

J. EWING RITCHIE



***THE CRUISE
OF THE ELENA;
OR, YACHTING
IN THE HEBRIDES***

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The Cruise of the Elena; Or, Yachting in the Hebrides

**Enriched edition. A Victorian Voyage Through
Scotland's Island Landscapes, Maritime Culture, and
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Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Nolan Taylor

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YACHTING IN THE HEBRIDES**

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MIDLAND RAILWAY.

CHAPTER I.

OFF FOR GREENOCK.

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The late—I had almost written the last—Imperial ruler of France was wont to say—indeed, it was his favourite maxim —“Everything comes to him who waits.” It was not exactly true in his case. Just as he was to have placed himself at the head of his followers, and make his reappearance in France, and to have effaced the recollections of Sedan[1], Death, who waits for no one, who comes at the appointed time to all, put a stop to his career. Nevertheless, the saying is more or less true, and especially as regards my appearance on board the *Elena*. Whether my great great grandfather was a Viking or no, I am unable to say; all I know is, from my youth upwards I have longed for a yacht in which I could cruise at my own sweet will. I am no great hand at singing, but when I do sing it is always of a

“Life on the ocean wave[1q],
A home on the rolling deep[2q].”

And thus it happened that, when an invitation was sent to me, just as I was on the point of giving up the ghost, in consequence of the heat of a London summer, to leave Fleet Street, and cruise among the Western Islands of Scotland, I accepted it, as the reader may well suppose, at once.

It is somewhat of a journey by the Midland night express from London to Greenock; but the journey is one well worth taking, even if, as in my case, you do not get a Pullman

car[2], as that had been already filled, and was booked full, so the ticket manager said, for at any rate twelve days in advance. It is really interesting to see that express start. "It is an uncommon fine sight," said a man to me the other night, as he lit his pipe at the St. Pancras Station. "I always come here when I've done work; it is cheaper than a public-house." And so it is, and far better in awakening the intellect or stimulating the life. It is true I did not see the express start, as I happened to be in it; but I had another and a greater pleasure—that of being whirled along the country, from one great city or hive of industry to another, till I found myself early in the morning looking down from the heights of Greenock on the busy Clyde below. It was a grand panorama, not easily to be forgotten. All at once it opens on you, and you enjoy the view all the more as it comes in so unexpected a manner.

Let me pause, and say a good word for the line that bears me swiftly and safely and pleasantly on[3q].

The story of railway enterprise as connected with the Midland Railway has been told in a very bulky volume by Mr. J. Williams. I learn from it that forty years have elapsed since, originating in the necessity of a few coal-owners, it has gradually stretched out its iron arms till its ramifications are to be found in all parts of the land. Actually, up to the present time it has involved an expenditure of fifty millions, and its annual revenue reaches five. Daily—hourly, it rushes, with its heavy load of tourists, or holiday-makers, or men of business, past the ancient manor-houses of Wingfield, Haddon, and Rousbery; the abbeys of St. Albans, Leicester, Newstead, Kirkstall, Beauchief, and Evesham; the