she saw, as I am in terror that she had an unlucky sight of some of my own children."

The minister very reluctantly complied, and, on entering the apartment, found Christy so far recovered as to bear being questioned. He asked the cause of her ailment, and, in short, put the query whether she had seen anything? She refused to reply, except by the uttering of some evasive answers.

He then told her to tell at once what she had seen, as otherwise he would not leave her until she did. Eventually she expressed herself in timid, tremulous terms, and said, that while seated on the wooden bench by the fire, she happened to cast her eyes upon a plank on the opposite side, and beheld stretched on it the mangled, bleeding body of a lad, Macdonald, then alive and well.

Having told this, she solicited the minister not to divulge it. On his leaving the seer, he was instantly pounced upon by the landlady, and asked, in breathless anxiety, “What did she see? What or whom did she see?” His reverence had no alternative but to tell the good matron, for the comfort of herself and her domestic circle, what the dreaded woman had revealed.

All parties were then contented, and the affair looked on as a mere revery. Six weeks or so thereafter, there was a marriage in the upper district of the parish, to which the young man, Macdonald, was invited, and went.

On returning home alone about midnight by a hilly pathway, in the extreme darkness, he lost his way, fell over a precipice about a thousand feet high, and was dashed to pieces in the clefts of the debris below. He was eventually missed at home.

Messengers were sent in quest of him, hither and thither, and when no tidings could be found concerning him, the population of the district went forth in hundreds on the search.

After a day or two’s minute ransacking of every hill and dale, lake and river, the mangled corpse was discovered by a boy, jammed hard and fast in a crevice at the base of the huge precipice already named. The crowd assembled around the shattered remains, and a cry was uttered as to what was best to be done?

The torn body could hardly be handled, and a proposal was immediately agreed to, that four men should run to the miller’s house for a door or plank, to convey the remains to the father’s home. This was done—the

men rushed forward to the miller's, and snatched away the identical plank on which the woman, Macleod, had seen the vision already related.

Many similar instances of second-sight in the Western Isles are alleged to have existed, which as yet have not been recorded.

It is stated in the Statistical Account of Iona, that St. Columba was the first on record who had the faculty of second-sight. He is said to have told the victory of Aidan over the Picts and Saxons, on the very instant it happened. The same authority states, that when St.

Columba first attempted to build on Iona, the walls, by the operation of some evil spirit, fell down as fast as they were erected. Columba received some supernatural information that they would never stand unless a human victim was buried alive.

According to one account, the lot fell on Oran, the companion of the Saint, as the victim that was demanded for the success of the undertaking. Others pretend that Oran voluntarily devoted himself, and was interred accordingly. At the end of three days, Columba had the curiosity to take a farewell look at his old friend, and caused the earth to be removed accordingly.

Oran raised his swimming eyes, and said, "There is no wonder in death, and hell is not as it is reported". The Saint was so shocked at this monstrous impiety, that he instantly ordered the earth to be flung in again, uttering the words, "Uir! Uir! air beul Orain! mu'n labhair e tuilleadh comhraidh!"—that is, Earth! Earth! on the mouth of Oran, that he may blab no more!

This passed into a proverb, and is in use in the Highlands at the present day. It is not improbable that the story was invented by some of Columba's Druidical enemies to expose him and his Christian doctrines to ridicule.

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SMALLER SUPERSTITIONS.—Somewhat resembling this alleged faculty, yet different from it, are certain prognostications of death, which are said to be seen in the shape of blue, quivering lights, resembling the feeble flame of a taper. These have been observed moving along in the course which some funeral procession would soon take, or perhaps twinkling in or about the bed on which some individual was soon to die. Many intelligent people firmly believe in the existence of these lights.

Some years ago, if not even still, many in the Western Isles believed in the existence of the "Gruagach," a female spectre of the class of Brownies to which the Highland dairymaids made frequent libations of milk. The Gruagach is said to have been an innocent, supernatural visitor, who frisked and gambolled about the cattle-pens and folds.

She was armed only with a pliable reed, with which she switched all who annoyed her by uttering obscene language, or would neglect to leave for her a share of the dairy produce.

Even so late as 1770, the dairymaids who attended a herd of cattle in the Island of Trodda, at the north end of Skye, were in the habit of pouring daily a quantity of milk on a hollow stone for the Gruagach. Should they

neglect to do so, they made sure of feeling the effects of her wand next day. The Rev. Dr. Macqueen, then minister of Kilmuir, of whom Dr.

Johnson spoke so highly, and who is buried within a few yards of Flora Macdonald's grave, went purposely to Trodda to check this gross superstition. He might then have succeeded for a time, but it is known that many believed in the existence of the Gruagach long after that worthy clergyman had been gathered to his fathers.

Besides the votaries of this ridiculous superstition, there are others who confidently believe in the existence of an evil eye, by which cattle and all kinds of property are said to suffer injury. The glance of an evil eye is, therefore, very much dreaded.

It deprives cows of their milk, and milk of its nutritive qualities, and renders it unfit for the various preparations made from it. This superstition can certainly lay claim to great antiquity. Virgil, Ossian, and other writers, seem to have dreaded the effects of it, at least they allude to its existence. Virgil says (Eclog. III., 103)—

Nescio quis teneros oculus mihi fascinat agnos.

(I know not what malignant eye bewitches my tender lambs).

But equally superstitious are the means resorted to for the cure of these sad afflictions, such as the use of certain charms, the repetition of strange rhymes, putting living trout in a portion of the injured milk, and many other such ridiculous appliances.

There is an endless variety of superstitions in regard to things which are unlucky or unfortunate to be done. It is unfortunate if a stranger counts

the number of your sheep, cattle, or children. It is quite common if one asks, “How many children have you?” to add the words, “Bless them” to the question.

It is unlucky for an odd number to sit at a table, such as 7, 9, 11; and 13 in particular is so unfortunate that unless rectified, one of the party is sure to die that year. It is unlucky if a stranger walks across a parcel of fishing-rods on the sea beach, over ropes, oars, or sailing gear, when a boat is about to go to sea.

Means are used for getting the stranger to retrace his steps. It is unlucky to drink the health of a company, or to serve them round a table except from left to right, as the sun goes in the firmament, or the hands on the dial-plate of a watch. It is unlucky, in setting off, to row in a boat, or to commence a procession at a marriage or funeral, but to the right.

