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## The Bells of Portknockie.

AN IDYLL OF THE NORTH SEA.

By DAVID LYALL.

"Ye may go down to the shore if ye like, Annie Doon; but one thing ye will not see, an' that's the Bonnie Ann weather the Beacon. For she'll never come into Portknockie again. Oh, my son, my bonnie man, that I had dandled on my knee!"

She was an old woman, upon whose face many sorrows had set their seal. Have you ever looked at the faces of seafaring folk who live close to the great deep, and whose lives depend on its mercy from the cradle to the grave? If you have, you do not need me to tell you of the pathos, the patient, hungry, waiting look, which speaks of hearts not staved in trust, but rather prepared for the worst, even the greatest tragedy of all.

It was an October night on the shores of the North Sea. The sun had gone down in red wrath, leaving a long yellow glare on the horizon, which the inky blackness of the storm speedily swept into the sea. It was hard to say which month of the year gave the stormiest record; but perhaps if you had asked the weather-wise, they would have said that the gale to be dreaded above all others on that treacherous coast was the gale of the Equinox in the late autumn. It was a wild, magnificent, awful coast, with many beautiful but few kindly spots. The cliffs rose sheer from the stony beaches, and were torn by great gulches and wonderful caves, which people came from distant parts to see when the weather was fine and there was nothing to frighten or frown at them.

Here and there in the clefts of the rocks a handful of red roofs or a little spire proclaimed the habitations of those who go down to the sea in ships. Here, too, there would be a strip of shining beach, a natural harbor, affording even at the best of times a precarious shelter. And here they lived and moved and had their being, wept and loved and suffered, those who strove to wrest a scanty living from the great deep.

On that night two women stood by an open cottage door, with shawls tied about their heads, their strained eyes peering out into the blackness of the night. The noise of the mighty rushing wind and the boom of the sea against the rocks where the salt spray dashed into the air made it difficult for them to hear one another's voices, which were shrill and high and sitting in the note of pain.

"Dinna say that, Annie," said the girl, and shivered as another great billow broke in thunder on the shore. "Go back into the house, and I will run to the harbor and hear if there's any news."

She pushed her head and shoulders back into the house. She did not demur. She was old, and the wind buffeted her; she was no longer able to face and fight it. So she crept back to the desolate hearth, and sat down by the red embers to watch and pray. The girl closed the door, wrapped her shawl more closely about her, and turned to face the blast. It was only a few steps to the harbor mouth, but for more than once she wavered, feeling as if the next gust must sweep her into the sea.

A group of women, a few old men, and a handful of children crouching under their mothers' skirts were huddled at the frail shelter of the harbor wall. There is no other path always about the watchers when there is peril on the sea; the women and children and the old men, who wait at home for the safe return of the bread-winners. The harbor lights gleamed fitfully upon anxious faces and appealing eyes turned, ever turned, to the angry sea.

Scarce a word was spoken, and when Annie Doon joined them she became a part of the silence. They fell apart a little to let her into the circle, and one of the women laid a kindly hand on her shoulder. For they knew she loved, she feared for the man she loved, the stalwart seaman of the Bonnie Ann.

"There's a little use to stand here, neighbors," said one of the old men at length. "Until the wind falls the open sea's their safest bit."

"But Annie, saw the Bonnie Ann off the Beacon, Davie Duffus," said the girl feverishly; "just on the back o' six o'clock."

"She dreamed it, lassie. Frankie Scott wad never come near the Beacon in a nor-easter like this, that is, unless he took leave o' his seevin senses, which is not likely."

"But I think I saw her myself, Davie, when the moon arose afore the rain came on. And whaur can she be now?"

"On the Beacon," he answered grimly. "Unless he made for Portknockie harbor. Wheesht! What's that?"

Through the boom of the storm came the distant clang of a bell.

"It's the bell of Portknockie! He's on the Beacon," said the girl, in a low, anguished voice, and her fingers worked convulsively with the fringes of her shawl.

"Then there may be a chance. The coast-guard's out afore the bell rings. Lord help them a'!" said the old man, and the crowd began to separate, and come to an end.

