

THE SILVER CHANTER

A novel by

Pipe Major John Grant

Edited by Alan Amstrong, Ph.D

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The Silver Chanter

Editor's Introduction

On 24 January 1925, John Grant completed a piobaireachd entitled “The Silver Chanter.” In his Inventory he explained that it was composed “in memory of the happy hours of inspiration which has led me to pursue my life passion for Piobaireachd, so that it might live once more as it did in ‘the days of other years’.” Whether the composing of this piece inspired him to deal further—and in a different way—with the topic of “The Silver Chanter” is unknown, but on Christmas Eve of that year Grant completed a novel by the same name: an endeavour that was unique in his output.

We have no indications from Grant why he wanted to create a work of fiction, but we do know he intended to seek its publication and that he was proud of the final product: he subtitled several subsequent works “Composed by John Grant, Author of . . . The Silver Chanter.”

The Silver Chanter, a magical instrument that enables its owner to perform the most challenging bagpipe music with the utmost ease and musical expression, appears often in tales of Scottish lore. Grant delivered the following telling of the tale to “Morar” in the 9 August 1913 edition of the *Oban Times*:

It is said that one day when a young MacCrimmon was playing his enchanted pipe near the piper's study, a hollow ledge of a precipice on the shores of Dunvegan, he met the “Fairy Queen,” who handed the youth a silver chanter, by which he could charm the otter from the sea, the deer from the hills, and the lark from the clouds. No pipe ever played with such fragrance, and never before or since has any chanter piped such powerful strains, for the rich grandeur of the theme of “The Cave of Gold” burst its beauteous chords asunder as this youthful minstrel entered the Cave of Gold. The fairy theme died away in faint and broken accent till the piper was heard no more. The price of this fatal pre-eminence was the hard condition that after a year and a day the young MacCrimmon should

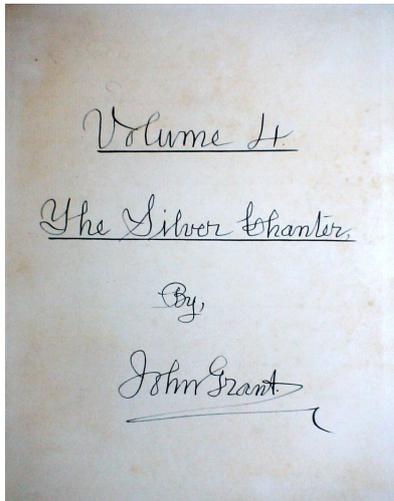
renounce his life on earth and enter the Fairy Kingdom through the Cave of Gold, from which he never returned.

Grant touches on this and other renderings of the “Silver chanter” tale in his novel; he even introduces the reader to the “young MacCrimmon” described above, but the majority of the story is really a product of his own imagination. The central character, Padruig Dubh MacVourich, a young New Zealander of Scottish Highland parentage, is sent from his home at Dun Alasdair to live a year in Scotland in order to experience its charms and customs. He is the guest of the Roderick Mór MacDonald family at Craig Mhor, their home in the Highlands. MacDonald is head shepherd to a local Duke; his wife, Marion tends to the homemaking, and their only child, Flora, is a “fair lassie” Padruig’s age. Padruig and Roderick both play the bagpipes, and Flora dearly loves them, so the art of piping, its history, and lore are often topics of conversations when the three are gathered around a cosy peat fire or walking among the heather. Warned by Flora to beware the wiles of the Fairy Queen, whose powers are especially potent near the “Fairie’s Well,” Padruig strays too close too often and is kidnapped by the beneficent Queen. Whisked away to fairyland, he experiences the beauties it offers both to the eye and to the ear. He is witness to a great Gathering of clans and a Chieftain’s burial; he traverses the Cave of Gold, and hears the young MacCrimmon of the original legend play on his magic pipes. When he is returned, he and Flora realize that they are in love, and he finally gets up the courage (with the help of the Fairy Queen) to press his suit. Flora loves Padruig, but she will not leave her parents to move to New Zealand. Padruig notifies his own father of the fact, and the elder MacVourich invites Roderick Mor to join him in working his New Zealand farm. Everyone agrees, they all take up residence in New Zealand, Padruig and Flora wed, and they all live happily ever after.

Although Padruig and Flora are the central human protagonists of Grant’s story, the Great Highland Bagpipe and the nature and culture of the Scottish Highlands are clearly as important. Grant’s obsessive love for bagpiping reveals itself on almost every page. If bagpipes are not being discussed, they are within reach to be played, and Grant “waxes eloquent” when describing the emotions

felt by each character upon hearing a tune. In a similar manner, Grant extols his native land. Perhaps inspired by Sir Walter Scott, he paints a Scott-esque portrait of the Highlands for every season, depicting locales, flora and fauna, and even the weather with a highly Romantic brush.

John Grant was not a great novelist, but “The Silver Chanter” has some charm about it, especially for lovers of The Great Highland Bagpipe or those interested in a Highlander’s view of his native land in the early 20th century.



John Grant’s original novel was 606 manuscript pages long, written in eight standard-sized “composition” books a student might use in grammar school. When Grant died, the books were passed on to his eldest son, John Roy, and when John Roy died, the books fell into the possession of his son, Jonathan. When Jonathan passed away, his widow threw out the first volume but their daughter was able to save the rest. Therefore, the first 123 pages—a little over a fifth of the novel—are missing.

There is no way to know exactly what the topics were that these earlier pages contained, except by inferences from extant pages. Padruig Dubh leaves his native New Zealand to live with the MacDonald’s. He boards a ship for Scotland, and entertains the crew on the voyage. Padruig Dubh informs the captain that he intends to purchase a silver chanter for his bagpipes when he reaches Glasgow, and is warned by the captain to beware the wiles of the “Fairy Queen” should he make such a purchase. In Glasgow, the young piper indeed makes the purchase, and is warned a second time by the pipe maker himself, to whom Padruig Dubh pays no heed. As the story picks up, Padruig Dubh is now in the home of the MacDonald’s at Craig Mhor. Roderick Mór is giving Padruig Dubh a lesson on the MacCrimmons.

Chapter VII (continued)

[Roderick Mòr MacDonald is giving Padruig Dubh a lesson on the MacCrimmons, the hereditary pipers to the MacLeod's of Dunvegan.]

“ . . . that it is true, for it has never been proved, but they are said to have invented piobaireachd, and brought it to perfection; their finger work in playing the intricate variations such as Toarluath and Crunluath must have been magnificent. They knew the construction of piobaireachd from beginning to end as no other race of pipers ever did, and their compositions are perfect in form. No student of the art of piping was supposed to be qualified in playing unless and until he had studied at the MacCrimmon school for a period of seven years, at the end of which the pupil had to undergo a severe test both in performing on the great pipe, and the construction of piobaireachd. If the candidate passed this test he was accompanied by the MacCrimmon himself back to his master in order that the master musician might account for the merit of his pupil in person. Only one pupil was allowed to enter the study or teaching apartment at one time, and the MacCrimmon supervised and imparted all instructions himself. One pupil was never permitted to assist another. In fact it is also related that no apprentice would accept instructions from another. They would only be taught by the great MacCrimmon, which was a hallmark of his superiority. A case was never heard of where MacCrimmon failed to bring his pupils up to the pitch of perfection, or where any Clan Chief regretted the sending of his piper to Boreraig for education.

“There are many very interesting stories told about the MacCrimmons, and these are still cherished by the Highlanders and Isle men who admired that great race of Pipers,” said Roderick, to his young friend MacVourich.

“Donald Mòr MacCrimmon had a brother named Padruig, who had squint eyes. Padruig had a dispute with his foster brother who lived in Kintail. Shortly after the dispute Padruig MacCrimmon was in the act of washing his face in a burn near his dwelling when the man from Kintail came upon him from behind his back and mortally wounded the young MacCrimmon with a blow from his dirk. When Donald Mòr heard of the treacherous news at Dunvegan

he set about avenging his kinsman's death. He betook himself to Renelg to punish the murderer, but the Kintail man having been warned of MacCrimmon's approach, concealed himself in a friend's house in the village. The inhabitants would not reveal the hiding place of the murderer, so the MacCrimmon set the place on fire and burned eighteen of their houses, which caused several people to be burned to death.

“Lord Kintail was advised of the MacCrimmon's desperate act, and he at once offered a reward for MacCrimmon's apprehension, also sending a party of his men to search the neighbouring country for the intruder. The party returned without finding the enraged MacCrimmon, who concealed himself amongst the hills. He afterwards called upon a friend of his, named Mackay, who directed MacCrimmon to go [to] the house of one of his shepherds, where he would be in a place of greater safety. The shepherd constructed a bed in one of the walls of his house so that the MacCrimmon might escape detection. Lord Kintail was advised by his daughter of the hiding place of the MacCrimmon, and the Chief sent his son with twelve men to capture him. It was a very wet day, and Donald Mòr was in residence at the shepherd's house. The shepherd's wife observed the men approaching her abode, and she at once hid the MacCrimmon in the secret bed. She then made up a great fire, in order to dry the men's clothes and entertain them hospitably.

“When the men arrived at the house in question, they were welcomed by the good wife, who put their plaids upon ropes to dry, and as the rain still fell very heavily, the pursuers of poor MacCrimmon gladly availed themselves of the homely comforts which the Highland sheiling afforded them. They had for the moment forgotten the object of their mission, and the plaids were especially hung upon ropes so that they might form a screen, at the back of which the bold MacCrimmon made good his escape.

“After Mackenzie and his men were comfortably seated round the peat fire, he then proceeded to inquire of the mistress of the house where she had the MacCrimmon concealed? The shepherd himself was also questioned about the fugitive, but he replied with great and unmoved composure that he knew nothing whatever about him. The Mackenzie then ordered his men to search

the house, but even though a reward was offered by the Chief of Kintail, yet Mackay would not betray his friend, the MacCrimmon.

“When the party found that their search was fruitless, they all retired to rest for the night, after they had received some refreshments. The mistress of the house planned things very ingeniously. The Mackenzie’s bed was placed in a corner, so that it might be easily got at. When the party was fast asleep the MacCrimmon entered the house of the shepherd, and placed the Mackenzie’s arms and also some of the men’s across the commander of the clansmen, after which he again left the house unobserved. But Mackenzie awoke, and observing the arms piled up over his body he exclaimed that ‘the person who put them there could also have deprived him of his life.’ The leader of the party declared that it was Donald Mòr MacCrimmon who had performed the act.

“On going out next morning, the party saw MacCrimmon walking upon the other side of the river. Mackenzie commanded him to come across, which he refused to do until assured that he would be allowed to cross in safety. After Mackenzie swore all his men, MacCrimmon cross the river. MacCrimmon was then asked if it was he who placed the arms across Mackenzie’s bed, and he admitted that it was. ‘Then you could have also taken my life,’ said Mackenzie, ‘so I shall promise to procure your pardon from my father.’

“Young Mackenzie proceeded to his father to procure the piper’s promised pardon, and MacCrimmon repaired to the house of Lord Kintail’s fiddler, who attempted to take him a prisoner and to claim the reward. MacCrimmon, who was in an upper room, knocked the fiddler headlong downstairs when he attempted to secure him, and again made fast the door just at the moment when the Mackenzie arrived with the MacCrimmon’s pardon. The party then dispersed and Mackay and MacCrimmon entered the castle of Lord Kintail, where they enjoyed themselves for the night, and in the morning MacCrimmon returned to Skye in safety.”

“That is very interesting Mr. MacDonald,” said Padruig Dubh. “Donald Mòr must have been a brave fellow as well as a good piper.”

“Yes! he was,” said Roderick Mòr.

“There was Padruig Mòr MacCrimmon who succeeded Donald Mòr. He

had eight sons, all of whom were tall and handsome. These eight young men accompanied their father on Sunday to church, and before the end of that year, seven of them were buried in the churchyard at Kilmuir. The MacCrimmon then compose a very touching tune known as ‘The Children’s Lament’.”

“That was a very sad case,” said Padruig Dubh. “You must play for me, sometime, this Lament.”

“I shall be very pleased,” said Roderick Mòr, “if you will remind me to do so.”

“You see my young friend,” said Roderick, “the Western Highlands are rich in MacCrimmon lore. There was Padruig Òg MacCrimmon, who in his day was also piper to the MacLeod at Dunvegan, and Padruig had coveted a fine dirk which the laird possessed, and he did not hesitate to tell MacLeod, who promised to present him with the weapon if he composed an appropriate tune in its praise. MacCrimmon soon agreed to this request, and next day he played ‘The Pretty Dirk’ to MacLeod outside his castle at Dunvegan. The laird told MacCrimmon that the tune was a good one, and that he had earned his reward, whereupon MacLeod presented his piper with the beautiful gift.”

“Finally,” said Roderick Mòr, “let me tell you the story of the disappearance of one of the young MacCrimmons who always played at a favourite spot near Dunvegan. As he played one day on the great pipe, there appeared the ‘Fairy Queen,’ who offered him a ‘Silver Chanter,’ which the youthful piper accepted. With the chanter he could charm the otter from the sea; the lark from the sky, and the deer from the hills, but the price of this fatal pre-eminence was a hard and fast penalty: that after a year in a day he should renounce his life on earth and enter the ‘Fairy Kingdom’ through the ‘Cave of Gold’ where he had to spend the rest of his life, which he did. To this day he has never been heard of, and the mysterious occurrence was the means of his father composing that most touching and beautiful piobaireachd called ‘The Cave of Gold.’ This tune is now altogether lost.”

“Then! There must be something more to this ‘Silver chanter,’ and ‘Fairy Queen,’ than meets the eye,” said Padruig Dubh. “The fairies must possess more than the MacCrimmon scale. Much of their music must be in ‘Fairyland’ as

well as the young MacCrimmon.”

“Yes!” said Flora, “and there is more in ‘Fairyland’ than the young MacCrimmon if all were known. If I were you I should be very careful not to play your ‘Silver Chanter’ near their haunts,” continued Flora, in a very agitated manner, as she conveyed this warning to Padruig Dubh, who only smiled at her in return.

“After the MacCrimmons,” said Roderick Mòr, “come the MacArthurs. They were hereditary pipers to the MacDonalds of the Isles. They received their education and piping at the MacCrimmon school at Boreraig, Dunvegan, Skye, but they never reached the same state of perfection as their masters. This family of MacArthurs established in the Highlands a piping school of their own, and even professed that they used a more up-to-date method of teaching than the MacCrimmons, but that, I can assure you, was not true. The system of tuition which the MacArthurs used was partially the same as at Boreraig, the only difference being that the MacCrimmons never gave away their secrets, and MacArthur only possessed a portion of them, hence, the actual difference between the one school and the other was this: the Boreraig school had the MacCrimmon system in whole, but the MacArthur school only had it in part, because the MacArthurs never gained the mastery of the real MacCrimmon methods, nor notation. The MacArthurs were very diligent pipers all the same. They collected a great number of piobaireachd, and are said to have recorded them in their own way, although many of them now appear to have been lost altogether.

“One of the MacArthurs was sent to the MacCrimmon school by Sir Alexander MacDonald of the Isles, and when his term of instruction finished the MacCrimmon brought MacArthur to Sir Alexander’s residence in order to see whether the MacDonald was satisfied with the youth’s progress. Padruig Òg was the master who taught MacArthur, and when the pupil and teacher arrived at the residence of Sir Alexander MacDonald, Iain Dall Mackay, Gairloch’s blind piper was also there. MacDonald informed Mackay that he had sent a young man to Boreraig for seven years tuition with Padruig Òg MacCrimmon, and this youth had arrived from Skye. Sir Alexander then asked the young piper to play

a test piece so that Mackay should give his opinion. After the pupil had finished he was pronounced by Mackay to be an excellent piper. 'But I sent another man to Boreraig, and I wish to keep the best of the two,' said MacDonald. 'Well then! Let the second play,' said Mackay, whereupon Padruig Òg himself played. After he had finished MacDonald then asked Mackay's opinion, who said that although he was blind he had not lost his sense of hearing. 'If Padruig Òg MacCrimmon is alive it was he who played, for I would know him amongst a thousand pipers,' said Mackay."

"It is a great treat to hear you speak of the old pipers, Mr. MacDonald," said Padruig Dubh. "It must have been grand to have lived in the time of those great men. I wish, oh, so much that I had met them, and actually had heard them play."

"I spoke of Mackay," said Roderick Mòr. "The Mackays were great pipers, much more so than the MacArthurs, who claimed so much empty and borrowed fame as pipers and teachers. The Mackays were hereditary pipers to the Mackenzies of Gairloch, in Rosshire. They were taught at Boreraig, in the Isle of Skye, and no pupil who ever attended the MacCrimmon college excelled them. One of the Mackays who was born blind was famous in his day for his marvelous ability to pick up piobaireachd as he heard it played. The MacCrimmon was very proud of Mackay is a pupil, and the other student became jealous of him. One day they planned his destruction, and the manner in which Mackay was to be put out of the way, or practically murdered, was rather amusing but unsuccessful. Mackay had been at practice one afternoon, when he was set upon and thrown over a rock. Fortunately the blind man alighted without much injury, and found his way to Boreraig. The place where he fell is called 'The Blind Piper's Leap.'

"The Mackays then, more than one of them, were born pipers, and they pursued their profession with great enthusiasm. To this family we are indebted for many, if not indeed all the fine MacCrimmon piobaireachd which they preserved. More than one of the MacKays were taught at Boreraig. They heard the actual playing of the Skye masters, and were all able to inhale it, thus preserving for us an inheritance of which we should be proud. The Mackays

made no pretense of their own greatness. They were only too proud to acknowledge the fact that they were taught at Boreraig. There is that instance of friendship which existed between the MacCrimmons and Mackay where MacCrimmon was endeavouring to compose a new tune in his study or private room, but after playing the first two-parts over and over again, could not find a close. Mackay, who concealed himself behind the door, heard the MacCrimmon play his new tune, and helped him out of the difficulty by playing on his chanter, a third part. MacCrimmon opened the door, and congratulated Mackay on his fine work. ‘What shall we call the tune,’ said the MacCrimmon. ‘The piobaireachd is yours,’ said Mackay. ‘No!’ said MacCrimmon, we shall call it The Half Finished Piobaireachd. It is as much yours is mine.’

“The Mackenzies were very proud of their pipers, and they had good reason to be so, for apart from the MacCrimmons, the Mackays have never been equaled as pipers and composers of piobaireachd, as well as preservers of an ancient and Royal art.”

“It is surprising,” said Padruig Dubh, “that the Mackay, being blind, could acquire such a great number of piobaireachd.”

“Ah!” said Roderick Mòr, “but Mackay had the one great thing which is necessary to become a good piper, and that is the perfect ear.”

“The McIntyres,” continued Roderick Mòr, “were good performers on the great pipe. They were pipers to Menzies of that Isle. McIntyre was also taught at Boreraig, but did not become so very prominent in the piping world as the Mackays, although they performed their duties as pipers with the utmost skill. Menzies, of Castle Menzies was a great lover of things Highland, and it is related to this day that he was present at Bannockburn with his clan as pipers.”

“The MacLeans of Coll had their pipers, too,” said Padruig Dubh’s host, “and they were called Rankin. The Rankins were pupils of the Skye masters at Dunvegan, and in accordance with ancient custom underwent the necessary period of training before taking up duties as family piper to the Laird of Coll.”

“The MacCrimmons, then,” said Padruig Dubh, “may well be named the fathers of piping and piobaireachd, when all these Highland Lairds sent their pipers to Boreraig for tuition. It is a ‘Hallmark’ of greatness itself, the fact that

such pupils should go out into the world to carry abroad the MacCrimmons' fame."

"Yes!" said Roderick Mòr. "You see, Padruig, that pipers were by no means ordinary persons. They held a very dignified position in the retinue of the Highland Chieftain, and their education was a very expensive matter. The Chieftain who sent his young piper to Boreraig had to pay him his wages. MacCrimmon had to be paid for his tuition, and then over and above all that, the piper had to be fed, clad, and kept at Boreraig, the expense of which had to be defrayed entirely by the Chieftain of the clan to whom the piper belonged."

"One of the most recent pipers of fame to whom I should like to draw your attention," said Roderick Mòr, "was Breadalbane's piper. His name was Mackenzie, who was also a pupil of the MacCrimmon school through the Mackays of Gairloch. This piper was known as 'John Ban,' and he was an excellent performer upon the pipes. John Ban was both tall and handsome in personal appearance, and Breadalbane was as proud of him as he was of his ancestral seat, Taymouth Castle. John Ban was even envied by the Queen herself, who wished him to become her own personal piper in the Royal Household. Besides being a piper who excelled in his profession, John was a bagpiper of no mean order, for he made as fine a chanter as ever played in a pipe. In fact, the piper at Breadalbane could make everything necessary for piping, including reeds.

"John Ban Mackenzie was an outstanding personality in his day and generation. He would undertake no other duties. He was a piper, and a piper only. John was a dangerously attractive young man for a lady to meet, and this surely proved to be so, for one day he was commissioned by a gentleman who was in residence at Taymouth Castle, to carry a sealed letter to Miss Mackenzie of Applecross, who was living in the vicinity. This was a message of love, and John himself thought as much. When the messenger arrived at his destination, he was requested by the young lady to come in. This he very gladly did. The lady read the letter in his presence, and John observed by the expression on the fair reader's face, that the contents of the letter did not quite please her. The piper ventured to remark upon this, for we must remember that he was piper to

Lord Breadalbane, and the young lady said, ‘Ah! Had the letter been from you, John, it would be quite different.’ John took the remark at face value, and a very short time later they were married by a minister in a shepherd’s house nearby, where they became man and wife. This was the happiest moment of their lives, and Breadalbane, when he heard of the union, built a beautiful little house for them within the grounds of Taymouth Castle.”

“All this adds greatness and dignity to the art of piping, then” said Padruig Dubh, to his informant. “Breadalbane’s piper raised himself to a high and noble position, in that he became a Highland Laird’s son-in-law.”

“That is so Padruig, but he is the only piper that such luck has fallen upon,” said Roderick Mòr, “for I have never heard of any other piper who, by his good looks, in addition to a winsome way, ever won the heart of a young lady of such high rank and fortune. Music and good looks hath charms, but John Ban Mackenzie possessed much of both, which was the ultimate means of procuring a third and lasting charm, namely, a beautiful and loving wife.”

Chapter VIII

The Old Pipes

“Then Mr. MacDonald, you say that the Great Highland Bagpipe as we play it, is a modern musical instrument,” said Padruig Dubh, as he laid his pipes aside after playing a favourite piobaireachd.

“Yes!” said Roderick Mòr, “and very much so. There were no silver chanters with the old pipers. They would have nothing but simplicity.”

“Oh! I know that the silver chanter is a modern idea,” said Flora, who was never far away from her father when there was any chance of piping being on the programme, or storytelling about the pipes, old pipers, and piobaireachd.

“You are here again,” said Padruig to Flora. “I see you are always at hand when we play or discuss anything about the pipes.”

“You may be sure,” said her father, “that Flora is always on the scene where there is piping or anything in connection with the pipes going on. She is so much, and even more interested in them than if she had been a boy.”

“If my father cares to tell you the truth, there has been a silver chanter in existence in the Highlands and Islands for some hundreds of years,” continued Flora, who always dreaded the “Fairy Queen”. “I do not so much dislike the idea of a silver chanter because it is extravagant. Far from it, Padruig,” said the young woman. “Your chanter is an exquisitely fine one both as regards tone and workmanship. A thing of beauty, which is a joy forever, is also in your case a source of danger. You see Padruig, there are old proverbs in the Highlands, which it is unwise to ignore altogether. It is said that pride bares pain. I do not say that pride made you get a silver chanter by any means, but unconscious ambition often carries with it the grave risks of serious misfortunes.”

“I see!” said Padruig Dubh to Flora’s father. “Your daughter is far ahead of her years. She appears to worry about that day which would never come.”

“It is this ‘Fairy Queen,’” said Roderick Mòr, “which raises all the storm in Flora’s mind. Evidently she has always been in terror that I should be carried away by the elves or fairies, for she always conveys me past the ‘Fairies’ Well,

any time that I may have to pass that way.”

“Yes! and I always shall see you past that place, father,” said Flora, “as long as I am able to do so.”

“Your anxiety will be twofold now,” said Padruig Dubh to Flora, little thinking that his words were actually true, for Flora had already begun to see visions of the future.

“What do you mean,” said Flora, as if she tried to hide the crimson flush which found its way to her cheek.

“You shall have to look after me also,” said Padruig, and he turned and looked at [the] youthful maiden’s father, who busied himself with a manuscript of some ancient piobaireachd. “Are you not afraid of the ‘Fairy Queen’ yourself, Flora?” said Padruig Dubh. “She will more than likely take you away someday.”

“I am not in the least afraid of that,” said Flora’s father, who looked rather earnestly at the tattered volumes which he had in his hand. “It is much more likely that some ‘Fairy King’ will come one day and take Flora away in his big ship.” This her father said in a jocular manner, as he had often teased his daughter about a sweetheart since she returned from her education in the fair city of the “seven hills.”

“The fairies don’t want me,” said Flora. “It is only pipers that they carry away, and I live each day in mortal terror that the ‘Fairy Queen’ comes to know that Padruig Dubh has a ‘silver chanter’. She made the remark in the form of an appeal to her father who made no reply, probably because he was too busy searching for a lost piobaireachd for his young friend to play on his chanter which possessed a secret charm.

Roderick Mòr could not lay his hand upon the tune which he so very much wanted, so he laid his tattered volume aside. “Speaking of your bagpipes,” said he to Padruig Dubh, “many people say that the pipe which we play was brought from here and there, for this country and the other country, but that is utter nonsense. I have read a good deal of history, and heard many stories told about the pipes, for example, the Highland bagpipe having come from Rome, ancient Greece and other places; England, but I cannot find any authentic reference in any permanent record that this is actually the case of the Highland pipe being an

import into the Islands or Highlands of Scotland. I shall show you several sets of pipes in their various degrees of formation and progressive changes, and not one of them resembles the designs of our dear old pipe which was made and played by our forefathers.

“Here is a set with two drones, and a blow pipe with chanter, and they are very old. They belonged to my uncle who was a good piper. The bag of the set is made of skin, direct from the back of the animal, that is, a sheep, and put upon the stocks by my uncle’s own hands. He was a shepherd, and in the season of braxy lacked not for hide nor mutton. He had the secret of curing the skin himself, as regards the preparing of the inner side, and for a cover he left the wool upon the outside, which he dyed from herbs. The seam was sewn up with a rosined thong, just as a shoemaker, or saddler sews their boots or harness. Then the stocks were tied in, and the bag was therefore airtight. The chanter has a special stock for itself. As you can see; the two drones are inserted in a twin stock, and the blow pipe has also a separate stock. There was no valve upon the blow pipe in the olden days, such as you and I have now. The piper had to put his tongue upon the mouth of the blow pipe when he ceased blowing to refill his lungs with fresh breath. The tongue kept the wind from escaping out of the bag and the fresh breath which was blown in refilled the bag and kept the reeds going. While the piper breathed, he squeezed the bag to feed the reeds with an equal supply of pressure. This set is made from black Oak, and they have been turned by some kind of instrument or other. There was very little machinery in the days when this set came into being if there was any at all. Just look at the chanter. It has no added projecting mount at the end of the part as ours have. It is simply finished off with the same wood as the chanter itself, leaving a sufficient thickness to allow it to have a finished appearance.”

“These pipes really look very ancient,” said Padruig Dubh, to their owner, and inquired whether he ever played upon them.

“They are too old and dry to play,” said Roderick Mòr. “I only keep them as relics of the glorious past. Look how they are mounted. The joints are bound with bone of some kind or other, but of what animal I cannot say.”

“It would appear to be from the teeth of some sea animal, or strictly speaking

the fish species,” said Padruig Dubh. “It is not bone and it is not good ivory.”

“I believe you are quite correct in your idea,” said Roderick Mòr.

Craig Mhor was rich in antiques so far as concerns the pipes, for Roderick Mòr MacDonald had an unique collection. He then procured a box from which he took another set of much greater antiquity. “These,” said their owner, “are a stage further back. You will observe that they have only one drone, with a chanter and blow pipe. The drone is attached to the blow pipe with a leather thong to prevent it from falling from the performer’s shoulder. The chanter is similar to the one which I have just shown you, but the bag is far too hard and dry to make any attempt to see what it is like. I am afraid to touch it for fear that it breaks away from the stocks. The mounts in this set as you will observe are made of horn, and wonderfully well finished. The chanter has the same number of holes as ours, but the scale is not quite so perfect, because they had not the same means in those far back days of measuring the holes as we have now.” Roderick Mòr played upon the chanter.

“I do not dislike its tone,” said Padruig Dubh, “although it has not quite a ‘silver chanter’ appearance.”

“The old men came very near the mark, considering the rude instruments with which they had to work.”

“Are these family pipes also?” asked Padruig Dubh.

“I really cannot tell you,” replied their owner. “I got them as they are long-ago from my father, along with some others in this chest.”

“Another set which I still have here, and this would appear to be the bagpipe in its first state as such,” said Roderick Mòr. “Here we only have a bag, a chanter, and a blow pipe. The bag has almost crumbled away to dust. This pipe is made from a very hard wood of dark colour. It is not Oak like that other set, but the wood has a very rich appearance. The parts have been carved out by the aid of a knife or very sharp instrument and finally smoothed down by fine sand or sandstone. The sand was put into a cloth, and by this means the wooden part was rubbed continuously until it became quite smooth.”

“There are no mounts on the joints,” said Padruig Dubh.

“No!” said Roderick Mòr. “They are there, just the pipe in wood in pure

simplicity, and you will observe that no splitting has taken place, even by use and the passing of time.”

Finally Roderick Mòr produced a chanter only. “This,” he said, “is the real pipe in its first state. We call it a chanter; that is a great mistake. The old Masters called it a pipe. The MacCrimmons were the chanters, because they sang or chanted the tunes to their pupils, hence, the word chanter has been transferred from the teacher to the instrument erroneously. This chanter, as we shall call it to keep in line with the times, is a good specimen of what must have been its first and original form.”

“Have you any idea,” said Padruig Dubh, to the owner of the instrument, “to whom this pipe belonged?”

“That I cannot say,” said Roderick Mòr, “but I know that all the specimens which I have inherited have been in the possession of my forefathers for many generations. This pipe, the oldest form of its kind, of which I am proud as a genuine relic of olden times, has the same number of notes as our present chanter. Just listen to it when I play it with a modern reed. It is certainly not unmusical, is it? The tone is good, although the notes are deeper, or lower in pitch than the chanters now made. This is accounted for by the fact that the bore is much larger, as the older chanters were inclined to be.”

“The present day pipe is different in tone, to put it strictly,” said Padruig Dubh. “The chanter is higher in pitch, and the drones are correspondingly so.”

“Although that is quite correct,” said Roderick Mòr, “I cannot say that I would like to praise the new and miscall the old, because to tell you the truth, I have a certain amount of liking for them both. The modern pipe has most undoubtedly come to stay with its full accompaniment of drones, and it cannot be gain said, but that is pleasant to play as well as to listen to. On the other hand, the old pipe such as it now lies before you in its various stages must go for ever, because modern taste has changed, and music as well as musical instruments are changed also. We probably like the new best if anything, but the old pipers loved their old pipes. If the Mackays of Gairloch or Breadalbane’s pipers heard our pipes, were that possible, I am sure they would cease to sound the piobaireachd anymore, even were they to rise from their

sleeping places, in flesh and blood to take possession of their beloved art of piobaireachd playing.”

“I quite agree with you Mr. MacDonald,” said Padruig Dubh, “the old and the new pipers are quite different in taste, but mostly so far as the instrument is concerned. The music and the fingering are just the same. The old and new pipers only differ wherein the quality of the music is concerned.”

“This pipe, the oldest specimen here,” said Roderick Mòr, “is known as the shepherd’s, or pastoral pipe. It is the most primitive form of the instrument. In those early times, there were no bag, drones or blow pipe. Simply the pipe itself, or what we now call the chanter. The shepherd’s pipe was one of great simplicity consisting of two parts: the chanter and the reed. The reed was inserted into the top part of the chanter, and then put into the mouth, from which the wind passed through the chanter, and produced the notes. Later, a short cover made of wood was placed over the reed; fitted to the top of the chanter, which prevented the reed from getting water logged or becoming too warm from the heat of the mouth, thus producing a note of pure quality. You see Padruig, in the olden days,” continued Roderick Mòr, “the shepherds had much time on their hands, more especially in the months of June, July, and August, and the time had to be taken up in some way or other. There were very few books to read then, and fewer newspapers, therefore, music was a great charm. The shepherd made his own pipe, as well as his reed, and he played his music in his own simple way, which was a strange mingling of joys and sorrows, but now it has developed into a great art. We are the possessors of the fruits of the labours of those early pioneers, and to them be the honour of creating for us the glorious inheritance.”

But how did those early pipers get material for their reeds, Mr. MacDonald?” said Padruig Dubh. “Did the wood for their reeds grow in this country?”

“It must have,” said Roderick Mòr. “There grew in the olden days, near the Highland lochs, long reeds or straight stalks, not unlike the foreign cane or bamboo reeds, and from the Highland growths, more like bulrushes, the reeds for the early pipe were made. There was a very large kind of bracken, which when dried made an excellent blade for the chanter reed. It is some time now

since we have been able to get cane from other countries, and this has solved the reed problem, as well as wood from which modern bagpipes are made. Such wood is brought into Scotland by seafaring traders.”

“Another thing which interests me very much,” said Padruig Dubh, “is the music of the pipes. It is all very well for us to hear it played when it is complete, or brought into due form by the process of careful creative ingenuity, but the early creators must have laboured long and hard to bring it to what it now is.”

“Oh yes!” said Roderick Mòr, “you speak the truth, Padruig, when you say that the old men laboured hard. That they did, but see what they arrived at? When I recall that fine old piobaireachd which you played for me the night before last, it is a sufficient reward for all the labour which has been spent upon this great art.”

“Piobaireachd appears to be a special class of pipe music,” said Padruig Dubh. “It is!” said Roderick Mòr. “The English word which has been created in recent years is ‘Pibroch’, and this species of pipe music was the first of its kind. I can remember when there was no other pipe music played in this part of the Highlands, and in the Islands piobaireachd is supreme, in that the lighter music is unknown. Those tunes known as Marches, Strathspeys and Reels were forbidden by the old masters, and the MacCrimmons never played them, nor permitted their pupils to do so either.”

“But there is a variety of different kinds of these piobaireachd,” said Padruig Dubh, “apart altogether from their individual construction.”

“That is quite true,” said Roderick Mòr, “but I have never been quite able to follow out the different forms of piobaireachd. It has taken me all my time to memorise those which I play.”

“The MacCrimmons, then, must have kept the secret of their music well to themselves,” said Padruig Dubh, “both as regards their key or scale as well as the various forms of what appears more and more to me to be a great music.”

“You see the MacCrimmons are all dead now,” said Roderick Mòr, “and all that is left are the specimens of their work, which have been handed down to us from our forefathers, who in turn only appear to have handed the music on from

father to son, as they found it. Very few, if any of the intermediate generations seemed to try to cultivate the art or compose new tunes. The art of composition has been lost for many years.”

“What do you mean by the art being lost?” said Padruig Dubh. “Do you believe that the actual knowledge of the various tunes which differ in form have been lost?”

“No! Not quite. I refer to the creative art,” said Roderick Mòr. “No new piobaireachd have been created since the MacCrimmons died to compare with their models. The art of composition is dead. The old masters seemed to have no difficulty in composing a new piobaireachd when the occasion arose. They fitted the parts into each other so ingeniously, as did the master mason who formed the massive walls of the Duke’s Castle.”

“Then you believe that the secret of constructing these beautiful pieces is lost,” said Padruig Dubh, “and cannot again be recovered.”

“It is common knowledge from the folk-lore of the Highlands, and the Western Islands,” said Flora, who was waiting patiently to get an opportunity of telling her young friend that the fairies still possess the secrets. “They came into their possession in a very simple way,” she continued. “The MacCrimmons, when in the act of composing new tunes, never did so within the hearing of their pupils. These great creators had a secret ledge in a rock near the walls of Dunvegan Castle, to which they repaired, where they were wont to compose new pieces, and to this place they always betook themselves. There they prepared their new creations unmolested, for none but themselves knew of this cherished haunt. Although the MacCrimmons were quite unconscious of the fact, nevertheless, the fairies were always present with them. They loved pipe music, and wherever it was played, they were nearby. The ‘Fairy Queen’ sat close to where the MacCrimmon had seated himself, with her ‘silver chanter’, and upon this beautiful instrument, she played note for note with the master piper, thus storing up his compositions as soon as he had completed them. The ‘Fairy Queen’ was invisible, and it was thus impossible for the MacCrimmon to see her or even know that she sat near him.”

“Then!” said Padruig Dubh, “if these fairies are invisible, Flora, as you say, it is

an utter impossibility to attempt to recover the MacCrimmon secrets now, even with my 'silver chanter'."

"I would warn you," said Flora, "not to give them the chance of instructing you, or of initiating you into the secrets and mysteries of which they are now the possessors. You remember what my father told you of how the young MacCrimmon was taken away to 'Fairylan', and that he has never been heard of since."

"Oh yes! Flora," said her father, "but that is nothing more or less than a fairytale."

"Well, father," said Flora, "you may think it is a fairytale if you wish, but I am not so sure of that. I do dread the very idea of fairies, especially when one does not know whether they are about or not. They may even be near to us this very moment."

"If the MacCrimmon key or scale could be found," said Roderick Mòr, "and the secrets of placing these Variations together, then we would be able to understand more fully, the art of piobaireachd. I have often wished that I could follow the building up of a piobaireachd, but the fact that I have to live so far away from the busy hands of men prevents me from discussing the matter with other pipers; or even coming into contact with them. And, although we were to meet other pipers we might be little the wiser, for so far as I know, many play the great music, but few understand it. Almost anyone who has a good ear can play a piece which has already been composed for them, but it is a stage higher up in the art of music to thoroughly understand the construction of these very pieces which we have but ceased to play. The fact that the MacCrimmons could compose so many fine tunes enabled them to play their creations in a manner which would be quite impossible for us ever to attain. What I mean is that the expression which we give to them would have no comparison whatever with theirs. It would appear that a person must know the entire circumstances which gave rise to the idea of composing the piobaireachd before the performer could play it with that exquisitely fine feeling which makes one understand the meaning that each note conveys to the listener. It is in this point that many, more especially strangers, fail to understand piobaireachd. Practically

speaking, unless a person has been born and brought up to hear piobaireachd playing from infancy they can never hope to love such music, and I do not in the least believe that strangers can even find any charm in it, or follow these airs in such a way that it would interest them, beyond the fact that it is the music of a race that created it as a peculiar possession of their own.”

“I can observe,” said Padruig Dubh, “that there are certain tunes in which there are parts or passages which are peculiar to themselves alone, and which do not appear at all in others. This peculiarity convinces me that there are rules which govern the art of composition and piobaireachd, and that the state of perfection in which it now exists has been the outcome of some hundreds of years’ progressive improvement.”

“Whatever may be said of the cultivation of piobaireachd in the past, or hoped for in the future,” said Roderick Mòr, “very little credit is due to the present generation for what they have accomplished. We have only been able to keep the art alive by playing the compositions of the old masters. The fine arts all appear to be getting into a state of decay. There are very few Raeburns or Turners now; no Michelangelos, and no master masons.”

“Take for instance the art of masonry. It has been completely lost, so far as building goes nowadays. The old cathedrals and abbeys were one solid molten mass of stone. No lime was used then. The whole building appeared to be one piece as raised by the craftsman of long ago, and neither wind nor water could penetrate those walls. It is said that the great master builder of old was foully murdered, and the secrets of masonry died with him.”

“It would appear that that is the truth,” said Padruig Dubh, “because, more or less we all seem to be groping in the dark, and unskilled, so far as piobaireachd is concerned. It is that art alone which we are interested in.”

“There is still a faint ray of hope left,” said Roderick Mòr. “You are a young man of great promise, Padruig. You play well, and if you were to continue to prosecute the study of your beloved art with diligence, someday you may be a master of piobaireachd, if not a master mason. There is much left in piobaireachd that can be studied, and who can tell but that one day, you may be the proud possessor of the lost secrets. That ‘silver chanter’ of yours does

sound sweetly in my ears, and through it as Flora has often told you there is a field which you may still cultivate to great advantage, both to yourself as well as the generations which are as yet unborn. There are very few pipers here about except my two assistant shepherds whom I myself have taught to play tolerably well. You shall see them soon and when I go my usual rounds, should you wish to accompany me. The Duke's piper is a fine performer, and it is not impossible that you may have the pleasure of meeting him also, as well as hearing him play before you return to Dun Alasdair in New Zealand."

CHAPTER IXGoing Round The Shepherds

“I am going round the other shepherds tomorrow, if the day is fine,” said Roderick Mòr to his wife, Marion, as they sat together one afternoon. The tea was ready, and the master and mistress of Craig Mhor awaited the return of their daughter Flora and her young companion who had gone out together for a short walk upon the moor. “Padruig has intimated his willingness to accompany me,” said Roderick Mòr, “and we shall be away for at least several days.”

“That will be a nice change for the young man,” said Marion, “and you must not forget to show him all the places of interest on your way. He appears to be very much taken with the Highlands.”

Just as Mrs. MacDonald had spoken she observed the youthful couple approaching the house, and in a few moments they both entered the room. “Have you enjoyed your walk, Padruig,” said Mrs. MacDonald.

“Yes! very much,” said Padruig Dubh, “Flora knows all the places of interest, and she has taken me around quite a few of them, including the ‘witches stone.’ It is a ponderous weight for a woman to carry.”

“Ah!” said Roderick Mòr, “but I suppose that Flora would tell you that the witches are like the fairies. They can accomplish most wonderful feats of strength. That same stone is said to have been carried by a notorious witch for a distance of fifty miles, and it lies there because her apron strings broke while she brought it over the hills with the intention of placing it upon the mouth of the smugglers den. The witch called upon the smuggler once upon a time, and because he refused to allow her into his secret abode she intended to place the stone upon the aperture which led into the cave, thus preventing him from ever seeing the light of day any more. Something happened however, and there the great stone lies till this day.”

“Yes! Flora told me about it, and I do love to hear those ancient tales,” said Padruig Dubh. “They are most interesting. The whole place around here

appears to be a network of folklore.”

“Oh! I do so much want a nice cup of tea,” said Flora to her mother, “and so does Padruig, for we have walked much farther than we intended.” The four then set down at a small table and partook of tea together, after which they entered into conversation about places of interest in the neighborhood. The rest of the evening was spent in playing upon the great pipe.

“Now!” said Roderick Mòr, “we must get to bed a little earlier tonight than usual if you and I are going to visit Kenneth MacGillivray at the Duns tomorrow.”

“I shall be delighted,” said Padruig Dubh, so the family retired to rest.

Padruig Dubh rose early next morning but only to find that Roderick Mòr was up before him. “Good morning!” said Roderick Mòr. “You are surely up early right enough this morning Padruig.”

“Yes! I am,” said he. “I fully intended being up before you, but I see you have beaten me after all.” They both busied themselves preparing for their few days’ absence, and their journey amongst the hills. They put what things were necessary for their comfort into one small case to save unnecessary carrying as the road was long and rough.

“I should like very much to take one set of pipes with us,” said Roderick Mòr. “They will beguile the time, which may weigh heavily upon our hands, and I am sure that my fellow shepherds would love to hear you play.”

“Very well, then,” said Padruig, “I shall take mine,” and he packed them up carefully, after which he set them beside the other case at the front door to be in readiness, so that they might start their journey immediately after breakfast.

Mrs. MacDonald and Flora had also been astir for some time, and now Flora warned her father and Padruig their breakfast was ready. While the family sat at the table Mr. MacDonald spoke of their arrangements for the few days absence, and advised Flora that if she was going to accompany him and Padruig Dubh on their way it would be necessary for to put on a strong pair of boots, because a heavy dew had fallen during the night, and a dense fog hung about the hills.

“I shall soon put on my strong boots,” said Flora, who had just finished

breakfast, “for you know that I must see Padruig and you past the ‘Fairies’ Well’.” In a few minutes Flora was ready for the road with her coat over her arm and her father’s crook in her hand. Roderick Mòr MacDonald said goodbye to his wife as he stood by the door with his case in his hand, and intimated that Padruig Dubh and himself would be back within a week at least. Just at that moment, Mona, Roderick’s favourite dog, ran up to him and pranced about in great excitement, for she knew that her master was going to the hill, and she was never happier than when she followed him.

“Are you taking pipes with you, father,” said Flora, for she just then noticed that Padruig held his case in his hand.

“Yes!” said her father, “Padruig is taking his set to give the shepherds a treat.”

“Well father, you should take yours, for I shall live in mortal terror while you are both away with that ‘silver chanter’.”

“Fairies again!” said her father. “There is no fear of us, Flora, especially when you are seeing us past the danger zone. The fairies won’t take us both, surely Flora, and Mona and all, will they?”

“It is all right then,” said Flora, “if you will both have your own way, the responsibility is yours,” so they started on their journey. As they got on the brow of the hill near Craig Mhor, Roderick waived a farewell to his wife, and the trio went on their way. The fog had risen from the lower ground, and the sun broke through the silvery clouds.

“Everything points towards being a good day yet,” said Padruig Dubh, to his companions. “I do admire your hills Mr. MacDonald,” he continued. “Just look at yonder misty curtain rising midway up the highest mountain; the site is simply glorious. It reminds me of a scene in a theatre, only that what we now see is real.”

Flora and Mona had been amusing themselves playfully, as they walked along the narrow path upon the moor. The dog was full of fun but Flora was not altogether engrossed in the amusement. “There!” she said her father, “is the ‘Fairie’ s Well,” and no sooner had the words left her lips than she turned pale as a sheet.

“What is the matter? Flora,” said Padruig, who became somewhat alarmed at

her deadly appearance. "Are you sick?"

"Sick!" said her father, who overtook the young couple, for he had followed a little behind them, his attention being attracted to a considerable amount of sheep's wool, which lay upon the heather, and as there were not a few foxes as well as wild cats inhabiting the short bushes in the Corry, he examined the wool minutely in order to satisfy himself whether these destructive animals had been at work. "What then is the matter, Flora!" said her father, "now that I have overtaken you. Do you feel unwell? It strikes me that we will have to postpone our errand, and accompany you home again."

"Oh! I am all right again, father," said Flora. "I thought that I saw someone disappearing around the back of the 'Fairies Well'."

"These fairies will take you away altogether Sunday yet, Flora," said her father. "I cannot see anything, but we shall all go up to the 'Well,' and try to find this person whom you may have seen."

Flora, her father, and Padruig Dubh arrived at the 'Well,' but no one was there. "It must have been imagination on your part, Flora, there is nothing to be seen either dead or alive," said her father. "I can see neither ghost nor fairie."

"It is all right father," said Flora. "I am sorry for the alarm which I have caused; it must have been imagination." At least Flora said so, because she did not wish to upset her father's plans. After they were a considerable distance past 'Fairie's Well,' Flora said goodbye to Padruig Dubh, and kissed her father lovingly before they parted. She lingered for a considerable time at the "Fairie's Well," in the hope that she might see the "Fairy Queen" in person, but it was well into the afternoon, and that she saw nothing she left the scene of her recent alarm, to retrace her steps homewards. "I am quite satisfied," she said to herself, "that it was the 'Fairy Queen' whom I saw. She appeared to be small in stature and gorgeously dressed."

Mrs. MacDonald was now beginning to be somewhat alarmed at Flora's absence, as she could have been home long before three o'clock in the afternoon. She had tea set for two in the small parlour, and as her work was finished for the day she betook herself along the narrow pathway leading to the "Fairie's Well," to see what had become of her daughter, who at that moment had just come up

to her. “What has kept you, Flora?” said her mother. “I was getting alarmed about you. In fact I was on the eve of thinking that the ‘Fairy Queen’ whom you always speak about had got hold of you instead of your father or Padruig Dubh.”

“Well mother, you see I went into a considerable distance past the ‘Fairie’s Well,’ and I rested there a while on the way back. The time soon flies, and as I have no watch with me I now admit that I have lingered longer than I should have.”

Roderick Mòr and Padruig Dubh continued their journey after Flora had left them, and Roderick explained to his young companion many things which interested him as they crossed the moor. “I hope that Flora will be home safely by now,” said Padruig Dubh. “I am somewhat concerned about her health. She did look deadly pale back there before you came upon us.”

“Don’t fear Padruig, my boy, she will be all right” said her father. “Flora is by no means a coward. In fact she is much more inclined to be a heroine.”

“I am glad to hear that,” said Padruig Dubh, “and there is little doubt but that she shall be someone’s heroine one day.”

To this remark Roderick Mòr made no reply, but turned his head aside saying, “more than likely it would be this ‘Fairy Queen’ that Flora imagined that she had seen. You see we often speak about the fairies, and women folks are more apt than men to believe that these creatures do exist, but now I shall tell you a real fairytale.

“In the olden days,” said Roderick Mòr, “they’re always existed a bitter hatred and jealous rivalry between the witches and the fairies in the district. The witch who carried yonder stone to put it into the mouth of the smuggler’s den, often threatened the fairies that she would one day kill their Queen. She dropped that stone one evening just at dusk, and as she endeavoured to mind her apron strings in order that she might continue the journey with her heavy burden, the ‘Fairy Queen’ appeared. The witch thought that this was a good opportunity to kill the ‘Fairy Queen,’ and thus get possession of her magic wand. The real reason of the rivalry was that the ‘Fairy Queen’ knew everyone in and around the district, and she could do many wonderful things with perfect

success, but the witch often failed to perform her duties of good or evil. This witch often bestowed good things upon those people who helped her to carry out treacherous deeds which he perpetrated upon others, but those who hindered her often suffered at her hand. The 'Fairy Queen' on the other hand was a good Queen, and although she envied certain people, and even carried them away to Fairyland, yet she did so in a very pleasant manner, and caused no pain by her actions. The persons whom she kidnaped lived in a happy state in the fairy kingdom."

