THE HOME OF A HIGHLAND POET.

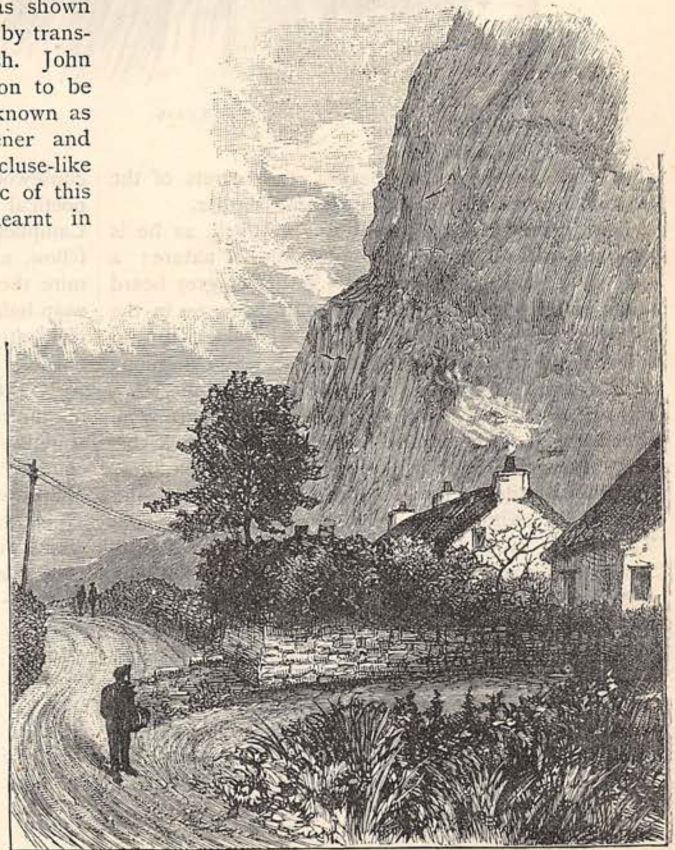
ON Staten Island, New York, is a picturesque little house. It looks seaward to a point where the mighty Atlantic steamers pass inward and outward bound. This ocean observatory is the home of William Winter, whose lyrics belong to the literature of the Western land. At this "cottage by the sea," the great ships, with their intense human interests, are tenderly watched by the American poet. If the gentle gaze of William Winter could stretch straight across the Atlantic, he might see another poet's cottage by the sea, showing white amid a setting of green, among the silvery lights and soft shadows, the changing rain and sunshine of the Western Highlands of Scotland. At Ledaig, Benderloch, looking past Oban down the Sound of Kerrera to the open ocean, where there is nothing between his rocky home and that of the Western poet but the Atlantic rollers, is the dwelling of John Campbell, the laureate of the Land of Lorne. These poets are neighbours, though 3,000 miles apart, and though William Winter and John Campbell may never have heard the name of each other. John Campbell, according to the competent authority of Professor Blackie, is the best poet in the Highlands. The "gay old Grecian Gael" has shown his appreciation of the Bard of Benderloch by translating his poems from the Gaelic into English. John Campbell himself has probably no aspiration to be styled a poet at all. He would prefer to be known as the postmaster of Ledaig, or as a gardener and grower of strawberries. A disposition for recluse-like retirement is the distinguishing characteristic of this man who, like all the real singers, has learnt in suffering that he might teach in song.

