

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1893.

QUIET OBAN BY THE SEA

IN AND ROUND ABOUT A SCOTTISH SUMMER RESORT.

Oban, Between the Scottish Highlands and Islands—Its Habitudes Substant in a sort of Droning Purring of Quiet-Characterful Folk, Incidents and Scenes.

Oban, Scotland, Aug. 25.—The purple shadows of evening were falling among its heather swarded corries when we whirled through the Pass of Awe. Then came a long stretch of desolate looking heath. Then followed dim glimpses of the weird ruins of Newcastle Dunstaffnage and the misty Falls of Lora. So it was night, with picturesque lights and shades upon the Sound, and a gentle hum of quiet and repose within the streets, when the train crept into Oban, the most noted watering-place of Scotland, and a fine large creature with the dialect of Skye and an atmosphere of usquebaugh guiltless of the taint of excise, after informing me with winsome honesty that both himself and all the hotels were "fu" for a silver saxepe, in hand paid, conducted me with some forgivable detour and delay to a very old, a very tiny, but still a very tidy and comfortable inn.

The guide of the inn had some doubts about admitting me. She heard my wanderer's story in silence, and examined my credentials critically. Then she retired for a whispered consultation with her female servants, during which I overheard with some trepidation the remark:

"He canna be muckle wi' but ain wee handbag."

"O, ay," was urged by another voice, "but mony Yonkees ha' go'd teed oop i' their claea."

"Aweel, I'll take him o'ernicht, an' put him i' th' Dochter's room, if he's na ill to thole!"

She bade me enter with some asperity, lighted a candle and conducted me up a narrow winding stair. We entered a large, low-ceilinged room, with two tiny windows like embrasures of a fortalice, whose furniture consisted solely of a high, old-fashioned bed, a rickety table of deal, a huge arm-chair and a rag carpet of the olden zig-zag pattern. She set the candle upon the deal table with a bang, and then with the air of conferring some wondrous favor abruptly asked:

"D'ye ken where ye are noo?"

I gave it up as pleasantly as I could, not yet being familiar with the geography of Oban.

"D'ye ken about Dochter Johnson?"

"The great Doctor Johnson who once visited Scotland with Boswell?"

"Ay, that's th' mon. Ye've gotten the varra room he lodged in. He had the bonniest thir there in Scotland. I'm sure though th' hoos was weel quat o' him, he smooed sae load th' plaister a' crackit! But ye ha' th' same chair, the same bed an' a'.

"Tis a muckle delight to a' that com."

"And the same bed-clothes?" I asked ruefully, with a glance at the stuffy belongings.

"You know, my good woman, that was 130 years ago."

"I doot, sir," she answered with spirit, "ye're takin' me oop wrang. Dinna be sae muckle auldmo'd. Deed th' claes ha' been weel washt syne!"

And with this the guide snapped herself out of the room in high dudgeon, but returned shortly in restored good humor and with my order for tea.

For the benefit of those who come after me, I should reveal the truth that it is one thing to order a meal at a Scottish, or for matter at an English inn, and quite another accomplishment to secure what you are led to believe the hostel affords. I do not refer to those large and respectable city establishments where, if your bill may be more confusing than an average American hotel, your comfort will be quite as well looked after, but to those countless pretty and cozy places of entertainment one must needs so often resort to in extended travel in the interesting provincial regions of Britain.

After a long day's journey the least carnal of us will dwell upon enticing visions of savory chops and luscious cold joints, and the appetite is even bold enough to modestly plead for warm potatoes. Settled at your inn, these forgivable longings find immediate expression. You decide on having a nice tidy supper in your own room. "What would you like for tea, sir?" evokes a hopeful inquiry as to what there may be most handy and hearty in the house. "Oh, anything at all you like, sir," is invariably the placid response. Rapturous processions of steaming toothsome things are instantly conjured. You suggest a mutton-chop, thick, rare and hot, a plate of cheese, tea or coffee or cream, waiter, by all means cream, and perhaps toast or biscuit. Your waiter begins to wear a look of pained surprise. "I'll see at once, sir," and he disappears; disappears for such a ruesome time, that you seem in a proper mood for compromise when he returns with "The chops are hout, sir, an' I was told to say, sir, 'ow as we never pertaters fur tea, sir.'" "Oh, very well; make it some cold joint and cheese then; plenty of it now; and here's a sixpence for

yourself. Look sharp now I'm hungry." There is laggardness in his step and tone, but he answers you respectfully enough: "All right, sir, I'll see directly."

