

## Strange Stories from Loch Grannoch

### Introduction

These stories were compiled and printed privately for his friends by the late George Rigby Murray of Parton, who was tenant of Loch Grannoch Lodge for many years.

The editor stressed at the time (1907) that the strange tales are purely fictional; others who know and love Loch Grannoch may like me prefer to think otherwise!

But in any case I am reprinting them with the permission of his family, in the hope that they will give the same pleasure to others as they have to me.

Elizabeth Murray Usher

Cally Estate Office  
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### Preface (by the Editor)

It occurred to me (after reading a book by Father Benson) that it might be interesting to get each of our Grannoch party to tell a little story of the supernatural which had come under his own experience, and to write the anecdote down, and have them printed "for private circulation only". For obvious reasons I have, in most cases, preserved the real names, as some of the characters are still alive, and, I hope, may be for many years to come.

## CHAPTER I.

August, 1907.

We had arrived at the Lodge at Loch Grannoch. We, the usual quartet—George, and Jack, and Dick, and Cecil. And the usual weather came with us—torrents of rain! The optimistic forecast by Conacher was fulfilled to the letter; and Straiton and Watson wore sad expressions. In order to lead the Simple Life, we had arranged for "Donald " to cart up for us the accustomed simple viands, not forgetting such trifles as pate-de-foies-gras, peaches, pine-apple, potted char, a cold saddle of mutton and some of Dick's fine old brandy; in fact everything had been done to ensure a good ten days of "roughing it". Everything except the weather! No matter. After the simple evening meal, smoking began, and between the clouds the suggestion came,—Why should not each of us tell a little story of the most extraordinary experiences of his life—and *it must be true!* At first there came protests—chiefly from Dick, who vowed he had no talent to describe his experiences—but at last G., "pour encourager les autres" made a start.

"This story," he began (carefully lighting his tenth cigarette from the acetyline gas), "was told me by my old friend, the Rev. Crowcroft Ewart, who, at the time described, was a curate in Derbyshire. I will endeavour to tell it to you as near as possible in his own words, though it is years since I heard the tale from his own lips."

"It was a cold winter evening in the late '90's, and I was just settling down in my study to a quiet evening with a pipe and the Times—my dear old collie stretched on the hearthrug beside my chair—when a ring came at the front door, and my old landlady brought me a note summoning me to the bedside of a poor girl (who was, I knew, dying of consumption) in a village about seven miles off. There was, of course, nothing for it but to mount my bicycle and hurry off without delay. The night was dark, and it was bitterly cold and gusty, but the exercise warmed me and as my lamp burned bright, I had no difficulty in finding my way over a somewhat rough road and some very stiff and tiring hills. On reaching the cottage where my poor parishioner lay dying, I was gratefully welcomed by her mother, and taken promptly to the daughter's room, where I found I was, alas! only just in time to see the girl alive.

"By the sick woman's bedside was a little table, and on it a small vase containing a bunch of forget-me-nots. She begged me to take them, and her last words to me were, 'Pray be careful, sir, how you ride down the Ashbourne Hill.' These words I have reason to remember, as well as her pathetic little gift.

"My sad errand of consolation accomplished, and with a few words to the sorrow-stricken mother, I remounted my cycle, and set off at a good pace for home. The night was darker than ever, and, even by the light of my good lamp, I had difficulty in keeping in the road. Suddenly, on nearing Ashbourne, I became aware that I was being followed, and, by the sound, it was a bicycle that was pursuing me. I turned in my saddle to look back, but could see no light, and after a time I concluded it was merely imagination. But as I rode on the conviction grew stronger and stronger that a cyclist was close behind me. And so I continued my journey until I reached Ashbourne Hill; and here occurred the mystery that remains still, and ever will, the one incomprehensible mystery of my life. On descending the hill I became aware that a bicycle was by my *side*, and on it was seated a spirit-form, distinct yet indistinct, clear yet vague, outlined yet obscure. Almost at the same moment something seemed to lift me gently from my own bicycle and transfer me to the other—gently, tenderly, pathetically as it seemed—and then I remember no more until next morning my old landlady came to wake me, and with this strange greeting, 'Oh! sir, however did you get home last night? We sat up till 12, and you hadn't come, so I guessed you had stayed at the cottage you visited; but we never heard a sound all night, so how you got here, and are safe in bed, goodness only knows.' Then I remembered, but I only told my landlady in a few words that I was kept late.