Born up in the land of Bens and glens, John Campbell inherited his patriotic passion for the Highlands. His father was a poor man, and at an early stage the delicate but dauntless son went from his mountain home to the great city of Glasgow to wrestle with—

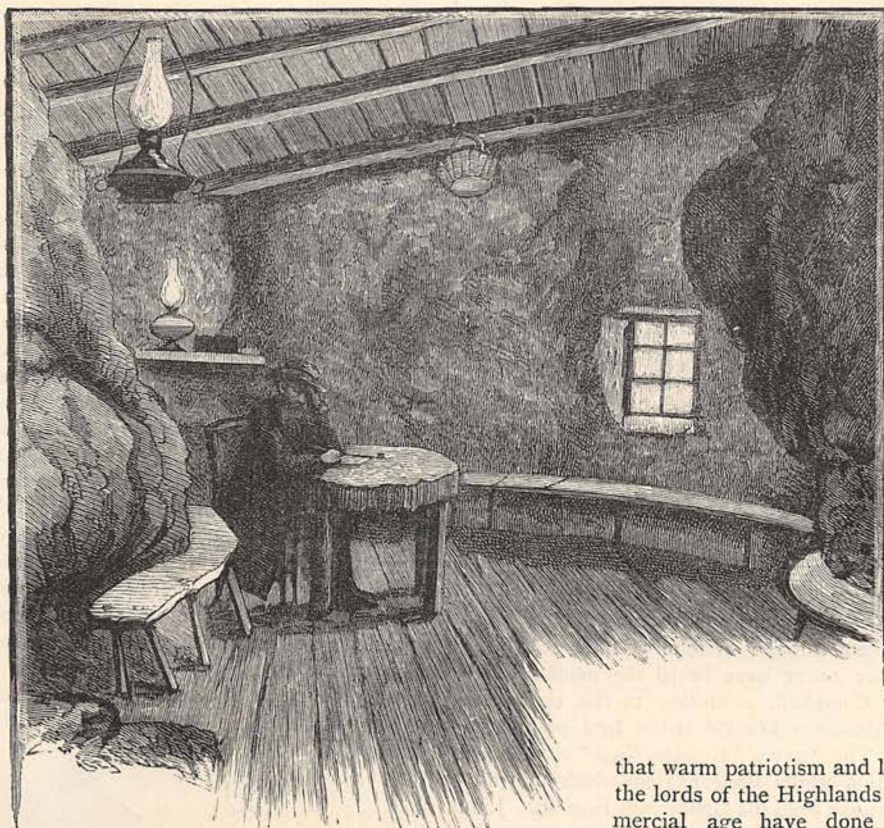
> "Those twin gaolers of the daring heart—
> Low birth and iron fortune."

He entered a warehouse in the mercantile port. Early in the mornings, while others slept, he was studying art. His evenings were devoted to literature. Sydney Smith described the Scotch reviewers as "cultivating literature upon a little oatmeal." This "low living and high thinking" was young Campbell's diet in the competitive capital of the Clyde. But while the earnest student was nourishing his mind, his body suffered. Broken down in health, he returned a confirmed invalid to the glens of his boyhood, to the far-off Benderloch with its revelations of austere mountain heights and its inspirations of the sea. Poor enough was he in pocket, but rich with the secrets which God confides to those who commune with nature.

It is an ideal cottage in which the poet-postmaster lives. Professor Blackie says it is "the most unique of Highland dwellings, cut from the living rock, and looking out across the sea, like the King of Thule's castle in Goethe's song." The sea comes nearly up to the front door of this domicile. All around is a panorama of mountains, which is as changeful in its light and colour, its gleam and gloom, as the sea itself; sometimes clear and shining and restful, at other times dark and weird and wild. There is, perhaps, no post-office in the world so purely picturesque and suggestive as this little house at Ledaig. You might pass the one-storeyed cottage on the roadside, so jealously do cliff and tree conspire to hide it from intrusive gaze. It is a mere speck beside the great bulk of conglomerate crag under which it shelters. A profusion of roses, red and white, cling to the white walls of the cottage. Pink stone-crop makes the russet roof a study of colour. All around is the sense



THE HOME OF THE BARD.



INTERIOR OF THE CAVE.

of solitude, the sound of the sea, the secrets of the tremulous trees, the scent of peat and heather.