It is unlucky to hear the cuckoo, or see a foal or snail before breakfast. As to this there is a Gaelic rhyme as follows, viz.:—

Chunnaic mi an searrachan ’sa chulaobh rium,

Chunnaic mi an t-seilcheag air an lic luim;

Chual mi’ a’ chuag gun ghreim ’nam bhroinn,

Is dh’ aithnich mi fein nach rachadh a’ bhliadhn’ so leam.

These lines may be translated—

With its back to me turn’d I beheld the young foal,

And the snail on the bare flag in motion so slow;

Without tasting of food, lo! the cuckoo I heard,

Then judged that the year would not prosperously go.

It is unlucky to stand between an epileptic man and fire or water. In Shetland there was once an idea that it was unlucky to save drowning men. It is unlucky to throw out water after sunset, and before sunrise. It is unlucky to have a grave open upon Sunday, as another will be dug during the week for some of the family.

If a corpse does not stiffen after death, there will be another death in the family before the end of that year. Fires and candles afford presages of death. Long hollow coals spirted from the fire are coffins. Winding-sheets are indicated when the tallow of the candle curls away from the flame.

The howling of a dog at night, and the resting of a crow or magpie on the house-top, are warnings of death. It is unlucky to weigh infants; they are sure to die. Cats sleeping near infants suck their breath and kill them.

When children begin to walk they must go up-stairs before they go down-stairs, otherwise they will not thrive in the world, and if there is no stair they should climb a chair. A mother after the birth of a child must not go outside beyond her house door until she goes to be kirked. If you rock an empty cradle you will soon rock a new baby in it.

It is quite curious to see the face of alarm with which a poor woman, with her tenth baby in her arms, will dash across the room to prevent “the baby but one” from the dangerous amusement of rocking the empty cradle. It is unlucky that a stray swarm of bees should settle on your premises unclaimed by their owner.

It is customary in many parts of England when a death takes place to go and tell the bees of it, to ask them to the funeral, and to fix a piece of crape upon their hives! It is unlucky to catch a sight of the new moon through a window.

It is a token of fine weather to see the old moon in the arms of the new; and so is the turning up of the horns of the new moon, as they retain the water which would fall to the earth if the horns were turned down. It is unlucky to enter a house, which you are to occupy, by the back door. If, when fishing you count what you have taken, you will catch no more.

If, you break your bones by accident, it is unlucky and useless to employ a physician or surgeon to bind them, as it is believed that, however skilful these may be in curing all other maladies, they know nothing whatever about the setting of broken bones.

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Many other remarkable cures are resorted to, such as healing sore eyes by putting gold rings in the ears, by rubbing them with jewels of pure gold, and by repeating certain rhymes. Warts are removed by washing them in rain-water or swine's blood. Serpents' heads are preserved for years to heal their own sting wounds.

If a man, cow, or any animal be stung by a serpent, let the dried serpent's head be cast into water, let the wound be washed in it, and it soon heals. Fried mice are a specific for small-pox. Whooping-cough is cured by whatever is recommended by a person riding a piebald horse.

A spider put into a goose-quill, well sealed, and put round a child's neck, will cure it of the thrush. In the Island of Soa, near Skye, it was customary when the head of the family died to have a large lock of hair cut off his head and nailed fast to the door-lintel to keep off the fairies. Sailors are sometimes very superstitious.

They greatly dread the stormy petrel, or Mother Carey's chickens, as they flutter at night around their masts and yards. These birds are regarded as objects of superstitious fear, believing that they are possessed of supernatural agency in creating danger for the poor, hard-toiled mariner.

At one time, a horse-shoe nailed to the mast of the vessel was great security against all evil agencies, such as witches, petrels, fairies, and evil eyes. To recapitulate all such superstitious frets would be an endless task. There are many similar fanciful notions in regard to births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths, but it is impossible to enlarge much upon them.

It was once prevalent when a child was baptised, that the infant was neither washed nor bathed that night, for fear of washing off the baptismal water before it had slept under it. Frequently too, the water used in baptism was bottled up as an effectual recipe for various disorders.

Parents took all possible care lest their female infants should be baptised with the same water used for male children, for if they should, the females would grow up with beards! A few years ago, I was baptising two or three children at the same time, in a village near by, when the first presented was a boy, and the next a girl.

After the water had been sprinkled on the face of the boy, and when I was about to do the same to the girl, an old worthy granny present hastily snatched away the bowl containing the water, poured it out, and filled it afresh, muttering aloud, “Na leigeadh Ni Math gum biodh feusag air mo chaileig” (Goodness forbid that my lassie should have a beard).

It is reckoned very unlucky in some parts of the country to have a child left unbaptised beyond the year in which it was born. For example, should a child come into the world on the 30th December, 1877, the parents would feel very uncomfortable, and consider it a neglect of duty, if they did not get the infant baptised either on that or next day.

Even in England peculiar frets are still observed in regard to infants. In a late number of an English paper, the following paragraph appeared:—“A certain act of barbarity and superstition is practised in many parts of the country. Children who are sickly are taken to a woman for the purpose of being cut for a supposed disease, called the Spinnage. The infants are, on a Monday morning, taken to this woman, who, for threepence, with a pair of scissors, cuts through the lobe of the right ear, then makes a cross with the blood upon the forehead and breast of the child.

On the following Monday the same barbarous ceremony is performed upon the left ear, and on the succeeding Monday the right ear is again doomed to undergo the same ceremony. In some cases, it is deemed necessary to perform this ridiculous operation nine times. It is not the lower classes alone who are chargeable with this and similar follies. Some of the higher classes likewise observe them. It is quite common to make the children partake of a roasted mouse as a cure for whooping-cough.”

The cold-bath was so much esteemed by the Highlanders in ancient times that, as soon as an infant was born, he was plunged into a running stream, and then carefully wrapped in a warm blanket. Immediately thereafter, the little creature was forced to swallow a large quantity of fresh butter.

It was made into a ball of no ordinary size, and was pressed down its little throat, in a manner sufficient to create a fear of the poor child being suffocated. Another fret was observed, that immediately after a child was baptised, he behoved to be secured from the power of the fairies, and of all evil spirits.

