

LETTER III.

GLASGOW, April 16, 1853.

DEAR AUNT E.:--

You shall have my earliest Scotch letter; for I am sure nobody can sympathize in the emotions of the first approach to Scotland as you can. A country dear to us by the memory of the dead and of the living; a country whose history and literature, interesting enough of itself, has become to us still more so, because the reading and learning of it formed part of our communion for many a social hour, with friends long parted from earth.

The views of Scotland, which lay on my mother's table, even while I was a little child, and in poring over which I spent so many happy, dreamy hours,--the Scotch ballads, which were the delight of our evening fireside, and which seemed almost to melt the soul out of me, before I was old enough to understand their words,--the songs of Burns, which had been a household treasure among us,--the enchantments of Scott,--all these dimly returned upon me. It was the result of them all which I felt in nerve and brain.

And, by the by, that puts me in mind of one thing; and that is, how much of our pleasure in literature results from its reflection on us from,

other minds. As we advance in life, the literature which has charmed us in the circle of our friends becomes endeared to us from the reflected remembrance of them, of their individualities, their opinions, and their sympathies, so that our memory of it is a many-colored cord, drawn from many minds.

So in coming near to Scotland, I seemed to feel not only my own individuality, but all that my friends would have felt, had they been with me. For sometimes we seem to be encompassed, as by a cloud, with a sense of the sympathy of the absent and the dead.

We left Liverpool with hearts a little tremulous and excited by the vibration of an atmosphere of universal sympathy and kindness. We found ourselves, at length, shut from the warm adieus of our friends, in a snug compartment of the railroad car. The English cars are models of comfort and good keeping. There are six seats in a compartment, luxuriously cushioned and nicely carpeted, and six was exactly the number of our party. Nevertheless, so obstinate is custom that we averred at first that we preferred our American cars, deficient as they are in many points of neatness and luxury, because they are so much more social.

"Dear me," said Mr. S., "six Yankees shut up in a car together! Not one Englishman to tell us any thing about the country! Just like the six old ladies that made their living by taking tea at each other's houses."

But that is the way here in England: every arrangement in travelling is designed to maintain that privacy and reserve which is the dearest and most sacred part of an Englishman's nature. Things are so arranged here that, if a man pleases, he can travel all through England with his family, and keep the circle an unbroken unit, having just as little communication with any thing outside of it as in his own house.

From one of these sheltered apartments in a railroad car, he can pass to preëngaged parlors and chambers in the hotel, with his own separate table, and all his domestic manners and peculiarities unbroken. In fact, it is a little compact home travelling about.

Now, all this is very charming to people who know already as much about a country as they want to know; but it follows from it that a stranger might travel all through England, from one end to the other and not be on conversing terms with a person in it. He may be at the same hotel, in the same train with people able to give him all imaginable information, yet never touch them at any practicable point of communion. This is more especially the case if his party, as ours was, is just large enough to fill the whole apartment.

As to the comforts of the cars, it is to be said, that for the same price you can get far more comfortable riding in America. Their first class cars are beyond all praise, but also beyond all price; their second class are comfortless, cushionless, and uninviting. Agreeably with our theory of democratic equality, we have a general car, not so

complete as the one, nor so bare as the other, where all ride together; and if the traveller in thus riding sees things that occasionally annoy him, when he remembers that the whole population, from the highest to the lowest, are accommodated here together, he will certainly see hopeful indications in the general comfort, order, and respectability which prevail; all which we talked over most patriotically together, while we were lamenting that there was not a seventh to our party, to instruct us in the localities.

Every thing upon the railroad proceeds with systematic accuracy. There is no chance for the most careless person to commit a blunder, or make a mistake. At the proper time the conductor marches every body into their places and locks them in, gives the word, "All right," and away we go. Somebody has remarked, very characteristically, that the starting word of the English is "all right," and that of the Americans "go ahead."

Away we go through Lancashire, wide awake, looking out on all sides for any signs of antiquity. In being thus whirled through English scenery, I became conscious of a new understanding of the spirit and phraseology of English poetry. There are many phrases and expressions with which we have been familiar from childhood, and which, we suppose, in a kind of indefinite way, we understand, which, after all, when we come on English ground, start into a new significance: take, for instance, these lines from L'Allegro:--

"Sometimes walking, not unseen,

By hedge-row elms on hillocks green.