A long time now elapses. You begin to really worry. Perhaps you may have the temerity to pull the tassel of a huge bell-cord, and alarmingly hear the resultant clanging and clamor like that from the efforts of a new set of change-ringers. A shock-headed maid plumps her shock head within the door. She too seems alarmed, and she asks, "what might you be a wantin' sir?" You toss her a sixpence and explain. She also says she'll see about it "directly." The waiter at length taps at your door, but does not come in. He warily inserts his napkinied arm and a portion of his head. "Sorry sir, but the cheese an' the joints locked up, sir. Might there be anything else you might be wishin' to 'ave, sir?"

Ravenous and desperate you repress burning words and handy furniture and at last gasp out. "In—heaven's—name—is—there—anything—in—this—house—I—can—get—to—eat—before—I—starve?"

The door is closed a little, but the voice behind it returns: "Oh, yes, sir. 'Am an' heggs, sir. Hexcellent 'am, an' fresh laid heggs, sir. Will it be a pot o' tea with 'em sir, an' some bread an' butter? All werry neat an' tidy, an' no wait at all, sir." You groan assent and sink into your chair with another traveller's castle-of-air ruthlessly shattered. "Ugh!" you mutter, "those everlasting ham and eggs and tea and ham and eggs!" But they are all before you in a jiffy (for they have been all the time preparing) and your busy, bustling landlady with whitest cap upon her head, sweetest cloth for your table, with dainty pot of "clotted" cream, delft pot of odoriferous tea beneath a pretty "cosey," and her most winsome smile and purring potterings around you, smooth away your frowns, until you half forgive their rank duplicity in the snug and cheery comfort you have found. It is the same in Scotland as in England. The dialect only differs. Ask only for ham and eggs and tea. You will then always be served quickly and well. Besides your bill will be less: for you will be accounted an old and a wise traveller.

Boswell says Dr. Johnson and himself had "a good night's rest" at their inn at Oban, where they breakfasted at their leisure, but could "get but one bridle here which according to the maxim, *detur digniori*, was appropriated to Dr. Johnson's sheltie." My rest was equally as good, whether or not the story of Dr. Johnson's occupancy of the inn and room had been a forgivable fiction; but my breakfast was at my landlady's leisure rather than at my own.

While waiting for the meal I heard issuing from the region of the scullery a quaint Highland song like those which might have at times regaled the ears of the great lexicographer in his famous journey to the Hebrides. Here is the first stanza, Gaelic and all:

"Se Coire-cheatnach, nan aighean siubhlach, An Coire rannach is arat fonn, Gu lurasch mid-theurach, min-zheal, suhar, Gach lusan fuar bu chubraidh lean; Gu molach, jubh-gloinn, torrach, luiseagach, Corrach, pìr-rannach, dha-chlan, grim, Cacin, ballach, dith-eanch, canach, mis-eanch Gieann a mhillich's an ionnmhor, mianach."

My own misty Corrie, by deer ever haunted, My beautiful valley, my own verdant dell, Soft, rich and grassy with sweets ever scented, From every fair flower I love dear and well; Truly all growing, brightly all blowing, Over its shaggy and green-darkened lawn; Moss, canach and daisies adorning its mazes, Through which gambols lightly the little graceful fawn!

This led to a discovery of a peculiar domestic feature of Oban during the busy summer months. Huge daughters of the Western Island crofters come here and enter service in the ruder vocations of scullery and kitchen maids, though some are employed as chambermaids. Few can speak English, but they are very apt and docile, and prove the best servants that can be found. They do not spend a penny of their earnings during the entire season, and their only pleasures are found in their occasional evening *ceitidh* (pronounced "kail-ey") or gossiping party, in the kitchens of boarding-houses and inns, and the Sabbath Gaelic services which are held for this class and the Oban fishermen in the Free Church. When the season is over they sail away to Lewis or Skye, bare-legged, bare-headed, singing their songs of home-going rapturously, the happiest folk in all the world that they mayhap carry with them enough sovereigns to rescue their parents from want against bad crops or ill-luck with the fishing boats. The entire year's rent of the little croft is often thus paid; and when I knew their story and the humble heroism of their lives I was glad that chance had brought me to an inn so modest that the revelation had its source through a scullery maid's Gaelic song.

But Oban has its princely hotels, its superb inns, its aristocratic boarding-houses and its beautiful villas. It is a winsome town, almost wholly composed of these, nearly in the heart of the western Highlands, just at the edge of the vast maze of Western Islands, sounds and lochs, and strung like a necklace of pearls along the edge of a semi-circular bay, so beautiful, so shut away from the thunderous Firth of Lorne and the sea by the rocky Isle of Kerrera, and still so tenderly within the arms of Ben Cruachan and other Highland peaks, that from any point of view it appeals to sight and sentiment with a sense of restfulness and repose.

