THE ROYAL DEE

A DESCRIPTION OF THE RIVER FROM THE WELLS
TO THE SEA WRITTEN BY ALEX INKSON McCONNOCHIE
ILLUSTRATED BY J G MURRAY A R E

WILLIAM JOLLY & SONS, ABERDEEN.
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THE ROYAL DEE.

CHAPTER I.

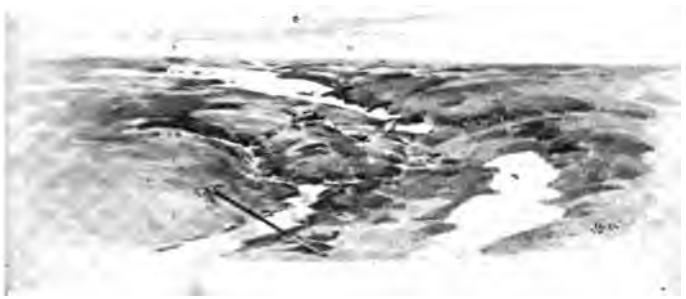
The Wells to the Linn.

From the bosom of the mountain,
From the silent lands of night,
Sparkles up the infant fountain,
Crystal clear and crowned with light.

THE Highlands of Scotland have no wilder scene of mountain grandeur, either in altitude or extent, than that obtained from the principal tops of the Cairngorms, the birthplace of the Royal Dee. These tops are Ben Muich Dhui, Braeriach, and Cairn Toul—three of the four highest mountains in the British Isles.

The Wells of Dee are springs on the summit of Braeriach, an enormous gravelly plateau, by far the largest of its kind in the United Kingdom. The name has been usurped by several Pools near the head of Glen Dee, between Ben Muich Dhui and Braeriach, but these lochans are gradually taking their proper position, and becoming simply the "Pools of Dee". It has been well said of the Dee that it is "born in the purple of rivers"; none other of the great streams of Scotland rises at an altitude of over four thousand feet. Mountain-born, it begins life with impetuosity, gradually decreasing its speed as it nears the North Sea, but never declining to sluggishness, as does its great rival the Spey. Braeriach became popularly known only in recent times; old maps ignored it, and writers generally passed it over in descriptions of the topography

of the district. The time came, however, when Scotsmen awoke to the value of their inheritance, and then the second summit of the Cairngorm range became a favourite with hillmen, who were the first to recognise that the Wells were, as certain maps published previous to the Ordnance Survey expressed it, the "main sources of the Dee".



The Wells of Dee.

Braeriach lies on the watershed of Dee and Spey, in the counties of Aberdeen and Inverness, where the three great districts of Mar, Badenoch, and Strathspey meet. The mountain, in addition to its extensive plateau, is noted for its bulk, its corries, and its precipices. Each feature adds to the robustness of the "infant Dee", which thus commences its course in picturesque sternness. Standing at the uppermost of the springs, and looking along in the direction of the little stream, the grandeur of the position becomes at once apparent. Across Glen Dee, we have "towering Ben Muich Dhui"; over the Garchary, to the right, is the peaked summit of Cairn Toul, flanked by the minor top of Sgor an Lochain Uaine; all around is a desert of gravel. The Wells are a little inconstant; occasionally the springs rise a few yards nearer the mountain's crest, disappearing, and reappearing, according to the season of the year; the number of the Wells also varies, a circumstance accounted for by the summer's drought. There are, however, three Wells that seem to have a perennial flow; our first illustration represents the two

principal. A tiny streamlet is at once formed; and the "infant Dee" has a visible existence. The "line of perpetual snow" is not to be found in this country, yet snow exists on the higher Cairngorms all the year round; on the summit of Braeriach there are only two seasons, summer and winter—the latter twice as long as the former. Thus the principal head-stream of the river is generally invisible in the upper part of its course for about eight months of the year. The runlet, as it makes a channel for itself over the bright gravel, can easily be stepped across for the first few yards, but taking toll here and tribute there it broadens out, and in a few hundred yards begins to make itself heard, rippling musically onward. The surface of the gravel, particularly in the neighbourhood of the Wells, is much scored with minute water-channels, tear-tracks which fitfully feed the young river. The plateau has been humorously proposed as a golf course; a coach and four could make way over it. The gravel has been not inaptly likened to an immense sponge; the interior of the mountain may be regarded as a natural reservoir. While the principal Wells are to be found between March Cairn and Eunach Cairn of Braeriach, there are others springing from a direction nearer the summit cairn. They send a considerable tributary to the brooklet, joining it just as it takes leave of the plateau of the mountain, two-thirds of a mile from the source. In some parts, where the ground is particularly flat, especially where the county march runs due east and west, it is difficult to determine off-hand the direction of the water—whether it makes for the Spey valley or the Dee.

Hitherto the flow of the stream has been comparatively gentle, though in twelve hundred yards it has descended about one hundred and fifty feet; now it dashes over the lip of a corrie in a fall of six hundred feet, a scene which the accompanying illustration strikingly pourtrays. The fall is not many degrees from vertical, but the shape of the corrie prevents a complete view, whether one stands at the top or the bottom. This immense fall can be seen from great distances; in particular it is visible from

the top of Lochnagar. The spectacle is perhaps most interesting when the fall is encased in a tunnel of snow and ice, with here and there gaps where the snow has fallen in. It is a frequent occurrence to find even in July an arch of snow above the burn as it tumbles over the edge of the precipice, blackened with the lighter debris of the mountain.

The Garchary Fall.

One of the grandest mountain views is to be had from the top of this gigantic waterfall. Briefly, the points which live in one's memory are: the huge mass of Ben Muich Dhui, with a long thin dark scar formed by Allt a' Choire Mhoir; the deep narrow glen of the Dee; Cairn Toul, with its

lochan perched high on its shoulder, and the sharply peaked Sgor an Lochain Uaine; in the distance, the misty summits of Beinn a' Ghlo. There is a wilderness of stones at the top of the fall; and all the way down there are rock ledges, only a few feet broad, where the mad river makes short pauses, only to plunge with greater force as it is turned into a long streak of white. At the bottom of the fall there is a waste of boulders, big and little, which is yearly receiving contributions from above. There one is tempted to forget the dignity of age and roll stones down the face of the corrie. How they thunder and bound, taking such fearful leaps that one would be appalled for the possible result, were not the whole scene (frequently not the case in similar instances) almost in full view. The descent may be made on either side of the fall, more safely on the right, though not a feat to be thoughtlessly undertaken on the one side or the other.

The earliest accounts of this great water-fall, and of the real sources of the Dee, are to be found in the Rev. Dr. Skene Keith's "Agriculture of Aberdeenshire" (1811) and Dr. Macgillivray's "Natural History of Deeside and Braemar" (1855). Robson in his "Scenery of the Grampian Mountains" (1814) also goes to the summit of Braeriach for the source of the Dee. The parson set out in July, 1810, "to ascertain the elevation of the principal mountains in Mar". He found the Dee "in flood at the time, from the melting of snow, and late rains; and what was most remarkable, an arch of snow covered the narrow glen (*sic*) from which it tumbled over the rocks . . . We approached so near the cataract as to know that there was no other lake or stream, and then we had to climb among huge rocks, varying from one to ten tuns, and to catch hold of the stones or fragments that projected, while we ascended in an angle of 70 or 80 degrees . . . We got to the top of the mountain . . . Here we found the highest Well, which we afterwards learned was called *Well Dee*, and other five copious fountains, which make a considerable stream, before they fall over the precipice". The enterprising mountaineers, we are told, recruited their strength by mixing "some good whisky with

Looking down the Garchary.

this water", even pouring a libation into the Well! This was on 17th July; on 14th September following, however, he found that "only three Wells out of five contained any water, and their united stream was not above one-third part of what it was on the 17th of July". Macgillivray's account is more thrilling than the parson's; he made the ascent alone when "a poor student of King's College, Aberdeen", in 1819, with the sun for a chronometer, and otherwise badly equipped. After a night spent in the Garchary, he "awoke fresh, but weak, about sunrise". The stream led him "to a magnificent corrie, in the form of a deep hollow scooped out of the great ridge . . on my right hand in ascending it. The sides of this corrie were formed of sloping rock of vast height. The rivulet came tumbling down the centre in the form of a cataract. Here the rocks were most abrupt, but I had determined to proceed—at least to attempt the ascent. Before I reached the base of the rocks I felt very weak, and was obliged to halt every now and then. However, I proceeded, and at length, being well accustomed to rock-climbing, found myself on the very summit of this vast mass of rock . . . The view down the corrie, which I had just ascended, was delightful—dreadful it might have been to some; the whole glen, the deep corrie just beneath, with its fearful rocks, the opposite mountains with an alpine lake before me. The scene was truly sublime, and I contemplated it with great delight . . . Proceeding along the streamlet, which was the principal object of my research, I traced it to two fountains, and several smaller springs". His son in 1850 describes the Dee as issuing "from several wells of limpid water, situated among clear granite sand, without any vegetation *(sic)*, even the slightest, and immediately forms a considerable torrent". "A river is nothing but a continuous series of continually renewed drops of water following each other in a groove. It is probable that not a single drop which issues from the Wells of Dee enters the sea at Aberdeen", owing to percolation and evaporation.

