



BRIDGE OF ALLAN

BRIDGE OF ALLAN.

BY REV. R. MENZIES FERGUSSON, M.A.

BRIDGE OF ALLAN, now a fashionable watering-place, lies about three miles north of Stirling, and, as may be seen from the accompanying illustration, is most picturesquely situated upon the left bank of the celebrated Allan Water. At the beginning of the century it was only a small hamlet in the western part of the parish of Logie ; but since then it has developed into a flourishing burgh, including the village of Keirfield on the other bank of the river. "The Bridge," as it is sometimes familiarly called, occupies one of the most sheltered and lovely positions in the whole of Scotland, and is environed by a district full of beauty and teeming with romance. The western spurs of the green Ochil hills protect the town from northern and eastern winds, and its mild winter climate has made it a very suitable place of residence for delicate people, retired Anglo-Indians, and others who have been used to warmer climates.

Little progress was indicated in 1827, when Mr Robert Chambers, in his "Picture of Scotland," describes it as "a confusion of straw-roofed cottages and rich massy trees ; possessed of a bridge and a mill, together with kail-yards, becks, colleys, callants, and old inns." To-day the scene is changed, and the straw-roofed cottages have been replaced by numerous streets of elegant villas, surrounded by forest trees and ornamental shrubs. The town is naturally divided into two sections—a lower and upper. As viewed from Stirling Castle, it resembles a long letter V lying upon its side. The lower portion stands on alluvial ground adjacent to the river, while the upper occupies an elevated terrace or old sea-beach, the intervening declivity being adorned by trees, shrubs, and shady public walks. There is a considerable number of handsome and well-appointed private residences, many of those on the hill being specially attractive. A large proportion of lodging-houses provide suitable accommodation for the influx of visitors during the seasons. There are also five hotels, and a commodious and well-arranged Hydropathic establishment, which are all well adapted to meet the requirements of tourists and temporary sojourners.

Bridge of Allan was created a police burgh in 1870, with one senior and two junior magistrates and eight councillors. There is a branch of the Union Bank ; a Post Office, with telegraph, savings bank, and postal order department ; a telephone call-office ; a Club-house, situated beside the Wells ; and a large number of excellent and well-managed shops. The greater part of

the burgh was created into a *quoad sacra* parish in 1868, and the Parish Church is commodious. There are also an elegant Free Church, built in 1853; a new United Presbyterian Church, rebuilt in 1895; and a Scottish Episcopal Church.

Among the most attractive features of this watering-place, however, are the many lovely walks through the woods of Westerton and Airthrey, round by Sunnynlaw on the north-west, up the Wharry Glen; along past Logie Manse and Blawlowan on the east, towards the old ruined Church of Logie; and up behind the peak of Demyat to the battlefield of Sheriffmuir. From the road leading past the farm of Drumbrae, a magnificent view of the valley of Menteith and the western Grampians may be obtained.

It is on account of the Airthrey Mineral Springs, however, that Bridge of Allan is deservedly famous. This mineral water has been for long distinguished as a specific for derangements of the stomach and liver, and skin and chest diseases, rheumatism, gout, sciatica, and nerve affections, and, for more than a century, crowds of visitors have resorted hither, from all parts, to enjoy the mild air and equable atmosphere, drink its healing waters, and benefit by its mineral-water baths. Through the existence of these mineral springs, Bridge of Allan has developed into the Queen of Scottish Spas, and the efficacy of the water is as great as ever. The principal quality is saline. The most important constituent, according to the analysis of Mr Andrew Wilson, F.I.C., is magnesian bromide, which is equivalent to 27.9 of bromine per million. In the Cheltenham spring, the corresponding figure is 23.2; in the Weisbaden spring, 30; and Aix la Chapelle, 27. On 13th June, 1893, these springs were incorporated, under the Companies' Acts, as "The Bridge of Allan Mineral Wells Company, Limited," under the chairmanship of Donald Graham, Esq., C.I.E., of Airthrey.

The amusements of visitors are provided for in a fine public tennis court, a very good golf-course, near the Fairy Knowe, two well-kept bowling greens, and in winter, skating and curling are enjoyed on Airthrey Loch, which the proprietor generously throws open to the public. The picturesque grounds of Airthrey Castle are open to visitors on Thursdays, Keir House on Fridays, while the Wallace Monument on the Abbey Craig, within easy walking distance, is open every lawful day. There is a good train service from both Bridge of Allan and Causewayhead stations, and tramway cars run between Stirling and Bridge of Allan every half-hour during the winter months, and every twenty minutes in summer; but during the busy season this is increased to every quarter of an hour. The cost of hiring is reasonable, and as the distance from Glasgow and Edinburgh is just about an hour's railway journey, it has become a favourite residence for many business men. It is an ideal place in which to spend a holiday.