

INTRODUCTION.

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THIS book has been prepared and is published with the view of making more widely known the attractions of Stirling and its neighbourhood for the tourist and the visitor, and the advantages of the town as a place of permanent residence.

Accessibility.—Situated, as Stirling is, almost in the centre of Scotland, and in the direct line of communication between south and north, all the great railway systems may be said to converge at and pass through it. The Caledonian and North British Railways connect it with Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Perth, and, through those cities, with England and with the extreme north of Scotland. The east-going section of the North British communicates with Dunfermline, St. Andrews, and all the interesting parts of the "Kingdom of Fife," as well as, by the Forth Bridge, with Edinburgh, and, by the Tay Bridge, with Dundee, and joins the East Coast lines to Aberdeen. The Forth and Clyde line connects the town with Aberfoyle and Loch Lomond, and the West Highlands generally; while the Callander and Oban Railway takes the visitor to the romantic scenery of the Trossachs, Loch Earn, Loch Tay, Loch Awe, and on to Oban—the centre for exploring the Western Highlands and Islands. The distance of the town from Glasgow is 29 miles, from Edinburgh 36, from Loch Lomond 30, and from Oban 84 miles.

Beauty of Scenery.—Thus readily accessible from all quarters, Stirling is in itself well worthy of the attention of the visitor, from the beauty of the scenery and the historical interest of the town and neighbourhood, as well as for the facilities—unequalled in Scotland—which it affords for visiting spots of picturesque and romantic beauty, and places celebrated in the history, legends, and literature of the country. It is not necessary to dwell at length on the magnificent landscape which spreads before the visitor to "the Rock" of Stirling. Every traveller has felt "the endless charm of this wonderful scene," and many have described it in language more or less enthusiastic. This is how it is celebrated by the gentle essayist and poet, Alexander Smith:—"Eastward," he says, "from the Castle ramparts stretches a great plain bounded on either side by mountains, and before you the vast fertility dies into distance flat as the ocean when winds are asleep. It is through this plain that the

the Culdees—are all within a short distance and connected with the town by cars or other conveyance. The beautiful glens of the Ochils—Menstrie and Alva Glens, Castle Campbell Glen, Glen Devon, with the Rumbling Bridge and the Caldron Linn—are accessible by rail, and, on certain days of the week, by coach, and, besides their romantic beauty, are interesting to the botanist and geologist. A journey of sixteen miles, by rail or coach, opens up the quiet beauties of the Lake of Menteith and sweet Inchmahome. Another journey of twenty-one miles will take the visitor to Aberfoyle and Loch Ard to vivify his conceptions of the bold Rob Roy and the redoubtable Bailie Nicol Jarvie. Sixteen miles by rail and eight by coach takes him, through the whole scenery of the “Lady of the Lake,” to the Trossachs and Loch Katrine, and Loch Lomond may be reached either this way or by taking another day and travelling by Forth and Clyde Railway to Balloch, and thence sailing up the whole glorious stretch of the lake. Other places easily reached in a day from Stirling are Strathyre and Balquhider (with Rob Roy’s grave), Loch Earn, Killin, and Loch Tay, and all the places of interest along the line to Oban. The historical student can readily visit, besides the battlefields that have been already mentioned, those of Sheriffmuir, Falkirk, and Kilsyth; while the antiquarian will find material for study and research in the Wall of Antoninus and the Roman Camps at Ardoch. These places of interest are mentioned merely by way of sample. There are many others which, if the visitor stays for some time, he will have no difficulty in discovering for himself.

Residential Advantages.—As a place of permanent residence, Stirling has advantages which few provincial towns possess. Its proximity and easy access to Edinburgh and Glasgow keep it in close contact with the life of these cities; while, at the same time, it is in a remarkable degree self-contained. Supplies of every kind can be had from the numerous and enterprising business establishments in the town, which vie with those of the cities in the amplitude and excellence of their stores. Villa and other residences—many of them charming in situation and pleasing in architecture—abound, and fine sites for building are available. The water supply is abundant and of the best quality. The salubrity of the climate has long been recognised. The western mountain-barriers drain the clouds from the Atlantic of their moisture, while the east wind has lost much of its sting before reaching the town. The rock on which Stirling is built breaks up the breezes from all quarters, and causes a free circulation of air all round. Few places, or none, in the British Islands can be found where the mortality from consumption is lower.