The bottom of the fall reached, the Dee is not yet allowed to settle down, for it has to make a descent, in a series of little

cascades, of about fourteen hundred feet, to the glen which bears its name, but equally well known there as the Larig.

This name reminds us that the situation now requires to be reviewed, and that it is high time to explain the Gaelic nomenclature of this wild region. To begin with the Dee itself—our rivulet is not strictly entitled, at this stage, to that name; the proper designation is Allt a' Gharbh-choire, "the burn of the rough corrie". Nevertheless authority is not altogether wanting for the designation Dhaidh, "Dee"—a name which will come under notice as we proceed to the Linn. The great opening between Braeriach and Cairn Toul is An Garbh-choire, "the rough corrie", a corrie which approaches the dignity of a glen, having important "side" corries. One of the latter is Fuar Gharbh-choire, "the cold rough corrie," into which the "infant Dee" takes its great leap. Both Allt a' Gharbh-choire and An Garbh-choire are frequently Saxonised into Garchary; the Larig is Learg Ghruamach, "the gruesome pass", which, separating the Western from the Central Cairngorms, extends from White Bridge, up Glen Dee, thence down to Strathspey, near Aviemore. At an altitude of 2750 feet the Garchary receives a small stream which takes rise between March Cairn and Sgor an Lochain Uaine; it was at this confluence that the "poor student" (Macgillivray) passed the night previous to his visit to the Wells. About five hundred feet lower down, the Garchary is swelled by the burn from Lochan Uaine, which, descending the precipitous side of Cairn Toul, is frequently blown into spray by the hurricanes which seem to burst from the corries. The snow-bunting breeds among the boulders of the Cairn Toul corries, which also offer not a few alpine plants to the botanist. On the other side of the Garchary, the crest of the precipices of Coire Bhrochain of Braeriach stands out black and jagged, mist oft playing "hide and seek", while tags of snow shew how winter lingers beyond its time.

Glen Dee reached, the Garchary is joined, near a number of moraine heaps, by Allt na Leirg Gruamaich, "the burn of the gruesome pass", a stream familiarly known as the Larig Burn,

which some authorities at one time regarded as the head-stream of the Dee. The Pools of Dee give birth to this brattling burn, though a great barrier, formed by debris from Ben Muich Dhui and Braeriach, lies between the visible source and the lower Pool. Indeed it is to such debris that the Pools—there are only two worthy of notice—owe their existence. They are situated at a height of about 2700 feet, having no apparent connection with each other, and are clear and pellucid, with stony bottoms so regular in formation that they have the appearance of having been artificially laid. A short distance above the upper Pool, March Burn may be observed dashing down the steep side of Ben Muich Dhui, only to disappear among the debris which here covers the lower part of this side of the mountain. Looking up from the path towards the source of this torrent, it seems to pour over the crest of the Ben, and is frequently to be observed issuing out of a little snow tunnel. The source, however, is a spot of rare beauty—beds of moss of the richest colouring, from brilliant green to imperial purple and gold. About a mile below the Pools the Larig Burn receives Allt a' Choire Mhoir, "the burn of the big corrie", a runnel which has its source near the cairn of Ben Muich Dhui. The confluence of the Garchary and the Larig Burn is a desolate region, with scenery of the barest and wildest description; yet evidence is not wanting that here, at a comparatively recent period, pines graced the glen, the great Caledonian Forest having extended, at one time, to an altitude of over 2000 feet.

"Below the Pools" introduces us to another feature of the river; drawn in the early days of October, winter had cast its mantle over mountain and glen. Standing at the lower Pool, we are faced by a boulder-rampart, on the other side of which the Larig Burn makes its first appearance; Ben Muich Dhui (4296 feet) slopes to the left; on the right is Braeriach (4248 feet), beyond which, and the Garchary, Cairn Toul (4241 feet) stands prominently out, with its southern peak, the Devil's Point, in the distance.

The Dee now receives frequent tribute from both sides of the

Below the Pools.

glen, from Ben Muich Dhui and Cairn Toul. The slopes of these mountains are scarred with water channels, many of them, however, dry. The "flood" of 1829 is mainly responsible for the dry furrows, which indicate the severity of that famous "spate", when the mountains burst out into innumerable water-spouts. A few channels are believed to date from another famous local "flood", that of 1768. In the upper part of the glen especially, one cannot fail to observe the parallel lines of brilliant red which the granite debris in its descent has scored on the slopes of Ben Muich Dhui, blood-red gashes which are yearly being added to. Among the tributary burns in this portion of the Larig may be named Allt Clach nan Taillear, "the burn of the tailor's stone", from Ben Muich Dhui. About three quarters of a mile south of its confluence are several boulders, piled together, known as Clach nan Taillear, "the tailor's stone", so named from three Rothiemurchus tailors who perished here on their way to Dalmore, now Mar Lodge. According to tradition they wagered they would dance at three "Dales" within twenty-four hours, and having performed two-thirds of their programme at Abernethy and Rothiemurchus sank exhausted in the snow at this spot. There are indeed several instances of loss of life in the Larig, which have happened either in sudden snow-storms or from weakly persons attempting too much.

The Devil's Point (3303 feet) is a striking peak in the Larig. It is a bold, precipitous, pointed mass of granite standing guard over the confluence of Geusachan Burn with the Dee, and is inaccessible from the Glen Dee side. The Geusachan, a considerable stream, rises on Cairn Toul, running parallel, in the first part of its course, to the Dee, which it seems, as it bends and twines, to enter with reluctance. At this point, according to some old maps, the name Dee is first properly applied—the Garchary and the Geusachan combined forming the River. Dr. Skene Keith tells us that in his time "the only human habitation [in this neighbourhood] was a shealing, belonging to some farmers in Badenoch, who rent these glens from Earl Fife, and where

shepherds reside a few months in summer". The "shealing" has been displaced by a "watcher's" hut, Corrour, at the foot of the Devil's Point, and the Badenoch sheep-farmers have given way to foresters. Opposite the mouth of Glen Geusachan a deer-stalker's path connects Glen Luibeg with Glen Dee, forming the ordinary tourist entrance from Braemar to the Larig.

The Devil's Point.

Beinn Bhrotain (3797 feet) commands the lower angle formed by the Dee and the Geusachan, and is an imposing bulky mass. It slopes to the south by Carn Cloich-mhuilinn, "Millstone Hill", and Carn Geldie. The hills on the other side of the glen are somewhat flat and uninteresting. The portion of Glen Dee between the Devil's Point and White Bridge is comparatively little frequented by the public, and the path is therefore generally indifferent and indistinct. The great feature of the Larig here is the view of Beinn a' Ghlo in Glen Tilt, a group of mountains with rather a prominent appearance. About a mile and a half short of White Bridge a *larach* in Coire na Cula will be observed; it is said to mark the site of the uppermost hunting seat of the Earls of Mar.

The Dee descends the glen at a rattling pace. Little cascades are numerous; the most picturesque spot is a rapid called the Chest of Dee, a short distance above White Bridge. The river, rock-bound for about 120 yards, its banks clothed with a few stunted birches and an aspen or two, there takes three regular step-like "falls" into a broad pool, issuing from which it takes another "step" and regains freedom. The "falls", more remark-

able for width than height, are exceedingly slight, but are sufficient to agitate the river in a very lively manner. Standing on the river bank here, the only houses to be seen are two foresters' cottages in Glen Geldie and the tree-sheltered Bynack Shieling; towering in the distance one cannot fail to recognise the well-defined and majestic Carn nan Gabhar—the highest peak of Beinn a' Ghlo.

