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AN OLD CASTLE AND ITS SUN-DIALS.

ON A SUN-DIAL.

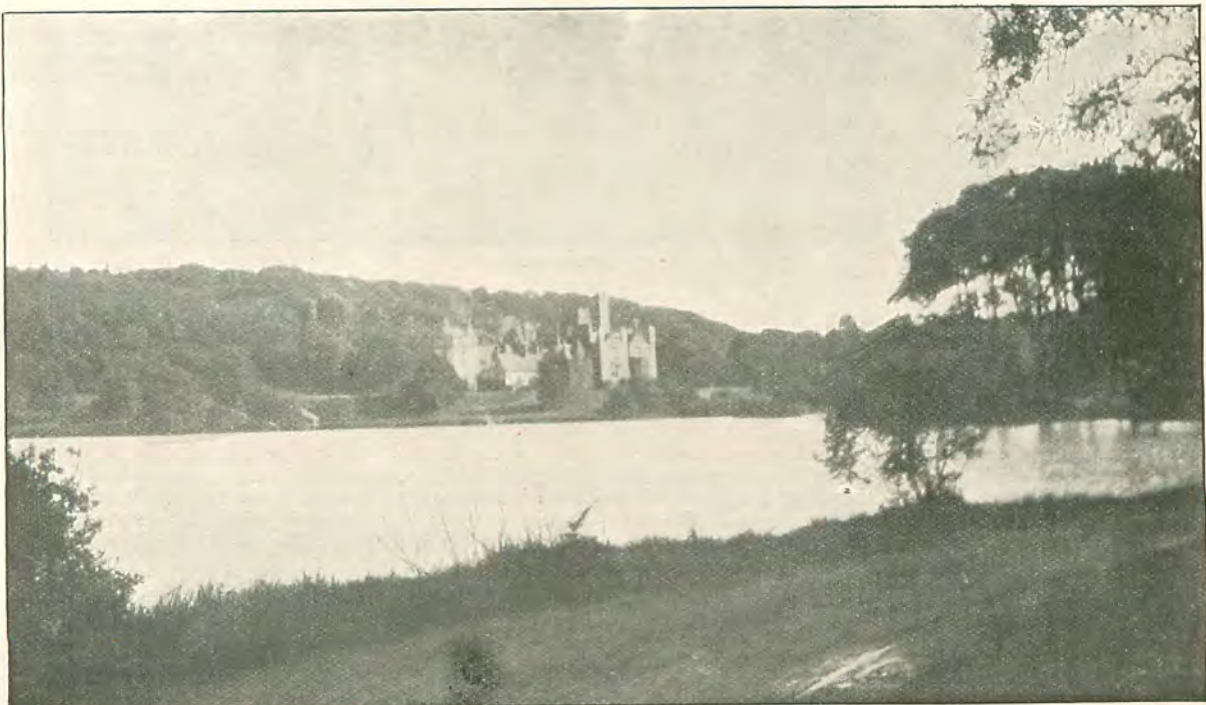
“With warning hand I mark
Time’s rapid flight
From life’s glad morning
to its solemn night,
Yet, through the dear God’s
love, I also show
There’s light above you by
the shade below.”

Whittier.

I AM sitting in the library of an old Scotch castle; the room is lined with books of all kinds and descriptions—ancient books with their curious leather bindings and old English printing, and modern books of travel, and biography, and science, and art, and history. On my left hand is a plain, old wooden chest, with a very large key-hole and lock, its sides and bottom bound together with iron clasps. This holds the archives



of one of the most ancient families in Scotland. Looking out of the window to my right is the White Loch; in the centre of it is an island, and on it the ruins of a still older castle. Robert the Bruce has often crossed that water and slept within those ancient walls. The great Black Douglas has come galloping down here across the moors and through the copses, followed by his hundreds of horsemen—for in the fifteenth century the Douglas was a greater man and had a greater following than even Scotland’s King. Once when the King sent to ask for his help, he refused, and was heard to mutter, “Let dog eat dog! Wherefore should the lion care?” Just in front of me is a terraced walk with a stone balustrade, and here and there along the top



