

The Complete Scotland

STIRLING TO CALLANDER AND THE TROSSACHS.

THE busier route is by the Callander road, which from Stirling drives straight across the flat lands between the Forth and the Teith, turning right at Kincardine (6 miles) for Doune. More interesting is the road crossing Stirling Bridge and turning to left at Causewayhead, close to the lofty Wallace Monument. This also is the route of the L.M.S. Railway. **Bridge of Allan** (3 miles) is a deservedly popular resort on the southern slopes of a hill overlooking the Allan just above its junction with the Forth.

Distances. - Crieff, 18 m.; Perth, 30 m.; Stirling, 3 m.

Early Closing. - Wednesday

Hotels. - *Allan Water and Spa* (70 rooms; R & b., 11s. 6d.), *Lady of the Lake, Queen's* (12 rooms; R. & b., fr. 9s.), *Carmichael's* (temp.) (12 rooms; R. & b., 8s. 6d.).

Sports. - Golf, fishing (Allan Water for trout, grilse and salmon), bowls, tennis, boating, curling. *Games Meeting:* 1st Saturday in August.

The mountain views westward are lovely. The village came into prominence on account of its mineral springs - and recent re-equipment of the Pump Room and Baths has done much to enhance the reputation; but its modern fame is at least as much due to its position as a centre for excursions long and short. The grounds of Airthrey Castle and of Keir, both near at hand, are open on certain days and are worth seeing. Eastward are numerous fine rambles over the Ochil Hills.

At **Dunblane** (*see previous chapter*) the Callander road turns westward for **Doune**. On the left, as the village is approached, is *Doune Castle* (*admission, 6d.*), less famous (and consequently less besieged by visitors) than many in Scotland, but very interesting.

The Castle dates from the beginning of the fifteenth century and consists of two towers and a large court on a strong position between the *Teith* and the *Ardoch*, which unite their waters just below its walls. During the 1745 rising, the Castle was held by the adherents of Bonnie Prince Charlie, and among the prisoners confined here was John Home (author of *Douglas*), who made his escape by means of a rope of bedclothes. At other times the Castle served as a royal palace and state prison, and a number of historic personages have found more or less welcome security within its walls; but the modern interest of the Castle results largely from the thorough restoration of some of the apartments carried out during the last fifty years by the Earl of Moray, the Baron's Hall, the Banqueting Hall, the Kitchen and Queen Mary's Room affording very interesting glimpses into the habits of bygone days.

From Doune to Callander the road runs between the railway and the Teith, on the far side of which is *Lanrick Castle*. At the house of *Cambusmore*, passed just before the road crosses the Keltie Water, Sir Walter Scott spent some time collecting material for *The Lady of*

the Lake.

Callander.

Distances. - Glasgow, rail 45 m., road 35 m.; Stirling, 16 m.; Trossachs Pier, 10 m.; Lochearnhead, 13 m.

Hotels. - *Palace* (72 rooms; R. & b., fr. 10s. 6d.), *Dreadnought, Caledonian* (temp.) (24 rooms; R. & b., 8s. 6d.), *Lancaster Arms, Crown, Waverley*, and others.

Sports. - Golf (2s. 6d. day), tennis, bowls, angling (salmon and trout).

Proportionately to its population (less than 2,000) Callander has a greater number of hotels and boarding-houses than any other place in Scotland. It is, of course, the "jumping off" place for the celebrated Trossachs Tour, but it deserves attention also as a very good centre for road and rail excursions in all directions, being equally in touch with Edinburgh and Glasgow and the finest loch and mountain scenery. The town itself needs no description. As to the surrounding country, no Guide Book can compete with the glowing pictures in Scott's *Lady of the Lake*.