A number of almost indefinable features and characteristics altogether render Oban peculiarly attractive. In the first place be it known no Scottish summer resort or watering-place is like any similar retreat in England or America. Scotland is truly one vast and almost indivisible summer resort. Everywhere are lofty mountains, glorious glens, fleathery waterfalls, noble streams, winsome braes, misty corries, vast or tiny shadowy lochs. All of these attract and charm and hold. Families settle in little neighboring thousands at this or that beautiful spot. Thousands of

British noblemen and gentry haunt the vast game preserves. And the tourist throngs move hither and thither, tarrying for but a day or an hour, countless bright and colorful human threads and interlacings across the sunny land.

But there is nowhere a place in Scotland like the American Long Branch, Coney Island, Newport, Nantucket or Bar Harbor, or like England's Southport, Bournemouth, Brighton, Margate, Ramsgate or Scarborough, where jangling, Babelic crowds jostle and perspire while bands blare and fakirs roar. Strathpeffer away north in Rosshire, Rothesay in Bute near the mouth of the Clyde, and Oban here in the Western Highlands, are the nearest approach to what may be termed great water-places. Strathpeffer is distinctly a spa and is exceedingly aristocratic. Rothesay is chiefly the summer-home of Glasgow's wealthy families. Oban is spa, seaside resort and the great temporary halting-place of British and foreign tourists in their journeys to and from the Highlands and Islands; while fully two score of the most scenically interesting tours to be found in Scotland of necessity includes a visit here. Some of these, like the tour to Fort William and Inverness though the greatest of Scotch lochs and the Caledonian Canal, to Mull Skye, Gairloch and Loch Maree; and above all to Staffa, Fingal's Cave and the silent, sacred ruins of Iona, are not surpassed for historic interest and scenic grandeur in the whole world.

Were it not for the bright tides of life continually ebbing and flowing through Oban, the white city, embedded in emerald and blue with an outer rim of purple where the ghostly mountains lie, would impressively recall those silent, half oriental towns of white, like flecks of beaten foam between the sea and hills, you will see upon the southern shores while sailing upon Mediterranean waters. There is an depth of color and light here, at times beautifully softened by leathery mists from sea and mount, which intensifies this seeming, and is very dear to the heart of British artists. Little is there to know or see of gay social life in Oban. The decorous Scotch nature is ever warily decorous in passive pleasures; and those who are not here for the season subside in a sort of a droning purring of quiet, which strongly posess all who come to idle through a day or week. Quiet, rest; a drinking in of the blended sea and mountain air: a silent contemplation of all the grand and lavish scenes that nature spreads to view; perhaps the gentle mental fire of conning the ancient Gaelic pages the centuries have left to read in the grim ruins of Castles Dunolly and Dunstaffnage, in the latter of which was kept the "Stone of destiny;" in the Clach-a-Choin pillar where Fingal bound his dog Bran; in Kerrera's castle Glylen and Dalry field, where the second Alexander died; and in the wondrous coming and going of tourist folk from every land, are found the witching thrall of Oban. Its summer folk idle little upon its pretty streets. They stroll listlessly in its lanes and mountain paths. They haunt the quays and see the steamers come and go like dreamers gazing upon the pleasant scenes of dreams. The lights are scarcely lighted in the long gloaming of eventide. And when night, the pale laggard here, at last appears, Oban and its lazily happy summer idlers are asleep.

Here as elsewhere in Scotland and you cannot avoid the humidity, nor can you fail to observe one of the curious effects upon Scotch people themselves. They are either wholly indifferent to its influence or seem to possess a sort of liking for it, from long syne companionship. A fish poacher will cast his hook in contentedness all day long through a steady drizzle. All sorts of peasant-folk along the road-side pursue their regular vocations in pelting showers, as if utterly unconscious of the drenching element. Excursion and picnic parties set forth for a day's outing in a pouring rain with the same enthusiasm as on a clear morning. The indifference to the mist and the rain may have become a national characteristic through the universal use by Scottish people of woolen clothing, so perfect in quality and comfortable in texture as to protect the body from the ill-effect of sudden change in temperature and the chill of evaporating moisture. But you cannot account for the apparent actual liking of mist and drizzle, drizzle and mist, save on the theory that endless companionship with anything so exasperating as intermittent fog, sun and drizzle in time gives the habit of liking, if not indeed of love.