For this purpose a basket was taken, which was half filled with bread and cheese, wrapped up in a clean linen cloth. Over this parcel the child was laid as if in a cradle. The basket was then taken up by the oldest female in the family circle at the time, carried three times round the fire, and then suspended for a few seconds from the crook that hung over the fire.

The child was then removed from its temporary berth, while the bread and cheese were divided among the company present, as nourishment to guarantee their health for another year.

There was still another superstition, that soon after the birth of a child, when all the duties necessary on such occasions had been performed, it was customary to make a dish of “crowdie” by mixing oaten meal and water together, of which each of the company required to take three horn-spoonfuls, for the protection of the infant.

This superstition was, until of late, very prevalent in the Highlands of Perthshire. It was likewise the custom that the mother of the infant dare

not perform any work, or engage herself in any of her domestic affairs, until she had been kirked.

After she had performed this religious rite, and had dealt out a portion of bread and cheese to every one she met on her way home from the place of worship, she was invested with free liberty to attend to her ordinary household concerns.

Until then, however, everything she did, and every object she handled, was reckoned unclean, and would not be meddled with by any in the family circle.

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It was also alleged by carpenters that, while in bed at night, they heard their saws, hammers, and planes at work before being employed next day in making a coffin. Highlanders in particular speak confidently of the expected nature of the weather, from the figure, appearance, colour, coming, and stages of the moon.

They avoid slaughtering sheep, pigs, and cattle in the wane of the moon, as the meat would shrink in cooking. In the same way they study to shear corn, to mow grass, to fell trees, and to cut peats and turf in the wane of the moon, as the best time for drying and seasoning these commodities.

There was a superstition in Ross-shire whereby it was believed that the soul did not finally and completely leave the body until the corpse had been laid in the grave.

There was a similar superstition in Perthshire, whereby it was believed that at the moment of dissolution, whether by natural death or by accident the soul or spirit was visibly seen leaving the body in the shape of a little creature like a bee.

Witches frequently put themselves into the appearance of animals, such as a hare, but when arrows were pointed at them, barbed with silver, or muskets loaded with silver coins for shot, the semblance of the hare disappeared at once, and some shrivelled, decrepit hag of a witch wife stood before the shooter in full size!

The natives of Easter Ross, particularly the fishermen on the sea-coast from Tain to Cromarty Bay, are influenced to this day by remarkable superstitious frets which they observe on marriage occasions. It is the practice among them that couples, once the marriage festivities are past, must go to be kirked on the Sunday.

This devout duty is easily performed when there is but one marriage in the place. But should there be two or three, as frequently occurs, in the same week, the kirking affair is entirely altered, and becomes a matter of no small difficulty and concern.

Sabbath comes, and each marriage party, bridegroom and bride, with their attendants, prepare themselves for the parish church; duly arrive there in good time; and perhaps desert their usual seats, through a desire to occupy those that happen to be nearest to the door.

The sermon is impatiently listened to, when, without waiting perhaps for the benediction, the parties rush out, like so many bees from a hive, and

run homewards as fast as their feet can carry them. Thus, one marriage party strives with another, in running the lucky race. Frequently, in their haste, the bridegroom outruns the bride and others of the party.

All this arises from an old superstition, that the marriage party which first arrives at home from the kirking are sure to be prosperous and happy in after life, whereas those left behind, should it only be a distance of a few yards, run the risk of becoming the victims of misfortune and adversity.

The Highlanders, as well as many other ancient tribes, looked upon certain days as lucky or unlucky in themselves. The 14th of May was considered an untoward day; so much so, that the day of the week on which the 14th day of May fell, was deemed unlucky during the whole of that year, and nothing of consequence was undertaken on that day. May and January were considered unfortunate months to marry in, as also the Friday of any week.

On the death of a Highlander, many silly superstitions were practised. In some districts it was believed that when death ensued, the spirit still kept close to the body, as if it were to guard it until after the burial, when dust was consigned to dust, and ashes to ashes.

The relatives, friends, and neighbours of the deceased, deemed it their duty likewise to watch the corpse of the dead, both by night and by day. This was called the “late wake,” at which the most absurd fooleries were practised, such as music, called the “coronach,” dancing, leaping, riddles, games, singing of songs, and the most boisterous revelry.

These manners and customs are now, however, almost extinct. There are many superstitious observances at certain seasons of the year, of which we must treat briefly.

I. “La Calluinn” and “Oidhche Challuinn” (New-Year’s Day and New-Year’s Night). Besides the “first-footing,” which is a common practice still, the Highlanders observed many in-door and out-door ceremonies.

On New-Year’s Eve, they surrounded each other’s houses, carrying dried cow-hides, and beating them with sticks, thrashing the walls with clubs, all the time crying, shouting, and repeating rhymes. This is supposed to operate as a charm against fairies, demons, and spirits of every order.

They provide themselves with the flap, or hanging part of the hide on the cow’s neck, which they called “caisean-uchd,” and which they singed in the fire and presented to the inmates of the family, one after another, to smell, as a charm against all injuries from fairies and spirits. A specimen of the rhymes repeated, with loud chorus, is as follows:—

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Mor-phiseach air an tigh,

Piseach air an teaghlach,

Piseach air gach cabar,

Is air gach ni saoghalt’ ann.

Piseach air eich a’s crodh,

Piseach air na caoraich,

Piseach air na h-uile ni,

’S piseach air ar maoin uil’.

Piseach air beann an tighe,

Piseach air na paistean,

Piseach air gach caraide,

Mor-phiseach agus slaint dhuibh.

Great good luck to the house,

Good luck to the family,

Good luck to every rafter of it,

And to every worldly thing in it.

Good luck to horses and cattle,

Good luck to the sheep,

Good luck to every thing,

And good luck to all your means.

Luck to the good-wife,

Good luck to the children,

Good luck to every friend,

Great fortune and health to all.

II. “Di-domhnuich-caisg” (Easter Sunday). This period is observed in the Highlands by preparing and eating certain kinds of pan-cakes made of eggs, milk, meal, or flour. Together with this the young people provide themselves with large quantities of hard-boiled dyed eggs, which they roll about, and finally eat.

The English hot cross buns at Easter are only the cakes which the Saxons ate in honour of their goddess “Eastre,” and from which the Christian clergy, who were unable to prevent people from eating them, sought to expel the Paganism by marking them with the cross. Hence the hot cross buns.