"I rose and dressed, and sat down to breakfast; but on looking in the hall for my bicycle, which I always kept there, I *found no trace of it!* Before I finished breakfast I was told a man wanted to see me. He was shown in—a roadman who lived in a cottage near Ashbourne. 'Well,' I said, 'what do you wish to see me about?' 'Lor' bless you sir,' he exclaimed (and I noticed he looked pale and scared), 'I'm right glad to see ye at *all—alive* and well—and how you escaped from that awful accident is a mystery to all of us!' I asked him to explain, but all he could say was, 'You just come along o' me to Ashbourne Hill, and that'll explain!' And so I went with him, and half-way down the hill I saw my bicycle—a hopeless, shattered mass of scrap-iron.

"That was all;—no, not all: by the side of the machine was lying on the roadside a little bunch of forget-me-nots."

## CHAPTER II.

Cecil kindly volunteered to give us a wee story on our second evening, and we badly wanted something interesting to cheer us, as we had come in soaked, and with a very poor bag after a weary tramp over Craig Lowrie and Branyea. "Donald" got his head in at the door for a piece of sugar, the last slice of pine-apple had disappeared, the dogs had ceased to howl, and the midges were at rest, when Cecil, slowly lighting a moist cigar, began as follows:—

"Though we may not believe in the supernatural, some of the coincidences of life are indeed most extraordinary, and I trust you will think me justified in relating a singularly curious experience of my own.

"On a perfect summer day in June, 1904, I found myself cosily established in a first-class smoking carriage on that most comfortable of railways, the Great Western, on my way to spend a few days with Major Bernard at the manor house, Bradford-on-Avon.

"I was feeling on remarkably good terms with myself and the world generally, as I had recently received promotion in the Foreign Office with an increase of salary which, with my small private means, gave me at last a comfortable sufficiency, at any rate for a bachelor.

"I had, moreover, had some unusual luck at Ascot—a tenner on the winner of the Hunt Cup, starting at 20 to 1. But I had other reasons for exhilaration—my heart was in a state of flutter at the prospect of meeting Mrs Bernard. I first met her as Violet Coventry, eleven years ago, and at first sight had been madly infatuated by her beauty. For three years I lived only for her, my feelings had been reciprocated almost from the first, and we became desperately, hopelessly in love. We had both, however, the good sense to realize that marriage, without an assured income sufficient to maintain us in the ways of life we were used to, must be denied to us.

"After three years of this existence, I was attached to the Embassy at Constantinople for five years, during which time I avoided coming to England, and tried to cure myself of my infatuation; but to abstain from writing occasionally I found quite beyond me, and Violet's letters continued to be my chief pleasure in life. So the fire went smouldering on. One day, some two years after I had left England, I received a great blow—a letter from Violet announced her engagement to Capt. Victor Bernard, an old schoolfellow and friend of mine. I read between the lines that she was not in love with him, though fond of him, and had allowed herself to be influenced by her mother and friends. Victor Bernard, as I had known him at school and in the service, had been one of the best types of young Englishmen. He had served for many years in an Indian Cavalry Regiment and on the Indian Staff College. Unfortunately his health suffered greatly during an expedition in Assam, and he had been invalided home suffering from an abscess on the liver, which, though soon apparently cured on his return home, had doubtless sown the seeds of insidious disease. At the time of his engagement he had just succeeded to a nice little estate near Bradford bringing him in a clear £3000 a year.

"There were, however, other reasons known, I believe, to myself alone, outside his own immediate family circle, which made this engagement seem to me a fatal mistake, and made me inexpressibly sad. Victor Bernard had inherited the taint of hereditary insanity of a kind which in two instances had taken the form of homicidal mania. His great-grandfather had, in a fit of insane and groundless jealousy, stabbed his wife in her bedroom, where she had bled to death before assistance arrived. Victor had himself told me the story in our school days, how that her ghost was said to haunt the manor house, and the bloodstains still remained on the floor of his mother's room.