It had only, however, entered on a new phase, and those who were able began to climb the steep brae face to the summit of the cliff, whence could be seen the cove at Portknockie, and the light on the dreaded Beacon Rocks. The Beacon was a sharp, sheer ledge of rock, which ran far out into the sea, and was always submerged, though at low water its black, cruel outline could be defined by the troubled passage of the waves above it. Upon this treacherous reef many a barque had foundered, many a life destroyed. It had indeed been the grave of many a fair and goodly hope.

Annie Doon passed outside the door of her aunt's cottage, the home that had sheltered her since she had been cast orphaned on the sea of life. Through the unshuttered window she could see the dropping figure in its hopeless attitude by the fire; she could even catch the expression on her face. It indicated prayer.

There was no sleep for them that night; it was spent by the glowing driftwood fire, and at the grey dawning some peace came to the troubled sea, mayhap to their hearts. Annie Doon crept to her bed in the attic room and sobbed herself to sleep. Next day, in spite of what they would say, she went with the seafarers on the drift-strewn beach; but not on that day nor on any other was the body of Frank Scott recovered. Nor would be until the sea gave up its dead.

Life has to flow in its appointed channels, even though hearts are at the breaking. The daily duty then becomes the merciful healer. The gaps closed up in Portknockie year by year; a few white hairs, a line about the mouth, a quietness and stillness of speech—these perhaps were accentuated by the increasing sorrow. But the boats put to sea as usual, and the same hours of anxiety and heart sickness were endured by women on the shore.

Out of it there grows a quiet courage, a dumb patience, a still, unrumored waiting on the will of God.

Annie Doon did not weep where she could be seen, nor did she give up a single item of her daily task. The only mother she had ever known was growing frailer day by day. The whole care of the house devolved on her; and there was work to be done, too, for the fishers and the nets.

But out of the girl's heart the singing bird had gone. In the Spring of the next year, when the wonderful tenderness of an April sky was mirrored on a sea which always smiled, Jean Ardbuckle laid her down to die. She was neither sad nor glad to go. She would die as she had lived, acquiescing in the will of God.

"Annie," she said one day, as the girl, who had been twice a daughter to her, bent over her bed, "he has lo'ed ye lank, my John. When I am gone, unless I tak' him, what will ye do? If I could see ye man an' wife afore I dee I would shut my e'en in peace."

"I can never be wife to ony man, Annie; my heart is dead," the girl answered, simply.

"But it wad come to life again, Annie. Listen. When I was young I thocht as ye do; but I married a man that had loved me true for years, and when I was his wife and his bairn laid upon my knee I knew he was the man God meant for me. John has lo'ed ye a' his life."

The girl's face flushed a little, and her eyes were troubled. In the soft calm of the spring night she went out upon the brae to commune with her own heart, and to ponder on what had passed between her and Annie.

She thought of all the years she had been sheltered in that humble home, of John's tender if unobtrusive care, and a strange humbleness and yearning towards him came over her.

Under cover of the darkness Annie Doon slid down the face of the brae to Portknockie nimbly as a young deer, and came upon the harbor mouth as the lifeboat grated against the steps. Then she stood, with the shawl dropping from her shoulders, and the wet wind in her hair, until the boat was by one. Ardbuckle

"Ye are there, Annie," he kind of gruff gentleness, "ter been at home."

"Where's Frank, John?" she asked, in a voice shrill with fear.

"We had to, lassie. A him clean into the sea b' e'en. An' what could I then, puir child? Come awa' name."

But she would not let him touch her. "Let me be!" she said, and turning from him disappeared in the darkness. And none saw which way she turned.

They talked in low, regretful murmurs of their comrade who had been slain. He was one beloved of all for his high courage, his sunny heart, and generous disposition, and all were won to sweet Annie Doon, widowed before she was a bride. Ardbuckle had little to say, at which, however, none wondered, knowing him to be a still, silent man, who refrained from all verbal expression even when he felt most.

As there was nothing to be done until the dawning, when it would be their melancholy task to seek their comrade's body among the drift cast up by the storm, they began to disperse slowly to their homes. It was close on midnight, and that had been an anxious, weary day. Ardbuckle, still keeping himself apart from his fellows, strode home to his mother's cottage on the lee shore, under the shadow of the cliff.

No light burned there. The solitary figure crouching in despair by the fire had forgotten the flight of time. She sat so motionless, she might have been asleep or dead. The step on the shingle outside aroused her; it was the step she loved, and had scarcely hoped to hear again on earth. She sprang up with a low, shrill cry, and met her son at the opening of the door.