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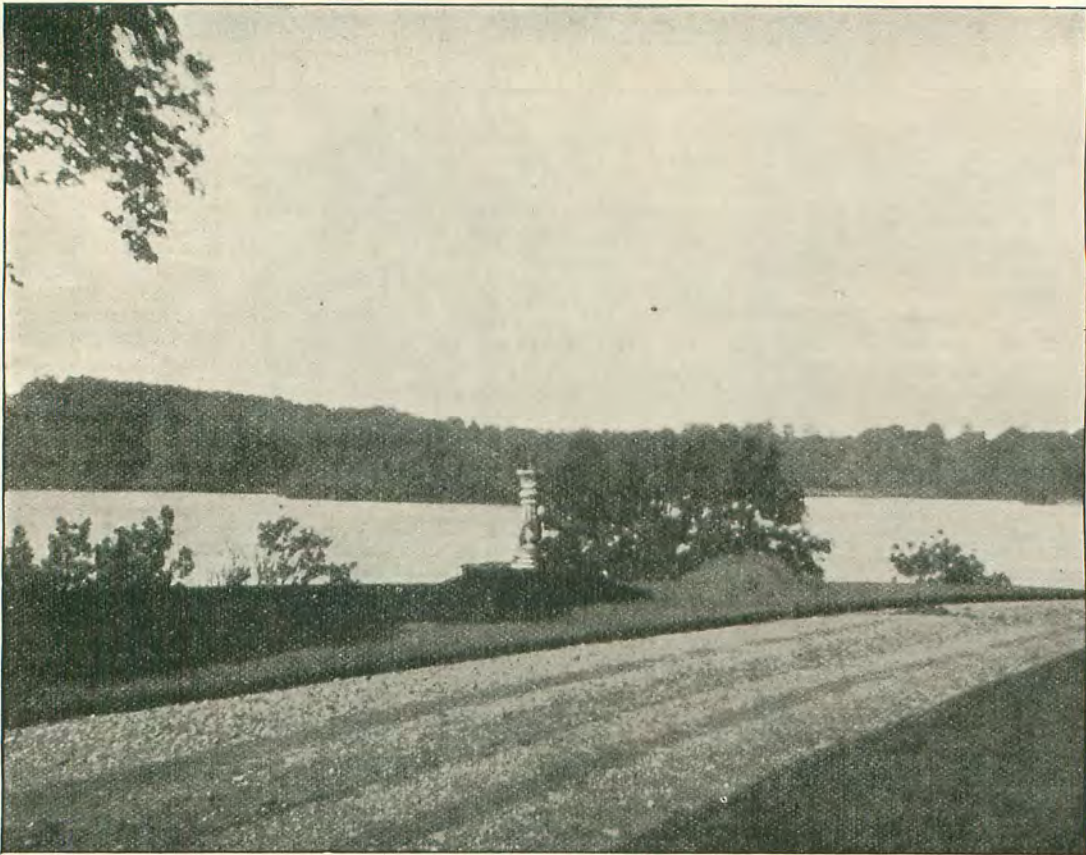
THE OLD CASTLE.

are urns with plants growing in them, and climbing over its side is the lovely crimson rambler, while below there is a row of bright red gladiolas in full bloom; and then comes the stiff Italian garden, and in the centre stands the old sun-dial. The ancient inhabitants of this castle must have been punctual people who wished to keep strict hours, because there are no fewer than three sun-dials. One is built out on a tiny shelf from the house itself close to one of the sitting-room windows, and another one stands near the old chapel.

I expect you have often seen an old sun-dial. It has a piece of iron erected slanting upwards from the centre, the stone on which it is erected is flat and round, and a metal dial-plate fixed into it, with the hours, half-hours and quarters marked on it, and the time is measured by the sun's shadow cast by the piece of iron, or style, as it is called. The chief practical difficulty in making a sun-dial

as the year 900 A.D. Some of these early dials have been discovered in Italy; one of them is supposed to have belonged to Cicero, who in one of his letters said that he sent a sun-dial of this description to his villa near Tusculum. It is a curious fact that no sun-dials have been found among the antiquities of ancient Egypt, and there is no mention of them in any of their writings. It has been thought that perhaps they told the hour of day by the shadow of some of their numerous obelisks.