* * * * *

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
While the landscape round it measures;
Russet lawns and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains, on whose barren breast
The laboring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and livers wide:
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted trees."

Now, these hedge-row elms. I had never even asked myself what they were till I saw them; but you know, as I said in a former letter, the hedges are not all of them carefully cut; in fact many of them are only irregular rows of bushes, where, although the hawthorn is the staple element, yet firs, and brambles, and many other interlopers put in their claim, and they all grow up together in a kind of straggling unity; and in the hedges trees are often set out, particularly elms, and have a very pleasing effect.

Then, too, the trees have more of that rounding outline which is expressed by the word "bosomed." But here we are, right under the walls

of Lancaster, and Mr. S. wakes me up by quoting, "Old John o' Gaunt, time-honored Lancaster."

"Time-honored," said I; "it looks as fresh as if it had been built yesterday: you do not mean to say that is the real old castle?"

"To be sure, it is the very old castle built in the reign of Edward III., by John of Gaunt."

It stands on the summit of a hill, seated regally like a queen upon a throne, and every part of it looks as fresh, and sharp, and clear, as if it were the work of modern times. It is used now for a county jail. We have but a moment to stop or admire--the merciless steam car drives on. We have a little talk about the feudal times, and the old past days; when again the cry goes up,--

"O, there's something! What's that?"

"O, that is Carlisle."

"Carlisle!" said I; "what, the Carlisle of Scott's ballad?"

"What ballad?"

"Why, don't you remember, in the Lay of the Last Minstrel, the song of Albert Graeme, which has something about Carlisle's wall in every verse?"

'It was an English, laydie bright
When sun shines fair on Carlisle wall,
And she would marry a Scottish knight,
For love will still be lord of all.'

I used to read this when I was a child, and wonder what 'Carlisle wall' was."

Carlisle is one of the most ancient cities in England, dating quite back to the time of the Romans. Wonderful! How these Romans left their mark every where!

Carlisle has also its ancient castle, the lofty, massive tower of which forms a striking feature of the town.

This castle was built by William Rufus. David, King of Scots, and Robert Bruce both tried their hands upon it, in the good old times, when England and Scotland were a mutual robbery association. Then the castle of the town was its great feature; castles were every thing in those days. Now the castle has gone to decay, and stands only for a curiosity, and the cotton factory has come up in its place. This place is famous for cottons and gingham, and moreover for a celebrated biscuit bakery. So goes the world,--the lively vigorous shoots of the present springing out of the old, mouldering trunk of the past.

Mr. S. was in an ecstasy about an old church, a splendid Gothic, in which Paley preached. He was archdeacon of Carlisle. We stopped here for a little while to take dinner. In a large, handsome room tables were set out, and we sat down to a regular meal.

One sees nothing of a town from a railroad station, since it seems to be an invariable rule, not only here, but all over Europe, to locate them so that you can see nothing from them.

By the by, I forgot to say, among the historical recollections of this place, that it was the first stopping-place of Queen Mary, after her fatal flight into England. The rooms which she occupied are still shown in the castle, and there are interesting letters and documents extant from lords whom Elizabeth sent here to visit her, in which they record her beauty, her heroic sentiments, and even her dress; so strong was the fascination in which she held all who approached her. Carlisle is the scene of the denouement of Guy Mannering, and it is from this town that Lord Carlisle gets his title.

And now keep up a bright lookout for ruins and old houses. Mr. S., whose eyes are always in every place, allowed none of us to slumber, but looking out, first on his own side and then on ours, called our attention to every visible thing. If he had been appointed on a mission of inquiry he could not have been more zealous and faithful, and I began to think that our desire for an English cicerone was quite superfluous.

And now we pass Gretna Green, famous in story--that momentous place which marks the commencement of Scotland. It is a little straggling village, and there is a roadside inn, which has been the scene of innumerable Gretna Green marriages.

Owing to the fact that the Scottish law of marriage is far more liberal in its construction than the English, this place has been the refuge of distressed lovers from time immemorial; and although the practice of escaping here is universally condemned as very naughty and improper, yet, like every other impropriety, it is kept in countenance by very respectable people. Two lord chancellors have had the amiable weakness to fall into this snare, and one lord chancellor's son; so says the guide book, which is our Koran for the time being. It says, moreover, that it would be easy to add a lengthened list of distingués married at Gretna Green; but these lord chancellors (Erskine and Eldon) are quoted as being the most melancholy monuments. What shall meaner mortals do, when law itself, in all her majesty, wig, gown, and all, goes by the board?