That the Scotch love their mists and drizzles you have endless proof. "Dear Auld Reekie" (Old Foggy or Smoky) is not the only predilection for mist-weathered, drizzle-sprinkled Edinburgh, one of the most interesting cities of the world, but it is the love-name of all old Scotia itself. Any day in the year you will meet groups of society ladies or business men gathered at crossings or near important building entrances, cheery as larks on a June morning in their exchange of courtesies or gossip, while tiny rills of rain are nervously coursing from their ears, chins, and noses, or seeking along tole ative vertebrae the sequestered and spongy shades of waistbands, hip-pockets and kilted skirts. While about George Square at Glasgow, the old Tron Steeple, Dumfries, the picturesque landing-place and in George Street here in Oban, and along High Street or in Waterloo Place, in Edinburgh, you will see scores of people standing idly in the rain; as though they had come out of irksome and confining habitations for an invigorating sup, literally sup, of this sort of fresh air.

EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

Australian Estates.

Australia is the country of immense estates. Of three advertised for sale in a Melbourne paper the area of the first is 454 square miles, and of the second 648 square miles, and of the third 553 square miles. They are all in Queensland.

The rent of the first is only \$1,500 and the cattle on the pasture are valued at \$12 each. It is watered by a river, and has a town on one side ninety miles distant, on the other 150.

The advantage of the second is that it lies between three towns, which are respectively 180, 300, and 350 miles away. The third has the best situation, as it is within 100 miles of a railway.

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GLIMPSES IN A MINT.

Something About the Process of Coining the Precious Metals.

It is rather difficult to attempt a description of how money is made. Even encyclopedias which are supposed to be equal to any and all emergencies, object to that. In a measure they are right. To get the best idea of the multiple and minute processes of minting one must be an eyewitness. It adds charm to the proceedings to stand by the dusty furnaces, arranged in sentinel-like rows, to see them open their jaws and to look right down into the fiery cavern, where insatiable tongues of flame are licking up the molten masses of silver and gold.

A day or two ago Officer Brown, standing beside a visitor who had watched with all the fascination of a novice the great iron mouth opening and closing, betrayed himself into a neat little explanation of the process of minting money. Officer Brown has been many years at the Mint, so the visitor listened with interest, as to one who spoke with authority. Here is the process in a nutshell.

"Making money," said he, with one of those eloquent waves of the hands he keeps by him to use on explanatory occasions such as these. "is just like making cake. You mix the dough, we mix the metal. You roll out the dough into shape, we roll out the metal into bars. You cut the dough into cakes, we cut the metal into coins. Then we stamp them. The metal left over is melted up and used again, just as the cook gathers up the left-overs, rolls them again, and cuts more cakes."

In other words, an amount of metal, say the equivalent of \$90,000 in gold, which chemically is made up of 90 per cent. gold and 10 per cent copper, is put into a black-lead crucible about the size of a peck measure. It is kept in the furnace one hour and fifteen minutes. The workman watches his gold as sacredly as the cook her cakes, and when the molten liquid is brought to the proper consistency he takes a three-cornered black-lead cup, about the size that would fit a monkey's head, and dips up \$2,000 worth of the metal at a time, pouring it out again with that marvelous dexterity, which only comes from practice, into moulds holding \$1,000 each. Nothing can be more beautiful than the fiery stream of young and pure gold as it glides into the locked arms of the iron mould.

When the liquid solidifies it forms a bar, or, to be technically correct, an ingot about twelve inches long and about half an inch thick.

These ingots are subjected to a process of rolling out which lengthens them without increasing the width. The bars are then ready to be cut. One machine cuts the coin, another stamps them after the process of milling has been performed. Milling in mint parlance, has somewhat of a different signification than in ordinary vernacular. It signifies the rolling over of the edge of the coin preparatory to stamping it with the minute denticulations, which are commonly known as the milling. The latter is part of the process of stamping, and is done at the time that the ingot is put on the coin.

Speaking of stamping introduces the large corps of women who form a considerable part of the working force of the Mint. About 100 of them are employed, and they attend entirely to the adjusting and stamp-

ing. It may be said in explanation of the process of the term "adjusting" that every coin before it is shaped is carefully weighed. If too heavy the edge is delicately filed until the coin is of lawful weight; if too light, the piece is sent to be remelted. This process of weighing and adjusting is an employment to which women, with their delicacy of touch are well suited. They are also in charge of the stamping. Incidentally it may be said that most presses stamp from 80 to 110 coins every minute. In one short hour \$45,000 in ten-dollar gold pieces can be stamped around the edge and on both sides.