Forth has drawn her glittering coils—a silvery entanglement of loops and links—a watery labyrinth—which Macneil has sung in no ignoble numbers, and which every summer the whole world flocks to see. Turn round, look in the opposite direction, and the aspect of the country has entirely changed. It undulates like a rolling sea. Heights swell up into the blackness of pines, and then sink away into valleys of fertile green. At your feet the Bridge of Allan sleeps in azure smoke—the most fashionable of all the Scottish spas—wherein, by hundreds of invalids, the last new novel is being diligently perused. Beyond are the classic woods of Keir; and ten miles further, what see you? A multitude of blue mountains climbing the heavens! The heart leaps up to greet them—the ramparts of the land of romance, from the mouths of whose glens broke of old the foray of the freebooter, and, with a chief in front with banner and pibroch in the wind, the terror of the Highland war. Stirling, like a huge brooch, clasps Highlands and Lowlands together.”

Historic and Antiquarian Interest.—Of the wealth of interest in and about the town for the enquirer into national, local, and social history, for the student of old Scottish ecclesiastical, domestic, and street architecture, and for the investigator into the past generally, the papers in this book will serve to give some idea. They are far, however, from exhausting that interest. In a book—prepared in the manner and for the purposes which have ruled the preparation of this one—it is obviously inadvisable to attempt to discuss, at the length which their importance requires, all the topics of interest which gather round the town and its ancient buildings, and impossible even completely to indicate them. But enough may have been done and said to show the stranger and the dweller within the gates the abounding interest, of a historic and antiquarian character, with which the town overflows.

Places of Interest in the Vicinity.—And if the town itself is interesting, scarcely less so are numerous places which lie all around, within an easy day’s travel by rail, steamboat, and road. In fact, the tourist would do well to make Stirling his headquarters for some time, and from thence explore the many interesting scenes within his reach. He will find ample facilities. The hotels are numerous and excellent, or, if he prefers the retirement of private lodgings, these are easily procurable. Trains go in all directions, cars and ’buses cover the immediate neighbourhood, hiring is ample and moderate, and the roads are excellent for the cyclist or the sturdy pedestrian. Bannockburn, the Field of Sauchie, the Gillies Hill, Beaton’s Mill, Cambuskenneth Abbey, the Field of Stirling, the Wallace Tower, Bridge of Allan, and Dunblane—with its Cathedral and its memories of

The town also has a vigorous social life, and numerous organizations for religious, benevolent, educational, and recreative purposes. It has a fine picture gallery, free consulting library, and a most interesting and well-arranged local museum. Its schools take rank with the foremost in the country. The High School, a very ancient foundation, besides affording a classical and commercial education of the highest type, has completely equipped schools of Science and Art. The spacious King's Park gives an open recreation ground to all, where cricket, football, and other games may be freely played. In addition, the County Cricket Club has a fine playing ground at Williamfield, and the King's Park Football Club has its special grounds at Forthbank. The inevitable golf course is provided in the King's Park, and, although this course is laid out and upkeep by the Stirling Golf Club, it is free to all comers. A very vigorous Amateur Boating and Swimming Club practises on the Forth, which, from its smooth waters and freedom from shallows and other interruptions, is peculiarly adapted for this species of athletic exercise. Were these and many other advantages both for young and old better known—and it is the purpose of this Handbook to make them so—Stirling ought to become a still more favourite place of residence than it has been in the past.

The Articles and their Writers.—The articles in this book are the work of various writers. Each of these is believed to have special acquaintance with the subject or subjects on which he writes, and he alone is responsible for the statements and the style of his articles. The Committee who allotted the various subjects made it their endeavour to prevent as far as possible overlapping in the matter. But it is obvious that in a series of articles on related subjects, prepared as these have been by writers working each independently of the others, absolute freedom from overlapping was impossible to secure. If cases of it are observed by the reader, he will take this as the explanation.

It is not intended that this book should interfere with the ordinary guide books. Several excellent works of this kind are issued by various publishers in the town, and to these the reader is referred for more minute details and instructions for viewing the town and neighbourhood, which it does not enter into the purpose of this more general Handbook to supply.