"However, I felt strangely excited at the prospect of this visit, which was perhaps enhanced by the knowledge that I was about to play with fire, and that strict obedience to the rules of wisdom and propriety would have kept me away.

"I will pass over the circumstances of my arrival and reception at the manor house. During a walk round the lovely old garden before dinner, Violet told me she had been much concerned about her husband's health during the last few months, and feared a recurrence of the old trouble—he at times gave way to most extraordinary fits of uncontrollable irritability and jealousy, and though generally most kind, gentle, and considerate, occasionally seemed to wish to prevent her from going about and seeing anybody. Occasionally, also he seemed greatly depressed, and during the last week had been suffering so much from insomnia that his doctor had prescribed sleeping draughts.

"Dinner passed off pleasantly enough—everything in the way of food was exactly right, and the champagne such as can only be supplied by a well-known firm in Pall Mall. Victor seemed quite his old self, gay and full of interest, but once during dinner I noticed a curious expression in his handsome grey eyes, a sudden gleam of malignant and cruel hatred lingering only for a moment, but it sent a chill right through me.

"As to Violet Bernard I cannot attempt any description of her, only I thought her more exquisitely lovely than ever, but sometimes there would come into her eyes an ineffably sad sweet look, telling of some hidden trouble. Ah, those eyes! Often and often as I have gazed into them I could not for the life of me tell you what colour they are—sometimes they seemed to me dark blue, sometimes hazel, or of a colour matching her delicious coppery brown hair.

"After smoking a cigar in the garden with me after dinner, Victor suddenly complained of a pain in his right side. Though it passed away in a short time, he was evidently unwell, and, following my advice, went to bed at about ten o'clock. Violet was much upset and anxious, and retired with him.

"An hour passed away, and I was sitting by the open window in the smoking-room, having put out the lights to get the beauty of the moonlight, enjoying a cigar, and the delicious fragrance of the exquisite June night, when I realized that I was drifting back to the old state of infatuation. I made no effort to check my thoughts, and I sank into a delightful reverie, half-hoping, inwardly praying, that Violet would come down and see me again.

"How long I sat there dreaming I do not know, but I was aroused by a light step approaching behind me, and the rustling of a silk dress. I sprang up, my heart leaping in expectation, and there stood Violet! We

gazed at each other for one moment, the moonlight shining through the open window full on her face. Neither of us spoke—there was no need—her wonderful eyes told me everything; she held out both her hands; I took them in mine, kissing them with frenzied eagerness, and then she threw herself into my arms, and, her lips on mine, poured out her whole soul to me. . . . The memory of those few moments is engraved on my heart as the absolute quintessence of exquisite, delicious happiness. Suddenly Violet seemed to be recalled to realities, and in half-alarm she freed herself from my arms, and glided away like some beautiful spirit of the night.

"Overcome with excitement, I closed the window and sank back into a large armchair near the fireplace, lit another cigar, and sat thinking and thinking, and trying to go through it all again in my mind.

"I had sat on in this pleasant dreamy state for perhaps nearly an hour, when I was startled by a crash, as of broken glass or crockery, proceeding from the room overhead; then a sharp, stifled cry, and a dull thud as of someone falling helplessly on the floor.

"In an instant it flashed on my mind that this was Violet's room. Something must have happened—my first instinct was to rush wildly to her. Then I remembered what Violet had told me, and I thought that after all it might only be some slight accident, and that I must on no account run any risk of compromising her. "I had flung myself down in a chair to try and think clearly what I could do, when, happening to look up at the ceiling, I noticed a dark stain forming in the junction of two cracks in the plastering immediately over me. Judge of my horror, when a second afterwards, something fell with a heavy splash right on my forehead. My God! it was blood. Blood! Her blood! I sprang up in horror. In an instant I became possessed with the horrible conviction that Victor had woken unexpectedly after his sleeping draught, had discovered our intrigue, and in a wild burst of uncontrollable, mad, jealousy, had stabbed her, just as his great-grandfather had stabbed his wife nearly a hundred years ago in the very same room. Sick with fear, I made up my mind to rush upstairs and ascertain the worst, when I became suddenly transfixed with horror, my limbs refused to act, my tongue clung to the roof of my mouth, and great beads of cold sweat trickled down my face—there glided in at the door a tall, ghost-like figure, draped in white (its features I could not distinguish, for a cloud happened to pass over the moon at that moment). Slowly raising its right arm, it pointed to the dark spot on the ceiling, uttered a yell of demoniac laughter, which will ring in my ears till I die, and then slowly, mysteriously vanished from the room.