III. “La Bealtuinn” (May-day, Whitsuntide). The demonstrations of this day are now all but extinct. The first of May was held as a great Druidical festival in honour of the mighty Asiatic god, Belus. Fires were kindled on the mountain-tops, through which all the cattle of the country were driven to preserve them till the next May-day.

On this day all the hearth-fires were extinguished, in order to be kindled from this purifying flame. Hence the word Bealtuinn is “Beil-teine,” the fire of Belus. So that “La Bealtuinn” (Whitsunday) is “the day of Belus’ fire”.

Of old in the Highlands the young people went to the moors on this day, made a circular table on the grass, cut a trench around it, kindled a huge fire, baked a large cake, which they cut into as many similar pieces as there were persons present. They daubed one of the pieces with charcoal, and made it perfectly black.

Then they put all the bits of cake into a bonnet, from which all of them, blindfolded, drew a bit.

Whoever drew the black bit was the person who was doomed to be sacrificed to Baal; and in order to avoid the execution of this doom, he was compelled to leap six times over the flames. Even in Ayrshire, Baal's fire was kindled till about the year 1790.

HALLOWE'EN.—The only other season noted for superstitious observances is that of Hallowe'en. Hallowe'en in Gaelic means "Samhuinn," that is "Samhtheine," the fire of peace. It is a Druidical festival, at which the fire of peace was regularly kindled. There is no night in the year which the popular imagination has stamped with a more peculiar character than Hallowe'en.

It was the night, above all others, when supernatural influences prevailed. It was the night for the universal walking abroad of all sorts of spirits, fairies, and ghosts, all of whom had liberty on that night.

It was customary in many parts of Scotland to have hundreds of torches prepared in each district for weeks before Hallowe'en, so that, after sunset on that evening, every youth able to carry a blazing torch, or "samhnag," ran forth to surround the boundaries of their farms with these burning lights, and thereby protect all their possessions from the fairies.

Having thus secured themselves by these fires of peace, all the households congregated to practice the various ceremonies and superstitious rites of that eventful evening. As these are pretty fully alluded to in Burns' poem

of “Hallowe’en,” it is unnecessary to enlarge here. There is still a remarkable uniformity in these fireside customs all over the kingdom.

Nuts and apples are everywhere in requisition. These the old matron of the house has generally in store beforehand for the youngsters’ good luck on that night, or as the Ayrshire Bard has so naturally expressed it—

The auld guidwife’s weel hoordit nits

Are round and round divided,

And mony lads’ and lasses’ fate

Are there that night decided.

Some kindle couthie, side by side,

And burn thegither trimly;

Some start awa’ wi’ saucy pride,

And jump out-owre the chimley,

Fu’ high that night.

The ceremonies of the evening were numerous—such as, ducking for apples in a tub of water, the pulling of kail stocks, the three dishes or “luggies,” the wetting of the shirt sleeve, the sowing of hemp seed, pulling the stalks of corn, throwing the clue of blue yarn into the pit of the kiln, the white of eggs put into a glass of water, reading of fortunes in tea-cups; these and many more were the superstitious ceremonies of Hallowe’en.

Perhaps there is no part of the Highlands of Scotland where the practice of using the flaming torches of Hallowe'en is so much observed, even still, as in the braes of Aberdeenshire.

Not later than last year, our Gracious Majesty, no doubt in order to preserve those relics of ancient times, caused these blazing torches to be kindled by the youth of the place, around Balmoral Castle.

The torches are considered by the natives to be the means of protecting, not only their farms and other possessions from the ravages of the fairies, but likewise mothers and newly-born infants.

While the landed possessions were duly surrounded that evening by the torch-bearers, the dwellings where children had born were encompassed with still greater care, for the safety of the mothers and their young offspring, which the fairies were on the watch to snatch away.

The torch-bearers used great care in carrying their fire in the right-hand, and therewith running around their premises from right to left, thus observing the "Deas-iuil," or the right hand direction. The "Tuath-iuil," being the left-hand, or wrong direction, would render their precautions entirely abortive.

In this manner they protected their properties, and prevented the fairy thieves from snatching away the unbaptised infants from their mothers' bed, placing in their room their own ugly and deformed children.

Martin, in his History of the Western Isles, informs us, "That this was considered an effectual means to preserve both the mother and infant from the power of evil spirits, who are ready at such times to do mischief, and

sometimes carry away the infants, and return poor, meagre skeletons; and these infants have voracious appetites. In this case it was usual for those who believed that their children were thus taken away, to dig a grave in the fields on quarter-day, and there to lay the fairy-skeleton till next morning, at which time the parents went to the place, where they doubted not to find their own child instead of the skeleton."

They had also, in other localties, recourse to the barbarous charm of burning, with a live coal, the toes of the suffering infant, the supposed changeling. The Fairies were not contented with abstracting handsome children—beautiful maidens and wives sometimes disappeared.

"The Miller of Menstrie," in Clackmannan, who possessed a charming spouse, had given offence to the fairy court, and was, in consequence, deprived of his fair helpmate. His distress was aggravated by hearing his wife singing in the air—

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Oh! Alva woods are bonnie,

Tillicoultry hills are fair;

But when I think o' the bonnie braes o' Menstrie,

It mak's my heart aye sair.

After many attempts to procure her restoration, the miller chanced one day, in riddling some stuff at the mill-door, to use a posture of enchantment, when the spell was dissolved, and the matron fell into his arms. The

wife of the Blacksmith of Tullibody was carried up the chimney, the fairies, as they bore her off, singing—

Deidle linkum doddie;

We've gotten drucken Davie's wife,

The smith o' Tullibody.

"Those snatched to Fairyland," says Dr. Buchan, "might be recovered within a year and a day, but the spell for the recovery was only potent when the fairies made, on Hallowe'en, their annual procession." Sir Walter Scott relates the following:—"The wife of a Lothian farmer had been watched by the fairies. During the year of probation, she had repeatedly appeared on Sundays in the midst of her children, combing their hair. On one of these occasions she was accosted by her husband, when she instructed him how to rescue her at the next Hallowe'en procession.

The farmer conned his lesson carefully, and, on the appointed day, proceeded to a plot of furze to await the arrival of the procession. It came, but the ringing of the fairy bridles so confused him, that the train passed ere he could sufficiently recover himself to use the intended spell.

The unearthly laugh of the abductors, and the passionate lamentations of his wife informed him that she was lost to him for ever."

