

THE CHANGES AND WARS OF MORAY.

THE ancient province of Moray comprised all the territory of modern Elginshire, all Nairnshire, a considerable part of Banffshire, and nearly one half of the continental portion of Inverness-shire. The eastern part of it is aggregately much more lowland than the western; the mountains which everywhere occupy the south, coming down with increasing approach to the north, till, for some distance on the west, they render the whole country characteristically highland. The northern district as a whole is champaign, and may be described as a band of country prolonged for 60 miles from east to west, with a breadth of from 2 to 12 miles, and a superficial area of about 240 square miles. This long belt of lowlands is greatly diversified with ridgy swells, and terraced or low hilly ranges disposed parallel to the frith; and is intersected by the rivers Ness, Nairn, Findhorn, Lossie, and Spey, running across it to the sea. The grounds behind the lowlands appear, as seen from the coast, to be only a narrow ridge of bold or alpine heights, rising like a rampart to guard the orchards and the woods and the rich expanse of waving fields below from all invasion; but, when approached, they disclose themselves in file behind file of long and broad mountain masses receding, in all the wildness and intricacy of Highland arrangement, to a distant summit-line. Much the larger portion may be viewed as simply the screens of the vast glen,—the long and grand mountain-strath of the Spey, and of the numerous tributaries which cut their way to it along lateral glens; another and considerable portion, partly

identical with the former, are the vastly fissured masses of the Monadleah mountains, flanking the Findhorn and its head-waters; and a third, though much smaller section, consists of the heights which tower up from the sides of the east end of the great glen of Scotland, admitting, amidst a little wilderness of alps, broad clefts and long narrow vales of picture and romance.

The lowlands of Moray comprise the main matters of its economical interest, and often appropriate all the historical associations of its name; and they have long been known to fame for fertility of soil, and for mildness and luxuriousness of climate. A certain dryness of their atmosphere, in particular, has been repeatedly celebrated by historians and poets. But this property, so delightful in itself, seems to have intimate connexion with the equally though lugubriously celebrated phenomenon of "the Moray floods." The high broad range of mountains on the southwest shelter the lowlands from the prevailing winds of the country, and exhaust many light vapours and thinly charged clouds which might otherwise produce such drizzlings and frequent gentle rains as distinguish the climate of most other lowland districts of Scotland; but, for just the same reason, they powerfully attract whatever long broad streams of heavy clouds are sailing in any direction athwart the sky, and, among the gullies and the upland glens, amass their discharged contents with amazing rapidity and in singular largeness of volume. The rivers of the country are, in consequence, peculiarly liable to sudden freshets and disastrous floods. One general and tremendous outbreak, in 1829, in which they desolated glen and plain, tore up woods and bridges and houses, and powdered and carpeted scores of square miles with the wreck of regions above them, afforded an awful exhibition of the peculiarities of the climate, and will long be remembered, in connexion with the boasted luxuriousness of Moray, as an illustration of how chastisement and comfort are blended in a state of things

which is benignly adjusted for the moral discipline of man, and the correction of moral evil.

Moray, at the epoch of record, or about the close of the first century, was possessed by the British tribe of Vacomagi; one of those communities who, after and even sometime before the period of the Roman abdication, figured predominantly in the history of North Britain under the name of Picts. Their towns, while a separate tribe, were Tarnea, in Braemar, immediately beyond the south-eastern limits of Moray; Banatia, on the east side of the Ness, about 600 yards below its efflux from Loch Ness; Ptoroton, on the promontory of Burgh Head; and Tuessis, on the east bank of the Spey, a little below the parish church of Bellie. In the early Pictish periods, the Vacomagi seem to have held a predominant or at least a distinguished place among the confederated tribes; and, at all events, appear to have had within their territory the earliest seat of the Pictavian monarchy.

When the Scots, bursting beyond the limits of Dalriada, and pushing their stealthy but sure conquests northward among the western Highlands, arrived at the uplands which form the mountain-rampart of Moray, they drove the Picts into the plains, and maintained entire possession of the alpine fastnesses and intervening glens. The distinction between the boundaries of the Picts and those of the Scots was long preserved by Moray, and can be traced in the topographical nomenclature throughout the province. Among the charters of Dunbar of Grange, one granted in 1221 by Alexander II. to the abbacy of Kinloss, and referring to the lands of Burgyn names as a boundary *Rune Pictorum*, 'the Picts' cairn;' another charter from Richard, Bishop of Moray, granted after the year 1187 to the same abbacy, mentions *Scoticum molendinum*; and a road among the hills to the east of Dollas from the highland to the lowland districts of the province, is, to this day, or, at least, was forty years ago, called the Scots road.

After the Pictish and the Scottish dominions became consolidated into one monarchy, the Scandinavian vikings made frequent descents on the plain of Moray, and even enthralled it for long consecutive periods. Thorstein the Red, Sigurd, and Thorfin ruled over it, either independently or with slender acknowledgment of the superiority of the Scottish kings, from the commencement of the 10th till the middle of the 11th century.