"I had never before been a victim of physical fear, but I frankly confess that I stood for some seconds as one paralysed, my limbs trembling and absolutely unable to act. At last, with a sudden effort of will-power, I staggered to the door, and thence to the foot of the staircase leading out of the hall, just in time to see the ghost form disappearing on the first landing. I remember sinking down in a state of nervous collapse on the lower steps, and being aroused shortly afterwards by a rush of footsteps on the landing above. Then Julie, Violet's maid, came rushing down the stairs in wild excitement, and implored me to run for the doctor—her mistress had dropped a glass water-bottle on her washing-stand, and a broken fragment had fallen on her foot, cutting an artery severely, and causing great loss of blood. Her mistress had swooned away, but had now recovered consciousness. The loss of blood had been great, and she was in a very weak state. I had sufficient sense and dignity left to restrain myself from yelling with delight and from embracing Julie, and I am perfectly certain that no one before or after has ever covered the distance from the manor house to the doctor's in Bradford in less time than I did that night.

"The apparition I had seen in the smoking-room troubled me no more—Violet was safe! She told me two days afterwards that Victor frequently walked in his sleep, and that twice she had seen him come into her room and point at a certain spot on the floor, and laugh in an uncanny way.

"Poor Victor! His health grew worse from that time, and two years ago he died. I was with him at the end, and his last words to me were— 'Be good to Violet.' Such is the tragedy of life!

"Violet and I never married. Shortly after her husband's death she entered the Convent of the Sacred Heart near Windsor, and I am the husband of another!"

"I afterwards discovered that this weird event happened on the identical date of the murder of 20th, 1807. Truth is indeed stranger than fiction!"

### CHAPTER III.

It was Dick's turn this evening to relate his experiences, and we were all looking forward to something startling, and quite keen to finish our simple meal, light our pipes, and settle down. We had returned from a hard day on the top of Craig Ronald, and nothing but the prospect of an interesting story would have kept us awake. After Conacher had removed the remains of our simple repast, we lit up, and Dick began:-

"Of course you fellows have all heard of Jack Heavy-side, who was the master of the Bramsty Hounds so many years. Well, anyhow, he is a very old pal of mine, and we have been fast friend<sup>30</sup>for 30 years. Dear old Jack, 'the Hairpin' as he has always been called, because his legs are so long and thin, and the ladies all love him; no better fellow ever lived, and I verily believe no finer horseman. Brave as a lion and true as steel, no one ever had a better friend. Many are the good days hunting we have had together, and my annual visits to him have afforded me some of the brightest days of my life. Well, it was in the month of December, 1898, that I went to stay with him in Selbyshire for my usual fortnight, and the weather being open, I looked forward to a merry and a sporting time. And here, to digress for a while. At the beginning of the 19th century there lived in that part of Selbyshire, now hunted over by the Bramsty Hounds, a yeoman farmer, one James Paddlewick, a fine man and a good fellow he must have been if all the stories handed down concerning him are true. At any rate it is well known that he was a fine sportsman, and, like many another good farmer in that country, dearly loved fox-hunting, and would no doubt have echoed the sentiments of Mr Jorrocks, that all days not spent in hunting the fox were wasted. He lived in that fine old house at Pembury-on-the-Hill, red brick with stone facings, that, with the spire of Pembury church its near neighbour, forms a good landmark from the surrounding country. In those days the Bramsty was a trencher-fed pack, and supporters of the hunt, like James Paddlewick, would arrive at the meet with their 1, 2, or 3 couple of hounds, and take them home again when the day's sport was over. A keen man to hounds was James, and a bold rider, and I have no doubt he took care to have one or two of the sort that can gallop and jump, and land him safely back at Penbury when it was all over. Now the story goes that it was at the end of a day's hunting that old James as he is always spoken of, for it is recorded, as you will see later on, that he was then in the 60's, having collected his two couple of hounds, set off to ride home about four o'clock on a February afternoon. It appears that he had some fourteen miles to go, allowing for short cuts, of which, needless to say, he knew everyone in the country. He had passed Haycock farm, and was skirting the wood, which, if you look in a map of Selbyshire, you will find described as Haycock Beeches, but which is locally known as Paddlewick Wood, when one of the hounds that had been trotting leisurely along at his horse's heels suddenly made a dive into the corner of the, wood, and immediately gave tongue. Before James realised what had happened, the other three hounds, regardless of his rating, followed suit, and in less time than it takes to tell it, James saw his two couple of hounds streaming away in full cry, with one of the 'biggest foxes wotever was seen' leading them by about a hundred yards. The light was failing fast, and the fox's point was evidently not for Pembury, so what could James do but sit down and ride in the hope that a check might afford him a chance to stop his hounds. But no, away they went, and ride he must, and ride no doubt he did, but (and here the story of James Paddlewick ends) he did not reach the old house on the hill that night. His housekeeper (for he was a bachelor) having become frightened when her old master did not return, had gone out to find the shepherd, whose cottage was hard by, and together they sat throughout the night listening anxiously for any sound that might announce the old farmer's approach. Just as day was breaking, his favourite old hound, Mermaid, came sniffing at the kitchen door, and when Bob Bell, the shepherd, went. to meet her it is said he saw a look in her eye which convinced him that some catastrophe had overtaken his and her master. It was after a search of many hours, in which all the farm hands and many neighbours were engaged, that near the brook that runs by Delbury Dingle were found side by side the dead bodies of James Paddlewick and his horse `Turpin', the broken rail in the fence by the brook telling the tale. Such was the legend of James Paddlewick.