"A woman," says Dr. Buchan, "who had been conveyed to fairyland, was warned by one she had formerly known as a mortal, to avoid eating and drinking with her new friends for a certain period. She obeyed, and when the time expired, she found herself on earth restored to the society of mankind."

A matron on another occasion was carried to fairyland to nurse her newborn child, which had been previously abducted. She had not been long in her enchanted dwelling when she furtively anointed an eye with the contents of a boiling cauldron. She now discovered that what had previously seemed a gorgeous palace, was, in reality, a gloomy cavern. She was dismissed, but one of the wicked wights, when she demanded her child, spat in her eye, and extinguished its light for ever.

About the middle of last century, a clergyman at Kirkmichael, Perthshire, whose faith was more regulated by the scepticism of philosophy, than the credulity of superstition, would not be prevailed upon to yield his assent to the opinion of the times. At length, however, he felt from experience that he doubted what he ought to have believed.

One night, as he was returning home at a late hour, from a meeting of Presbytery, and the customary dinner which followed, he was seized by the fairies, and carried aloft into the air. Through fields of ether and fleecy cloud he journeyed many a mile, descrying the earth far distant below him, and no bigger than a nut-shell.

Being thus sufficiently convinced of the reality of their existence, they let him down at the door of his own house, where he afterwards often recited to the wondering circle, the marvellous tale of his adventure.

Some people will believe that “spirits” of a different sort had a little to do with the worthy minister’s conviction, and that his “ain gude grey mare” had more to do with bringing him to his own door than the fairies.

It is difficult to describe a Hallowe'en as enjoyed by a family circle in olden times. An eye-witness has given the following account of it:—"When I entered the house, the tide of enjoyment was rolling on in full career. I listened and thought I heard an unusual noise in the apartment immediately above. The noise, however, was by no means of an alarming kind. It appeared to be the obstreperous romping of a parcel of youngsters. I found that the ladies of the house had brought together a number of young friends to burn nuts and duck for apples.

I ascertained that previous to my appearance, they had already gone through the greater part of the ceremonies of the evening. They had pulled stocks, burnt nuts, and were now collected with earnest and somewhat awe-stricken faces, round a table on which stood two or three wine-glasses full of pure water. They were, in fact, about to commence the ceremony of dropping the egg—a ceremony which is performed by puncturing a fresh egg with a pin, when the person whose destiny is to be read holds it over a glass of pure water, into which he allows a few drops from the egg to fall.

The glass is then held up to the candle, and some important event in the future life of the inquirer is found exhibited hieroglyphically in the glass, —the egg droppings assuming an endless variety of shapes, in which the skilful in these matters discover a resemblance to things, which, by association, clearly point out coming circumstances and events. All this was done by an old, weird sybil, who had been invited for the special purpose of reading to the young folks the various signs and indications of this privileged right.

We all tried our fortunes after the most approved manner of egg-dropping, by the direction of the withered sybil already alluded to, and who, indeed, looked the very 'beau ideal' of a witch, or fortune-teller of coming events. She was old, shrivelled, and haggard—had a shrill, sharp voice, and was withal marvellously loquacious. She seemed to be deeply in earnest, and to be strongly impressed with the solemnities which were going forward, and was more than once highly displeased with what she considered our irreverence for these matters, and the unbecoming and ill-timed levity with which we heard each other's fortunes foretold.

We had all now tried our luck, with various results, but there was one young gentleman, who, I thought, seemed rather disinclined to go through the ceremony—and indeed, he finally endeavoured to back out altogether by a forced joke. We all urged him on, however, and at length fairly drove him to the experiment.

'Come awa, come awa, my bonny man,—excuse me for speaking that way, but ye ken I've kent ye sin ye was a bairn, and hae dandled ye mony a time on my knee. Come awa, and lat's see what luck is to be yours. I'm sure it'll be gowd in goppins, and true love to brook it—a bonnie lady wi' a bonnier tocher.'

Whilst the old woman was speaking, the youth, having advanced close to the table, was in the act of dropping, with rather an unsteady hand, the egg into the glass. This done: 'Here Janet,' he said, with an affected laugh, and at the same time handing the glass to her across the table—'Now, give me all the good things of this life, let not one be awanting on your peril.'

Well, all awaited in silence the announcement of our friend's future fortune, as we felt a degree of interest, nay of awe, stealing in upon us, which gradually allayed the light spirit with which we had entered the apartment.

The old woman had now gently raised the glass between her eye and the candle, and having peered through it for a second—'Eh! gude guide us, Sirs,' she exclaimed, 'Gude guide us, what's this we hae here; but it canna be, it canna be, let me see,' and she looked with an increased intensity at the fatal signs.

'Ay! ay!' she said again, 'it's but owre true, my bairn, my bairn,' she added, and laying down the glass on the table. 'Are ye sure it was your glass ye gae me?'

'Sure enough, Janet, sure enough, what's all this fuss about?' 'What is it, Janet, what is't, what is't?' now burst from both old and young, all being wound up to a pitch of the most intense interest to know what was that fate which Janet's expressions so particularly and fearfully hinted at.

'I insist on knowing,' said the young gentleman, striking his hand on the table with a sort of good-natured energy, for he affected to be laughing at the time.

'I insist upon it,' he said, 'for the edification of all present. Come then, Janet, any thing you like short of premature death and ruin, and crossed love.' 'But it's short o' neither, my bairn! Alas! it's short o' neither,' said the old woman gravely and seriously.

‘It’s indeed short o’ neither—there’s a winding sheet there wi’ a fearful rent in it, and that ye ken, betokens a violent death; there’s a’—here, perceiving that things were getting rather serious, I suddenly burst in with an affected shout of hilarity, overturned the glass, talked loudly and obstreperously, and insisted upon our adjourning to the apartment we had left. So, with a wild, but assumed glee, we hurriedly descended to the room below.

“We endeavoured to enjoy ourselves, but still a weight seemed to have been laid upon the spirits of us all, which nothing could remove. We all felt the absurdity of permitting such a frivolous circumstance as the egg-dropping to depress us, but we could not hide from ourselves the fact that it had depressed us, and more particularly so, as our excellent host—a kind-hearted youth of twenty-three—had evidently taken the sybil’s vaticinations too severely to heart.

