

is. Even in James Watt's day there were a dozen shoals between Renfrew and Glasgow, and in addition the river formerly split into two shallow branches. In ordinary weather, therefore, communication between both banks was easy; in other words the geographical control exerted by the river was weak. Again, historically considered, the lands north of the Clyde formed part of the ancient barony of Renfrew, for, as we shall see later, they had been given by the king with other parts of the county to Walter the High Steward. It was the same reason that made Bathgate and the surrounding territory part of the sheriffdom of Renfrew until the sixteenth century, when the office was sold by the second Lord Semple. This district was obtained by Walter the sixth Steward, son-in-law of Robert the Bruce, as part of the dowry brought him by Marjory. In legal usage the district is still referred to as a sheriffdom separate from Linlithgow.

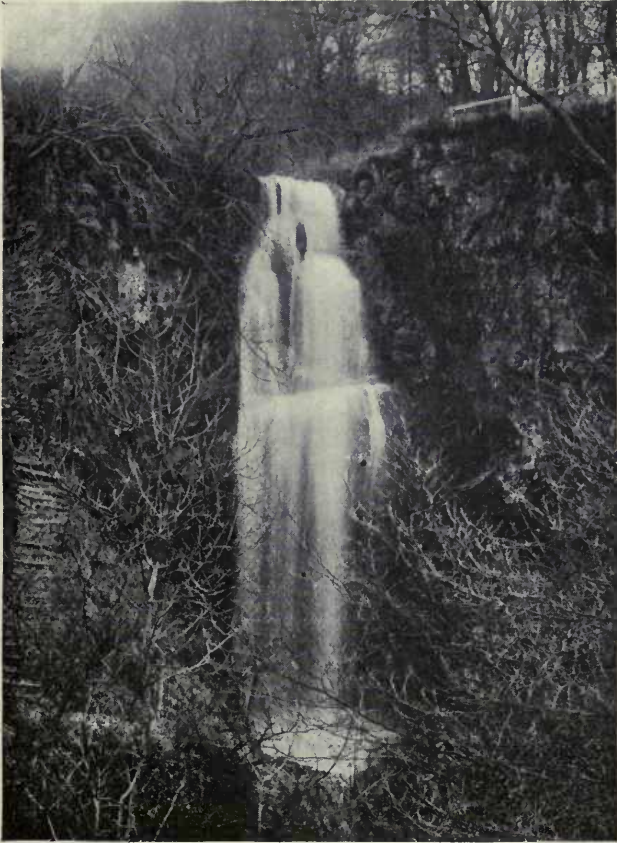
4. Surface and General Features.

The surface of Renfrewshire is extremely varied. It ranges from sea-level to a height of over 1700 feet. The loftiest part of the county is the southern boundary, which forms a high rim to the shire from which the land falls to the north-east, sometimes gradually, sometimes very steeply. The hill masses have the structure of plateaus. There is nothing in the least approximating to a *range* of hills. To endeavour to represent the hills on a map by the favourite devices of lines, or "herring-bones," would be ludicrously

inexact. They must be shown as broad, irregular areas, as is done in the map on the front cover, or more simply in the sketch-map on p. 140. In addition there are a few steep, isolated crags which will be referred to more particularly in the section on Geology.

From the south-eastern extremity of the county a broad band of high moorland stretches without a break to the Firth of Clyde, save where it is deeply cut by two important valleys trenching at right angles across the general direction of the uplands. These two valleys, therefore, divide the hill masses into three blocks. That to the south-east comprises the Eaglesham, Mearns, and Neilston moors. The middle mass stretches from the Loch Libo valley to the valley of the Black Cart. Unfortunately there is no name for this hill mass as a whole. In default of a better, the name Corkindale Moors (from Corkindale Law, the highest point) will here be adopted. The Braes of Gleniffer, the northern edge of these hills, have been rendered classic by Tannahill. The third plateau stretches from the Black Cart valley to the Firth of Clyde. Only the northern part of these hills is in Renfrewshire. They stretch north and south without a break for nearly 20 miles, from Greenock to Ardrossan. There is no generally accepted name for these hills, but many years ago James Geikie called them the Kilbarchan Hills, and that name will be retained here.

The hill masses of Renfrewshire are flat-topped on the whole, and therefore we find neither the imposing peaks, nor the sharp, serrated ridges that give the note of grandeur to a typical Highland scene. Occasionally, however, the