"And now I return to my visit of 1898 to my old friend, 'Hairpin' Heavyside. I remember well it was Christmas Eve, and the Bramsty were to meet at Riccarton Guide Post, a favourite meet with those hounds. The day was soft and mild and felt like hunting, and with two good horses provided for me by my excellent host, I had nothing left to desire but a straight-necked fox and a holding scent. The morning work was uneventful, and it was about 2.30 when we trotted off to draw Paddlewick wood. Jack and I were together, and he was just telling me of a good gallop he had had from the same covert three or four weeks earlier in the season when we reached the little hand-gate leading into the wood. Charlie, the second whip, had been sent on to the far side of the wood (which was about ten acres in extent), on the Pembury side. And now Jack threw his hounds into the covert with a cheer, and we

hoped for the best. We had not been more than two or three minutes in the covert when the hounds made a sudden dash forward in the direction of the point where Charlie was posted, and a moment later we realised that they had gone. No hound had spoken, and, with a face of almost pathetic astonishment, Jack half-turned in his saddle and said, 'Come along, Dick, I believe they're away.' We galloped down the ride, and out at the gate at the far end where was Charlie. 'Where are they?' says Jack. 'Yonder they be, sir,' sings out Charlie, pointing in the direction of Pembury. 'Well, why didn't you holloa when you viewed him away?' Never saw no fox sir,' was Charlie's reply. Well, 'yonder,' indeed, they went, the whole pack two fields ahead, and the pastures there are wide. Jack blows his horn, and away we go. And we did have to ride, and no mistake. I won't stop to describe the run, which would require the pen of a Whyte Melville to do it justice,- enough to say that we reached the end safely, and it is the finish of this wonderful hunt that connects it with the story of James Paddlewick's death. Ten miles from the wood where we found, or were supposed to have found, our fox, we crawled with deadbeat horses up the ascent to Pembury farm; through the fold-yard, and across the road, and there in the churchyard the hounds had checked at last. Getting off our horses, Jack and I got over the churchyard wall, but nowhere could we find any place in which our fox could have found a haven of safety. At last an old hound gave one long-drawn note, and, turning to where the sound proceeded from, we found old Mermaid, namesake of James Paddlewick's favourite, sitting on a very ancient-looking grave. I looked at the stone at its head, and there read -'Here lies James Paddlewick, of this parish. Killed by a fall out hunting, February 9th, 1842, aged 65. Erected by his friends to a kind friend and a true sportsman.' That fox was never viewed away from Paddlewick Wood."