The Greeks learnt the use of the sun-dial from the Babylonians, but they far outstripped their teachers, and constructed most wonderful and complex dials. In Athens there is still a monument of this ancient time-keeping in a regular octagon tower called the Tower of the Winds. On each of the eight sides of this tower is a different sun-dial, four facing the cardinal points—north, south, east and west—and four facing the intermediate directions.



THE SUN-DIAL.

is the accurate fixing of the style, for on its accuracy the value of the instrument depends. It must be in the meridian plane, and must make an angle with the horizon equal to the latitude of the place. Sometimes they made night-dials for showing the hour at night by the shadow of the moon or stars.

I suppose that in the very earliest ages men were satisfied with the division of the day into morning and evening as marked by the sunrise and sunset. The earliest mention of a sun-dial is found in the Bible in Isaiah xxxviii. 8. "Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward." The date of this sun-dial would be about 700 before the Christian era!

The first sun-dial of which we have any certain knowledge as to construction belonged to a Chaldean astronomer named Berosus, and this ancient gentleman lived about the year 340 B.C. This sun-dial was used for centuries, and the Arabians made sun-dials like it as late

The Greeks, too, used to have what they called dials of suspension, intended for travellers, but none of these have been found, and they are only spoken of and never explained in their writings.

You will see, then, that sun-dials date from very ancient times, and that they were in general use as time-keepers before clocks and watches were invented. Some of the old English and Scotch sun-dials have quaint inscriptions and coats-of-arms on them, and are very elaborate. There is an interesting old Saxon sun-dial on a very old church at Kirkdale, in Yorkshire. The church was restored by Orm, father of Gemel, before the Conquest. Gemel was a pre-Norman proprietor who owned vast tracts of property in Yorkshire. On this old Saxon dial are the words, "Orm made me."

As I write a cormorant has come sailing along the White Loch, with its long, snake-like, black neck one moment high in the air, and the next diving down into the water. and making a good dinner off the trout. We

caught a trout the other day with a great piece bitten out of its side. Evidently the cormorant made a bad shot that time!

Lovely peacocks are strutting about the lawn. To look at they are so beautiful, but to listen to—well, their voices are too dreadful for description! Early one morning one of the children woke, hearing unearthly noises. It was only a peacock which had flown on to the window-ledge! We warn all visitors now, lest an alarm of shrieking ghosts should raise the household.

In the olden days I think the squires and dames who lived in this castle must have been sound sleepers. Certainly they cannot have walked in their dreams or done anything foolish of that kind. I suppose that sort of thing belongs to the strain and nervous excitement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To wander from your bedroom here in sleep would, I should think, mean sudden death. The bedrooms in the tower open straight on to the rough stone corkscrew stairs.

A boy, a Cambridge undergraduate, came to stay, and was given one of these tower bedrooms. The first night at dinner he had been holding forth, to my great amusement, on the wonderful advantages of always sleeping with the window open, and of course I was delighted, and thoroughly agreed with him. He told us that his sisters refused to follow his advice, and had nearly died in consequence. They slept in a room together, and one of them woke in the middle of the night to find the room full of gas. She shook her sister and tried to wake her, then managed to creep to the door in an almost fainting condition, and to call the French maid, who slept in the next room. She came and promptly threw open the windows, and saved their lives, although they were ill for some time afterwards.

The next morning when our friend came down to breakfast, we asked him how he had slept. He confessed that his night had been disturbed by the noise of fluttering wings all over his room, but on discovering the sound only proceeded from two bats who had entered at the open window and were fluttering around, he turned over and was

soon fast asleep again. Although I do believe that the advantages of an open window far outweigh such disadvantages as this, yet some people of course might object to bats!

