THE RHYME OF THE LADY OF THE ROCK, AND HOW IT GREW

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The Rhyme of the Lady of the Rock, and How It Grew by Emily Pfeiffer

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EMILY PFEIFFER

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"All the strength, and all the arts of men, are measured by, and founded upon, their reverence for the passion, and their guardianship of the purity, of Love."

RUSKIN

LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1884

Envoy

TO

C. R. AND M. L.

Sweet sisters, far away in space, but near
In love, to you this shapen thought I bring
As 'twere a jewel that might clasp or cling,
Well knowing that however it appear
To others poor, your loves will hold it dear;
And all the dearer that the song I sing
Is mine, and verily the only thing
That I can truly give of all my gear.

Sisters! None better than we three can know
Where absence tells on love, where tries in vain;
The hearts it cannot quell it worketh woe;
And thus I send o'er land and sea, this chain
To bind your thoughts to me an hour or so
In links that shall be other than of pain.

THE RHYME

OF THE

LADY OF THE ROCK.

In the autumn of the year 18—, we were tarrying at Oban, detained against our will by the storm which caused the great Atlantic waves, despite the natural breakwater of Kerrera, and the many protecting headlands of the bay, to come surging almost into the houses of the overgrown Highland village. Looking, from the blurred windows of the Great Western Hotel, upon the wild waste of sea which submerged the garden, we might almost have fancied ourselves where about this time we had counted upon being: on the often turbid waters at the mouth of Loch Linnhe, on our passage to the Island of Mull. We were fain to acknowledge, in hearing of the wind and the waves, that we were in a better place, as, admiring the play of the mighty forces from our safe shelter, we abided our time.

It was, perhaps, on the day following the storm, when the shingle, which had turned the high road into a pebbly beach, had been cleared away, when the clean, porous soil of the Western Highlands had left the surface dry, and the sun had made a rift in the retiring storm-clouds, that we ventured abroad, hoping to obtain from Dunolly a glimpse of Castle Duart, the old Norse-built stronghold which formerly made terrible to strangers the entrance to the Sound of Mull, having been long the head-quarters of chiefs who exercised a wild sovereignty over the Isles.

Duart Castle, and the low, black, almost sunken rock which lies betwixt it and Lismore Lighthouse, had ever since I first beheld them, on a summer holiday long years ago, possessed a peculiar interest for me, as having been the scenes of a highly dramatic story, the yet unexhausted capacity of which for poetic treatment, had lately been pointed out to me by my friend Professor Blackie. It was at his instigation that I had also got hold of a little-known book by one calling himself a "senachie" of the Clan Maclean, which in its turn introduced me to other curious sources of information; and these several circumstances abetting, my mind had come to set with considerable persistency in the direction of this old robbers' nest, and was busying itself by