## CHAPTER IV.

This was our last night at Grannoch, and Jack was to give us his "strange experience." Dinner was a little late, and as Cecil's anecdote on our second night had kept us up till nearly two, we were rather hopeful Jack would condense his experience into a smaller space. Our beat had been round Loch Skerrow, and the grouse were a little kinder to us, so we were in better spirits, and there was scarcely any grumbling at the absence of caviare and ortolans from our menu. It was nearly ten when Jack, attired in faultless evening dress, and armed with a potent trichinopoli, took up his parable and said: -

"As these stories have got to be true experiences, I cannot probably do better than relate a curious fishing adventure I had last year. After an unusual stress of hard and anxious work, I was feeling rather run down, and gladly accepted G.'s invitation to stop at Loch Grannoch Lodge for a week before the shooting season commenced.

"I already pictured to myself a lizard-life on the rocks, by the silver sands of the loch—occasionally taking my rod for a cast in the burn, loch, or river, and returning to a simple meal, and then a refreshing sleep in the hut at the foot of Craig Ronald, watched over by ten million stars.

"It was on a Friday afternoon, after a rainstorm, of unusual severity, with a somewhat fiery feeling still in the air, that I felt an impulse, sudden but distinct, to betake me to the swollen waters of the Fleet, and try for a sea-trout before the boiling torrents had stilled to purling streams and quiet flows. As I expected, there was not a fish moving, and I was just going to take my rod down, and set my face homewards, when I thought there would just be time to try the big deep pool above the roughs and rapids called 'Maggie's Wae'. Hardly had I cast to the tail of the pool when I 'was into' a big fish—bigger than I cared to handle with my single-handed rod. But did ever anyone see such a fish? Without any of the usual rush and leap, he simply bored away until he dragged me to the end of the pool, and lay there—just like a dog tugging to get out of his collar. Evening was coming on, and I was beginning to get anxious, when, all of a sudden, the big fish fairly rushed the shallows, and was away through the fall. Trying to follow him, I, unluckily, slipped and fell headlong, twisting my ankle badly, and receiving a severe contusion at the base of my skull.

"I was in too great pain to heed further about securing my fish, and could only drag myself into a recumbent position, and wonder what had become of rod, fish, and line. Gazing down into the pool, I thought, I saw my rod floating, and most certainly—just beyond—I saw a hand raised above the water, as if beckoning me on, and I noticed that on the first finger was a silver ring. Hardly believing my senses, I continued to look, and again I saw the hand waving. Almost immediately, I suppose, I must have lost consciousness from the pain of my wounds, for I remember nothing more until I came-to, and finding it was almost dark, I made my way home as best I could.

"Next morning Straiton went off early and secured my rod which he found in Maggie's Pool — no fish, of course, but caught on the dropper fly was—a silver ring! The device was a heart held by a band with hands clasped, and surmounted by a crown, and on the heart could just be recognised the initials A. and M. I learnt, on enquiry, that many years ago poor Maggie Murchison, of Cullendoch, was promised to a sailor-lad named Andrew Black, of Portpatrick, but he was lost at sea within a year of his engagement, and Maggie had the misfortune to drop his ring one day, while washing clothes in the Fleet. After Andrew's death she seemed to care for nothing but haunting the river, and one day after a very bad storm a herd from Orchars found poor Maggie's body in that very pool.

"I sent the ring next day to her father, old Robert Murchison, who had a wee shop on the Newton-Stewart road, near Murray's Monument. He could sometimes, after a wee drappie, be induced to tell this story and to show the ring, and some of the visitors (mostly anglers) have tried to buy the ring, but the old fellow never would part with it for any consideration.

"This year I went early in August to stay at the new hotel at Clatteringshaws, and I was hoping for a 'crack' with the old man, but I heard, to my deep regret, he had died quite recently. Lately, they told me, he had a fancy to wear Andrew and Maggie's ring, and it was buried with him in Barskeoch Kirkyard. Curiously enough I have a ring myself of the similar design, formerly belonging to a friend who died in the Transvaal, also in the month of August."