The Chest of Dee.

White Bridge, the uppermost bridge over the Dee—we do not take into account the occasional plank and stilts which do duty at Corrour!—crosses the river a few yards above its confluence with the Geldie,

White Bridge.

at a point which has been well described as "beautifully desolate". The bridge is built of timber with stone piers, succeeding a foot-bridge with a ford a little lower down. The Scottish Rights of Way Society, not unmindful of mapless tourists, has here placed one of its useful guide-posts to point out the way to Aviemore; in Glen Geldie the pedestrian is also directed to Glen Tilt and to Insh *via* Glen Feshie.

The Geldie rises between An Sgarsoch and Carn an Fhidleir, flowing somewhat languidly for several miles along a rather flat mossy glen, with hills generally low and featureless. Geldie Lodge is the most westerly house in Aberdeenshire, being the shooting-box in connection with the Geldie portion of the Mar Forest. It is situated four miles above White Bridge, on the right bank of the burn, at the mouth of Allt Coire an t-Seilich. Bynack Burn is the principal tributary of the Geldie from the south; its Shieling (also in Mar Forest) is on the left bank about half a mile above the confluence. The Geldie's tributary burns on the north are worthy of notice from their names—Allt Dhaidh Mor, "the big Dee burn", and Allt Dhaidh Beag, "the little Dee burn". The Geldie, which some contend signifies "the white Dee", has been asserted to be the real head-stream of the Dee, mainly from the circumstance that it flows in the Dee's general eastward course. It is inferior, however, both in length and volume to the Dee above White Bridge; and, moreover, despite its occasional stony channel, the appropriateness of the name may be doubted from the water being tinged with peat. An Sgarsoch is a flat-topped hill, with grassy slopes, where formerly a cattle market was held. This "Tryst" —on the county march between Aberdeen and Perth—was the successor to a market previously held in Glen Feshie; latterly it was removed still farther south till it ultimately became stationary at Falkirk.

A Dalmore laird, who first concealed his gold in the Garchary, afterwards removing it to Coire na Craoibh Ora, "the gold tree corrie", in Glen Luibeg, finally deposited it on Carn Geldie, under a big stone on which he cut the figure of a horse-shoe. And there it

still remains! True, an ancient shepherdess came across the stone, on which she stuck her distaff into the ground and went for help; but on her return at the head of a party of men, lo! the whole hill-side bristled with spindles. "An Taillear Ruadh" next observed the marked boulder, but when he came with his friends there was nothing to be seen. Stupid "Red-haired Tailor"! Had he only placed a piece of money on the stone he would have had no difficulty in finding the spot the second time. The treasure is reserved for a Ruadhraidh Ruadh, a Red Roderick, a Mackenzie both by the father and mother's side; he will come on it some misty morning while searching for a strayed ox.

White Bridge is three miles west from the Linn, a driving road extending as far west as Bynack Shieling and Geldie Lodge. Just below the confluence of the Dee and the Geldie is Dubh-bhruach (Dubrach), where a sergeant's guard was stationed after the Rebellion of 1745. It seems the soldiers were lodged "in a Barn, and are pretty well accommodated having plenty of Blanketts from the County people besides those they carried from home". An interesting tombstone in Braemar churchyard marks the grave of the oldest, and probably latest surviving, "rebel" in Scotland, "Peter Grant, sometime farmer in Dubrach, who died at Auchindryne, the 11th of Feb., 1824, aged 110 years". He was generally called "Dubrach" from the name of his farm, and, the attention of George IV. having been directed to him, he received a small pension.

About mid-way between White Bridge and the Linn, two adjoining *larachs* will be observed, Dail a' Mhoraire Mhor, "the big lord's haugh", where Viscount Dundee encamped on his way to Killiecrankie, and Dail a' Mhoraire Bheag, "the little lord's haugh". Dail a' Mhoraire (Delavorar) is a name of not infrequent occurrence in the Highlands, and is always descriptive. The sketch, taken above the Linn, shews the few trees that distinguish the site as the traveller walks along the Glen Dee road. Standing on the Linn Bridge, the contrast between the scenery on the east and that on the west is striking. Eastward, the river seems to enter a strath, with habitations of men and scenery of a comparatively mild type:

westward, one looks up to nature; there is no arable land—the red deer reign supreme, and houses can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The river hurries along, passing pine-planted patches, the silence of the glen broken only by the ripple of the water, and the beholder stands fascinated as he pictures to himself the lonely grandeur of the Dee "from Wells to Linn".

Delavorar.

CHAPTER II.

The Linn to Braemar.

So it was told . . . . . .
How under Linn of Dee, where over rocks, between rocks,
Freed from prison the river comes, pouring, rolling, rushing,
Then at a sudden descent goes sliding, gliding, unbroken,
Falling, sliding, gliding, in narrow space confined,
Save for a curl at the end where the curve rejoins the level,
Save for a ripple at last, a sheeted descent unbroken.

THE Linn is a few yards beyond the sixth milestone from Castletown of Braemar where a new series of milestones commences. The Linn is the Mecca of the ordinary pilgrim tourist, and is no ordinary shrine to worship at. Strathdee commences at the Linn; the valley westward is known as Glen Dee. The traveller has here a delightful choice of railway stations; their distances apart are considerable, however: there are Ballater, Blairgowrie, Blair Athole, Aviemore, and Nethy Bridge; the nearest is about 23 miles distant. At the Linn there is accommodation neither for man nor beast; yet to it in summer and autumn there is an almost continuous stream of visitors—walking, cycling, and driving. Nature, with man's assistance, has preserved the Linn from the charge of being a hackneyed "show"; it is beyond the reach of pic-nic parties—the popular Four-in-hand does not penetrate so far west. We remember once leaning against the eastern parapet of the bridge, resting awhile as we journeyed to Aviemore, thinking we had the solitude to ourselves. Judge then of our surprise to see the Queen-Empress seated upon a rug, which John Brown had evidently just placed, sketching this beautiful spot. Prince Leopold and Princess Beatrice, with a lady in waiting, had accompanied Her Majesty. We hastily resumed our knapsacks impressed with what we left at the Linn.

The Linn of Dee.

The Linn is no great water-fall; after the Garchary one is not easily satisfied. But the Linn is as wonderful a feature of the Dee as is the Garchary, perhaps even more so. No effort is necessary, as a certain writer sagely remarks, for water to fall six hundred feet when opportunity is offered; but it is quite another thing for a river to cut through solid rock. That is the Linn; the rock bristles with pines, producing, according to some authorities, the most picturesque and beautiful spot in the whole course of the river—and there is certainly no lack of charming places in the Dee valley. "Cribbed, cabined, and confined", the river here seethes, plunges, churns, boils, and rushes with, as we are told in "Deeside", the impetuosity of youth and the strength of manhood. Our Linn illustrations tell their own story—one of them needs perhaps a little explanation. Artists, inspired by the scene, have rendered it famous; our sketch, taken from below, is not merely a faithful picture but one which we may boldly assert has caught the *spirit* which animates the spot. How often have we gazed on the maddened river from the foreground rock till it seemed a thing of life, a continuously-impelled, un-ending torrent———; but enough—even now looking at the picture we seem to hear, not the North Sea breaking against the Girdle Ness, but the roar of the angry Dee at the Linn. Our smaller view is thus explained. Artist and writer dallied on the occasion, but at last sketch-book and note-book were replaced in the knapsack and we were taking a final look from the western parapet, when Donald, with his long "Dolland", came on the scene, and the knapsack was necessarily re-opened—for burly Donald is an old friend. We talked of the Dee from Delavorar to the "cold rough corrie", for as is Fleet Street to the London journalist so are the Larig and its recesses to Donald. From matters of fact we wandered to theory, discussing an old suggestion concerning the river below White Bridge. There was a time—perhaps—when the Dee found no fissure in the rock here, but flowed *over* the rock as it left a loch which had extended as far up as the Geldie confluence. The inquisitive stream, however, had found out the weak spots in the mica-slate and gradually bit into

the present channel; thereupon the loch emptied itself, and the Dubrach and Delavorar of the future became possible. Whatever may be the geological explanation of the course of events and the formation of the Linn, there can be no doubt that the latter is, geologically, quite a modern affair. Even Macgillivray seems puzzled; but the flora and fauna of the valley were of greater interest to him than vain speculations as to what might have been. He simply accepts the present appearance of things, on which he pertinently remarks: "The sides have been in part worn smooth, but, great as the force of the stream must be, it has failed to wear off the projecting angles or to straighten the passage. Considering the power of running water, and especially the wonderful effects it is represented as producing, we naturally think it strange that this fissure, in not very hard rock, should remain so little changed. The Dee, with all its floods, and many they have been, has rushed along this narrow rent, I suppose some thousand years, without so much as fairly smoothing its sides. . . . The rock is mica-slate, containing a large proportion of granular quartz, and intersected by veins of quartz". These words were written in 1850; they are equally applicable to 1897—the geological clock knows neither hours nor centuries. On the present occasion the ordinary chronometer seemed to ignore minutes, but the artist had not been idle.