There is another part of the work which comes under the charge of the women employed at the Mint. They do the sewing. At first thought it seems a trifle incongruous to associate sewing with money minting, but all the bags used by the Mint are sewed in the building. The bags are made of white duck and run up by machine, being sewed twice for security. The bag making is no small thing when you come to consider the number it takes to pack up the newly coined wealth of the country each year. The five-cent pieces are packed in \$50 bags and the pennies in \$10 bags, small silver in \$1,000 and the gold in \$5,000 pouches. Roughly speaking, last year fully 2,000 bags were made up for gold alone. 16,000 for silver, 5,000 for half dollars, besides many thousands for the smaller coins.—[Phila. Times.

How Helen Keller was Taught. Something of the Method Explained by Her Tireless Instructress. Memphis Appeal-Avalanche.

The most interesting feature of the Educational Congress was the appearance of Helen Keller, under the kind and skilful guidance of Miss Annie M. Sullivan, her teacher. When a babe Helen Keller became blind, deaf, and dumb. When Miss Sullivan, a young woman of unusual beauty of form and feature, stood before the sad sign of blindness in the large eyes, gave promise of still greater beauty, her face glistening with a rapture that painters try to express in the ecstasy of the angels, hearts seemed to stand still. It was a face that had never consciously looked on the distortions of passion or pain: the mirror of the soul that could not imagine the outward appearance of sin nor remember any of the discords of life. In her presence it was hard to apprehend the fact that her world lay within ours, without sun, music, or speech. No one who saw it will forget the impulsive fluttering of her young, white hand as it sought her teacher's face or round, white throat; the satisfaction when the contact of her delicate white finger tips gave her what sight gives us: the flash of light over her face when, with her forefinger resting on her teacher's lip, she read the answer to the question she had asked by the twinkling digital movements in her teacher's palm. There were those who wept when she repeated audibly, with a depth of feeling she alone can feel:

"Tell me not in mournful numbers Life is but an empty dream. All were invited to ask questions, yet not many did so; the occasion seemed sacred."

"How did you teach her the first word?" some one ventured at last.

"Her first word was 'doll,'" was the answer. "I gave her the doll, placed her finger on my lip, and spoke the word. When she wearied of the doll I took it from her, and when I returned it again gave the movement of the lips. The second word was 'mug.' I used the cup from which she drank, but became convinced that she had not a clear idea of the name, but that it meant to her also water or drink: so I one day took her to the pump, and as the water was flowing into her cup, had her hold her hand in the stream, and then putting her finger on my lip gave her the word 'water,' then I again gave her the word 'mug.' The idea that everything had a name, the comprehension of nouns, was a great revelation to her and came then and all at once. She was greatly excited. A nurse, with the baby sister in her arms, was standing near. Helen immediately put her hand on its face to know its name. I told her 'baby,' and she caught it at once. Then she stooped down and patted the ground to know what it was called."

"How soon after she learned words did she frame sentences?"

"Immediately."

"Were verbs harder to learn than nouns?"

"Not at all. I began with such words 'sit,' 'stand,' and the like that were easy to illustrate. Prepositions trouble her most."

"How does she get an idea of the abstract?"

"I cannot tell. It seems to be with her or it comes."

"Has she any distinguishing sense of musical vibrations?"

"Yes, very distinct. She likes music. 'Is her vocabulary large?"

"Very large. She expresses herself fluently and is choice of words."

"What books does she like best?"

"Every now and then the white fingers fluttered to the teacher's face for just one delicate touch—a finger look it was—and now they rested on Miss Sullivan's lip."

"Tell—the—people—what—books— you—like—best?"

Helen's face was an open book of her mental process. She repeated each word after Miss Sullivan, but hesitated a little on the words "tell" and "you," the brightness of her face dimming for the instant. As soon as she comprehended the question, which she did in advance of its completion, the flash of intelligence came, and when she turned toward the audience, for she did not seem at any time to lose her location, she said with spirit:

"Oh, I have read so much that it is very hard to say what I like best, but"—waiting a moment—"Little Lord Fauntleroy!"—and then followed rapidly the names of several works, some of which, it would seem, could hardly be understood by any one who cannot know sound and color."

"How do you read?"

"By raised letters and by my teacher."

"I noticed when you pronounced for her you articulated with an exaggerated motion of the lips," said one. "Is not that necessary?"

"Her teaching was begun in that way. I do not think it was necessary or best. I attribute the peculiarity of her voice to that, mechanical action which she uses. I think it would have been better and just as easy if she had been spoken to with the usual movement."