## CHAPTER V.

One day, as we were finishing our smoke after lunch at that wonderful spring near Loch Fleet, we asked Straiton if he had ever come across a supernatural incident in his life, and he told us the following story:—

"It was in the spring of 1890 that I was ordered by the doctor to take a change of air. I had been wet through every day for about three months, and was beginning to be very rheumatic, so I took the doctor's advice, and started off to pay a long-promised visit to my old friend, McMichael, who lived in Liverpool. My host and his wife met me at the station, and we drove in a cab to their house, a cosy little residence near the Walker Art Gallery. We reached the house in a few minutes, and an excellent supper was soon spread before us; after which we sat in the parlour, and a very pleasant evening we passed, chatting of old times and of days spent in Galloway among the bracken and heather\* Just before we went to bed, McMichael said to me, 'Look here, Andry, I don't for a moment suppose you are so foolish as to believe in ghosts, but my missus says I am bound to tell you there is a silly story about a ghost in this house, and the room you are to sleep in is said to be *the* haunted room. However, I can assure you no one that I know has ever seen the ghost, and no one is ever likely to. I fancy the story was invented by a former tenant just to get the place cheap and to keep people away from the house, and possibly prejudice any other person against it. His tale was that the ghost took the form of a spirit hand, leading by a luminous chain a dog of the setter breed. And now you know all I know of the foolish talk, and I am sure you will take no heed of it, and just sleep like a top till morning. Good night, Andry!"

"Without thinking more about it, I went up the stairs, entered my bedroom, undressed, and turned in to bed. It was just then eleven o'clock, and it was not many minutes till I fell sound asleep. Now, I am not a nervous man, nor at all imaginative, but I began dreaming about a certain favourite setter called Togo, whom, on this occasion, I had left at home at Gatehouse. My only interest in McMichael's story had been slightly increased by the fact that his ghost-dog was of that particular breed. Beyond that I had paid little heed to his absurd story. How long I slept I do not know, but the light of early morning was stealing through my window when I distinctly heard the sound of a slight scratching outside my door. At first I took no notice, but the noise grew louder and more persistent, and was followed by a little soft, plaintive howling, so I got up, opened my door, and what do you think I saw? Well, of course, you can easily guess! There stood Togo, and to his collar was attached a bright new chain! How he had got to Liverpool is a mystery, and has never yet been explained, but I assure you, gentlemen, it's a fact. Eh? No, I didn't see the spirit-hand! . . . (A pause.) I think very likely we shall have showers to-morrow!"

## CHAPTER VI

"I think I ought to tell you," said Conacher one night (after bringing in the barleywater and lemonade), "that a very strange and apparently supernatural apparition appears to me every evening at the Lodge before you gentlemen come in from the shooting. It has occurred each night since we came here, but I have refrained from telling you, partly because I feared it might be a mere delusion, and partly lest you might laugh at me, or think I was inventing a story. The facts are these. Every night when I go to lay the cloth in the wee dining-room, as I enter the door I notice a dim vapour enveloping the whole apartment, something like smoke but more transparent, and when my eyes get used to the dim light I can make out sitting round the table 4 old gentlemen, whom, from their appearance, I take to be ministers of the Scottish Kirk. Sturdy, grey-bearded men they are, of the old robust type, such as , our fathers described to us as presiding over the kirks at Minnigaff, Kirkcowan, and Girthon. Hale old fellows with rosy faces and benevolent expressions. There they sit every evening, but ne'er a word do they speak. On the table are four glasses and a whisky bottle (which, (Heaven knows) *I* never placed there), and now one of them slowly raises the bottle and pours about half-a-tumblerful into each glass! Each in turn bows his shaggy head, and a smile comes over each rugged face. Glasses are raised and emptied, and still no word is uttered. Only the same bowing of the head, the same happy smile. And so it goes on until the bottle is empty. Then there is a pause—but only for a few seconds, when, to my astonishment, the empty bottle is removed by some unseen agency, and a fresh one—full—is placed on the table. The same procedure again takes place, and now occurs the strangest part of all, for, taking my courage in my hands, I approach the table and quietly place upon it a jug of pure spring water, which Mr Richards always prefers for his evening meal. In an instant the forms disappear—vanish into space—no trace is left. Ministers, whisky, tumblers, all vanish into thin air, and nothing remains but the jug of water, and the only sound is the faint humming of the ever present midges. At first I confess I was strangely moved, and a bit scared by this uncanny sight, but now I am quite used to it, and should miss the faces of the fine old fellows, if they ceased to appear at their wonted hour."

