

busied about others of whom they had hope. He lay on his back, breathing very hard, but perfectly insensible; and in the middle of his forehead there was a round little hole without so much as a speck of blood about it, where a musket-bullet had passed through his brain. He continued to breathe for about two hours; and when he expired I wrapped the body decently up in a hammock, and saw it committed to the deep. The years passed; and, after looking death in the face in many a storm and many a battle, peace was proclaimed, and I returned to my friends and my country.

“A few weeks after my arrival, an elderly Highland woman, who had travelled all the way from the further side of Loch Shin to see me, came to our door. She was the mother of Donald Gair, and had taken her melancholy journey to hear from me all she might regarding the last moments and death of her son. She had no English, and I had not Gaelic enough to converse with her; but my mother, who had received her with a sympathy all the deeper from the thought that her own son might have been now in Donald's place, served as our interpreter. She was strangely inquisitive, though the little she heard served only to increase her grief; and you may believe it was not much I could find heart to tell her; for what was there in the circumstances of my comrade's death to afford pleasure to his mother? And so I waived her questions regarding his wound and his burial as best I could.

“‘Ah,’ said the poor woman to my mother, ‘he need not be afraid to tell me all. I know too, too well that my Donald's body was thrown into the sea; I knew of it long ere it happened; and I have long tried to reconcile my mind to it, tried when he was a boy even; and so you need not be afraid to tell me now.’