Under this feeling, and after our kind host had made such ineffectual attempts to restore the gaiety of the evening, the party broke up, each went his own way, and I retired to bed.

‘Confound that old hag,’ said my friend, just as I was about to part with him for the night; ‘confound her, she has spoiled our evening’s enjoyment with her nonsense. Wasn’t it evident,’ he said, ‘that our friends were damped by the fooleries up-stairs?’

I said, avoiding a direct answer, ‘that we had spent a very pleasant night, and if there was any feeling of the kind he alluded to, a night’s sleep would entirely remove it.’

I met my friend and his aunts next morning at breakfast, where he more than once alluded to the circumstance during our meal; and indeed fairly allowed that, in despite of the contempt with which he viewed such things, he could not help the idea of the rent winding-sheet still retaining its hold on his imagination.

"It will serve no purpose to relate the history of this unfortunate youth. The impression of the old hag's prediction never left him, but increased in intensity as some years passed on. He became addicted to intemperate habits, and utterly heedless of his worldly affairs. He squandered his patrimonial estate, and ruined his aged aunts, who lived with him.

Ultimately, he wandered in beggary to a neighbouring city, and frequented the lowest haunts of dissipation, where he was found by a friend, who had gone in search of him, but found exactly an hour after he had swallowed a vial of laudanum. He opened his eyes, and knew his friend, who had just procured a surgeon; but all in vain.

His last words were—'Oh! the winding sheet; the rent winding-sheet!' and in less than two hours, he gently expired."

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There are instances of the minds of some having been unhinged through the influence of undue credulity in certain practices of this nature. It has frequently happened besides, that personal injury has been inflicted, unintentionally no doubt, by the frolics and fooleries of that evening.

The throwing of cabbage runts and large round turnips down the "lums," or chimneys of the cottars' dwellings, have often struck violently upon the

family group around the cosy ingle, and inflicted serious injuries. The ceremony of throwing the clue of blue yarn into the pit of the kiln is one that has been attended with unhappy results.

Kilns for drying corn are generally erected in lonely places, apart from the other dwellings, owing to their liability to catch fire. On the other hand, the kiln-logies or pits, are dreary, dark, deep receptacles, of circular form, narrow below and wide above, like hollow cones inverted.

During the romping frivolities of the domestic circle in performing as many of the games as they can, lots are cast as to the maiden who must resort to the kiln at the dark hour of midnight, with her clue of blue thread in her hand, to meet with her sweetheart, or to hear his name. The selected "lass" must go, and go alone, however dark and stormy the night.

It requires no small fortitude to enter the damp, dark kiln, to climb to the upper ridge of the kiln-logie, and to sit in that weird position in utter darkness. By this time, however, a number of the young men, unknown to the girl, had resorted to the kiln, and concealed themselves in and around the place.

The girl, with palpitating heart cast her clue in to the kiln-logie, retaining the end of the thread in her hand, and exclaiming, with tremulous voice, "Co e sud th'air ceann mo ròpain?" (Who is there at the end of my rope or thread?)

Some of the youths, hidden in the kiln, would enter the aperture or fireplace below, lay hold of the clue in the pit, and cry with a feigned-unnatural voice, "I am here, what want ye with me?"

"Who art thou, and what thy name, bold swain?" The replies to this query were various. Some said that they were the girl's sweetheart, others, that they were wizards or beings of the supernatural order.

Some even wickedly feigned to be the prince of darkness, when the pre-concerted shrieking and howling of the hidden fellows so terrified the trembling young female above, as to render her a helpless maniac for life.

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SACRED WELLS AND LOCHS.—The veneration that has been paid for ages to "Sacred Wells," and the confidence placed in their charms all over the kingdom for the curing of diseases, both mental and bodily, falls next to be noticed.

It appears of old that if a well had a peculiar situation, if its waters were bright and clear, it was dedicated to some tutelary saint, by honouring it with his name. Thus we have St. Fillan's, St. Conel's, St. Catherine's, St. Bernard's, St. Cuthbert's wells, and a host of others in Scotland. We have hundreds of holy wells in England, such as St. Chad's, St. John's, St.

Mary's, St. Madern's wells, all remarkable for something. We have St. Winifred's holy well in Flintshire, the most famous in the three kingdoms, at whose shrine Geraldus Cambrensis offered his devotions in the twelfth century.

The vast majority of holy wells were frequented for any disease, while some wells were visited for special ailments, for the cure of which they had been celebrated. St. Tegla's well was patronised by sufferers from the fall-

ing sickness; St. John's, Balmanno, Kincardineshire, by rickety children, and sore eyes.

The waters of Trinity Gask, Perthshire, will render all baptised therein proof against every plague. In the Island of St. Kilda there are two wells —"Tobar nam buadh" (the spring of virtues), celebrated for deafness, and "Tobar a' chleirich" (the clerk's well)—which, though covered twice a day by the sea, never becomes brackish.

At Kirkden, in Angus, there is a well said to cure all sores, by mere washing, after the applications of skilled physicians had proved ineffectual. But by far the most interesting wells in this country are those formerly resorted to for the cure of insanity. Of these may be mentioned St Fillan's well, near Tyndrum, Perthshire, as well as St.

Nun's celebrated fountain in Cornwall. The curing process at St. Fillan's may be described as a specimen. The lunatics were first plunged into the water, wherein they were tumbled and tossed about rather roughly. They were then carried into the adjacent Chapel of St. Fillan's and there secured with ropes, tied in a special way.

A celebrated bell, which has a history of its own, was then placed with great solemnity on the patient's head. There the poor creature was left all night alone in the dreary chapel, and, if in the morning he was found unloosed, hopes were entertained that he would recover his reason, but the case was hopeless if found still in his bonds.

Very frequently the patients were released from the bonds and tormentors by death, caused by the cold, and all the cruelties inflicted upon them. St.

Catherine's well, near Edinburgh, was regarded in olden times with great awe, because there appeared a black substance on its surface which could be set on fire.

This dark-looking, greasy substance or oil, was supposed to proceed from the strata of coal underneath, and it was believed to cure all sorts of cutaneous diseases. In the north end of Skye, and a little beneath the towering cliffs of the far-famed Quiraing, there is a conflux of pure, fresh-water springs, which form a small elliptical pond of considerable depth.