The Linn of Dee.

For it would seem he had stolen away to the other side when his companions descended to theory; and now we all see how the Dee looks at the Linn when one peers down from the eastern parapet of the bridge.

The Linn bridge is a beautiful structure, erected by James, Earl of Fife, and opened by the Queen in 1857. Yet some of us have sighed for its predecessor, "the auld, ricketty, widden brig"; but in 1814 Robson, the famous artist, thus speaks of what he then saw there: "A wooden bridge, painted black and white, with a long balustrade on each side, crossing the chasm in a situation the most conspicuous, is disgusting". However the Englishman had his revenge, for Sir Thomas Dick Lauder tells us that the flood of 1829 swept the then bridge entirely away, though it stood thirty feet above the river, the Dee rising three feet above the bridge. In the beginning of the century a plank served as a foot-bridge; in 1830 the foot-bridge is described as "alpine". The Linn commences a few feet to the west of the bridge, a pool about forty feet deep receiving the stream after its wriggle through the rock. Salmon are frequently to be seen in this pool, sometimes out of condition, recuperating themselves for their final tussle with the opposing rush of the Linn. About two years ago the rock-channel above the bridge was very slightly cut in order to make the passage easier for salmon. This purpose has been gained without in the least detracting from the picturesqueness of the channel, though a great outcry was raised when the public first became aware of the Duke of Fife's intention to interfere with the Linn. Between White Bridge and the Linn the pools often swarm with salmon, affording excellent sport in the season; the Duchess of Fife may frequently be seen in the glen filling a big basket.

The poet Byron nearly lost his life at the Linn; Moore says that "as he was scrambling down a declivity that overhangs the fall, some heather caught his lame foot and he fell. Already he was rolling downwards, when the attendant luckily caught hold of him, and was just in time to save him from being killed". Accidents are not unknown here; the narrowness of the channel—it is under

four feet where most contracted—tempts the unwary to jump across, only to find that the return leap presents an unexpected difficulty.

There is a driving road on both sides of the river below the Linn; that on the left crosses Lui Water, passes in rear of Mar Lodge, crosses the Quoich below its Falls, and proceeds by Invercauld to the main turnpike, near Invercauld Bridge; that on the right, through Inverey, is, however, the usual thoroughfare.

Lui Water joins the Dee about half a mile below the Linn. Glen Lui extends to Derry Lodge, where it branches—on the east we have Glen Derry, on the west Glen Luibeg. Glen Lui is now without any arable land, though numerous *larachs*, on both sides of the stream, suggest a once populous valley. These *larachs* have excited considerable comment, being passed by many tourists *en route* for the Cairngorms or Speyside by the Larig. It is almost needless to say that crops could not now be profitably raised in such upland glens. There are two water-falls, within a young plantation, a little above Lui Bridge. Derry Lodge is a shooting-box in Mar Forest, situated at the confluence of Luibeg and Derry Burns. Both streams rise on Ben Muich Dhui; the former partly in a little tarn, Lochan Uaine, the latter issuing from Loch Etchachan. The Lodge is a noted stage in the mountaineer's journey to Ben Muich Dhui, for here the driving road ends and mountain tracks have to be taken. The walk up Glen Lui is most enjoyable; the glen is bare, but is not long enough to be monotonous. In recent years patches have been planted with trees which promise to adorn in due time the sides of the glen, as well as to afford shelter in winter to the deer. At Black Bridge, where the road crosses the Lui, some fine old pines, "monarchs of the glen", may be seen where a direct road branches off to Mar Lodge. Below this bridge note must be taken of the lively run of the Lui; higher up it is content to ripple along in less demonstrative fashion. Near Black Bridge, also, one cannot fail to observe instances of the results of recent hurricanes on some of the finest trees in the valley; frequently little plots may be noticed completely devastated, while more likely spots for the wind's vengeance have been mysteriously spared.

The well-known "pass", Learg an Laoigh, "the calves' pass", may be said to commence at the mouth of Glen Derry, terminating near Forest Lodge in Strath Nethy. In the lower part of Glen Derry there are still a few noble pines, worthy successors of the hundred-feet monarchs that nearly a century ago made the head-streams of the Dee famous for firs. The head of the glen, however, well illustrates the change which seems to have taken place, as far as tree growth is concerned, in the climate of the present time compared with that of former days. Only stunted individual specimens are now to be seen two miles beyond the Lodge, where bleached trunks tell of the storms which have overtaken the former monarchs of the forest. A well-known Deeside character, Alexander Davidson (1792-1843), purchased much of the timber in the Derry and constructed a Dam in the upper end of the glen for floating cut trees to the Dee. "Rough Sanie", as he was called from his long black unkempt beard, however, was unfortunate; what he had "earned" in smuggling disappeared in the timber speculation. The story of "the last of the old poachers" is an interesting one, but we must leave it alone; Mr. Michie's "Deeside Tales" should be referred to by the curious reader. Sandy's end was pathetic: "Next morning he was discovered on the hills of Glen Bucket, lying on his back, with his faithful companion, the little brown pointer, seated on his breast, keeping watch over him . . . when a stranger approached the faithful creature attacked savagely, and it was not without a strenuous resistance that it allowed the remains of its master to be conveyed into the nearest human dwelling". The flood of 1829 made an end of the Dam; it was never repaired, but traces of its existence may still be observed.

The track for Ben Muich Dhui leaves Glen Derry about four miles above the Lodge, proceeding up Coire Etchachan, and passing the loch of that name; higher up, a view may be obtained of Lochan Uaine (of Ben Muich Dhui) and the head of Glen Luibeg. Glen Lui and Glen Luibeg form the ordinary route for entering Glen Dee, the longer road by White Bridge being seldom used by pedestrians between Braemar and Speyside. Two miles up Glen

Luibeg the track crosses the stream, and, rounding Carn a' Mhaim—more familiar as Cairn Vym—the southern spur of Ben Muich Dhui, joins the Larig path opposite the mouth of Glen Geusachan.

We have, however, lingered long enough in the upper glens and at the Linn; the main course of the river must now be followed. Our walk to Castletown will be a delightful one; the road and the river, confined within a narrow valley, are bounded by near low hills and crags clad with fir and larch; here a place of historic interest, there a picturesque spot which rivets attention—not to mention the varied course of the stream with banks charmingly irregular, high on one side, low on the other. Occasionally the pace of the river attains a dignified slowness; indeed it is only in the neighbourhood of Braemar that the Dee is to be seen for any considerable distance apparently lolling in its channel—and nowhere is it more beautiful. Cultivation is restricted to narrow strips by the river side; little crofts are numerous, but "farms" are practically unknown.

The Cairngorms from above Inverey.

We have just spoken of "low hills", but that term must be considered as comparative; these hills are backed by others, higher and higher as they recede from the centre of the valley, culminating on the one side in the Cairngorms, on the other in the Ben Uarns. Grand views of the former are obtained in the walk to Castletown, and many a lingering look is taken as they are presented in ever-changing aspect.