The Scandinavian settlers intermarrying with the Scottish and the Pictish Celts, a mixed race arose who seem to have been a necessitous, unsettled, turbulent people. Their chiefs or maormors soon began to assume the name of Earls; and, having some connexion with the reigning family, they advanced pretensions to the throne, and convulsed the country by rebellions against the sovereign, and by deeds of regicide. They killed Malcolm I., in 959, at Ullern, supposed by Shaw to be Aldearn; they killed King Duffus at Forres, in 966, when he came to punish them for their crimes; and, about the year 1160, in consequence of an attempt, on the part of the government, to intrude the Anglo-Norman jurisdiction upon their Celtic customs, they raised a grand rebellion against Malcolm IV.

The insurgents, in this rebellion, laid waste the neighbouring counties, and were so regardless of the royal authority as actually to hang the heralds who were sent to summon them to lay down their arms. Malcolm despatched the gallant Earl Gilchrist with an army to subdue them; but he was defeated, and forced to recross the Grampians. This defeat aroused Malcolm, who was naturally of an indolent disposition; and he marched north with a powerful army, and found the enemy on the muir of Urquhart, near the Spey, ready to give him battle. After passing the Spey, the noblemen in the King's army reconnoitered the enemy; but they found them so well prepared for action, and so flushed with their late success, that they considered the issue of a battle rather

doubtful. On this account, the commanders advised the King to enter into a negotiation with the rebels, and to promise, that in the event of a submission their lives would be spared. The offer was accepted, and the King kept his word; but as the Moray men were, as Buchanan says, "*Hominis inquieto semper ingenio*," men of a factious disposition, his Majesty, by the advice of his nobles, ordained that every family in Moray which had been engaged in the rebellion should, within a limited time, remove out of Moray to other parts of the kingdom, where lands would be assigned to them, and that their places should be supplied with people from other parts of the kingdom. For the performance of this order, they gave hostages, and at the time appointed transplanted themselves, some into the northern, but the greater number into the southern counties. Chalmers considers this removal of the Moray men as an "egregious probability," because "the dispossessing of a whole people is so difficult an operation, that the recital of it cannot be believed without strong evidence;" but it is not said that the *whole* people were removed, and it is very probable that only the ringleaders and their families were transported. The older historians say that the Moray men were (*pene interneccionem*) almost totally cut off in an obstinate battle, and strangers brought into their place; but this statement is at variance with the register of Paisley, and the fact, that while there are very few *persons* of the name of Murray in Moray, they are numerous in the counties on the English borders, and are to be found in the more northern counties, where some of them have taken the name of Sutherland, favours the account which that writing gives of the transportation of the Moray men.

Both Malcolm IV., after expatriating the rebels, and his successor William the Lion, appear to have frequently resided in the province; for, from Inverness, Elgin, and various others of its localities, they dated several of their charters.

Among the new families who were brought in to replace the expatriated, the chief are supposed to have been the powerful Earls of Fife and Strathern, and the once potent Comyns and Bysset Ostiarii; among the original families who remained were the Inneses, the Calders, and others; and among those who speedily appeared in the possession of extensive property and great local influence, the chief was the family of De Moravia, whose founder, or at least whose earliest figurant, was Freskinus, Lord of Duffus.

The mixed and altered race who henceforth were sons of the soil, lived for many centuries apart from their Celtic neighbours; and—as still appears by the resemblance of the vocalic sounds of the provincial idiom to those of the languages spoken north of France—they retained in speech, and probably in customs, many of the characteristics of their semi-Scandinavian predecessors. They appear also to have become, if not effeminate, at least greatly more peaceable, less hardy, and less acquainted with the use of arms than the stern mountaineers of the upland districts of Badenoch and Lochaber.

Either from the superior richness of the country, or from the comparatively easy and peaceful character of the inhabitants, the Highland caterans regarded the plain of Moray as open and ever-available spoliage-ground, where every marauder might, at his convenience, seek his prey. So late, in fact, as the time of Charles I., the Highlanders continually made forays on the country, and seem to have encountered marvellously little resistance. The Moray men, it has been remarked, appear to have resembled the quiet saturnine Dutch settlers of North America, who, when plundered by the red Indians, were too fat either to resist or to pursue, and considered only how they might repair their losses; and Penant supposes that, in consequence of their being so mixed a race, Picts, Danes, and Saxons, and altogether aliens to the pure Celtic communities of the mountains, the Highlanders

thought them quite 'fair game,' and never exactly comprehended how there could be any crime in robbing 'the Moray men.' So late as 1565, as appears from the rental of the church-lands in that year, the inhabitants of the province remained entirely a distinct people from the Highlanders, and all bore such names of purely Lowland origin as are still common around Elgin; and not till a comparatively recent period did declining feuds and the prejudices of clanship permit social intercourse and intermarriages with the neighbouring Gordons, Grants, and Macphersons. Moray, in consequence of the attachment of its people to the cause of the Solemn League and Covenant, and of the Marquis of Montrose and his ally, Lord Lewis Gordon, having adopted it as one of their principal scenes of action, suffered more disasters than perhaps any other district of Scotland from the civil wars under the last of the Stuarts. So severe and memorable were the inflictions upon it by Lord Lewis Gordon, that an old rhymer classes his name with the Scottish designations of two of the worst plagues of an agricultural country:

“ The gule, the Gordon, and the hoodie craw,
Are the three warst things that Moray ever saw.”

Montrose, after his victory of Inverlochy, in 1645, made a desolating descent upon the province, destroying the houses of all persons who would not join his standard, and inflicting upon the towns of Elgin, Cullen, and Banff the disasters of an indiscriminate pillage.