Well, we are in Scotland at last, and now our pulse rises as the sun declines in the west. We catch glimpses of the Solway Frith, and talk about Redgauntlet.

One says, "Do you remember the scene on the sea shore, with which it opens, describing the rising of the tide?"

And says another, "Don't you remember those lines in the Young Lochinvar song?--

'Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide.'

I wonder how many authors it will take to enchant our country from Maine to New Orleans, as every foot of ground is enchanted here in Scotland.

The sun went down, and night drew on; still we were in Scotland. Scotch ballads, Scotch tunes, and Scotch literature were in the ascendant. We sang "Auld Lang Syne," "Scots wha ha'," and "Bonnie Doon," and then, changing the key, sang Dundee, Elgin, and Martyrs.

"Take care," said Mr. S.; "don't get too much excited."

"Ah," said I, "this is a thing that comes only once in a lifetime; do let us have the comfort of it. We shall never come into Scotland for the first time again."

"Ah," said another, "how I wish Walter Scott was alive!"

While we were thus at the fusion point of enthusiasm, the cars stopped at Lockerby, where the real Old Mortality is buried. All was dim and dark outside, but we soon became conscious that there was quite a number collected, peering into the window, and, with a strange kind of thrill, I heard my name inquired for in the Scottish accent. I went to the

window; there were men, women, and children there, and hand after hand was presented, with the words, "Ye're welcome to Scotland!"

Then they inquired for, and shook hands with, all the party, having in some mysterious manner got the knowledge of who they were, even down to little G----, whom they took to be my son. Was it not pleasant, when I had a heart so warm for this old country? I shall never forget the thrill of those words, "Ye're welcome to Scotland," nor the "Gude night."

After that we found similar welcomes in many succeeding stopping-places; and though I did wave a towel out of the window, instead of a pocket handkerchief, and commit other awkwardnesses, from not knowing how to play my part, yet I fancied, after all, that Scotland and we were coming on well together. Who the good souls were that were thus watching for us through the night, I am sure I do not know; but that they were of the "one blood," which unites all the families of the earth, I felt.

As we came towards Glasgow, we saw, upon a high hill, what we supposed to be a castle on fire--great volumes of smoke rolling up, and fire looking out of arched windows.

"Dear me, what a conflagration!" we all exclaimed. We had not gone very far before we saw another, and then, on the opposite side of the car, another still.

"Why, it seems to me the country is all on fire."

"I should think," said Mr. S., "if it was in old times, that there had been a raid from the Highlands, and set all the houses on fire."

"Or they might be beacons," suggested C.

To this some one answered out of the Lay of the Last Minstrel,--

"Sweet Teviot, by thy silver tide
The glaring bale-fires blaze no more."

As we drew near to Glasgow these illuminations increased, till the whole air was red with the glare of them.

"What can they be?"

"Dear me," said Mr. S., in a tone of sudden recollection, "it's the iron works! Don't you know Glasgow is celebrated for its iron works?"

So, after all, in these peaceful fires of the iron works, we got an idea how the country might have looked in the old picturesque times, when the Highlanders came down and set the Lowlands on fire; such scenes as are commemorated in the words of Roderick Dhu's song:--

"Proudly our pibroch, has thrilled in Glen Fruin,

And Banmachar's groans to our slogan replied;
Glen Luss and Ross Dhu, they are smoking in ruins,
And the best of Loch Lomond lies dead on her side."

To be sure the fires of iron founderies are much less picturesque than the old beacons, and the clink of hammers than the clash of claymores; but the most devout worshipper of the middle ages would hardly wish to change them.

Dimly, by the flickering light of these furnaces, we see the approach to the old city of Glasgow. There, we are arrived! Friends are waiting in the station house. Earnest, eager, friendly faces, ever so many. Warm greetings, kindly words. A crowd parting in the middle, through which we were conducted into a carriage, and loud cheers of welcome, sent a throb, as the voice of living Scotland.

I looked out of the carriage, as we drove on, and saw, by the light of a lantern, Argyle Street. It was past twelve o'clock when I found myself in a warm, cozy parlor, with friends, whom I have ever since been glad to remember. In a little time we were all safely housed in our hospitable apartments, and sleep fell on me for the first time in Scotland.