Let me introduce you to John Campbell, as he is working in his garden, a simple child of nature: a shrunken, retiring man of sixty, with iron-grey beard and a soft Highland voice. There is character in the friendly face and eloquent eyes. Character, too, in the warm nervous grip of the toil-worn hand, stretched out with no conventional expression of welcome. No show-place, this dwelling of the Highland bard, who shrinks from the obtrusive tourist gaze, although this quaint home of his has extended its simple hospitalities to the great and the gifted. Among John Campbell's visitors have been Alfred Tennyson, Tom Taylor, Sir Noel Paton, William Black, Dr. Angus Smith, and many others; while Professor Blackie is often a welcome guest. This is how Blackie describes the home of the bard :—" In one of the beautiful broad bays flanked by projecting headlands on the west coast of Argyleshire, a grand crag of old red conglomerate juts out into the sea, and one huge fragment of this mass has so shaped itself as to be readily turned into a comfortable chamber. Here, a friend of mine—one of those native singers in whom the Highlands abound —has pitched his abode; and not few are the happy hours that I have spent in his rocky shelter, singing with him Gaelic songs of his own composition, full of that warm patriotism and loyalty which the lords of the Highlands in this commercial age have done so little to cherish. But neither the Queen in all her majesty at Balmoral, nor Tennyson in all the beauty of heath, gorse, and copsewood at Haslemere, can boast of a dwelling so poetical as my friend John Campbell. Nor is John Campbell a poet merely; many a poet is a worthless fellow, and others think the world is bound to admire them, and even to support them, for blowing soap-bubbles; but my friend handles the spade as efficiently as the pen, and is in all respects an admirable specimen of that noble peasantry who shine so brightly in the military annals, and have been, not unfrequently, so ungraciously handled, and so stupidly neglected in the rural economy of this country."

Professor Blackie appends some verses, written after a visit to the spot, as "a small tribute to the fine lyrical talent and great personal worth of the person into whose mouth they are put." This spirited poem begins :—

" My name it is Ian the Bard,
  And I dwell on the far west shore,
Where I look on the mighty old Ben,
  And hear the old ocean roar;
And my house it is cut in the rock,
  At the bend of the beautiful bay,
Beswept by the strength of the blast,
  And beshone by the grace of the day.

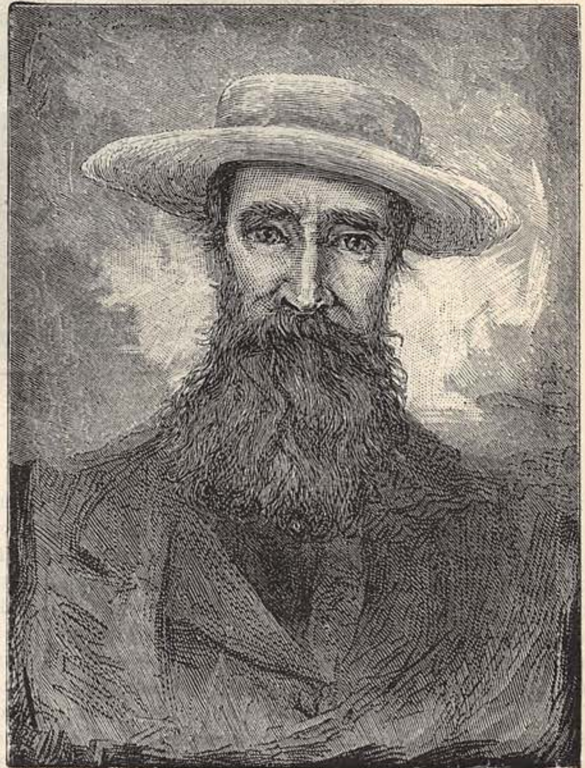
" O fair is the house of the bard,
  Where it stands on the rock by the sea,
With the sway of the billow below,
  And above with the swing of the tree;

With the glorious sun in his view
As he sinks in the glow of the west,
And the joy of the grey sea-birds
As they float on old ocean's breast!"