"The witch was a woman of enormous size, and the 'Fairy Queen' was a very small person.

'Come!' said the witch to the 'Fairy Queen,' down into the bottom of the Corry and see what your fairies have done to my abode."

"The 'Fairy Queen' knew what the witch was about to do, and she replied, 'Beware woman! Lest thou may bring about your own destruction!' The witch paid no heed to this warning, but continued with her desire to kill the Queen. They both walked down the slope together, and when they reached the bottom the witch made an attempt to seize the 'Fairy Queen,' but in an instant she raised her tiny body upon silver wings, and soared far into the heavens. She then touched a great dark cloud with her magic wand, and immediately there came on a terrible thunderstorm. She returned to where the witch stood, and the lightning flashed with dazzling brightness, for the night was very dark; the thunder roared until the peaks reechoed up and down the whole countryside; and the rain fell in great sheets. As the storm continued the stream in the Corry became swollen, and as the water rose, the great witch was lifted off her feet. She floated for a long time upon the water's surface, while the 'Fairy Queen' put down her little boat into which he entered, and sailed round and round the great witch in safety. The volume of water still rose until it had reached some twenty or more feet up the Corry sides, and in her frenzied state of terror the witch screamed at the pitch of her voice. She cried for help but all in vain, for she had been the means of bringing all the trouble upon herself. The "Fairy Queen" sailed closely up to the monstrous woman who still kept afloat, and her tiny bark sat upon the water as in a complete calm.

“While the storm still increased it is magnitude the ‘Fairy Queen’ said to the woman, ‘Thou vile and treacherous monster, what of thy power and witchcraft now? Thou didst design my death, but in thy venomous place thou hast laid a trap in which thou shalt remain for all time. Dost thou know my actions are always good whilst thine are always evil? Thus thou shalt be carried by the waters which have fallen from the heavens this night, down into the great ocean, and there thou shalt sink, never to rise again’.

“As the ‘Fairy Queen’ ceased to address the witch she soon reached the dry land and then disappeared leaving the object of her displeasure to an awful doom.”

“That is a wonderful tale,” said Padruig Dubh. “Yes!” said Roderick Mòr. “You may know what the depth of the water was when it reached the point where we now stand.”

As the travelers got to the other side of the Corry they had just then reached a high point, or eminence, on which they both rested so that they might view the surrounding hills. “This is a most wonderful country,” said Padruig Dubh to his guide. “Every place is a Dun, Corry, Craig, Cairn, Glen, Ben, or Loch.”

“Ah!” said Roderick Mòr, “that is the beauty of the whole thing. These are the names which add charm to life in this our Highland home, and enrich it with all the folklore, much more of which you shall hear before you depart from Craig Mhòr.”

After a short rest Roderick and Padruig Dubh proceeded on their way, and Padruig said that he would not mind if he were at his journey’s end, because his pipe case became very much heavier as he went along.

“We shall soon be at our destination,” said Roderick Mòr, “yonder is the shepherd’s house.

“Although I am quite tired,” said Padruig, “I would not have missed this visit for anything. I do so much love the hills.”

“Now this is the Duns at last,” said Roderick Mòr, “and when you have had a rest with something to eat, Padruig, I am sure that you will be all right.”

The Duns was a neat little house of three apartments. The walls were built with good stone from the neighboring rocks, from which plenty of building

materials could be found without much trouble. A roof a fine heather thatch projected well over the walls, which looked as if the heather had actually been woven together before being put on. "There is an art in thatching houses with heather, Padruig, you know," said Roderick Mòr, and if anyone possesses that secret, Kenneth MacGillivray does."

"Good afternoon Roderick," said Kenneth, as the two visitors approached his dwelling," and how would herself be? She has not seen her since long before, and how are Mrs. McDonald and Flora, would they both be well?"

"Yes! thank you, Kenneth," said Roderick Mòr, "and I hope that both Elspet and yourself are well."

"Och, aye! she could not be expected to be better, and the good wife, Elspet, as you have called her, is just preparing for you."

"You expected us then," said Roderick.

"Yes! man, man, whatever, moreover, do you know Roderick," said Kenneth, "that you came into her head some days ago, for there would always be some beast or body running in her head, and she was sure that you would be calling upon her soon. And who would be the braw lad that she has brocht with her? She does not often bring a gentleman to the Duns."

"Oh!" said Roderick Mòr, "this is my young friend Padruig Dubh Macvourich, who has been staying at Craig Mhòr with me for some time."

"Och! aye man," said Kenneth, "and she would be a piper from the appearance of her case."

Kenneth and Padruig were introduced to each other, and before entering the house Kenneth said, "and surely this Padruig would not be having one of her other eyes looking after Flora? When her father would not be looking, whatever, moreover," but this remark passed over the distant mountain, and died away without further comment. The visitors received the same cordial greeting from Elspet, who asked them to be seated, and she laid aside their two cases.

"Be very careful with the bagpipe Elspet," said, "as you put them by, and see that no harm comes to them, because she would be looking forward to having a great night of piping now that they are here, for her own pipe would be laid

aside.”

“What is wrong with your pipes now, Kenneth?” said Roderick Mòr, “are they out of order again?”

“Och! man,” said Kenneth, “if she would be dry, and Padruig also, that would be very easily put right.” Kenneth immediately left the room and soon brought back a remedy for drought. “Now Roderick,” said Kenneth, “that would not be bad stuff for her throat when it would be dry. That would be her own production.”

“Now Kenneth,” said Roderick Mòr, “you must be careful, and more especially when strangers are about. What if the ‘Ganger’ were to pay you a visit?”

“Strangers!” said Kenneth, “yourself would be no stranger here, nor with the young gentlemen be a stranger neither, and for the ‘Cager’; there would be little use of Caging her now. She has been too long amongst the Heather to sit in a Cage.”

“You will have it your own way then, Kenneth,” said Roderick Mòr, “and what is always doing at the Duns, now that I have got a chance to ask? I hope the sheep are all right upon your ground.”

“Oich, yes!” said Kenneth, “the flock would be all right on her piece of the ground, and what she would otherwise be doing would just be the same old thing. Nothing but going about the hill like a moorfowl, and a skirl of the pipes by times, only that her pipe would be dry without playing because her reed would be all broke. If she were to recall her own words the other day, yourself would know, to be sure, what it may come to someday. She was just telling Elspet there the day before tomorrow, that some morning in the middle of the afternoon she would find herself turning into a partridge amongst the short heather or the long green grass round by.”

“But she will be hungry, Roderick,” continued Kenneth, “and your friend also. Bring in over the table with the Elspet, and set down food for the strangers, and for us all, we would be all of us be hungry. She was just up at the hill the other day and got two or three bits of beasties, and the big brown hare, so she was telling Elspet that you would be here, therefore you would be very lucky.”

“The hare is not so bad,” said Roderick Mòr, “but how did you manage to get the other two or three-----?”

“Oich! aye, but now she would be asking,” said Kenneth, “a little ago she was warning her to beware of the ‘Cager,’ and next she would expect that you would have for beware of Malcolm Campbell the Duke’s gamekeeper. But Kenneth was not born yesterday, nor the day before. The Duke nor Malcolm will never miss all that she will require.”

By this time else that had the meal ready, and they all partook of the hill products. “It is quite true, Kenneth,” said Roderick Mòr, “they will never be missed, but whether or not they taste well, for I am hungry.”

“Yes they do,” said Padruig to Mrs. MacGillivray. “I have never tasted the like of them. They are really delicious.”

During the meal they entered into a general conversation, and Kenneth asked Roderick Mòr how long he was going to stay. “You will be going to remain with us for three or four days or more,” said Kenneth, “more especially that the bagpipes are here.”

“I am sorry,” said Roderick Mòr, “that we can only stay two nights at the most, as I have to visit Loch Dubh, and the ‘Cairns!’”

“Very well then,” said, “we will have to make the best of it.”

“We have done justice to your good things then, Elspet,” said Roderick Mòr, “and now we shall have to go out and see what is doing upon the hill before it gets dark.” Kenneth, Roderick Mòr, and Padruig Dubh all went for a stroll upon the moor, which looked very beautiful, as the heather was still in bloom, and in the far horizon it looked as if it were a great purple carpet. There were a good number of small knolls or hillocks around Kenneth’s abode, which would actually appear to be of supernatural construction, or built up by some mysterious person or persons.

“What are these small knolls dotted here and there?” said Padruig Dubh, to Roderick Mòr. “Have they been built up by someone long long ago?”

“No!” said Roderick Mòr, “these are ‘Duns’ from which Kenneth’s home takes his name. Around these they say that the fairies play every evening at dusk.”

“We must look out for these most wonderful creatures then,” said Padruig

Dubh, “and try if possible to see what they are like.”

“She would better beware of herself,” said Kenneth, “the fairies would be no people to be playing with. Malcolm Campbell was here the other day and said that the ‘Fairy Queen’ had been about with her ‘silver chanter,’ and had even taken away little Duncan the piper, who has never been seen before nor since. She never plays her pipe about the Duns, Padruig, because there would be great danger of being taken away, body, soul and mind.”

“I am afraid we shall have to turn now, Kenneth,” said Roderick Mòr. “It will be dark before we get home.”

“Very well!” said Kenneth. “She will all be turning round bout. It will be grand to hear the pipes again.”

Kenneth and his two visitors arrived back at the “Duns” about seven o’clock in the evening, and by that time they were ready for further refreshment. The strong hill air creates an appetite at all times, but Padruig especially felt very hungry, and the fact that Elspet had supper ready when the party returned, with a fine peat fire burning made everything look cheery and comfortable. Kenneth did not linger long over supper, for he was very keen to hear a tune from the great pipe, and he was also anxious to see Padruig’s new set, which he imagined from Roderick’s subscription, must be a very fine one. “Is the fire on in the ben end of the house, Elspet?” said Kenneth.

“Yes!” replied Elspet.

“Well! she will be removing herself to the ben end, then, Roderick,” said Kenneth, “and hear this great pipe of Padruig’s.” They retired to the best room of the house, which was well lit by the fire alone, which burned so brightly that the whole apartment was sufficiently illuminated for the night’s entertainment.

“Do not bring any further light, Elspet,” said Roderick Mòr, “the room was quite bright.”

“Please don’t,” said Padruig, “this is just what I like.” The fireplace was very old-fashioned. All that held the fire was a number of round stones neatly placed together, whitened with chalk or pipeclay, and a semicircular piece of iron laid upon the stones to keep the fire together. Upon the hearth there burned a considerable number of fine dry peats, and some large pieces of fir,

which both heated and lighted the room quite well.

“This is the real Highland Sheiling, Padruig,” said Roderick Mòr. “Yonder is a portrait of the prince, and on the opposite side of the room is a picture of the ‘The Gathering of the Clans.’ Kevin is a true Jacobite.”

“That may be so,” said Kenneth,” but she would not be quarreling with the Queen, although her father was once killed in a skirmish with the redcoats between the ‘fifteen’ and the ‘forty-five’.”

“What about the pipes, Roderick,” said Kenneth, “is a gentleman going to play?”

“Yes!” said Roderick Mòr, “he is.” Padruig Dubh then got his pipe case and brought out the National Instrument, and as he did so Kenneth’s eyes sparkled like diamonds.

“Man! Man! Roderick,” he said, “that would be a grand pipe, and to crown the best of it there would be on them a ‘silver chanter.’ See that the bar would be made fast on the inside of the door, Elspet. She would never listen to a quaver till the door and the windows would be made secure in order to keep the Fairy Queen out, and who knows but the limmer may be glowering in upon us. She can manage to keep off herself with both beast and body, but she would be very careful when the fairies are prowling about.”

The door was secured, and Padruig Dubh blew up his pipes. Kenneth MacGillivray’s Highland blood began to warm and course the faster as Padruig proceeded with his tune, and Kenneth swung to and fro to the rhythm of the music. The piobaireachd was a very spirited piece, and a fine specimen of the “Battle Tune.” There was inspiration in every note. As the performer went on for variation to variation, the purport of the tune became more and more obvious to the listener. When Padruig finished playing, Kenneth could not help remarking upon the fine performance. He wished within his own heart that he could play in such a masterly manner. Although he mortally dreaded the fairies, yet he would have run many risks to be permitted to finger upon the “silver chanter,” which appeared to him to have something supernatural about it.

“That is a fine pipe,” said Roderick Mòr to Kenneth, “and a piobaireachd well

played. You do not hear the like of that every day, do you?"

"She could not say that she does, Roderick," said Kenneth. "She would admit that it would be a grand pipe, with a very fine performance, but now it is done Roderick. Surely there would be something mysterious about the 'silver chanter,' for she never heard such playing in all her lifetime before nor since."

"But you shall have a tune from that fine set yourself, Kenneth," said Roderick Mòr.

"Oich! no," said Kenneth, she would be spoiling them completely." In fact Kenneth had a very strong idea of superstition in his mind, although he admired the pipe, as well as the music which it was capable of producing, yet all these temptations would not induce him to play it.

"Very well then, Kenneth," said Roderick Mòr, "I will play you a tune myself."

"Oich! aye, man," said Kenneth, "but you would be a grand piper, Roderick while it would be very different with herself who would not be accustomed to be playing such a grand set. But! whatever, moreover, to be sure she will have her tune next."

As promised, Roderick Mòr took the pipes, and prior to displaying one of his favourite tunes, ran over several short pieces or preludes, in order to prove the stability of the reeds. Before Roderick had finished playing these short test pieces, all the drone reeds had retuned to Padruig's tuning, which is a real test of good reeds, and perfect tuning ability on the part of the performer. Roderick Mòr knew from his own experience that if he could perform this feat the drones would play more steadily, and keep in more perfect concord where that was possible than if he had entirely retuned the pipes.

Kenneth awaited Roderick Mòr's performance with great enthusiasm. He was quite confident that his master could play along side of anyone in a sportsman-like manner, for he was satisfied that Roderick Mòr would never tolerate the idea or even the suggestion of competition in whatever form.

Once satisfied that the pipe with the "silver chanter" was in perfect form, Roderick Mòr broke into the Ground work of his tune. He was tall and handsome, with a fine carriage, or bearing which added much to his performance and left nothing further to be desired. The Theme had a peculiar

touch of solemn grandeur about it, which had quite the opposite effect that Padruig Dubh's had upon Kenneth who sat in a very composed position with a distinct expression of sadness upon his face. Indeed, Padruig Dubh could see several large teardrops passing slowly down his weather-beaten face. Roderick Mòr continued his tune with slow and mournful expression. This was his favourite species of piobaireachd, and his performance was worthy of a royal audience. He left the Crunluath, returned to the Theme and stopped.

"Oich! aye, man, Roderick," said the gentle shepherd. "Padruig's piobaireachd put so much of the courage into her that she could fight anyone except the fairies. The Gathering rouses her blood to such an extent that she would be giving the very devil himself as good a leveling up as ever he got, if only she could lay hold of him, for he sorely requires it because he is always meddling with someone or other. But the Lament would be by far too much for her. The notes would be so very solemn and grand. She could not help letting one or two bits of a tear fall in the passing for her heart would be too full of sadness, although she would be having no sorrow to cause her to weep in the meantime, whatever, moreover. She could not refrain from thinking that the piobaireachd would be strong, strong music, for it never fails to move her heart to sorrow in death itself when it comes around her, nor does the Battle Tune fail to excite her mind into a frenzy for war with the enemy of the Duke would put foot on his mountain or keep walking up or down his glens."

"Now Kenneth," said Roderick Mòr, "you must play a tune yourself, and we shall all have contributed to the night's enjoyment."

"And what if the Fairy Queen were to see her playing on the 'silver chanter'? She would be no more, whatever, and Elspet would be speaking to herself forevermore. What is more Roderick, you would be requiring another shepherd in the place of Kenneth. There would be two 'no more's'."

"What exactly do you mean, Kenneth?" said Roderick Mòr. "Is this in the way of an excuse for not playing?"

"Man, man, Roderick, it would be no excuse, whatever, if she would just allow her to explain. There would already be a 'Lochaber no more,' but if she played upon the 'silver chanter,' and the fairies took her away before morning,

there would be a 'Kenneth no more'."

"I can assure you," said Roderick Mòr, "that there was no chance of the fairies meddling with you. It is your turn."

"Well, if she thought that it would be safe she would just like to be giving the 'silver chanter' a bit [of a] blow," said Kenneth. "They would be a grand set. A skirl and a half would be quite sufficient for her."

"All right, Kenneth," said Roderick Mòr, "just play one of our own favourites." At last Kenneth took up the pipes, and played very pathetically in the majesty of simple grandeur, a fine old Lament which Roderick Mòr had taught him.

"That was well played, Kenneth," said Padruig Dubh, "I like your style very much. There is a great wealth of meaning in it, and that is what counts in the art of good piping."

"Yes!" said Roderick Mòr, "Kenneth plays a good tune, when the little tuition which I have been able to give him is taken into consideration. You see Padruig, we are far apart, and with our other duties we cannot devote so much time to pipe playing as we would like to."

"Man, she would be a grand pipe with that 'silver chanter,' Padruig," said Kenneth. "She never played upon such a grand pipe before or since, whatever, moreover."

Next day Kenneth took his visitors further afield, for the moors were very extensive on which the flocks grazed during the summer months. Roderick Mòr has satisfied himself that the flocks were all in good condition, and well looked after. He then asked Kenneth if there was any place in particular upon the hillside that he would like Padruig Dubh to see.

"Oich! aye, man," said Kenneth, "she would be bringing her past the place where the 'mountain dew' falls at night but never rises in the morning."

"What does he mean?" said Padruig Dubh to Roderick Mòr. "Does not the dew fall upon the whole of the moor, and lift with the sun in the morning?"

"Man, man!" said Kenneth. "It would be easily seen that the lad would be scarce of the knowledge of our great mountains. It would be taking some 'dew'

to cover all the mountains between here and the seashore. To let you so far into the secret, Padruig,” continued, “she makes the ‘mountain dew’ with the one hand in the evening, and with the other hand she lifts it in the morning to toast the ‘Prince,’ and wish for the speedy return of ‘Charlie’ to his Highland glens.”

“Kenneth means to take us to the den of the smuggler,” said Roderick Mòr, “to see where the smugglers used to make their own spirits.”

They all made their way past the ‘tarn,’ and just before they came up to the water’s edge Kenneth stopped to look around in case that any person might be about whom he did not wish to see. The way was clear and Kenneth signaled with his hand for his companions to follow him. Kenneth entered first, and his two companions were in a few seconds seated in a small place in the very bowels of the earth. There were many things there that Padruig Dubh had never seen before, but ‘silence’ was the ‘password.’

“This would not be a place to be speaking in above her breath,” said Kenneth, as he liberated the spirits which had been confined for some considerable time in a place of security. “She will all be better able to face the rest of the road when she gets onto the header again,” said Kenneth, who drank to the health of the ‘Prince’ together with that of his companions. They left the peculiar apartment after they had surveyed the hidden mysteries of “mountain dewdom.” The entrance was again made fast, and after a careful scrutiny of the hillside the company lost no time until they again reached “the Duns.”

Elspet was anxiously waiting their return with great patience, for in fact she wondered what in all the wide world could be keeping them so long. “We have arrived again at last,” said Roderick Mòr, as he entered the house followed by Padruig Dubh and Kenneth.

“She will all be having something to eat now,” said Kenneth, “for she would be very hungry after her round of the hill.” They all did ample justice to the meal which Elspet had so kindly prepared, after which a lengthy conversation took place on the difference between sheep farming in New Zealand, and the Highlands of Scotland.

“You must get your pipes, Kenneth,” said Roderick Mòr, “so that we may put them in order before we leave you.”

“She will do that very quickly,” said Kenneth, “for it would be too much for her to be getting them to be playing.” Kenneth left the room, and in a few moments he returned with his pipes. “Oh! but they would be dry, dry, Roderick, man,” said Kenneth. “Too dry for any mortal to put breath into them. She even blew some of the ‘dew’ into her, but she refused to give one groan and a half, for as much as she longed to get ‘My King Has Landed in Moidart’ out of her.”

“We must see what is wrong with them than,” said Roderick Mòr, “so that we may leave them with you in good order.” Padruig Dubh and Roderick went to work. They tested the bag after which they applied some seasoning and made it airtight. Then they examined the reeds, which were completely played done.

“I don’t wonder that they won’t play, Kenneth,” said Roderick Mòr. “Your reeds are done.”

“Very well, Roderick,” said Kenneth, “she will just be putting her past again.”

“We cannot allow you to do that, Kenneth,” said Padruig Dubh, taking pity upon Kenneth who was so far away from anyone who could give him reeds. “I have some spare reeds in my case, Roderick,” said Padruig Dubh. Kenneth may have a set!”

The pipes were accordingly put into playing order, and Kenneth was as proud as a peacock. “She would be able to play for a long time now, Roderick,” said Kenneth, “even until she would be tired whatevermore. She would be very much indebted to her for the reeds, Padruig, and she will be remembering her all her lifetime.” They spent another happy evening at the Duns in pipe playing, and relating traditional stories about the fairies and ghosts, which greatly amused Padruig Dubh who was unaccustomed to hearing such tales.

Next day Padruig Dubh and Roderick Mòr had to say goodbye to Kenneth and Elspet, and they thanked them both for their hospitality and entertainment. Kenneth invited Roderick Mòr back again soon, and wished Padruig Dubh a safe journey back to New Zealand, at the same time warning him to beware the fairies, and especially the not least fascinating one at Craig Mhòr – Flora.

Roderick Mòr and his companion made their way towards “Loch Dubh” to pay Murdoch Mackay a visit. The day was fine and they both enjoyed the journey very much. They crossed the Corry which had a peculiar winding amongst the hills, and when they regained the high ground they could see in the distance the shepherd’s house. It stood close to the Loch side for they were only separated by a distance of about fifty to a hundred yards.

“I shall refrain from telling you anything about the origin of the ‘Black Loch,’ Padruig,” said Roderick Mòr. “Murdoch Mackay will put you through its history very much better than I can.”

There was a very heavy dark cloud just over the sun, and as the visitors approached the Loch from the east it looked very weird and ominous. “I am not surprised at the name which is been given to the Loch,” said Padruig Dubh. “It looks black enough.”

“Yes!” said Roderick Mòr, “it is black enough any time, but that cloud which would appear to be a thundery one, makes it look still darker.”

They arrived at the shepherd’s house, but only to find that Murdoch was away from home. Nora, his wife advised them, however, that good Shepherd (as all shepherds were good), would not be long before he would be home again, as he only went out upon the hill to see some of the sheep which had been disturbed the night before.

“What has been at them, Nora,” said Roderick Mòr. “Has there been strange dogs about?” Nora said she could not be certain, but that when Murdoch came home he would be able to tell all about it.

A few moments later Murdoch arrived home, and Nora, his wife, warned him that Roderick MacDonald had arrived from “Craig Mhòr” on a visit, with a young man from New Zealand. Murdoch was very pleased to hear of the visitors, and hastened inside welcome them. “Good afternoon Murdoch,” said Roderick Mòr. “Nora tells me that you have had some trouble with the sheep. What is wrong?”

“Nothing would be wrong Roderick, nothing man, just a big black dog which she would be seeing this morning when she got up on the hill,” said Murdoch, “and she would be wondering whether the brute would be coming back again!”

“These things will happen now and again,” said Roderick, “but so long as there is no worrying the matter will be all right.”

“She will not be leaving her tonight, now that she would be here,” said Murdoch, to Roderick Mòr. “If you can keep me along with my friend here, we shall be most delighted to stay.”

“Keep her,” said Murdoch, “she will be doing the like very easily, but who would her companion be, if it would not be too much to be asking?” Roderick Mòr then introduced Murdoch and/or to Padruig Dubh, who shook hands with them very warmly.

“She will be hungry, Roderick, and her friend also,” said Murdoch. “Get some food ready for them, Nora.”

After having partaken of what good things Nora could give them, Roderick Mòr told Murdoch that they would better take a turn round, as they had to be on their way early next morning for the “Cairns.”

“She would just be going then,” said Murdoch. “In case the big black cloud would be falling upon us and the Black Loch which is very black enough already, and she would be unable to show it to Padruig.” They got out upon the moor again, and visited the place where the black dog had been disturbing the sheep on the previous day.

“I can see a fair quantity of wool there, Murdoch,” said Roderick Mòr. “Whether or not the visitor has been disturbed, he meant business right enough. You will require to keep a watch upon this part for a few days, in case of a recurrence, and report the matter to me at once.”

“She will be doing that, Roderick,” said Murdoch, “it is she would be getting a hold of the bit dog, she will occupy her attention for as long as will prevent her from worrying the Duke’s sheep, or any other person’s sheep.”

Being satisfied that there were no more dogs in the vicinity, the visitors were taken over the higher parts of the moor by Murdoch who knew. Their position was such that an excellent view of the surrounding country could be enjoyed. Padruig Dubh expressed his admiration of the scenery, which he described as the finest example of rugged mountain grandeur that he had ever seen. “It is not to be wondered at,” said Padruig Dubh, “that we pipers get our inspiration

from the lofty mountains with their majestic peaks, which at times are veiled with mist from heaven. Had I only got my pipes here and now so that I might play that ancient 'Gathering,' so that it's notes might be carried by the mountain breezes over the four quarters of the globe."

"That would be well said, Padruig," said Murdoch, "and she will be having a piobaireachd from her this very night before the old clock will strike one twelve times, more especially after gazing upon such a magnificent view as we have just beheld. She would sleep after such an inspiring view as this would be. But yonder is the 'Black Loch.' She would be bringing her past it, and that she would be going down the hill she will be telling Padruig Dubh the story of the 'Black Loch'."

"It would be long, long ago," continued Murdoch, "before her great, great grandfather's time, that there would have been a 'Gathering of the Clans,' just before the sun fell down the back of that high hill over there, and in the darkness of night multiplied by the blackness of the 'Black Loch,' what would hinder both clans to be having a big fight with the claymores. The darkness would be so great that somebody happened to kill the great Chieftain in a mistake, so that she fell as dead as an otter in a trap, before the Chieftain knew who would be killing her. Whatsoever, moreover, in the darkness of the night the pipers played the 'Lament,' and the great warrior was buried beside the 'Black Loch' which is still there to tell the tale, that the dead warrior knew not whether her clan won the battle or lost the big fight, the like of which has never been fought since the year before one. And to this day, and every day as the clock strikes the twelve strokes of midnight, the dead Chieftain's ghost would be marching around the loch without ceasing, with the pipes playing, and her claymore in her hand ready to kill the person who would have killed her in the big fight."

"Man! that would be great times, Roderick, would it not?"

"Yes!" said Roderick, "these were the stirring times. The best days for Scotland, but now the Chieftain may as well be dead as alive, and more especially since the Prince crossed the main."

"Have you ever come to see the Chieftain's ghost marching round the loch then," said Padruig Dubh to Murdoch.

“Did she think that herself would be daft altogether? Murdoch may be daft at times, but not so much so as would be coming out of her warm bed to see any person whatever in the middle of the darkness of night, and very much less which he come to the ‘Black Loch’ when the dead man’s ghost would be going about with her claymore choose one in her hand to kill the first person that she would be meeting. But, moreover, that would be the exact history of the ‘Black Loch,’ and there as you see there are the footprints of the dead Chieftain still visible to the naked eye on the shore, where we now stand. In a word may the good providence keep Murdoch from conflict with the great Chieftain who still waits to avenge his cruel death.”

Roderick Mòr explained further to Padruig that in a dull day in winter the loch really look as if the darkness had even fallen around it while it was only midday. “You see,” continued Roderick, “that the hills almost rise completely round the loch, as there is only a very narrow hollow at either side to allow the water to come and go. The loch is also fed by springs, because in summer when the weather is very dry, more water leaves the loch then comes into it.”

“The traditional history of the places here interests me very much,” said Padruig Dubh. “There is always more charm in the traditional story that makes one’s hair almost stand on end than the written history of the country.”

“She would be very anxious to hear the pipes, Roderick,” said Murdoch, “so she will all be going home.” As the three stalwarts did feel a bit tired, they retired to the house. After supper they were about to get ready for some pipe-playing when someone knocked at the door. Murdoch hastened to answer the knock, went to his great surprise no one was to be seen or heard. The dusk had fallen, but it was not dark. There was no mistake about the knock for every person in the house heard it. The three men, and they were all fit to meet man or beast, went out and searched all around the house, but still they could neither hear or see anything.

“It must have been the fairies,” said Murdoch, “and it would not be easy seeing them.”

“Are you sure that it was not the Chieftain’s ghost,” said Padruig Dubh, in an effort to throw some light on the mystery of the “Black Loch” tragedy.

“She would not be too sure, Padruig,” said Murdoch, “but as it is getting still darker she is thinking that all of us would be safer in the house.”

They went inside again, and Murdoch did not disguise the fact that he was still somewhat alarmed at the incident which had just occurred. “She will be barring the door,” said Murdoch, “and she would not be liking this clattering of people’s fingers upon her door and then disappearing.”

“Get out your pipes, Padruig,” said Roderick Mòr, “a good tune will clear the air, and help to keep away the fairies, hobgoblins, and ghosts, or whatever may be about.” Padruig did as he was told, and as he got his pipes from the case, he was not a little surprised to observe that Murdoch’s face turned somewhat pale.

“May the providence above preserve her, she would be seeing that the young fellow has got a ‘silver chanter.’ She would not be wondering anymore, whatsoever, who would be at the door.”

“Who do you think it would be there, Murdoch,” said Roderick.

“Who but the ‘Fairy Queen’ herself,” said Murdoch. “There will be more trouble yet to come over that ‘silver chanter’.”

“We must have a tune at all costs, whatever may be the result,” said Roderick Mòr. “Blow up Padruig, and give Murdoch that fine piobaireachd which you played the other evening, ‘The Shepherd’s Warning’.”

“She would not be desiring any more warnings, whatever,” said Murdoch. “She has got enough warnings for one night, and the rest of her life, she would be sure.”

Padruig had play the tune which Roderick had asked him to, and his pipes were going in tip-top order. Murdoch listened most attentively while Padruig played, and when he had finished Murdoch admitted that the ‘silver chanter’ was the finest pipe that he had ever heard. “That would be a fine piobaireachd, Roderick,” said Murdoch. “Man! Man! She never knew that there would be such a tune. The only warning she ever heard of where the Shepherd was that ‘rainbow in the morning,’ but she has lived to get two warnings in the one night—the mysterious knocking at the door, and the ‘Shepherd’s Warning’ on the ‘silver chanter.’ She would always be learning as she would be living.”

“Now, Murdoch,” said Roderick Mòr, “you play a tune upon these pipes, and

see what you think of Padruig's choice."

"And she will be sure that she would be running no risks by playing upon 'silver chanters.' She might as well run her neck into a snare like a partridge upon the stubble. Na! Na! Murdoch would not be so big a gouk as all that. If she must play, she would prefer to blaw her own sheep's blether."

"All right, then, Murdoch, give us a tune from your own pipe," said Roderick Mòr, "as I must play you a tune myself before I go, and the night creeps on." Murdoch got his pipes and played a tune in his own way. His pipe was rather an old one, but Murdoch could bring the music of his native hills out of it all right.

"He plays well," said Padruig Dubh to Roderick. "I rather like the sound of his drones, and his chanter is quite clear of tone. In fact the old set is well balanced between drones and chanter, and there is a melodic charm about the instrument. There need be no delusion either about Scotland's early pipers or pipe makers. They were both masters of their arts of composition and the creation of their beloved instrument."

When Murdoch stopped Padruig Dubh congratulated him on his performance, and admitted that he was taken with the tone of his pipes. "Aye! she would be an old, old one that, man," said Murdoch. "She would not be parting with her for two score of good hogs or more. Play a tune yourself then, Roderick, if she would be going away tomorrow, she will have to be to bed soon. The time would be moving backwards, for this day will soon be yesterday."

"True! Murdoch," said Roderick Mòr. "I must then fulfill my promise, and add my contribution to the evening's performance." Roderick Mòr played a beautiful slow air, which neither Murdoch nor Padruig Dubh had ever heard, and during the performance both listeners admired it so very much that they longed for a halt in order that they might inquire of its name and origin. As soon as Roderick had finished playing, Padruig was ready to ask what the name of the piece was, but he was superseded.

"What would be the name of the tune, Roderick, man?" said Murdoch. "She has never let her into that one before or after. It would be a grand bit of a tune."

"The name of that tune," said Roderick Mòr, "I could not tell. It is one of the

hidden mysteries of piobaireachd, and strange to say all such pieces are the best, that is, those without a name. There is such a charm about the melody of that air, that I cannot describe the pleasure which the playing of it gives me.”

“You mean to keep it a hidden favourite, then,” said Padruig Dubh, “for I must admit that I never heard a finer tune so far as melody is concerned, and particularly of rhythm.”

“We will have to be putting ourselves to bed then, as the night would be growing old, and soon the morning will be coming with the dawn when the hungry moorcock will be calling us for everything that is obscure for snoring upon her beds after we should be up and doing everything that has to be done,” said Murdoch to his companions, “and she must be saying that she has enjoyed the evening’s proceedings,” continued Murdoch, “all except the knocking at the door by some hidden hand or another. Nora and herself will always be having to bar the door every night after this, very early, and it would be a blessing that the bairns would be in bed before the knock came.”

Next day Roderick Mòr intended visiting Alasdair McNeill, at the “Cairns,” but as he had spent several days away from home already he intimated his intention to Padruig Dubh that he must pay Malcolm Campbell a call out the “Corry,” before he returned to Craig Mhòr. Accordingly the two visitors said goodbye to Murdoch and his wife, Nora, and so left “Loch Dubh” with all its very charms and ghostly apparitions.

“We shall have to put in a step,” said Roderick Mòr, “if we are to be at the Corry before dusk. We really ought to have left Loch Dubh after breakfast instead of after dinner. We may stay at the Corry two nights, and have a day upon the moors with the Duke’s shooting party if by any chance Malcolm Campbell requires additional assistance tomorrow, and the day is good. You will perhaps have an opportunity of visiting the Cairns sometime again before leaving us for New Zealand. It is quite an interesting place, and I should not like you to miss seeing it.”

The afternoon was fine, and the moor being dry, they were able to cover the ground more quickly than if the mossy parts had been soft, as they usually are

after rain. "They will be beginning to miss us at Craig Mhòr," said Padruig Dubh, "we must not stay more than two nights at the Corry."

"Are you wearying for Craig Mhòr already?" said Roderick Mòr, "why, we have only been away from it for three nights."

"Yes!" said Padruig Dubh, "that may seem very short to us but Mrs. MacDonald and Flora will be feeling very lonely."

"Oh! they will be quite all right," said Roderick Mòr, "and besides, the last two nights will soon pass when we shall be with them again."

"I believe Flora will be meeting us on our return," said Padruig Dubh. "She never seems to miss the 'Fairie's Well'."

"I would not be in the least surprised if she comes to her favourite spot on more than one night on the chance of meeting us," said Roderick Mòr, "for she seems to have some very peculiar notions about the old well."

"I am sure that she guards it carefully," said Padruig Dubh. "She never seems to let either of us pass that way without being present."

"I quite agree with you," said Roderick Mòr, who could never see anything wrong in what his daughter did. "But yonder is a most beautiful double rainbow in the eastern sky. I have never seen a more brilliant one. It is my chief 'weather glass'," continued Roderick Mòr, "for as sure as it appears in the evening, it is a sign of good weather, but a rainbow in the morning is as sure to forebode a storm."

"You are a great believer in the old saying is, then," said Padruig Dubh to his companion.

"Yes! said Roderick Mòr, "because these signs are invariably correct."

They had just then entered the Corry, and Roderick Mòr pointed out Malcolm Campbell's dwelling place, which was a very neat little four-roomed house being sheltered from the east wind by the sloping hill which overlooked it. The kennels stood quite near the house, and they could hear the deep barking and the deer hounds, and the black retrievers added their voices in harmony with their more powerful companions. "We shall soon be out Malcolm Campbell's fireside," said Roderick Mòr, "and not behind time, for I must say that I feel tired. This is our fourth day on foot, and if we go to the

moor tomorrow, we shall sleep very soundly at night.”

As they turned the band upon the footpath, which led up to the gamekeeper’s house, they came face-to-face with Malcolm Campbell himself. “Good evening Roderick,” he said, “what takes you and your friend here at this hour? You will have a rather darksome journey to Craig Mhòr tonight. But before you go any further let me tell you that I was just on my way to Craig Mhòr, as we are to have a big grouse drive tomorrow on the western moor, and I must at least find two or three more men.”

“I was just telling Padruig, my friend here, that if we could both get a day on the moor with the Duke’s shooting party he would enjoy the experience immensely,” said Roderick Mòr, “so there is no need to go further, Malcolm.”

“We will get inside then,” Malcolm said with much pleasure, and ease of mind, “and have something to eat, for you must both be hungry. I am clear now for the night, so we shall all spend it together.”

Mrs. Campbell welcomed Roderick Mòr who introduced Padruig Dubh to Betty as the mistress of the house, to whom they would have to be deeply indebted for two nights quarters, at least. “We shall make you both most welcome to as many nights again,” said Betty, “for both Malcolm and myself both enjoy your company, Roderick, and I see your young friend has got his bagpipes with him. It will be a great entertainment for us to hear pipe music as it should be played.”

“Yes! said Roderick Mòr, “and where are the boys?”

“Oh! Callum and Fergus are not home from the hill yet, but they won’t be very long now, although they may have gone on to the Castle with the others.”

Before Mrs. Campbell had the meal read the boys had arrived. They were aged fourteen and sixteen respectively. The company then numbered six, so they all partook of supper together. Malcolm Campbell was longing for some piping, and as soon as the meal was over he called upon Padruig Dubh to play.

“I think Roderick Mòr should play first upon the occasion,” said Padruig Dubh, “as I am the stranger, and have played first upon the last two occasions.”

“Very well, then,” said Roderick Mòr, “I shall play you a tune.” While Roderick Mòr played, the whole company sat listening with great eagerness.

The pipes and their music were to them a real musical feast. Roderick played “The Campbell’s Gathering.” It was a stirring tune, for in the days of other years, it had called that powerful clan to rally round their Chieftain in peace and war. The ancient clan spirit still lived in Malcolm Campbell, and as Roderick Mòr left his Urlar to play the next variation with its hurried notes, the gamekeeper’s eye was lit with the fire of battle. His face was flushed with enthusiasm, as much as if he were to march on a dreaded foe. But Roderick Mòr MacDonald harboured no grudge against his fellow employee and trusted friend. “The Massacre of Glencoe” aroused not in his mind any hatred against a Campbell who had no part in that terrible act of foul murder.

When Roderick finished playing he said “Now Malcolm, that is the tune for tomorrow, and I hope that we may enjoy the day.”

“If we all do as well tomorrow as you have played that tune tonight, Roderick,” said Malcolm, “it will be a Gathering right enough, and a bag to be proud of, too, I can assure you.”

They then discussed the possibilities of the next day, and Malcolm rehearsed what had to be done. “Now, we shall have your tune, Padruig,” said Roderick Mòr, “and you must let Malcolm hear the pipes as they are to be played.” Padruig played the “Battle of the Giants,” a very old tune commemorating one of the most outstanding events of some centuries ago. It was a real illustration of the “Battle Tune,” and Padruig interpreted its meaning with fine effect. The theme was one of outstanding peculiarity, and the masterly rendering re-fought a great and ghastly struggle which had once upon a time taken place between clansmen of enormous size and strength of arm.

“The ‘Battle Tune’ has a rousing effect, has it not?” said Roderick Mòr, as the tune came to a close.

“These were the days, Malcolm,” said Roderick, “when you and I would have had no luck in, and they were by no means small men.”

“If we are to go by the expression of the tune,” continued Roderick, “the fight must have been long and stubborn. Every couplet means a blow, while other movements meant disaster to those who fell in mortal conflict.”

“I rather enjoyed the air, and these pipes go well,” said Malcolm, “but I have

always heard that [the] ‘silver chanter’ has secret charms, and that the fairies envied them. In fact, that is the only silver chanter that I have ever seen.”

“I am beginning to wish,” said Padruig Dubh, “that I had never got such a chanter, for indeed I never play it that I have been questioned, or warned about it.”

“I have heard that the fairies possess a ‘silver chanter’ in ‘The Isle of the Mist’,” said Betty, the gamekeeper’s wife, who was herself an Islander, “but now I have lived to see one in reality. Whatever risk there may be in possessing such a beautiful instrument,” she continued, “the richness of its music compensates the owner for any danger which he may incur.” Betty could not play the pipes, but she was a sound judge of a good tune, and a perfect rendering from a perfect instrument, for she admitted then and there that she had never heard a pipe like it.

Next day was a big event upon the moors, and Roderick Mòr and Padruig Dubh kept close upon Malcolm Campbell all day. There were twelve guns present including the Duke himself, and in the evening the bag when enumerated was the heaviest which Malcolm had accounted for, for many years. Padruig Dubh had never been upon the moors at such a meeting before, and he for one thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Malcolm had a particularly appetizing luncheon for Roderick and his friend Padruig Dubh, and as Padruig did not favour heavy refreshments, a special flask was even prepared by the House Steward for himself.

Malcolm brought home his companions to the Corry at night, and he was in great form over his success during the day. He attributed no small portion of his achievement to his friends who now sat at his hospitable table. “You see, Padruig,” said Malcolm, “times have changed, some for better, and others for worse; but the days for shooting over the dogs must disappear. The birds are too numerous and they must be kept down, otherwise they will eat up everything far and near. When the guns that shoot over the dogs one has to endure a great deal of fatigue, and few gentlemen will undergo such ordeals nowadays. Butts are erected now, and as you would have observed today the

birds are driven over the gentlemen who are concealed behind the butts. It is an easy matter to bring a covey of grouse right across the line of butts, at which one or by chance to gentlemen may get a shot as the birds pass, but the experienced gamekeeper must arrange his butts, and his beaters, when driving upon the moor, so as to bring each covey over the whole line of butts, so that each gentlemen may be within shot reach of the birds. It is not easy to do this every time, but doubtless you will have noticed how often it happened today.”

“I must say,” said Padruig Dubh, “that I was very much struck with the manner by which you always managed to manoeuvre the beaters so as to bring the birds over the butts as described. Indeed, I could see one gentleman fire to his right, front, and left, and kill every time, having fired in all six shots. There is an art in your profession after all, Mr. Campbell.”

After supper the company again indulged in music from the great pipe, finishing up with Malcolm relating some of his experiences upon the moors.

The occupants of the Corry retired to rest, and next day Roderick Mòr and Padruig took their departure from Malcolm Campbell’s residence. Each said goodbye to the other, and Malcolm Campbell remarked as they turned to go, that they would all meet again before many days passed.

“What does he mean Roderick,” said Padruig. “We are not going back to the Corry again, are we?”

“I really could not say for certain,” said Roderick in reply. “Evidently Malcolm has got something well up his sleeve.”

“Now for home, Padruig, my boy,” said his guardian, “but I am somewhat afraid that we will be there too early for Flora’s being at the ‘Fairie’s Well’.”

“We shall just see,” said Padruig Dubh. “I think that she is akin to the fairies herself, for she appears to know most things in advance. I am almost sure that she will be at that mysterious place.” A considerable time passed without conversation, and at last they sighted the well. The approach was made in complete silence, but Flora was not there.

“Of course Flora would not expect us in the early forenoon in any case,” said her father, as they passed on. “She would never think of coming to meet us until after dinner at the earliest.” They both looked all round and round the

“Fairie’s Well,” but still no one was to be seen. Just as they left, however, they heard a peculiar noise, as if it were the rustling of a satin gown, and soft footsteps.

“That is a very peculiar sound!” said Padruig Dubh.

“What is that?” said Roderick Mòr.

“It would appear to be some person moving about,” said Padruig Dubh, somewhat alarmed, for he had heard so much about fairies.

“It must have been the wind,” said Roderick Mòr, who tried to pass off the occurrence as best he could, so they left the “Fairie’s Well” together. Just as they approached Craig Mhòr, Flora had spied them in the distance and she was some distance on her way to meet them before they got inside the house.

“You have returned very early in the day, father,” said Flora. “I have been at the ‘Fairie’s Well’ several times in the hope of meeting you for the last two afternoons.”

“Well Flora!” said her father, “we went to the ‘Duns’ first, then to ‘Loch Dubh’; we skipped the ‘Cairns,’ and then spent two nights at the ‘Corry’. We had one day on the moors with the Duke’s shooting party, and you will be hearing more about it my dear child, that I am sure. We did not go to the ‘Cairns,’ but either you or I, Flora, will go there before Padruig Dubh leaves us, and show him round Alasdair MacNeill’s residence.”

“But father,” said Flora, “let me ask, what did you mean by saying that we would hear more about the Duke’s shooting party?”

“Oh! I am only surmising that you may hear more about the Duke’s shooting party,” said her father. “But my child, you must wait and see in any case. We have both enjoyed ourselves very much, and Padruig is more and more charmed with our place every day he sees it.”

Chapter XPadruig Falls in Love

Two important letters had arrived at “Craig Mhòr”: one for the Duke’s Commissioner for Roderick Mòr, and another from “Dun Alasdair,” New Zealand, for Padruig Dubh. Padruig’s letter was regarding an inquiry as to his return home, and stating that his parents were quite well. “I shall have to reply to this communication at once,” said Padruig Dubh, and arrange for a definite date for my return to New Zealand.”

“There is no hurry for your immediate return, is there?” said Roderick Mòr. “If you leave here in the early part of next year, that will be soon enough. We shall be delighted if you will take in the New Year with us.”

“Very well then,” said Padruig Dubh, “I shall advise my parents of my return in January of next year. I should so very much like to see winter, or at least part of it at Craig Mhòr. I am sure it must be grand to be here in a big snowstorm.”

So Padruig’s business was settled for the time being it was different with Roderick Mòr. His communication concerned the Duke’s business, which had to be attended to immediately, and necessitated his absence from home for at least one or more nights.

“I must go to ‘Loch Dubh’ today, and the Duns tomorrow, Marion,” said Roderick Mòr to his wife, after he had read the Commissioner’s letter.

“What is wrong now, Roderick?” said Marion.

“Oh! There is nothing wrong,” said Roderick. “The Commissioner has had a letter from a large firm of butchers in London, placing a big order for this year’s lambs and wither hogs, so I must go and get a sufficient number gathered together. The young lambs are at ‘Loch Dubh’ and the wither hogs are at the ‘Duns.’ I shall go alone,” continued Roderick, “as Padruig has just been there, and he will keep Flora and you company until I return.”

“If Padruig Dubh is willing he can easily go with you,” said Marion. “He will assist you to get the lambs and hogs gathered out.”

“I would prefer to go alone, Marion, if you don’t mind,” said Roderick Mòr,

“as this is purely a business concern.”

“All right then, then,” said Marion, “we shall be delighted to have Padruig Dubh at home with us.”

“Flora will take Padruig about a bit in my absence,” said Roderick Mòr. “The young people must have amusement, and some freedom. I have the greatest respect for Padruig. He is a young man of the highest moral character, and we can have the most implicit faith in him. ‘To the pure all things are pure’,” continued Roderick, “and I am sure that Padruig will make his mark in the world yet.”

Padruig Dubh was in his room upstairs in the early forenoon, writing his letter, which was to catch the foreign mail, while Flora was busy assisting her mother with the housework. “I have just finished my letter,” said Padruig Dubh, as he entered the large room downstairs, in which were seated Roderick Mòr, and his wife. “Will it go today?”

“Yes!” said Roderick, “it will go this afternoon.”

“I am not going away from ‘Craig Mhòr’ then until January of next year,” said Padruig Dubh, “and I must thank you both very much now for your kind invitation to stay till that time.”

“I must leave ‘Craig Mhòr’ for a few days,” said Roderick, “during which time I shall leave you in charge Padruig, and Flora will be able to take you about for sightseeing in the afternoons.”

“The dinner will be ready at twelve noon, sharp,” said Marion to her husband as she left the room, “so that you may get away early.”

“All right, Marion,” said Roderick Mòr, that will suit me, and I shall be able to start on my journey at one o’clock.”

“Flora and I will see you past the ‘Fairie’s Well’,” said Padruig Dubh, “for I am sure that you will not be allowed to pass the mysterious spot alone.”

“I am sure enough you will not be allowed to pass the well alone, father,” said Flora, who had just entered the room to prepare the table for dinner, “and I am delighted that Padruig is to accompany me, while I convey you out of the danger zone.”

“That will be all right Flora,” said her father, “and while I am away you must

do your best to entertain our mutual friend, Padruig here, so that he may not be lonely in my absence.”

“I should do my best, father,” said Flora, and Padruig took particular notice of how Flora made this promise to her father.

The dinner was passed and Roderick left “Craig Mhòr” at one o’clock, as he had arranged, with “Mona” his dog at his heels. He said goodbye to Marion, his wife, and put in a pace in order to overtake Padruig and Flora, who had left home a few moments ahead of him. “Do you think that we will hear or see anything at the ‘Fairie’s Well’ today, Flora,” said her father as he overtook the young couple. “I am beginning to think that I am never safe to pass here alone.”

“You might have brought your pipes with you, Padruig,” said Flora. “This is a lovely green spot to play upon. No wonder that Duncan Bheag used to like to play upon it, and now that he is gone you may as well take over possession of it.”

“What is that Flora,” said her father, “do you mean the small green beside the ‘Fairie’s Well?’.”

“Yes!” said Flora, “it looks like a beautiful carpet. I only wish that we could erect a canopy over it for a summer abode.”

“Then you wish to become ‘Fairy Queen,’ Flora,” said Padruig Dubh, “and who do you wish to capture then if you did become ‘Queen’ of the fairies?” Flora made no reply to this query, but at that moment reminded her father that she must bid him farewell for the time being, and before they separated Roderick Mòr gave the handsome young woman, who was once his child, her parting kiss.

As Padruig Dubh and Flora passed the well on their way home, they sat down upon the stone slab nearby to have a short rest. The sun shone down with its beautiful rays upon the clear water that bubbled up from the rock, and ran away like crystal, the little ripples of which sparkled like diamonds. “Isn’t the water most beautiful,” said Padruig, to his fair companion. “It looks so refreshing that I must have a taste of it, ‘Fairy Queen’ or not.”