"Inverey is an excellent example of a Highland clachan", writer after writer has recorded, indicating the while that it was a poverty-

striken hamlet composed of miserable looking huts. In the first half of the century—aye and even later—the houses both in Inverey and Castletown are described as seemingly "destined for the abode of wretchedness: the roofs are composed of clods supported on rafters; the floor is naked earth . . . smoke and darkness prevail within". Doubtless in these days poverty was ever present, but starvation was unknown and the people were contented and happy. We have watched the falling into line of Inverey—gradually the old thatched biggins that affroded us shelter in our early wanderings have disappeared and cottages of a modern type have taken their place; the Inverey of our youth is no more. Yet while we sigh for the homely comforts of the past we seem to enjoy the refinements and elegancies of modern days. There are two villages of Inverey, the Meikle and the Little. The latter is on the west side of Ey Burn, the former on the east. Glen Ey has widened to a strath where the bridge carries the road over its brattling burn, but beyond, to the south, we have an excellent specimen of a Highland glen, with a burn rising on the Mountains of Hell; such is the interpretation of the harmless words, the "Ben Uarns". In their exact Gaelic form they read "Beinn Iutharn Mhor" and "Beinn Iutharn Bheag", but the Bens themselves suggest nothing of the lower regions, unless, indeed, they are extinct volcanoes—which, however, a geological friend says they are not. Glen Ey forms part of Mar Forest; far up there is a little shooting-box, Alltanodhar Sheiling, seldom occupied in recent years. Few penetrate to its

Meikle Inverey.

solitudes; its loneliness is such that even the deer must pine for human society! A short avenue of firs leads to the Sheiling door; the trees cast a gloom over the place, conjuring up weird and romantic scenes.

The Falls of Connie.

Allt Connie is the principal tributary of the Ey; a few yards above the confluence the Falls of Connie make a miniature Linn.

The Farquharsons were once supreme in upper Deeside; their "lands" stretched from the Wells to the watershed of the Tanner—save for a narrow strip from Morven, along Strath Girnock, to Dubh Loch, where the Gordons held sway. The Inverey Farquharsons were always ready in turbulent times to take to the field, never turning a deaf ear to a call to arms. They had their Castle in Meikle Inverey, a substantial proof of their dignity and importance. Alas, it is now a crumbling ruin, often heedlessly passed by. A dyke

Inverey Castle.

encloses the decaying walls; a few trees stand silent sentinels, reminding us of a Highland Chieftain's judicial dignities and powers. The Gallows Tree—the Laird's Tree *par excellance*—was an indispensable adjunct of the Laird's Castle; can we readily forget the injunction of the good wife to her laggard husband: "Gae awa', John, an' be hanged, an' nae anger the Laird"? Like many a greater family the Inverey Farquharsons have passed away—except in ballad and tradition:

> Inverey came down Deeside whistlin' and playin',
> He was at brave Braichlie's yetts ere it was dawin'.
> . . . . . .
> Frae the head o' the Dee, to the banks o' the Spey,
> The Gordons may mourn him, and ban Inverey.

The Farquharsons must have made an early start! How merrily they seem to have marched on their bloody errand—for which in due time they received well-merited retribution. They appear to have outlived their time, clinging with almost fatal persistence to the "divine right" of Highland gentlemen to descend on the richer Lowlanders and "lift" their cattle. The Invercauld Farquharsons would seem to have adapted themselves more promptly to altered times, even taking the liberty of hanging, for a slight misdemeanour, one of their Inverey cousins on the Laird's Tree. The Inverey cateran objected to the proceeding on the merits, as well as to the indignity of being suspended on his own "Tree", but without avail. He is reported to have prophesied that the Tree would be standing when the Farquharsons of Invercauld should have disappeared; the Tree remains, but the direct male line has died out.

The Castle of Inverey is believed to have been burned after the battle of Killiecrankie by a party of the royal troops; then came evil days for the "Black Colonel", as the then Laird was called. He fled up the glen to a deep, narrow, rocky gorge formed by the Ey, now familiar to tourists as the Colonel's Bed. The gorge is a beautiful one, particularly up-stream from the Bed when autumn has goldened the leaves. Here he lay in concealment for some

time, his "bed" a recess on a rocky ledge, a dangerous "shelf" to visitors; one cannot help thinking that the Colonel must have been in nightly danger of rolling into the deep black pool below! If tradition is to be believed he was occasionally not without agreeable company. His Annie Bhan, however, passed away and was laid to rest in Inverey churchyard, where, shortly before his death, he gave orders for his own interment. His relations, naturally enough, did not see the propriety of this arrangement, preferring the family burial ground at Castletown. But the corpse was obstinate, and again and again was to be found of a morning above ground. At last his widow yielded to supernatural powers and the body was transferred to Inverey. The coffin, says the tradition, was towed up the river with a horse-hair tether. Lately the natives have added to the "furniture" of the Colonel's retreat. Visitors to the Bed have pointed out to them his "table" and "wash-hand stand", boulders with a certain rude resemblance to the articles named.

The Colonel's Bed.

The burial ground of Inverey is behind the Castle, towards the mouth of the burn. Disused, and neglected to such an extent that it is almost unrecognisable, it is the most remote on Deeside; the author of "Shon Campbell" might have had it in view when he described:

> The green Quadrangle of the hills
> to watch their sleep profound,
> And the Guadeamus of the burns
> making a homely sound.

Mar Lodge.

There are three buildings on the banks of the Dee which from their structural importance or situation are unequalled in the valley —these are Mar Lodge, Invercauld House and Balmoral Castle. Mar Lodge, the Highland residence of the Duke of Fife, is situated on the left bank of the river, a little below Meikle Inverey. The original name was Dalmore; according to tradition it was granted by James IV. to two natural sons of Kenneth Mackenzie, known as ninth Earl of Kintail. The Mackenzies retained Dalmore till after the rebellion of 1715, when financial difficulties compelled them to part with it to the Duke's predecessors. The present building was erected on the destruction by fire, in 1895, of NewMar Lodge, a modern house on Creag an Fhithich, "Ravenscraig", on the south side of the river. The Queen laid the foundation stone, which is thus inscribed: "This stone was laid by Her Majesty Queen Victoria on 15th Oct., 1895". Mar Lodge is sheltered on the north by Creag a' Bhuilg, a dependency of Beinn a' Bhuird, a dark pine-clad rocky hill; in front, to the south, there is a broad lawn, between which and the south road the Dee flows in a narrow valley more glen- than strath-like. Creag Bheag—Creag an Fhithich is its eastern extremity—one of the most beautifully wooded crags in Braemar, commands the south side of the valley, stretching from the Ey to Corriemulzie. The river is crossed by the Victoria Bridge, a private structure which is at times open to the public. There are many fine pines in the neighbourhood of the bridge, one of

The Gallows Tree.

which, "the Gallows Tree", on the edge of a gravel pit on the south side of the road, is a noble specimen of the Scottish fir. The narrowness of the valley, the steep hills on both sides of the river, as well as the situation of the Lodge on a park almost level with the Dee, though at an altitude of 1100 feet, have the effect of apparently hill-locking the demesne on all sides. The *tout ensemble* is charming; yet somehow one prefers the Ravenscraig site where graceful birches relieve the sombre pines.

The flood of 1829 was exceedingly severe in this district. The bridge over the Dee was carried off; the iron garden-railing, "modelled from that at the Tuileries", was prostrated; several feet of mud were deposited in the dining-room—not to mention other consequences, serious and otherwise. Embankments were afterwards raised to prevent the Dee making calls in the future at the Lodge, and, though not of an imposing character, they have, as yet, answered the purpose. The present bridge was named the "Victoria" from having been erected for Her Majesty's accommodation on her first visit, in the Duke of Leeds' time, to Mar Lodge. There is a large park enclosed for deer immediately to the east of the Lodge, which affords an excellent view, at close quarters, of these noble animals.

The road between the Victoria and Corriemulzie Bridges departs from the straight line to which we have been accustomed from White Bridge; high above the river, it proceeds in a series of windings, through trees, thus preventing an extended prospect. Ravenscraig comes well into view, however, as Corriemulzie is neared; it is an ideal site for a house. The original building was called Corriemulzie Cottage; on being enlarged it became known as New Mar Lodge; latterly "New" was dropped. Opposite, on the north side of the road, is Tomlea, with a summer house commanding an exquisite view of the valley. The "Eagle's House", with its tenant, so familiar to Deeside visitors, was removed after the fire of 1895.

Corriemulzie Bridge carries the road over the burn of that name at a point where a beautiful cascade is formed. The Falls, half-

way between Castletown and the Linn, though unimportant for volume of water, are nevertheless exceedingly interesting, and accordingly are much frequented by tourists. The bridge, with its elegant arch, forms an artistic background; the gorge is narrow, having rocky sides covered by trees and vegetation. Below the pool which receives the Falls the stream seeks the Dee through a charming miniature glen. The predecessor of the present fine road had crossed the burn a few yards to the south, but the old bridge had not been so picturesquely placed as the modern—a circumstance which does not generally happen in these utilitarian days.