I shall never forget my last night at the Castle. I slept in the old part, but not in the tower. Outside, over my bedroom window, the date 1426 was cut into the stone. Prayers were said in the hall at ten o'clock, and then we all retired to our respective rooms. On entering mine I threw open the window, and found it was a gorgeous night—no moon, but the stars covering the heavens in all their glorious beauty. I determined to get a wider view of their magnificence. I took my candle and wandered up the corkscrew staircase, and knocked at the door of Eva's room, and asked her if she would come to the top of the tower with me and look at the stars. She gladly assented, and carrying our candle we proceeded upwards. We reached the outer door, which was opened by withdrawing an old-fashioned wooden bolt. She held the candle, and I unfastened the bolt, and then clambered on to the stone which projected as a rough step below the door and walked out. The wind nearly blew the candle out, so we placed it in a corner where the parapet shielded it from sudden gusts, and then carefully standing where the castellated parapet was highest we gazed around. Such a sight met our view as I have seldom seen! The whole vault above us was one mass of millions of stars, shining out like points of steel from the dark grey of heaven. The Milky Way was a white, shimmering, winding road above our heads, and one after another we picked out the better-known constellations all around us. Shooting stars flashed across the sky, one of them leaving a trail of light behind it like a comet's tail. The planets were reflected like points of light in the White Loch at our feet.

"Wondrous truths, and manifold as wondrous,
God hath written in those stars above."

Longfellow.

"Ye stars which are the poetry of Heaven!"—*Byron.*

VARIETIES.

The Editor heartily thanks BILLY-TEA (Australia) for the following interesting letter:—

"DEAR OLD FRIEND EDITOR,—I won't give you a very long letter to read, but when I tell you that, except for one year when 'funds were low,' I've had THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER from the commencement, you will be patient with just *one* more letter to read this mail-day. First, I was a young girl, and 'mother' bought it for me. Then I earned money and bought it myself. Then my husband bought it for me. Now I am not far from forty, and have four dear children, I still feel young enough to watch for and enjoy our GIRL'S OWN PAPER. My little daughter, age six and a half, is just beginning to like the simple parts, so you see I have a claim of an old friend. Thank you all very much for the help and interest and amusement of years. It is not likely we will meet on earth, but 'by-and-by' we will meet and greet each other. I would like to tell you such a lot about ourselves, but it seems so egotistic. We are just a busy, happy family striving to follow Jesus. That means so much. I need hardly add to it. You will know all our failures and victories and struggles, and true underlying happiness in all. I have not got any question to ask, but if it should be you can send me a greeting all to myself, my *nom de plume* would be 'Billy-tea.' Billy-tea is essentially Australian, made at picnics in a big tin can called a billy. The tea is put in when the water boils and boiled a minute or two more. So just think of me as a real honest cup of Australian billy-tea (Australian born, English mother and father, minister's daughter).

"Yours very lovingly for auld lang syne,
"BILLY-TEA."

TAUGHT MANNERS AT SCHOOL.—At the opening of the Great Exhibition of 1851 a Chinaman took his place among the ambassadors and representatives of foreign nations. He bore himself with as much dignity and behaved with as much courtesy as the most aristocratic diplomatist in the brilliant circle. Yet he was only the carpenter of a Chinese junk then in the Thames, whom the directors of the Exhibition borrowed for pictorial effect in the procession. On surprise being expressed at his demeanour to an old Shanghai merchant, his reply was that "Every Chinaman is taught manners at school as part of his ordinary education." We have here a hint for school boards.

THE MOTHER OF THE GREAT NAPOLEON.

The mother of the great Napoleon was a remarkable woman. "My excellent mother," said the Emperor once during his days of exile, "is a woman of courage and of great talent; more of a masculine than a feminine nature, proud and high-minded. She is capable of doing everything for me. I allowed her a million a year, besides a palace, and made her many presents. To the manner in which she formed me at an early age I principally owe my subsequent elevation. My opinion is that the future good or bad conduct of a child entirely depends upon the mother."

TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE.

Truth is a strong and widening stream
That floweth evermore;
And knowledge but the nearer waves
That break upon the shore.—*Crandall.*