But Professor Blackie says nothing about the most interesting part of the poet's home. A step from the post-office porch, another step across the road, down a garden-patch bright with flowers that you would not expect to meet out of a conservatory, and shady with fruit-trees that might have been leased from Devonshire, and then you are among the Atlantic boulders. Here Ian, assisted largely by the rocky tumult of nature, has built a grotto-parlour. The shore rocks supplied him with two ready-made walls and a portion of a third; but the rest is the poet's own cunning contrivance, as indeed is his thriving garden, for until John came here the place was all barren rock, and he has made the wilderness smile by the dint of his own diligent hand. The ponderous wooden block which serves as a table was once the resting-place of Robert the Bruce. A sturdy oaken chair is in proportion to the solid table. A few forms are placed round the little room, which is reached by a descent of moss-grown stone steps from the garden. The floor is of wood, walls and ceiling are of undressed boulders. A patch of sunlight comes in from a pane in the roof. There is one window; it looks right out upon the Atlantic, upon the grey glory of Dunstaffnage Castle, upon the calm expanse of Loch Nell, with its observatory tower rising from a green gloom, upon island and mountain, upon scenery that is an enchantment to the most commonplace eye. A bookcase and a swinging oil-lamp complete the appointments of this apartment.

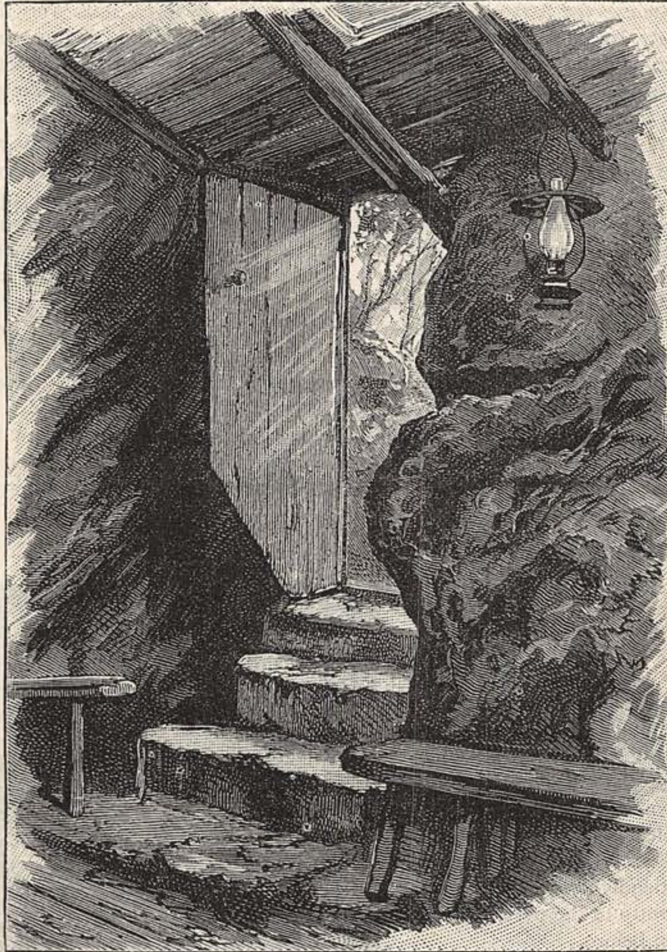
The sea is serene in its summer sleep to-day, but sometimes the spindrift rises high, a white whirling mist, over the cave. Once has the turbulent tide altogether demolished it. On the night of the great storm (November 22nd, 1881) Bruce's heavy table, chair, forms, lamps, books, flooring, walls even, were carried away to sea. The historic table was stranded down the coast the next day and so recovered. Everything else was lost. Friendly help, however, restored the wave-worn grotto to the poet, and it is built more strongly than before.

