

**A REMINISCENCE OF
THE HIGHLANDS OF
SCOTLAND IN 1843**

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CHAPTER I.

DURING the last thirty years such great changes have taken place in the north of Scotland, that the reader may with satisfaction glance back at the then condition of the Highlands and compare it with the present—showing as it does that no part of Scotland has made such rapid strides in advancement in social and commercial progress.

A change from a busy town life to the slowness of the country is admitted by most

men now-a-days to be almost absolutely necessary for health. Although men may grumble at the want of this or that luxury, they, nevertheless, are benefited by an absence from it, and go back to town all the better of a little discomfort from a stay in the country. We believe that the variety has a most vivifying effect, and that therefore such change is a duty.

Nowhere is the charm of solitude more fully felt than in some of the retired glens in the north of Scotland. To him who loves it, and seeks it, we would say go to the far north; and he who has experienced it will say that there is great enjoyment in the stillness and rest of a Highland Glen. It is said that only the busy man, who is a stranger to such scenes, really appreciates or even apprehends the great charm of the repose in hills and glens,—that it is a special

privilege awarded to him as requital for over work in body and mind in different scenes,—that to him is permitted the full companionship of the old grey lichen-covered rock, the weeping birch, brown breckan, mossy banks, mists on the mountains, juniper knolls, and trickling burns ! To these natural beauties, at all events, great men have in all time bowed with reverence and admiration ; seeing in them the great hand that knows how to give to man with profusion and love. With the help of railways and steamboats these solitudes are now-a-days made accessible to thousands of men and women who otherwise would certainly never have approached them ; and while Saint Paul's Cathedral is now visited by the wondering Donald Macdonald, from Scorryreckan, the privilege (with Mr. Cook's faithful aid) is given to

Betsy Jane, of Aldersgate, to scale the "altitude" of Ben Nevis, the "ighest mountain as is!"

A remarkable feature in connection with the travelling world in the Highlands of Scotland is that, while the moorlands are only great tracts of barren waste, and not a vestige of cultivation visible, the public roads through them are such as might fairly compete in their delineation and structure with many of the great roads lately made by the Emperor Napoleon the Third, in France, and which latter are for ever a lasting token of the ability and zeal for his country of that great man. Until a few years ago the Government of our land granted a sum of money annually for the care and maintenance of Highland roads, as opening up the country to civilization; and we regret to have to record that in a very

parsimonious hour some Liberal member of the House of Commons determined to withdraw this sum, and to throw the whole weight of roads' expense on the heritors; not by any means a wealthy community in the north of Scotland. For one hundred and twenty miles from Perth to Inverness, and for about an equal distance north from Inverness to Wick, these roads were all subsidized by Government, and those who remember the old coaching days there, will think of their order, speed, and punctuality with pleasure.

Several miles away among the wilds from this main road, called the Highland Road, out of deference we presume to the roads anywhere else, was situated a Shooting Box of very rustic and very unassuming pretensions, and occupied for the season by three Scotch gentlemen, bachelors, ardent