"Eh, my laddie, are ye safe after a'?" she cried, beginning to weep now that the strain was loosed and relief had come; "where's Annie an' Frank Scott and wee Willie an' the rest?"

"We are a' safe but Frankie, mother. A wave swept him into the sea. It was like a mighty churn, an' he disappeared in a moment."

Although her joy at her son's return was overwhelming, her face clouded again.

"An' where's Annie? Does she ken? She's not seen her?"

"She kens. I thocht I should find her here."

"Her heart will be broken, John; it's set on him. She's but a frail thing, and she'll be wild. Maybe she has thrown herself into the sea after him."

"She walked awa' frae the sea. But I'll seek her now if ye like."

"But ye are soakin' to the skin, laddie, an' jist saved frae the sea. Come to the fire. Annie will be here soon. She'll come to see her son."

But Ardbuckle could not rest. He turned on his heel and went out into the night again, and just at the head of the sloping shingle met the girl walking with slow, disconsolate step. He took her by the arm, and his touch was tenderness itself.

"Come, my dear, it will do nae good to be wanderin' here in the night. Ye are wet an' cauld, Annie. Come home."

She suffered him to lead her; but she spoke never a word. Once or twice her eyes turned to the angry sea, which had wrought such woe in her heart and life. They came together to the house, and old Jean Ardbuckle, whom the sea had robbed of three sons and their father, took the girl to her motherly home. If there had been any bitterness there because she had seen another thrown to her own, it melted even catch the expression on her face. It indicated prayer.

Join your life to mine I pray that I be worthy o' ye afore I dee."

"Oh, wheesht, I am but a puir lassie that kens naething, and a' Partknockie kens what you are," she said, as she laid her hand with the women's courage and tenderness upon his arm. "Come, let us go back to Annie Jean."

—British Weekly.

### GRIM COURTSHIP.

Customs of Kidnaping and Murder Still Extant in the Caucasus.

The manners and customs of the people of the Caucasus have not changed to a great extent since the country was subdued by Russia. One of the relics of the good old times to which the Caucasians especially cling is the custom of kidnaping the women whom they desire to make their wives.

Recently a case of this kind resulted in a tragic end. A prominent inhabitant of the little Caucasian town of Katsagan, named Ismail Oglu Oki, tried to kidnap the sister of his best friend's wife while his friend was absent from home. The girl resisted his attempt to carry her off, aided by her married sister. The baffled lover drew his sword and inflicted dangerous wounds on both the ladies. At this moment his friend returned, and, enraged at finding what had occurred, killed Ismail on the spot. Then cut off Ismail's head and carried it around to show the neighbors what a fearful revenge he had taken.

In the same district a young nobleman desired to marry the daughter of a neighboring land-owner, and invited the girl with her parents to a grand ball given at his castle. During the evening he found an opportunity of decoying the girl into a secluded part of the house, where she was seized by his men and placed in a carriage. The prince's father, and in spite of the girl's entreaties, started out to drive to a place, where they could be married without much delay.

The girl's father, on finding that his host had disappeared with his daughter, gave chase, and being on horseback, overtook the carriage. He shot the nobleman without ado, and took his daughter home. The nobleman, however, had won her heart during the drive, and the girl was now reluctant to marry the man of whom her father approved, but the stern parent insisted on the wedding taking place at once. The bride appeared in the church, pale, but cool and collected. During the ceremony she drew a dagger and stabbed the bridegroom to the heart. Afterward she committed suicide.—London Mail.

### QUAINT AND CURIOUS.

A widower of Wellington, Kan., the

plent contain a store of tempting liquid refreshment. He crosses the hospitable threshold and enters what is to him a spacious and elegant apartment, strolling along, stopping here and there to sip a drop of nectar, until he is well within the walls of the enclosed leaf. Here he encounters a glazed zone; a portion of the leaf of such a peculiarly smooth and slippery surface, consisting of delicate, overlapping glossy hairs, upon which even he, that can walk upside down upon a glass skylight, finds it difficult to keep his footing. He slips and falls, but spreading his wings, flies and attempts to alight on the opposite side, a little further down perhaps, to avoid the slippery zone, but encounters a surface thickly set with stiff, downward-pointing hairs, that affords him no footing; and even if he succeeds with the greatest difficulty in alighting, prevents his progress upward. Taking flight again and pounding against the walls, bewildered, tired, perhaps stupefied or intoxicated by the food he has taken, he inevitably, sooner or later, falls into the liquid at the bottom of the tubular leaf, a pool of death in which are already imprisoned the bodies of numerous previous victims, and so incontinently becomes a subject "to point a temperance lecture or adorn a tale."