And here we are sitting trifling with his strawberries and listening to his rapid, electrical talk, with the "old green glamour of the glancing sea" dazzling our eyes, and the sun searching out the mosses and lichens, and beautiful colours on the mountain-slopes. But the sea-cave is devoted to higher purposes than the idle chit-chat of a holiday party. In this rugged room the Highland poet meets a Sabbath class. This Sunday gathering has been held in the present sea-cave for the past ten years. For twenty years previously it met in a fisherman's cottage that the Atlantic one night, remorseless in its rage, swept away. Thus for thirty years or more the poet-postman has taught his simple country-side scholars. His pupils trudge sturdily from far-off crofts, across the sobbing moors in the winter sleet. Some of them are lads and lassies; others are married people with bonnie wee bairns of their own. They attended Campbell's class in their youth. They are so attached to it in their age that they come each Sunday night across the peaty paths—weather fair or foul, suntime and snow-time—to listen to the old, earnest, sympathetic voice, telling the wonderful story of the Man of Sorrows, who consecrated their humble position by His poverty, and who dignified their hard lot by His toil. It is a picture, that Sunday evening service in the wave-worn cave, with the lamp throwing darkly weird Rembrandt-like shadows, and sharp lights, on the little throng of men and women, youths and maidens, gathered round their teacher. The sea is moaning on the boulders under the little window that throws its yellow gleam upon the throbbing Atlantic; the wind is howling through corrie and glen; but there are hearts warmer than the glowing peat in this little room. Now and then there is a hymn sung in the Gaelic; the words are by the teacher. His daughters lead the singing, and the quaint music fills the air with its lilt of melancholy, deep, subdued, sympathetic. Then a prayer that is aching in its pleading pathos. Then a lesson in English; for Gaelic and English are both taught to the class by Ian, who thus unites, in this Sunday evening service, sound instruction with deep devotion.



IAN THE BARD.

Ledaig is worthy of a pilgrimage, apart from its association with its uncrowned laureate. It nestles under the cliff between Connel Ferry and Loch Creran, in the most romantic part of the Argyleshire archipelago. Close to John Campbell's house is the old vitrified fort called Berigonium. It is said to have been built by Fingal, and to mark the capital of the ancient Pictish kingdom. There are several ways of reaching Ledaig. By sea from Oban it is about six miles. A fine sail it is past Dunolly and Dunstaffnage, and a wonder of rocky islands, the home of strange sea-birds. If the weather is not suitable to journey to Ledaig by water, you may reach Connel Ferry either by train or by road. Interesting enough is the walk from that place. At Connel you cross Ossian's Falls of Lora. The tide, with rush and roar, runs irresistible through a deep and narrow channel; but the ferry-boat is broad of beam, and the boatman knows every eddy of the current; and you have a better time of it in crossing than fell to the lot of Wordsworth and his sister when they crossed in 1803. Pleasant is the stroll from the north side of the ferry on a level, breezy road, through the great Moss of Achnacree, with a world of mountain-peaks, which embrace in one scenic surprise Ben Lomond, Ben Arthur, and Cruachan Ben; and then, with all the wonder of wide



DOORWAY OF THE POET'S CAVE.

water between, the majestic mountain ranges of Mull, Morven, and Kingairloch.

The poetry of John Campbell is marked by a fervid patriotism. He is a born Highlander, and tears come in his voice when he contemplates a land cleared of its people and its once green farmsteads, so that English brewers may bang away at stags and make the moors a slaughter-house of grouse. His poems are eloquent of his regret at the decadence of the Highland race.

As a specimen of his fine lyrical talent we append a few verses of one of his Gaelic songs, translated by

Professor Blackie, entitled "The Gael in a Foreign Land."

"Dear land of my fathers, my home in the Highlands,
'Tis oft that I think on thy bonnie green glens,
Thy far-gleaming lochs, and thy sheer-sided corries,
Thy dark frowning cliffs, and thy glory of Bens!

Thy wild-sweeping torrents, with bound and with bicker
That toss their white manes down the steep rocky brae,
Thy burnies that, babbling o'er beds of the granite,
Through thick copse of hazel are wimpling their way.