“I should not advise you to drink it,” said Flora to Padruig. “We shall soon be home, and you will have a nice drink of mid day milk, or elderberry wine.”

But Padruig could not resist the temptation. He bathed his hands in the

water as it left the well, and finally drank one long deep draught. “Oh! How refreshing that water is, Flora,” said Padruig Dubh. “Just taste it and see!”

“It is sufficient that one should taste, meantime,” said Flora, “but I shall not drink.”

They sauntered slowly home, and midway between the “Fairies Well” and Craig Mhòr, they met a fine Royal stag which passed them not more than two hundred yards away. “Oh! Look,” said Flora. “Yonder is a beauty for you.”

“Yes!” said Padruig Dubh, “that is a deer.”

“No!” said Flora, with a pleasant smile upon her youthful blushing face. “That is a ‘Royal Stag.’ A Royal Twelve Pointer.”

“What do you mean by a twelve pointer,” said Padruig Dubh, “I have never heard the expression before.”

“Ah! Your father would know. You see by being born in New Zealand you have missed all that. For one thing, I must tell you that the Stag’s head is known as ‘The Mackenzie’s Arms.’”

“Oh! How interesting,” said Padruig Dubh, “my mother’s name was Mackenzie.”

“Very curious that that should be so,” said Flora. “That is just a coincidence, for in mentioning the fact about the Mackenzie’s arms, I was not aware that such was the case. Let me tell you further,” continued Flora, “that a Stag does not become ‘Royal’ until he has got twelve points upon his horns. Some, in fact, most twelve pointers are rather dangerous to meet, but that one appears to be quite quiet.”

“But how can you tell that he has twelve points on his horns?” said Padruig. “It appears to me to be impossible to count the points; he runs so fast.”

“It is an easy matter to tell without counting the points,” said Flora. “Did you not observe as he turned to look at us face on, that the cups were formed upon his antlers. The cups mean three points upon the top of each horn. When these form, no more points grow, and the animal is then known as a ‘Royal Stag.’ The Deer Stalker who brings down a ‘Royal’ is always a proud person, and considers himself a crack shot, more especially if the quarry is killed by a single bullet at long range. The Royal Stag is in many cases a treacherous

animal,” continued Flora, “and those who frequent the moors have always to be on their guard.”

“Is your father not afraid of these animals?” said Padruig Dubh. “He must come in contact with many of them.”

“They never trouble my father,” said Flora, “but I would not say that the one which has just passed is altogether in friendly terms with Malcolm Campbell. You know the great rule of ‘a life for a life,’ as it is written in the book of books, ‘an eye for an eye’ and ‘a tooth for tooth.’ That is the rule laid down for human beings, Padruig, and nature teaches the wild animals to protect themselves. Malcolm Campbell often kills the Royal Stag, but when he once fires from his rifle and pierces some ineffective part of the animal, it never while it lives forgets him. It is often a case of the stag watching the Deer Stalker, as the Deer Stalker watching the stag. The stag knows the Deer Stalker by his smell, and the animal sniffs the air which carries the scent for miles, so that the Deer Stalker must never allow the deer to get on the wind side of him. Once wounded the monarch of the mountain is no more a friend but a deadly foe, and so the Deer Stalker must be ever upon his guard if he values his life. It is still upon record that in a deer forest in Scotland, a Royal Stag, who had been severely wounded by a Deer Stalker, watched him for years, and in the end when the Stalker was on his way to attend the funeral of a friend Stag or him to death.”

The young couple had reached Craig Mhòr once again, and Flora, at least felt rather tired. Mrs. MacDonald, Flora’s mother, had been enjoying a quiet rest. She had finished up her days worked after which she set the table for tea, and awaited the arrival of Flora and Padruig Dubh. “I hope that you have tea ready, mother,” said Flora, as she entered the room, “for I am so much in need of a cup, and I am sure that Padruig is the same.”

“Yes! Flora,” said her mother, “tea is ready. I had been waiting on you for some time. I hope you have both enjoy your walk, and that father got past the ‘Fairie’s Well’ safety.”

“Yes! Mother, we have enjoyed our walk immensely and father left us in great spirits. He was humming over to himself one of Padruig’s favourite piobaireachd. You see he soon picks up a strange tune, and more so when he

takes a fancy to it.”

“Oh yes!” said Padruig, “that was ‘Ossian’s Lament’ which he was memorising.”

After tea Flora, her mother, and Padruig spent the rest of the evening by indulging in storytelling, and the practice of music. Flora and her mother told several ghost stories, stories of witches, and fairytales, which were of great interest to Padruig Dubh, who listened to them all very eagerly, and more so three told by Flora.”

“Now Padruig,” said Flora, “you must play upon the great pipe. Mother and I are both too fond of its music to let another night passed without hearing you play.”

“I thought that I would get off tonight,” said Padruig, “and more especially when your father is away from home. What of the ‘silver chanter’ and the ‘Fairy Queen.’ Would it not be better to leave off playing until your father’s return? I was enchanted with the stories told by your mother and yourself. Indeed, so much so that I am just afraid I could not do justice to the great pipe tonight.”

“Oh! just one tune, Padruig dear,” said Flora, “I cannot live without hearing the pipes.”

“And may I ask what are you to contribute, in music, to the evening’s amusement, Flora?” said Padruig Dubh. “You must sing that old love song which I have heard you humming as you skip about the house in the forenoons.”

“Oh! I shall give you a musical treat,” said Flora, “when you finish playing upon the great pipe.”

“And pray, what is that to be? Flora,” said Padruig. “I am very anxious to know.”

“After you have played,” said Flora, “you shall then see.”

Padruig got his pipes and played one or two favourites, while Flora and her mother listened with great eagerness. They both dearly love the pipes and drank in every note. When Padruig finished playing they thanked him, and also assured him that he was greatly improving in his playing. “I hope,” said Padruig, “that the ‘Fairy Queen’ is not about. But now, Flora, for your part of

the programme.”

Flora got her violin, and as she prepared herself for a performance upon the instrument, Padruig looked somewhat mesmerized. “Why do you look at me so,” said Flora, in a half childish, half jocular manner.

“Do you really play upon the violin?” said Padruig Dubh, “or are you trying to have a game at my expense?”

“I cannot say that I can play with sufficient mastery to boast about,” said Flora, “but if you will just wait a little, you’ll hear what I can do.” Flora played over several Highland airs, and she made the instrument speak to the listener.

“I did not know that you played upon the violin, Flora,” said Padruig Dubh. “Just fancy me having been here all this time, and never knew that you were such a talented musician?”

“Well! Padruig,” said Flora, “I never like to put all my best cards upon the table to begin with, or in other words I always keep the best wine till the end. You see I had several courses of lessons in violin playing when I was at school in Edinburgh some years ago.”

“What was the name of the last tune which you played, Flora?” said Padruig, “I do so like it that I would consider it a special favour if I could hear it again.”

“That was an old Highland love song,” said Flora. “The lines which run thus:

And he wore a philabeg of Stuart tartan,
while a plaid was wrapped around his stately form
and his hair was darker than the mountain raven.
On his shoulder shown the Scottish Cairngorm.”

Flora played the tune over again, and while she did so, Padruig’s appearance betrayed his inward thoughts. The tune was such a very beautiful one that it took possession of the most tender emotions of his heart, as the notes rose from the enchanted instrument which Flora held so gracefully in her dimpled hands. Padruig watched every movement of the performer’s tiny fingers, which had created those magic notes that were so full of musical eloquence and charming expression. “I have changed my mind about the bagpipe, Flora,” said Padruig

Dubh. “They cannot be compared with the violin.”

“Nonsense!” said Flora. “The pipe is a much more superior instrument than the violin, or as we more commonly call it in the Highlands, the fiddle. That tune which I have just played is only a mere love song, and suitable only for the tender ears of the fair sex. But the pipe speaks of ‘war and peace,’ of ‘chivalry and romance,’ the ‘coming of age’ of the young chieftain, and the ‘exile’s farewell’ to his Highland home. The ‘Great Pipe’ is indeed a Royal instrument, for did the Prince himself not beguile the time which hung heavily upon his hands by playing upon it while he was hunted like a fox by the ‘Kings Redcoats?’”

“You overestimate the instrument, Flora,” said Padruig Dubh, “it cannot produce those tender notes which you have just play.”

“You need not try to persuade me to sacrifice such a noble instrument as the ‘Great Pipe’ for a timid noted instrument like the violin,” said Flora whose Highland blood flushed her neck and face to crimson. “The pipe is the most powerful of all musical instruments to the genuine Highlander. I had been brought up to hear it from infancy, Yea even from the cradle itself. The notes of the Highland pipe gives strength to the arm of the warrior as the piper plays the ‘Gathering of the Clans,’ while the sad and mournful notes of the Lament brings tears to the eyes of the stoutest hearted clansmen for death is the saddest thing of all our experiences, more especially our own loved ones. There is ‘The Flowers of the Forest,’ a very sad tune, which I always associate with another poem:

‘Leaves have their time to fall,
and flowers to wither at the North Wind’s breath,
and stars to set but all.
Thou hast all seasons of thine own, Oh! Death.’

But I am making you said, now, Padruig with my musings. We shall say adieu to sad thoughts for the time being.”

“What is that which I hear in the far distant west, Flora,” said her mother, “surely it is thunder.”

“Hush!” said Flora. “It is thunder! I have been dreading it for some time back. The sky has been very sultry for a whole fortnight. I have just been thinking more than once that if thunder did come we would have a very severe storm.”

Padruig went outside to see what like the night appeared from the sky, but he could see nothing but almost inky darkness. As he stood motionless listening for the next peel of thunder, Flora came to his side, and as she placed her hand lightly upon his shoulder there came a blinding flash of lightning, which in the extreme darkness, lit up the entire mountainside. Padruig could see the streaks of lightning extending for miles along the darksome mountains, and would have lingered longer, but for the fact that Flora swooned almost into a dead faint in his arms, on account of the shock which she received on seeing the lightning. Padruig got Flora inside, and seated her upon a chair, while her mother ran for some water, which revived her greatly, but still there remained a rather pale look upon her face. The storm continued with great violence. The lightning was frequent and vivid; the thunder peels were loud, and the rain fell in drenching torrents. “I am afraid that we are to have a very severe storm,” said Padruig, who rather admired the peculiar, and all-inspiring influence of the mountain thunder-storm. In fact as the storm had reached its height, Padruig continue to watch it from the window, and while its violence was sufficient to strike terror into the stoutest heart, yet it was magnificent to behold and Padruig became spellbound, and appeared to be riveted to the spot on which he stood.

“The autumn thunderstorms are by far the worst of any of the other seasons of the year,” said Flora, who endeavoured to break the silence.” “The thunderclouds seem to come down to the very mountaintops,” she said, “but I think it is over now.”

“Yes!” said Padruig. “I have not seen any more lightning for some considerable time. I think we should now retire to rest.”

“Right! Padruig,” said Flora. “I hope to be up early tomorrow morning despite tonight’s storm, and my fright. My mother has promised to allow me to take you [on] a long and very interesting walk in the early forenoon.”

“That will be splendid, and very kind of you, Flora,” said Padruig, who

wished both mother and daughter good night.

Next day Padruig was up at a very early hour. The morning was magnificent. The storm which raged the night before had cleared the air, and the great mountains wore a fresh mantle of green and purple. Flora got up as she promised, but only to find that she was not first, for when she went to open the outside door she found it unlocked, and the double bolt drawn. As she looked around upon the hills to see what havoc, if any had been played by the storm; she had not far to go when she came upon Padruig at his morning stroll near the house. "Good morning! Padruig," said Flora, "I see you have beaten me. I thought that I would be up before you."

"Oh! good morning, Flora," said Padruig, "I was very anxious to get up and see the beautiful hills at sunrise. It is to be a great day for our walk."

"We must have breakfast first," said Flora, "and by now I think that it will be ready, as I left mother to complete its preparation."

After breakfast was over the young couple prepared for their outing. "I am taking luncheon with me, Padruig," said Flora, "we are going for a very long walk today. One which you have not seen before, and we would be unable to survive until our return without some refreshments."

"The basket is ready, Flora," said her mother, "and I hope that you may find plenty in it. I am sorry that I am unable to accompany you."

"You can easily do that," said Padruig, "we shall walk very slowly."

"Have you any idea how far you are going?" said Flora's mother to Padruig. "I am quite unable for such a walk now, although many a time I have done it."

"Where are we going today, Flora," said Padruig, who was beginning to wonder what attractive spot they were to visit. "We must be going to cover some ground when your mother cannot come with us."

"I will tell you where we are going when we get on to the moor," said Flora. "We are going to the North West."

"I shall carry the basket, then," said Padruig.

"No!" said Flora, "you shall not. You are taking your pipes, and I shall carry the luncheon basket."

“My pipes?” said Padruig, “but what good is there in my taking the pipes with me if the journey is to be very long?”

“You will not take them all the way” said Flora, “we shall leave them at a secret place near the ‘Fairie’s Well.’”

“And what if someone comes and takes them away?” said Padruig. “It would be a good way of getting rid of my ‘silver chanter,’ dear.” Padruig made this remark in order to tease Flora, who had so often warned him about the fairies.

“There is no fear of your pipes being taken away,” said Flora. “I have been too often at the ‘Fairie’s Well’ not to know every spot around it. I have one special hiding place, where I always leave something or other, and I never fail to find it upon my return.”

“All right,” said Padruig. “I shall take your word for it, and put my trust in you. At least I shall put the care of my pipes upon you, and if the ‘Fairy Queen’ takes them into fairyland you have to go into that mysterious place to bring them back.”

“Is Prince coming with us, mother?” said Flora.

“And I am sure he is not,” said her mother. “Two’s company, and while Padruig is to be your companion, Prince will be mine. Surely you don’t wish me to stay here alone.”

“All right mother,” said Flora, “we are off.” Flora’s mother lingered at the door and watched the young couple until they got to the top of the small knoll, and just then Flora and Padruig paused to wave farewell to the only occupant of “Craig Mhòr,” after which they descended the slope that led to the “Fairie’s Well.”

“We are going to visit ‘The Eagles Loch’ today, Padruig,” said Flora. “You have not been at this interesting place before; but I shall tell you more about it when we reach the enchanted spot. Now we are at the ‘Fairie’s Well,’ once more,” continued Flora. “We shall rest here a while, and you must play me one or two of your favourite piobaireachd, as an incentive to climb that great mountain.”

“I shall play, with pleasure, Flora,” said her companion. “‘One good turn deserves another.’ You are taking me to the ‘Eagles Loch’ for a treat, and the least

that I can do is to comply with your request.”

Padruig took his place from the case, and as he did so he asked Flora what she would do if the “Fairy Queen” took him away with his “silver chanter”?

“There is no fear of that,” said Flora, “while I am here.” Padruig played over two pieces of considerable length, and while he did so, Flora sat and feasted upon every note. Flora’s heart was truly Highland. The piobaireachd was to her a deep well of emotional inspiration, and Padruig’s style of playing had become part of her own musical thought. The sun shone very brightly while a soft Westerly breeze fanned her sweet face, and that same breeze carried the exultant notes to her sensitive ear, after which they died away softly upon the slopes of the great mountain which she was about to climb. She watched every movement of the stately youth who piped her into dreamland, and while he piped she pictured scenes, painted in colours, which were almost too beautiful to behold; too tender to approach, and by far too uncertain to reveal. “Pipe on noble youth,” she said to herself. “Oh, that these magic notes would never cease,” were the words that she would fain have spoken in order to satisfy the inward longings of her own heart. But just then the piping ceased, and Flora wakened from her imaginative dream. She returned from her “Fairyland,” if it could be considered to be so, only to find that she sat by the “Fairie’s Well,” the old haunt of her infancy.

“You almost piped me to sleep, Padruig,” said Flora, as he abandoned his instrument in order to recover his breath before attempting to ascend the steep hill. “There must be some magic, or fairy spell about this spot today, for your pipe sounds sweeter by far than I have ever heard anyone pipe before,” continued Flora.

“Well! Flora,” said Padruig, “I did feel very happy as I played that last tune ‘The Tryst.’ My fingers seemed to linger lovingly upon every note, and I must have added exquisite charm to my playing when you were about to fall asleep. For my part I must admit that I was very much awake.” The question of the name of the last tune was upon the tip of Flora’s tongue, but its import prevented her from asking.

“We had better put your pipes in a place of safety,” said Flora, “because the

day advances, and we must be going.” Flora went up to a secret recess in the rock near the Well, and there she deposited the sacred pipe which was far dearer to her than it was to its owner, for it was that instrument which was the means of bringing them together.

“Now!” Said Flora, “they are as safe there as the bank until we return, and as you have already volunteered you may carry our luncheon basket, because I am not so sure but that I shall be tired of it before we reach the summit.”

Padruig took the basket as he was requested, and along with his fair companion, began to climb the great mountain. The ascent was very steep, and as there was little opportunity for conversation on account of their heavy breathing during the climb, both parties indulged in individual thought in which was interwoven mingled hopes which ran in parallel with each other. Padruig paused for an instant, and gazed upon the purple mountain, which was then tinged with brown, for the bloom of the heather assumed its first appearance of wearing off. A new light shone upon his path, and that light was love. He took occasional glimpses of Flora whose face was flushed with what appeared to him to be more than the exertion of climbing. She stood out before his admiring eyes, as a picture of youthful womanhood, and every time that he looked into her sweet bewitching face, her rosy cheeks coupled with a charming smile, carried him into a new world in which he longed to dwell with one alone. In truth, Flora had captured his heart. The passion of love had overcome his young mind. This blushing maiden was indeed his “Queen of Hearts.” But Padruig was not alone in the matter. This passion, love, was working its own process on Flora’s mind also, for she had from the very day on which they first met, lost her heart. The magnetism of love was too powerful for her to resist the temptation, which had come to her so unexpectedly. She thought and rethought of the miracle of how she had come to meet the object of her warmest affection. Flora had often heard the proverb that “the first love is the best love,” and now that first love had shone upon her path, and illumined her panting heart with the divine light that descended from heaven itself, and would never grow dim. She remembered her Shakespeare: “Once I adored a twinkling star, but now I worship a celestial sun.” Flora had never known what love was, other

than maternal and paternal love, which to her was always full of charm, but now she had skipped the stars altogether, for Padruig had become her “celestial sun.”

Their thoughts were divided, in that, although they ran parallel still a great gulf lay between them. Padruig saw so many obstacles in his way that he dared not reveal his secret thoughts and affections to any person living. Flora was in the same position, but she had that feeling of mental communication which from the side of the fair sex is often allowed to materialize. “Fate will decide,” Flora said to herself, and she abandoned the present difficulties which crossed her path. The first kiss of love was something to be left in abeyance; something to wait for with sacrificial patience. Yes! the virgin kiss of love is a foretaste of that heavenly bliss, which links two hearts and souls together: where Earth ascends to heaven, and the bonds of union are sealed forevermore.

At last Flora broke the silence. “We shall soon be at the top” said she. “What do you think of our hills now, Padruig?”

“One thing I can hardly dispute is, that it takes some energy to climb them.”

“Now for the top,” said Flora, as they reached the summit, “and yonder is the object of our journey, ‘The Eagle’s Loch,’ with the great rock towering into the sky. I can see two of this year’s brood flitting from crevice to crevice of the rock. See! There is also the male bird spreading his enormous wings, and now he soars around his offsprings’ lofty home. This is what is called the ‘Golden Eagle,’” continued Flora. “It is a very large bird, but the female eagle is not quite so big. The male bird is always on the wing, especially when someone approaches his abode. He guards his continually until they are almost full grown, after which they are capable of protecting themselves.” “A beautiful loch,” continued Flora, as she described the scene to Padruig, who stood almost spellbound with awestruck surprise and admiration.

“I have never seen the like and it,” said Padruig, “and what is most singular to me is, finding water at such an altitude.” “The loch is fed chiefly by springs,” said Flora. “It is never dry summer or winter. Now! as you rest I shall tell you the story of the ‘Lament For The Great Eagle.’ It is a most peculiar tune, and you must remind me to get father to play it for you when he comes home. This story is still told in the long dark winter nights, by the peat fires in the humble

mountain sheilings, and in the habitations of the Highland clans the tale of the death of the 'the Great Eagle' is still fresh in the people.

Once upon a time, when witches existed, this Eagle was what one might say foully murdered by one of these dangerous women. The witch had been upon a very long journey, which took her some days to accomplish. She was so much overcome with fatigue that she lay down in a dead faint near this loch, and ultimately fell asleep. The great Eagle rose from his aerial abode immediately after sunrise, and as he scanned the mountain top in search of food for his young he observed the woman lying upon the hilltop. The Eagle attacked her with great vigour, and ventured to alight beside the object of his ravenous assault. The woman who was very big and powerful awakened, and seized hold of the object which had attempted to devour her body. In her startled frenzy she held on grimly to the great vulture with one hand, while with the other she raised a large wooden club, which she always carried for self-defense, and felled the most noble bird that ever adorned the rugged precipices of the Highlands of Scotland. These are his offsprings which are hovering over us, and I feel sure that if we gave them an opportunity they would not hesitate to do the same to us, as their predecessor tried to do to the witch. Now we must descend by the way we came after partaking of what refreshments mother has stored here for us."

As they sat at lunch and Padruig kept his eyes upon the male bird who kept on the wing. "He seems to be very restless, that great fellow," said Padruig. "Why does he swoop down so, at times?"

"He probably sees some objects such as grouse or mountain hares," said Flora. "These are the animals on which he lives chiefly."

"I am now very curious to hear that piobaireachd which commemorates the death of the 'Great Eagle'," said Padruig. "I must get your father to play it that night he arrives home. Is the composer's name known?" Padruig asked very anxiously.

"No!" said Flora, "I don't think that it is really known who composed the tune, but we shall see when father comes home."

They had now finished their lunch, and rose in order to make their way home again. "We shall leave what remains of our meal for the eagles," said Flora.

“They will soon be here immediately [after] we are gone.”

“Will they see these pieces of meat and bread, Flora?” asked Padruig.

“See them!” said Flora. “Just wait and see.” They had not gone more than a mile with the male bird alighted on the very spot which the young couple had vacated only a few minutes before. “See!” said Flora. “Yonder is the eagle finishing the remains of our luncheon.”

“The descent of a mountain is much more difficult than the ascent,” said Padruig Dubh. “I slip from one high part to another.”

“It is a little awkward,” said Flora “but you must be careful not to sprain your ankles, a thing which I have done more than once, and had on one occasion to rest for a long time upon the couch.”

Again they reached the “Fairie’s Well,” and Padruig Dubh was very anxious to see whether his pipes were there. He immediately examined them to see that they were intact.

“You need not fear, Padruig, about your pipes,” said Flora. “I know before you look, that they are quite safe. This is not the first occasion on which I have left things here, and I have never found anything amiss on my return.”

“You are quite right, Flora,” said Padruig Dubh, “they are just as we left them. Shall I play a tune before we go?”

“No!” said Flora, “and I am quite sure that you shall rest. If you are like me you will be too tired to play. Much that I would like to hear you play a tune upon that green grassy carpet, I would not allow you to do so meantime. You shall come again and play here.”

The young couple left this very content spot once more for home, and reached there just in time for tea, which was already prepared by a fond mother. “You will be tired, Flora,” said her mother, who then asked Padruig how he had enjoyed the day.

“I must say that I have never enjoyed a day like it in my life,” said Padruig Dubh, “for more reasons than one.”

“I am glad to hear that,” said Mrs. MacDonald, and while Padruig expressed his candid opinion of the day’s outing, Flora’s face flushed not a little, as she looked straight into his eyes.

“We must have tea, then, mother,” said Flora. “I am sure that Padruig is even more thirsty than I.”

About seven o'clock in the evening a knock was heard upon the door, and as Padruig Dubh was the only man in the house he volunteered to answer the summons. “It is all right, Padruig,” said Flora. “I am not in the least afraid.” Flora immediately open the door, and who entered but her father. “You are surely home earlier than you hoped to be, father,” said Flora, as he walked in.

“Yes!” said her father, “I did not expect to be home so soon, but, nevertheless, I have accomplished my errand, and I am very glad to get back again, for I do feel tired.”

Roderick Mòr was just about to have something to eat, when another knock was heard upon the outside door. It was quite a different knock from that of the previous visitor. “Surely that is Malcolm from the Corry,” said Roderick, “I know his knock,” and when Flora again opened the door, in stepped Malcolm, as sure as Roderick Mòr had guessed.

“Good evening, Malcolm!” said Roderick, “and what brings you here so unexpectedly, at this late hour?”

“Well!” said Malcolm. “I was going to ‘kill two birds with one stone.’ First, I had to come here for more reasons than one, and secondly as I have already said, I was desirous of doing both errands at once. We have been troubled with some strange persons moving about in the dark, and although it is an unwelcome business, we must be on the spot to see whether we can catch these poachers if they be such.”

“Strange!” said Roderick Mòr. “We have not seen nor heard anything of strange persons here.”

“That may be so, Roderick,” said Malcolm, “but they have been seen, and heard, too, and I have other three men going over the ground. While they do that I hear and now deliver the Duke’s own epistle.”

“Surely something untoward has happened now,” said Roderick Mòr, “for I very seldom have a letter from the Duke’s own hand.”

Roderick’s hand trembled very slightly as he opened the packet, and to his

surprise an invitation ran thus: “----- requests the pleasure of the company of the following persons: Mr. and Mrs. R.M. MacDonald, Miss Flora MacDonald, and Mr. Padruig Dubh MacVourich, at the ball to be held at the Castle, on Friday, the 28th, inst., at 8 p.m. prompt.” This information put the whole household and Craig Mhòr in a state of unparalleled excitement, and more especially that the Duke had written the invitation himself. Padruig Dubh for one was very pleased, and Flora was overjoyed. Malcolm Campbell was not in the least surprised. He knew what the message contained, for he played no small part in making sure that this invitation would be issued.

“I am sure that you will enjoy the ball,” said Malcolm to Flora, “and you also Padruig.” Flora and Padruig both assured Malcolm that they would be there, and thanked him for coming so far at so late an hour with the invitation.

Malcolm partook of something to eat and then met his men outside to continue their search, while Flora, her father, and Padruig Dubh were very tired, and they were all very anxious to retire for the night. Padruig Dubh said “good night” to all, and got upstairs to dream of future happiness, while Flora lay long in waking hours to think of her walk that day on the moors, and when sleep overtook her weary eyelids, she saw the book of fate opened at the most interesting chapter of her life.

Chapter XIThe Duke's Ball

Several days had passed since Malcolm Campbell had called at Craig Mhòr with the invitation for the whole family, including their visitor, to attend the Castle ball. The young couple had several long and interesting walks together, and Padruig Dubh had played many times at the "Fairie's Well" alone. But at last the anxiously-looked-for 28th day of the month had arrived. The Gillies' ball was to be held that night. Flora's pulse was beating faster than it had ever done before, and Padruig Dubh suppressed all signs of the powerful passion which made the blood course faster within the secret channels of his heart. The weather was glorious. Although the day was beginning to shorten, yet it was warm in the sunshine, and the hills were changing their garment of purple for auburn. They were only a very few guns on the moor that day, because they required a considerable number of men to prepare the Castle ballroom for the great annual festival and dance. Since Roderick Mòr had accepted the Duke's invitation to the ball, another communication has been received at Craig Mhòr requesting Padruig Dubh to bring his pipes in order that he might be one of the musicians for the evening, and assist the Duke's piper to play for the Highland Reels.

"This will be a real treat for you, Padruig," said Roderick Mòr, "and an honour to."

"What is it now?" said Padruig Dubh. "It is all eventful happenings now, and especially within the last few days."

"An invitation has also come for you to play for the Reels at the Castle ball tonight," said Roderick Mòr, "you must, therefore, take your pipes."

"There must be no consideration or refusal," said Flora, who held the invitation in her hand. "You are to play the Reels as requested, and I shall dance merrily to your piping."

"If it must be, then," said Padruig Dubh, "there will be nothing for it but to take the pipes with me 'silver chanter' and all."

“I am not just so able as I have been in earlier years to go to the Castle,” said Marion to her husband, “but I cannot miss being present at the ball for anything. We must have an early dinner, and then prepare for the journey.”

Flora assisted her mother with the preparation of the mid-day meal, and the laying of the table. When that was done she summoned her father and Padruig, to which warning they immediately seated themselves at the table, and partook of the good things which lay upon it.

Roderick Mòr and Padruig dressed in the kilt, and put in a small parcel a pair of light brogue shoes for each of them to dance with. This, together with Padruig’s pipes, was all that they had to carry.

“You will be wearing your black satin dress, Marion, I suppose,” said her husband. “You look best in it.”

“Are you sure? Roderick,” said Marion. “If you think that my black satin dress suits me best, then, I shall wear it with pleasure, for I am not fond of bright colours.”

“What shall I wear then, father,” said Flora, “now that you are making a choice for mother?”

“What, but your white satin dress,” said Padruig Dubh, who was in terror that Flora’s father would suggest her purple dress. “You look best in white,” continued Padruig, “and I shall give you a sash of my own tartan in silk, with one of my Cairngorm brooches for your shoulder.”

“Then you wish to be brother and sister for the evening,” said Flora’s father. “A very good idea.”

“But let me fetch the sash, and brooch for you now, Flora,” said Padruig. “It will look well, and more especially if there are lots of Highland Reels.”

“If the bright lamps shine o’er fair women and brave men, you, Flora, shall be one of the ‘fair women,’” said Flora’s father, as he glanced to his wife with a sign upon his face.

“And who shall be one of the brave men?” said Flora’s mother, but there was no answer to that question, which was secretly settled without doubt in the mind of one person at least.

Padruig Dubh brought the sash and brooch, and handed them both to Flora,

who thanked him warmly, while her face and neck flushed almost to crimson. She did not examine them so minutely at the moment, as she would have liked to, but there was a time to come when she would see them later. "Yes!" she said to herself, "I shall see them in the great mirrors in the Castle ballroom long before tomorrow's dawn. The tartan sash will look so sweet against my spotless white dress, and the cairngorm will flash its brilliant lights from the many facets which enrich that Scottish jewel of which I am so fondly proud."

Flora and her mother dressed in warm clothes, for the evenings were beginning to get rather chilly, and Flora packed up in a very small parcel her own white dress, and her mother's satin gown. "I shall have to put in our dancing slippers also, mother," said Flora, "although they will not make a very neat parcel with our dresses."

"Padruig will put the two pairs of dancing slippers in his pipe-case," said Flora's father, "there will be plenty of room there for them."

"Then that means a request," said Flora, "which if granted also represents a favour."

"And a great favour, too," said Padruig, "but, nevertheless, I shall be delighted to carry the slippers, and your dresses also. You shall find it enough to be able to accomplish the journey Flora, as well as your mother, without any encumbrance."

At last all was in readiness. The clock had just struck four in the afternoon.

"We shall have a nice cup of tea before we go," said Flora, "because it will be hours before we get anything to eat."

"You won't be hungry tonight in any case," said Padruig Dubh to Flora, "and one dances much lighter without a great deal of food."

"Tea is ready," said Mrs. MacDonald to her husband, "so please call Flora and Padruig."

Roderick Mòr went in search of the young couple, and found them in the small parlour packing the pipe case with all the small things which it could hold.

"See and not put too much in beside your pipes," said Roderick Mòr, "for fear the lid bursts open and the pipes fall out. But you must now come for tea. It is

ready and time flies.”

“Come then, Flora,” said Padruig Dubh, “we must have tea after your mother has made it ready.” Flora would have taken Padruig’s arm as she tripped along the passage, but she did not wish to show any signs of affection towards what then only appeared to be her friend in her parents’ presence. “It is only a few weeks since we have met,” said Flora to herself. “I must wait patiently, and permit events to take their natural course.”

All were seated at the table, but Flora was very restless, and her face was flushed far beyond what was usual, with excitement. “I am too full of expectation and youthful joy at the thought of dancing, to partake of tea,” said Flora. “I can just imagine myself swinging round the great ballroom.”

“With whom in your arms?” said her father, but this only made Flora more nervously excited, so much so that she could not answer the question put to her, if she ever heard it at all.

“Well Flora,” said her father, “you may not be hungry, but Padruig and I are. For my part at any rate for I have got past most of the vital stages of life.”

At five o’clock Craig Mhòr was in silent solitude. The door was made fast, and Prince as well as Mona whined very pitifully. They knew that their master was going from home, and listened eagerly to every footstep until all sound of the inhabitants died away in the distance. The evening was very dull but calm and pleasant. It was moor all the way to the Castle. There were quite good paths leading to the Castle, which were well trodden down by the sheep and by foot passengers who had so often frequented that lonely road. Where the wayfarer had to leave the paths, the moor was fairly level and the heather was short.

The moon was full but the sky was very heavily clouded, and very little of the “Queen of the night” was to be seen. Occasionally the silvery orb peeked through when the clouds broke, and for a moment or so its soft light fell upon the lonely path on the slopes of the rugged mountainside.

“I think that it will go to frost,” said Roderick Mòr. “The moon is coming out altogether from behind the clouds.”

“I wish that the sky would clear altogether,” said Flora, “for I am always very

nervous after dark.”

“You must be careful of me as we pass the ‘Fairie’s Well’,” said Padruig. “This ‘Fairy Queen’ will be on the move on such a fine night. In fact I am almost sure that she will be present at the Castle ball this evening.” As Padruig Dubh made this remark he turned partially round towards Roderick Mòr, and smiled.

“Don’t you be too sure,” said Flora to Padruig, “the ‘Fairy Queen’ may be present at the ball all right, and you must keep your eyes open, so that you may behold her in all her magnificence as you swing round the ballroom.”

“I shall keep my eyes open, then, Flora,” said Padruig. “I wonder what she will be dressed in? I am sure she will not look half so charming as you.” Flora blushed. “I must dance, if possible, with the ‘Fairy Queen,’ continued Padruig, “and make the Duke himself jealous, if she is even half as beautiful as she is said to be.”

“You beware, Padruig, and not make light of this ‘Queen’—a beautiful woman who is always shrouded in mystery. She may cause you to rue your words e’er you are one month older,” said Flora, somewhat sternly.

Just then they reached the “Fairie’s Well.” The sky was almost bare. The moon was high up in the heavens, and the lofty mountains appeared in a new mantle of silvery grey. At the well all was silent. Not even a breath of wind was to be felt, nor could they hear a single rustle from the Juniper bushes which grew nearby, and Flora was very glad when they passed the eerie spot. She had in her own secret mind always dreaded the fairies, for she really believed that they took people away to their mysterious haunts.

“I wish we were at the Castle, father,” said Flora. “I hope that I am not too tired to dance.”

“You are surely not tired already, Flora,” said her father. “You are young besides me, and I could go twice as far, and dance a Highland Reel when I arrived with my heavy boots on without turning a hair.”

Flora and Padruig Dubh had got a little ahead of her father and mother, who were desirous of allowing them a little scope: the privilege of rehearsing the evening’s performance. “I shall dance to all the Reels that you play for, Padruig,” said Flora, “and I am sure that I shall enjoy them.”

“And what about the other Reels, Flora?” said Padruig Dubh. “You must dance them with me.”

“Oh! I am sure I shall, Padruig dear,” said Flora. “I intend to give you a real night’s pleasure, and if I dance with you the ‘Fairy Queen’ will only be able to look on, even if she be present magnificently dressed.”

It was well past seven o’clock as Roderick Mòr and his party approached the Castle gate, and the ancient drawbridge was up. There was the sound of revelry about the great stronghold. Young and old from far and near gathered round the festive board. It was the “Gillies Ball,” and although it was such, no one enjoyed the Gathering more than the Duke himself, who was always present in person with all the guests in residence at the Castle. The lamps which were numerous shone brightly from the great windows, all of which were illuminated. There was every sign of festivity, and not a few guests had arrived long before the appointed time. As Roderick Mòr with his party arrived he was greeted very warmly by his trusted friend Malcolm Campbell, who also welcomed Mrs. MacDonald.

“Where is Flora, and your young friend Mr. Padruig Dubh,” said Malcolm to Roderick Mòr. “I don’t see them with you.”

“They are not far away,” said Roderick Mòr. “They waited behind a little in order to get a good view of the Castle with its hundred and more windows with their twinkling lights. They look so bright. I admit that I admire them myself, and Padruig Dubh has never seen the like before.”

Flora and Padruig were not far distant. They heard Malcolm Campbell’s voice and noted what he said. “Let us step back a little,” said Flora, “and look at yonder part of the Castle called the tower.”

“Oh! I can see it very clearly from where we are, Flora,” said Padruig. “The great battlements rise up into the star-spangled heavens like a gigantic rock, and each window throws out its individual illumination like an ocean lighthouse. It shows up its lights much better, now that the moon is undercover.”

“That tower goes as far down into the bowels of the earth as it appears above the ground,” said Flora. “There is sufficient accommodation in the ancient Keep to hold five hundred armed men, and in times of war when Scotland was

much younger than it is now, as many prisoners had been quartered there. And it all depended upon their behaviour, as well as their commander's attitude, that the same number came out alive."

"These were stirring times, Flora," said Padruig Dubh, "but we must go, I see your father looking around for us."

"We are here, father," said Flora. "I was just waiting behind for a moment to allow Padruig to get a good view of the Castle with its great number of lights."

Malcolm Campbell hailed the young couple with delight, and welcomed them to the Castle. "There will not be another such handsome couple in all the ballroom," said Malcolm to Roderick Mòr and his wife in a very low whisper.

"I am very proud to hear you say so, Malcolm," said Roderick Mòr, "but that remains to be seen."

"We shall not quarrel over it, Roderick," said the good-natured gamekeeper, "but my decision is final, and if not I shall promise you the best Royal head in the Dukes deer forest."

"All right!" said Roderick, "we shall see 'after the ball'."

There were a great number of people about, Farmers, Gillies, Shepherds, and Estate workers, and just before the clock struck the appointed hour there was a great commotion at the Castle entrance. Malcolm took his friend Roderick and his three companions into the great ballroom after they had had a wash and were attired in their festive garments. The ballroom was a gorgeously spacious apartment. There was ample room for many couples upon the floor, and plenty of resting accommodation round the walls and in recesses. The room was tastefully done in white and gold, with numerous oil paintings inlaid in panels at appropriate parts of the high walls. There was one scene painted upon the roof, and it was that of the "Gathering" of the Duke's clan, some of whom were attired in pastoral dress, while the Duke's personal bodyguard were clad in their native Highland garb, with jeweled dirks and broad claymores, for they alone were responsible for their Chieftain's safety. It was a great work of art, and the tartaned Highlanders stood out upon the picture with marked effect.

At eight o'clock the Duke's piper gave the signal for the commencement of the night's festivities. He played the family "Gathering" which was an ancient

custom that was never forgotten on such an occasion. There were many present who wore the Highland garb, for it was their native dress; the outstanding figures of Malcolm Campbell the head gameskeeper, and Roderick Mòr MacDonald, the Duke's shepherd were fine specimens of Highland manhood. The ladies were all very tastily attired in the fashionable dresses of their time. Many of the younger ladies wore white, while those who were more advanced in years were clad in black. Just as the piper began the closing variation of his tune the Duke himself entered the ballroom. He had a very handsome figure, and he wore the clan tartan. The Highland ornaments which adorned his person were of a very unique design, and the cairngorms in his powder horn, dirk, brooch, and skean dubh sparkled with unusual brilliance. The stones were very highly prized by all Highland chieftains, being commonly known as the "Scottish Diamonds."

The programme commenced with the grand march and reel. Each couple formed in double file, headed by the Duke with his partner, who were proceeded by the piper who played a beautiful old-time Highland air. The entire company entered the ballroom, turned to the left, and marched once round the room, and when they reached the door by which they entered the company marched up the centre of the apartment: the ladies and gentlemen forming up into position for the first dance. This performance was carried out like clockwork under the capable direction of Malcolm Campbell, who could swing his kilt to perfection as he marched up the room to the music of the Great Highland Pipe. At a given signal the piper finished his slow and stately air, and struck into a very lively dance tune. Then the great performance commenced. It was a spectacle to be seen; the lively and vigorous spirit of the older people was most surprising, and indeed most wonderful to behold.

Malcolm Campbell's remark which was whispered into Roderick Mòr MacDonald's ear had repeated itself. It was as true as Malcolm said. There was one, and only one outstanding young couple in the great company of dancers. When the reel was over, the Duke himself was curious to know who the belles of the ball were, and as he walked up to Malcolm Campbell, he hesitated for a moment beside him. "Who are the two dressed in a bright red

tartan, Malcolm?" said the Duke. "I am quite at a loss to recall who they are."

"They are the daughter of Roderick Mòr MacDonald, from Craig Mhòr, and his friend Padruig Dubh Macvourich," said Malcolm, proudly. "The young man was on the hill with us the other day, and it was he whom you caused to be invited by your own special invitation."

"Roderick's daughter has grown to womanhood all at once," said the Duke. "I hardly recognized her, and for the young man, he does not appear to be the same person as I observed upon the moor."

The Duke moved away, and Malcolm announced this next dance. Padruig Dubh and Flora danced the reel together, and it was little wonder that they should outstrip all the others for appearance. Padruig stood just on six feet high, and he wore a bright red tartan. His coat was made of a very fine black velvet, and his Highland ornaments were of a very rich design. He had procured his outfit while in Glasgow, and as his father was very well-to-do he gave his son instructions to get a really good and well fitted costume with all the necessary ornaments in accordance with ancient custom. The most of the tartans worn by others present were all more or less dark in colour, and the Duke's was very dark, so that Padruig stood alone in the limelight of colour. His was the only really bright coloured tartan worn that night, and red always takes the eye especially in the night light. Flora MacDonald, Padruig's partner wore a dress of white, with a silk sash of Padruig's own tartan, and a beautiful cairngorm brooch upon her shoulder. She looked a perfect picture. Her cheeks were flushed, and she bore a pleasant smile upon her face. In height she stood not far short of her companion, and more than one person asked whether they were brother and sister. They were both gifted with a peculiarly nice manner. There were no signs of pride about either the one or the other; no self-consciousness or conceit, nor any appearance of affectation whatever. They were both so polite and amiable that they became general favourites with all, which enabled Padruig to enjoy the evening all the more, for he was to the great company a complete stranger.

Mrs. Campbell's bosom companion and confidential friend came up to her specially to ask one question about Padruig and Flora. "Are they actually

brother and sister, Mrs. Campbell?” said the more anxious than inquisitive inquirer, who continued her diplomatic tactics by adding that “The crimson flush upon the young lady’s face and neck arouses other suspicions in my mind.”

“What exactly do you mean by such a question,” said Mrs. Campbell, to her companion and trusted friend, who did not satisfy what she thought was idle curiosity. Mrs. Campbell realized after all that her friend had only asked what might have been considered by a broad-minded person as a well meaning and disinterested question, to which she ultimately decided to give a simple but evasive answer. “Love is the same in this world as in the next,” said Mrs. Campbell to her enquirer, “and whether we be brothers and sisters or otherwise we must remember that ‘only the innocent blush,’” and for the moment, no further conversation passed between the enquirer and the enquired.

Malcolm Campbell asked Padruig Dubh to play for the next reel, which he did with great pleasure, and as he was about to strike up his pipes, Malcolm whispered into his ear. “I will look after Flora. I am going to dance this reel with her myself.” Padruig smiled his approval, and played the reel with splendid time and rhythm. Flora was a fine dancer, and with Malcolm Campbell as her partner, they danced the reel in right Highland style. Before it was quite finished Malcolm admitted that the reel was as well played as he had danced it with his fair partner.

The whole company danced merrily for two hours, and no couple enjoyed the evening more than Roderick Mòr MacDonald’s young daughter and her friend. At ten o’clock the piper played the assembly into the supper room. Couple after couple got seated at the long tables which groaned under their heavy load of good things, with which the guests were to be refreshed. Padruig Dubh had Flora as his partner. Many admired them on account of their pleasant demeanour and unselfish disposition. The young couple was followed closely by Roderick Mòr MacDonald with Betty, Malcolm Campbell’s wife, while Malcolm himself was partnered by Marion, the wife of Roderick Mòr. There was enough and to spare for all present, and the Duke himself presided over the “Gathering.” Malcolm Campbell took more than an ordinary interest in the young couple from Craig Mhòr, for as he was manly in spirit as well as in

appearance, he also admired people of the same type. "Will you have some light refreshments to drink?" said Malcolm to his partner. "There is some very nice light wine here, and I will just fill up your glass with it, Marion. It is 'French wine,'" continued Malcolm, "and it comes in by sea, but exactly where is sometimes a mystery."

Roderick Macdonald's wife was very temperate in her habits, but upon this yearly festival she was even tempted to look upon the light-wine 'when it was red.'

"Thank you so much, Malcolm," said Marion, as Malcolm filled her glass to the brim. "You do believe in quantity."

"There is nothing like a glass full and to overflowing," said Malcolm, "especially when we live in a land of peace and plenty."

Time sped on as the company sat over the tables spread with good things, and soon the toasts were to be given and replied to. "They are a very handsome couple," said Malcolm to Mrs. MacDonald. "There is not the like of them in broad Scotland. But his partner suppressed her reply.

"I tell you, Marion," continued Malcolm, that you will not have your daughter long. Mark my words, and you shall not have long to live to see them come true."

"Nonsense! Malcolm," replied Mrs. McDonald. "Flora is only a child, and besides she is too fond of her father and mother to think anything about matrimony. In fact I am quite positive that she is love-proof. She does take an interest in our young friend, but that is only friendship."

"Don't you believe it, Marion," said Malcolm. "I am a good judge of these things. I have come through the same experience myself, and I tell you for a surety that they are both passionately in love with each other."

Without giving Flora's mother an opportunity of saying anything further, meantime, Malcolm, who was master of ceremonies, called for the first toast, which was given by the Duke himself. Toast after toast was given and replied to with the greatest enthusiasm, and at the close of the list, in accordance with ancient custom, the Duke rose to give the last toast, but Malcolm Campbell claimed one which he vowed had been omitted, and should be given before the

close. Request to give this toast was granted, and the host of the evening seated himself for one brief moment, in order to see what this item was, because in fact Malcolm Campbell was a great favourite with the Duke. Malcolm got to his feet, and in a clear voice, with his glass in his hand, he said, "Let us drink a health to the prettiest couple in the ballroom." It was like a great love drama being performed upon the stage of an Opera House. The whole company rose, and drank their health to a man. The gentlemen received the toast with Highland honours. To their great amusement Flora and Padruig found themselves seated while this performance took place. There was no reply to the toast, and none was called for, for the company was satisfied that the reply should be left in silence. There was a pause in the proceedings for a few moments.

Donald MacLean from the village was present, and he sat quite close to Roderick Mòr MacDonald. "That would be very well done, Roderick," said Donald, "who would be planning such toasts as that? Man! Man! It would surely be the 'Fairy Queen' herself. She thought that she would be seeing her at the ball with a grand frock with silver lace upon it. It would be a grand toast, Roderick man, and they would be very well worth it all. She would be a braw braw lad, and Flora would be far more beautiful."

At last the final toast came, and the Duke hoped that all present had thoroughly enjoyed the evening, as he had up to that point, after which he closed by saying "Happy to meet, sorry to part, and happy to meet again."

Dancing was again indulged in and continued to the small hours of the next morning. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, and no one was happier than Flora MacDonald and Padruig Dubh Macvourich. Padruig had never dreamed of the pleasures which were in store for him at Craig Mhòr when he left the fair Scottish capital for the golden west in the "Highland Queen."

The dancing was kept up with great vigour until four o'clock in the morning. The older people were even more keen at that hour than the young ones. Flora was tired but she could still dance, and while Padruig Dubh played for the closing reel she danced it with one at least who admired her more than if she had been a queen; her partner for the last dance of the evening being no other than

the good Malcolm Campbell, who was an expert Highland Reel dancer.

It was grey dawn before Roderick Mòr McDonald with his wife and daughter together with Padruig Dubh left the Castle. They were accompanied part of the way by Malcolm MacDonald and his wife. Padruig Dubh and Flora kept well ahead of the rest of the party all the way home, for they had many things to talk of as they wound their way through the heather arm in arm. They had danced often together that night locked in each other's arms, and they did not think that it was in the least out of place to go arm in arm home in youthful innocence.

Flora kept an eye upon the "Fairie's Well" as he passed it. The early dawn had gone, and the sun welcomed them as the happy young couple pressed forward upon their homeward journey.

"What are you looking for, Flora," said Padruig Dubh. "You surely don't expect to see the Fairy Queen at this early hour? Do you really imagine that she is accompanying us on our way to Craig Mhòr?"

"I am not so sure but that I have seen her this morning e'er now," said Flora. "Did you observe the very tiny lady at the ball, dressed in green and trimmed with beautiful silver lace? She appeared to me to be a rather suspicious person. I spoke to her twice, but she made no reply, and both times she turned silently aside."

"Your brain is only overheated with the evening's excitement, Flora," said Padruig Dubh. "There will be no 'Fairy Queen' in your mind after you have had a good rest."

"I shall tell you more about the 'Fairy Queen'," said Flora, "after I have had a sleep."

Chapter XII

Kidnapped by the Fairy Queen

To meet the sun at dawn before he left Scotland was one of young Macvourich's great desires. He awoke very early one morning in the beginning of October: it must have been about four o'clock. It was still dark, and Padruig Dubh turned upon his other side, curled himself up amongst the blankets and said, "I shall still have half an hour to snooze, and be in good time to greet the golden orb, for in itself it is one of the great wonders of the world. Even the greatest astronomers do not fully understand its being, although they have studied it for more than a thousand years."

Padruig Dubh was taught from early infancy by his parents not to pry into the great unknown. In other words, he was warned not to seek for that knowledge which was not good for him to know. What the sun was only concerned Him who created it, and all that Padruig Dubh wished to do was to see it arise from the mighty deep: see it shed its virgin morning rays upon mother Earth, and greet it with a simple smile as it sped its way into the blue heavens. Once awake, however, sleep would not return again that morning, so Padruig rose and dressed.