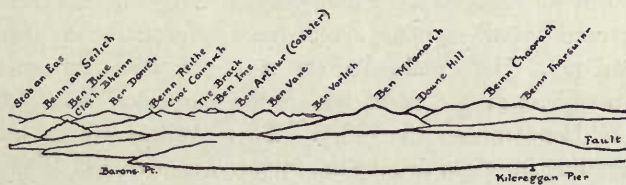


The Linn, Gleniffer

hills rise into distinct summits, the highest being Hill of Stake (1711 feet), East Girt Hill (1673 feet), and Misty Law (1663 feet), all near each other on the central and culminating part of the Kilbarchan Hills. This district is one of the most unfrequented in the west of Scotland. The tide of railway traffic pours down the Lochwinnoch valley, and swinging round the south of the Kilbarchan Hills flows north again to Largs; but it leaves these lonely moors untouched. They make no arresting appeal to the eye that is anxiously on the alert to catch the first glimpse of the glorious, splintered peaks of Arran. They are bleak, lonely, and treeless, clothed with heath or coarse bent, with bare, rocky ribs protruding here and there. And yet they have a nameless, powerful fascination of their own. The air is clear and pure, and the miles of undulating walking afford a sense of freedom and an impression of space that true peak-climbing never gives. But above all, the views from the hills of Renfrewshire are unsurpassed in Scotland. From Misty Law, or even Corkindale Law farther inland, a vast panorama is unrolled on a clear day. Northwards lies the broad valley of the Clyde, a dark pall of smoke marking where Glasgow blackens the landscape. Here and there a gleam of silver betrays the course of the river as we sweep the horizon from Dumbarton Rock to Tinto. To the north-west, blue in the distance, are the rugged peaks that form the outposts of the giant armies of the Highlands, the massive bulk of Ben Lomond, the gashed outline of the Cobbler, and the shapely cone of Ben Ime, prominent among less noticeable mountains. Westward the eye lingers on the jagged, granite peaks of Arran, then

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passes to the blue form of Ailsa Craig, seeming to hang like a tiny hay-stack in mid air. Perhaps even a glimpse of Skiddaw may be had in the far south, if the air has been recently washed by rain, and is unusually clear and free from dust. Although the view from the high interior hills is the most extensive to be obtained in Renfrewshire, it is not the finest. For that we need climb only to a modest elevation on any of the hills behind Gourrock or Greenock. Then to the most of the features mentioned above must be added a near prospect of the blue waters of the Firth, sparkling in the sunshine, or lying one mass



Southern Highlands as seen from behind Gourrock

of molten gold and crimson, as the sun sinks behind the mountains of Cowal. It is one of the finest views in Britain. From such a point a splendid panorama may be had of the southern rampart of the dissected plateau that we call the Highlands. It is by no means easy to identify the individual summits without instrumental aid, therefore a drawing is given (see above) based on photographs and theodolite readings, showing the most interesting part of the mountain panorama seen from the hills behind Gourrock.

It has been stated that the hills of Renfrewshire are

divided into three main masses by two large valleys which run north-east and south-west. These valleys are of the utmost importance, for they form the only easy routes from Glasgow and the large towns of the lower Clyde to the busy and fertile Ayrshire plain. The larger of these two valleys is that which runs from Johnstone to Dalry; the other begins at Barrhead, and passes through Caldwell and Lugton. Such valleys breaking through hilly barriers and forming easy routes from one rich district to another are often called "gaps," and these valleys may be termed respectively the Lochwinnoch Gap and the Loch Libo Gap. Ebbing and flowing through these natural gateways, pours a ceaseless tide of traffic by road and rail. The main line to Ayr and Stranraer goes through one; the main line to Kilmarnock, Dumfries, and London uses the other. These valleys are as interesting in origin as they are important for trade. They are of that peculiar class known as "rift valleys," of which the best known type on a large scale is the Great Rift Valley of Africa that runs from Lake Nyasa to Palestine. The crust of the earth has been fractured along two parallel lines, and the strip between has sunk, leaving a wide valley-floor, bordered by steep sides. The Red Sea is a part of the African rift, so is the curious Jordan valley, in places 2000 feet below sea-level. Its course is marked by narrow lakes—Nyasa, Tanganyika, Albert, Rudolf, Dead Sea, Galilee. The Loch Libo Gap and the Lochwinnoch Gap are similar, though on a smaller scale. Loch Libo lies in the former; Castle Semple Loch, Barr Loch (now drained), and Kilbirnie Loch mark the course

of the latter. All these lakes were formerly more extensive. In fact even yet in times of flood the Lochwinnoch Gap is covered by an almost continuous sheet of water that stretches from Howwood nearly to Dalry. These valleys are green and pleasant places, sheltered and fertile, while the broad lakes of still water with their background of hills give the scene a quiet charm. It is the type of scenery that most impressed the older writers. Of Loch Libo the parochial enthusiasm of the writer of *The New Statistical Account* led him to state that "Loch Libo presents a scene of unparalleled beauty," and even to maintain that "Loch Libo excels in picturesque scenery Rydal Water in Cumberland." The beauty of the loch and its surroundings, especially towards the close of a still summer day, is undeniable, but to compare it with the Lake District is rash.

The north-eastern part of the shire is extremely flat. This district, known as the "laigh lands," was at no very remote epoch covered by the waters of the sea. The sites of busy industrial centres such as Johnstone, Paisley, and Glasgow were occupied by the wide estuary of the river, on the surface of which primitive man propelled his rude dug-out canoe.

That much of what is now dry land must have been under water in human times is shown by the canoes that have been found at various places in the area. In Roman times, however, the relation between land and water was what it now is, for the position of Antonine's Wall shows that there has been no appreciable rise or fall of the land since it was made.