It is a beautiful spot, pleasantly hemmed in with shrubs and bushes. It is called "Loch Sianta," or the Holy Lake. Owing to the natural beauty of this little Hebridean Siloam, the natives conceived it to be favoured with its divinity, to whom, in the days of darkness and superstition, they were extremely punctual in making offerings of various kinds.

Invalids resorted thither, drank of its waters, washed themselves therein, and received cures thereby for their mental and bodily ailments. These superstitions have, however, long ceased, and Loch Sianta, though beautiful as ever, has lost its ancient charms in this more enlightened age.

On the first Sunday of May (old style) the well at "Creagag" or Craigie, in Munlochy Bay, was believed to possess powerful charms against diseases, witchcraft, fairies and such like. For weeks before the time, old and young prepared for their pilgrimage to this well. All behoved to bring their offerings.

Coloured threads and rags of cloth were brought in thousands, and hung upon the rocks and brushwood, as propitiatory gifts to the saint of the

healing waters. Even in St.

Kilda the divinities of "Tobar nam buadh" and "Tobar a' chleirich" had to be propitiated by offerings, in the shape of shells, pins, needles, pebbles, coins, or rags, otherwise their tutelary saint would be inexorable. So common, indeed, was this habit, that at the Rugwell, near Newcastle, the shrubs and bushes near the spring were densely covered with rags.

And many of my readers are old enough to have seen crowds of the good citizens of the Highland Capital flocking on a May morn eastward to the well at Culloden to taste of its waters, and to cover with their offerings of rags the branches of the surrounding trees.

There is a place beyond Kessock Ferry, near the point of Kilmuir, called "Craigie-How," where there is a cave close to the sea-beach. In this cave a little water falls down from the roof in drops on the stones below. These drops are to this day considered a complete cure for deafness, if properly applied.

The patient lies down, and lays his head on the flags, and lets the water fall first into the one ear and then into the other. After some formalities are gone through, the patient rises, and the deafness is believed to be gone!

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Loch Maree also has its Sacred well. The scenery of this part of Gairloch, in Ross-shire, is unsurpassed, and perhaps rarely, if at all equalled, by that of any other quarter of the kingdom. The mountains which surround Loch Maree are of great height, and of beautifully characterised outline.

Their lofty, jagged, serrated peaks, like Macbeth's witches, "so withered and so wild in their attire," present the finest specimens of the grand and picturesque to be met with anywhere. The gigantic Slioch (Sliabhach) towering to a height of more than 4000 feet, is seen from afar, even from the remotest of the Northern Hebrides.

Within the bosom of these mountains lies enshrined the far-famed Loch Maree, with its many wooded islets, so varied in size and so different in appearance. About twenty-seven of these lie in a cluster near the middle of the lake (opposite the Loch Maree Hotel), which is eighteen miles in length, and two in average breadth.

Dr. M'Culloch writes—"It was with some difficulty that we explored our way through the labyrinth of Islands in the centre of this lake; as they are little raised above the water, and covered with scattered firs, and thickets of birch, alder, and holly, while they are separated by narrow and tortuous channels."

The scene indeed, is so grand, wild, and fantastic, that words are at fault to describe it. Some years ago it was visited by tourists, whose admiration of it cannot be better expressed than in their own words.

"When this majestic scene first burst upon our view, the effect was as surprising and enchanting, as it was unexpected. The lake sparkled bright in the evening sun. The lofty mountains were, at their summits, tinged with his golden rays, while in the hollows, and nearer their base, they were wreathed in mist and light clouds. The effect of this was to increase to a prodigious degree, the apparent height of the mountains, to make every hollow on their rugged sides, seem a deep and inaccessible glen, and to en-

large to an almost immeasurable extent the lake, and the hills which rose at its extreme distance.

It was altogether a scene of enchantment never to be forgotten. The white piqued summits of the File-Mountain sparkled like the spires and turrets of an emerald palace, the work of some eastern magician, or of the genii of Arabian romance, and forming a splendid contrast to the dark and rugged Slioch, which rises from the opposite side of the lake!"

It is by no means surprising that Superstition, in her fantastic freaks, should have, in ages long byegone, selected this weird locality for the manifestation of not a few of her favourite protegés.

This superb sheet of water, from its almost unfathomable depth and other dimensions, furnished a befitting receptacle for brownies, water-horses, uruisgean, kelpies, and such like, while one of the islets of this beautiful lake became the arena of various superstitious practices, and of curing therewith some of the most inveterate diseases.

The largest of these Islands are Eilean Suthain (St. Swithan's Isle), Eilean Ruairidh Mhoir, and Eilean Ruairidh Bhig. Eilean Maree is the most celebrated, and was, as some think, dedicated to the Virgin Mary; others assert that it is named after St.

Malrube; but more probably it is called after a Prince, or petty King who occupied the Island—is, in short, "Loch-ma-Righ," or Loch of my King. It has a burying-ground with tombstones bearing inscriptions and hieroglyphical figures, which cannot now be deciphered.

There is in the Island also a Sacred Well, in which, as in the pool of St Fillan's, lunatics were plunged and healed, and, in short, all manner of diseases cured. Around this sacred spot the usual oblations were made to the tutelary saint, and coins of every descriptions stuck into a tree that grew out of the bank.

The sacred water of this well was deemed so effectual in curing the insane, that they were brought to it from the remotest quarters of the north. The treatment they received was no doubt somewhat severe.

Before they drank of its waters, it was reckoned indispensable to the permanency of their cure, that they should be dragged at the stern of a boat twice round the Island, pulled by a rope made of horse-hair, fastened under their arms and around their shoulders. They were then dipped in the well, and drank of its water.

Her Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria, recently paid a visit to this romantic district, and held a religious service on the Island. In commemoration of this welcome visit she has been pleased to sanction a memorial inscription, by the proprietor of Gairloch, on a large stone opposite the Loch Maree Hotel, in which she took up her abode.

In this manner our beloved sovereign, whose eye is always keen to observe, whose taste is exquisite to admire, and whose sensibility is great to appreciate all that is grand and beautiful in Nature's workmanship, has conferred a lasting honour on the true-hearted Highland Chief, Sir Kenneth S.

Mackenzie, Baronet; on his loyal and delighted tenantry; as well as on his romantic property in Gairloch.

It may be remarked that there is hardly a lake, or perennial fountain in Scotland of any magnitude, but has certain traditional stories connected with it, bearing reference to something wild or supernatural.