Apart from the Trossachs Tour the two principal excursions from Callander are the walk to the **Bracklinn Falls** and the ascent of Ben Ledi. The falls occur in the *Keltie*, rather more than a mile east of the town in a direct line. The route begins by a road which crosses the railway near the east end of the town, and thence one follows well-marked paths over a hillside covered with gorse and bracken and commanding good views. (The best views are from Beacon Craig, or Willoughby's Craig (1,100 feet), to which signposts point the way.) Where the river is spanned by a footbridge the water tumbles over a succession of huge sandstone blocks which form a rough natural staircase. The colouring is rich and all about is a profusion of mountain ash, oak and other trees.

Ben Ledi (2,873 feet) lies west of Callander, between the Trossachs road and the Lochearnhead highway. The ascent is not arduous, and the view from the top has that peculiar charm which characterizes the frontier heights of mountain districts. The easiest route is from Coilantogle Farm, 2½ miles from Callander (*see below*), whence the way over the heather and bracken slopes to the smooth green summit is obvious.

A more striking route leaves the Lochearnhead road nearly 3 miles from Callander, passing over the river by an iron bridge and over the railway by a level crossing. Ascend the track up the knoll on the left, bending to the right round the knoll, the top of which is crowned by a small cairn. Hence is a beautiful little view in both directions. Northwards the lower reach of Loch Lubnaig is seen, and southwards through the wooded dingle of the Leny Pass appear the Teith and Callander Bridge. The bridge continues to be a more or less prominent feature in the scene during the whole ascent.

The rocky escarpment of Ben Ledi itself now appears in front. Beneath it are a few yards of a winding track about a quarter of a mile ahead. Make for this track, and when you have climbed it, turn to the left so as to get on to the main ridge at the south end of the scarp and nearly a mile from the summit.

When once the ridge is gained, turn to the right and an easy grass-slope takes you to the top of the mountain.

The **view** is fine and varied. Callander Bridge is, perhaps, its most telling feature. Beyond it the windings of the Forth may be seen, with the Ochil range on their left. Nearer at hand are Doune Castle and Dunblane Cathedral. To the south-east is Arthur's Seat behind Edinburgh. In the north and west rises an endless billowy range of Highland hills. Ben Lomond displays by no means his most pleasing outline, being conspicuous by three small lumps. To the left of him Goat Fell, in Arran, may be discerned, and to the right of him the "Cobbler" somewhat resembles in profile a cat's head, the ears being prominent. Then farther north rise the two peaks of Ben Cruachan, some way apart as seen from here. Ben Nevis shows a curved outline terminated southwards by a peak, in the extreme distance and beyond the triangular-shaped summits of Ben More and Stobinian. The two last named, almost close at hand, are easily recognized by the V-shaped depression between them. Ben Lawers is the most prominent peak northwards, and to the right of it the outline of the Cairngorms cut the horizon.

The lochs visible are Lubnaig, Menteith, Vennachar, Achray, and the upper end of Katrine. Beyond Vennachar and Katrine respectively the tarns of Drunkie and Arklet are seen.

CALLANDER TO THE TROSSACHS.

One mile beyond Callander, at the old *Kilmahog Toll*, the Trossachs road leaves the main road and turns sharp to the left over the bridge, whence it curves to and crosses the railway.

A shorter route from Callander is by the road turning down to the left in the village. This passes the Palace Hotel, crosses the Teith and the main road about a mile west of Kilmahog bridge.

The first part of the route to the Trossachs from Callander owes more of its interest to Sir Walter Scott than to its own merits. Almost every house on the way is associated with the hunt described in *The Lady of the Lake*. Immediately after crossing the railway we have the farmhouse of *Bochastle* on the left. Here the pace began to tell decisively; the "tailing" had already commenced at Cambusmore on the other side of Callander:

"'Twere long to tell what steeds gave o'er,
As swept the hunt through Cambusmore;
What reins were tighten'd in despair,
When rose Ben Ledi's ridge in air;
Who flagg'd upon Bochastle's heath,
Who shunn'd to stem the flooded Teith."