Daylight had made a very faint appearance as he drew the bolts, unlocked the outside door, and left Craig Mhòr so that he might carry out his purpose. Several days had come and gone since the happy night of the Castle ball, and some of the events which had taken place since then, together with what was to happen that afternoon crowded themselves upon a youthful mind with great charm.

Padruig had played his pipes several times at the "Fairie's Well" in solitary grandeur, and piping under such circumstances attended by the congenial environment of the mountain atmosphere created in his mind an air of peculiar gladness. Flora had arranged to meet him at the sequestered spot in the afternoon of that day, because she had some mysterious secret to make known to him, which had troubled her inwardly for some time. This secret which

Flora had imprisoned in her mind was to be revealed to her young friend as a warning.

The morning after the ball at the Castle, Flora had a few hours rest, and she must have fallen asleep, for she had a peculiar dream which haunted her mind ever since. The little lady who was dressed in green at the ball was the subject of her dream. Flora could see this tiny object dogging her footsteps and more especially that of Padruig Dubh who ultimately disappeared from her sight in a mysteriously alarming manner. Flora woke up after her rest, and in a quite audible voice said, "It must be the Fairy Queen going to kidnap Padruig. I must lose no time in revealing to him my mysterious dream." The day on which this was to be carried out had arrived and Flora too was very happy. The very idea that she would meet her affectionate friend at the accustomed place had created a feeling of great pleasure in her mind.

At last Padruig Dubh stood upon the summit of the great mountain which overlooked Craig Mhòr. The dawn was breaking red. The sun rose in all its golden splendour, and greeted him with smiling brilliance. It was a scene to be remembered, for there Padruig gazed at the great orb which met him face to face with inspiring effulgence. "The Great Red Dawn" was shining, and as it shown Padruig Dubh scanned with admiring eyes the hilltops together with the valley below, which was newly flooded with the virgin morning light. As he stood motionless on the crest of the towering mountain he could not but admire the most wonderful and magnificent work of a great and beneficent Creator, who had made the sun and clothed the earth with such artistic beauty.

Satisfied with the morning's achievement Padruig Dubh retraced his steps homeward only to find that he was not so late as he had expected to be. Breakfast was ready, and Roderick Mòr was warned the night before of Padruig's intention and he requested his wife and daughter to wait for the return of their mutual friend and companion.

"You are just in time Padruig," said Flora, "come and have breakfast. We have all waited for you."

"I am so glad, Flora," said Padruig, "for the hill air has made me so hungry that I can now eat almost anything."

“Did you enjoy your morning outing then, Padruig?” said Roderick Mòr.

“The morning was fine and I can assure you that I did enjoy the walk,” said Padruig. “The scene was glorious. The good old saying is true after all ‘early to bed, and early to rise’ makes one fit. I slept immediately my head was on the pillow last night, and this morning I was awake before the clock warned four. I should not have missed this morning’s experience for anything.”

“Many a time have I done the same thing,” said Roderick Mòr, “and every time I have witnessed the sunrise on the same spot it has always had the same charming effect upon my imaginative mind.”

“I too am exactly the same,” said Flora. “Give me the mist, the mountain, and the Great Pipe discoursing those war-like lays, the Lament, and the Theme of Love, and I am in paradise.”

“Flora shall have all these except the mist this afternoon,” said Padruig to her father. “We have an important appointment at the ‘Fairie’s Well,’ and I am taking my pipes with me.”

“Oh! Then I must be present,” said Roderick Mòr. “I must hear you play.”

“You forgot the rule, father,” said Flora. “You know that two is company.”

Flora blushed violently on making this jocular remark, and her mother said, “Young people will be young. I think father will stay with me. I have heard them say the same thing before now, when we were young.”

After breakfast Flora made the final arrangements with Padruig Dubh. She was to meet him at the “Fairie’s Well” at three o’clock that afternoon. This done and an early dinner past, Padruig left Craig Mhòr by one o’clock. He arrived at the appointed place, and prior to taking his pipes from its case, he sat for a moment upon the accustomed seat near the well. There was a curious foreboding in his mind as he sat there alone, but he banished all thought by taking up his pipe and began to play. For a considerable time he made the surrounding hills re-echo with the tunes which he played. He had never before been in better playing condition, and he was satisfied when Flora did arrive she would hear him at his best. The morning scene reminded him of a favourite tune. He lamented so much that he was no poet because what he saw kindled the fire of inspiration in his young mind, and urged him to higher ideals. In

order to compensate his lack of poetic genius Padruig Dubh played his old time favourite piobaireachd “Lament for Ossian” for he was still pregnant with the celestial music of the Piob Mhòr. This departed hero was the Gaelic poet of the misty mountains, and Flora loved to hear him play that tune.

While Padruig played the time approached for his affectionate companion’s arrival. He paced to and fro upon the green grassy spot, and as he turned away from the well, he saw in the distance a young woman’s form, which he took to be Flora. While she was still a good distance away Padruig ceased playing, and drank a deep draught from the crystal waters of the fairy-haunted fountain. Again he took his pipe, and continue to play the same piece until his supposed companion came close up to the well. Padruig ceased playing, lay down his instrument, and said “good afternoon,” but the word, “Flora,” stuck in his throat. Before he could get it spoken, he observed that he had addressed a person who was to him a complete stranger.

“Good afternoon, Sir,” said the stranger, “apparently thou seekest someone else, as I may judge from the expression upon thy face.”

“I do!” said Padruig, “I had mistaken you for the Shepherd’s daughter who promised to meet me here and now.”

“Thou shalt be my companion instead,” said the stranger. “I am the ‘Fairy Queen’.”

“Should you choose to listen to my pipe until my fair companion arrives,” said Padruig, “you are welcome, but you shall never supplant Flora MacDonald.”

“Thou dost speak in vain,” said the Fairy Queen. “I am fairer than the fairest – a Queen with a kingdom of mine own, by virtue of this wand, which was my “Royal Sceptre.” I know that thou lovest that young damsel, the maiden daughter of Roderick Mòr, the Duke’s Shepherd, but, meantime, thy love is but vanity. Thou shalt dwell with me for a year and a day, or for a time at least, and if thou dost even attempt to resist my will, thou may dwell with me for the rest of thy life in my domain.”

Padruig Dubh was overwhelmed by the demeanour of this traitor who sought to spoil his afternoon’s pleasure; in fact she had just threatened to mar his entire life, and resistance was useless. He attempted to free himself from his

perilous position by means of the art of diplomacy. "Can you not come another day when I am free," said Padruig to the Fairy Queen, "and we shall then reckon with each other."

"Come hither," said the Fairy Queen, "there is no time for delay. I can see whom thou seekest, in the distance. We must be gone." In an instant, the Fairy Queen took from her side a 'silver chanter,' before Padruig had time for any further questioning. This chanter was one exquisitely wrought in silver; the appearance of which was to Padruig magnificent in the extreme. The Fairy Queen placed her tiny fingers upon the instrument, and played a tune which enchanted the listener to such an extent that he completely forgot where he was. The Fairy Queen made a hurried retreat from the well, accompanied by her companion, for he was in reality her captive, who clung to his pipe which he held in his hand as his captor met him. Padruig Dubh was so enchanted by the music from the Fairy Queen's chanter that he was quite unconscious of having reached the seaside.

"Now!" said the Fairy Queen, "thou must enter my kingdom through 'The Cave of Silver,' and upon pain of death itself, I warn thee to keep silent until we pass the great portcullis which entereth into my secret abode."

Padruig could hear the sea lashing up against the rocks surrounded the mouth of the cave into which they had just been entered. This cave had the appearance of a great mirror. The silver all around him shown with great brilliance, and while they passed along a long underground passage, not a single word was spoken. After they had traversed this passage for a considerable distance they appeared at the entrance to the "Fairy Kingdom." The Fairy Queen touched the great silver portcullis with her magic wand of the same metal, and immediately the huge door was raised. The Fairy Queen entered first followed by her captive.

"There are three entrances to my kingdom, from the outside world," said the Fairy Queen, "which I shall now enumerate to thee: 'The Cave of Gold,' 'The Cave of Pearls,' and the 'Cave of Silver,' through which we have now entered. Let me tell thee further that it is only because thou hast a pure and unspotted character, morally, that thou hast been permitted to enter by 'The Cave of

Silver'; and, further I now make unto thee a faithful vow, which is to say, that in the event of thy behaviour being good, thou shalt be restored to thy fair companion, the Shepherd's daughter, within the space of sixty days."

"But why keep me here for the space of sixty hours?" said Padruig Dubh, in the way of a protest, "not to speak of sixty days. You lack nothing here. You don't know what the hardships and mysteries of the world are. I pray you to let me free now."

"There are few miseries and hardships in the outside world with which I am not acquainted, youth," said the Fairy Queen, "and it is acts of kindness that I perform when and where they are urgently required."

"You appear to perform your acts by employing fear," said Padruig Dubh,

"...and not by love such as the idol of your heart, the maiden who dwelleth in yonder house at the Great Craig," said the Fairy Queen before Padruig could complete his sentence. "I do naught by force or fear as thou sayest. Every act of which I am the author, is performed by virtue of this my wand of Office," continued the Fairy Queen. "I possess no money. I bestow favourable rewards upon those who are good, and punish those who are evil. There is no corruption nor iniquity in my heart, nor in fairyland. All must be pure who dwell herein."

"What offensive have I committed that you have taken me into your secret abode?" asked Padruig Dubh earnestly. "I am not aware of any."

"Did not the maker of thy pipe, the old white haired man in yonder city by the fertile banks of the Clyde, question thee about that 'silver chanter' which thou holdest in thy hand this very moment? Did not the Captain of the 'Highland Queen' warn thee about the fairies who dwell up at Craig Mhòr? Did not Donald who took thee thither warn thee to be silent on the way, as he feared the fairies? Did not Murdoch MacKay, at Loch Dubh warn thee of my presence there? Has not Flora MacDonald, the fairest maiden in broad Scotland warned and watch over thee since thine arrival in the Highlands? And many other warnings hast thou ignored. Dost thou not know that it was I who knocked at the Shepherd's door at Loch Dubh, and that I danced to the piping at the Castle ball, but a few nights ago? In how many ways hast thou transgressed against the

unwritten laws of my fairy kingdom? Be it known unto thee now, though somewhat late, that he who drinketh deeply at the well by yonder green grassy spot, and hath had the presumption to address me—a Queen, as thou hast done, shall pay the penalty, which my displeasure shall impose.”

“Thou hast finished thy education which thy good parents have desired that thou shouldst possess, but long e’er thou shalt leave my domains thou shalt be taught more lessons than one, which shall avail thee much for the rest of thy lifetime. Thou didst gaze upon the rising sun the other morning, but when thou shalt gaze upon the ‘great red Dawn’ of fairyland, it shall excelled that which thou didst see upon the mountaintop which overlooketh Craig Mhòr where your heart would feign be at this very moment.”

There appeared before the Fairy Queen and Padruig Dubh a great curtain of tapestry, curiously wrought. It bore the scene of a “Gathering of the Clans,” which as regards needlework, Padruig had never seen anything to compare with it. To carry out and complete such an undertaking was nothing short of a marvel. “Cast thine eyes upon that curtain, youth,” said the Fairy Queen. “From the one end of it to the other it measureth some miles in length, which the industrious inhabitants of my kingdom have ingeniously wrought by hand with needles of pure silver, and threads of the same material, intermingled with the product of the silkworm. It hath taken many centuries to complete that great work of art. The hands to which such a task was committed overcame much, and wrestled with monotony for many weary years. But now I shall show thee what lieth behind this precious material.”

Padruig Dubh was mesmerized beyond all measure. He had no idea that fairyland was such an interesting place, and for the time his mind was completely centred upon his surroundings. The Fairy Queen touched the enormous curtain with her magic wand, and in an instant it was raised far into the heavens. The scene which confronted the Fairy Queen’s captive was magnificent. There lay in the distance a country of exquisite beauty richly covered with luxurious verdure and trees of every description. It was watered by a river of some considerable size, the banks of which were covered by a great variety of beautiful flowers. There were hills, and great mountains, with deep

ravines, the dark recesses of which were filled with a strange form of what one might venture to term the sweet music of the mountain stream, as it wound its way downwards falling over rocks and precipices. Far up the hillside upon a grassy plateau stood a Castle, the private residence of the Fairy Queen, which was guarded by numerous fairies under the command of Kenneth the dwarf.

After Padruig Dubh had had an opportunity of seeing some of the wonders of fairyland, the Fairy Queen commanded him to accompany her to the Castle upon the hillside. As they arrived there the Queen was saluted by the commander of her legions. "All is well at my Castle, I hope, Kenneth," said the Fairy Queen, "and where is Duncan Bheag, the piper?"

"He is in the Castle," said Kenneth, "I heard him play upon the great pipe but a few moments since."

They entered the Castle by a huge door, which opened as the Fairy Queen touched it with her silver wand. The interior of her abode was very beautiful, and commodious. There were many rooms within the walls which were occupied by fairies of a lower rank, who attended to duties which were set apart for each and all. There were no idle persons in the fairy kingdom. Every room in the castle was white as snow, and the courtyard was very neatly kept, together with the pathway which approached the Royal residence. The Fairy Queen took Padruig into a spacious hall, where a great number of coats of armour were neatly arrayed. This armour appeared to be intended to fit men who were small of stature. Each coat was spotless, and shown with exquisite brightness. Beside each coat of armour lay a short sword with basket hilts of silver studded with precious stones of many colours. "These!" said the Fairy Queen, "are in readiness for my attendants should any sign of danger arise, and now that thou art one of my captives, thou shalt be guarded by those men while thou dwellest in my abode."

"I shall trust myself in thy Queenly keeping while I am here;" said Padruig, "it is quite unnecessary to guard me at all."

"That is well said, gallant and fearless youth," remarked the Fairy Queen, "but thou knowest not the dangers which surround thee even here. Thou must be guarded from harm, so that at the end of the prescribed period thou mayest

be restored to thy fair companion.”

“My fair companion,” said Padruig what shall she think of my absence and without warning.”

“She knoweth of my previous doing,” said the Fairy Queen, “and as she possesseth the greatest virtue—patience, which men like thee lack; she shall wait without weariness until thou dost return. Let me tell thee youth, that it is well with thee that thou didst not meet the shepherd’s daughter at the well; for thou wouldst but have stolen her heart, as she hath captured thine when first she saw thee. Thou must mistake not the fact, Sir, that Roderick the stalwart Shepherd knoweth thy plans. He seeth the link which is forming twixt his only child and thee; a link which upon thy next meeting will be welded forever, shouldest thou be careful. The Duke’s Shepherd hath a pure heart, and is upright in thought as well as action. He hath trusted thee with his only child upon yonder moor. She is the offspring of a tender love, a noble mind, and the one and only joy of a pious mother’s heart. But enough, meantime, thou shalt know more in due season: time flieth; I can see that thou art hungry, and we must needs dine.”

The Fairy Queen touched a small door with her magic wand. This door opened instantaneously and she entered into another room, after which she beckoned with her wand as a signal for Padruig Dubh to follow her. Padruig entered into a very spacious apartment of luxurious appearance, in the centre of which stood a table prepared for dinner. He could see that only two were intended to dine. The room was lit by means of a hundred cruises made of silver. Each light flickered very faintly but nonetheless, there were so many of them burning that there was sufficient light to illuminate the room, and Padruig observed that the result of these lights were very effective.

“Be seated,” said the Fairy Queen her captive, “let me give mine attendants the signal to come hither.” The Fairy Queen touched a small spring with her magic wand, and several maiden fairies appeared. They were all alike, and very neatly dressed in white. “We desire to dine,” said the Fairy Queen, “bring the first course.” Immediately the word was given these tiny creatures went to work, and dinner was served in Royal style.

Not a word was spoken during the meal, and Padruig who was in a fainting condition for want of food, enjoyed to the full the sumptuous meal. Several beautiful crystal bottles sat upon the table which appeared to Padruig to contain wines of some kind or other, but as he was very temperate, he did not envy them in the least. "Thou shalt have some wine now, Sir," said the Fairy Queen. "It will refresh thee even more than the food."

"I am quite unaccustomed to wines," said Padruig Dubh, "and I had much rather not partake of these."

"I can read your mind with as much ease as that book which lieth on yonder table, but be not afraid, Sir, there is no sleeping potion in the beverage which will either deprive you of your senses or harm you in any way whatever. I know full well that thou art not a heavy drinker," continued the Fairy Queen, "but these have been specially prepared for thee. They are light and invigorating. I assure thee, youth, upon my Queenly honour that they are not harmful."

"The fair sex possess winning ways," said Padruig, "but I am unwilling to break the vow which I made to my parents e'er I left my home."

"Thou meanest that Eve's patrimonial influence is being practiced upon thee by a Queen," said the Fairy Ruler. "Thou art but skeptical in thine ideas which are only youthful. I pray thee to taste the contents of that bottle of wine of thine own free will, and see how good it is. Thou shalt miss something shouldst thou refuse."

Like his first parent, Padruig was either tempted or persuaded to partake of a wine which contained rare qualities. After he had tasted the beverage, he admitted that it was good, and very refreshing.

"Now!" said the Fairy Queen, "what is that which I hear?" It is the pipe, and methinks that it soundeth well tonight." The door of the room gently opened, and there entered a piper richly dressed, but small of stature, who played upon a curiously made old-looking pipe. He played a tune which possessed a particularly attractive air. This pipe had an exquisite tone, full of charm, and in perfect tune. It required absolutely no effort for the performer to play upon his pipe, and indeed it appeared to Padruig that this was Duncan Bheag the lonely piper who had lived at the Great Dun, near Craig Mhòr. The piper played three

times round the table in accordance with ancient custom, and then left the room, while he continued to perform his accustomed duty for a considerable time until his notes died away in the distance.

After he had finished the tune, the Fairy Queen took from her side her “silver chanter.” “Let me now entertain thee,” she said. “I shall play thee an ancient piece, which is full of great charm, and it shall only be one example of what thou mayest hear before thou quittest the land of fairydom. It runs thus.” Padruig Dubh watch the performers tiny fingers as they danced over the holes of her beautiful chanter. He could not help thinking that the Fairy Queen must have inherited the art of finger manipulation from some unknown and mysterious source.

As she continued to play, the listener felt a genuine charm which the great music possessed. His soul was filled with inspiration, and little wonder, for the air which he listened [to] was perfect in form, and rich in melody. Padruig Dubh long to be able to perform upon his own pipe with such rare expression. Although a good performer himself, his execution was slovenly as compared with what he was at the moment listening to. So enchanted was Padruig Dubh with an air so beautiful, and performed with such skill in fingering and expression that he actually fell fast asleep. He must only have slept for an instant. The melody of the tunes seemed to become richer and richer as the one variation gave place to another. At last the music ceased, and still the notes of that sweet melody seemed to reverberate within his ear. Fain would Padruig have requested the fair performer to continue the tune, or enter upon another of equal beauty, but it would only have been helpless to do so, because the Fairy Queen played her part in the musical drama, and now it was Padruig’s turn to pipe.

“Thou hast been foolish enough to procure for thyself a ‘silver chanter’,” said the Fairy Queen. “How doth it compare in tone or appearance with the one which thou hast just heard?”

“There is no comparison,” said Padruig Dubh, “I admit.”

“It is well said,” remarked the Fairy Queen, “and it is also well with thee that thou admittest so. I can only bestow favours upon those who are fully

conscious of their own need of such. Thou art a fair performer upon the great pipe, and now thou shalt play while I make up my programme of future events.”

Padruig took up his own pipe which he had carried along with him into fairyland, and to his great surprise when he blew it up, the reeds were in perfect tune. Never before had he felt the same charm in his pipe. The art of piping had always been uppermost in his mind, and often had he enjoyed the pleasures of a good tune, but now he seemed to be playing upon an instrument which was in every respect perfect. “Could the Fairy Queen have instilled her secret charm into them, or did she touch my fingers with her fairy wand while I slept but for that instant?” Padruig said to himself. “My pipe never before played like this.”

He took as his choice one of his old familiar tunes. An old time air which was of particular interest to him, because he had been instructed in its intricacies by his own father, and his mother loved to listen to it. The expression with which he now performed this most beautiful old tune created in it something altogether new, and he wished with all his heart that his mother could hear him play it now. What would Flora MacDonald and her father think [if] they could hear such piping? The finest performance which he had ever been capable of could not compare with that which he now executed. “The Fairy Queen must be a very benevolent creature after all,” he thought to himself. “She cannot keep all good things to herself,” he said, as he continued to pipe with unabated pleasure. At last he ceased playing, and lay his pipe upon a table richly carved, while the top portion of it was studded with sparkling jewels.

“Thy ‘silver chanter’ hath charms in its notes after all, Sir,” said the Fairy Queen. “Thou hast lost nothing of thy piping abilities even in fairyland. It is well that thou hast taken thy pipe with thee for otherwise I should have missed that rare performance. But the night passeth, and as I have important business on hand for tomorrow in which thou shalt take a part, we must needs sleep.” The Fairy Queen called for an attendant, who conveyed Padruig to his room for the night, and there he laid himself to rest where he slept soundly until next morning when he was awakened by the same person.

CHAPTER XIIIAnxiety at Craig Mhòr

The mountains wore their Autumn garb, and Craig Mhòr nestled in silent grandeur midway up their heath clad slopes. There was more activity at the shepherd's abode than there had been at this season for many years. Their friend Padruig Dubh had been early astir that morning in order to fulfill his desire to see the sunrise upon the vast stretch of mountain moorland which looked far out upon the blue ocean. Flora, the shepherd's daughter tripped about the house lightheartedly. She was full of life. Hope of future happiness had been running in her heart for some weeks past. It was no secret to her father and mother, nor was it unnoticed by her father, Roderick Mòr McDonald, who had a keen eye and a quick understanding. Their daughter had grown from childhood to girlhood and from girlhood to womanhood all at once, so to speak, and they had her future welfare at heart as much as she had herself. Flora MacDonald, then, was by no means giddy-headed. She was shrewd for her age, and endowed with ennobling qualities which would stand her in good stead for the years to come.

Her figure was a fine example of young womanhood, and her education fitted her for a good position in life. Her companion Padruig Dubh Macvourich left Craig Mhòr at midday, and it was his intention to practice upon his pipe at the 'Fairie's Well' until well into the afternoon. Flora was to meet him at three o'clock, and for that purpose she left home in time to fulfill her engagement. She took in her hand one of her father's favourite crooks, and Mona her mother's favourite dog, was full of excitement because she was also going to the fairy haunted well. Flora bade her parents adieu for the time being, and commenced her journey up the steep mountainside along with her canine companion. She had looked forward to her meeting with Padruig Dubh at the "Fairie's Well" for some considerable time. There were more reasons than one why she longed to meet him there. She wished most of all to warn him to beware of the "Fairy Queen," and the idea that no one except Padruig Dubh himself would be

present, lent enchantment to her twofold purpose. Flora hurried onward towards her goal, because she was somewhat late in starting, and she has still a considerable distance to cover.

Mona had been hunting amongst the mountain hares for some little time, but as she was unsuccessful in being able to capture any of them, owing to their swiftness of foot that season of the year. Being well fed, she gave up the chase in disgust, and came close enough to her mistress's side. All at once she began to whine, and Flora chided her violently, for she did not like this turn which the dog had taken. Chastisement was of no avail; Mona kept on whining, and Flora got somewhat alarmed, because she knew that such an occurrence meant some bad omen or other. It became almost unbearable, and at last she wished that she had not taken Mona with her at all. On reconsideration, however, Flora thought that after all, if anything untoward did happen, having Mona with her she was better than being entirely without a companion.

"Could there be anyone lurking about in a secret hiding place?" said Flora to herself. "That could hardly be," she continued to think in her own mind. "I have never seen any strangers here before."

Flora was not in the least nervous, so she followed on, now that Mona was quite quiet. Just at that moment Flora recalled the incident of Malcolm Campbell's visit to Craig Mhòr, with the invitation to the Castle wall. He spoke of strangers being seen in the vicinity then, and he had three of his men on search that evening.

"Would it be some of the strange persons prowling about?" She began asking herself the question. "Let me listen, to see whether I can hear anything."

Flora even concealed herself amongst some tall twigs of juniper bush and heather in order to keep a secret watch, but nothing was either to be seen or heard. Finally she made up her mind that Mona must have been trying to play a trick upon her, or that she lamented her failure to catch some of the hares which she had pursued, and with this idea as a solution to a mysterious problem, Flora continued her journey without further interruption.

On arriving at the "Fairie's Well" there was no one to be seen. Flora looked everywhere, but still she could neither see nor find her companion. All at once

Mona's whining rehearsed itself in her troubled mind, and there and then she was convinced that it was a warning that something had happened. "Where can Padruig be?" she said to Mona, as if the dumb animal could relieve her anxiety. "Has he gone home by another path because I am somewhat late? Or has my dream actually come true?" Flora was now in an acute state of alarm, but before she gave up hope, she called upon Mona who ran about with pricked up ears, to follow her, and they both retraced their steps homewards.

Flora lost no time on the way, and when she was only halfway home she spied her father, who was tending his flocks upon the hillside. She ran up to him with great haste, and advised him of what had happened.

"Well Flora," said her father, "you have always feared that 'Fairy Queen', and now she must have played a nice trick."

"That is all very well, father," said Flora, "so far as humorous amusement is concerned, but what can have become of dear Padruig?"

"Oh! I see," said Flora's father, "and is that the way the wind is blowing? It is Padruig is your dear! I am afraid that I am out of the picture now. Is that it my child?"

"No! Father," said Flora, "you are both in the picture."

"Well!" said her father, "there is only one other alternative, [and] that is I am in the picture, and this missing Padruig is in your heart."

"We must see further into this matter about Padruig, my dear Flora," continued her father, "but in any case, I am quite sure that he will turn up some way or another before long. He may have gone to visit Duncan Bheag's hut."

"I did not think of that in my excitement," said Flora. "Shall I go there now, or wait for a little to see whether he returns?"

"You had better wait a bit, Flora," said her father. "Even if you went to meet him you might pass each other on the way. There is no saying which road he may come [down]. He may take the path on the hillside, or one never knows, something might attract his attention to bring him down by the waterside."

"I shall just wait there, father," said Flora.

"Are you coming home now?" "If you wait for one moment," said her father, "until I put these hogs to the Westward I shall be ready to go home with you."

Flora hoped that by the time she arrived home Padruig Dubh would be there. “Would he be playing a trick upon me, father,” said Flora. “It would be grand if he were home before us.”

“You never can tell these things, Flora, said her father,” until we get home to see, but it would not be at all like Padruig to play such a trick upon anyone. He is not a bit frolicsome. At least that is my opinion of him.”

On their arrival at Craig Mhòr, Flora’s mother was somewhat surprised to see her home so soon. “You are surely early, Flora,” said her mother, “at least earlier than I expected you. Where is Padruig?”

“Is he not home, mother?” said Flora. “When I arrived at the ‘Fairie’s Well’ there was no one there, and Mona did whine so terribly on our way.”

“He has not made his appearance here,” said Flora’s mother. He must have played a trick upon you, or you are playing one on me.”

“I am playing no trick upon you, mother,” said Flora, “and I am quite sure Padruig is not either. I am going away to see if perchance he has gone to visit Duncan Bheag’s hut.”

“You cannot go there alone, Flora dear,” said her mother. “The night is falling, and the twilight is here.”

“Something must be done, mother,” said Flora. “We could not sleep without doing something at least to try to find his whereabouts.”

“There is a good moon, Flora,” said her mother, and if you will be at Duncan Bheag’s hut father will accompany you.”

A hurried cup of tea was prepared, of which all three partook, although Flora was not in the mood for eating. Immediately thereafter Flora and her father set out for the hut in question. “I am not taking Mona this time, father,” said Flora. “I cannot put up with her whining whatever may be the result of our search.”

“All right, Flora,” said her father, “we shall take Prince instead. He never whined in his life. It seems to me the nature of all females, to whine.” Roderick Mòr said this with the intention of taking the incident off his daughter’s mind by means of a joke.

“Why be so cruel, father,” said Flora. “It is not my nature to whine, and if I do so on this occasion, I am sure you will admit that I have good reason, because

I am so far to blame in the matter.”

“In what way are you to blame, Flora?” said her father, with some surprise. “Is there anything amiss that you know of?”

“There is nothing amiss that I know of, father,” said Flora, “other than that I suggested, that our meeting place this afternoon should be the ‘Fairie’s Well,’ because I wished to warn Padruig about the ‘Fairy Queen.’”

“These fairie’s will unhinge your mind, Flora,” said her father, “and what ever will you do if they have kidnapped Padruig Dubh?”

Just then they arrived at the hut. The moon shone brightly, for darkness had fallen over an hour since. All was quiet. Not a sound was to be heard save the mournful cry of an owl, which rose from the trees beside the stream that wound its way past Craig Mhòr. Flora and her father entered the hut, but no one was to be seen. They searched all around but still they could find no clue as to the whereabouts of their missing friend. “It appears to be hopeless, father,” said Flora. “He has not come here, and I don’t know how we ever thought that he could.”

“One never knows where he might go, Flora.” said her father, “and there is no harm in coming to see especially when you yourself thought first of his coming here.”

Father and daughter both arrived home somewhat tired after their fruitless search. There was no chance of Padruig turning up at Craig Mhòr that night, as it was then late in the evening. “We shall see what a new day brings,” said Roderick Mòr to his wife and daughter. “He may have gone to some of the shepherds on an unforeseen errand. Tomorrow I shall go around them, and see whether he has been there.”

Flora went to bed with drooping spirits. She lay long engrossed in a deep train of anxious thought. She left no stone unturned, so far as imaginative ideas went. Many possibilities occurred to her, but these must remain in abeyance till tomorrow, when some new light might be thrown upon the mystery which had caused her so much anxiety. Flora listened for a long time after she laid her wearied head upon the pillow, in the hope that she might hear a knock upon the outside door, but no: all her listening was in vain. She could only hear the

sighing of the wind, as it sped on its aerial journey in the soft glow of silvery moonlight. The stars sparkled brightly as they peeped in at her window, but they could tell her not of him whom she had lost. The western breeze kept blowing, and even in the sighing of the wind she could hear MacCrimmon's doleful notes falling upon her ear "Alas I am no more returning." At last she was fanned to sleep by the soft breeze. The imaginary music which haunted her soothed her troubled mind, and lulled her into dreamland. It was the sweet breath of even' that passed through her open window; checked the Crimson flush upon her cheek, and cooled her fevered brain. Flora was dead to the world, for sleep the sweet angel of peace folded her golden wings around her, but still her mind was haunted by the one thing she loved most of all-music. As Flora slept the zephyrs sang:--

"Sleep on sweet maid, thy lover rests like thee.
 Fanned by the western breeze on bed of down;
 The Fairy Queen shall one day set him free;
 Your heart is his, and his shall be your own."

Morning came, and the sun shone in at Flora's window, where the night before the pale beams lit her room. She woke up later than she had been in the habit of doing, owing to the lateness of the hour at which she fell asleep. She slept very soundly and dreamed happy dreams. Notwithstanding all this, nothing but mystery surrounded the disappearance of Padruig Dubh Macvourich, who had passed from Flora's vision like [a] phantom ship in the night.

Roderick Mòr was early astir. He breakfasted and parted with his wife in all haste with the intention of going round his other shepherds to see whether Padruig Dubh had by any chance called upon either of them. He was accompanied by Prince, his favourite dog, and as he paced the moor at a speed which was greater than he was accustomed to, at the same time he kept his eye upon the surrounding hills to see whether there was any visible signs of his missing friend.

Flora came downstairs for breakfast only to find that her father had gone on the errand which he promised to fulfill. "Why did father go in such a hurry?" said Flora to her mother. "I fully intended to accompany him as far as the 'Fairie's Well'."

"He did not wish to disturb you, Flora," said her mother, "as he thought that you would be tired after yesterday's excitement and fatigue."

"I am not in the least tired, mother," said Flora, "and as soon as I have had breakfast, I am going up to the 'Fairie's Well' to see if I can find any clue to Padruig Dubh's disappearance. I forgot to look in my secret hiding place. He may have left his pipes or a written message for me there."

After Flora breakfasted she set out for yesterday's meeting place. She did not take her mother's favourite dog with her, as she thought Mona had brought her bad luck the day before. The green sward near the Fairie's Well was a desolate spot, now that Padruig Dubh had disappeared, and Flora could not linger about it with the same affectionate pleasure as before. She looked into the secret hiding place near the well, which Padruig also knew, in the hope that he might have left some message there, but it was empty. If Padruig Dubh was not to be found in any of her father's shepherd's houses, Flora had made up her mind to wait patiently for the natural course of events. She returned home very sad and broken hearted, and advised her mother of the result of her search. "There is still hope, Flora," said her mother, "father may bring us home good tidings."

Roderick Mòr arrived at the Cairns earlier than he expected, but his hope that Padruig Dubh had called there the previous day was very faint. Padruig had never visited the Cairns as was intended sometime before. He did not even know where it lay amongst the hills. Roderick Mòr was determined, however, to leave no stone unturned in his search, as he inquired of Alasdair MacNeill whether he had had a visit from anyone resembling the description of his missing friend. Roderick Mòr explained to Alasdair of the Cairns that his business was urgent; that he could not remain for dinner, and he left immediately for the Duns which was yet a good way off.

As he pressed forward towards the residence of Kenneth MacGillivray,

Roderick had happened to rest for a moment upon a green knoll to scan the hillside with his glass. He observed a man in the distance who appeared to be coming onto the path by which he had to go to the Duns. Roderick was not sure who this person was, but he got to his feet, and in a very short time they met. When Roderick got nearer he could see that whoever the person might be he was not Padruig Dubh Macvourich. At last they met, and who would the other man be but one of the under gamekeepers, who was on the moor for the purpose of endeavouring to locate several Royal stags, which had been seen on that part of the hill the week before. Roderick inquired of the gamekeeper whether he had seen any person upon the hill that forenoon, but the young man answered in the negative. They stood for a few moments and engaged in a short conversation, during which time Roderick Mòr warned the gillie that if he saw anyone who was within easy reach of him upon the moor to go up to him and enquire who he was, and if by any chance he did meet Padruig Dubh Macvourich by name, and would accompany him to Craig Mhòr, the youth, as well as Roderick himself would reward him handsomely. This was a sufficient bait for the young gamekeeper, and henceforth he searched more for the missing youth that he did for the antlered monarch of the mountain. His search, however, was all in vain, for though he kept his glass going upon every moving object on the hills there was no trace of such a quarry to be found.

Roderick Mòr had by this time arrived at the Duns, and as he approached the house, Kenneth MacGillivray saluted him while he was yet some distance away. Roderick began at once to wonder whether this salutation meant anything more than a mere signal of greeting, as it was unusual for Kenneth to do so, but on his arrival at close quarters his hopes were again blighted. Kenneth asked Roderick Mòr if there was anything wrong, as he appeared to be covering the ground at a great speed. After Roderick had had a moment's breathing space, he explained to his shepherd what had happened, and as Kenneth had already the pleasure of meeting Padruig Dubh on a former occasion, he was sure to have known and detained him if he had called at the Duns. Kenneth assured his companion that Padruig had not been in the vicinity of his abode, and that if the young man had called there it would have given him great pleasure to

accompany Padruig Dubh to Craig Mhòr. Roderick Mòr had some dinner at the Duns, and left soon after for Loch Dubh. Padruig was very much taken with the Black Loch when he called there, and as a last straw to which he might cling Roderick wondered whether his young friend had taken it into his head to visit Murdoch Mackay.

Roderick Mòr lost no time in getting to Loch Dubh as he was desirous of reaching Craig Mhòr that same evening. It was not an usual thing for him to accomplish the three visits in a single day, but as he had fully made up his mind to do so upon this occasion he would have been very much surprised if he did not succeed. There was not a single person to be seen upon the whole hillside, as he made his way to the residence of Murdoch MacKay. It was a very rare thing that Roderick Mòr should see two Royal stags within short range of where he stood at one point of his journey. He remained motionless for a few seconds, and still they approached nearer and nearer to him. It just occurred to him that, as a coincidence, he should see the Royal animals instead of the person who was out in search of them. They both came within a stone's throw of the spot on which he lingered, and in fact he was just beginning to become somewhat nervous, for if both animals had attacked him there would have been very little chance of his ever seeing Padruig Dubh alive, or his home at Craig Mhòr either, not to speak of Loch Dubh. The outlook was rather of an ominous nature, but Roderick Mòr McDonald was by no means a coward, and after all he had his faithful dog Prince by his side, who would not hesitate to attack one of the animals, while he could defend himself from the other with his shepherd's crook. Roderick awaited his doom if doom it must be, but just at that moment the two animals caught a sniff of the Western breeze, and they made off in the opposite direction at lightning speed. He considered himself in luck, for after all Providence favoured him. The Royal Monarchs of the shaggy heath smelt [sic] an enemy, and they were warned by mother nature to run no risk, so that within the space of a few moments they were far up the mountainside. Roderick made good the short time which he had lost, and the rest of his journey to Loch Dubh was uninterrupted.

The sky threatened rain. The clouds were rather heavy and dark, but here

and there the blue appeared. Roderick hoped that it would go to frost. If it did so, the moon was nearly full, and he would get to Craig Mhòr that night with ease, so far as times concerned, although he might be somewhat wearied. There was nothing pressing for him to do upon the day following, so that he could have a good rest in the morning, instead of his getting up at his usual time.

When he arrived at Loch Dubh he found that Murdoch MacKay was from home. Murdoch had also been upon the hunt. A fox was lurking about the Loch, and as they sometimes attacked the sheep, especially in the moonlight, the shepherd was on round with his dog which rarely missed such creatures if he got a fair chance. Foxes were not uncommon upon that part of the Highlands, as sometimes they wandered in search of food far away from their hiding places. Mrs. Mackay bade Roderick be seated, and enquired what was his errand to the Loch at such a late hour? She assured her visitor that Murdoch would soon be home again, and that they would spend the night together.

Roderick Mòr told Nora that such an idea was quite impossible, as he had to be at Craig Mhòr that night. He enquired at the shepherd's wife whether she or her husband had seen Padruig Dubh, the young man who had accompanied him there on his last visit, as he had left Craig Mhòr the day before, and had not returned home. Nora was very much upset to hear the news, but she or her husband had not seen the youth since he left with Roderick himself some weeks prior to that date. Nora suggested that if Padruig was fond of shooting he might have gone to the Corry. Indeed she observed that Malcolm Campbell was particularly interested in Padruig Dubh, as they appeared to be very friendly on the night of the ball at the Castle where they spent a considerable time in each other's company. Roderick Mòr admitted that Malcolm Campbell thought the world of Padruig Dubh as he himself did, but it was not at all likely that he would have gone to the Corry, although he did not favour the faint hope, that one could never tell until satisfied by a personal inquiry.

Murdoch returned from his search and was surprised to hear of the mysterious disappearance of the young New Zealander, but he had not seen him upon the moor. He had not called at Loch Dubh, that he could vouch for, because his house was never altogether left empty. Either he or his wife were

always at home, and if Padruig had called some of them were bound to have seen him.

After tea Roderick Mòr left Loch Dubh for home. He was himself tired, and not a little disappointed. It was sure to be a source [of] regret to Flora and her mother, the fact that he had been unsuccessful in his search for Padruig Dubh. Whatever lives, hope never dies, however, and hope still burned in Roderick Mòr's bosom. By the time that he arrived home there was still a faint glimmer of hope that Padruig Dubh might have returned and if that was so even then he would not grudge his weary search. It was now dark, but the moon shone brightly, and the stillness of the night added little comfort to his mind, save that the old sayings still hold true, "Silence is golden," and in the silence Roderick hurried over the moor keeping closely upon the narrow path which led him homeward. He knew that his absence would be felt at Craig Mhòr and this idea put "metal in his heels." The Fairie's Well, Flora's now dreaded spot, lay silent as the tomb under a clear sky and the silvery moon. Not even a breath of wind was to be felt. Roderick could only hear the trickling of the crystal water as it left the well, and there was something peculiarly grand in its ripple. The rhythm of music was there, and although Flora MacDonald did dread that spot, yet she always loved it, because in her childhood day she spent many a happy hour upon the green turf near the oasis of her mountain home. Although Roderick was then tired and foot-sore, these drawbacks did not trouble him much. He was still a strong man and full of courage. At last he heard Mona barking as he approached his abode, and Prince replied with some vigour.

When Roderick Mòr arrived home he found that Flora and her mother were not alone. Malcolm Campbell had called to invite him and Padruig Dubh to a hunt upon the moors. "Good evening, Malcolm," said Roderick, as he entered the room. "I did not expect to see you here. Are you on the search also?"

"I only knew for the first time when I arrived half an hour ago that your young friend had disappeared," said Malcolm, "and I have been endeavouring to sympathise, especially with Flora, my flower of the heather." Malcolm twitched his eye as he looked at Roderick Mòr. "Padruig Dubh will not remain long away," said the wiley Malcolm Campbell. "I only expected that he would be

kidnapped. He was quite unconscious of the grave dangers which surrounded him at the Fairie's Well, and the fair Flora did not guard him as much as she ought to."

"That may be so Malcolm," said Roderick Mòr, "but I have had a very fruitless share in the search for him, although this afternoon I came in contact with two antlered monarchs which you would have given something to meet."

Flora explained to her father what steps she had taken to endeavour to trace Padruig while he visited the shepherds, but admitted that all her hopes had been lost in despair.

"Well Flora," said her father, "my efforts have been fruitless likewise, but we must just hope for the best."

"It will all come right in due season, Flora, my dear," said Malcolm. "I may tell you my way of solving the problem. The Fairy Queen has nabbed him at the Well. You see half an hour behind your times means a great deal. Indeed half a minute was quite enough for the little lady in green and gold, for she carries a magic wand and a silver chanter by her side, and with these emblems she works swiftly, so you see what lost time has cost you." Flora smiled faintly, but made no reply. "My business here tonight," continued Malcolm, "is to invite you to attend the hunt which takes place this day week upon the western moors. There are so many Roe Deer this season, that if we do not keep them in check, they will overrun the entire countryside. There are too many white hares also, so something must be done to kill as many of both as will serve to thin them down. I just thought that it would be such a treat for master Padruig Dubh to come also, but he may be shooting in Fairyland, and if not shooting, I am certain he will be playing his 'silver chanter.' He was so keen on piping that he would risk anything for more knowledge in the art. But now I must be going Roderick. The moon is good and Betty will be looking for me by the time that I arrived at the Corry."

"Well then! Malcolm," said Roderick, "I shall be with you at the Corry, this day week, that is to say if the Fairy Queen does not catch me also." Roderick Mòr cast his eye upon Malcolm Campbell with a pleasant smile on his face so as Flora might see that at least there were two who took it for granted that all

would come right in the near future.

Roderick Mòr accompanied Malcolm for a very short distance, and as they walked slowly together, Malcolm assured Roderick that he was convinced that Flora and Padruig Dubh would make a match before the youth left Craig Mhòr for New Zealand. “You may rest assured, Roderick,” said Malcolm, “that the two young people will yet make a bargain on it, and that before long. I can read young lovers’ faces,” continued Malcolm. “I may be wrong, but, nevertheless, I am willing to lay the cost of the finest new silk dress that I can find in the city of Glasgow upon it.”

Roderick smiled, but only said “time will tell, Malcolm,” so they bade each other “good night” and parted.

Chapter XIVThe Fairy Queen Instructs Padruig

Fairyland was, after all, a charming place. That was what Padruig Dubh thought of it as he gazed out at the window of his new abode. Just then the sound of music broke the silence. Padruig had no idea whence it came, but it was the sweetest music which he had ever heard with the exception of the Fairy Queen's "silver chanter." He ventured to open the door of his room, which entered into a great corridor, at the Eastern end of which sat a fairy Princess. She was dressed in a beautiful silken gown, and the couch on which she sat was covered with the same material in various colours. The Princess played upon a golden harp and as she played with a graceful ease Padruig Dubh became rooted to the place where he stood. He was charmed with the rare expression which the performer imparted to his soul from her music.

A fairy maiden broke the magic spell. She placed her tiny hand upon the listener's arm. "The Fairy Queen awaits thee," she said, "in her chamber. Come hither!" Padruig followed, and he was ushered into the Fairy Queen's presence. "Did'st thou enjoy the soft sweet music of the harp, Sir," said the Fairy Queen. "If I mistake not thou wert enchanted by the performance."

"I was indeed," said Padruig, "but sweet that it was, I could not compare it with the strains of your 'silver chanter'."

"Thou art fond of music, youth, I can see," said Fairy Queen. "It is the one great charm of thy life. Thou playest well upon the pipe, but further knowledge of the intricacies of its music will be necessary before thou canst accompany me upon my tour. I can show the pipers who have lived in the dark ages, and let thee hear them play."

"Roderick, the shepherd at yonder dwelling upon the great crag hath told thee about Donald Mor and Padruig Og, but these are only two small branches of piping, were I to compare them to a great tree. Before thou returnest to Craig Mhor I shall show the root, trunk and branches of a great and heroic art. 'Necessity is the mother of invention,' but 'instruction is the key of knowledge.'

You must understand the MacCrimmons never committed their system of musical genius to paper. Their greatness lived within themselves, and their methods of instruction were handed down from father to son pure and unimpaired. I am in possession of every secret and intricate note and movement in ancient piobaireachd, for to prove what I say, did I not sit in the dwelling of the MacCrimmon himself while he instructed his pupils? I carried away in secret what took the masters years to gain. In one day I grasped the entire fundamentals of their wonderful art, and I followed right down a long line of celebrated pipers, the names of whom are deeply engraved upon my heart. MacArthur was among the first of pipers outside the MacCrimmon family to be taught by the genuine Skye masters personally, but the genuine secrets of the art of piobaireachd shall be imparted to thee by a 'Queen'."

"Let me instruct thee. Take this 'silver chanter,' and if thou doest as I did thee, thou shalt understand the art more clearly when thou shalt meet the great minstrels of the misty west, who dwelt amongst the lofty hills and heath-clad mountains. I shall now entrust thee with genuine secrets of the verbal notation of the MacCrimmons which is more commonly known as Canntaireachd. Take that pipe which I have given thee. Hold it in thy left hand. Place thy thumb of that hand upon the hole at the back thereof. Then place the first finger of the same hand upon the top hole in the front of the instrument. Place the second finger upon the second hole, and the third finger upon the third hole. The little finger of thy left hand shall remain free. It is the balancing medium of the left or upper hand. Thy right hand shall now be placed upon the lower holes of the pipe or chanter. Put the ball of the tip of the little finger of thy right hand upon the lowest hole of the pipe, that is, the bottom hole of the pipe should be covered by the little finger of the right hand just midway between the tip and the first joint. Then the three upper or remaining fingers of the right hand should be placed upon the second, third, and fourth holes from the bottom of the pipe. Thou must be careful to see that the fingers are always straight; not bent up, and that the thumb of the right hand be placed upon the pipe at the back, and directly opposite the third or longest finger from the bottom of the chanter. If thou shalt be a piper of note, such as I have but now described is the one and

only way to hold the pipe or chanter. There is just one other thing that I should like to impress upon thy young mind: always remember my left hand is right hand at the top of the chanter, and the right-hand is the proper hand at bottom the chanter. The real reason for this you have found out already. If the left hand is on the top of the chanter the drones will lie upon thy left shoulder where they ought to lie, but if thy right hand be allowed to go on the top part of the chanter the drones would then have to lie upon thy right shoulder which is quite wrong and ungraceful as regards your carriage and princely bearing.”

“Ancient piobaireachd has lived from its creation until now, traditionally. It has been handed down from father to son; master to pupil; from generation to generation, and it now remaineth with thee, their descendents. Thou must then forget about thy right hand and thy left hand as I have already warned thee, and know them as the upper hand and the lower hand, because in ancient times the tunes were imparted to the pupils by the master from the chanter alone. The pupil faced the master, and by naming the hands, ‘upper’ and ‘lower’ there was less chance of mistakes in fingering than if the hands were referred to by the master at the ‘right hand’ and ‘left hand.’ Many self-taught pipers began with the right hand up instead of the left, and the result was as I have already described to you but a moment ago, but thou art now safely past that danger. Now thou dost hold the chanter, as I have instructed thee, with all thy fingers except the little finger of the upper hand, and thy two thumbs upon it. In other words, seven of thy fingers and two thumbs hold the chanter. While thou holdest it so, thou shalt get the following notes in the MacCrimmon scale, but in order that there shall be no misunderstanding let me make it quite clear to thee thus:—when the chanter is closed, that is, all thy fingers are upon the instrument, thou shalt get the first note of the MacCrimmon scale, that is—‘um.’ This note will yet be known by generations who are now unborn by the letter ‘G’ and the system will be called staff notation, but time must march slowly on before that era shall have its being. Raise the fourth or little finger of the lower hand, and thou shalt get the second note of the MacCrimmon scale, or:—‘o,’ which shall yet be known as ‘a’ in staff notation. This note thou must understand to be the keynote of the actual chanter scale, which will yet be known as a full octave

scale. Raise the next or second finger from the lower end of the chanter, and thou shalt get the third note of the MacCrimmon scale, or:-'a,' which yet shall be known as 'b' in staff notation. Raise the next or third finger of the lower hand, and thou shalt get the fourth note of the MacCrimmon scale, or:-'ae,' which shall yet be known as 'c' in staff notation. Raise the next or fourth finger of the lower hand and put the little finger upon the lowest hole on the chanter and thou shalt get the fifth note the MacCrimmon scale, or:-'ei,' which shall yet be known as 'd' in staff notation. Then bring down upon the chanter the three top fingers of the lower hand upon their respective holes, lift the little finger of the lower hand, and the first finger of the top hand from the lower end of the chanter and you will get the second note of the MacCrimmon scale, or:-'i,' which shall yet be known as 'e' in staff notation. Raise the second finger of the top hand from the bottom, with the little finger of the lower hand still up, and thou shalt get [the] seventh note the MacCrimmon scale, or:-'ie,' which shall yet be known as 'f' in staff notation. Raise the top finger of the upper hand, that is, three fingers of the upper hand up, three fingers of the lower hand down, and the little finger of the lower hand up, and thou shalt get the eighth note the MacCrimmon scale, or:-'u,' which shall yet be known as 'g' in staff notation. Another position of the fingers for the same note is:-The little finger of the lower hand up: the remaining three fingers of the lower hand down; the first and third fingers of the upper hand up, with the middle or second finger of the upper hand down. Finally, raise the thumb of the upper hand from the chanter, and leave all other fingers of both hands in the same position as the note 'u,' or 'g,' and thou shalt get the ninth or last note of the MacCrimmon scale, or:-'e,' which shall yet be known as 'a' in staff notation. This last note in the MacCrimmon scale shall form what shall yet be known as the extremity of an octave in staff notation.