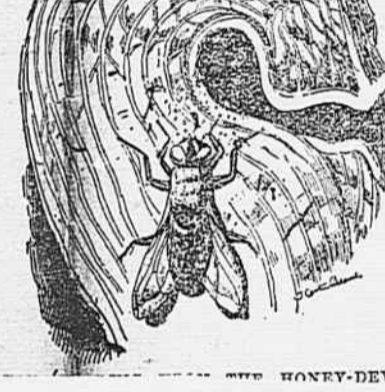


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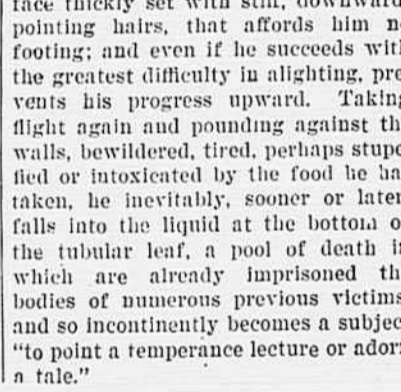
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### TREES THAT HAVE HELPED ME.

Let others sing in praise of me, Of art and books galore; My song shall be of impress deep Wrought by the woodland's store;

Of aspirations that the oak Taught from her acorn small; Of perseverance that my soul Learned from the chestnut tall.

The maple fair, the stately pine, Each willow by the brook Guided my childhood's careless thought In upward ways to look.

But yet 'tis true beyond dispute, As memory's leaves I search, The tree that influenced me most Was mother's little birch.

—Lila.

### HUMOROUS.

Well—What a deep voice he has. Belle—Yes, for such a shallow mind.

Blobs—Bjones has a suit of clothes for every day in the week. Slobs—So have I. I've got it on now.

"Borrowed—Alas! I'm undone. Harduppe—I'm worse than that. "How do you mean?" "I'm dunned."

Sillicus—I understand the bride is quite a gifted young woman. Cynicus—Yes, she got a good many presents.

He—Fine feathers don't always make fine birds. She—No; but they make fine bonnets, and that's more important.

Will—Before they were married she had him clean out of his mind. Belle—And now he has her clean out of his mind.

Poeticus—There are no geniuses in attics nowadays. Cynicus—No; most of them seem to have got down to business and are running elevators.

"Young man," said the millionaire, sadly, "my daughter is my only child." "Yes," confided the suitor, "that's one reason why I thought I'd like to marry her."

Mrs. Towne—Have you any close neighbors, dear? Mrs. Subbuss—Yes; they are all close. So close that you couldn't borrow a fattron or a cup of sugar to save your life.

"Keep cool!" whispered the lawyer. "The sweat's just bubbling out of you!" "Yes," returned the witness on the stand, "it's trying to keep cool that has got me so overheated."

"What! back again?" exclaimed the housekeeper. "Why, I gave you soup only yesterday." "Yes, lady," responded the polite tramp, "an' one good tureen deserves another."

She—I wonder why it is that the average lovers poets write about are so awfully stupid. He—Why, there has to be something stupid about them to rhyme with cupid.

"What are you swearing about?" inquired the senior member of the firm. "O! that new office boy," replied the "old partner," "he's never to be found when he's wanted." "Hereditarily, I suppose. His father's a policeman."

Preparing the Impromptu. Great orators have generally refused to speak on the spur of the moment on important themes. Demosthenes, the king of orators, would never speak in a public meeting without previous thorough preparation. Daniel Webster, when once pressed to speak on a subject of great importance, refused, saying that he was very busy and had no time to master it. When a friend urged that a few words from him would do much to awaken public attention to the subject he replied: "If there be so much weight in my words it is because I do not allow myself to speak on any subject until my mind is imbued with it." On one occasion Webster made a remarkable speech without notes before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard University, and a book was presented to him. After he had gone a manuscript copy of his eloquent "impromptu" address, carefully written, was found in the book, which he had forgotten to take away.—Philadelphia Post.