At the foot of **Loch Vennachar** is, or rather was, *Coilantogle Ford*, where Roderick Dhu flung down his gage to FitzJames:

"See here all vantageless I stand,
Arm'd, like thyself, with single brand;
For this is Coilantogle Ford,
And thou must keep thee with thy sword."

Had the "Black" Roderick lived now, he would probably have chosen another spot for the dramatic episode herein described; otherwise his historian would have had to substitute for "Coilantogle Ford" "the great sluice of the Glasgow Waterworks," and to give this a poetic ring

would have puzzled even such an eminent word-painter as Sir Walter Scott. The sluice, however, terrible dissipater of romance as it is, has its advantage: it keeps back the water in and above Loch Vennachar against a drought.

The peculiar colour-charm which is more conspicuous in Perthshire than in any other Scottish county is nowhere more so than around Callander. Not only are the hill-sides all aglow with the light purple of the ling, but also the rocks, and consequently the roads, are deeply tinged with the same hue.

Loch Vennachar (the "Lake of the Fair Valley ") is pleasing without having any striking features. It is 4 miles long, and from a half to three-quarters of a mile wide. Beyond it is a charming view over Loch Achray to the Trossachs and Ben, Venue. Then comes a short descent to *Duncraggan*.

From the hamlet among the trees a short way east of Brig of Turk a rough road strikes to the right up *Glen Finglas*, by which the pedestrian may in 10 miles reach **Balquhiddier**, at the east end of Loch Voil, climbing to a height of 1,400 feet, and descending by *Glen Buckie*. After wet weather a formidable stream has to be waded about 2½ miles short of Balquhiddier. There is little or no track between the farmhouse of *Achnahard*, about 1½ miles up the glen, and that of *Bailemore*, 2 miles short of Balquhiddier. The intervening 6 miles will take from two to three hours.

Brig of Turk owes its fame to *The Lady of the Lake*.

The Trossachs.

Loch Achray, whose side the road now skirts, is one of the most charming little lakes in Scotland, when seen from its eastern end. At its head commences that unrivalled mingling of purple crag, silver-grey birch, oak-copse, and green herbage which we call the **Trossachs** (the "bristly country"). Ben Venue rising directly behind it, broken, rugged and precipitous, adds a grandeur to the scene far greater than its actual height (2,393 feet) would lead one to anticipate. It is, perhaps, the glossiest mountain in Scotland, rivalling in this respect, and even surpassing in richness of colour, the fells of the Coniston and Langdale portion of English Lakeland. Ben Venue is as different from the ordinary run of Scottish mountains as velvet is from calico.

At a bend of the road along the lake-side there is a fine point of view, from which Turner took one of his pictures, and a little farther we reach the *Trossachs Hotel* (80 rooms; *R. and b., fr. 11s. 6d.*).

WALKS THROUGH THE TROSSACHS.

(1) To the foot of **Loch Katrine**, and back by the **Pass of Achray** (3½ miles; about three hours). Proceed along the main road for nearly a mile, and 70 paces beyond the ninth milestone from Callander take a road to the left. In 1¼ miles this reaches the sluices, after crossing which (a) you return by a path to Achray Hotel, on the Aberfoyle road, or (b), taking a path to the right, you at once cross a foot-bridge and, turning up the hollow, join the path from Achray Hotel (*See earlier chapter*) to the **Pass of Bealach nam bo**, which is seen strewn

with boulders, and here and there a stunted tree, high up to the right. After a pleasant up-and-down walk of a mile or so, the stiff ascent begins. From the top, by climbing the little knolls on the right, you get a lovely view of Loch Katrine, with Ellen's Isle just below, the Trossachs, Ben A'an opposite, Lochs Achray and Vennachar, and a host of mountains.

Bealach nam bo ("Pass of the Cattle") is so called from the fact that the old "caterans," or cattle-rievers, used it as a pass through which to drive their stolen flocks and herds.

