



BALMORAL.

From an Original Drawing by W. Wyllie

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CHAPTER IV.

ROMANTIC grandeur, rich and varied beauty, picturesqueness and sublimity, are the distinctive features of the scenery of Scotland. The steep and stern summits that look down upon the traveller as he journeys onward through "the land of the Gael," the remote and solitary glens, the wild corries, the deep and dark tarns, the rivers, lochs, and sounding shores of Caledonia,

"Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,"

are the theme of wonder and admiration to all who behold them, and form favourite subjects of illustration to the poet and the painter. The "wild and majestic," as Byron happily phrased the character of its scenery, have their true home in Scotland, while its old historic castles and venerable ruins possess an imperishable interest from the traditions, national associations, poetry, and song, with which they are in many instances so inseparably invested.

Of many of the most celebrated of its scenes, descriptions have already been given in this Work. Of what remain, the autumnal residence of the Sovereign of these Isles, standing almost within the shadow of

"The steep frowning glories of dark Loch-na-garr,"

the mighty monarch of the Deeside mountains, claims the first place.

BALMORAL.

THIS celebrated Highland residence of Queen Victoria and the Court during the autumn of every year, is six miles from Ballater, Aberdeenshire, and forty-eight from the city of Aberdeen. It is pleasantly situated on a sloping lawn, encircled by the river Dee, beneath the shadow of the mountain of Craig-an-gowan. Its name is said to mean "the seat of the great Earl." Originally the property of the Earl of Fife, it was held in lease from his trustees by the late Sir Robert Gordon, a brother of the Earl of Aberdeen, who was for a considerable period British ambassador at the Court of Vienna. In 1848 it was acquired by Prince Albert. The additions and alterations made on the structure, principally by Sir Robert Gordon when resident there, have rendered its architectural composition peculiarly picturesque. The air of culture which the environs present, forms a striking contrast to the rugged face of Craig-an-gowan to the eastward, the oak-clad steep of Craig-an-darroch and the Pass of Ballater, with the gorge of Carn-na-Cuimhne and the dark pine-haugh of Invercauld, upon the west. Young shrubberies and trees cover almost entirely the grounds that strictly belong to the Castle, with the exception of the lawn and gardens between the front entrance and the public road, from which the Castle is at a considerable distance. The approaches from the east and west gates sweep down the bank in a semicircle, and meet together in the hollow below, from which, through the shrubberies and walks, there is a slight ascent to the house itself.