Luck in Horseshoes. The superstition dates back too far for record, but it was not always confined to the horseshoe. Any piece of iron found in one's path was accounted a sign of good luck, and as horseshoes were more commonly picked up than any other article of that metal, that particular object at last became the standard emblem of good fortune and the supposed defense against bad luck. In Aubrey's "Miscellanies," written 200 years ago, the author mentions having seen the horseshoe nailed up in church, and he also says that "most of the houses in the West End of London have the horseshoe on the threshold." The horseshoe to possess virtue, must have been round, not purr in the prescribed manner, made the customary amount of journeys and supplied the usual amount of honey, she conscientiously laid her egg and closed up the empty cell.

It is quite common to speak of the intelligence of insects, but it really seems, in the light of recent scientific investigations, almost as correct to speak of the intelligence of a watch. Insects doubtless accomplish wonderful results, but such results seem to be effected (as are the equally wonderful adaptations of man to an end by the vital organs in his own bodies) by automatic, unconscious, and unintelligent obedience to internal or external stimuli.—Scientific American.

Leonid's 1000th Tour. The next return of the Leonids, or November meteors, will mark the 1000th anniversary of the first record of this swarm. Last November, on the morning of the 15th, one American observatory estimated that 1600 meteors an hour were falling. In England a number of meteors were doubly observed, the mean heights of eight being thus calculated at 81 to 56 miles.

A Japanese family of five can live on less than 88 a month.

A snow wall four feet thick is a perfect protection against a rifle bullet at 50 yards distance.

The Royal Horse. The Belgians, who have just celebrated their sixty-first birthday, comes from the most illustrious royal house in Europe, the house of Hapsburg—and her cup of grief is more than full. Her hair is said to have been white while she was still in her thirties. The queen's only son, the Duke of Brabant, died suddenly under circumstances which suggested poisoning; her son-in-law was the Crown Prince Rudolph, who ended his life in a most tragic manner; her favorite nephew was killed in an accident, and her sister is in a lunatic asylum, not far from the palace at Brussels. Queen Marie Henrietta has not neglected the social and intellectual side of life, however. She is a clever horsewoman, a gifted composer of music and as fond of her stud as she is of her camera and her piano.

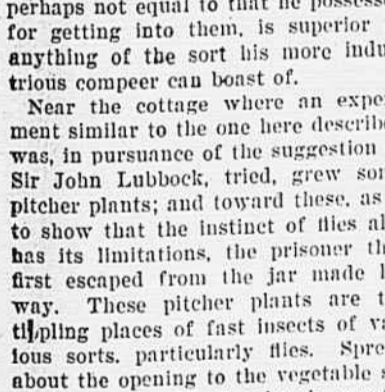
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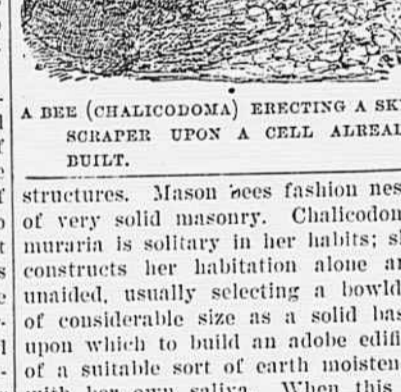
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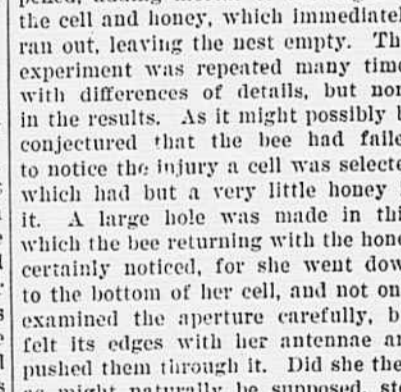
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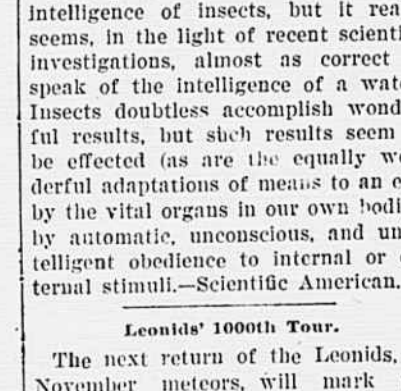
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