(2) By the **Old Trossachs** track to **Loch Katrine**, and back by the present road, 3¼ miles. Old track very sloppy after rain. Quit the main road a quarter of a mile beyond the hotel, opposite the divergence of the Aberfoyle road. After a good mile of up-and-down through woods you enter the road along the north side of Loch Katrine, by the side of a burn, a quarter of a mile beyond the steamer-pier.

(3) **Round Loch Achray**, re-entering main road just beyond the Brig of Turk, 4 miles (*see map*).

The following climbing excursions are also fully worth the time and exertion required by them: -

(1) **Sron Armilte** (1,187 feet), a commanding viewpoint just behind the *Trossachs Hotel*, one hour up-and-down. Go up the grounds on the east side of the hotel and pass to the right of an outhouse; then straight up.

(2) **Ben A'an** (about 1,500 feet, an hour's brisk walk to the top; splendid view). Cross the beck behind the hotel; follow up the stream for two minutes or so, and then bear to the left by a narrow path which soon begins to wind up steeply amongst the crags above the woods. The cone of the mountain soon appears ahead. When past the crags, bear right to the ridge, and follow its ups-and-downs until you get almost under the summit, which is gained by making a detour to the right round a gully. The view includes Loch Katrine, the Trossachs, and the surrounding mountains.

A descent may be made in the direction of the length of the loch, through at first deep heather, crossing two small burns, and dropping steeply into the north-shore road of Loch Katrine a little beyond the point at which it is opposite Ellen's Isle. Hence back to the hotel either by the present road, or the old Trossachs track (*see above*), entered a quarter of a mile short of the steamer-pier, 2½ miles. *N.B.* - In descending be careful to avoid the crags on the left.

(3) **Ben Venue** (2,393 feet; four to five hours up-and-down, a circular walk). Either (a) take the *Path of the Sluices* to the top of *Bealach nam bo* (*see above*), and thence follow a faint track that bears up the left towards the ridge; or (b), taking the reverse way, ascend by the ridge from Achray Hotel. The walking is up-and-down and rough, but the view of the three lochs and the fertile plain of the Forth beyond is very fine.

Trossachs to **Aberfoyle**, 7 miles (*see earlier chapter*).

From the *Trossachs Hotel* to the Steamboat Pier the road passes through the heart of the Trossachs, and by the road-side numerous itinerant pipers fill the air with reels to which more or less willing children dance - a feature with which one would gladly dispense. The distance is about a mile, and the country traversed is a rich copse wood dingle, which admits of little

distant view except the peak of *Ben A'an*, whose rocky crest rises to a height of 1,500 feet on the north. The Trossachs glen is best appreciated either out of season or early or late in the day, when one's admiration of the scenery is not interrupted by the heavy motor traffic or by the sight of young children forced to dance by the road-side. The pier and its surroundings are the very essence of rustic beauty. Here, indeed, "every prospect pleases" - and here, alas, man (or some men) earn the epithet "vile" for the manner in which they dispose of orange peel, tins and cartons. So abruptly do the purple crags rise out of the water, and so closely do the trees - birch, hazel, dwarf-oak, and others, that love to burrow their roots through the rocky chinks - grow to their edges, that even under a noontide sun deep shadows are cast on the still waters of the land-locked bay.

At the Pier-head are refreshment-rooms and a space for motor parking.

Rowing boats may be hired at the pier.

The road itself (pedestrians only) is continued along the northern shore of the lake, passing *Ellen's Isle* and the *Silver Strand*, the latter a mile beyond the pier. So far the tourist should certainly stroll. The entire route (about 8 miles in length) takes one to the farmstead of *Portnellan*, about a mile beyond that part of the lake which is opposite Stronachlachar. Here the road comes to an end. It may be possible to get ferried across to Stronachlachar; otherwise one must retrace the route or seek a way round the headwaters of the loch as it flows out of Glen Gyle. There is also a good walk up Glen Gyle and over the hills to Ardlui, at the head of Loch Lomond. The walk along the loch side admits of a fine view of Ben Venue, but otherwise nothing can be seen to greater advantage than from the steamer.

