



CASTLE CAMPBELL.

DOLLAR GLEN AND CASTLE CAMPBELL.

BY GEORGE LOWSON, M.A., B.Sc.

ONE of the most pleasant of outings to be had from Stirling is got by taking train to Dollar Station and visiting the pretty little town of Dollar, with its large and handsome and efficient school, the glen behind it— weird and beautiful, awful and enchanting—and the gaunt, grim, ruined fortalice which stands at its top, out of the world as it were, yet close to it, cut off by the rocks and the streams from our everyday life, and set above it in what now-a-days looks like a veritable Land of Beulah.

The many streams which leave the Ochils cut for themselves narrow glens, or rather gorges, in the volcanic rock. These gorges abound in waterfalls, and are clad with alders, oaks, and mountain-ashes, while the dripping rocks are draped with many lovely ferns—the lady fern, the beech fern, the oak fern, the hart's-tongue, and the filmy fern being all found, some of them in great abundance. The rarer kinds have, however, of late years become scarce even in these favoured glens, on account of the rapacity of the unthinking visitor; and it is a pleasure to think that the plants which now remain are quite safe, since to acquire them is alike too difficult and too dangerous an undertaking. Of all the gorges which the streams have cut in the southern face of the Ochils, Dollar Glen is the most impressive and the best worthy of a visit. It is only in recent years that it has become possible to explore the wonders of this fairyland. A path was cut along the steep face of the enclosing cliffs, bridges were thrown across the streams, and sights which were either absolutely inaccessible, or which could be reached only by the most agile and venturesome, have now been made open to all. Entering the glen we pass under the thick shade of trees, and catch at intervals glimpses of the wild rushing waters below, where the impetuous stream dashes over its contracted, precipitous, and boulder-strewn bed. At no great distance up the gorge, we come to the meeting-place of the two streams—"Care" and "Sorrow"—which by their junction form the burn of "Dolour." As we turn to the left and walk over the long bridge through The Pass, the black rocks and the inky-hued water underneath—on which no sun can ever shine—bring to mind the inscription which Dante found over the entrance of the nether world,

“All hope abandon, ye who enter here.” Few places can be more suggestive of gloom and despair. At the end of the long bridge we see the curious fissure in the rock called Kemp’s Score. If one were daring enough it would be possible to climb up this Score and so arrive at the Castle above; and the tradition is that down this Score ran a flight of steps to enable the defenders of the Castle, when necessity arose, to procure water from the stream below.

Passing upwards to the left of the Score, and close to the stream, the scene quickly brightens, and the sun-lit waterfalls of Lower and Upper Sochie tend to chase away with their merry laughter and babbling glee the gloomy thoughts with which the Pass and the Score had filled our minds. Turning to the right, a few steps bring us to the green in front of the Castle. The great planes or sycamores which adorn the grassy sward are commonly graced with swings, but tradition—ever quick-tongued, and keen-eyed for the picturesque—loves to hint of the times when men were swung from the branches in different fashion.

Little seems to be known of the early history of this most picturesquely-situated fortress. It seems to have come into the possession of Colin, First Earl of Argyle, through his wife, Isabella Stewart, daughter of John, Lord of Lorne, in the year 1465, and it is recorded that in the year 1489, “Oure soverane Lord (*i.e.*, James IV.) of his riale autorite, at the desire and supplicacioun of Colin, Erle of Ergile, Lord Campbele and Lorne, has chengeit the name of the castell quhilk was callit the Gloume, and ordinis the same castell to be callit in tyme to cum Campbele.”

Probably because it was so safely set, the Castle is seldom named in history. The reformer Knox visited the Earl of Argyle here in 1556, and doubtless many great matters concerning the commonweal were gravely discussed.

In January, 1563, Mary Queen of Scots graced with her presence the marriage, at Castle Campbell, of Lady Margaret, a sister of the Earl of Argyle, to Sir James Stewart of Doune. But within three years, when Moray, Argyle, and others had risen in rebellion on account of her marriage with Darnley, she set herself and her husband at the head of her loyal subjects and forcibly seized the stronghold in the course of her *pacification* of the country.

Castle Campbell was completely destroyed about eighty years later. In 1645, during the wars waged by the great Marquis of Montrose on behalf of the Stewarts he so loyally served, and while he was marching from his victory at Alford to the still more decisive battle of Kilsyth, between Stirling and Glasgow, he took Castle Campbell and gave it to the flames.

The destruction was in large part an act of vengeance of a section of Montrose's followers—the Ogilvies—for the destruction of their stronghold, Fortar Castle, in Glen Isla, in Forfarshire, which had been taken and burned in circumstances of peculiar cruelty, rehearsed in the well-known ballad, "The Bonnie House o' Airlie."

Since then the Castle, although it remained in the hands of the noble family of Argyle till the year 1805, has stood a dismantled ruin, although the great keep still stands entire; and one regrets that something should not be done in a wise way to recall here, as at Doune Castle, the semblance of old-world noble dwellings, and to restore the setting of many a princely pageant.