If thou canst but remember these notes, with their relative fingering thou shalt be able to follow the tunes, which ere long thou shalt hear the great masters play. In order that thou mayest remember this peculiar scale, and memorise it with greater ease let me enumerate the notes in their order from the lowest to the last or highest:-One 'um,' two 'o,' three 'a,' four 'ae,' five 'ei,' six 'i,' seven 'ie,' eight 'u,' nine 'e.'

Thou shouldst never forget that the scale is the root or foundation of all music especially this great music, and if thou shouldst play a perfect scale, thou shalt in time play a perfect tune. Thou shalt never at any time consider thyself too far advanced in the art of music, to be above playing, periodically, the pipe scale with fine expression. Now thou shalt play it with me, and if thou canst play it thus, thou shalt have good reason to be proud of thy future performances. Thou shouldst always be careful to give each note the same time value when playing over the scale. If thou shalt do so, each note, together with the entire scale, shall possess exquisite beauty; but thou must always bear in mind the fact, that an irregularly played scale possesseth no charm whatever.”

“Thou must be made aware of the fact that thine ear is the recorder of music, and that when thou hearest a piobaireachd rendered in perfect form that is one of the greatest lessons in the art of acquiring musical knowledge.”

“Thy parent hath imparted to thee the music of the pipe in practise, but let me describe the construction of the great music, and also acquaint thee with the various specimens of piobaireachd; because ere long thou shalt see and hear the greatest performers of pipe music who have ever lived.”

“Be it known to thee, then, that there are eight different species in this music, which thou lovest so dearly, and hath spent so much time as well as money upon. There is the ‘Salute’; the ‘Welcome’; the ‘Lament’; the ‘Farewell’; ‘Gathering’; the ‘March’ or ‘Challenge’; the ‘Battle Tune’, and the ‘Warning’.”

“The ‘Salute’ signifieth the birth of the Chief; the coming of age of the heir to the estates; the marriage of the Chief, or the succession of the new Chief to the headship of the tribe or clan. The ‘Welcome’ was intended to assure the one Chief that he was being made welcomed by another chief, and that while he was in residence in his host’s Castle he was in perfect safety. The ‘Lament’ commemorateth the death of the Chief, and to its doleful notes the clansmen accompanied his dead body to his last resting place in the green dell. The ‘Farewell’ was played by the visiting Chief’s piper as he left the residence, or Castle, of his host, which signified regret for his necessary departure. The ‘Gathering’ was played in the time of war, and to its hurried notes the clansmen gathered round the standard of their Chief, who commanded that during the

playing thereof the 'Fiery Cross' was also hurried o'er mountain and through glen. The 'March,' or 'Challenge' indicated an argument; so that a reason might be set forth for going to war, and foster the daring spirit with which a great clan went into battle. The 'Battle Tune' which the piper played in the midst of the raging conflict signified an expression of complete defiance, and to its savage and shrill notes the heroic clansmen fought for victory or died upon the field. The 'Warning' is the last of the group, and as the Highland piper observed his Chief to be in danger, he struck up this peculiar melody, in order to warn his master to keep at a distance from a cruel enemy."

"Now! Thou must be made aware that these tunes hath an Urlar, or Theme, and Variations such as the Siubhal or First Variation, and its Doubling; the Toarluath, and its Doubling; Toarluath Fosgailte, and its Doubling; the Toarluath Breabach, and its Doubling; the Toarluath-a-mach; the Crunluath, and its Doubling; the Crunluath Fosgailte, and its Doubling; the Crunluath Breabach, and its Doubling; and the Crunluath-a-mach, are to be found in the various species of tunes to which they apply, but thou must take special note that all the variations which I have but now enumerated are not to be found in any one tune. A piobaireachd with a Toarluath and Crunluath cannot have a Toarluath Fosgailte and Crunluath Fosgailte, and the tune with a Toarluath Breabach and Crunluath Breabach cannot have a Toarluath Fosgailte and Crunluath Fosgailte. In other words each piobaireachd can only have one of the following: Toarluath and Crunluath, Toarluath Fosgailte and Crunluath Fosgailte or Toarluath Breabach and Crunluath Breabach, but a piobaireachd which has a Toarluath and Crunluath can have a Toarluath-a-mach, and a Crunluath-a-mach if its construction will allow of such."

"Let me warn thee that the ancient music of the Highlands did not possess all these variations in its early infancy. First of all the early Masters begin with a Theme, and were content to perform that alone until that portion became perfect. The greatest beauty of melody is, and always was displayed in the Theme, or root of the tune, and from what thou now knowest to be the Theme or Ground, came in time, though very slowly all the Variations which I have now explained to thee."

“Nature hath suggested to the early composers ‘Themes’ on which they dwelt. The sound of the waves dashing against the rocks on the shore; the warbling of the birds; the ringing of the Church bells; the clang of armour; the marriage, the birth, the death of the Chief, and the echo that flashed across the stream which ran down the narrow corries, all suggested Themes for new creations in ‘the art of piobaireachd.’”

“Thou shalt find, then, in the Theme, the original note, which in the next Variation is doubled; in the following variation it is trebled; then it becomes a fourfold movement; then fivefold, and finally sevenfold, which is the crowning glory of piobaireachd.”

“In the ancient MacCrimmon style thou shalt find but one syllable in the Theme; in the first variation two syllables; in the Toarluath three syllables; in the Toarluath Fosgailte and Toarluath Breabach four syllables; in the Crunluath five syllables, and in the Crunluath Breabach thou shalt find seven syllables, and also the longest of all the movements in the great music. Such explanations will do much to enable thee to understand in theory, what thou shalt yet hear in practice.”

“The poetry, as well as the music of the Gael shall interest thee, and ere thou dwellest long and fairyland thou shalt even see the great Gaelic poet Ossian, whose fame has spread over all the land. Thou lovest the old time ‘Ossian’s Lament,’ which is one of the most beautiful compositions ever created for the Highland pipe. The ancient bard and poet of the misty mountains, was comely in feature, and very stately in person. He was a hero; in fact he was the most valiant man of his time. His flowing white beard, and dark rolling eyes were characteristics which even in his old age made him attractive, and in the prime of his youth he won the affection of more than one of the mountain maidens. Thou shalt hear him recite his poetry in the Gaelic tongue, which thou shalt not understand. There is inspiration and greatness in his muses, and that thou mayest have some idea of what they are like let me give thee an example here and now in thine own language.”

“King of Temora! Matthos said it is thine to lead in war. Thou art a fire to our eyes on the dark-brown field. Like a blast thou hast passed over hosts, and

laid them low in blood: but who has heard thy words returning from the field? The wrathful delight in death; their remembrance rests on the wounds of their spear. Strife is folded in their thoughts; their words are ever heard. The course Chief of Moma was like a troubled stream. The dead were rolled on thy path; but others also lift the spear. We were not feeble behind thee, but the flow is strong.”

“Such,” continued the Fairy Queen, “is the poetry of thy beloved Ossian, but enough meantime. There is even another poet whose fame was great; who loved the rugged mountains, and the sweet pipe of the gentle shepherd. While thou art stirred by the heroic words of the Muse, let me recite to thee a stanza from a poet whose mighty voice shook the lofty hills, and sweetened the notes of the pastoral pipe.

‘Oh! purple hills whose sides are riven;
By thunder from the vaults of heaven.
The mighty eagle’s piercing scream,
Disturbs the shepherd’s lonely dream.

I see the misty mountains rise;
With towering peaks to meet the skies.
The heather with its purple hue;
is brightened by a sky of blue.

The rugged slopes of every ben;
Leads down towards a fertile glen,
And when the hilltops rise again;
They lead but to another plain.

Oh! What a joy-the shepherd’s pride:
To watch his flocks upon thy side;
While on thy brow the stag doth roam;
The antlered monarch’s lofty home.

Hark! What is that adown the glen?
 The sound of pipe and armed men.
 Do clansmen come from near and far?
 With fiery cross to practise war.

No! 'tis the pipe of peace I hear.
 Its notes sound sweetly in mine ear.
 I see them come they gather still,
 From every pathway on the hill.

Each Chieftain donned his tartaned plaid;
 But sheathed he wore his claymore blade:
 While clansmen gathered by the side,
 Of him who leads them far and wide.

Then feats of strength in sports began;
 They tried their prowess man-to-man,
 And when the day had closed perchance,
 They spent the night in song and dance.”

“In the olden days,” said the Fairy Queen, “life in the Highlands was a strange mixture of peace and war. Husbandry was too often neglected when war was rife; but the gentle shepherd always tended his flocks; for the clansmen had to be clothed and fed. The shepherd, then, had a pipe of his own, which sounded more plaintive in the listener’s ear than the pipe of war. Let me now render to thine ear a pastoral tune, so that thou mayest fully enjoy its charm.”

The Fairy Queen then took from her side her “silver chanter,” and she played a Theme of which she was passionately fond. Padruig Dubh, whom she had held spell-bound with her enchanted instruction for so long, became more and more overjoyed and contented in fairyland. He listened to the piping of the Fairy Queen until he was completely lost in a reverie of musical enchantment.

Padruig had never heard such music in his life before. The Fairy Queen's fingers danced swiftly over her instrument, and as she continued to play her captive longed to play on his own pipe, which had now been silent for such a long time.

Just then the music ceased, and the Fairy Queen dropped her instrument by her side. Padruig Dubh would fain have requested permission to play, but before he had time to address his captive (sic), the Fairy Queen again warned him what was to happen upon the morrow.

"Thou must be early astir at tomorrow's dawn, Sir," she said. "There is to take place in fairyland the greatest 'Gathering of Clans' ever witnessed. Thou shalt see the mountains on either side, and in the valley below, the scene shall be such as you have never seen before. Thou shalt be in attendance with me, and must keep closely by my side, as I shall have need of thy pipe on more than one occasion. Take, then, that pipe in thine hand, which I have given thee but an hour ago, and play with me and air which hath much beauty, and this full of pathos. When thou hast committed it to memory thou shalt never forget it." They played together this air, which Padruig performed in such a manner as if he had played it a thousand times before, and if tomorrow he was to play such a beautiful piece of music it must be intended to fulfill a special purpose.

The Fairy Queen left the room in which she had remained with her captive for some considerable time. She led the way and then requested Padruig Dubh to follow her. They passed through a long corridor, which was beautifully illuminated by a great number of small lights. This appeared to Padruig to be an underground passage. There were also numerous seats right along the walls, and as captor and captive approached the end of the passage, the Fairy Queen opened a secret door, from which there came sweet sounds of music. They then entered a small room in which there sat a fairy Princess whom Padruig had already seen and heard. She played upon a golden harp, and as she played she accompanied the music by singing a song of love, which ran as follows:—"A maiden fair doth wait for thee. She longs once more thy face to see. Her heart is sore, her love is true; While absence fires her soul anew. With what an ecstasy shall she; Rejoice again to meet with thee."

But the Fairy Queen left the small chamber, and signified her desire for

Padruig Dubh to follow. He was very reluctant to leave the presence of the singer, because she sang so sweetly, and she sang about one which he loved. Padruig pondered over the words which he had just heard, and the melody haunted his soul like unto a sacred passion. Padruig and the Fairy Queen then began to climb a long winding stair, and when they reached the top of a great tower, the Fairy Queen opened a window, which overlooked a beautiful country.

“That is but a small part of my extensive domains,” said the Fairy Queen, “and through these woods we shall pass tomorrow for our rallying ground lies there: where the great Highland Chieftains with their clansmen and retinue are at this moment approaching. But now we must be gone. I have more pressing business which must be attended to.” They again descended to the bottom of the winding stair, and the Fairy Queen entered a room in which she left her captive, while she made further arrangements for tomorrow’s journey. Padruig Dubh was in the midst of a world of literature: for the bookshelves around him ground under their burden. He laid his hand upon a volume of ancient poetry which filled his inmost soul with joyful hopes, and led his mind into a land of pleasant dreams.

Chapter XVThe Gathering Of The Clans

Padruig Dubh was wakened early in the morning to the strains of the pipes. After he had dressed and looked out the window of his room he saw a very tiny man playing upon an old set of pipes. He played the tune which the Fairy Queen had taught Padruig the evening before. This little fellow wore a magnificent dress, and he paced to and fro very gracefully. Padruig Dubh had not forgotten the air of the tune which was now sounding so sweetly in his ear once more. The performer played in a small court down below the listener's window. This court was surrounded by a high wall, which re-echoed the notes as they rose upwards. Padruig take particular notice of the graceful manner in which the little piper carried himself with his pipes, and also the expression upon his face, which arrested his attention with such curiosity, that he bent down in order to get the full force of the notes, as well as to study the performer's facial expression. The tune was reproduced in a very singular manner, and with exactly the same expression as that of the Fairy Queen's rendering. "Is that intended for me to hear once more," said Padruig to himself. "It may be well to listen at all events."

There was something very attractive about the melody, for it was an air with a story in it. As one who would read a book from end to end without a stop in order to get the good of its contents in minute detail; such was the case with the tune which Padruig Dubh now heard. He listened eagerly so that he might catch every note, and the one followed the other in becoming harmony. This tune was intended by the Fairy Queen for some special purpose, but what that purpose was Padruig had no idea. All that he could do was to wait patiently for further developments. There was magnetic power in the notes of the tune which Padruig Dubh listened to, which drew him closer to the performer. The strains which he heard acted as a magnet upon his mind. He was not content to listen only, but had to see the performer in person.

All at once the piper ceased to play. The tune had a pleasant close, which

satisfied the ear of the listener, and Padruig was disappointed when it was finished. The tiny piper who had just completed his daily task suddenly disappeared, but where he had gone Padruig Dubh could not tell. Probably he had other duties to perform, and to these he would have to attend. Padruig wished very much to converse with him, if that was by any means possible, but he knew not where to find the Fairy Queen's piper.

The door of Padruig's chamber was opened very gently, and in stepped the Fairy Queen in person. She was dressed in a beautiful gown of silk and lace, and wore upon her head a crown of silver studded with precious stones. The gems in her crown sparkled brightly as he moved about the room in the morning sunshine.

"Good morning! Sir," said the Fairy Queen to Padruig Dubh, after she had surveyed his room. "Thou must now breakfast in haste and come with me." Padruig was then conducted to a breakfast room, and after he had partaken of many good things he was again warned by a Fairy Princess that the Fairy Queen was in readiness for her journey which had to be accomplished immediately. This little Princess ushered Padruig Dubh into the Fairy Queen's presence, and there he received instructions for the day. Padruig had to take his pipes with him, and the Fairy Queen carried by her side her 'silver chanter,' while she held in her right hand the silver wand by which she performed many mysterious deeds.

The Fairy Queen and Padruig Dubh left the enchanted Castle together. They passed rapidly through the beautiful country which Padruig had viewed the night before from the turret window. It appeared to be no trouble for them to cover the ground; for they had already gone a considerable distance on their way. A very high hill now reared its head before them, and the pine forest which covered its side sheltered them from the north wind as it whistled through the branches. The pine trees wore their Autumn colours, and they looked very beautiful as they waved their heads in the breeze.

The Fairy Queen lost no time in getting to the top of the mountain, which they had to climb, and when they reached the summit they paused for a moment. "Look now to the valley below, Sir," said the Fairy Queen, and Padruig gazed in

wonderment. "There, on that beautiful plain the Gathering of many clans shall take place in their respective tartans, and now we must press forward, so that we may be at the meeting place in advance of the various clans which shall take part in the great rally."

In a very short time they both arrived at the upper end of the large grassy plain which nestled at the foot of the lofty hills. The grounds upon which the Gathering was to be held was surrounded on three sides, to the South, East, and West. At the North side of the plain the ground rose naturally almost into the form of a dais, and on this height the Fairy Queen took up her position. The mountains on either side were very high and rugged, and part of them were well covered by pine trees. Broken ridges appeared here and there, and along these ravines ran paths by which these solitudes were traversed. The rugged beauty of the lofty hills appeared to Padruig to be an appropriate background for the occasion of a Gathering such as was now about to take place, and the day being fine though somewhat short, in conjunction with the surroundings brought everything into becoming harmony. The Fairy Queen surveyed the whole valley at a glance, and after a moment's hesitation she took from her side her "silver chanter," and from it she played the tune. It was in the form of a "Gathering," and she put such fire into it that the Padruig could imagine in his own mind that if the clansmen could only hear it they would gather in an instant upon the fairy-haunted field.

Padruig waiting patiently to see what the Fairy Queen's pleasure might be, and he had not long to wait; for just then the sound of music could be heard in the distance. "I can hear them coming," said the Fairy Queen. "Today there shall gather sixty-four clans: each having their chieftain, and one hundred clansmen, with their pipers. Each Chieftain shall pick the bravest and most stalwart men of his clan, and they shall not number in all more than an hundred all told. They shall bear no arms; only the Chieftain of each clan shall carry his claymore, which shall be sheathed. Thou, fair youth shalt play that melody which thou didst hear this morning at daybreak, and thou shalt continue to play until the first plan appears upon the green plain. When the MacGillivrays set foot upon the soft sward upon which this Gathering is to take place, thou shalt

instantly cease to play, and record upon this parchment a detailed account of each clan as they arrive. See that thou makest no mistake in the accounting of the clans, or the number of clansmen, in case that it may be against thee to err in the performance of this important part of thy duty.”

The Fairy Queen left the place where she stood while she instructed her captive, and then instantly disappeared. Padruig Dubh then began to play upon his pipe, and without the slightest effort, rendered the tune which the Fairy Queen herself had imparted to him the night before. While he played he could see the clansmen gathering from the South, East and West. Their pipers were in the vanguard of each clan, and the standard-bearers were all powerful man. As the first man set foot upon the grass sward, Padruig ceased to play upon his pipe, and the following was the record which he made for the Fairy Queen.

The MacGillivrays with an hundred men including their Chieftain and pipers. Their banner waved gently in the breeze, and it bore the coat of arms of the Chieftain, with the motto “Touch not the cat bot a glove.” The clan pipers played the MacGillivrays’ “March.”

The MacDonalds with their Chieftain, whose banner bore the Armorial Bearings of the clan, and their mottos “Craig an fhithech,” and “Per mare et terras.” Their pipers played the MacDonalds’ “March.”

The Drummonds with their Chieftain, whose banner bore the Armorial Bearings of the clan, with their motto: “Gang warily.” Their pipers played the “Drummonds’ March.”

The Forbses with their Chieftain, whose banner bore the Armorial Bearings of the clan, with their motto “Grace me guide.” Their pipers playing the “Forbses’ March.”

The Graemes with their Chieftain, whose banner bore the Armorial Bearings of the clan, with their motto “Ne Oublie.” Their pipers played the “Graemes’ March.”

The Grants with their Chieftain, whose banner for the Armorial Bearings of the clan, with their motto “Stand Fast” and “Craigellachie.”

Other fifty-eight clans followed, each having their Chieftain; their banners

emblazoned with their Armorial Bearings; their Mottoes, and the pipers played their appropriate pipe music.

When the last clan entered the ground the Fairy Queen appeared. "Hast thou numbered the clans, Sir," she said Padruig Dubh. "Show me thy list, which should contain sixty-four clans and all." Padruig produced his scroll, and it agreed with the number which the Fairy Queen had invited. Padruig again played upon his pipe for a short time, and when he ceased the Fairy Queen gave orders that all should partake of refreshments, which were served by a great number of Fairy Princesses. When all had supped the entire company took part in sports of every kind.

The ancient sports of the Highlands were well contested, and amongst the various items which took place were tug-of-war, shinty, running, jumping, hammer and weight throwing, tossing the caber, dancing and fencing. The enthusiasm with which each clansman entered into the amusements was great, and no difference or quarrel marred the day's enjoyment. There was a special competition for bagpipe playing for the clan pipers. Each piper playing with great spirit, and the individual clan tunes were heard to advantage.

At the close of the day he assembled clansmen, with their respective Chieftains gathered around the Fairy Queen as she played upon her "silver chanter." Its music was so full of charm that all sports ceased. The Fairy Queen played upon her enchanted pipe for the very purpose of drawing the Highlanders around her. She then placed her instrument by her side and addressed the gathering thus:

"Highland Chieftains and clansmen ye have done well this day. Sport is the life of a nation when entered into an appropriate seasons of the year, and today the amusements have not been marred by animosity or jealous rivalry. Each victor in the various events hath been fully rewarded by his victory. That alone shall be sufficient recompense for the trouble entailed. Victory is so easily carried away when it has been secured and it cannot be divided. I have marked with great pleasure the utmost fairness of each award, and the gift of strength to a strongman is a great asset when used in doing good. There is nothing more noble, or elevating in all the events of life than to give honour to whom it is due.

If one man be stronger than another, his strength cannot be divided; if one dancer dances more nimbly than another, then the skill of the best artist is his own, and if one piper plays with more beauty of expression than his neighbour, he hath in him a gift from nature. He only does his best just the same as the less fortunate of performers upon the great pipe. I am so well pleased with the success of today that I invite all to my Castle over yonder hill to take part in a grand ball which shall take place tonight at the hour of eight prompt. Thou shalt have two guides; the one shall be slightly in advance, and the other shall lead the whole assemblage to the music of his ancient pipe I did thee all farewell," and the Fairy Queen instantly disappeared, followed by Padruig Dubh.

Little Kenneth, the dwarf gave the signal for March; for the clans had formed up into regular order. He led the way and Duncan Bheag struck up a sprightly March to which every clansmen and Chieftain stepped forward with light springing footsteps because Duncan's pipe played merrily. They lost no time in reaching the top of the hill, and then the worst being passed, the rest of the journey was easily accomplished. When at last Duncan ceased to pipe the Castle gates were opened, and all entered. They were conducted to a great Hall where refreshments were served, and all were prepared for dance and song.

The sound of music heralded the hour of eight, and now the clansmen entered headed by the Chieftains while they filled to overflowing, the great ballroom. This place was luxuriously decorated with works of art upon the walls on three sides. On the fourth hung a great tapestry of an ancient boar hunt, where the mountain scenery was magnificent. This tapestry was a masterpiece of needlework, and at the one end of the room lay the boar dead and bleeding. He was speared by the foremost huntsman who was to be seen holding a spear in his right hand. The music which could be heard was that of the harp, and it continued until the dancing began. The harpist played by the same Fairy Princess as Padruig Dubh had been charmed by on more than one occasion.

The Fairy Queen had left the sports field and returned to her castle, along with Padruig Dubh by a secret path, which was a much more direct road than that taken by the clansmen.

When Padruig entered the room to which he was conducted by a Fairy Princess, he found there a fine dress all in readiness for him to put on. It consisted of a kilt of Royal tartan, and a black velvet coat with silver braid and buttons. He also found all the necessary Highland ornaments, and when he was fully attired he had every appearance of being equal at least to any Highland Chieftain. The Fairy Queen had also undergone a great change of dress, for she was clad in a robe of scarlet over which there was a covering of silk lace curiously worked with pure silver. She carried by her side her "silver chanter," slung from her shoulder by a very peculiarly made chain of silver, and in her right hand she held her wand of office, by the use of which she could perform great miracles.

Padruig Dubh accompanied the Fairy Queen into the ballroom, and they took up their position upon the dais at the north end of the room. The first dance was to be taken part in only by the Chieftains of clans, and they were lined up at one side of the room; the floor being cleared. Then sixty-four Fairy Princesses entered by a side door, so that each Chieftain had a partner. All the Princesses were dressed in pure white, with lace trimmings which were studded with fine jewels. The contrast between the different tartans worn by the Highland Chieftains, and the sparkling gems upon their partners' dresses was very marked indeed. It was a pleasing spectacle and a unique example of Royal splendour. Padruig Dubh, who was upon the dais, struck up his pipes and played a slow air to which the dancers marched down the centre of the room, and parted to the right and left; the ladies upon one side and the Highland Chieftains upon the other. Then at the signal given by the Fairy Queen the dance began, and to the piper's magic notes, the company tripped merrily round the ballroom. The various clansmen afterwards entered in turn into the dance with the greatest enthusiasm. They had for their partners Fairy ladies dressed in green silk gowns. During the evening the company danced to the music of the harp in addition to the pipes, the harp being a favourite instrument with the fairies as well as the pipe. Dance after dance went on, and everyone present enjoyed the event thoroughly. The hours passed swiftly and pleasantly, and at last the great clock in the Castle tower struck four in the morning. The dancing ceased, and

the Fairy Princess who played upon the harp sang a beautiful song accompanied by the soft strains of her instrument. The song ran thus:-

“Oh! Music what a charm is thine;
That leads my soul to ecstasy.
To that right world of happiness,
Where I can dwell at peace with thee.

My golden harp doth sound so sweet:
In loves' enchanting melody.
It kindles hope in every breast.
If only it would come to stay.

Oh! What a victory is thine,
When savage hatred bends its head.
When unity supplants discord,
And bitter tears no more are shed.

Hail! Glorious herald of joyful piece,
Companion would I be to thee.
For thou the captive of my heart;
Doth bid me from my troubles flee.”

When the singer stopped, the Fairy Queen then addressed the assemblage before they parted:-“Chieftains and clansmen, ye have danced merrily all night; but now it is morning, and we must part. What greater gift than music can be found for the purpose of beguiling the time, and brightening the lives of mankind. Music hath charms but, alas! Too often has it stirred up strife and hatred. How much pain and sorrow hath the ‘Gathering’ and the ‘Battle Tune’ caused to the mother and the lovesick maiden? Yea! These airs for the great pipe hath been the means of rallying many a brave clansmen and valiant Chieftain, only to meet an early death, and a narrow bed beneath the sod. There are

occasions when it is necessary to go to war for liberty and honour, but how many skirmishes have taken place between one clan and another over covetous and dishonest actions which in the past have only lead to ruin, and the destruction of mankind? In future, I say let these acts of violence cease. Remember that if the 'Gathering' when played upon the pipe, by the piper, can bring clansmen from far and near; and if the 'Battle Tune' can rouse the fighting spirit of the clan; do not forget at the same time that the music of the pipe can make the heart sad; and even sick of war. Were I to play just now the heart-rending notes of the 'Lament' upon this instrument which hangeth by my side, it would bring tears from the eyes of the hardest-hearted warrior. He would then realize what the horrors of war are, and what the mother, and the helpless child have to bear through its effects. As a Queen, I love peace, but I hate war. The ancient proverb may say 'all is fair in love and war,' but it does not always follow that such a saying is anything like true."

"Clansmen! I warn thee not to envy or take away thy neighbour's companion and love, and Chieftains beware of war. One adventurer may lead thousands of clansmen into battle, but he cannot bring the slain back to their once happy homes: nor can victory reward a sorrowing mother, where war could have been avoided. How much doth our beloved nation, Scotland, long for peace? How many struggles hath she seen? Some lost, others one; yet she is no nearer that peaceful harmony which shall build up her shattered fortunes. I would now bid thee all adieu, and may the same spirit of goodwill towards one another lead thee to thy respective homes, as it hath kept thee here in unity under my roof."

CHAPTER XVIThe Roe Hunt

The Autumn had almost closed, and Craig Mhòr stood bare amongst the hills. The trees had shed their leaves, and the only green bushes which looked healthy were the holly hedges that surrounded the shepherd's house. The heather too had lost its purple, but the mountains were still beautiful. They were never distasteful to the eye, no matter what the season may be, or what the weather is like. Roderick Mòr McDonald had a peculiar feeling of loneliness since his visitor Padruig Dubh Macvourich had disappeared; but he was not without hope. The young man was sure to return someday soon, just as he had left his haunted abode. At least that was what Roderick Mòr thought. It was then midday; and as the pipe was a cure for all the shepherd's ills and misfortunes he always had a craving for a tune to solace his anxious thoughts and beguile the time. He therefore laid hold upon the instrument which he loved so well, filled the bag with one long breath and set the reeds a humming in masterly style. "Strange!" He thought in his own mind; "they are going well today. There must be some charm either in them or me," he would have said to himself, if only he could have spoken. Yet the great pipe spoke to him in notes of exultant joy. Every reed was in perfect harmony, and his fingers rose and fell like magic. The pipe which he played was a charm to more than the performer, for Flora, his daughter had stolen into the room beside her father, and sat in silence feasting upon the rare melody. She was always in love with her father's pipe, but today it sounded sweeter in her ear than ever it had done before.

Roderick Mòr played a very old Pibroch known to him as "The Tryst." It was an air which spoke of love, and well could he remember upon the days of his youth wants such a pleasure the same "Tryst," or place of meeting with his sweetheart, meant to him. These musical pieces commemorating such events created a very pleasurable sensation in his mind. That was the reason why he played them so often.

Flora followed the rendering of the piece with great eagerness, and as she had

finished her work for the rest of the day, she hoped that her father would play that air over again. When he came to the Doubling of the Crunluath Flora stepped quietly up to his side, and whispered in his ear. No sooner had she done so than once more the Theme came with tender feeling from her father's chanter. Each note was to her a word, and as the notes continued to rise from the fingers of the performer, they became a sentence, which in the end formed a complete story as the tune came to a close. After all, Flora thought to herself, but there was in reality more in music than the mind could comprehend or the time express. She listened intently to the music, not only because it was her father who played it or because she had been accustomed to hear it from earliest childhood, but for the reason that she loved the music of the pipe very dearly.

This was the shepherd's past-time, or midday recreation, and as a rule Roderick Mòr MacDonald never missed an opportunity of playing upon his pipe whenever he could find a spare half hour. True, he had other duties, which he by no means neglected, but he managed both duty and pleasure in the daily round of everyday life. Roderick Mòr was by no means a careless or slothful servant. His master was pleased with him, and he was pleased with his master.

Time, however, was wearing on. The day was now about at its shortest, and the hearty shepherd had to be about his business. Roderick laid his tuneful pipe aside for the time being. "I see you are there, Flora" said he to his daughter. "The pipes are going well today if I mistake not."

"They are father," said Flora. "I don't think that ever I heard them play so well. That tune which you played first was delightful."

"It was, Flora," said her father. "It came accidentally to my mind, and as I played it, I could not resist the temptation to look back upon happy, happy days, when the world was at least a little younger. Sometimes I play these fancy haunting airs when my mind roams in a world of its own. The music of my beloved pipe has such a peculiar power over my mind that dispels all troubles and anxieties which generally lurk about me. A good tune upon the pipe never fails to lift me up above the turmoil of everyday life, and makes me sometimes feel a new man."

"I was almost asleep, father," said Flora, "as you played the first tune. It was

a most delightful air. I am very fond of it.”

“Yes! Flora,” said her father, “and so you well may. There are few tunes like it in Ceòl Mòr. But now I must go and arrange about the sheep being put to the low country for the winter.”

Flora was left alone with her mother who was feeling somewhat tired, and she said, “I think I shall go and have a rest for an hour or so; but be sure and call me in time for tea.”

“All right, mother,” said Flora. “I shall find a book and have a quiet read by the fireside.”

Flora procured for herself a volume and sat down in her father’s armchair. It was Sir Walter Scott’s “Heart of Midlothian,” which she held in her hand, but she never opened it. This was the volume which she selected, not altogether on account of the tragedy which saddened the story on its pages, but because the locality with which it dealt was Edinburgh. The fire burned brightly, and Flora gazed into it, as if she endeavoured to read the figures which presented themselves in the live coals, but they only died away; smouldered into dust and disappeared. At last she wondered whether Padruig Dubh, whose image was reflected from the mirror of her tender and love stricken heart, had gone to Edinburgh, so that he might play a trick upon her, as a punishment for having so often warned her about the Fairy Queen.

Edinburgh was a beautiful city and while Flora was there she visited its many places of interest. Padruig Dubh took for his place of education the city of Glasgow. At least that was his father’s choice because the friend of his early youth resided there. Of the two cities Flora was glad that she was sent to Edinburgh. It was the capital of Scotland, and she being fond of the hills had many of them in the fair capital. She could look up to seven hills, and when she climbed them in turn, she could look down on seven valleys. There was the Castle: a landmark to be proud of. Volumes could be written on the history of this ancient Royal residence. Flora had often climbed the Castle hill, and gazed over the city. The Highland Regiment which was always stationed there attracted much attention; for she loved to see the men marched past in the kilt. The pipers were also favourites with Flora. She loved the pipes, and wherever

the Regiment marched in full dress parade in the city, if it was possible she was often near them that she might see the Highlanders, and hear their pipers play. There was also the Palace of Holyrood, the ancient home of the Scottish kings and queens. The Royal mile contained the houses of many of the Scottish nobility in earlier days, and the Highland lairds spent many happy days and nights there. Like the mountains which towered into the blue skies around Flora's home, Arthur's Seat reared its lofty head far above the city. On May-day she climbed its grassy sides, and bathed her brow and rosy cheeks with the dew which fell from heaven upon it. From the top of this height Flora could see the river Forth gliding in graceful silence as it wound its way to the dark blue ocean, and she watched with much interest the boats as they passed upwards and downwards. There was little attraction in Glasgow to compare with Edinburgh, and that Padruig Dubh had suddenly taken it into his head, he might have gone back to the Scottish capital to explore its places of interest once more before he would return to New Zealand.

Flora recalled much of the past in her own mind, during the two hours or more which she sat by the fireside. She was now beginning to weary, and at last laid aside the book which she still held in her hand during these thoughtful moments. While the volume lay unopened, Flora re-read, so to speak, the unwritten story of the past few years of her life which she spent in Edinburgh. Indeed if her thoughts had been committed to paper they would have filled many pages. On looking at the clock which set upon the mantel shelf Flora realised that the hands had recorded more time than she intended to spend in meditation. She left the room and went outside to see whether her father was in sight, as it was now time that he had returned from the hill.

Roderick Mòr had left home after dinner to go round his portion of the sheep farm, to gather his flocks. They were very much scattered that afternoon, and he had further to go than he expected. Even although he possessed to splendid sheepdogs, it was no easy matter to gather the flocks quickly when they were scattered far and wide upon the extensive moors.

The weather had been fine for the most part of the summer, and the autumn as well, so that the hills were fairly firm for footing, which made walking more

pleasant than when the mossy sward was wet and boggy. The afternoon was fine, and Roderick Mòr did not hurry over the ground; because, for one reason the sheep were very much spread over the hills in small lots, and to gather them quickly would mean that the dogs would have to keep the sheep running very hard to get them into one flock. While the dogs were fresh and did not feel the strain of continual fatigue, yet it was very bad for the sheep to overrun them. This Roderick Mòr new and guarded against, for he was a well tried and experienced shepherd. Besides, he loved his flock, and for this reason he always treated them in a humane manner. As he passed on his rounds, every here and there he met with a stray deer, and several times that afternoon he had seen a Royal head. The deer were very wild, and kept well out of his reach. They had never settled down since the big hunt which was held only a short time previously.

This hunt, for roe deer chiefly, was arranged by Malcolm Campbell the Duke's gamekeeper to thin down these animals, which had become over-plentiful. The autumn of the previous year was so wet that no hunt was held, and for that reason the number of animals had increased to such an extent that it was absolutely necessary to shoot many of them down. Roderick Mòr was at the hunt along with his friend Malcolm, and many others.

Malcolm was very much disturbed and affected by Padruig Dubh Macvourich's absence, because he had become very fond of the youth, and he was sure that he would have enjoyed a day with the gun. Malcolm has made up his mind to give Padruig Dubh his own fowling piece, and walk close beside him, so that he might keep him right as to the line of firing. Somehow or other Malcolm had an idea that Padruig Dubh was unaccustomed to the use of a gun, but at the same time he thought that if the young New Zealander made half as good use of the gun as he did of his pipes he would make a first-class shot. However, the Duke's gamekeeper was saved from trouble or worry so far as the thought of risk was concerned in the matter of avoiding accident, for his young favourite was elsewhere on the day which had been to a certain extent arranged for his pleasure. On arranging the guns for the hunt upon the moors, Malcolm and Roderick Mòr kept in close touch with each other. They had a gun each,

side-by-side; Malcolm was a good shot, and few could beat him either with the long-distance rifle or shotgun. He took on a wager with Roderick Mòr as to who could or would take down a Royal deer or stag at the greatest distance. Malcolm never dreamed of getting within reach of shooting a twelve-pointer with the smooth bore gun, as that was the only weapon in use for the day. There was no thought in the gamekeeper's mind of getting a chance of such a prize. Roderick Mòr instantly took on the wager with his friend, and they said no more about it for the time being. Roe deer was very plentiful, and most of the guns had one or more to their credit. The blue or mountain hare was also very abundant, and many fell before the incessant fire which was kept up all along the line.

As the hunt proceeded Malcolm and Roderick passed casual remarks to each other now and then when a Roe deer had very suddenly appeared before them. They were not sure who should fire, but Malcolm warned Roderick Mòr to take his chance and try his gun. "If you take the deer down at that distance, Roderick," said Malcolm, "I am not sure that my 'Royal' stake is safe for all."

In an instant Roderick Mòr had the gun at his shoulder; off went the charge, and the animal lay as dead as a stone at a distance of fifty yards. "You have done it, Roderick," said Malcolm. "Let us go up and see the hit, so that I may find out how you managed it."

They both examined the wound, and the animal was shot just over the heart. Roderick was using fairly heavy pellets, three or four of which were quite sufficient to kill, as the part of the charge that did the deed entered between two of the ribs over the heart. "I think I shall withdraw my wager, Roderick," said the gamekeeper, "after that event. It is not at all likely that we shall see a Royal stag today, and in fact I don't think that we can spare one; at least I have given orders to all that none be shot."

"That is all very well at this time of the day, Malcolm," said Roderick Mòr, "but remember that I am not to be done. A piece of a twelve-pointer will be as welcome upon your dinner table and mine, as it will be upon the Duke's in the late evening, so I am not going to give up the idea of losing my bet."

"We shall have to wait and see the stag first, Roderick," said Malcolm, "and

then we can settle conjointly upon the shooting of it.”

“You know as well as I, Malcolm,” said Roderick Mòr, “that when Royal deer appear within shot reach, they won’t hesitate as long at that distance until we hold a meeting, as to whether you can spare a head or not. On such an occasion arising it is necessary to take time by the forelock, as I did with the Roe deer, and fire while the quarry is within shot reach.”

“I see you mean business then, Roderick,” said Malcolm. “I only hope and trust that we fail to come across a twelve-pointer. It would look rather out of place for you to bring down one if occasion arose, in view of the fact that I have just prohibited others from taking a chance shot.”

The hunt continued, and Malcolm had to the credit of his gun more than Roderick in numbers; but this caused Roderick no uneasiness whenever: he waited patiently for his chance of winning the prize. There was no hope of him scoring upon the slopes or level moor, for the stag was too wily an animal to allow himself to be trapped in such a place. Roderick’s only chance was going over the brow of the hillock, or the chance of an unexpected head coming out from under brushwood in some of the gullies. It was coming towards evening when the guns were nearing some low copsewood, when all at once out popped a Royal stag, just in front of Malcolm and Roderick Mòr. The bewildered animal stood still for a second midway between them, at a distance of thirty or forty yards, and without a single moment’s hesitation Roderick leveled his gun, fired, and killed the stag. Malcolm Campbell had no intention of firing, and he did not think that Roderick would either, but he was mistaken. Roderick was bent on having his wager, and also a leg of good venison for his next day’s dinner.

“Now! Malcolm,” said Roderick. “What do you think of that?”

“A good shot,” said Malcolm. “I did not for one moment think that you would fire; and what is more, I did not think that your gun would do it.”

The sportsmen of those far back days did not hesitate to put a good charge in their guns, and a heavy recoil was little or nothing against the shoulder of a powerful man. Roderick’s gun was a single barreled weapon, and the barrel being long carry the shot a great distance, and many an animal of one kind or other did he kill with it. These were also the days of the muzzle loader, but

nothing was thought of the time required to reload. Rapidity was nothing with Roderick Mòr; accuracy was his strong point. At the close of the day the bag was enumerated, and the Roe deer were well thinned down. Only one Royal had felt. All those present received a portion of the venison each, after the animals had been skinned.

The day after the hunt Roderick Mòr was again with his flocks. For a considerable time Flora waited her father's return from the moor, and having lost her patience she at last threw a tartan plaid over her head and shoulders, and went out to see whether she might meet him. Her father had just warned her before going over his ground that he would not be in the least surprised if the coming winter would be a very severe one. Flora just hoped the very opposite because in the month of January of the coming year Padruig Dubh had to find his way back to New Zealand, and if snow fell heavily before then it would be utterly impossible for him to leave Craig Mhòr. But again she recalled the fact to her mind that this young man in whom she was more than interested had disappeared. Under such circumstances he would first have to return from what appeared to her to be an oblivion, and then the matter of his departure could be settled.

Flora had been walking along the rugged path with downcast eyes, which indeed were fringed with the dew of sorrowing anxiety, and as she raised those large sad eyes she found that her father was almost by her side. When Roderick Mòr got alongside his daughter he said, "What are you looking for Flora? Do you expect our mutual friend Padruig Dubh to come up out of the earth, as if it had some time ago swallowed him?"

"Oh! Father," said Flora. "I was just thinking in my own mind that if it is a bad stormy winter, even if Padruig Dubh does return, he would never find his way from here in the middle of January."

"But Flora!" said her father, "there is room and to spare for him, and food also even if he has to stay until June of another year."

"Yes! Father," said Flora, "but what about his father and mother? They will both weary for him, won't they?"

“What does it matter for a month or two, Flora, after all,” said her father. “Padruig’s parents are not altogether depending upon him. So long as they know that he is safe and well cared for they won’t worry.”

“But what if Padruig’s parents knew what we know?” said Flora to her father. “They would lose their reason, and besides just this afternoon while you have been upon the hill a letter has arrived from his parents from New Zealand. How long may it be before it is opened or replied to?”

“Well Flora,” said her father, “we will just have to wait patiently to see what happens, and if the young man does not return within reasonable time, he would forgive you if even you were to have recourse to opening his letter. After all, the letter is only from his father and mother. There would be no ‘secrets’ in it, so that to reply to it after due waiting would be a work of necessity.”

“You will have got your sheep all right for the night, father,” said Flora. “The dogs appear to be very tired, especially Mona.”

“Yes! Flora,” said her father, “they have both had long journeys this afternoon. I had to get my part of the sheep gathered today because the whole flock are going away in a matter of a few days to the low pasture. I am positively certain that we are to have a very severe winter. Look at that sunset. The sun is going down beautifully and encircled in a ring of grey silvery clouds, and on the outskirts of that ringlet there is great congestion. I am not at all pleased with tonight’s appearance, and I only hope that we get all the sheep away before the weather breaks.”

“Are all the other shepherds going down country than, father?” said Flora. “If they are their wives will weary very much as they did some five or six years ago.”

“Yes! They will be somewhat lonely, Flora, for they are like ourselves, far out of reach of neighbours,” said her father, “but I can assure you if they are all in good health they think nothing of loneliness.”

“We must go inside, father,” said Flora. “Mother is very much upset over Padruig Dubh’s letter. She is in terror that he does not return in time to avoid his parents suspecting some great tragedy.” Flora could see someone in the distance as she looked up the hillside before she went inside the house. “Who

comes, father? said Flora. I can see someone in the distance carrying twigs or small branches of a tree.”

“The man is too far out yet, Flora, to say, but if it is not Malcolm Campbell, I am very much mistaken,” said Flora’s father.

When the figure came nearer they could both see that the visitor was indeed Malcolm from the Corry. He carried under his arm the head of the twelve pointer which Roderick Mòr had killed at the roe hunt. “Good evening,” said Roderick to Malcolm, “what brings you here at this hour?”

“Oh!” replied Malcolm, “I have come to inquire whether Flora, my flower of the heather is still as lonely?” But Flora made no remark.

“Is this head for me, Malcolm?” said Roderick. “I suppose as I killed the stag you are giving me the antlers.”

“No!” said Flora. “The antlers are for me. I have always wished for a Royal head, but I would have liked it much better if the skin had also been preserved—a complete head.”

“You cannot both get it,” said Malcolm, “but I have no doubt that it will be yours someday Flora.” Flora could not understand what the gamekeeper meant, but she thought that caution was the line of thought as she awaited further conversation. “I have boiled off the flesh from the skull,” said Malcolm, “because if this head goes to New Zealand it is by far the best way to preserve it. I am going to present it to Padruig Dubh when he comes back, to take home with him to Dun Alasdair, seeing that he was unable to be with us at the hunt.”

“A very good idea, Malcolm,” said Roderick Mòr, “but he won’t be able to put the gift into his portmanteau.”

“It will be all right, Roderick,” said Malcolm. “He will get it for little or nothing as deck cargo. All that he will have to do is to fasten it to the ship’s rail to keep it from going overboard.”

When they got into the house, the head was laid carefully aside to away Padruig Dubh’s return. They all had tea together, and then Malcolm asked Roderick to oblige him by playing a nice tune upon the pipes. Roderick Mòr was somewhat tired after his long day upon the hills, but he always had some energy left for piping, so he complied. Malcolm Campbell was very fond of the

pipes, and he always envied Roderick's playing. He lamented very much not having had an opportunity of becoming a piper when his fingers were young, but Malcolm had very much in his mind a desire to make amends so far as his family was concerned, for his own defects. "I must get you to start [those] two boys of mine to the pipes someday, Roderick," said Malcolm. "I think either of them will become a piper someday, if not them both." Roderick promised to comply with Malcolm's desire, to start the boys by giving them instructions on the chanter at an early date.

As Roderick played upon the pipe Mona his dog began to whine violently, a thing which was very unusual for her to do. Flora immediately became nervous, for she remembered the fit of whining which the animal took of the same nature the very afternoon on which Padruig Dubh disappeared. "Someone must be about outside," said Roderick, who has suddenly stopped piping. Let us go and see. I am confident that dogs, if not supernatural creatures, have a peculiar instinct of warning people of the approach of danger." Malcolm and Roderick searched all round the house, but they could neither see nor hear anyone about. It was very unlikely that any of their friends would call at Craig Mhòr without making themselves known. At last Malcolm put it down to the fairies, and he was sure that it was some of their doings.

"These fairies are so mysterious, and no one understands them," said Malcolm. "You see Flora, you have always dreaded them. They have taken away your young friend, and who knows but that it may be yourself next." Flora paid little heed to the remark which Malcolm made, but all the same she had a peculiar foreboding in her mind. It was now late, and Malcolm left Craig Mhòr for the Corry; he bade them all good night adding the remark that morning might throw some further light upon the singular occurrence.

Chapter XVIIThe Fairy Queen and the MacCrimmons

The wonderful Gathering which had taken place in Fairyland had made a great impression upon Padruig Dubh's mind. He had never seen so many Highlanders in his life before, and the music of their pipers still rang wildly in his ears. The tartan and the pipes were to him a great source of joy; and to see the stalwart clansmen and hear their pipers play were two of the greatest pleasures which his heart could desire. So impressed was he indeed that next morning it was his first thing to play upon his pipe. To do so before he was disturbed by anyone was his only hope of endeavouring to reproduce some of the errors which he had heard the day before. The day was but young when Padruig took to his pipe, and all alone he played over several pieces. There was one tune which was played by the MacDonalds' of the Isles that clung particularly to his memory, for Padruig had a perfect ear. He was naturally gifted with the ability to pick up a tune when once he had heard it played. Padruig played over the MacDonald tune several times so that he might find, and give it the correct expression. The melody was a very sweet one, and it haunted him from the very moment that he heard it until he had now got an opportunity to play it upon his own "silver chanter." As he played the tune it became more and more attractive, and his chanter appeared to be more full of music of quality than it had ever been before. Indeed Padruig Dubh was not at a[ll] surprised at the fact that he was permitted by his enchantress to retain possession of his much admired chanter. There was a great deal of the same charm in his own instrument as there was in the Fairy Queen's "silver chanter." Padruig Dubh was, however, one of the Fairy Queen's favoured guests, and for that reason she watched over him with the tenderness of a mother's care. She saw that he was full of innocent curiosity, and pried not into those things which did not concern him.

As he marched to and fro in his small chamber the door opened as he turned his back upon it. The Fairy Queen placed her hand very gently upon his

shoulder and requested him to stop playing. Padruig immediately obeyed and waited patiently further instructions. "Today," said the Fairy Queen, "we have a long journey to cover both by land and sea. There is then, no time to put off. Get thyself in readiness, and when I call upon thee again we must be gone." The Fairy Queen then left the room. Padruig Dubh lost no time in making what preparations were necessary for a journey of considerable length.

A little man of small dwarfish appearance entered the room, and announced to Padruig Dubh that the Fairy Queen was ready and awaited him and her bower. They left the room together, and as they passed along the corridor, which led to the Queen's bower the pleasant notes of the harp rose triumphantly to swell the charming melody which was sung by an unseen singer. As Padruig Dubh made his way past another open door he managed at least to catch one single verse as it fell upon his tuneful ear, and it ran thus:--

"Beware of the path which thy foot shall soon tread.
 May thine arm be strong, and steady be thy head;
 For the Sea runs past on the strand far below:
 If thou fall thy descent shall lead thee to a woe."

In a beautiful bower sat the Fairy Queen, who greeted Padruig Dubh once more with a bewitching smile. "We go now upon an errand, Sir," said the Fairy Queen, "which is entirely for thy benefit: yea even for thine education and advancement in the art of piping which thou dost love so dearly. Let me also warn thee now that thou must be prepared to undergo, if necessary, many difficulties and even dangers. Knowledge which is gained by experience and hardship is always more highly prized than those things which money can procure, and the hand toucheth not the hard task which is impossible to shun, if by feats of strength and endurance we would procure the prized object which we have set our hearts to when whatever may be the cost. But enough for the present: we must be gone."

