



The Broomielaw

# THE CLYDE.

By NEIL MUNRO.

THE Clyde has been Glasgow's highway to fortune, as it is to so many of her people the highway home to the hills and the shores they came from. She made it herself what it is, out of a shallow, narrow salmon stream, where wherries precariously navigated; robbed it of its pellucid and pastoral charms, and in a century turned it to "a tide in the affairs of men." To-day it would not seem lovely to the eye of the enthusiast who came to Glasgow for trout-fishing, but it is, let us remember, still but in the making. While we admire the Titan energy thundering on the rivets of its shipbuilding yards, and wonder to see great battleships, and argosies from every land, come and go through miles of pasture land and wharf to and from this inland city, we forget the spoiling of the salmon stream; the more readily because we know the Clyde is, as has been said, but in the making even yet, and its purification has made extraordinary progress in the past quarter of a century.

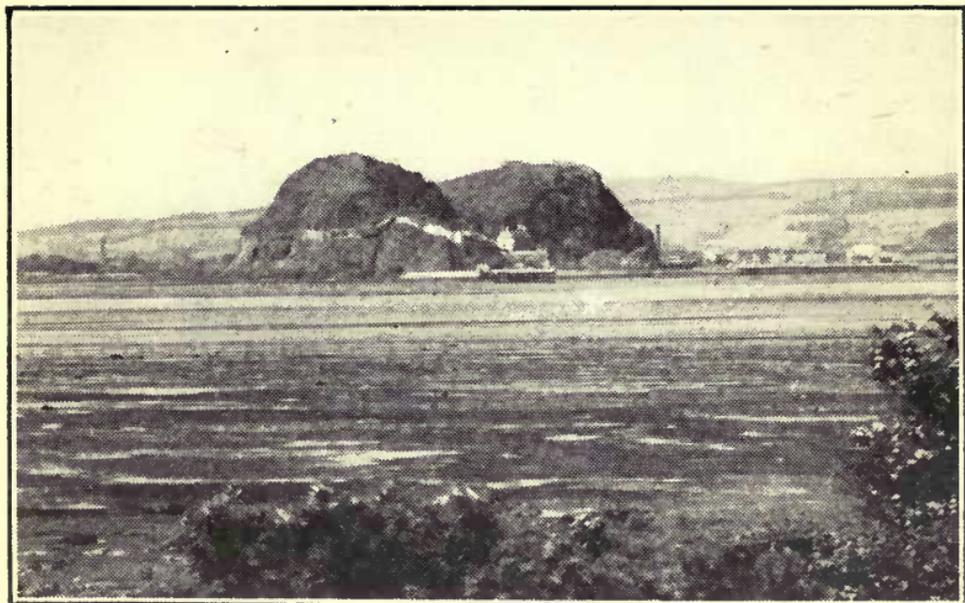
Glasgow's Harbour is seen at its best at night, or at the end of an autumn afternoon, when a swollen sun, setting behind thickets of masts, gilding the stream, glorifying smoky cloud, transfiguring dingy store and tenement, closes a vista that captivates the

eye and spurs the imagination as might some vision of a Venice stained and fallen from virtue, an abandoned mistress of the sea. In such an hour and season we forget the cost of mercantile supremacy, and see in that wide fissure through the close-packed town a golden pathway to romance or the highway to the hills and isles.

Glasgow, with a gust, as it were, for the sea breeze and the evening sun, has always stretched her arms importunate to the west. A day may come when she shall climb to the wholesome breezy plateau of the Mearns to the south of her—indeed, her tramcars are already there; but for long she has, by preference keeping close to the river bank, crept seaward, usurping towns and hamlets on the way, and it looks as if she will not be content until she dips her feet in the waves that beat against Dumbarton Rock.

Govan and Partick are old, but Whiteinch, Yoker, Clydebank, Kilbowie, and Dalmuir, all on the north side of the Clyde, between the River Kelvin and the Kilpatrick Hills, are suburbs whose origin is of yesterday; and are the homes of the men who work in the shipyards or in the factory of the Singer Sewing Machine Company, whose clock tower dominates the smoky valley.

Thirty minutes' sail or so from Glasgow is the town of Renfrew, one of the oldest burghs in Scotland, which has the honour of giving a title to the Prince of Wales. Renfrew is on the south side of the river, at the mouth of a burn which has never lived down the saddening fact that it is called the Pudzeoch. Yet Renfrew proper is half a mile from



Dumbarton Rock



Loch Lomond

the Clyde now—a town of one long street, and numerous lanes and wynds that branch off irregularly from it.

At Erskine Ferry we are really at the portals of the Firth, and the hills on the north side of the river, furrowed by hurried streams and scarred by storms, are the *avant-gardes* of the veritable Highlands. Old Kilpatrick lies at the foot of these—a tranquil little town, identified by tradition with the nativity of St. Patrick, patron saint of Ireland. This claim for Kilpatrick is contested by some foolish place called Boulogne-sur-mer, but locally we laugh at that. No one, at least, can wrest from Kilpatrick the glory of having, in the confines of its parish, had the western terminal forts of that thirty-six-and-a-half mile turfen wall which Antoninus, by his legate, Lollius Urbicus, built between the Forth and Clyde. Nature had defrayed the first expense of the redoubts, and Chapel Hill, an eminence beside the village, has rewarded the assiduity of antiquarian research by *trouvailles* of Roman monumental tablets, vases and coins.