The Falls of Corriemulzie.

The road east of Corriemulzie has many openings among the

trees, affording opportunities for viewing the beautiful valley. On the right Mor Shron, "the big nose", a mountain better known as Morrone, bounds the strath all the way to Castletown; on the other side of the Dee dependencies of Beinn a' Bhuird and Ben Avon slope to the river. The Quoich is seen joining the Dee in the most reluctant manner possible. About half a mile above its mouth, after being crossed by the north road, it flows over a meadow-like plain with no definite channel. The confluence is thus uninteresting, and indeed detracts a little from the beauty of the landscape. The marshy ground thus formed is known as Lochan a' Chreagain; the flood of 1829 sent the Quoich quite out of its course below the Falls.

Looking westwards, from a point about half a mile east of Corriemulzie Falls, one of the finest prospects in the Dee valley will be obtained. In the foreground, the placid river winds onward in a most deceptive manner; its speed is much more considerable than one would at first imagine. The valley is narrow, bounded by wooded hills on both sides; at the head also, beyond the Linn, mountains close the vista. How proudly Ravenscraig rears its crest on the south side! Tree-clad from base to summit, the stately stems of the larches on the upper part of the crag are particularly noticeable. Dark pines creep up the hill faces, the foreground relieved by birches, the green banks of the river diversified by gravelly or pebbly stretches. Often the red deer may be seen feeding by the quiet river-side. In autumn the beauty of the landscape is intensified by the scarlet of the rowans, dotted here and there among the pines and birches.

It is from such a point as this that Mar Lodge is seen to the best advantage. We do not mean the *building*—which makes no pretension to being more than a Highland shooting-box—but the *tout ensemble*. The Lodge, both the new and the old buildings, and the other erections attached to it, while near enough to be distinguishable, are yet so far distant that they are in a manner idealised. Standing in the Lodge park one cannot grasp the full grandeur of the situation, for "the wood is not seen for the trees";

Valley of the Dee at Mar Lodge.

but from our stand-point below Corriemulzie the full glory is apparent. Deeside abounds with landscape pictures of surpassing beauty; they are the rule, not the exception.

There is little more to tell of the walk to Castletown; the last two miles, beautiful as they are, suffer in comparison with the upper part of our second stage.

While the south road, as already indicated, is the usual route between the Linn and Castletown, the road on the other side of the river is also interesting. Glen Lui is entered from it; Lui Bridge, where the road crosses the stream, is a graceful one-arched structure worthy of notice. Near Clabocaidh, which the Ordnance Surveyors have mercifully given as Clabokie, a view of Inverey and Glen Ey may be obtained; Mar Lodge of course is not seen to advantage. The road to the Quoich is lined by firs; one complains that the prospect is occasionally quite shut out by their density. The landscape, however, opens as the Quoich is neared, there being no trees in that neighbourhood between the road and the river. As the bridge is approached a by-path may be observed leading to the Falls; a driving road leads eastward from them to the turnpike.

The Falls of Quoich

We have said that the Linn has been described as the most beautiful spot in the whole run of the Dee. Yet the Falls of Quoich would make one waver in this belief, were it not for the fact that the Quoich is not the Dee! Looking across from the

south side of the Dee, there is no indication of the charming spot concealed among the pines, which here, and for some distance upward, adorn Glen Quoich; the gorge of the Falls comes as a surprise. The Quoich rises between Beinn a' Bhuird and Ben Avon, the main source being a lochan on the former mountain. Pennant in his famous Tour was informed that this lochan "had ice the latter end of July". The Quoich, from its mountain cradle to Bridge of Quoich, is a very lively stream, the latter part of its course bordered with splendid firs and drooping birches. For some distance above the Falls the stream rushes through narrow clefts and over rocky ledges, and as there is a deep border of trees enclosing the scene the effect is exceedingly beautiful. The Falls themselves are of the nature of the Linn of Dee, presenting precisely the same features, but they are more impressively picturesque. The channel, while not so deep, is narrower; the rush of the water seems even greater than that at the Linn. Free of the Falls, the Quoich continues its rapid course between high rocky walls and steep banks bristling with trees; a saw-mill appropriates part of its power, and the glory of the corrie-born burn is lost in Lochan a' Chreagain. A foot-bridge spans the stream at the Falls and is of advantage in viewing them. Above this bridge the Quoich has worn basins in the rock, one of which is particularly noticeable. It is known as the Earl of Mar's Punch-bowl, from a tradition that it was used upon occasion in that capacity by the Earl in some of his hunting excursions; we are even told that a big jorum of punch was made here after the raising of the standard at Castletown! We should prefer our toddy under a roof less blue and with more sheltering curtains than pine branches! Be that as it may, time, *edax rerum*, has now eaten through the bottom of the traditional Punch-bowl, and so put an end to the use of the "Quaich". "Quaich", or "Cuach" more properly, is a goblet or drinking-cup; the punch-bowls must be of considerable antiquity, as it is asserted that they gave name to the stream itself.

Glen Quoich is still remarkable for its pines, though we find Cordiner, in his "Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland",

bewailing their devastation, which he dates from the erection of a saw-mill in 1695 at the mouth of the glen. The saw-mill is still in evidence, but even the Member for South Aberdeen could not object to it as being antagonistic to the "Preservation of Natural Scenery". The sawmiller and the household of Allanaquoich—the farm on the east side of Lochan a' Chreagain—are now the only inhabitants of a glen once so populous as to require a corn-mill for its own use. It would seem that the district had at one time stood in awe of a certain character who bore the unenviable epithet of Domhuall Urrasach. Donald was a Mackenzie, claiming kin with the laird of Dalmore, but none was anxious to be on intimate terms with "Donald the Proud". One of his peculiarities was that his corn became meal without apparently paying either a visit, or multures, to the mill. In course of time it became known that

Glen Quoich—the mouth.

Donald conveyed it to the glen mill by night, without awaking the miller from his slumbers, who was thus defrauded of his "dues". The Highlander was not a man to be tackled in an ordinary manner, so the miller resorted to stratagem. Accordingly one evening before retiring to rest he slightly disarranged the machinery, with the result that, when Donald set the mill in motion, the ground corn flowed down stream instead of falling into the sack placed for its reception. Donald was completely nonplussed; his perplexity being, if possible, increased when he found that the water could not be turned off in the usual way. The miller appeared in response to Donald's repeated calls and speedily put matters to right—and was never afterwards bilked by Domhuall Urrasach.

CHAPTER III.

Braemar.

Here hills aspire
To crown their heads with the æthereall fire:
Hills, bulwarks of our freedome, giant walls,
Which never fremdling's slight nor sword made thralls.

BRAEMAR is both a village and a parish, a parish with the dignity of a district. The village, situated on both banks of Clunie Water, is double—each portion jealous of its individuality. The part on the left bank of the stream has long been known as Auchindryne, while that on the right bears the more obvious name of Castletown—a name now frequently applied to both portions. Auchindryne is built on land the property of the Duke of Fife; Castletown is on the estate of Invercauld. Each has its own hotel as well as its own "Jubilee" Hall, from which may be inferred that no small rivalry exists between the east and west sides of the Clunie. Though the village is insignificant in size, the parish is not, and, as far at least as extent is concerned, it might well rank as a county. The *quoad civilia* parish, Crathie-Braemar, extends from beyond Balmoral to the Wells of Dee; but, *quoad sacra*, Crathie and Braemar are once more separate charges.