The celebrated Hugh Miller relates the following regarding the "Fiddler's Well," near Cromarty:—"There is a little path which, in the eastern part of the parish, goes winding over rock and stone along the edge of a range of low-browed precipices, till it reaches a fine spring of limpid water, that comes gushing out of the side of a bank, covered with moss and daisies. This beautiful spring has been known to the people of the town, for a century and more, by the name of Fiddler's Well.

Its waters are said to be medicinal; and there is a tradition still preserved, of the circumstance through which its virtues were first discovered, and to which it owes its name. Two young men of the place, who were much attached to each other, were seized at nearly the same time by consumption.

In one the progress of the disease was rapid; he died two short months after he was attacked by it; while the other, though wasted almost to a shadow, had yet strength enough left to follow the corpse of his companion to the grave. The surname of the survivor was Fiddler, a name still common among the seafaring men of the town.

On the evening of the interment, he felt oppressed and unhappy, his imagination was haunted by a thousand feverish shapes of open graves, with bones smouldering round their edges, and of coffins with the lids displaced; and after he had fallen asleep, the images, which were still the same, became more grisly and horrible.

Towards morning, however, they had all vanished; and he dreamed that he was walking alone by the sea-shore in a clear beautiful day in summer. Suddenly, as he thought, some person stepped up behind, and whispered into his ear, in the voice of his deceased companion, 'Go on, Willie, I shall meet you at Stormy'.

There is a rock in the neighbourhood of Fiddler's Well, so called from the violence with which the sea beats against it, when the wind blows strongly from the east.

On hearing the voice, he turned round, and seeing no one, he went on as he thought, to the place named, in the hope of meeting with his friend, and sat down on a bank to wait for his coming; but he waited long, lonely and dejected; and then remembering that he for whom he waited was dead, he burst into tears.

At this moment, a large field-bee came humming from the west, and began to fly round his head. He raised his hand to brush it away; it widened its circle, and then came humming in to his ear as before.

He raised his hand a second time, but the bee could not be scared off; it hummed ceaselessly round and round him, until at length its murmurings seemed to be fashioned into words, articulated in the voice of his deceased companion.

'Dig, Willie, and drink,' it said, 'Dig, Willie, and drink.' He, accordingly, set himself to dig, and no sooner had he torn a sod out of the bank, than a spring of clear water gushed from the hollow; and the bee, taking a wider

circle, and humming in a voice of triumph that seemed to emulate the sound of a trumpet, flew away.

He looked after it, but as he looked, the images of his dream began to mingle with those of the waking world; the scenery of the hill seemed obscured by a dark cloud, in the centre of which there glimmered a faint light; the rocks, the sea, the long declivity faded into the cloud; and turning round, he saw only a dark apartment, and the first beams of morning shining in at the window.

He rose, and after digging the well, drank of the water, and recovered. And its virtues are still celebrated; for though the water be only simple water, it must be drunk in the morning, and as it gushes out of the bank; and with pure air, exercise, and early rising for its auxiliaries, it continues to work cures."

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It has been remarked, that almost all our lakes, fountains, pools, waterfalls, rocky crevices, and caves, have been tenanted, by superstition, with water-horses, kelpies, uruisgean, and brownies. Of this there are many instances in the Highland districts of Perthshire, which are now made classic ground by the magic pen of the author of Waverley.

Beinn Venue is a lofty mountain which rises from the south-east shore of Loch Katrine. The celebrated "Coir-nan-Uruisgean," or Goblin's Cave, is situated at its base.

It is guarded by precipitous rocks, which lie strewed in immense fragments on every side, and this well-defended corrie or cave, affords a safe

asylum for foxes, badgers, and wild-cats; as also one equally safe, if the natives be credited, for the goblins, kelpies, and uruisgean.

The uruisgean are, in short, no strangers in various quarters of Perthshire, as well as in most parts of the Highlands. Dr. Graham says that they are "a sort of lubberly supernaturals, who could be gained over by kind attention, to perform the drudgery of the farm; and it was believed that many Highland families had some of the order so tamed, as to become attached to them".

Sir Walter Scott states that "tradition has ascribed to the uruisgean, a figure between a goat and a man; in short, however much the classical reader may be startled, precisely that of a Grecian Satyr."

It is related of an honest farmer's wife in Glenlyon, that one wet morning, as the decent matron was in the act of making the porridge for the family breakfast, she had an unexpected visit from an "uruisg," who came in unceremoniously, cold, dripping with rain, and squatted herself close by the cheering fire.

There the huge, slippery-skinned, uncouth monster lay, enjoying the genial warmth, but awkwardly impeding the worthy good-wife from cooking the family meal. Sadly annoyed at the monster's impertinence, the good old lady lifted a ladleful of the boiling beverage from the pot on the fire, and poured it on the sides and thighs of her unwelcome guest, on which, the creature arose suddenly, darted off in a moment, upsetting tables and chairs, and exclaiming in pure Gaelic:—

Ochan! loisg thu mi, chràidh thu mi,

Led' bhrochan teth, tana, gu'n stà;

Ach fhad's bhios uisg' ann an Liobhain,

Cha chriochnaich do pheanas gu bràth.

A' Chaillich gu'n mhodh, is gu'n nair

'S tu chiurr mi gu goirt, is gu searbh,

Ach thig mi le armachd gu'n dàil,

Is cuiream gu bàs thu gu dearbh!

We ought to learn one lesson from this subject—gratitude to the Great Ruler, because we live in more favourable circumstances, and under the light and liberty of a preached Gospel.

The press and the pulpit have now opened the eyes of men; the schoolmaster is abroad; and many superstitions by which past ages have been deluded have greatly vanished before the pure light of evangelic truth.

In many quarters of the world they have disappeared before the lustre of that revelation which has brought the truth of immortality to light, and which impresses the imagination of man with truer notions and simpler imagery.

We cannot but admire the dauntless courage of Paul when he boldly faced the Epicurean and stoic philosophers—when "he stood in the midst of Mars' Hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious".

There he met a people, the most distinguished for the wisdom of their political constitution, for the brilliancy of their achievements, for the extent and variety of their learning, and for the refinement of their manners; yet a people who, amid all their glory and renown, were ignorant of the true God, and lived the blind and deluded victims of the grossest idolatry and superstition.

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