Again Padruig Dubh left the residence of the Fairy Queen accompanied by her alone. They traversed a beautiful but lonely path, which led through glens

and over many lofty mountains, the fastness and solitudes of which lent quietness to the mind and inspired the soul which went out to search for nature's hidden treasures. Streams with lovely little cataracts and falls watered the country every here and there, and the fir and pine woods rose high above them to shelter the lonely traveler and adorn the hillsides. They lost no time in getting to the seashore, and when they arrived there, a boat was prepared in readiness for them. It was manned by six rowers with oars in their tiny hands but powerful arms. The Fairy Queen accompanied by Padruig Dubh entered the boat, and immediately the anchor was weighed; the oars were plied with great dexterity, and they glided swiftly onwards on the crest of the dark blue waves.

“We go to the ‘Isle of the mist,’ Sir Padruig Dubh, whispered the Fairy Queen in the ear of her companion, “and there thou shalt see the home of the pipes; the fathers of piping; and their fathers, whose forefathers made thy beloved music a fine art.”

Padruig sat quietly in the little boat which was quickly spinning on its way. He was in a happy mood, and whatever dangers he might have to encounter the thought of such did not mar his happiness or suppress his enthusiasm in exploring the musical secrets of the Western Isles.

After they had been a considerable time upon the water, they came at last in sight of land. The place where they had to disembark was very steep and rocky. In fact, Padruig Dubh could only see precipices towering far above him. The Fairy Queen stepped lightly from the boat, and landed upon a ledge on the rock. Padruig Dubh followed, and the rowers pushed off to seaward. The Fairy Queen had previously given them instructions when and where to meet her again, and thither they made their way in their tiny bark. “Sure footing alone can preserve us from disaster here, my friend,” said the Fairy Queen to Padruig as they both climbed upwards. “But the prize will be the more valuable when it is won,” continued the fair adventurer, who never appeared to tire or grow weary.

Padruig was not so much concerned about the prize as he was about his footing, for the steps on which he placed his feet were by no means a carpeted

staircase. If he had been asked to make this ascent alone, Padruig would no more have thought of doing so then he would have flown upon wings from the mainland to the Isles. But the fair adventurer who led the way added courage to his otherwise feeble will, and put strength into his right arm, as well as a sure rest for his feet. It was not altogether an utter impossibility to accomplish this feat, but at the same time it required a strong arm and a level head to reach the top of the rock in safety. This place had been used in the olden days for landing men in the time of war. These steps were not hewn by human hands, but worn by the sea and fashioned by mother nature.

When they reached the top in safety Padruig Dubh could hardly believe his own eyes that such was the case, and as he looked down the great abyss he shivered at the thought of it, as the Fairy Queen led him to a place which would interest him, and be the means of forgetting such an adventure which one wrong step would have led to a disaster and an untimely death. It was little wonder then that the fairy singer warned Padruig in her song of the dangers of the rocky path which he had to tread.

The Fairy Queen then led Padruig Dubh inland for a very short distance, and there he observed what appeared to him to be a mere hut. As they approached this humble dwelling place, smoke could be seen emanating from one of the ends of the turf built little house. "We must be careful to conceal our presence as we approach yonder dwelling," said the Fairy Queen to Padruig. "Take careful and minute note of what thou shalt see for thine own benefit, and education, but speak not a single word which may be audible to the occupants in case our presence should be detected."

Padruig Dubh looked into the interior of the house from an aperture in the wall. There he could see a peat fire smoldering at the south end of the room. Just below the opening through which the Fairy Queen's captive gazed there sat an old man with white hair, busily engaged in his primitive hobby. The bench at which he worked was but the trunk of a tree, and on it lay a bagpipe partly finished. The tools with which he intended to complete his task were but few although they were sufficient for his purpose, for the instrument which lay before him was not his handiwork in its infancy. Not far from him sat a youth

who appeared to be the old man's grandson. This stripling amused himself by playing upon a pipe which had already been completed. Simple in form as it appeared to the onlooker to be, yet music of a strange though not unpleasant character proceeded from the rude instrument.

As the youth played, or performed what might have been his musical task, the old man hurriedly laid aside his half finished pipe, and after he had done so, he took from the hands of the boy (who endeavoured to produce what appeared to be an early Highland melody of singular beauty of melodic charm) the pipe upon which he played. The old man rebuked the youth, and then played over once or twice, a correct rendering of the air for the pupils benefit, and afterwards handed back the instrument to the young lad who obediently continued to play the tune more diligently in a more perfect form than he had done a few moments before. An old woman also went about her domestic duties and that she performed her common task, she crooned now and again the air which the boy endeavoured to memorize.

The old man returned [to] the object of his production. It was a new pipe which he endeavoured to produce, and nearby laid a reed with which he intended to test the quality of the notes of the instrument when it was more complete. At intervals when the boy wearied of his practice he came across the room to watch the old man as he worked at his craft. The craftsman explained at intervals to the apprentice the secrets of pipe making, such as it was at that early period, and in this way pipe making as well as the art of pipe playing was handed down from father to son for the benefit of future generations.

"Was this the MacCrimmon?" Padruig Dubh asked himself in silence, for he was warned not to speak. This was the period at which the pipe had no bag; no drones; no blow pipe, but only a simple pipe with a reed. Its music had a Theme only. No First Variation to follow the Theme; no Toarluath to enhance the First Variation, and no Crunluath to elaborate the Toarluath. The Theme, such as it was, was crude in form, as the pipe was rude in fashion; but from them emanated a greater inheritance. Those early seeds were destined to bear luxurious fruit. The old woman in this humble abode crooned her simple Theme with much sweetness of expression, and Padruig Dubh had memorised

as much of it as he could reproduce it more perfectly in his own good time.

The Fairy Queen then gave Padruig the signal for departure, and they both left the scene of their first visit in the home of the pipe and its music. "Now!" said the Fairy Queen to her companion, "we must press on, for we have yet much to see before we leave the land of pipers." They returned towards the seashore, and waited behind a small mound, or fairy dun, from which they were to make observations.

Down in the hollow, below where they had seated themselves, both the Fairy Queen and Padruig Dubh could see a flat ledge upon the rock which led to the shore. But they were guided there by the strains of a pipe, the notes of which had a peculiar shrillness about them. This special ring was accounted for by the music being re-echoed from rock to rock as it rose from the performer's instrument. When Padruig looked over the small eminence which concealed him from the eye of the musician, there he saw a man dressed in the early Highland garb, with long shaggy hair, and rough sandals on his feet. Beside him lay at one side of the flat ledge two youths dressed in the same manner. The young men listened eagerly to the music as the piper played, and at times they fingered silently upon short sticks. The person who piped appeared to be of middle age, with his hair turning grey; of powerful build, and stately appearance. He played upon a very primitive bagpipe which consisted only of a bag made from deerskin, a blow pipe, and a melody pipe. The instrument was very rude to look at. No elaborate carvings adorned its woodwork, and no tartan covered the self-made bag which lay in the graceful curve of the performer's side. The bag was very small. It lay in his oxters like something that was fondled, and it was filled every now and then with perfect regularity.

The piper paced to and fro in a very dignified manner, and he played with great care. Every note was executed in a masterly fashion. The air was slow, but pleasant to listen to, and it appeared to Padruig to be unfinished. This droneless pipe was not without charm, for Padruig Dubh enjoyed the richness of its tone, the clarity of its notes, and the expression which the performer put into his music. To see such a person in the pursuit of his occupation was only to be assured that his whole heart and soul was in his beloved art.

Before the Fairy Queen left such an interesting place the master played several pieces. Padruig Dubh was very much struck with their singular beauty, as well as the simplicity of their phraseology. After the master was finished playing, each of the youths took the pipe in turn, and played for a time. It was quite clear to the listener that the two last players were apprentices, because the difference between their performance and the master's was very marked.

"These men will soon be returning to their habitation close at hand," said the Fairy Queen to Padruig, who listened intently, "and for that reason we must be gone before we are caught in the act." They again made their way inland for a short distance. "Now! Sir, Padruig," said the Fairy Queen, "thou shalt soon see a greater master, whose abode has been long famed for the production of pipers." In the distance Padruig Dubh could see smoke rising straight up into the air, and when they had reached the rising ground several chimneys appeared. The great College as it was at that [time] stood clearly before them. "We must exercise the greatest care in approaching this place," said the Fairy Queen; "for the great masters guard their secrets with jealous care, that they may keep them within their family circle. No strangers are allowed to enter the place of instruction while tuition is in progress. Therefore, if thou art going to see what is going on in their secret chamber we must needs walk warily."

The mist hung low upon the ground at times, as the weather was very dull, and when they were sufficiently hidden by the fog from the sea, they took the opportunity of approaching the place which was the chief centre of interest for Padruig Dubh at least. Several sheep grazed near the dwelling house, and at the door lay a dog which acted as a sentinel. If this watchdog heard a stranger approach, he gave the alarm in good time, so that such arrangements as were necessary could be made to conceal the secrets which their family never seemed to divulge to anyone. The Fairy Queen knew every nook and corner of the island. She had watched over this place since the first of the race dwelt there, and being in possession of such information she could find her way along with her companion to a place of security, where it was possible to witness what went on without observation on the part of the teacher and his pupils.

In a small room sat two persons. The one was the master, and the other the

pupil. They faced one another with a pipe or chanter each. The master played over the piece first of all, unaccompanied by the pupil. Then they both played it together. This they continued for a considerable number of times. The master stopped every now and then, to explain the necessary points to the pupil who listened eagerly to every word. After the term expired the one pupil replaced the other.

The second pupil who entered the room played upon his pipe while the master listened carefully to his performance. Where the pupil erred in time or fingering the master corrected him, and thus they made good progress as they worked hard together. The master was intent on the effort to impart the art to his pupil, while the pupil was equally anxious to grasp the real expression of the tune. While the pupil played, the master chanted the tune, giving the correct expression in time and rhythm. The pitch of the master's voice was always in unison with the pupil's pipe or chanter. There were in that establishment no books or written signs of any kind. The music was imparted from the master to the pupil by means of the instruments, and no other method was in any way tolerated by the fathers of the ancient art of Piobaireachd.

The second pupil was replaced by a third who received instructions in the construction of Piobaireachd. The master explained in minute detail the various forms of the classical music of the pipe, and warned the pupil to be aware of the danger of mixing up the Variations by including a part or Variation which was inapplicable to the piece. The master indicated by illustration thus:-“Where the tune had a plain Toarluath, it could not have a Toarluath Fosgailte or a Toarluath Breabach. Where a Toarluath Fosgailte occurs, there can be no plain Toarluath, or Toarluath Breabach, and where there is a Toarluath Breabach there can be no plain Toarluath or Toarluath Fosgailte. The same rule applies to the Crunluath. The Doublings of Variations must be played at the same speed as the Singlings. The Doublings must not be played twice as fast. The difference between the Doubling of a Variation and the Singling is that the Doubling is all played in the one movement throughout, i.e., the Doubling of the Crunluath is performed in the Crunluath movement from start to finish of the Variation; whereas, the Singling has Themal notes, or long

cadences, which makes it very expressive. Toarluath and Crunluath must be performed correctly, and great care must be exercised in the manipulation of the fingers when performing them. There is a vast difference between a light Crunluath, and a distinctly heavy one. The light Crunluath is distinctly wrong, but the proper heavy Crunluath has much graceful beauty about it, as well as very intricate fingering.

Another pupil took the place of the one who had just gone, and he had under his arm a great pipe. The pupil was a youth of about twenty-one, well-built, and attired in the dress of the Highlands. He played upon his pipe while his instructor sat and listened carefully to the performance, which was executed with most wonderful skill. When the pupil had finished his test pieces, the master played in turn, and now it was the apprentice's turn to listen so that he might catch the proper rhythm of the tune. The last performance was perfect. Not a single note was misplaced. If this was the MacCrimmon College, as Padruig Dubh took it to be, then he wondered not that good pipers were created there. The ring of the master's performance was true, and effective, for the making of a piper could be traced in every pupil.

The last pupil who took up his studies was rather small in stature. He held in his left hand a pipe only. Immediately [when] he entered the room he was seated face to face with his instructor, who chanted over several piobaireachd in the syllabic notation. The voice of the chanter was rich and sweet in quality. There was a syllable for every note, and a combination of syllables for each movement. The Theme had its one syllable; the Siubhal or First Variation had two syllables; the Siubhal had three syllables; the Toarluath Breabach four syllables; the Crunluath had five syllables, and the Crunluath Breabach had seven syllables, and they are all very ingeniously constructed as well as interwoven into each other.

Again the Fairy Queen left the ancient school, and next she took Padruig Dubh to a place of greater interest. As they journeyed along together Padruig Dubh could see a Castle in the distance, the ramparts and battlements of which rose high into the air. From the top of these battlements came the sound of the pipe. A stately form could be seen as they approached the stronghold, and that

form was the MacCrimmon, who piped to the four winds of heaven, the tune which rose to the neighbouring hills around the home of the MacLeod's of Dunvegan, and fell with a marked effect upon the ears of those who listened far below. Was this an ancient custom like the ringing of the curfew, or was the piper indulging in idle amusement which would disturb the peace of the neighbourhood? No! This was the great MacCrimmon welcoming his master home.

The Chieftain of the clan approached his ancestral home in Highland fashion. He was accompanied by his retinue or bodyguard, and the hereditary piper to the clan was upon the battlements discoursing, first a "Warning" and then a "Welcome." The "Warning" to the Chieftain that all was well at home, and the "Welcome" assured him that those who kept his fortress were pleased to see him returning. The MacLeod had been abroad from his domain upon important business, and the MacCrimmon who was very much devoted to his master, had awaited his return eagerly.

From the ramparts of the Castle he kept a careful watch, and when the retinue was near enough to be recognized as that of his master, it was in those days customary for the MacCrimmon to play his pipe as he did when the Fairy Queen and Padruig Dubh visited the Castle of Dunvegan. The Chieftain and his men arrived at their Highland home, and as they did so the gates were opened by a stalwart man fully armed. When all had entered the gates were again closed, and MacCrimmon's pipe was silent.

As darkness fell the great beacon upon the Castle ramparts was lit, and in the blackness of night the fire shone far afield with great brightness. There was to be merriment in the Castle of the MacLeod that night, and already one of the visitors had arrived. This was the Chieftain of another very powerful clan. His retinue was considerable in magnitude. The spectacle at the Castle was an inspiring one. Members of the clan MacLeod guarded the residence of their Chief, and as the guests arrived the great MacCrimmon played upon his tuneful pipe as the beacon upon the Castle ramparts. The Western breeze blew the flames of the fire Eastward, while the sparks flew upwards.

The stately form of the warlike MacCrimmon in full Highland dress could be

seen as he approached the beacon. The breeze appeared to gather his plaid around him while he piped under the gathering clouds of night, and his pealing notes seemed to flutter in the night air in becoming harmonic rhythm with the sparks as they rose from the burning embers only to disappear in the darkness of night.

Padruig Dubh could still hear in the ear of imagination the powerful notes of MacCrimmon's pipes, for he had never heard or even witnessed anything like this. The night became black as ink which made the scene all the more effective. There was neither moon nor stars to light the far horizon, but the beacon still smouldered away. Its golden embers fanned by the Western breeze through out a peculiar light, and a solitary watchman still paced the lofty battlements.

Inside the Castle all was astir. Everything was beginning to shape into the form of a night of great festivity and enjoyment. The visiting Chieftains were busy dressing for assembly in the festive hall, while their servants rushed to and fro in the performance of their various duties. At the hour of banquet MacCrimmon entered Dunvegan's stately Hall, and played upon his great pipe. Padruig Dubh's eyes feasted upon him, and if he had been asked he could not have expressed in words the joy with which he beheld the great master as he played upon his beloved instrument. The MacCrimmon was tall, and broad shouldered, well-built with pleasant features. A partial smile adorned his finally shaped face. The thrill of his music as it emanated from his soul lit up his face with a becoming expression of perfect happiness, which was only a reflected shadow of the powerful emotions which reigned within.

The tune which MacCrimmon played enchanted Padruig Dubh to such an extent that he could hardly refrain from expressing in words in some form or other, his extreme amazement at such a masterly performance. The ease with which MacCrimmon [played] was to Padruig a marvel. His finger work was absolutely perfect, together with the expression which he put into his tune. And no one but a MacCrimmon could give such a performance. If Padruig had heard this piper amongst a thousand, and not even been aware of his identity he would have pronounced him to be the great MacCrimmon if ever he lived.

“Surely then,” said Padruig to himself, “the MacCrimmon is the father of piping, and piobaireachd, and at last my own eyes have seen him.”

As the pipes played the guests assembled in the Halls of Dunvegan, Chieftain after Chieftain entered, together with their ladies, and as the MacLeod welcomed them they took their places at the festive board. The MacLeod sat at the head of the table, and at a given signal the feast began. The table was well laid with mutton, venison, beef, fowl, and game, and after ample justice had been done to the good things for the support of the body, the Hall was cleared of some of its combrous furniture, so that the company might intermingle, and participate in the joys of dancing.

The MacLeod with all his male guests were clad in Highland dress, and they wore the accompanying ornaments of the times. At the belt of each Chieftain were fixed some very fine specimens of Highland steel pistols, seriously wrought. Some were inlaid with gold and silver, and the art of steel engraving was displayed to great advantage. Several curiously made old fashioned dirks and Skean Dubhs were worn, of the genuine type: black handles studded with silver nails, and some bearing richly coloured cairngorms in their tops, while others were fully mounted in silver, heavily embossed.

The greater part of the company engaged in dancing, while many only looked on. The real old-fashioned dances were still in vogue, and old as well as young entered into them with great vigour. At intervals the hereditary piper played upon his great pipe, which was looked upon as a necessary item in the evening’s programme in the Halls of Dunvegan. While the MacCrimmon played, the notes of his tuneful pipe re-echoed as they rose from his fingers to the roof of the house. The Dunvegan piper was much envied by every Highland Chieftain who heard him, and more than one of the company that night would have given something to have him, or such a skillful piper attached to their retinue. In fact many of the Highland Chieftains made arrangements there and then to send their own pipers to Dunvegan to study under the MacCrimmon.

The music to which the company danced was that of the harp and the violin. There was one thing which the MacCrimmon refused to do, and that was to play the lighter music upon his pipe. Whatever form the dance music of the period

may have taken, MacCrimmon thought it derogatory to his dignified position as piper to MacLeod of Dunvegan to play anything other than piobaireachd, the classical music of which he was master, nor would he permit his apprentices to play the lighter music within his hearing. The MacCrimmon music was then the classical music of the pipe, and while he played piobaireachd in the most dignified manner, he detested the lighter music as that only fit for being played upon uneventful occasions. The lighter music required little or no tuition or effort on the part of the performer, while pupils for piobaireachd had to remain at Boreraig for seven years.

The ancient piobaireachd was a musical play; it contained a story; a great drama of real Highland life, and to the performance of the family piper the guests of the MacLeod listened and looked on with even greater interest than many would have done had it been a great drama performed by a full company of artists. The night passed quickly in music and dance, which were carried on until the early hours of next morning, and finally only the moaning of the zephyrs round the great walls of Dunvegan Castle could be heard. For a time all were fast asleep, and while they slept the stars shone down upon them with unusual brightness, until the morning dawn came to extinguish them.

Next morning Dunvegan stood in silence until daybreak, and then Padruig Dubh was to see and hear what he had longed so much for. Before breakfast the morning silence was broken by the sound of MacCrimmon's pipe; for it was his duty while the guests dressed to play upon his beloved instrument. This he did outside the Castle, and for miles around the MacLeod clansmen knew that their Chieftain was at home when they heard the pipes sounding far afield while the day was yet in its infancy.

Again in the evening the guests gathered round the festive board to dine, after which the family piper performed his customary duty. While the company still sat at the table, the ancient custom of piping to them was carried out. MacCrimmon blew up his great pipe, and marched slowly into the Hall where he continued to play for a considerable time. Not a word was spoken while he played. Every note was listened to with great eagerness. MacCrimmon played one of his old favourite airs and his pipe sounded as it

never sounded before. The music which Padruig Dubh listened to was in itself a feast to those who loved the music of the pipes. In the Island of the mist the pipe of Dunvegan produced notes with a peculiar charm, and the piper had chosen an air which was full of pathos. The rhythmic beauty of the Theme was carried right through the Variations and the sharp clear cuttings or deciphering of the Toarluath and Crunluath movements actually appeared as if the chanter was made of crystal which shot into the air in tiny fragments as each movement or group of notes left the performer's fingers.

There is such a thing as the piping fever, and when that fever is upon the piper its power cannot be described in words. Only from the pipe itself can the genuine piper fully express himself, or convey his mysterious passion to his audience. To hear the pipe played perfectly is to a piper who listens to it an inspiration which creates within him a desire to play upon the pipe himself, and Padruig Dubh longed to get away to a place where he could put into action those pieces which he had just heard the great Dunvegan master played.

The Fairy Queen was no stranger at the stronghold of Dunvegan, and her flag lay there in the possession of the MacLeod family. "The Fairy Flag" did not often wave as it was wont unless when the "Fairy Queen" was present. The Chief of the MacLeod's was about to exhibit this mysterious emblem to some of his guests, but to his surprise when he entered the room in which it usually lay he found that it had gone. On his making inquiries one of his clansmen advised him that he had seen the "Fairy Flag" waving upon the Castle ramparts just before sunset. The MacLeod made no further inquiries. He was for a moment silent and thoughtful. Did he have dealings with the fairies? The flag, however, was again restored to its usual place as soon as the Fairy Queen left the Castle, and the peculiar charm which lies in this ancient relic can only be unraveled by people who have dealings with, and belief in the charming creatures who live by the fairy-haunted shores of the West.

In their retreat from Dunvegan Castle the Fairy Queen and Padruig Dubh met with the angry aerial elements. When the weather proved foul in the West it was something to be afraid of. While the Western breezes were often soft and

refreshing in the Summer sun; yet when the wind rose to a hurricane it was certainly something to be reckoned with. The spray rose far above the rock on which the Castle of Dunvegan stood, and the white horses rose and fell upon the great billows like a regiment of cavalry which had just made the charge upon an angry foe.

It appeared to Padruig Dubh that it was futile to attempt to make a journey of any kind, however short in such a storm. He had just left a comfortable abode where all was merriment and festivity, and where the tuneful pipe of MacCrimmon had charmed his inmost soul with all the ecstasy which music could supply from its vast store of untold riches. But now Padruig Dubh was face to face with misery. He had to fight for dear life. The stormy wind pierced him through and through; the rain fell heavily; the roar of the angry billows were almost deafening, and darkness had completely fallen. The Fairy Queen pressed forward with undaunted courage, for they were then upon the sea beach. Padruig Dubh followed in body but not in spirit. But the noise of the gale and the flow of the incoming tide prevented him from making an appeal to his guide to return to Dunvegan until the storm would abate. "Dost thou wish to perish upon a shore where there is neither shelter or company to be found?" said the Fairy Queen to Padruig Dubh. "Surely thou art not afraid of a breeze such as this! What wouldst thou do if an awful hurricane arose? Faint heart can never win a prize. The Shepherd's daughter at the Great Craig doth encounter even greater hardships for thy sake even now, and such a night as this is only a taste of what may come before we reach our destination. Meantime, let us lose no time if thou valuest thy life."

Padruig Dubh took heart and continued the journey, and they had not gone far when the storm increased in violence. There was something grand about such an experience after all. On the wings of the storm road the great gull with its almost agonizing cry. It foretold the wayfarer of the storm still more gigantic in force as the bird made its last voyage for the in search of a place of refuge. At last they came to a place where the rocks opened up like a great gateway. The Fairy Queen entered into a great cave, which immediately sheltered both herself and her companion from the angry elements. "Follow

closely in my footsteps,” said the Fairy Queen to Padruig Dubh, “and thou must be silent while we enter this wonderful cave.” Padruig Dubh did as he was told, and soon he could see many small lights as they continued their journey. The pathway became more even, and a brighter light shone down upon them until they reached two portals which secured a massive door.

Suddenly there came a great ray of light from both sides of the doorway. So bright was the sight that it almost dazzled Padruig Dubh’s eyes. The door was opened by the touch of the Fairy Queen’s magic wand, and both entered into an abode of exquisite beauty. Padruig Dubh being now free from the discomforts of the storm had already forgotten all about his struggle with the stormy wind and rain. He gazed upon the scene around him, when all at once the sound of music broke in upon his ear. He could see no one but while he listened he could recall hearing the tune before, which was now distinctly audible to his sensitive ear.

The music became more clear, and the notes ran in quick succession upon each other until it appeared to Padruig to that it was almost impossible for fingers to produce them. The hurried notes died away softly as if at a great distance and again there came the strains of a new piece of music which appeared to Padruig to be the sweetest air which he had yet heard. He listened particularly to the musician as he discoursed his Theme. It was performed by a master hand. The skill with which the performer handled his instrument was in reality of a supernatural character. So pleasing was the melody that Padruig Dubh made an effort to get a peek at the person who produced it. And to his surprise there appeared not far from him a stalwart youth arrayed in a beautiful dress. He wore the garments of Fairyland. Long, long ago he had renounced his life upon earth, and entered his now enchanted abode, “The Cave of Gold” all through his acceptance of a “silver chanter” from the Fairy Queen. Padruig Dubh now beheld the young MacCrimmon who once paced the spacious Halls of Dunvegan, and played upon his father’s pipe. But by accepting the gift which was bestowed upon him by the Fairy Queen, he now played upon an instrument which had no equal.

Padruig Dubh longed to play upon such a pipe. There was certainly

exquisite taste and beauty in the music which he heard, but when a musician produces in person a beautiful melody, it has a double fascination. There is the pleasure of producing music, and also the enjoyment of one's own rendering, as they wish it to be produced. It could not be doubted but that Padruig Dubh was a good performer upon the pipe, and now he had a great craving to pipe like the young MacCrimmon who had entered the "Fairy Kingdom" through the "Cave of Gold." Why then, he thought to himself, did not the Fairy Queen bestow upon him such a gift? He had made up his mind to run whatever risk such a gift would entail if only he could pipe like this youth who had entertained him so skillfully. The Fairy Queen had decided that so far as Padruig Dubh's wish was concerned, it should be otherwise. She knew how enchanting music was and was fully aware of Padruig Dubh's great love of the art, but then he had to be restored in perfect safety to his friends at Craig Mhòr who now made continual and diligent search for him. For this reason, to bestow upon him a "silver chanter" such as that which the young MacCrimmon possessed would entail his remaining in Fairyland for the remaining part of his life. The fairies never give away their secrets, or their secret charms to people who dwell in the outside world.

The pipe which Padruig Dubh had listened to with so much pleasure now ceased to play, and the Fairy Queen had been out of sight for a considerable time, so that her captive was left to his own imaginations for the space of what appeared to him to be several hours. Padruig Dubh had fallen into a partial slumber, when all at once the silence was broken by the sound of music which once more awakened within his heart the unquenchable love of piping. As he looked around to see who entertained him, to his great surprise it was the Fairy Queen herself. She played upon her "silver chanter," and the tune which she had chosen was even more pleasing to listen to than any which Padruig Dubh had yet heard.

The Fairy Queen had two reasons for playing upon her own "silver chanter" on this occasion. She was desirous in the first place of proving to Padruig Dubh that the young MacCrimmon who had just piped was fully competent of producing as superior a performance as she was herself. This youth who had

renounced his life upon earth could play upon his "silver chanter" with the same charm as the Queen of the Fairies. But probably her main reason was to play with the utmost care, giving it all the charm of expression which lay in her power because this was to be the last occasion upon which her captive was to hear her play upon the pipe of fairyland.

Padruig Dubh listened to the tune and observed that every note was performed in such a way that nothing more could be desired on the part of the listener. In fact he was very much disappointed when the music ceased, for there he had heard a melody so full of charming harmony: so graceful in time, and regular in rhythm, that he could have listened to it with much pleasure for many hours longer without growing weary of its power to entertain him.

"We must now go," said the Fairy Queen to Padruig Dubh, "as again it will be necessary for us to journey by sea." They left the "Cave of Gold," but Padruig was very reluctant to do so, and as they approached its mouth, the sweet strains of the MacCrimmon's pipe could be heard in the distance.

At the sea shore a boat was laying in readiness, and as soon as the Fairy Queen and Padruig Dubh entered into it, the oarsmen pulled off at top speed. The sea was very calm, and the morning was fine, which enabled them to reach their destination before the hour of noon. They had now landed upon an Island, which was much smaller than the one from which they had come. "Up at yonder Castle," said the Fairy Queen, "there is much sorrow, and lamentation. Everyday life in the outside world has much to enrich our minds and to broaden our outlook, but what we will now see this day shall be a lesson on how to live, and it shall also teach us how to die, but enough for the present. See yonder the great Chieftain lieth upon his bier. He has quitted his earthly tabernacle; his soul has fled heavenward and his clansmen are now about to lay him to rest."

The Fairy Queen led the way, and soon they were within the Castle walls. All were in a state of sadness and sorrow. The young Chief gave instructions that the body of his father should be carried by the clansmen to his last resting place. Six stalwart men lifted the dead body shoulder high, and carried it all the way to the burial ground to the Westward of the Castle; a spot from which the departed warrior had seen the sun set for over seventy years in the golden

West. The procession was led by the Chief's piper, and behind the coffin marched the young Chieftain along with the next of kin. It was a solemn spectacle for the clansmen mourned the loss of the Chieftain who was indeed to them a father. The sad notes of the pipe brought tears from the eyes of the stoutest hearted clansmen, and many of the older retainers wept bitterly.

As the cortège round its way down the incline to the green dell where the burial place was, the doleful notes of the Lament continued to rise, and died away softly upon the distance hilltops. When the mourners had reached the place of internment the body was consigned to its last resting place. No more was this aged warrior to unsheath his sword; no more was he to lead his clansmen into battle; for his right arm was now cold and lifeless. In the day of his youth and manhood he had ruled his tribe with a firm but bounteous hand, but that day he was laid in his last resting place. He was lulled to sleep in his narrow bed by the very pipe which so often had led him to great and glorious deeds. The heart rending Lament told its tale of sorrow as the mourners dispersed, after they had paid their last tribute to the parted Chieftain.

The Fairy Queen turned to Padruig Dubh she said, "Since thou hast been under my care thou hast seen of the beauties of the Highlands and Highland life in its various aspects; but today the scene has been the saddest of all. The Chieftain, who has just been consigned to the dust was once in the prime of his manhood. He was valiant in war, and much beloved by his clansmen in peace. He had won both honour and glory in the protection of his country, and at a ripe old age he hath closed his eyes in death. While nature provides us with good things in the heyday of life; it also instructs us how to live for the good of our fellow creatures. Therefore, thou shouldst beware of being over ambitious, for in the end the path of glory shall lead thee but to the grave. Thou dost love the pipe and thy father's native Highland home. Its music doth charm thee, and it doth inspire thy very soul with its sweet melodies, but there is no air in its train half so powerful as the 'Lament.' The 'Salute' may be pleasant to listen to with its cheerful notes; the 'Gathering' may stir thy heart for war, and the 'Battle Tune' may strengthen thine arm in the hour of battle, but the 'Lament' is the key to the floodgates of thy heart. Its doleful notes can tap the fount of tears which giveth

vent to thy most tender feelings. Did I not see thee drop the silent teardrop but a few moments ago as the piper played the solemn dirge? Even in sorrow there is that grandeur which no one can fully elucidate with the tongue or pen. There is nothing more touching than the 'Lament' when played upon such an occasion at it was today. Its emotional power is unsurpassed, because its notes are enriched with that pathos which is expressed in the music of the pipe, and flows from the very heart of the performer to seek a place of refuge in the bosom of those who mourn for the dead."

"Our companionship now draweth to a close. Methinks that I can hear the sweet maiden's voice upon yonder hillside bemoaning thy disappearance, and now it is both go hence." They then returned to the mainland, and as they journeyed the Fairy Queen gave her captive wise council, for his future guidance throughout life. She warned him against his inclination to slight the power which she possessed, as the ruler of the mysterious race of creatures who went about the Highlands doing good, and cautioned him that while today he was to be released, if ever he entered the Fairy Kingdom again, it would be very difficult to regain his freedom.

It was now midday, and they had just reached a familiar spot upon the mountainside. "Fare thee well Padruig Dubh Macvourich," said the Fairy Queen, "and may good fortune attendeth thee for the rest of thy life. I can see someone advance, and now I must be gone. Play but one tune so that I may hear thy pipe while I cross yonder mountain." Padruig Dubh took his pipes, and played as he was often wont to do, and as he piped he observed the little well with its rocky basin. His pipe was sweeter in tone than it had ever been before, and at last he realized that he was at the old familiar haunted spot, the "Fairie's Well."

Chapter XVIIIPadruig Dubh's Return

At midday Flora left Craig Mhòr for her favourite walk to visit the Fairie's Well. She had set the tea prior to her departure, and left her mother by the fireside reading; while her father had gone to the Corry to pay his friend Malcolm Campbell a visit. Mona, her mother's favourite dog ran by Flora's side, and she had just observed that the animal was unusually frolicsome. Flora had called Mona back on several occasions as it appeared that she wanted to get out of her mistress' reach. The dog returned once or twice to Flora's feet, and looked up into her face as if she could tell her some great secret. Flora became somewhat alarmed, for she had never seen Mona so full of energy before. She stood still for a moment, and to her great surprise and astonishment she could hear the pipes as distinctly as if her father himself had been playing within a few yards of where she stood.

Flora hurried forward with all speed until she came in sight of the Fairie's Well, and in the distance she could see a person, while he played upon the pipe. Her face flushed, and her heart beat with great rapidity. "Can that possibly be Padruig?" she said to herself aloud. "If it is not, then it must be my father." Her father's pipes were at home. Flora had seen them lying upon the table as she came away, so it could not be he who played at the Fairie's Well. She summoned the courage, and in a short time she stood almost face to face with the object of her recent anxiety. In reality it was Padruig Dubh in person, but how was Flora to address him? He had been absent from Craig Mhòr for such a long time.

Padruig was not yet free from the charming spell of Fairyland. He had heard so many new tunes on his series of travels with the Fairy Queen, that now being liberated he concentrated all his attention upon the reproduction of one of the rarest of the ancient MacCrimmon tunes which he had heard from the great master's own fingers. As he turned towards Flora while he played with the greatest earnestness of expression, she suddenly caught his eye. Padruig at

once stop playing, and approached his visitor. "Good afternoon Flora!" said Padruig Dubh. "I was just endeavouring to beguile the time by playing a favourite air until you might perchance arrive."

Flora could not find words in which to reply to Padruig's salutation, but when she had regained her normal presence of mind, she returned an expression of welcome to her long-lost friend. "Good afternoon, Padruig!" said Flora, "but where in all the wide world have you been? We have searched everywhere for you until we were at our wit's end to know where to look. All our efforts to find you proving of no avail, the only other alternative open to us was to wait patiently to see whether you would return of your own accord. Do you know that you have been absent for many weeks now, and that a letter has lain in your room for such a time which may require your immediate attention?"

"Absent for many weeks, Flora," said Padruig Dubh, "why it only appears to me like a happy dream, or a matter of a few hours since last I saw you."

"I know what has happened," said Flora. "You disregarded all my warnings about the fairies, and now you have had to pay the penalty."

"You are in truth right, Flora," said Padruig Dubh, "but Fairyland is an exquisitely beautiful place. Whatever risk was entailed it was well worth all to be able to say that I have actually been in the Fairy Kingdom, and have now returned safe and sound. When I get time I shall tell you the complete story of my experiences, as well as what I have seen and heard. But what did charm me most was the early art of pipe making, together with the indescribable beauty of the music of the great MacCrimmon's own pipe. I only wish that your father and Malcolm Campbell could have heard it."

"And what of me also?" said Flora. "I love the pipe as much as either my father or Malcolm Campbell. Would not I have enjoyed such a treat when you were so much impressed with what you heard? Let me assure you that there is no man or woman alive who loves to hear the pipes better than I do, especially when it is well played."

"But Flora," said Padruig Dubh, "there is yet time to let you hear of what I did store in my mind while I was in Fairyland. Did you not hear the beautiful tune which I play as you approached me a few minutes ago?"

“No!” said Flora. “The truth is I was so much overjoyed to see you again that I was quite unconscious of what you played. I did, indeed, hear the pipe after Mona had drawn my attention to it. She heard it long before I did, because she has a very keen ear, and would run for miles to get beside my father while he plays. You see she has been so accustomed to hearing the pipes ever since she was a few days old.”

“We must now return to Craig Mhòr, Flora,” said Padruig Dubh. “If a letter awaits me, and has lain so long I must attend to it at once.” Flora turned homewards with a lighter heart than she had had for some time, because she was now accompanied by one whom she considered to be no stranger.

Little did I think when I set the table for tea just before leaving,” said Flora, “that you would sup with us upon my return. My father and mother will be so delighted to see you, for your disappearance has marred all our happiness for weeks past.”

“You see what that ‘silver chanter’ has done after all, Flora”, said Padruig Dubh, “and now that I think of it, I was well warned, not only by yourself, but by everyone who saw my pipe. But you should have seen the Fairy Queen’s ‘silver chanter.’ It was the most wonderful workmanship that I have ever witnessed, and to hear it played was a treat never to be forgotten. The Fairy Queen was very beautiful. She was pure in thought, and noble in word as well as deed. Every haunt of the old pipers and more especially the MacCrimmons is known to her. I do not wonder that she possesses the genuine secrets of the Boreraig notation because she must have spent years in the old Master’s presence.”

Flora was almost as much under the spell of the Fairies as Padruig himself when he was in their residence, for she listened to every word which she heard with the greatest interest. Craig Mhòr was that night to be back to its normal condition. Flora stole very quietly into the house followed by Padruig Dubh, in order to surprise her mother. But it was not to be so much of a surprise as Flora thought it would be. “Is tea ready, mother?” said Flora, as she entered the small parlour. “I have got a friend here who is in need of some refreshment.”

“Who?” said her mother.

“Padruig!” she exclaimed in surprise.

“That is the reason why you set four places at the table, Flora,” continued her astonished mother.

“Four places?” said Flora, “I only sent three.”

“Well, Flora” said her mother. “That is the table as you left it.”

“Can that be possible?” said Flora. “I was quite unconscious of setting tea for four but perhaps it was intended to be a lucky omen.”

“Oh!” said Padruig Dubh, “the Fairy Queen must have been here.”

“There shall only be three for tea after all, Flora,” said her mother. “If father does not come soon we will not wait for him.”

Padruig Dubh had gone to his room and read the letter which had awaited him for some time. It was from his father, who had just happened to suspect that his son would want to spend a few months in Scotland after his training was finished. Padruig was quite delighted, and after he had washed hurried downstairs to acquaint Flora and her mother of such good news. As he sat down to tea, Padruig said that everything was all right at home, and his father would not expect him to return immediately, as he had better spend a month or two in the old country after his confinement at Office work in Glasgow.

“You warned them at home did you not?” said Flora, “that you would not return until after the New Year. They could not have had time yet.”

“No!” said Padruig Dubh, “but you see Flora that a father and mother know what young people are. They do want us to get some enjoyment out of life when we are young.”

“That is true,” said Flora, “but do not be surprised if you do not get away from here until the early summer of next year.”

“How do you think that out, Flora?” said Padruig, whose face coloured as he made the remark. “Why I hope to be in New Zealand by the month of May or June at least.”

“Well!” said Flora. “Father is a good judge of weather, and he says that we are to have a very severe winter.”

“I never thought of that,” said Padruig Dubh. “Then if the snowfall is very heavy I could never find my way to the boat.”

“Let the day and the journey for Padruig be all like, Flora dear,” said her mother. “If the winter be such as prevents him from getting home in the Spring as he intends, father has assured us that there is food and room to spare for Padruig as well as us, and if necessary he is most welcome to them.”

They had just finished tea when Roderick Mòr had returned from the Corry, and when he saw Padruig Dubh he could hardly believe his own eyes. It had been dark for some time, and Roderick had recourse to rubbing his eyes in order to see whether it could in reality be his friend. “You have returned, then, at last,” said Roderick Mòr. “Who was your captor, the Fairy Queen? It is very strange that Malcolm Campbell and I talked much about your sudden disappearance. Malcolm remarked that you were not the first to disappear from the same place, and that before another year you would not be the last to disappear from Craig Mhòr. What he meant by such an expression I cannot tell, but he emphasized his remark by adding that if I could not tell, time would, so we must leave it at that. There are some very strange happenings in these days, for just as I left Malcolm, he said that he ‘would not be surprised if Padruig would not sit at Craig Mhòr’s fireside this very night’.”

“But that is not all father,” said Flora. “Do you know that when I sat at the tea table, I laid places for four, and I was quite unconscious of doing so and so mother drew my attention to the fact.”

“These things will happen at times, Flora,” said her father. “The desire of the heart sometimes command our actions, and the result of your work is only one other proof of a very wise and ancient proverb.”

Roderick Mòr partook of tea, after which all four sat round the old peat fire, and compared notes of the past few weeks’ happenings. “There is something superbly grand in the homeliness of the peat fire after all,” said Padruig Dubh. “The lecture is of the Palace or the Castle cannot compare with. I would rather sit and muse by the clean fireside with its humble peat fire in the lone sheiling, then lie upon the couch of down in the spacious apartments of the greatest palace which the world possesses.”

“I am glad that you and I agree on that point, Padruig,” said Roderick. “For

my part I would be like an alien in a strange country if I even attempted to rest upon a couch of eider down. I am unaccustomed to it, and if I got my choice I would prefer the sheiling to the Castle. There is a warm glow in the peat fire which all other fires lack, and the odour of the peat is to the Highland a luxury in itself. But what about your absence, do you know that the Roe Hunt which Malcolm Campbell arranged chiefly for your benefit, is past, and that he was here in person, but the other night with a Royal head—a twelve pointer for you, which he desires you to take back to New Zealand? Go and fetch it Flora.” Flora brought the head as she was requested, and it took her all her time to carry it.

“Here!” said Flora, “Isn’t it a beauty?”

“It is indeed,” said Padruig Dubh, “let me carry it. It is much too big and heavy for you, Flora.”

“Malcolm Campbell has not forgotten me, then,” continued Padruig. “I must thank him in person for such a handsome gift. If I can manage to get it safely to Dun Alasdair in New Zealand, it shall be my most prized of all gifts.”

“And I suppose you will also be pleased to hear,” said Roderick Mòr, “that the Royal monarch fell to my gun.”

“Yes!” said Padruig Dubh. “That fact will add to the value and interest of the gift.”

“What about Fairyland, then, Padruig,” said Roderick Mòr. “Are you glad to get quit of it?”

“Well!” said Padruig Dubh. “It is all in the journey of life. It would appear that to be in the land of the Fairies was part of the path on which I was to tread. I must admit that I do not in any way regret the experience, for I have seen and heard many things of interest while I was there. Probably the most interesting thing of all was the happy associations which existed between the Fairy Queen who conducted me in my pilgrimage, and the great MacCrimmons. I only wish that you could have seen and heard them.”

“That may be so,” said Roderick Mòr, “but I think that I am safer where I am.”

“Yes!” said Padruig Dubh, “but the Fairy Queen told me that ‘faint heart never won fair lady,’ and that if I was to see the Highlands along with other things

which interested me, I had to run some risks as well as privations if necessary. Luckily, however, my enchantress was kind as she was benevolent, for I suffered neither loss nor inconvenience while under her care. She acquainted me with the fact that fairies have existed in the Highlands of Scotland from time immemorial, and that they did not admit everyone into their kingdom. If I had been born far from the land of my father's birth, I have made up for it now. What will interest you most is to hear all about the old pipers, that is, the Skye Masters. But before saying anything about them let me relate to you one or two very interesting incidents together with a short description of the Western loch and mountain scenery.

“As we journeyed to the seashore on the mainland prior to our processing to the islands, the Fairy Queen was the means of averting a serious conflict. We had just crossed a very high mountain, and then entered into a deep ravine, which was darkened by the majestic hills that rose upon either side. In this lonely place there rested three or four cattle drovers, with their herds of black cattle, which were being driven to the Southern Markets. They had put the animals in a place of safety, where a good deal of green verdure grew, and then the drovers themselves lay down to rest for the night, leaving two sentinels to watch the herds while they slept. The sentinels were dogs specially trained for the purpose, and were almost as wise as the drovers themselves. They could do everything except speak. The moon shone very brightly for the night was far advanced, and the cattle had been moving about eating whatever fodder they could find.

“There was a strong Southerly breeze blowing at the time, and although the animals had wandered a short distance away from the drovers and their dogs, yet nothing out of place was suspected. Suddenly a party of eight desperate freebooters appeared, the ringleader of whom was a tall well-built powerful-looking Highlander. They were all clad in kilts, and were armed with long dirks. The leader had also a broad claymore by his side. These lawless men knew that the cattle belonged to some Highland laird who would not be altogether ruined by their loss, and thinking that this opportunity was a favourable one, they were then really in the act of driving the herd away. The

drovers were only temporary custodians of the herds, and they would suffer very little loss by these thieves gratifying their desire.

“All went well with the band of robbers but only for a very short time. The dogs as well as the drovers must have fallen fast asleep, otherwise the cattle could not have got so far out of their sight without being detected. The wind rose into a hurricane, which blew the broken twigs about that had fallen from the trees. Some of these small branches must have hit one of the dogs which got up and barked violently, as he rushed after the missing animals. This alarm awakened the drovers who in turn ran with great haste after their herd of cattle.

“The drovers were armed with dirks, and after several miles of chase they overtook the gang of cattle stealers. Although the drovers were in close touch with the herd, yet they were face to face with desperate odds that outnumbered them by two to one. Drovers as a rule were always men of good mettle, and although they were in the minority, yet this disadvantage did not prevent them from attempting to recover their employers herd.

The man in charge of the drovers requested the leader of the thieves to give up the cattle which he had stolen. This he refused to do; saying that might was right in his country, and that if he along with his men thought that they could recover their herd they would have to do so by force of arms. This challenge of defiance by no means daunted the courage of the drovers, for they were of great strength, although small of stature. The drovers more than once had experienced skirmishes of minor importance in the pursuit of their occupation, which was always attended with a certain amount of danger, but this instance appeared to be one of the most serious conflicts which they had ever encountered.

“Words were exchanged on either side which proved fruitless. These words at last led to blows. Dirks were drawn upon both sides, and the struggle assumed a very desperate aspect. The drovers were by far the most courageous party. They had put several of the freebooters out of action, and were in all likelihood about to gain a victory over double their number. The conflict was about to take a new turn, for up till now both sides as they fought were armed alike. The ring leader of the cattle stealers stood aside so that he could see the

struggle carried on to a close in his own favour, because he had seven men against four. This powerful fellow had some sense of honour about him, too. As he was armed with a claymore, he did not think it fair to attack a man who was armed with a dirk only. This fact along with the number of his men kept him from taking part at the onset, but the drovers had by agility and strength of arm accounted for four of their enemies. The man who had stood aside with his claymore, assuming what he thought to be the umpire, suddenly realized the seriousness of his position. He drew his claymore, and rushed with great fury upon the leader of the drovers, and was in the act of plunging the blade of his weapon into his opponents heart, when in an instant the Fairy Queen stepped in between the combatants, and addressed the freebooters thus:—

‘Thou coward! Wouldst thou stoop so low as to take such undue advantage over thine adversary? Put thy weapon into its sheath and begone ere thy life depart from thee. Hast thou not been the means of enough bloodshed already, and not a single drop of thine own has been lost? These cattle are the property of thy neighbour, who hath never done thee a mean turn in his life. Wherefore, then, wouldst thou take by force of arms that which is thy neighbour’s; spill innocent blood, and stand with thine own skin unscathed? Let the faithful drovers be gone with their herd, and go, thou desperate fellow: bind up thy comrades’ wounds, and return to thine own country, lest something more serious befall thee.’”

“This was all the work of a few moments,” said Padruig Dubh. “It was a very noble action on the part of the Fairy Queen.”

“On leaving the scene of the conflict between the freebooters and the cattle drovers, we then continued our journey, reaching the seashore about the middle of the afternoon. The Fairy Queen led the way to a cave amongst the rocks. This cave was very difficult of access, because the waves lashed up against the rocks at ebb tide. It was only possible to enter into the ‘Black Cave’ when the tide was out, and even then the entrance was so obscure, that no one except those who knew of such a place could find it out, or think of taking up their abode there.

“The ‘Black Cave,’ then, was the residence of ‘Alasdair Dearg,’ so called

because of his having red or sandy coloured hair. The sea is sometimes a most wonderful carver, so to speak, for in this cave the waves had worn away at one time or other all the soft rock or sand stone strata which ran in seams through the hard granite, leaving a very narrow passage which led into a most interesting abode. The water was always very deep at this part of the shore so that even when the tide was out only a few yards were left dry between the cave and the water's edge.

“First of all we had to climb three or four steps. These were formed by the tide as it broke to spend itself upon the rocks on the shore. Then came a passage which took several peculiar turns rising all the way until we came to a point which was several feet above the level of the sea at high tide. When we got to the end of this aperture in the rock we stepped at last into the cave itself it was a very spacious place, and quite dry. There was sufficient room for a considerable number of people to live in this wonderful abode, and at one side was made up a sleeping place capable of accommodating several persons. There was always some person residence in the cave by day and night, because ‘Alasdair Dearg’ had no other residence.

“This was indeed a ‘Smuggler’s Den,’ and the beds were made up in the usual Highland fashion—short cut heather firmly tied together and placed upright on its end. The floor space was ample for the purpose of its occupier, and he was seldom alone. They had a good peat fire burning, and round this fire sat cooking, as well as other utensils. Alasdair was very busy. He spoke to his comrades in the Gaelic tongue, and always kept an eye upon the entrance to the cave. I could not understand what he said, but the Fairy Queen acted as my interpreter. At one side of the fire sat an old pot boiling full-steam ahead. This was venison in the process of cooking, for several more of the smugglers’ friends were expected that evening. That was why Alasdair kept his eye on the entrance, as he would have more peace of mind when his visitors had arrived.