Thy close-clinging ivy, with fresh shining leafage,
That blooms through the winter and smiles at the storm,
And spreads its green arms o'er the hoary old castle,
To bind its grey ruin and keep its heart warm.

The sweet-sounding plash of thy light rippling billows,
As they beat on the sand where the white pebbles lie,
And their thundering war when, with whirling commotion,
They lift their white crests in grim face of the sky.

The land I was born in, the land I was bred in,
Where soft-sounding Gaelic falls sweet on the ear;
Dear Gaelic, whose accents take sharpness from sorrow,
And fill me, despairing, with words of good cheer.

'Twas oft I looked backward, and wishfully turned me,
When my travelled-worn foot to the Lowlands was near,
Like a glimpse of the sun through the dark cloud out-peeping
Was the land of my love which I left with a tear.

What though from the hills, when we first know the Lowlands,
The Lowlander greets us with sneer and with jest?
Ofttimes when the bark is the roughest and hardest,
The pith is the soundest, the wood is the best!"

John Campbell's poems, however, are not to be judged by a vagrant sample such as the necessities of space have compelled us to detach. This fragmentary selection is but a "tasting order" to a store-house which, we hope, will soon be enlarged by Professor Blackie rescuing from the Gaelic many inspirations of Ian's muse that in their native form cannot reach the heart of the Sassanach.

EDWARD BRADBURY.

HOW MOLLY MADE BOTH ENDS MEET.

BY PHILLIS BROWNE, AUTHOR OF "WHAT GIRLS CAN DO," ETC.

CHAPTER II.—LAYING DOWN A PLAN.

MRS. BROWNE looked astonished when Aunt Susan said that Molly could not *afford* to dress poorly.

"You mean that she cannot afford to dress expensively, do you not?" she said.

"Not at all," said Aunt Susan. "People who are rich can afford to dress as they like. If they look shabby, their friends and neighbours say that they are eccentric, or that they have simple tastes, and care for something better than dress; but if people of limited income look shabby, their neighbours say that they are in difficulties, and the tailor sends in his bill."

"Better not let the tailor have a bill against them," said Mrs. Browne, "then they can be independent."

"Molly will make a great mistake if she thinks she can dress regardless of the opinions of her neighbours," persisted Aunt Susan. "I expect she will discover that people treat her respectfully or otherwise according to the appearance she makes. You, Mrs. Browne, know quite well that if a shabbily-dressed woman were to go into a shop and say that the last pound of butter she bought was rancid and high-priced, there *are* some buttermen who would be rude to her. They would think, 'This poor creature will never buy much of me; I need not try to please her.' But if the same woman made the same remark when handsomely dressed, the butterman would immediately say, 'Here is a good customer, I must not offend her,' and he would apologise, and bring out his 'best fresh.'"

"Susan does not think much of the high moral feeling of buttermen," said mother.

"I said *some* buttermen," replied Aunt Susan, "and only as an illustration; of course they are, as a class, as honest and polite as other people."

"For my part," said Mrs. Browne, "I do not think the shabby dress would make much difference if the customer knew what good butter was, and what it ought to cost. If she had no knowledge of this kind, the handsome dress would make our high-principled friend the butterman think that she had plenty of money, and could be imposed upon."

"I quite agree with Susan so far as a man's dress is concerned," said mother. "A business man who is not well dressed is at a disadvantage, and a shabby coat may cause him to lose both in position and influence; but with a woman it is different. I always think that one of the delights of being married is that a wife does not in her dress need to study the taste of any one but her husband."

"I should have thought that you would have advised Molly to dress well because of the effect upon her own feeling," said Mrs. Browne. "I fancy sometimes that women respect themselves ever so much more when they are conscious of suitable and becoming apparel."

"Of course they do," said mother. "Don't you remember our energetic friend, Mrs. Brayton? She said that whenever she had a sick headache she put on her best black silk, because then she did not want to lie down on the sofa and give way to it."

"When do you expect to have a housekeeping letter from Molly again?" said Mrs. Browne.