From the foothill of Kilpatrick the alien keepers of the *vallum* had a noble view, which has lost none of its charm in a thousand years, unless we count the smoke-stacks of the ships in Bowling Harbour, a poor equivalent for the long sweeps and beaked prows of the Roman galleys which sheltered in the lee of Dumbarton or under the Hill of Dun. No finer panorama of the Clyde may elsewhere be discovered.

Yet Old Kilpatrick is in no way maritime: fields and the railway separate it from the river shore.

on which there is a shipbuilding yard, and Bowling is the port. Bowling is at the western extremity of the Forth and Clyde Canal, and in its harbour the best of the passenger steamers on the coast are wintered, to have the rust-scale tapped from their hulls and their toilets made for the following spring. To the west of Bowling stands the rocky promontory of Dunglass, on which survive a few remnants of the castle which was once a stronghold of the Clan Colquhoun. Dunglass Castle, as a junior warden to Dumbarton in the command of the passage of the Clyde, played its own part in our civil wars, and might have been a staunch old "biggin" yet were it not for the shameless custom of elected persons to make quarries of their noblest monuments. On the highest part of the promontory there stands an obelisk to the memory of Henry Bell, "father of steam navigation in Europe."

Leaving Bowling, we are at the inner end of the estuary, and seen at low tide it makes no great demand on the imagination to believe one looks on an ebbed fiord that has lost most of its power to fill again. Bleak areas of ooze lie at low tide between the now far-separate shores, and the navigable water is an attenuate stream whose course is marked by many lights. Once, no doubt, the terraces on the shores were sea cliffs fringed with wood, and the rocks proclaim the vigour of the floods that beat on them. Geologists have had what seems a ghoulish satisfaction in dwelling on the meaning of this strange recession—they have seen in the far future a Clyde devoid of estuary altogether, reduced to a rivulet or deepened to a dead canal. The

Vale of Leven, behind Dumbarton Rock, is a reclaimed swamp, and a depression of thirty feet would admit water to Loch Lomond; the parks of Erskine and Cardross are made of the accumulated soil of yesterday, which an inundation of twenty feet would restore again to the dominion of the sea.

Dumbarton, the castled rock, that stray and stranded brother of Ailsa and the Bass, which jumps to the eye a little too insistently to be resolved into, and harmonised with, its immediate environment, has a history that peculiarly endears it even to Scotsmen who may never have set foot on it. It is an imperishable monument to divers races, dynasties, and ideals, and to countless nameless and forgotten men. Wallace was its prisoner, Bruce captured it almost single-handed, Mary, Queen of Scots, sailed from it as a child to France, and visited it again in 1563; surely wraiths of them all must haunt that lonely rock against which fleets and armies have been drawn.

The output of Loch Lomond, the Leven, at one time described as "unspeakably beautiful," but now soiled irremediably by the printfields and dye-works of the "Vale," loses the last relics of its Arcadian origin when it passes into the shadow of Dumbarton Rock. Old Cardross village faced Dumbarton on the opposite bank of the Leven, and beside it was the castle which was the favourite residence, and the death-place, of King Robert the Bruce, but no stone of the building stands above the turf of the knoll on which ceased to beat that gallant heart the Douglas hurled among the Saracens.

Though the Cardross of Bruce was on Leven bank, the modern village of that name is farther down the Clyde, from which the railway separates it. Cardross marks the limit of the jurisdiction of the Clyde Navigation Trust. It is a pleasant, leafy walk from it to Helensburgh, the prosperous town of ease which curves for two miles round the bay near the Gareloch mouth.

Greenock, on the opposite shore of the Clyde, has been spoken of in a most eulogistic manner by Wordsworth, who must have seen it under the most favourable auspices. Though Greenock, as we see it to-day, is a growth of little more than a century, its roots are deep in time. James Watt was born here, in a house which subsequently became a tavern. Through grey, strenuous, and constricted thoroughfares giving glimpses of the harbours, one enters the district of Cartdyke and passes to the burgh of Port-Glasgow, three miles on the eastern side of Greenock.

Port-Glasgow owes its existence to the commercial spirit and enterprise of Glasgow merchants, who, refused the privilege of establishing a harbour either at Dumbarton or Troon, bought thirteen acres of land in Newark Bay in 1668, laid out the ground for a town, and built a harbour. Port-Glasgow grew rapidly beyond the limits originally contemplated, but its supremacy as a supply centre terminated with the awakening of Greenock and deepening of the Clyde. Its prosperity is now due to its shipbuilding yards and various marine activities.

Greenock in its leisure hours, however, but rarely

takes the Rue-end road to the "Port"; it much prefers the breezier way to Gourrock, two miles farther down the Firth. For kings have sailed from Gourrock, a circumstance which has had less influence on its history than the discovery that herring could be cured by smoke. The first red herring known in Britain was here produced in 1688. Railed in on the highest terrace of the promontory, round both sides of which the burgh hangs, is a rough grey boulder to which old passing mariners paid superstitious respect. To-day their sirens hoot derisively and "Granny Kempoch" does not care, mysterious and serene in her incongruous surroundings.

Finally, at the lighthouse of the Cloch, the Clyde makes no more pretence at being a river, hardly even an estuary, though its name on the maps goes down far beyond its islands to the gaunt and lonely pinnacle of Ailsa Craig.