From Trossachs Pier steamers leave for Stronachlachar, towards the far end of Loch Katrine, about four times daily (*return fare, 4s. 6d.; cycles carried, but not cars or motor-cycles*).

The steamer usually passes to the right of **Ellen's Isle**, on the beach of which the "blighted tree," against which the Harper reclined, is still pointed out. For beauty of outline and delicacy of foliage - mainly birch - this island is certainly unsurpassed. Opposite is the **Silver Strand**, a promontory which has been made an island by the raising of the water. The *Goblin's Cave* (*Coire na Uruisgean*) and, above it, *Bealach nam bo*, "Pass of the Cattle" (*see above*), are seen well up the slope of Ben Venue. The mountain ahead, as we look up the lake, is *Stob a Choin*.

Loch Katrine is called by Scott "Loch Cateran," or the lake of the "robbers"; and the name, though less pleasing to the southern ear, is supported by others of similar import in the neighbourhood, *Bealach nam bo* (*see above*) to wit. If the tourist can throw himself back to the time when there was no road from Stronachlachar to Inversnaid, and "no mode of issuing from the Trossachs except by a sort of ladder composed of the branches of roots and trees," while of houses of entertainment the nearest and best was the clachan of Aberfoyle, he will realize the probable appropriateness of the name. The lake is 8 miles long and, on an average, three-quarters of a mile wide. The whole beauty is concentrated at the Trossachs end, the rest of it being singularly destitute of distinctive features, though it is surrounded by wild hills of considerable height. During the sail up it, Ben Lomond comes into view on the left, and, soon after, the Glasgow Waterworks, marked by a villa amid fir-trees, are passed on the same side.

The length of the aqueduct from the Loch to Glasgow is about 30 miles. The Thirlmere aqueduct to Manchester is 95 miles long; the Lake Vyrnwy to Liverpool, 67 miles; the Rhayader to Birmingham, 73 miles. In addition to Loch Katrine, the waters of the enlarged Loch Arklet (*see below*) are also requisitioned.

The steamer stops at **Stronachlachar** ("the Stone-mason's Point"), 2 miles short of the head of the loch. (*Note*; there is no longer a hotel at Stronachlachar.) From this point coaches convey the passengers through **Glen Arklet** to **Inversnaid**, a distance of 5 miles - one of the few remaining routes where the old-fashioned horse-coach is retained. There is usually time to walk, however, as there is generally nearly two hours between the arrival at Stronachlachar and the departure from Inversnaid. Loch Katrine being 364 feet above the sea, and the highest part of Loch Arklet scarcely 500, the climb is very slight, but at the far end of Glen Arklet there is a sharp descent to Loch Lomond, which is only 23 feet above the sea: this part of the route is by far the most interesting, as the Arklet cascades down a pretty glen beside the road, and in front the view across the water and up the Inveruglas glen, with Ben Ime at its head, is very charming. The view in front is also the chief feature of the journey alongside Loch Arklet, on the southern shores of which Rob Roy's wife, Helen MacGregor, is said to have been born. At the western end of the glen is a small clachan: the farmstead known as *The Garrison* commemorates the fortress erected to overawe the MacGregors in 1713: no less a celebrity than General Wolfe once was its commander. (*See a previous chapter*)

A little-used route, giving good views over Glen Gyle and the wild country at the head of Loch Katrine, strikes up from Glen Arklet beside the Corracklet Burn, passes round Beinn a' Choin and Stob nan Eighrach and suddenly discloses a grand "bird's-eye view" of Loch Lomond before descending to its shores at Ardleish, opposite Ardlui.

Half a mile from Stronachlachar the little-used but pretty road from Aberfoyle strikes in on the left (*see earlier chapter*). For Loch Lomond, (*see earlier chapter*).