“On a clean flat slab lay a strange mixture, to which the smuggler-in-chief paid a great deal of attention. It appeared to be soft and somewhat moist. This stuff he turned over very carefully with his hands, and while he was thus engaged, the tail of his eye was continually on the outlook. When his task was

completed 'Red Alasdair' paid his attentions to the pot, the worm, and finally the copper still. They were all going well, and he remarked to one of his companions that he expected this to be one of the best that he had ever produced.

'Good! Alasdair,' replied his friend. 'We shall sample it when you are ready.' The sound of footsteps was heard, and all four stood at attention, with an eager eye upon the entrance.

'Come away Callum,' said Alasdair, 'have you brought your pipes?' Callum replied in Gaelic, in the affirmative. Callum was accompanied by two men of small stature, and they all wore the kilt. The occupants of the cave then congregated closely together. They had a 'general meeting' so that they might decide upon the programme for the night. The entire conversation was carried on in their own peculiar tongue. They came to the unanimous conclusion that the first thing necessary was supper.

"Alasdair tried the contents of one of the pots, and pronounced them fit to satisfy their hunger. This dish was composed of venison, potatoes, and other vegetables. The smell was very agreeable, and after each man had possessed himself with a wooden cup or bowl, and a horn spoon, together with a portion of the contents of the pot, they sat down to eat, prior to which a short grace in Gaelic was offered by 'Red Alasdair' who was not altogether forgetful of the Giver of their mercies.

"They ate in complete silence until their hunger was satisfied, after which Alasdair rose from his seat and listened very eagerly. The results of his precautionary measure was quite satisfactory, and then he removed a thin slab from its place. This slab concealed the next course for supper which was a beverage. An earthenware jar with seven horns was produced, and each man washed his throat with a liquid which was to them far more palatable than the food which they had just consumed. The one pledged the others health and prosperity in silence, by holding up their horns above their heads, and drinking their contents. Then they smacked their lips with great satisfaction.

'What is it to be now?' said one of the company.

'A song,' was the unanimous cry. The smallest man of the seven then sang a

beautiful Gaelic song. His voice was rich in quality, and the grim rocks re-echoed the words which he sang to great advantage.

‘Now Callum,’ said Alasdair Dearg, ‘the pipes.’ Callum produced a very old looking set, on which he played with great spirit and enthusiasm. The rest of the company listened very attentively, and as they called for tune after tune, each new tune was baptized with the real mountain dew, for above this cave stood a great range of lofty hills. On these mountains those harmless fellows found their food without interruption or price, and down in the valley beyond they procured material from which their beverage was distilled.

‘Callum, the piper played quite a good tune, and his pipes were pleasant to listen to. The reason for this was partly due to the natural acoustics of the cave, the rocks above throwing back the music to the listeners’ ears to great advantage. The notes were clear and distinct, and the fingering was very accurate. In fact it appeared that Callum was a born piper. His style was all his own, and his carriage was pleasing to the eye. There was a particular fascination in the expression of his tunes which added much interest to his performance. This was borne out by the fact that those who listened to the piping thoroughly enjoyed the performance, because although Callum had piped for over an hour, they still called for more. Personally, I enjoyed the piping, and the tone of the old set of pipes appealed very much to my individual taste.

‘The chanter was rude in appearance. There was no comparison between it and that of the Fairy Queen’s to look at, but the richness of the quality of its music was bewitching. There were only two drones, and they were both in perfect unison with the key-note of the chanter. The drones were only once tuned, and they kept in perfect unison all the time. In fact, Callum and his pipes were part and parcel of one another. Callum could not be prevailed upon in any way whatever by his friends to play more at that point of the night’s amusement. Not even a drop of Alasdair Dearg’s dew, or a pinch from the ram’s horns snuff mull would induce the piper to play another note. Callum then took his seat by the fireside, and called for the next man’s contribution to the programme.

‘One of the smuggler’s companions volunteered to give a Gaelic recitation,

but prior to his embarking upon a long, dry road, as it were, he knew that his throat would be somewhat parched before he finished, and on that account he was supplied with a 'gargle' before he started. This fellow was a bit of an artist, indeed he was very much so. The piece which he chose was a love tragedy, 'The maiden was black, but comely, and her lover was morose and fickle'. It took some time to recite the poem, but it was delivered in such a manner, that more than one of the listeners were sufficiently moved by the emotional currents of their temperaments as to show signs of sorrow. The hero of the poem falls in love with another young woman, and in the end his first lover dies of a broken heart.

"The next item was a Gaelic song, the air which was a very pleasant one. Its simplicity and regularity of time as well as the rhythmical accent was a great treat, especially to myself, being a stranger to them. Again the company pledged each other's health, and called for the pipes. Callum played a very sprightly air, and four of the company then danced a Highland reel in a very rapid and vigorous fashion. The Fairy Queen then gave the signal, so we left the cave, and crossed the Island of the Mist.

"This Island was rich in mountain, glen and loch scenery. The rugged grandeur which met the eye awoke with in my heart the desire to climb the highest peak, and to walk in silent loneliness round the beautiful lochs which I saw gleaming in the sunshine. The mist lay halfway up the great Coolin Hills, and hung like a white silken curtain, behind which lay the wonderful charm of a Fairy-haunted world.

"Shortly after we landed on his beautiful sea-girt Island, we arrived at the edge of a small loch. The spot was the scene of a desperate duel, which was fought by two Highland chieftains who had an inveterate dislike towards each other for many a day as had their forefathers before them. Both combatants were of middle height, well-built, but their hair had several years since turned to grey. They were each armed with claymore and targe, and attired in the dress of the Highlands. The Tartan of the one had a yellow ground, and the other was very dark in colour mixed with dark red stripes. The duelists had no companions or seconds. They were unattended. One wore an Eagle's feather

in his bonnet, while upon the side of the headdress of the other shown a silver badge. The combat was prearranged, and both arrived at the place of meeting almost at the same time, although the Chieftain with the Eagle's feather in his mind was in reality first upon the field. He sniffed the air as he faced the Western breeze, as if he could tell thereby the very direction whence his opponent was to come.

“On the arrival of the second party, they entered into a very heated discussion, which ended in their selecting a level spot for the fray. Both took up their positions, adjusted their targets, and finally measured their weapons. Had there been an umpire the combat would have been honourable, but the Fairy Queen whispered in my ear that she would act as arbitress. The challenger was in yellow Tartan, and he made the attack, which was very skillfully defended by his opponent. The fight was to be a long and stubborn one, because they were well matched. They had the same length of arms; the same courage, and the same determination.

“The feathered Chieftain was the first to fall. He slipped with his left foot and fell. Up to this point not a drop of blood was drawn, nor was there a scratch on either side. But for this mishap the combat might have lasted as long again. The Chieftain with the silver badge in his bonnet could have slain his adversary had he been altogether void of honour, and indeed to tell the truth there appeared to be a great deal more hatred than honour upon both sides. When the one Chieftain fell his opponent turned to the right, as if he appealed to an umpire for guidance, and by the time that he got back into position his rival was again on foot. There appeared to be a very mysterious link of mental communication between the combatants and some invisible spectator. This I could see was entirely due to the unmistakable indication that both parties were conscious of the presence of a supernatural creature, for they had a great trust and a firm belief in the powerful influence of the Fairies. Probably this accounted for their coming to the loch side unattended, because this was a Fairy-haunted place. The Fairies always frequented lochs and springs where they existed in the Highlands and Islands.

“But the duel was by no means finished. The combatants again took their

positions, and readjusted their targes, measured claymores, and continued the contest. There was no lack of vigour on either side; nor did they lose time between the thrusts. They both kept the same spot almost to a yard, and although the day was somewhat cold yet the perspiration ran off them like dew from the warm breath from their nostrils in a severe frost. Not a single word was spoken. There was not a sound to be heard, except the clash of steel and the ring of the claymores as they beat upon the leather targes.

“Their claymores were made of true steel, well tried and splendidly tempered, for had there been a single flaw in the one or the other their blades would never have stood such a severe test. Their strength of arm was marvelous and their power of endurance was a proof of the material which the Highland Chieftain is composed. Of all the performances which I ever witnessed, this was the most exciting, and what added to the risk which either combatants ran, was the fact that the duel could only end in tragedy should either of them lose their footing and fall a second time. As they kept up the struggle it could be seen that either combatant had to give in or die on the spot. They moved, however, from the particular place on which they stood their ground for so long.

“The Chieftain in the dark Tartan placed his foot into a rut and fell full-length backwards. His opponent rushed forward, placed his foot upon his body, and was in the act of plunging his claymore into his heart, when all at once he stood fixed like a marble statue. He heard the rustling of the Fairy Flag, and as he gazed upon it, it waved gracefully in the breeze. Just then the little lady in green appeared beside the combatants and in a soft subdued tone said ‘Is this a time or place to put thy blades to so severe a test? Hast thou not had enough to cool thine anger in recent years? These blades can hardly be cold since last they were in conflict. And besides, it is but the essence of dishonour to strike a man who lieth upon his back. Thy opponent has fallen by misfortune, and not for lack of strength or the necessary courage. Take thy foot from off his body and assist him to his feet, as he hath done to thee but a short time ago. What shall it avail thee to take a mean advantage of one who could ere now have taken thy life? Besides, to commit such a foul deed would only add to the dishonour which lieth in thine own heart, and thus serve no good purpose. Arise! gallant

Chieftain and shake thine opponent's hand. Begone, both of you to your own homes and territories lest ye both be carried thither.'

"The decision was a very just one. While the one Chieftain fell in the first part of the duel, and allowed to rise in an honourable way it was only fair that the other should be treated in like manner.

"From this beautiful little loch we continued our journey in the direction of the Coolins, so that we might climb to the top of their highest peak. The Fairy Queen led the way, and we climbed the very steep aside of the mountain. As we got half up, the dense mist enveloped us, and it appeared to me that we could only grope our way. This, however, was not the case, because in a very short time we were again upon the open heath, leaving the misty curtain behind us.

"We had not far to climb when we reached the summit, and there we stood upon the very horizon. As I gazed upon the scene below, my guide pointed out the various places of interest. I could see the great ramparts of Dunvegan Castle, the MacLeod's maidens, and the rugged rocks which led down to the seashore. I cannot describe the immense pleasure it gave me to look upon such a scene. The whole Island was brimful of traditional lore and chivalric romance. The sun was about to set, and down beyond the blue and placid ocean sank the great red orb, which at early dawn that day flooded the landscape with its golden rays. Just before night fell we took up our abode in a lone sheiling, where a bright peat fire was burning, and an old man and woman sat deeply engrossed in a Gaelic conversation. We were hospitably received, and attended to, and I could see that the old couple were aware of who one of their guests was.

"Next morning we were on the move before dawn. We crossed another high peak of the majestic Coolins. While yet upon the summit of the mountain, the dawn broke. The sun rose like a great ball of fire, and its virgin morning rays were pregnant with an abundance of beautiful rays which led up the great peaks, as they stood out in silent grandeur. Then the shadows gradually disappeared until the valley below lay in a flood of light. We saw the proud eagle soaring up above. He looked like a mere speck.

"High up in the very heavens, far beyond the reach of mankind this noble bird

searched the surrounding district for his morning meal. It was most wonderful to watch the powerful vulture, as he scanned the mountain sides. At a height that would appear to be almost impossible to detect any moving object he could descry a prey. We had then come to a hiding place, and the Fairy Queen warned me to get out of the bird's sight. From our place of obscurity we watched the eagle as he flew in a circular flight. Round and round he went in mid air always coming nearer and nearer to the earth. He had fixed his eyes upon an object, and there he kept encircling it at a considerable distance away. All at once he raised himself upon outspread wings to a great height, and then suddenly the bird darted down with a rapid nosedive, and lifted up in his claws a mountain hare. The animal would way some two or three pounds at the very least, and while it was yet alive it had no alternative but to submit to an unpleasant aerial flight. The hare was securely clutched in the eagle's claws, and away upon an unreachable cliff the defenseless beast was torn to pieces, and devoured by the great wing the monarch of the air.

“We then continued our journey down into the valley below. The first sign of winter had then appeared. The frost was keen, and here and there the mist hung in patches over the low-lying areas. A beautiful loch was in the vicinity, and it was to be our next place of interest. It was a fairy-haunted loch where the great poet Ossian was said to have frequented regularly in the height of his political inspiration. As we both approached this placid sheet of water which nestled silently at the foot of the great hills, the Fairy Queen warned me to approach the water's edge with great caution. We both crawled quietly into a deep recess in the rocky side of the hill and then waited patiently for a very short time. The mist rose and fell from the dark waters of the loch, as the wind blew it to and fro.

“Just then an aged man appeared, wrapped in a long covering like a plaid. He had a white beard, and long white locks, which hung in ringlets over his shoulders. In his right hand he held a roll of white script, and his left hand was outstretched as if he pointed to the far side of the loch. In this posture he paced the water's edge, slowly, but with the majesty of poetic gracefulness. There the greatest of Gaelic bards recited in his native tongue an inspiring ‘Battle’ poem.

The Fairy Queen interpreted to me afterwards the beautiful piece which ran thus:-

‘Son of the distant land, who dwellest in the secret cells! Do I hear the sound of thy grove? Or is it the voice of thy songs? The torrent was loud in my ear, but I heard a tuneful voice; dost thou praise the Chiefs of thy land? Or the spirits of the wind? But lonely dweller of the rocks! Look over that heathy plain: thou seest green tombs, with their rank whistling grass, with their stones of mossy heads: thou seekest them, son of the rock; but Ossian’s eyes have failed.’

“But I weary you, Flora,” said Padruig Dubh, “for the poem is a long one.”

“Not so!” said Flora, “I love Ossianic poetry, and so does father and mother.”

“Yes! we do,” said Roderick Mòr. “Go on my son.”

“The night is now far spent,” said Padruig Dubh, “so I will conclude with the last short stanza.”

‘Son of the distant land thou dwellest in the field of fame: Oh! Let thy song rise, at times, in the praise of those that fell that their ghosts may rejoice around thee; and the soul of Lorma, on a moonbeam, when thou liest down to rest, and the moon looks into the cave. Then shalt thou see her lovely; but the tear is still on her cheek!’

“While the aged bard recited his warlike lay he was filled with poetic inspiration. As he looked up into the sky, his eyes, though dim with age, were lit by the sun which at intervals broke through the misty clouds. The fire of battle was under his eyelids, and with a renewed impulse of effort his keen dark eyes shone like unto diamonds as they met the noontide sun. As he finished the last stanza the mist again enveloped the strange figure: his voice died away in the soft breeze, and finally he disappeared from our view. We remained in hiding for a considerable time, but although the wind rose and cleared away the mist no one was to be seen. The great Ossian had returned to the world of Spirits, and we were left alone with the sighing of the Western breeze.”

“I then wondered why the Fairy Queen did not pursue her journey immediately the ancient Gaelic bard finished his oration, but she had reasons of her own. This was a fairy- haunted loch, and there was more to be seen and heard. The Fairy Queen took from her side her ‘silver chanter’ and played a

tune upon it. The melody of her magic instrument was so sweet that I was entirely overcome by its influence. As she piped this beautiful air, the eagle came down from his rocky home, and stood close beside us at the water's edge; the stag came from his place of hiding, and feasted upon the notes; and the laverock came down from the skies and accompanied the air with its charming warblings which blended with the music of the silver pipe as it rose above the placid waters of the fairies' loved abode. When the music ceased, the eagle returned to its mate; the deer retraced its steps up the mountainside, and the lark soared into the heavens singing its endless theme which nature had imparted into its little breast.

“From this interesting scene, we then continued our journey down into the little glen, and there we followed a small stream, which murmured its strange form of music as it wound its way seaward. At last we arrived at a humble little sheiling from which I could distinctly smell the peat reek. It was a most welcome odour in my nostrils, for it instantly conveyed to my mind some sort of indescribable charm. From the fumes of the smoke came a message of homeliness; and assurance of friendship, and, indeed a sign of real Highland hospitality from the indwellers. The Fairy Queen knocked at the door with a very gentle tap. In an instant the door was opened, and inside stood an old white-haired woman who appeared to be upon the other side of seventy. She bowed very gracefully and bade us enter. Again I was very much impressed with the manner in which this old woman received us; but more especially the Fairy Queen.

“The occupants of the house treated us as part of themselves, and never asked a single question. The house was spotlessly clean, and a peat fire burned brightly upon the simple hearth. In this humble dwelling lived an old crofter with his wife and grandson, a youth of about twenty years of age. The old man was busily engaged in his hand loom. He was weaving cloth, and there he continued his task. First the warp and then the woof, and these followed each other time about until, not only did the operator make goodly material for clothing himself in his small household, but provided for the regularity of his occupation, an easily measured rhythm whereby he could time his required

movements in the manufacture of the genuine homespuns.

“In a corner near the fireside stood a spinning wheel. The old woman took her stool and sat down beside this ancient relic. There was no unemployment in the Island. Everyone found occupation of some kind or other. The Islanders appear to be a very thrifty race. They let nothing be lost. Even time itself is saved in a sense, for each hour of the day has one of three things, namely: a task begun, continued or completely finished. The spinning wheel appears also to be one of the essentials in the Highland sheiling. The family is not only provided with clothing from its ceaseless revolutions, but warm garments as well as most valuable woolen materials are sent into the markets.

“There was not a single care-worn wrinkle upon the aged spinner’s brow. She plied her craft with the utmost ease. There was plenty of time in which to complete her creel of material. She did not work against time, but evened out every crinkle which existed in the crudely carded wool, with the greatest care. As she sat at her task, she crooned a simple air, by which means she regulated her actions. To this beautiful old-world melody the old woman’s foot kept the treadle going. The vocal music was the regulator of the speed at which the wheel was to revolve, and to watch the operator at work, it was clearly to be seen from the pleasant smile upon her face that she loved to spin.

“There was the most peculiar influence of music about the quite movements of the hand loom. It produced a deep hum as the warp and the woof took their place in the web of cloth, and the click of the shuttle emphasized the beat, so to speak, as it passed to and fro from the old man’s hands. The hum of the hand loom was accompanied by the buzz of the very quick revolving spinning wheel, and the combined the sound of both blended into a not unpleasant harmony. They were new to me at least, and if a stranger could find nothing pleasing or musical about them, personally I could not say that they jarred upon my ear. There is, and must be, a certain amount of monotony about every kind of occupation, and doubtless the old couple felt something that irksomeness at times, as they both pursued their daily toils.

“In order to kill two birds with the one stone, the old woman left her task and went about preparing the last meal for the day. This fulfilled a twofold

purpose. It tended to break the monotony of labour, and kept the body and the soul together. We all partook of the food which was prepared. It was very plain but nourishing. After the meal was past the old couple returned to their task for a short space of time. This time the full orchestra was in operation, if I may be permitted to put it that way, and if it was a crude one, nevertheless, I enjoyed fully, and to a degree. The youth who had been endeavouring for a considerable time to get his rude pipe into playing order, had been eventually successful in accomplishing his task. He was so delighted with himself that he leaped with joy. On his first attempt he made the small apartment ring with the notes of a short prelude.

“The handloom and the spinning wheel were again set in motion. The youth played upon his quaint pipe, and his music was very pleasant to listen to. The old woman called it ‘The Weaver’s Chant.’ To this tune the handloom and the spinning wheel kept regular rhythm, and to give the music as well as the motion of the two mechanical devices, the old woman broke in with a very sweet voice to chant the words to accompany the notes of the pipes. The pipe had no drones: only a simple reed pipe, and it was neither loud nor harsh, so that the old woman’s accompanying chant was very pleasing to the ear. The vocal words blended completely with the notes of the instrument, and the youthful performer appeared to be conscious of some supernatural charm being present in his humble dwelling.

“There was an expression of joy upon the faces of all the inhabitants of the crofter’s little home. They seemed to cast aside the cares which assailed them, if they had any, because they knew that their good benefactress was at that moment within their family circle. The Fairy Queen had upon more than one occasion bestowed gifts upon them, and it was to them a good omen to see her sit by the cozy peat fire which burned brightly with only one upmaking for the whole evening, and throughout numberless magic sparks of various colours. The Fairy Queen loved the pipes, and she added additional dexterity to the young performer’s fingers. He could play his pipe with unusual ease, and in his ear it sounded sweeter than it had done for many months. The magic influence of the Fairy Queen worked wonders upon the minds of the people of the Island,

and much more so with those whom she came into personal contact.”

Flora MacDonald with her father and mother listened to Padruig Dubh as he related the story of his experiences in the land of the fairies. Not a word did one of them speak. They were spell-bound. In fact, Padruig’s tale had been transformed into a pleasing romance, full of charm and heroic adventure.

“I should have liked very much to have heard the MacCrimmons play upon their pipe,” remarked Flora at this point. “It would have been a feast for my eyes to behold them, and my ears to hear their tuneful instrument.”

“But tomorrow, Flora,” said Padruig Dubh. “You shall enjoy the next best thing. I shall let you have an interpretation of the great master’s piping, when next we visit the Fairie’s Well. But while I remember let me tell you an interesting incident which happened as we reached the mainland. We were descending beside of a hill, where a small stream led us along a level corry. The Fairy Queen followed the stream until it was supplemented by two others of smaller proportion. The additional water made one fairly large stream. Walking along the bed of the mountain rivulet we arrived at a very high precipitous rock, which rose perpendicularly from a large pool. A very rugged pathway led up to the top of the rock, and there, was a flat ledge of marble-like strata on which we rested so that we might admire the course of the water as it wound its way down to the sea. We had not been there for more than a few moments when there appeared a very coarse looking woman, who had her head wrapped up in a rough Highland plaid. All that could be seen of her face was her eyes, and barely that. This was a witch who was well known in the district, and she had brought disaster upon many people in her day.

“The witch was very cunning, and by her craftiness she endeavoured to secure the mastery of the Fairy Queen’s virtue and popularity. The old woman had often heard the music of the Fairy Queen’s ‘silver chanter,’ and if she could only procure the instrument, by whatever means, that she would be the happiest person in broad Scotland. The witch asked the Fairy Queen to play a tune that her heart might be gladdened thereby, for she admitted that she had been much distressed of late. The Fairy Queen knew the malicious desires of the old

witch's heart, yet she took from her side the much coveted instrument, and played a peculiar air. The witch was very much displeased with the melody, and instantly began to upbraid the performer. Instead of creating a feeling of joy of the old woman's heart, the expression of the music brought forth an angry outburst of bitter hatred. The tune was called 'The Deceitful Witch,' and indeed the melody betokened its moaning in every detail.

"The witch was so enraged that she at once demanded the forfeiture of the instrument, so that the Fairy Queen might never play anymore upon her favourite pipe. The Fairy Queen, however, looked upon the old woman with disdain, and warned her to beware lest greater evil might befall her ere she left the rock. The warning only tended to height the witch's anger until it had risen to an uncontrollable frenzy. The Fairy Queen still sat upon the ledge of the rock as calm and unconcerned as if nothing untoward had ever happened, and replaced her 'silver chanter' by her side. Observing that there was no hope of terrorising the Fairy Queen, the witch attempted to wrest the beautiful instrument from her side. On her first attempt, however, she was unsuccessful, and in the struggle stepped backwards, and fell headlong to the foot of the rock, and was instantly killed."

"How very interesting," said Roderick Mòr. "Witches are kittle-cattle to deal with, but the old woman made a great mistake in attacking the Fairy Queen. Witch that she may have been; all her cunning witchcraft could never overcome the little lady in green."

"I could sit until morning," said Flora, to Padruig Dubh, "and listen to your tales. We have spent many hours already, but never have they passed so swiftly."

"That is true," said Padruig Dubh, "but the night being so far spent we must adjourn until another day when we shall again have the pleasure of indulging in a continued description of the charms of fairyland."

Chapter XIXThe Tryst

Several days had passed since Padruig Dubh had returned to Craig Mhòr. He still looked back with pleasure to his sojourn in the land of enchantment, and the scenes which he saw there were deeply engraved in his memory. The rugged scenery in mountain, loch and corry came up before his mind's eye in the richest colours. The sound of the great Skye master's pipe still rang in his ears, and at times the Fairy Queen's 'silver chanter' spoke to him in romantic melody never to be forgotten.

Malcolm Campbell heard of Padruig's return, and he took the very first opportunity of calling at Craig Mhòr to offer his expression of pleasure, in that it had pleased the Fairy Queen to release his favourite from fairyland. A special day was arranged, and Roderick Mòr, with Padruig Dubh accompanied Malcolm to the moors. They had no Royal heads, but, nevertheless it was surprising to see how much they could account for at the end of one day's sport. A great many mountain hares were shot as well as a few Roe Deer. The moor fowls were rather wild after the season's shoot, but still several braces were included in the bag. Padruig proved a fair shot, and two of the Roes fell to his gun.

Then Malcolm Campbell had the whole family of MacDonalds at the Corry for tea, and he teased Flora playfully about her permitting the Fairy Queen to kidnap her sweetheart. "Her sweetheart," said Padruig within himself. He repeated silently, Malcolm Campbell's words, and instantly caught Flora's eye as this expression flashed through his mind. Flora was thinking alike, for she marked Malcolm's words, and the manner in which he expressed them. Flora's father and mother had been keeping a keen eye upon the young couple, but they left them to settle their own desires themselves, because Padruig Dubh had a very standard of honour, and Flora had good taste, as well as being gifted with wisdom which was far beyond her years, and these qualities acted as a stimulus for both to rise to higher things, for now they walked upon the paths of

innocence and love-like companionship.

Padruig Dubh had often played upon his pipes with the thrill of the MacCrimmon's touch in his fingers. His music was also enchanted with fairy-like charm, and as he played at times the mysterious spell of supernatural power brooded over him. A great change was at work within his heart and soul, for now that his time was nearly up to returned to his father and mother in New Zealand, the one thought which occupied his mind was whether he was to go back single-hearted or otherwise. Flora MacDonald had possessed several months ago, the key to his heart; but there were so many seemingly insurmountable objects in the way, that the more he thought about the tangle, the more he was led to chaotic perplexity. Flora's father and mother already knew their secret. They realised that Flora dearly loved the pipes. Perhaps their music was the thing that she loved second best in the world, but there was more in her affectionate smile, which she always gave to Padruig Dubh, than a thank offering for his musical programme.

Parental love is a very powerful guardian. It leaves a father and mother to think wisely and well. Roderick Mòr MacDonald and his wife had already discussed Flora's position, past and present. They could see only too plainly that since Padruig Dubh Macvourich arrived at Craig Mhòr their daughter had undergone a great change. She had altogether become a woman, full of discretion and wisdom. There was little chance of Flora finding a match in the vicinity of her birthplace. True, there were two promising youths at the Corry, but Malcolm Campbell's sons were too young, and what was far more decisive, Flora's heart did not lie in that direction. There were attendants at the Castle, and on the other side of the mountain lay a great stretch of agricultural land, where many farmers' sons dwelt. These farmers were well-to-do, and if any of their sons had seen the fair Flora MacDonald there would have been more than one offer for her hand. All these imaginary thoughts were of no value, for the time was very nigh at hand when the only child of Craig Mhòr would reveal her great secret, and the handsome New Zealander would be the happiest of all young man.

Roderick Mòr had prophesied a very severe winter, but neither Padruig

Dubh nor his only daughter believed him. There was in the end of November no sign of snow, and if it did not come before the first day of December, a green Yule was an absolute certainty, and Padruig would sail for home in the end of January, or at the latest, early in February.

Padruig Dubh longed for one more meeting at the haunted well with the fair Flora. He had made up his mind to take the first opportunity of arranging a meeting there, and he had not long to wait. It was now the third day of the week. The forenoon was dull, and there were no arrangements made for anything special in the afternoon. Dinner was passed and as was fully expected rain fell heavily, so that the rest of the day had to be spent inside. Flora skipped about the house very lightheartedly in spite of the dull rainy afternoon. She set the tea early in order to leave a long leisure hour before nightfall. Her mother was busily engaged in a new book which he had procured, and her father was doing odds and ends outside while the daylight was good.

Padruig was in his room upstairs. He had received a letter from home that morning, and he replied to it, which took some time. Flora listened with careful patience to hear Padruig come downstairs, because she was now ready to spend an hour with him alone. There was no sign of her expected companion leaving his place of security, so Flora took up the book which she had scarcely begun, and continued to read as she sat by the small parlour fire. She had only read a few pages when Padruig Dubh entered the room.

“All alone, Flora,” said Padruig. “I would have been down sooner, but that I had to write home. Last time my letter was somewhat short, and today I had to make amends by writing a very long one.”

“Come away! and sit here,” said Flora to her expected visitor as she drew in an armchair to the opposite side of the fireplace. “I have been expecting you for some time.”

Padruig Dubh seated himself as he was requested, and remarked that there would be no hope of getting out that afternoon. “Perhaps it is only a heavy winter shower,” said Flora. “Although there is no break in the sky meantime, it may yet clear up and go to frost.”

“If the rain is necessary,” said Padruig, “there is no harm done. We are very

comfortable here, and the only thing that we can do is to reconcile ourselves to our lot.”

“I have been thinking over what father has said about the winter,” said Flora, “and I am of the opinion that there is no real sign of a heavy snowfall, but in case that I may be wrong, I had made up my mind that we should have one more meeting at the Fairie’s Well before winter comes in earnest.”

“Very well! Flora,” said Padruig Dubh, “name the afternoon. Any day will suit me.”

“Let us see!” said Flora. This is Tuesday. Saturday is not a good day for our purpose, because I don’t think that it is lucky.”

“Shall we say Friday, then?” Said Padruig Dubh.

“Yes!” said Flora in a very interested tone of voice. We will fix on Friday afternoon at two-thirty, but we must not go there together. We must leave Craig Mhòr to [two?] different hours, and reach the haunted spot by opposite paths.”

“What is the meaning of this suggestion, Flora?” said Padruig Dubh. “Is it another romantic episode, which you now plan? You really don’t want anymore kidnapping by the Fairy Queen, because if you do; time about is fair play, and it would now be your turn.”

Flora smiled as she looked into Padruig’s eyes. There was no trickery in her mind. Indeed, there was something far more than idle frivolity in Flora’s mind, for she was very little given to such habits. “You shall take Mona with you,” said Flora, to Padruig. “She is my mother’s favourite dog, and a dog is proof against fairies. I will take Prince, father’s chum, and they will be our guardians. You shall leave here half an hour after me, and go round by the hut where little Duncan dwelt, and then turn round the hill to the Fairie’s Well. I shall leave before you and take the high road so that we may meet about the same time. I have the longer road of the two.”

“This is romance in itself already,” said Padruig Dubh. “I can see you and Prince and all being taken away to Fairyland, just as I arrive at the Well. Had I not better take the pipes with me?”

“No!” said Flora. “I am so passionately fond of the pipes, but if I can read your

thoughts aright, the pipes will only be an obstacle in the way.”

“Oh! I see,” said Padruig Dubh. “Then you really don’t want the ‘silver chanter’ to play any more mishaps. In that case I shall go empty-handed, with Mona for my companion.”

“To tell the truth,” said Flora, “if you watch the dog after you leave Duncan’s hut, as sure as anything, Mona will take you to the Well of her own accord. She knows where it lies, and she loves dearly to drink a deep fairie’s draught.”

The young couple talked for over an hour after they had arranged their tryst. They recalled several incidents which took place since Padruig’s arrival. The Duke’s ball was not forgotten, for there the idea of mutual interest in each other’s affections had rooted in both their minds. Something was at work within their hearts, yet not an outward sign was visible that would betray the passions which raged within their young breasts. Whether or not Flora wished to converse further, in the meantime, would have been hard, even for an expert thought reader to tell. In any case she requested Padruig Dubh to play for her one or two of his Fairyland Themes. This Padruig did with great pleasure. Flora listened very eagerly. Had there been an audience of a thousand, Padruig could not have played to better advantage. His pipe went well, and his fingers still possessed the secret art of the great masters of piobaireachd. His Toarluath and Crunluath rang out with such a clear crispness, that never before did Flora hear their equal. As the simple maiden sat by her father’s fireside, in fact in his very chair, she followed the performer with an admiring eye, for Padruig Dubh had all the qualities of perfect manhood, and Princeliness in his method of carrying himself while he piped. Flora also drank with her ears, so to speak, every note, and not until her mother called for her tea, did she make any sign of asking her entertainer to call a halt.

There were only two days now to go when the eventful day of their tryst would come. The time passed quickly, and Friday dawned with a very red sunrise. The day was short, but yet there was time for Flora and Padruig to fulfill their hearts’ desire. The frost was keen and the moors were hard and dry. It was an ideal day for a long sharp walk, and after an early dinner, the young

couple set out in accordance with their prearranged plan. Padruig Dubh left Craig Mhòr, then, accompanied by Mona, who now knew him so well that he was one of her favourites. Flora had gone about half an hour before her companion, because she had the longer distance to cover, and she was desirous of arriving at the haunted well first. Prince, her father's favourite dog was her guardian. He loved to get upon the moors with Flora as his mistress, because she did not chide him for running away out upon the hillside. Prince's master could not allow him to chase game without chastisement, for such a practice spoiled him from other work amongst the flocks.

Flora, however, was in a happy mood on this occasion. Her mind was so full of other things that she forgot all about Prince, and proud of the opportunity he had several hard drives after wild birds and mountain hares. Flora suddenly made up her mind to take a near cut so that she might without doubt be first to arrive at the Fairie's Well. As she approached the appointed place, Flora had realised that her companion had long since left her alone, and it was only when she heard Prince barking very excitedly that she missed him. Prince had had many fruitless runs that day, but the one in which he was now engaged was not to be a failure. He put up a hare about twenty yards in front of him, and as he could run very fast he kept at her heels. In fact he was making ground on his quarry, and after a hard chase came within a few feet of his prize. At last he closed his teeth upon the exhausted animal, and carried it proudly to his mistress' feet. The hare was still alive, and what was Flora to do with it, for she had never killed a hare in her life? It was to all appearance a very fine animal, which would weigh from three to four pounds. But Prince was a powerful dog of his breed, and it was no effort for him to carry his trophy. Flora wondered what she should do, and at last endeavoured to free the hare from his captor. Prince, however, was not to be done, for he would not let go. There was nothing for it but to wait until Padruig Dubh arrived, and he would kill the poor beast.

Flora could hear Mona in the distance, and soon Padruig Dubh appeared in sight. In fact Mona had been at the same game herself, but she could not run so fast as Prince, and this accounted for her being less successful. Flora watched

Prince with his captive, and he was becoming tired of holding the animal. It was only on very rare occasions that Prince brought a hare to his master's feet, but when he did so Roderick Mòr killed the animal with no small degree of pleasure. It was well known to every shepherd that only a dog of the swiftest foot could, as a rule, catch these hares at that period of the year, because they were well fed and could run on rough ground at a great speed. They could leap a great distance at one bound, whereas the dog had to keep up a very high running pace all the time to get within touch of such lively creatures. As soon as Prince heard Mona barking, he immediately released his grip and in an instant fixed the hare right in the back and shook it; then he threw the beast down and left. It was quite dead, and Flora was saved further trouble, for she questioned if even Padruig Dubh could have killed the animal.

At last Padruig arrived at the appointed place. He had seen Flora there before he had expected. The afternoon was someone wintry, and he had hurried on so as not to have his companion waiting in the keen frosty atmosphere, for the air was rather chilly.

"You are still here, Flora," said Padruig. "I was just wondering whether it would be you or the Fairy Queen who would greet me on my arrival."

"It is much too cold for the Fairy Queen to come out this afternoon," said Flora, "but look at what I have got here," pointing to Prince's catch.

"You have been more in luck than me," said Padruig Dubh. "Mona put up as many as four on the way, but she got none."

The young couple paced to and fro upon the green grassy sward near the well, while they conversed eagerly all the time. They could have kept on walking upon the moor, but there would have been no fairy spell upon their eventful meeting. True the Fairy Queen was there although they could not see her. She guarded them secretly; she imparted into their souls the deepest passion; she molded their hearts into one; and finally she waited the result, by allowing Padruig Dubh to break the ice in a very high-spirited, noble and heroic manner. There were many reasons why Padruig should exercise care in approaching the portals to the gateway to Flora MacDonald's heart. Flora was an only child. He might have been able to secure her hand if in future he had

been going to reside in bonnie Scotland, but for him to do so was utterly impossible. Soon, in fact too soon, he would be skipping across the wide ocean which separated all Scots from Scotland, and unless he made an effort now, soon it would be too late. Flora, on the other hand, was fully conscious of the same difficulties although she never expressed them. There they stood on equal grounds. They were alike in passion as well as difficulties.

Padruig Dubh's heart beat wildly within his breast. Flora's bosom heaved like the surge of an angry sea. Love had at last taken possession of them both with such a powerful grasp that it had ceased to be a passion, and now became a flood of expectation, which must find an outlet or burst, by sheer force, the barrier which stood between heart and heart. Words, and words only could open those floodgates of love.

"Procrastination!" said Padruig Dubh to himself silently. "Yes! Procrastination. What is that? It is one of the most dangerous of all barriers. Procrastination is nothing other than 'the thief of time.' It is a temptation which I must get behind me," and when the battle was over a new inspiration fired Padruig Dubh's courage with a desperate determination. "Speak, then speak I must, and that instantly," said Padruig again to himself. "If I am to win the heart of the fair Flora MacDonald, I must tell her that I love her."

The next barrier which appeared upon the horizon of Padruig's sky was the result of hope and fear. If and when he expressed his love to Flora, was he to enter without resistance into the sweet calm of love's haven, or were his hopes to be dashed like a rudderless vessel against a hidden rock. The young couple had paced the soft grass near the Fairie's Well for some time in complete silence. Each had their own thoughts which occupied their minds, and held them spellbound. At last the Fairy Queen touched Padruig Dubh's lips. He looked into Flora's face with a questioning gaze. His eyes spoke of the turmoil of a troubled soul. Flora then returned the glance of a love-sick heart, but she was speechless.

"Flora!" said Padruig Dubh, and the spell was broken.

"Flora! said Padruig again. "I love you."

Flora's heart was full to overflowing with the greatest of all life's

passions-love. She could not, and even if she would, she dared not reply.

“I have loved you, Flora,” said Padruig, “since the very first night that I arrived at Craig Mhòr, and ere I leave I must make my love known unto you. If I offer you my heart, my all; can I expect in return the heart which beats so violently within your breast—the love that is yours?”

“It cannot be,” said Flora. “Such a dream can never be realized. I could not accept the heart, nor give one in return, if an ocean is to divide us, or me from my father and mother who have cared for me so passionately up till now.”

“Seeming difficulties appear to be, meantime, in our way; the horizon of our young lives may temporarily be darkened by the passing clouds, but Flora! The darkest clouds have always got the brightest ‘silver linings’,” said Padruig Dubh with the greatest tenderness.

“All other things being equal, there shall be no ocean rolling between your love and mine,” continued Padruig Dubh with unabated assurance. “If we can surmount all other difficulties, we shall soon get over the ocean, wide that it may be. We shall at least trust in the great Provider of all good things, and I can give you now the solemn assurance that if it be His will your heart shall be mine, and mine shall be yours in return.”

Flora’s heart was now beating a pace, and her mind was as busy. Her thoughts were in a complete turmoil. But through all the chaos of her troubled as well as fevered brain, love’s warmest rays shone like a great meteor through the now broken clouds of perplexity, and sparkled with matchless lustre, which lit up at last, the darkest labyrinths of her soul. Could Padruig have already been in conversation with her father about such a delicate subject? Surely not! He was not in the least likely to be urged by any imaginary idea to take such a step without first putting the question to the one he loved. Any attempt to solve such a mystery only lead to the fair Flora’s entering further into the mist which enveloped the thoughts that emanated from her overtaxed brain. All that she could do was to wait. She could give no direct answer to Padruig’s request until she had seen her parents. They were in reality the guardians, not merely of her bodily wants and needs, but of her affections, and they alone were the sole arbiters of her future welfare.

Padruig Dubh was fully aware that he trod, for the first time in his life, upon tender ground. He had, therefore, no desire to press for a reply when and where it was impossible to procure it, and now he enjoyed in silence which reigned supreme between him and his first and only love. A considerable time had passed without a single word being passed between them. 'Silence is golden' saith the ancient proverb, and if ever Flora and her lover were to spend golden moments in each other's presence, they were indeed spending them now.

They had again reached a very critical point. If their silence was golden, who was to break that blissful spell? Padruig had always been taught to put prudence before valour. At least wisdom was what he had to cultivate as a safeguard against his pressing for a premature reply from one who could not give it where she stood.

Time was marching swiftly on. The twilight had already fallen. Prince and Mona ran about playfully, and every now and then they both ran up to their master and mistress; stopped dead, as it were, in their bounding rush of glee, and looked up into Padruig's and Flora's faces to see whether they were to be allowed to go homewards.

The Fairy Queen intervened. This time she touched the lips of the fair Flora. Flora at last looked up into Padruig's eyes. She had upon her beautiful face an angelic smile, but she spoke of love. Love's golden dream had yet to mature, before the seal could be administered. Enough ice had been broken for one day. The haunted grassy spot was still there, and the clear crystal spring poured forth its refreshing waters. Love was implanted into hearts that day at the Well of the Fairie's, and seeds now sown were not planted in vain. Expectation is a very powerful master, for it leads where many other factors fail. Whatever lives hope never dies, and in Flora's eyes, as she beheld her lover, there were rays of hope. The smile which illumined her face spoke volumes to Padruig Dubh, and still the passion of his soul. It calmed his throbbing heart, and he left the rest to materialise in due season.

"We must return home now, Padruig," said Flora, "for night is upon us and the dogs are becoming impatient. Take the mountain hare in your hand, and we shall retrace our steps towards Craig Mhòr."

Padruig Dubh picked up the hare, and Flora walked home with him hand-in-hand. They confined their conversation to neutral topics, and Padruig Dubh even returned with his fair companion to fairyland. He entertained Flora with all the romance of his adventures in the land of fairies, and both she and Padruig were so deeply engrossed in an exciting narrative that they arrived at Craig Mhòr before they fully realize where they were.

Chapter XXChristmas at Craig Mhòr

It was now the fifteenth day of December, and snow fell heavily upon the surrounding mountains. Roderick Mòr's prophecy had in the long run proved to be true. Not since he was a boy had the shepherd at Craig Mhòr seen such a fall. For several days the snow continued to come down in an almost unbroken spell. The frost was very keen, and the snow was dry as powder. This occurrence changed the scene. The heights above Craig Mhòr were transformed into their true Christmas mantle of spotless white. Padruig Dubh had never before seen such a spectacle of nature's own creation. If the hills looked beautiful in their purple hue when the heather was in full bloom in early August; they now presented a picturesque magnificence which was rarely excelled in any previous winter season.

Roderick MacDonald's flocks were all safely removed to the low country where they were to be pastured until Springtide return again. There was now nothing of much importance for Roderick Mòr to do, so that he could more or less draw his chair in towards the fireside and make himself comfortable. It was getting well into the afternoon, and there were no signs of the blue skies appearing. The winter's stores were gathered in at Craig Mhòr several weeks before, and there was no lack of food even if the snow lay for two or three months on end.

The whole family with their friend from New Zealand were kept to a great extent indoors, because the snow was now over a foot deep. Roderick Mòr and Padruig Dubh spent much of their time at pipe playing, and Padruig took this opportunity of initiating his host into the mysterious secrets of the ancient canntaireachd, or verbal notation of the great MacCrimmons. Roderick Mòr paid particular attention to the instructions of his youthful master, and followed with no small degree of enthusiasm the intricate syllabic system. Indeed Padruig Dubh insisted upon imparting to the good shepherd, a complete piobaireachd in the MacCrimmon method. Padruig had through the

beneficence of the Fairy Queen, seen the MacCrimmon himself at work as he imparted his system to his pupils. Roderick Mòr then procured a chanter, and sat face-to-face with Padruig Dubh, who played the piece over first. Then he chanted the air vocally, and finally the two performed the intricate fingering together. Roderick Mòr had a very quick ear. His ability to memorise a tune was very acute, and in a very short time he was able to play the greater part of the air by memory. Padruig Dubh left off playing altogether, and when his pupil failed to get the next note, as instructor Padruig Dubh supplied the deficiency by chanting the melody along with the pupil. Roderick MacDonald was amazed at the simplicity and accuracy of the system of the verbal tuition, and in a few hours he could master a new piobaireachd completely. Finally Padruig Dubh played the tune upon the great pipe, after which Roderick Mòr in turn did likewise. Roderick's initial test was not expected to be a masterpiece performance, but very soon his expression of a new tune was marked with all the characteristics of the genuine MacCrimmon style. Padruig Dubh, therefore, was highly delighted, not that he could play like the MacCrimmon himself, but impart the great music with the same precision as the Skye Masters.

Roderick was now upon an equal footing with him and Padruig Dubh, for he had a very good clean finger. He had not in his possession a coveted "silver chanter," but his old one produced a tune which was well worthy of an educated audience. Flora was an interested spectator, and a keen auditor. She never missed an opportunity of gaining a knowledge of new tunes as well as anything extraordinary in the art of fingering the pipes.

Only a few days had to elapse before Christmas, and Flora with her mother were busy in preparation for the festive season. To all appearance the coming Christmas was to be a landmark, so to speak, in the history of the MacDonald family at Craig Mhòr. For Flora's part, she had no idea what that day meant to her. Flora and Padruig Dubh had many leisure hours together, but never again having entered into matrimonial conversation since their tryst at the Fairie's Well.

Padruig Dubh, however, mentioned his intention to Flora's father, and Flora had several consultations with her mother about her future prospects.

Roderick Mòr MacDonald and his wife were a very wise and sympathetic couple. Since they had been approached on both sides, they had given the matter of Flora's love affair much anxious consideration. Whatever was to happen, the settlement of Flora in life meant a great change to them all, and as parents they were prepared to [do] anything within reasonable bounds for their daughter's sake. In the event of Padruig Dubh receiving Flora's hand, Roderick Mòr and his wife could see no other way out of the difficulty, but go to New Zealand with her if necessary.

Padruig Dubh knew his parents mind sufficiently well to offer Flora's father and mother a comfortable home at Dun Alasdair, should they make up their minds to accept his word and assurance that they would be made welcomed. Iain Macvourich had long wished for a companion of Highland birth and sympathies to share the large farm which he cultivated. Padruig Dubh knew that there was room and to spare for them all, and what was more thoughtful on his part, if Flora and he were spared they would have the satisfaction of being able to look after their parents on both sides when they were unable to look after themselves.

Such a problem required a great deal of thought and entailed much anxiety, but if it had to be done for the best Roderick Mòr and his wife for the very people who would be willing to sacrifice much for the welfare of two who were worthy of their sacrifice. The going out to New Zealand meant the breaking of very strong ties with his master as well as his dearly beloved home and country, but on the other hand it was entirely for his daughter's good, and he was still at an age where by he would enjoy seeing a greater portion of the world before leaving it.

Flora's father and mother slept over the matter, and upon the morrow they could see no reason why they should not accept Padruig Dubh's offer should it prove a genuine one. It would mean giving up of his situation, which had been held for three successive generations of MacDonald's. That Roderick had no son to succeed him, and as he would be in any case, the last of his race to be head shepherd at Craig Mhòr, he might as well retire from the post now as at a later date, when he might be compelled to do so under more distressing

circumstances. Meantime, Roderick Mòr MacDonald and his wife left the matter at that while new hope smiled upon their future.

The few short days which intervened between the fifteenth and twenty fifth of December passed very quickly, and now the morning of the day before Christmas dawned. The snow fall had increased, and there lay upon the ground snow to the depth of sixteen inches. It was now genuine Christmas weather, and there was not a black speck to be seen as far as the eye could carry. That day Roderick Mòr and Padruig Dubh had climbed to the top of the mountain where only a few weeks before Padruig had seen the sunrise. Although the landscape was dressed in a mantle of white, yet Padruig Dubh had never seen anything to compare with it. The vast moorland which a short time ago lay beneath the great red dawn in a mantle of purple and gold was now clothed in a covering many times purer than the whitest fleece of the most innocent lamb. The scene made a great impression upon Padruig's mind, and a still deeper impression on that of Roderick Mòr who was in all likelihood to have to tear himself away from the land of his birth.

The snow being very deep it was heavy work plodding through it, so the mountaineers descended towards Craig Mhòr. They just arrived in time to greet Malcolm Campbell from the Corry, who had cause to pay Roderick Mòr a visit on the eve of Christmas. While Roderick conversed with his friend, the Duke's head gamekeeper, Padruig Dubh stole from the room. Roderick's consent to his daughter's union with Padruig Dubh reach Flora with lightning speed, for the visit to the mountain top was specially arranged for that purpose. Padruig whispered the glad tidings in Flora's ear. In a few words he set the mind of the one whom he loved, and who loved him clearly in return, at rest, and in the small parlour arranged another meeting at the Fairie's Well for tomorrow at two in the afternoon. Flora's face flushed to crimson on the success of that visit to the hilltop. In fact her colour kept almost at the same height the whole evening, for Malcolm Campbell teased her about it violently.

Malcolm Campbell was one of those men who was half a century old in body, but under twenty-five in spirit. He asked Flora to name the day of the eventful

occasion in good time so that he might have the pleasure of presenting her with a silken dress. Flora was in turn a keen sportswoman. She assured Malcolm that she would give him at least a calendar month's warning. But this was not all that Malcolm said. He prophesied things which Roderick MacDonald never thought of.

"You will see Dun Alasdair in New Zealand yourself yet, Roderick," said Malcolm. "I can see the whole MacDonald family there yet."

"Nonsense!" said Roderick Mòr, and as he spoke his face betrayed his remark. This was as good as an admission to Malcolm Campbell, and he added that he might be there himself before he died.

"New Zealand is a great country," said Padruig Dubh, "and I am sure there is no one there who would make you more welcome than my father and mother. He would give you piping forevermore. I really don't know how we ever manage to be so successful in business, for many an hour he has spent on the pipes."

"But pipers are always successful," said Malcolm. "Look how fortunate you have been yourself, Padruig."

"In what manner do you mean that I have been successful, Malcolm," said Padruig. "I have not yet entered into business."

"Have you not?" said Malcolm. "I should just think that you have made a very good start."

