

DESCRIPTION OF A BOTANICAL EXCURSION IN THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND.

THE University of Edinburgh has for years been known as the "Alma mater" of many enthusiastic botanists. This is perhaps owing to the circumstance that, whilst the lecture-room is not neglected, neither are the fields, and to the almost unrivalled excellency of the botanizing grounds which exist in the environs of the Scottish capital.

So much has been said about the fun and frolic of a botanical excursion that we propose to give a sketch of one in the Highlands of Scotland. The excursionists were a party of medical students. We give the sketch in the spirit-stirring words of one of the party:—

"The place of meeting was at the village of Currie, six miles from Edinburgh; the trysting time at the inn eight o'clock, and breakfast ready; six, therefore, must be the time to start from town. It was as bright a July morning as ever dawned upon the earth. Parties of twos, threes, and fours soon gathered, all tending towards the same destination; and, before the quarter after eight had elapsed, upwards of fifty young men were gathered in the large room of the inn, eagerly looking for the advent of the rolls, the eggs, and all etceteras which were to satisfy appetites sharpened by a six-mile walk. Fearful would have been the consternation of our host, had this inroad come upon him unprepared; but two days' notice, and a previous knowledge of botanical appetites—by no means vegetarian, however—had served to allow ample provision, testified by the clothes-baskets heaped full of rolls, the huge wickers of eggs, the beef and the hams.

"Almost we hear now the merry laughter of that breakfast-table, almost see the air of *bouhonic* with which our good Professor,* after himself diving to the kitchen, reappeared with another basket of eggs, when all were thought to be exhausted ere appetites were satisfied. Almost can we see the grave humor beaming in the genuine Scottish face of 'Old Macnab,' known far and wide in Europe as the skilful manager of the Botanic Gardens, the Professor's lieutenant, and whose walking powers of threescore could tire out many, if not most, of the younger limbs then present. Now and then would the laugh become doubly hearty, as some

laggard straggled in late, and looked ruefully around at the almost cleared board.

"But, breakfast over, then came the start for the hills and moorlands which were to be the scene of the day's explorations. Most of the band were really practical botanists, were well shod for the purpose, wore the light shooting-jacket and light cap, and carried boxes which would hold a good store of plants; not a few with good, stout hand-spades slung to the wrist or buttonhole. Some only evidenced their novitiate by appearing in white trousers and natty boots, of whom more hereafter.

"A short two miles, and the first exploring ground is reached—an extensive bog, where grew not only most of our common bog-plants, but a few rarer species, one more especially of the Orchis family, the *spurless coral-root*, found only in a very few situations in Scotland. No sportsman can feel more eager interest than the enthusiastic botanist in search of a rare plant. The plant was soon found, but well was that bog searched over, and more than once did eagerness or ignorance lead some to venture on treacherous surfaces, to find themselves, without warning, sunk up to the middle in the black bog-water. To the men of strong shoes and rough trousers, this was but a small calamity; but woe betide the well-cut boot and white inexpressibles, whose luckless owner had the laughs of the entire party to meet.

"By high noon, the bog having been exhausted, the hills had to be breasted, and more than one covey of grouse whirred off from the patches of the mountain cloudberry (*Rubus chamaemorus*), to reach which formed the outside limit of the excursion. Then, along the dry, open moorlands, gathering on our way the small white butterfly orchis (*Habenaria albida*), the curious little fern moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*), and many others, till we come to, in a small hill bog, the threadlike stems of the cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccus*), resting on the surface of the white sphagnum moss, and bearing its rose-colored blossoms and berries together.

"But the sun of this July day has shone fiercely, and by three o'clock thirst oppresses many who have not had a sip from a pocket-flask of cold tea, or wine and water. There, on

* Professor Robert Graham.

the side of 'the black hill,' a line of fresh green tells that a spring rises no far way up, and sure enough we find it, clear and pure as only these hill streams are—cold, too, almost too cold for safety; but many a thirsty one drinks from the 'diamond of the desert,' notwithstanding. Thirst quenched, ere long something tells that the stomach has long since disposed of the ample supplies of the morning. Some had been careful enough to provide a biscuit, or to pocket a roll from the breakfast-table, and some were happy enough to own such a provident friend willing to share with them; but the supplies were sadly scanty. There is the Professor—his tall, handsome form was ever distinguishable—striding off to that hill farmstead, or, rather, on Scottish ground, 'farm town,' and soon his hearty call is heard. He has bought up the whole of the good wife's store, and milk, food, and drink together are there for the whole party. We wonder if the good woman ever had her milk-pans so thoroughly cleared before; they were then.

"Another stretch across the moorland, a search down the narrow glen of the bonny burn which makes its way through it, in alternate stream, cascade, and pool, stream and cascade again, and seven o'clock in the evening finds most of the party—some few had deserted early in the day—at the scene of the morning breakfast. But alas! our host had not calculated upon an evening foray, as well as a morning raid, and the late furnishing of comestibles was but scant, compared with the early; actually

there was not enough. One of the party we detected laying violent hands on some rather rusty beef-bones in the pantry, which the host had been ashamed to bring out!

"Then came the dispersion. Some, unused to the exertion, stopped at the inn, some lagged on the road, some stopped at the half-way village, and a few only, with the Professor and his veteran lieutenant, marched into town at ten o'clock at night, well tired, but well satisfied, and one at least of the party to remember the day as one of those green spots in life's retrospect which, like a thing of beauty, 'is a joy forever.'

"But now the shade. Ere the next summer flowers were blossoming, some of the merry laughers of that excursion were laid low by fever caught in the study of their profession in the hospital wards; another year or two, and all were dispersed on their several roads of life—short roads to some, very short. A West Indian appointment with one led to yellow fever and an early grave; one, at least, fell in the Khyber Pass, under the knives of the Affghans; consumption and other diseases have claimed their victims, and Graham and Macnab fill respected graves. Yet many live, engaged in the successful exercise of their profession, and may sometimes lighten anxious thoughts by a recall of the botanical rambles of student days."*

* "Wild Flowers: How to See and how to Gather them." By Spencer Thompson, M. D. London. 1858.

THE TWIN SISTERS.

BY S. ANNIE FROST.

Two young girls sat together in a large, well-furnished room in a boarding-house in Philadelphia. They were the only occupants of the apartment, and, as they sat in the dim twilight of a spring evening, locked fast in each other's arms, low, deep sobs were the only sounds that broke the stillness. Darkness fell, yet still they sat there, weeping bitter tears, each clasping the other fast, as if they were each other's only comfort. At length, raising her head, one of them looked sadly round the dark room, and said, in a low, choking voice—

"Perhaps we had better look over the desk this evening, Gracie."

"Well, we will, if you think best," was the answer.

"Gracie, dear sister, how you shudder and sob! Your hands are like ice, and I cannot comfort you." The speaker's voice trembled, but, softly putting aside her sister, who was clinging to her, the first speaker rose and lighted a lamp, setting it on a little table beside a writing-desk. "Come, Gracie, we must do this together," she said, drawing the table over to the sofa, upon which her sister was still seated.

Grace raised her head, and, as the light struck upon the two, it was difficult to distinguish one sister from the other. In both, there was the same peculiarity of large hazel eyes, dark eyebrows and lashes, with a profusion of light hair, which fell in soft curls around their