Castletown is of great antiquity, and the royal associations of former times are considerable. Three kings of Scotland are more or less intimately connected with it—Malcolm Canmore, who built its castle; Robert II., who signed several charters there; and Kenneth II., whose name is borne by one of the surrounding hills. In the present time Her Majesty's annual residences in the parish and her visits to the village have singularly enough renewed in the most intimate manner the connection between Upper Deeside and the monarch of these realms. The village, which is the fashionable

Castletown.

capital of the district, is situated at a height of about 1100 feet above sea level, and, as it is almost mountain-locked, the scenery of the neighbourhood may be described as of the grandest Highland character, with no lack of the picturesque. As the village comes into view of the stranger two feelings are uppermost—the first, surprise at finding so many habitations in such a retired region, the second, delight at the charming position. Clunie Water, which rises on the Cairnwell near the Perthshire boundary, is a lively stream even where it divides the village, and joins the Dee a few hundred yards to the north of Castletown. The illustration represents Castletown as seen from the north bank of theriver, almost opposite the mouth of the Clunie; the glen of that name is indicated in the centre of the picture. Of the many charming views of the village which find favour with artists,

The Old Road—Invercauld.

we do not think any can compare with that to be obtained as one walks along the fine old road on the left bank of the river, between the Bridge of Invercauld and Mar Lodge. The village appears to hug the Clunie, but right and left houses will be observed creeping up the hill-sides, especially on Morrone. The hills in Glen Clunie and its tributary glens stand prominently out; to the left Creag Choinnich is a bold feature in the landscape. The more modern Braemar Castle, the churchyard, and, in the distance, Invercauld House, are included in the prospect; but the grounds of the latter, beautiful as they seem from this spot, are not seen to the best advantage. It is impossible not to contrast the Braemar of to-day, now one of our greatest and most important summer and autumn resorts, with the Braemar of the early years of the century. In those days the beauties of Highland scenery were little appreciated, and the finest watering-places of the near future were practically unknown. The minister of Kirkbean describes Castletown on his first visit (1817) as possessing an inn "tolerable according to the notions of the day, but such as was more suitable for drovers and excise officers, than any higher description of travellers". Times are changed now; on either bank of the Clunie the visitor will find accommodation of the most luxurious character, with small danger of meeting either a drover or an exciseman! With the revival of courtly connection Braemar asserted its undoubted claims for public attention, and has now established a position independent of the adventitious neighbourhood of royalty. Except by the pedestrian or cyclist long coach drives have to be taken ere one can enter Castletown; yet so numerous are its attractions that frequently during the season the wanderer may have difficulty in getting under a roof.

As already indictated no wide plain lies at the feet of the visitor to Castletown; hills up-stand all around, and one wonders how river and road are to penetrate between them. The great mass of Morrone, attaining a height of nearly three thousand feet, rises between the Dee and the west side of the Clunie, having

Auchindryne at its northern foot; the more picturesque, but less bulky, Creag Choinnich, with several tops southward and eastward, occupies the space between the east bank of the Clunie and the Dee. Castletown is built at the foot of its western slope. Carn Drochaide and its fellows, dependents of Ben Avon (whose "Barns" may be observed from Clunie Bridge), border the valley on the north side of the Dee.

Malcolm Canmore's castle stood on the right bank of the Clunie, a few yards above the present bridge. The "ruins" are considerable, but mostly overgrown with grass; what masonry is left may be described as underground—the stones of this ancient royal residence had doubtless proved too tempting when the degenerate natives were in search of building materials. The ruins are now so surrounded as not to be entered without some effort; on a recent visit a "clockin' hen" boldly opposed our entrance! Once on the top of the ruins there was a more serious danger—that of falling into the vaults. These have been partially explored in recent years, and a few "finds" made, but we are asked to believe that a red-capped apparition put the last intruders to flight. We cannot but regret that such an interesting ruin has suffered so much from the avaricious attentions of the natives. In Malcolm's time how different was the scene from that of the present day! The everlasting hills, the same yesterday and to-day, even to the "Barns" of Ben Avon, kept watch over Malcolm's guard; but the surrounding huts and hovels, sheltering under the castle walls, gave quite a different character to the outlook. Nevertheless, the tailor's workshop, which presses against the ruins, seems not a little incongruous; how are the mighty fallen! Being built close to a bridge over the Clunie, the castle was known as Ceann-Drochaide (Kyn-drochet), "Bridge-end"; at one time it gave that name to the parish.

The pre-Reformation Church, St. Andrews, by which name the parish was for some time known, stood about half a mile to the north of the castle; but it has been suggested that the site had formerly been in the immediate vicinity of the bridge. The ancient

name of the church is retained by the Roman Catholics, who still form no inconsiderable portion of the inhabitants. The burial aisle of the Farquharsons of Invercauld is built over the site of the church, and is surrounded by the churchyard. There are not a few interesting tombstones, but we shall content ourselves with a reference to two or three only; Dubrach's was referred to in the first chapter. On a stone commemorating the death of James Gruar in 1807 there are the following lines:

Four hundred years have now wheeled round,
With half a century more,
Since this has been the burying ground
Belonging to the Gruers.

Gruars, it may be mentioned, still flourish in Braemar. A head-stone of light granite affords an example of Her Majesty's appreciation of faithful service, and her well-known kindness as a mistress. The inscription reads:

IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF
FRANCIS CLARK.
BORN AT BELMORE, ABERARDER, SEPT. 1, 1841,
DIED AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE, JULY 7, 1895.
FOR 25 YEARS THE FAITHFUL AND DEVOTED HIGHLAND ATTENDANT OF
QUEEN VICTORIA,
WHO HAS ERECTED THIS STONE.
HE WAS BRAVE, HONEST, AND TRUE.
HE FEARED NOT DEATH, AND WAS PREPARED TO MEET HIS GOD.

"BLESSED ARE THOSE SERVANTS WHOM THE LORD,
WHEN HE COMETH SHALL FIND WATCHING."

The Dalmore Mackenzies had, it may be mentioned, their burial "lairs" at the west end of the church.

As in other parts of the Highlands there was here a deep-seated love for the Stewart kings, advantage of which was taken by the Earl of Mar in the "Rising" of 1715. Under the pretence of a hunting party in the Forest of Mar the Earl assembled a considerable number of his friends at Braemar in August of that year. After deliberations at Aboyne Castle and Invercauld House, the Standard of James VIII. was raised on 6th September, in Castletown, on a little mound barely a stone-throw from the ruins of Malcolm Canmore's castle. In a recent extension of the hotel

Braemar Castle.

in Castletown this historic spot was levelled, and embraced in the dining-room of the establishment. A plate thus commemorates the circumstance:

ON THIS SPOT
THE EARL OF MAR
RAISED HIS STANDARD OF REBELLION
1715.

The Highlanders, with the Earl of Mar as Commander-in-chief, thereupon marched southward by the Cairnwell and Spital of Glenshee. This event is celebrated in a popular song, of which the following is the first verse:

The Standard's on the Braes o' Mar,
Its ribbons streamin' rarely,
The gatherin' pipes on Lochnagar
Are soundin' lang and sairly.

The Standard was elaborately wrought by the Countess of Mar (a daughter of the Duke of Kingston), but an evil omen happened at its unfurling—the golden ball on the top fell, and the accident had a depressing effect on the assembled Celts, some of whom had been compelled against their own wish to join in the Rising.

The Braemar Castle of modern times stands hard by the churchyard. The present building dates from the middle of last century, but the original structure was erected towards the end of the fifteenth by John, Earl of Mar. It was burned by the Royal troops after the Revolution, but was soon repaired. After the Rebellion of 1715 the Mar estates were forfeited, and the Castle and its lands ultimately purchased by Farquharson of Invercauld, who, in 1748, leased the then dilapidated building to the War Office as barracks for a garrison to keep the unruly Highlanders in check. A Guard of Honour was stationed at the Castle during Her Majesty's earlier visits to Balmoral. Though such an authority as Macculloch dubbed it a "pepper-box"—there were no trees round it in his time—it has a certain fitness for its surroundings, of which the most imposing is Creag Choinnich. That crag, here seen to full advantage, bristles with pines, beeches, and birches as it rises boldly up from the side of the public road, the bare rock frequently showing

through the grass and bracken. The hill, though it may be scrambled up in many directions, abounds with precipitous crags, some of them vertical. Many a fallen tree rests on its wind-swept slopes. A cairn was built on the summit by a detachment of the 25th Regiment when stationed at the castle. "Choinnich" is another form of Kenneth, and the name is said to be derived from Kenneth II., who, according to tradition, watched the chase from the hill.

In these piping times of peace the Castle has, till quite recently, been solely occupied by a caretaker; but the lawn has been frequently used for the annual Gathering of the Braemar Royal Highland Society. This Gathering is a great social event on Deeside, the Games being often attended by the Queen and other members of the Royal Family. Racing up Creag Choinnich was formerly one of the items in the programme, but on Her Majesty's observing the injury caused to the competitors, by the severe exertion, it was abandoned. A great antiquity is claimed for the Braemar Gathering, some enthusiasts crediting Malcolm Canmore with its institution! In particular he is held responsible for the hill race, the first to reach the summit being rewarded with a purse of gold and a full set of dress and arms!!