Had Padruig Dubh been wide enough he would not have invited Malcolm's next remark. "I cannot follow what you mean, Malcolm," said Padruig, "but I shall be delighted to have an explanation."

"That will be very easily done, Padruig," said Malcolm. "In fact an explanation is not at all necessary. Have you not won the heart of one of the fairest Highland maidens that has ever try the purple heather? And to all appearance if things go well, before another Christmas or two at least you shall receive her hand."

Padruig Dubh blushed freely; Flora left the room; Roderick MacDonald looked askance, and his wife laughed heartily, as she rebuked Malcolm for his

drollery.

The rest of the evening was spent in merriment so far as was customary in such a lonely place. Roderick Mòr played upon his pipe. He piped the MacCrimmon tune which Padruig Dubh had taught him. It was called "The Tryst," and after he finished playing, he then explained to his friend Malcolm how he came to possess it. Malcolm was very much interested in this discovery which Padruig Dubh had made. He warned Flora to keep her eye upon the Fairy Queen in case she might do her out.

After supper Padruig Dubh played again upon his "silver chanter," and Malcolm could not help admiring his stately bearing. When he stopped playing the Duke's gamekeeper congratulated him upon the marked improvement in his fine performance. "Between the Fairy Queen in the MacCrimmon, they had made a piper of you, Padruig," said Malcolm, "and by my faith I have never heard such a fine tune."

Malcolm could not play the pipes himself, but he had a very acute ear, and he knew a good piper when he heard him play. The night was now far spent. The clock then warned the last hour of that day and night. "Is that the clock ringing one twelve times?" said Malcolm, with a tricky smile upon his face. "I must betake myself to the Corry, for now it is Christmas," and as Malcolm left Craig Mhòr, he wished them all the compliments of the season.

Christmas dawned with a very heavy frost, as well as a snowfall upon the ground. The sun rose like a great red ball of fire, and crawled round the hilltops. All was quiet at Craig Mhòr. There were no visitors which suited Flora and Padruig's purpose. At one o'clock they left for the Fairie's Well. They wended their way slowly arm in arm through the snow. Flora was in high spirits, and very often looked up into Padruig Dubh's face, which was very pleasant outwardly, but Flora could see through the surface of his features, as it were, behind the scenes, and there she could see that her lover thought somewhat deeply, although he remained calm and collected. They conversed freely with one another until they almost stepped into the well. The snow was very deep, which accounted partly for this occurrence. The subject of their conversation was in all probability the real reason why they had not noticed the

rock from which was discharged the crystal waters that bestowed virtue and good luck upon thirsty partakers.

Flora looked down into the spring which bubbled up from the rock. She very suddenly ceased conversation, and Padruig Dubh could see from her face that something had attracted her attention. Flora espied a little mound. It was a fairy dun constructed of snow. Padruig Dubh also made a like discovery, and asked his companion who had been at the well preparing these grounds? Flora made no reply. She raised her hand as a sign which warned Padruig to keep silent. They remained motionless for a few moments, after which Flora again smiled and Padruig Dubh's face, and said, "It's all right: we are now free." Padruig Dubh then understood what happened, and they resumed their conversation.

"Flora!" said Padruig. "This is the greatest day of all days when peace was breathed over the whole world, and goodwill bestowed upon all men. Today we have by mutual consent chosen a memorable hour, and a romantic spot to settle the greatest question of our future lives. I have already declared my love to you. My heart is yours as I now kneel at your feet. But that is not all. It cannot rest there. I ask for that which is most precious in all the world, to me at least. What is the answer to be?"

Flora was moved with the most tender emotions which only a woman can portray. There flowed from her heart, to compare it with the spring by which they stood, a love as pure as crystal. Her eyes shone in Padruig's face like monster diamonds. Her look illuminated his countenance; her smile awoke the passion which reigned supreme within his heart, and offered a silent consent. This, however, was not sufficient for Padruig Dubh. He waited with intense anticipation for the spoken word. Flora did not want coaxing. If Padruig Dubh only knew the thoughts which were passing through her mind, an answer would have been quite unnecessary. Flora, however, was not without a certain amount of anxiety. Although she was in possession of her parents' approval, yet there was that thought of a union with Padruig Dubh Macvourich which meant a vast change in her future existence. But Flora's father and mother had weighed the whole matter up carefully, and it was their earnest belief that they

had given their consent to a union for the good of their daughter and all concerned.

The chosen day was not by any means warm. The frost was intense. The wind was bitterly cold, yet the young couple felt it not. It might have been a day such as could have been enjoyed in an Indian Summer. Their pulses beat high; their blood was warm; their hearts were beating in perfect unison; their love was deeper than a fathomless ocean; and yet the hero of the fight awaited the acknowledgment of a decisive victory. Could it be that Flora was playing with his affections? It could not be because she was the very picture of innocence. Was she shy? Yes! She did blush crimson, indeed, but that was no reason why she should withhold her answer.

The longer Padruig Dubh hesitated the further he plunged himself into perplexity, and yet he could not urge himself to secure a forced acceptance of the greatest gift which he could bestow upon anyone even if his very life depended upon the issue at stake. Padruig summoned every ounce of courage that was within him. He could no longer stand the agonising suspense. In an instant he jumped to his feet; clasped Flora in his arms; looked into her beautiful eyes; and said, "Flora! Is your heart to be mine now or never? Yes or no?" Flora's heart throbbled with a strange affection. She knew that she could only give her heart away once; that it would be no more her own; but the property of another. This fact, real that it was, did not bar the way.

Flora could not withhold her answer any longer. With upturned face she said, "Padruig! I give you the heart for which you long. It is yours and yours alone." Padruig Dubh had no ring in his possession to place upon Flora's finger. He was far from the city with its busy throng; but he sealed a vow by placing upon Flora's lips the first kiss of love.

Will yet they stood clasped in each other's arms there broke upon their ears the strains of music. It was the Fairy Queen, accompanied by the fairy Princess who played upon the harp. Padruig and Flora could hear quite audibly the following words which rose to swell the singer's praise of one of the happiest hours of their lives:--

“While the crystal stream is flowing;
While the heart with love is glowing;
Tender lips the vow is sealing,
Dwellers of the mountain sheiling.”

The music died away. It was now all over. Padruig Dubh declared his love to Flora. Flora did not hesitate to give her answer, so that she might not provoke the ardent lover who sought her hand. She had no intention of trying his integrity; the depth of his love, or trifling with his affections. Both hero and heroine were of a temperament that was infinitely superior to such frivolity. Their love was sincere and they had now reached the culminating point of that passion which was to bind them together heart and hand it until they were parted by death itself.

It was only after a hand had laid hold of Padruig’s arm with a gentle touch that the young couple relaxed their hold of each other. They were in no hurry to burst asunder the powerful grasp of love, for this was the sweetest moments of their young lives. But the Fairy Queen with all her charm of kindly benevolence desired, for the last time, to offer to Padruig Dubh and his sweetheart her parting benediction.

“Gentle youth!” she said. “I have watched over thee since first thou didst set foot upon this mountainside. While thou wert in my kingdom I have tried thine integrity. Thou hast undergone temptations, and hast overcome the tempter’s powers; now this is thy reward, which has been well one. There standeth beside thee the daughter of Roderick Mor MacDonald. She is fairer than the fairest of Highland maidens. Her heart is pure as thine is also, and thou shalt both live to see many days. Fare thee well, my beloved companions. May the great Creator bless thee, and may the music of thy pipe continue to enrich your souls, while your life’s pulse beateth to the rhythm of an endless Theme that shall carry thee through the world, and carry you out of reach of all its troubles.”

As the last word died away in the ears of the youthful lovers, the Fairy Queen disappeared, and Padruig Dubh was left alone with Flora MacDonald by his

side. Padruig declared to Flora that he could never forget the Fairy Queen's benevolence. She had shed lustre upon his path, and attuned the most tender chords of his heart. The magic melody of her "silver chanter" was a charm which would never die while he lived, for the Queen of the Fairies had piped the sweetest strains that his ear had ever heard.

Chapter XXIPadruig Dubh's Dream Realised

The old year had closed with many happy memories for all at Craig Mhòr, and it was now New Year's morning. Snow again fell very softly, and the myriads of flakes covered that which had already fallen, with a fleecy mantle of pure white. The mountains frowned under the dark clouds which partly covered them, and the deer wandered about their slopes in search of food. The moor fowls fluttered about nervously, and came close up to the door of the shepherd's house at Craig Mhòr in the hope of getting something to satisfy their hunger. The eagle came down from the rocky heights in search of a prey, for the snowy garment which covered the heath-clad hills obscured the usual objects of his daily existence. The mountain hare had changed his coat of blue for a fur of pure white, which made it much more difficult for the eye to detect its movements.

None of these things escaped the attention of Padruig Dubh Macvourich, who, if he did not understand their exact meaning, had no hesitation in making enquiries at his beloved Flora, or her father, who could give the required explanation. Padruig Dubh not only began a new year with the first day of January, but a new era in his life. Since he had made a solemn vow at the Fairie's Well upon Christmas Day, and sealed that promise with the first kiss of love so full of sweetness and charm, he had become a man with certain responsibilities, which he took upon himself as his bounden duty to acknowledge. He found it for him, life had a new outlook, and the scenes of old had entirely changed. Padruig was no more a childish boy, but the companion of the maiden who had no equal in his mind's eye. He just had a letter from his parents who had approved of all arrangements which he had suggested to them sometime previously. This information he had conveyed to New Zealand well in advance, for he fixed his mind on Flora MacDonald when first he saw her, and if any doubt existed previously about his new deal his anxiety was now eliminated. He was writing back home with full particulars and expressing

further the desires of his heart. Iain Macvourich and his wife were now satisfied that their son had done the right thing, and they expressed their satisfaction to him as well as the great Providence which had guided his thoughts and actions.

Early in the afternoon the snow ceased to fall. A keen frost set in, and the sun broke through the clouds. The MacDonalds had an invitation from Malcolm Campbell to spend New Year's evening at the Corry. Roderick Mòr had played his pipes for almost an hour prior to visiting his friend. Padruig Dubh had been out upon the hillside enjoying a good walk amongst the snow. There he encountered the hardships as well as the pleasures of a big snowstorm. The snow was deep, and it was only with an effort of unusual courage that he could climb the slopes of the lofty mountains. When he returned home his face was glowing with the health-giving exercise in which he had indulged for the greater part of two hours.

"It is nearly time for us to depart for the Corry, Padruig," said Flora. "Where have you been?"

"I was not fully aware that the day was so far advanced," said Padruig Dubh. "I was at the top of the hill above the Fairie's Well."

"And what did you see there?" said Flora, anxiously.

"I saw many objects which interested me, but the thing that impressed me most of all was to stand upon the hilltop, and gaze upon the white-mantled mountains which stretched far beyond until they met the blue sea which rolled up to the edge of the dryland."

"We must have something to eat, and then go," said Flora. "But you must dressed first."

Padruig Dubh got upstairs to his room and dressed hurriedly; put his pipes in their case, and was downstairs again almost in an instant. The family had partaken of what dinner they were to have, and then left immediately for the Corry. Flora and Padruig left together. They walked happily arm in arm, while at a short distance in the rear, they were followed by Flora's father and mother.

As Malcolm Campbell's visitors wended their way through the snow they

enjoyed a quiet hour's conversation. Flora and Padruig spoke of future days, and of having the music of the pipes in the land of their parents' adoption, where they were ultimately to live, while close behind them came the Duke's shepherd Roderick Mòr MacDonald and his wife. The theme of their conversation was the leaving of a place which had always been the charm of their lives. In the new country there would be no high mountains; no Fairies Well; and no Fairy Queen. No more would they hear the sweet melody of the "silver chanter," which had so often lulled them to sleep in the long summer evenings, and entertain them upon the hillside in the heat of the noonday sun.

They passed the little well but all was quiet. Not a sound could be heard, and now the little snow dun or mound had disappeared. There was a distinct note of sadness in Flora's voice as she remarked this fact. She recalled the Fairy Queen's words of welcome to Padruig Dubh when she kidnapped him, as also that little creature's remarks as she bade them farewell, which meant that they would see her no more. Padruig Dubh himself was touched by Flora's remarks, for he had the greatest respect for the little figure in green. If he did not love her he did the next best thing. He revered her memory. The tiny well upon the hillside would always remain an oasis in his mind while he traversed life's road however weary he might be. Whether in reality or in imagination he would often quench his thirst with the pure crystal waters which he could hear and see no more. Although in person he would soon be far from the fairy kingdom, yet in spirit he would often be there to hear the sweet strains of the harp, and the touching verses which accompanied it.

The young couple were awakened from their reverie by a deep note which broke the silence. It was the bay of the stag hound. They had approached the Corry. Malcolm Campbell had been on the outlook for them for some time, and having grown weary of waiting, took the road in person to meet them. He wished them a happy New Year, as he shook hands with each and all. Flora was the last to enjoy Malcolm's good wishes, and he gave her hand a very hearty shake; then he turned to Padruig Dubh and said, "It is all over now. Flora and you will remember Christmas Day for a long time." Flora smiled and looked pleasantly into Malcolm's face in her usual good-natured way. Padruig Dubh

thanked his friend for so kindly asking him to spend New Year's night with him. This done, and the snow removed from their feet, the party entered Malcolm Campbell's dwelling to enjoy the warmth of a cheery peat fire, which not [only] heated them, but lit up the whole room.

"I think we shall be more comfortable here than outside," said Roderick Mòr. "The fire burns well. You must have been very successful with the peat this year, Malcolm. I have never seen a better Summer for peat. I got mine completely dried and build up without a single shower."

"I think that I have as much peat as will last me for two years," said Malcolm. "They are of good quality, and in excellent condition. But peat is only one thing," continued Malcolm. "We must change our breath."

Just as Malcolm said the word his wife came from the butt end of the house with a very old-fashioned tray which supported the elements required. Health and prosperity went round the ingle¹, and Malcolm smacked his lips saying "We shall not all be here next year, that I am prepared to bet."

Flora looked up and smiled. She was very fond of the gameskeeper for she grew up from child to womanhood close beside him, and she did not dislike his manner of teasing. "Where shall we be, Malcolm, then?" said Flora. "Do you expect to be away from the Corry by another year?"

"Now! You are asking a question, Flora," said Malcolm. "But I have just been enumerating my surplus spondoolachs² to see how much in reality I can give for that silken dress of yours! It is quite inevitable that I cannot get clear of what I might call a very rash promise when my heart was full or rather intoxicated over your matrimonial victory. Now! I must, however, fulfill it."

Flora blushed deeply, and did not know very well what to say, but she was helped out of the apparent difficulty when the good Mrs. Campbell entered the room, and requested the company to come and partake of supper.

The evening was spent in song, story and musical performance. The pipe was Malcolm's favourite instrument, and Padruig Dubh as well as Roderick Mòr

¹Fireplace

²Money

entertained the company. Many interesting stories were told of adventure, of fairies, of witches, and last but not least of ghosts. The Ghost stories Padruig Dubh enjoyed most of all. Malcolm Campbell was brimful of good stories, and Flora had such a winning way of getting the best of them from her favourite admirer, that she succeeded in getting one after another as fast as she could ask them.

The evening had slipped away very quickly, for on such occasions it is difficult to keep to the hour determined for departure. When the MacDonalds left the Corry the evening was well advanced. There was no moon, but it was quite clear outside. The white mantle of snow served as a light, and after as hearty a hand shaking as they had when they met the two families parted. Flora was somewhat anxious to get safely past the Fairie's Well in case of some mishap. She had never forgotten Padruig's disappearance, and she would never trust the fairies, even although they were kindly disposed towards all those connected with her.

Flora's father and mother led the way on the homeward journey. They were well in front of Padruig and his fair companion. They had, however, reached the haunted well once more. All was quiet until they approached the place. Flora stopped completely still as if she had taken fright, and waited without saying anything. Padruig Dubh wondered what had happened to her? She made no sign to him which called for complete silence. The Fairy Queen was there in person, for Flora could hear distinctly the rustling of her silken gown. After they had passed the well a considerable distance, Padruig endeavoured to get from Flora what she really thought of the fairies but he was altogether unsuccessful. Flora would not converse upon the subject on any account. She was delighted to get away from the place. Prince and Mona both started barking their welcome, "And now we are home," said Flora.

The snow lay upon the mountains unbroken for months. Never had Roderick MacDonald seen such a stormy winter. He had been round the other shepherds' houses several times, as they themselves were down in the low country with the entire flocks. Padruig Dubh often wandered amongst the hills

alone. It was a great and unexpected pleasure for him to roam on the snow-clad mountains. There he planned his happy future, and there also he rehearsed the drama of his past life. He recalled the early dreams of his youth. His father and mother often told him of bonny Scotland. They had imparted to him the impressions of the scenes of their childhood, and told him in detail what he would see when he visited the land of his birth.

Padruig Dubh was young and inexperienced in the wiles and snares which his fellow men sometimes laid in the world around him. He was, however, fortunate enough to meet with genuine friends. All those with whom he had had dealings were kindhearted and straightforward. They had a true ring of honesty about them, to put it in these words. In fact this young New Zealander appeared to have been under a lucky star on the night of his birth, and he was assured by the Fairy Queen herself that good fortune would follow him.

Out upon the hilltops alone he courted the muse within his own heart, for it was now pregnant with an abundance of new life and hope. Alone in the solitudes of the land which he loved, everything which met his eye was beautiful. Loneliness was to him the means of finding a great companion: One who would never forsake him, for nature was not only upon his right hand, but also on his left. It came up before him, and it lay also in the great beyond, as he looked backwards.

Padruig Dubh stood upon the highest range of mountains which surrounded his temporary home. He was one of the happiest men in the world. The dream of his life was now realized. To use an appropriate phrase: he had escaped from the submerged rocks of the troubled waters of life at an early age. He cast his eye upon a placid sea which lay beneath an azure sky. The young man who had by a stroke of good fortune visited Craig Mhòr was a good-natured fellow, who took life easy in some ways; but there were those things which concerned his future existence, and happily they were now settled. In his home in New Zealand he had many strange dreams of what one day he longed to be; where he wished to roam; who the companion of his life should be; to hear the great pipe played in ancient Scotland; to see the MacCrimmon himself; to dance with fairies in their green dresses; to see the real Gathering of the Clans; to chase the

stag; meet the smugglers in their own abode; to see the ugly old which; to meet with a genuine ghost; to see the golden sunrise; and last but not least to behold the eagle in its flight. These were the many dreams of Padruig Dubh's young life, and the dreams had now come true. He had possessed above all things which he had hoped for: the pleasure of being kidnapped by the fairies, and having spent a period of his life in fairyland. There he procured the master's touch of the chanter, and heard the sweetest pipe music that ever filled the sweetly-scented mountain air.

Fortune had smile upon the son of Iain Macvourich while he dwelt in Scotland. But with good fortune sometimes come great responsibilities. Padruig Dubh was launching out into a great undertaking. He had gained experience in commercial training; in the art of piping; and seen the wildest and most rugged mountains in the Highlands. There he found a sweetheart who smiled upon him when first she cast her eye upon his stately form. He sought her love long before she breathed of affection towards him, so that the plans which he was about to carry out were of his own planning.

When Padruig Dubh returned to his parents at Dun Alasdair, his old home was to be a new creation; a new world to him; for there were to be three new partners in the business of the great sheep farm. True, there was much to do, but Roderick Mòr McDonald was highly experienced in everything pertaining to sheep, and while he had, if all went well, many years yet to come during which he could enjoy sheep farming under much more pleasant circumstances, and after all his change, lay past something for a rainy day. There was no need for his friend at Craig Mhòr to worry about hard times for Padruig's father had plenty of everything. All that had to be done was to build a house for the MacDonalds, and the farm would be complete.

Having settled many things in his own mind Padruig Dubh left the mountaintop and returned to Craig Mhòr. Time would pass, and as soon as the snow was sufficiently broken he would have to leave those hills forever.

There was much to settle before early Spring, and Roderick MacDonal had an interest in all that had to be done. Flora and her mother were already busily engaged with head and hand, for they could see that the time in the long run

would be very short indeed. Roderick Mòr was fully alive to the fact that his departure from the Duke's sheep farm would cause the Commissioner himself deep regret. Roderick was rather uneasy about the whole affair. He had, however, made a promise: he had consented to a union between Flora and Padruig Dubh; and now he would never dream of drawing back.

While the object of Flora's love mused with himself in loneliness, the whole of the MacDonald family had been busy, making arrangements for their great changeover. They discussed the whole situation in all its phases. They were in reality tired out for the time being, and had just gathered round the fireside for a complete rest, when their friend Padruig Dubh returned from the hills. Padruig thought that while everything was freed in his mind, he would discuss matters that afternoon with the master of the house. He was frustrated, however, in his desire to do so, for as he entered the parlour at Craig Mhòr he was met by Flora, who welcomed him with a loving smile and a gentle word.

"Come away, Padruig dear," she said. "Don't worry anymore about it today. We are going to have something to eat, and then spend the rest of the day in enjoyment."

"What do you mean, Flora?" said Padruig Dubh. "I am at a loss to follow you."

"You may be," said Flora, "but you look very worried. I have never seen you so trouble in appearance before."

There was no one in the room except themselves, and Flora threw her arms around his neck. Padruig then realised the meaning of "hearts in unison"; of two minds thinking alike, and at the same moment. It was the sweet and passionate tenderness of love. After all his worry upon the lonely moors alone, he had no idea of what waited for him upon his return. He was only beginning to taste what a woman's love was like. The kiss which Flora gave at the Fairie's Well upon Christmas Day was not half so sweet as the one he had just received. Love is a great passion, and more especially when it is pure and true, and Padruig Dubh had not yet realised the depth of love which reigned in Flora's heart. The warm flesh of her cheek which lay close to his was a pleasure; nay a charm which he could not find words to describe. As he placed his arm around

her waist, and looked into her beautiful eyes, there he saw the beams of inward radiance which came from Flora's soul. There was something like a very faint resemblance between the love which he bore towards Flora, and his beloved instrument. Flora's waist was like the curve of the bag of his pipe. It was soft, warm, and tender, but the only point at which they appeared to be alike was there warm. Flora caressed her lover for two main reasons: because he looked worried; and because she longed for another tune from his great pipe. In fact she, with her father and mother, were in the same predicament, and a tune from the "silver chanter" would cheer them.

"Come! Padruig, but it has something to eat," said Flora, "and then you must play for me my favourite tune upon the pipe."

After Padruig had refreshed himself with good things which Flora prepared, he complied with her request. "The Lament for The Great Eagle" was Flora's favourite. This piece Padruig played with great feeling, for he knew that every note was followed from Variation to Variation by an audience he knew what to expect. Flora alone was one to be reckoned with as a judge of pipe music. She had heard it before she was many months old. Many a sound sleep she slept "under the spell of the pipes." The charm of Padruig Dubh's piping revived the things which were dear to her in childhood days.

"There is something peculiarly strange about the pipes," said Flora. "A time from them seems to lift the load from off a tired heart, as it reaches the end of a perfect day. When I am sad, I like to hear them played; and when I am happy they still possess a great measure of real comfort, which cannot be surpassed."

Padruig Dubh could fully appreciate this feeling, which led him to play again in an effort to create a happy atmosphere in what was otherwise a dull and lonely habitation. The pipes were in reality the life of those who dwelt at Craig Mhòr: they were a sunbeam, so to speak, which never failed to shine within the hearts of the MacDonald's. The pipe was indeed the great charm of their lives.

Roderick MacDonald was somewhat quiet in his demeanour, but he was not what one would call down hearted. He was now beginning to foresee what his departure from Craig Mhòr meant. It was a great thought to have to leave the old fireside, whereupon many a happy occasion the old peat fire burned brightly

as it warmed the Highland hearth. The pipes also had a supreme place in Roderick's heart. They were his one and only past time. He did not worship them, but he loved him dearly. That night he watched young Padruig Dubh play, and listened with pleasure to his masterly performances, which cheered him and filled his soul with real Highland fervour. With the stirring notes of Padruig's last tune they all slept over the anxious thoughts of that day, and awaited anxiously the results of what the Morrow would urge them to put into action.

Chapter XXIIPadruig Dubh's Farewell to Craig Mhòr

The snow did not break on the hills to fifteenth day of March, and by the end of the month the surrounding country had entirely lost its wintry appearance. There were some white patches here and there upon the highest mountain peaks, but the roads were now clear. Much had been done at Craig Mhòr since the New Year week, and in a month's time Padruig was to leave for New Zealand. Donald was ordered from the village to bring the necessary luggage to meet the boat when Morag was again to traverse the familiar road.

Padruig Dubh had few visits to make before he left the haunts which he knew only for a few short months. The three shepherds had returned from the low country about the middle of April. Their flocks were again on the hills, and Padruig Dubh had to pay visits to "The Duns"; "The Cairns," and "Loch Dubh." On the third week in April, Roderick Mòr and Padruig Dubh set out for that purpose. They spent a full week in this pleasant duty, and Kenneth MacGillivray, Alasdair MacNeil, and Murdoch MacKay were genuine Highlanders. Padruig enjoyed their company, and loved to hear them converse in the Gaelic tongue. Although he did not understand what they meant, he admired the language. They all spoke the English fairly well, but as it was a foreign language to them, in it they could only express themselves in their own simple way. When they spoke the English they had a very strong Highland brogue, and in conversation Padruig enjoyed to the full every word of it. There was a charm in their style of speech, and he could see that his father and mother still retained it despite the fact that they had left the Highlands for many years. Padruig Dubh told the shepherds that he had come to bid them goodbye, and that very soon Roderick Mòr MacDonald would be doing the very same thing, as he had now made up his mind to leave the land of his birth. The shepherds of the misty moorland were very much moved at the departure of Roderick Mòr's friend, and to enliven the parting, as well as to provide a farewell "skirl"; they

played many tunes upon their quaintly simple pipe. Padruig Dubh was the master of the instrument, but, nevertheless, he appreciated their style of playing. Their pipes were very mellow in tone. In fact, the quality of every note was peculiarly rich. These Highlanders played the sad pieces best of all. Their performances were slow but clear, and very impressive. The real spirit of the mist and the mountain was to be traced through every tune. Murdoch MacKay played one Lament while Padruig was at Loch Dubh, which brought tears to his eyes. The origin of this piobaireachd was that it was composed to commemorate the death of a beautiful young woman of Highland birth. It was called "A Lament for the Chieftain's Daughter." Murdoch related a very short history of the tune which ran thus:--

"This beautiful young woman had a sweetheart unknown to her father. He was not so highly born as she was, but he was an excellent performer upon the great pipe. They lived upon one of the Islands of the West, and they contrived to reach the mainland secretly where they intended to get wedded to one another, after which they were to return to their Island home. Then, Sheila, for that was her name, was to confess to her father, and beg of him to grant them permission to live together. They both left home one evening about dusk, and entered a small boat with the intention of making their way to the desired haven. The Moon shone dimly. There was a great double ring about it. As they boarded the boat and set sail they had just remembered that the moon forboded a storm. The wind rose gradually, and as they got about three quarters across the channel a hurricane had ensued. They both fought heroically the angry waters, but eventually the boat overturned, and they were left to the mercy of the waves. The young woman was drowned, but her lover managed to get hold of the upturned boat, which by some miraculous action on his part he got it set aright, whereby his life was saved. The young man endeavoured to locate his loved one, by means of a daring and most desperate effort before he left the scene of the disaster, but his efforts were all in vain. Alas! She had sunk beneath the angry surge, which laved her cold and narrow bed to rise no more until the trumpeter sounded the "last call." The survivor made for the mainland and lived in complete seclusion where he played upon his

mournful pipe for many years. He died in the vicinity of “Loch Dubh,” so tradition said, and Murdoch played the tune once more after he had related the sad story.

Roderick Mòr listened fervently, and Padruig Dubh wept.

“There is nothing that can unlock the floodgates of the heart like the Lament,” said Roderick Mòr MacDonald, as he observed Padruig wipe a tear from his paled cheek. “It is almost capable of moving a stone, so to speak, to sorrow.”

“You’re right, Roderick, man,” said Murdoch. “She would be always very, very sad when she plays that touching Lament, and turns its sad tale over and over in her own mind. Oh! that I had been there. The poor girl, she would have been sure to have saved her, but now, Alas! Roderick, man, her heart is too full to say more for the present.”

Padruig Dubh was very much impressed by the genuine friendship which these men had bestowed upon him, and it would be long before he should forget them. He left with each a handsome gift, which in turn was highly appreciated, after which he returned to Craig Mhòr with his companion. There was only one other visit to make prior to the departure, and Padruig left it over until the last days. In the end of the week before leaving this visit was duly accomplished. It was to the Corry Padruig Dubh went last of all. Malcolm Campbell had a secret liking for the young New Zealander, and Padruig Dubh in return respected the Duke’s gamekeeper as a true friend. Roderick Mòr again accompanied Padruig Dubh, and they arrived at the Corry in the middle of the afternoon of Friday. There were only three days to go from then, and Padruig would be going down the long path with many windings to catch the “Highland Queen,” and meet the jovial Captain MacIvor.

“Draw in your chair, Padruig,” said Malcolm Campbell, with a somewhat sad note in his words of welcome. “Are you really going to leave us?”

“I’m afraid that I must,” said Padruig Dubh. “I have now exceeded my time by several months. But I have nothing to regret. I have just said goodbye to several of the most genuine Highlanders that ever set foot upon Highland Heath.

I may never see them again, but I shall never forget them.”

“I believe what you say, Padruig my boy,” said Malcolm. “But you are not bidding us all goodbye. You will be taking ‘one’ with you. If not in person you will be carrying a way that part which is sweetest and best of all-her heart.”

Padruig took Malcolm’s provoking and good-natured teasing in good part, and went on to recount his pleasant experiences.

“I shall always remember your Highland home and hospitality, Malcolm,” said Padruig. “I have seen the mountains change four times. When I arrived here the hills were wearing their mantle of purple. Then they changed to brown. The brown gave place to the snowy garment of white; and now the snow has left the slopes and giant peaks in a fresh covering of green verdure, which denotes the newness of life that is brought into being by an early Spring.”

“There is one place which you will not readily forget,” said Malcolm. “The Fairie’s Well will always send forth its refreshing waters long after you are in New Zealand. There is one who will be missed at that spring: one who has frequented it from early childhood. But these things will be, Padruig. It cannot be helped. What is a loss to one is a gain to another.”

Padruig did not dispute Malcolm’s remarks. He left them to hang between facts and fancies. In any case time would decide. “Such changes as will be, must be in spite of all,” said Malcolm. “But surely you will not go, Padruig, without giving us one more ‘skirl’ from the ‘silver chanter.’ “If it has brought you luck it must give us cheer, and now for another tune.”

Padruig Dubh got the pipes; tuned them with great care, and played cheerfully for a considerable time. While he played Malcolm made occasional remarks to his friend Roderick Mòr. They both enjoy the performance. Padruig Dubh stopped playing, but he did not lay aside the pipe.

“Now!” said Padruig. “I shall play you my last piece, the name of which is ‘Farewell To The Mountains’.”

Again the pipes pealed forth their powerful notes. While the expression of the previous tune was pleasant and even stirring, the import of this one was somewhat different. A Farewell is not altogether a sad tune, but it has its own purpose: its own story, which never fails to take effect. This beautiful melody

had one message to convey, and the performer put his whole soul into the rendering. Malcolm was not entirely familiar with the ins and outs of the great music, but he could translate the meaning of this tune. It was impressive indeed. Had it been Malcolm Campbell's own son who had poured forth the music of his inmost soul in the form of a parting melody, he could not have been more affected. When Padruig Dubh finished playing he laid his pipes aside. No more with the soft Western breeze carry away the stirring notes of his pipe from the Corry to the neighbouring hilltops; no more would the antlered Monarch of the lofty mountains halt to catch the gladdening notes as they fell upon his sensitive ear; Norwood the eagle couch amongst the rugged heath anymore to enjoy the enchantment of a music which alone befitted its lofty habitation. It was now all over. Padruig's pipe was silent for all time on the Hills by the lonely Corry. It would play no more; not even at Craig Mhòr, for those who lived there were too full of that sentiment which takes possession of the affections prior to parting to enjoy, meantime, further performances upon their beloved pipe. They would rather recall the pleasant notes which harboured pleasant memories of the past, and in the ear of imagination listen to them as their coming into being reconstructed the memorable scenes of old. Finally, Padruig Dubh said goodbye to all at the Corry, except Malcolm Campbell, who begged leave to see him leave Craig Mhòr in person in the beginning of the next week. Padruig consented to his beloved friend's proposal, and retraced his steps homewards towards Craig Mhòr along with Roderick Mòr McDonald, who was not a little affected by the parting of friends that afternoon.

Two or three days were spent at Craig Mhòr in preparations for Padruig's departure from Craig Mhòr. Everything was neatly packed and Flora was the most interested party in this task. The stag's head which her father shot was carefully wrapped up and sewn into a covering of canvas, so that it might arrive at Dun Alasdair in New Zealand in good condition. She had begged for an antique set of pipes from her father and packed them for the same place as the "Royal Head." All the necessary arrangements had been made, and the

transference of the MacDonalds to their new home was also foreshadowed. Time was the only barrier in the way when again, in a new country, the meeting would take place which this parting heralded.

It was decided that Flora and her father should accompany Padruig Dubh to Glasgow and say farewell to him there. This was Padruig's own suggestion, because he had a twofold purpose in his desire. The Friday was a beautiful day. The sun shone brightly, and for that period of the year the weather was really good. The old saying held true that "what Friday gets Sunday keeps," and Monday as well as Tuesday were fine. The family at Craig Mhòr all retired early on Friday night, because next day they had to be early astir. They had to reach the village by two thirty in the afternoon to meet the boat.

Flora was first up next morning. She looked anxiously down the long road which wound round the edge of the hill. Donald too had been an early riser on the day of Padruig Dubh departure. At last on the second look, Flora could see the small equipage coming slowly but surely to Craig Mhòr. She ran into the house to warn her father and Padruig who were now ready for the road.

"Donald comes," said Flora. "He must have been out of bed before he was well into it unless he had gone to bed with the lark."

"Everything is ready, Flora," said her father. "You must now have something to eat. You cannot go away hungry."

"All right, father," said Flora. "I shall soon eat all I want."

But Flora only made a pretense. She certainly sat down at the breakfast table, but she could not eat. She was too full of excitement, and drank only one cup of tea, with which she only ate a morsel of plain bread and butter; but no more would go down. Full of life and youthful vigour, she stood beside the wayfarers ready to see the one she loved retracing his steps back to New Zealand to prepare a new home for her.

It was a day of great excitement at Craig Mhòr, and now Morag stopped like a vessel at anchor. Donald stepped out of his carriage. In his own familiar way he stood and looked in amazement, because he observed that there were three persons ready for transport.

"Good morning! Roderick Mòr," said Donald, "and would she all be going

away to the far country with a gentleman? Man! Man! It would be an awful business this going away from Craig Mhòr and leaving it empty to the care of the big black crows. Padruig Dubh, as she called her friend when she was here last, came to see the Fairy Queen, but she would be thinking that the Fairy Queen would be no less nor more than the fair Flora herself, whatever, moreover. Who would have thought that Flora would be going away like that?"

"I am not going away for a great distance, Donald," said Flora. "Just the length of Glasgow."

"That would be all very well, Flora," said Donald. "It would be Glasgow for a start, but you would be entering the country to which Padruig Dubh would be going to very, very soon, and that I am sure without saying more, whatever."

Donald have breakfast, and so had Morag, his little nag, and they both well-deserved. There was not a moment to spare, and by the time that they had finished their snack, Padruig Dubh and Roderick Mòr had the luggage aboard the gig. All were in readiness, when Malcolm Campbell arrived from the Corry.

"I am just in time," said Malcolm. "If I had been other 10 min. later you would have been gone."

"You are still in time, Malcolm!" said Padruig Dubh, "and I am glad to be able to shake hands with you in person before I go. I confess that I have enjoyed your company to the full."

And after they had conversed for a few moments, Malcolm bade Padruig Dubh goodbye. Padruig handed Malcolm a token of their meeting, as a keepsake. Malcolm thanked him, and as they parted Malcolm still teased Padruig and Flora about their bargain at the Fairie's Well upon Christmas Day, and promised that he would not forget to give Flora her wedding gown no matter whether he was present at the great occasion or not. Padruig thanked him, and so did Flora; who both waived a farewell to their mutual friend as he left for the Corry.

The next thing was Padruig's farewell to Mrs. MacDonald. It was not without a great effort on Padruig's part that he tore himself away from this delightful mother, and Craig Mhòr. He impressed upon Mrs. MacDonald's cheek the same kiss as he would have done had she been his mother. As they shook hands Flora's mother suppressed the tear, in the words of Farewell came

heavily upon her heart.

“Never mind!” said Padruig Dubh to the only one who was staying behind at Craig Mhòr for the day. “We shall meet again soon under more pleasant circumstances, and they parted for the time being.

After a long weary journey Donald and his passengers arrived at the village. The “Highland Queen” lay at the pier. As Padruig with his fair companion arrived, Captain MacIvor recognize them, and welcomed them on board.

“Good afternoon! My friend,” said the captain. “You have returned, indeed, and brought with you a fair companion, if not a Fairy Queen.”

“Good afternoon Captain MacIvor,” said Padruig Dubh, “I have come to play you that promised tune.”

“As soon as the boat leaves,” said Captain MacIvor. “I shall be delighted to hear the pipes skirl once more.”

Now came the parting of the pipers. Roderick Mòr said goodbye to Padruig Dubh, and wished him Godspeed. Roderick and Padruig were pipers. Their hearts were stout and their friendship was true. There was no sign of sentiment at their parting. Whatever passed in their minds was best known to themselves, but they left the tears to fair Flora.

“Goodbye!” said Padruig Dubh to his genial and warmhearted friend. “The next time we meet will be on the other side, when the vessel arrives at a far busier port. It is a great pity that the ‘Highland Queen’ could not take you all out to Dun Alasdair.”

Roderick Mòr got upon the pier again. The anchor was weighed; the bell rang from below; and the horn sounded the farewell to the villagers who stood ashore to see the boat depart. Flora waited long at the stern and waved to her father as long as she could see him. At last Roderick Mòr MacDonald retraced his steps towards Craig Mhòr, where he related to his wife the scene of parting at the shore.

After the vessel was well underway, Padruig Dubh and Flora entered into a very interesting conversation with each other.

“Did you bid Donald goodbye, Flora?” Said Padruig. “I forgot whether you

did or not. I was so busily engaged with the luggage.”

“What would I do saying goodbye to Donald?” said Flora. “I engaged him to take me home on my return from Glasgow. I meant to do both things at once, or at least make one transaction of it. I will pay him for the journey at the same time.”

“What do you mean by both journeys, Flora?” said Padruig. “If you mean our coming from Craig Mhòr today; that is all right. I paid Donald as I wished him farewell, and I have arranged with him to take you home. Over and above payment for his journeys to and from Craig Mhòr to the village; I left as much with the good old Highlander as will keep him from taking the cold for several winters to come; so you shall travel back to Craig Mhòr free. I have got your return ticket by me. Here it is.”

“What about that tune upon the pipe?” said Captain MacIvor, in his good-natured way. “I am longing to hear the ‘silver chanter,’ which was responsible for your winning the heart and hand of such a fair companion.”

Flora’s face was beaming all over, but upon the remark being passed she blushed freely, and Padruig by this time had the pipes upon his shoulder. Without further ceremony the pipes pealed out a pleasant tune, and the stirring notes created some sensation on board the steamer. The passengers crowded round the piper, and in a very short time there was hardly room for Padruig to march to and fro. Captain MacIvor still stood by Flora MacDonald’s side. Flora and the Captain were by no means strangers.

“The pipes sound well here,” said Captain McIvor to Flora. “It is now a long time since I have had the pleasure of meeting a piper on board. Your friend is a very fine performer. One of the best players I have ever heard. His carriage is even princely. If he is not a genuine Highlander I am sure his father was one, that I shall wager my last gold coin upon. There is every sign of seven years making. There is every sign of seven-year study; seven years practice, and seven generations of pipers in his performance.”

Flora stood in silence beside her good-natured friend, but made no remark. Padruig Dubh played a great many tunes before he stopped. The boat was

speeding upon its way. The long chimneys of Glasgow's factories came within view. This was a sign to cease playing and pack up. Captain McIvor thanked Padruig Dubh, and complimented him upon his fine performance. The "Highland Queen" soon afterwards steamed into the waters of the Clyde. The pier was reached, and again Captain McIvor saw Padruig's pipes ashore. Padruig Dubh and Captain McIvor had a romantic meeting, and a very pleasant parting. Padruig shook the Captain's hand with a real Highland grip of friendship. There was more in the grip than words can describe, and they parted forever. Flora told Captain McIvor that she would see him soon, as she would be returning again in a day or two. With this Padruig Dubh took farewell of the "Highland Queen," which was well named a Queen. The same vessel had been a "Queen" to him; or in other words, his first trip upon her was the means of bringing him good luck in all his inward desires.

A short journey by train took Padruig Dubh and his Flora to Glasgow. They were the guests of Donald MacLean. Donald's wife welcomed Flora MacDonald, and made them both comfortable in every way. Mrs. McLean complimented Padruig Dubh upon his choice, and told him that he had selected one of the best looking Highland lassies that she had ever seen. Padruig Dubh made no reply to this remark, but asked where his friend Mr. McLean was. Donald MacLean was not yet home from business, but shortly after he arrived, a very pleasant evening was spent. Padruig played upon the pipe, because it was a great treat to Donald MacLean to hear good piping.

Next morning Padruig Dubh was up early, and after breakfast he went shopping with Flora. They paid the old bagpipe maker a visit for two main reasons. He wished to assure the maker of the "silver chanter" that it was perfect in every way, and to bid him goodbye. The old man was very pleased to see his customer, and in parting wished him a safe journey home; assuring him that any further orders would be made welcomed, and punctually attended to.

Leaving the Royal Arcade the young couple next repaired to a large jewelers establishment. There Padruig Dubh purchased, and placed upon Flora's finger, a ring which was one of the many outward signs of their pledge. The time passed very quickly in Glasgow. Friday at 2: 30 in the afternoon Padruig

Dubh's vessel sailed. Flora enjoyed her stay in Glasgow, and although she had been happy all the time, she was somewhat downcast upon the day of parting. She remembered her father's demeanour when he parted with Padruig Dubh, and Flora was also to be heroic in her manner, and show no signs of outward emotion whatever may have been in her mind inwardly.

Mr. and Mrs. MacLean accompanied the young couple to the Quay side. They were to take leave of Padruig Dubh there, and bring Flora back with them where she was to remain until the following day, when she would then returned to Craig Mhòr. Porters and attendance put the luggage on board, and at last the farewell to Scotland had come. The alarm was sounded, and all passengers had to get on board. Donald MacLean and his wife bade Padruig Dubh goodbye, and wished him a safe journey home. Padruig Dubh was very sorry indeed to tear himself away from bonnie Scotland and his father's kindhearted friend. He was more touched with sadness than Flora. Indeed Flora was every inch a heroine. She kept smiling all the while. The final ordeal came and Flora held out her hand, but although Padruig Dubh held it firmly as he shook it that was not enough. He kissed his sweetheart, and with his left arm he embraced her. It was a genuine case of mutual love, but Flora placed her kiss upon Padruig's lips in return and they parted for a few months. The vessel sailed. There were two heavy hearts: one on board the great Atlantic liner, and one on Scotland's shore. Till the last moment Padruig Dubh waived his final farewell, and when the boat was out of sight, Flora with her guardians returned home. The Macleans' treated Flora with the utmost kindness and when she left for Craig Mhòr they made her promise that if ever she or her father and mother were in Glasgow they would come and see them again.

Next day Flora took leave of her kind friends, and returned homewards. Captain McIvor cheered her with the assurance that soon he would be bringing her back to return to Craig Mhòr no more. Then she would be happy. When Flora left the "Highland Queen" she was met by Donald who conveyed her back to her father's safekeeping.

Craig Mhòr had undergone a great change since Flora left it but a few days ago. It was no more to be her home, nor her parents habitation. They were

now all about to leave it.

* * *

A year soon passed. The twelve months were full of expectations, to Flora at least. Roderick Mòr MacDonald now found himself going round his shepherds once more, but for the last time. He took final leave of them all. Roderick Mòr had only Malcolm Campbell to bid goodbye to, but he left this, his most trusted friend, to the last. He had given up his charge six months ago, and the Duke's Commissioner accepted his resignation with reluctance. It had, however, to be, and on the shepherd's departure the Commissioner rewarded him handsomely for his devotion to duty.

Then there was the burden of parting with Malcolm Campbell. It was a touching incident, for the MacDonald's and Campbell lived long together, and dwelt in perfect happiness. There existed between them a real friendship, which was hard to tear asunder.

On the first week in May, a full year after Padruig's departure, the MacDonald's took leave of Craig Mhòr for the last time. Malcolm Campbell lost one of his best friends when he parted with Roderick Mòr, his wife, and their fair daughter. Flora had received her beautiful silver gown from her friend, and she was to be married in it when she arrived in New Zealand. The first Monday in May was the last day in which Roderick's pipes played at Craig Mhòr. He had a secret longing to play a farewell tune, but his pipe poured forth a sad and plaintive melody. It spoke of parting friends. It was "The Farewell." No more would Roderick Mòr's pipe cheer the lonely mountain solitudes; no more would his notes charm the fleecy flocks, which nibbled the sweet green verdure amongst the lofty hills with their mantle of purple; and the shepherd's dogs would whine sadly at his parting. Prince and Mona were both handed over to the other shepherds, and Craig Mhòr knew Roderick Mòr MacDonald no more. Malcolm Campbell returned to the Corry with a very heavy heart after bidding his friends goodbye. He had lost a friend indeed, but then, after all, Iain MacVourich and his son had gained a good companion in Roderick Mòr MacDonald.

Padruig had long since arrived at Dun Alasdair, and he was received by his parents with great joy. His father and mother had waited patiently for the time to pass when their new partners were to arrive from the old country. At last that day arrived. Roderick Mòr MacDonald with his wife and daughter arrived safely in New Zealand. The two families lived in perfect harmony, and a new house was built for Roderick Mòr on Iain MacVourich's farm. Shortly after the MacDonalds arrived in New Zealand, Flora and Padruig Dubh were duly married. It was a great occasion, and their never lived a happier couple than young Padruig and his fair Flora.

Time marched on. The old people on both sides lived to a ripe old age, and when they passed on to the "Land O' The Leal," they were sadly missed and deeply limited by their children, Padruig Dubh and Flora. The huge farm now belonged to the descendents of two great and honourable sheep breeding experts, and to then a son was born. Padruig Dubh was a loving father, and Flora was a devoted as well as a tender mother. This son grew from childhood to boyhood. Padruig Dubh in turn initiated him into the secrets and mysteries of the great music of the pipes, because to this boy the "silver chanter" with all its very charm would one day belong.

* * *

Love is a powerful passion. In some form or other it has occupied the minds of every human being, and will continue to do so while time lasts. It has employed the pens of literary men of the greatest genius. Love is the thread which runs through the narrative. It binds the whole story together; regulates the emotions of the reader's heart, and carries him or her who reads or takes part in the great drama of life to the end of the last act; compels the reader to peruse the novel from beginning to end with that inspired enthusiasm which in itself is the real spice of life. There is an old proverb "all is fair in love and war." Be that as it may, a young man may capture his friend's sweetheart, and win her affections. A young woman may encourage her companion's lover to pay her attention, and even gain possession of her heart; but either of these examples does not prove that "all is fair in love"; or that the one person does not steal from

the other.

There is such a thing as “a country” which has been “often overrun but never conquered,” so that war does not always fulfill its purpose, nor does it ever unite people of different nationalities.

Love is supreme, in, that it seldom or never overruns, but always conquers, where it is true love. It has united many a heart and hand; and by this means has molded nations into one vast Empire. Love is the hub round which all goodwill and prosperity revolves, and at love’s footstool the greatest of men and women have knelt.

Padruig Dubh, the hero of our narrative was endowed with a double share of love. He loved his parents; he loved Flora, and her parents; and he dearly loved his child. Padruig also loved duty for he was careless in nothing pertaining to business, and he drove and honest bargain. He was well-to-do, and easy-going: a good master, charitable, and free from evil thinking or bad habits.

Besides all these good points, Padruig Dubh had a great love for the pipes. Deep down in his heart he cherished them dearly. Love had enabled him to become a great performer on his beloved instrument. It was love that took him from his parents’ hearth in New Zealand, to sit by the peat fire of the humble sheiling, which nestled at the foot of the great mountain in bonnie Scotland. The same love filled him with courage while he entered the fairy kingdom, and carried him right through the wonderful scenery which he witnessed; enabling him to endure hardships, as well as traversing many perilous paths.

The love of music led our hero to the Island of the Mist and the mountain. There he saw the great MacCrimmon and heard him play upon Dunvegan’s pipe of war and peace. He saw the MacCrimmon on the battlements of Dunvegan Castle. There the great master drew his plaid around him as he piped the glad notes of Welcome, which were scattered by the wintry blast to the four winds of heaven.

By the influence of love Padruig Dubh was successful in gaining the secrets and mysteries of the notation of Boreraig, and above all he gain the mastery of the MacCrimmon touch, as he performed his Toarluath and Crunluath. Padruig Dubh knew that these movements were the flowers of the great music

which he loved so well, and now that he was in possession of the genuine method of performing such beautiful movements in the art of playing piobaireachd, he rejoiced exceedingly in his own heart.

All through life he treasured in his own bosom the pleasant experiences which he again in the land of bens and glens and heroes. Scotland was indeed a hallowed country in Padruig's mind. The green grassy spot at the "Fairie's Well" remained a memorial, yea an oasis, in our heroes thoughts, for there his pipe with its "silver chanter," – its wonderful and mysterious charm combined with its power of moving the emotions of his heart either to extreme joy or sorrow, and even to tears– sounded sweeter than any other place in the world. It was there at this trysting place, the "Fairie's Well," that Padruig Dubh Macvourich and Flora MacDonald enjoyed the real foretaste of a love which was pregnant with heavenly bliss– "The first sweet kiss of love."

– The End–

24/12/25

John Grant