## CHAPTER VII.

"My most remarkable experience of late years," said Watson, "was in connection with a Reeve pheasant which I had at Tintum. A stranger beast I never saw, and I don't think even Forsyth or Tom Tate can cap my story—not if they speak the truth. Well, this bird at an early age showed signs of being something out of the common, and developed such a queer temper that at times he was almost unapproachable, unless you wanted both your eyes picked out, or an ugly scratch across your nose. At other times he would come and walk beside me just like a dog, and accompany me to the village or Parton House for a stroll, just like any pet or companion. I have known him attack tramps on the road, drive tinkers away, and he was a source of genuine terror to the village bairns if they came too near him, or tried to play pranks with him. A lady who opened her parasol at him one day got a fine fright for her pains, and the most of her skirt torn off her. He would often come into the kitchen, and sit in an armchair while we took our supper, just like any sensible body, and would eat out of my missus' hand like a parrot. In fact he went everywhere, except to kirk—I never saw him there—and I don't think he ever got as far as the Castle-Douglas Market; but I have seen him chase a collie over Glengunzeoch as far as Craichie, and I've known him wandering off to Airds to have a wee crack with Martin in the good old days. A more curious beast you never knew. Well, he lived a good long life, but the end had to come, and he died last year at a ripe old age, and his stuffed body can be seen in the billiard room at Parton House: but his soul still haunts the Tintum woods, and many and many a night Bob, or Adam, or I can see his spirit form stalking about the slate quarry when the moon is up and the other world is beginning to awake."

## CHAPTER VIII.

Next day it was again too wild to shoot so two of us went off in the boat to try a drift past the "fisher's stane", with Bob Candlish rowing. During an interval of calm, we reeled up our lines, and induced our sturdy boatman to tell us the story of his one and only supernatural experience.



## BOB CANDLISH'S STORY

"My story is not a long one, but it's true. When up at Loch Grannoch a few years ago I started off one day rather late in the evening to walk down with the letters to Dromore Station. It had been raining all day, and was a coarse evening when I left the lodge. However, away I went, at my usual pace (of about 7 miles an hour), and had just passed the top of the Cleugh, where stands the white granite monument erected to the memory of Maggie, the old white pony which had died (aged 30) the previous year, when suddenly I heard the sound of a pony's tread just behind me. I turned to see what it was, and there, coming towards me, was Maggie herself—there was no mistaking her. I stood still, and think I may have called to her, but she came straight on in the middle of the roadway, and I almost remember supposing she must be blind and unable to see me. The bank on the left of the path going down the Cleugh falls away steeply and suddenly, as you know, and far below is the bed of some old torrent that must once have formed the outflow from Loch Grannoch. I remember no more till I opened my eyes in the big room of the wooden house at the Lodge some two days later, and found the doctor from Gatehouse at my side. It appears that when I did not return, and no news could be had of me from Dromore, a search was made, and it was not till the early morning of the second day that my body was found at the bottom of the old torrent-bed. My life was at first despaired of, but after some hours I showed signs of returning consciousness, and it was about five o'clock in the afternoon - 48 hours since I had set out - that I at last opened my eyes. Then it was discovered that my left hand was tightly closed, and only after some hours, as the numbness relaxed, did the doctor succeed in opening it. It was found to contain a bunch of white hair from a pony's back."

### FINIS.

Our time at Grannoch has come to an end, as all good things must. "Donald" is away down the Cleugh with all our bits of things. Bob, Clark, McTaggart and Henry are off with the dogs; and Conacher follows with Mrs Straiton. We saunter slowly down, looking back, at Maggie's Monument, for a last glimpse at the Loch, its silver sand, and the wee lodge nestling among the pine trees, and wonder when we shall be back again. An old cock-grouse jeers at us from Craig Ronald, a little wren sings us "au revoir" from the fir-boughs, and a gentle shower trickles over us to remind us that we are still in Galloway, and not mere outcasts from Paradise.