Nearing the Summit.

Braemar is approached from the south by Glen Clunie, a favourite route for those who have no objection to the long drive (35 miles) from Blairgowrie to Castletown. The Clunie is a large tributary of the Dee, and has a northerly course of about a dozen miles. Glen Clunie is narrow, being confined by steep hills on both sides, the turnpike crossing the watershed at a height of about 2200 feet at the base of the Cairnwell. Except in the neighbourhood of Castletown the glen is sparsely inhabited. Tomintoul, on the north-eastern shoulder of Morrone, has been claimed by the natives as possessing the highest arable land in the country—a distinction to which, however, it has no right. About two miles above Castletown, the Clunie is joined by Callater Burn, whose head-streams rise on Tolmount, over which is the noted right-of-way by Jock's Road to Glen Doll. It is a lonely but pleasant walk or drive through Glen Clunie, but Glen Callater may almost be described as desolate, there being now only one inhabited house, a forester's cottage three miles up the glen, at the lower end of Loch Callater. This lake is a narrow sheet of water, nearly a mile long, out of which flows Callater Burn; it is familiar to hillmen as the western starting-point for the ascent of Lochnagar. At the lower end of the loch there is a chalybeate spring known as the Priest's Well, which in former times was accounted holy. Braemar, it seems, had suffered from an exceptional frost of such severity and duration that an appeal was made to Father Peter, the priest of Castletown. The good man's supplications did not remain unanswered, the first sign of the approaching thaw being the unfreezing of this spring. The priest's name, Phadruig, is retained by a crag and a small loch in the glen; Carn an t-Sagairt (Cairn Taggart), "the Priest's Cairn", the western summit of Lochnagar, is also believed to refer to this worthy man.

Beyond extending a hearty Highland welcome to visitors Castletown keeps itself secluded, and commercial affairs languish. True, the electric telegraph now penetrates to Auchindryne, though a hundred years ago the nearest post office was 32 miles away. Against this advance, however, has to be placed the fact that the

Braemar markets have gradually dwindled, and are now things of the past. The solitude of Braemar during its long winter can only be compared in its intensity to its popularity during the "season". It has even been asserted that were it not for curling the inhabitants would die of *ennui!* They are accordingly experts in the roaring game.

CHAPTER IV.

Braemar to Balmoral.

Here clear Dee hastens down,
By park and castled steep,
To gain the stern grey town,
And wind-vexed deep.

THE Dee between Castletown and Balmoral flows through a beautifully wooded valley lined with crags, tree-clad and heather-tufted. These crags are backed by Lochnagar and Ben Avon on the right and left banks respectively of the river, the former mountain especially being frequently prominent in the landscape. The prospect is always restricted; each little opening presents new features and new beauties. The portion between Castletown and Invercauld Bridge is the most outstanding; it is ruggedly picturesque as one looks up to the bristling crags, almost pastoral when the eye rests on the long haugh of Invercauld. But the glen is so narrow that cultivation is scanty, and the designation "strath" is here, and farther up the valley, a misnomer. We are apt to forget what we have already seen of the Dee, and inconstantly exclaim: "*This* is the most beautiful spot in the Dee valley"! We are not inclined to quarrel with those who admire this portion of the strath beyond all others; for after all there is no fixed standard; cultured tastes differ; it is idle to attempt to place Beethoven, Mozart, and Wagner.

As we leave Castletown, and pass the churchyard and the Castle on the left, only a small portion of the valley is visible; hills, as before, shut in the prospect in both directions. The view of Invercauld across the river arrests attention, and it is impossible to avoid a comparison between the situations of Mar Lodge and the mansion house of the Farquharsons. The latter is well sheltered

from north winds by a long crag covered with pines and birches intermingled, but which, while more diversified in colour, lacks the boldness of Creag a' Bhuilg. Westward, the peaks of Ben Avon and the corrie'd side of Beinn a' Bhuird lend dignity to the scene; eastward, the view is bounded by Lochnagar and the Balmoral hills. The house is about one and a half crow-fly miles north-east from Bridge of Clunie. Its architecture is a modification of the Scottish Baronial, and it is a mansion becoming the dignity of a great Highland chieftain. The adherents of the old dynasty met here in September, 1715, to arrange their plans, and from this house, for nearly the last time in Scotland, the "fiery cross" was sent forth through the glens. On the ninth of that month the Earl of Mar wrote from Invercauld to "Jocke" Forbes of Inverernan, his Bailie in Kildrummy, as to the Donside contingent for the Rising. In 1875 the house was greatly enlarged—indeed practically reconstructed—but the old historic dining-hall is still almost the same as in 1715. The Farquharsons claim to be the oldest family in Braemar; history allows them a genealogy of centuries, but tradition, as usual, goes beyond fact. One story has it that the founder acquired his position by a clever ruse; snow was rapidly melting in the corries of Beinn a' Bhuird when a wily shepherd approached the house and asked leave for his sheep to pasture on the haugh till the snow should disappear. The desired permission was granted, and

Invercauld House.

the shepherd and his flock became permanent residents, on the ground that snow was always to be found on Beinn a' Bhuird!

There need be no hesitation in describing the scene as sublime, or in asserting that the Dee between Braemar Castle and Invercauld Bridge transcends the Trossachs. Creag Choinnich, the Lion's Face, and Creag Clunie, all on the right bank of the river, are points in the landscape which give particular grace to the picture. These beautiful crags rise up from the river with varying degrees of steepness, and as even the vertical precipices are not without trees their aspect is most picturesque. Spruce firs are plentiful on Creag Choinnich; the Lion's Face, its immediate neighbour, is now so overgrown with trees that the lion-contour is lost. A century ago it was known as the Lion's Head; previously it rejoiced in the name Creag na Murtair, "the murderer's crag". There is a recess about a third of the way up Creag Clunie known as the Charter Chest. Here, according to tradition, the Invercauld titles and other valuable papers were wont to be removed in troublous times, Farquharson himself seeking concealment in it after the Battle of Culloden while the royal troops made merry at Invercauld.

Though the road on the south side has such charms, it must not be forgotten that the old road on the left bank has also its own peculiar beauties. Though it is here comparatively little used for wheeled traffic and there is no bridge over the river near Castletown, one's acquaintance with the district and its most interesting features is not complete without traversing the road between the old bridge of Invercauld and Mar Lodge. Our first view, on a summer's day, of the magnificent scene, from a point a short distance to the east of the mansion house still lingers in our memory. To the westward, the house appeared backed by Beinn a' Bhuird, with its corries open to our gaze, the rock A Chioch, "the pap", upstanding, and speckled with numerous snow-patches; to the eastward, the view was equally grand, Lochnagar, its sharp peak closing the vista, was wreathed with snow—mostly in long horizontal stripes, whereas on Beinn a' Bhuird they were more vertical. The latter mountain

appeared considerably lower than Lochnagar, doubtless owing to the point of view as well as to the flatness of its summit. Sheep were dotted over the lawn, and the red deer cropped the grass, ignoring their woolly neighbours, and favouring us with a passing stare. Several hawks were seen in hunting-flight, and the noisy oyster-catchers were clamorous. The river flowed on, silently, yet how swiftly.

In the Forest—Invercauld.

The mouth of Glen Sluggan is about a mile to the west of the mansion house. This glen is a favourite route to Beinn a' Bhuird, and is described by Her Majesty in "Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands", where also mention is made that here "a stone of the house in which Finla Mor was born is still shewn". This Finla Mor was the common ancestor of the Farquharsons, including those of Inverey, Auchindryne, Castletown, Tullochcoy, Monaltrie, Balmoral, Finzean, and Whitehouse. On a little knoll, on the west side of the Sluggan burn, there is a granite obelisk erected to the memory of James Farquharson of Invercauld who died in 1862, "by his tenantry and servants, to whom he was greatly attached". The glen, now commonly known as Glen Sluggan, was formerly called Glen Candlic; the full name we understand is Gleann an t-Slugain Chandlic.

Many valuable topazes, called here Cairngorm stones, have been found on the mountains on the north side of the Dee; one large specimen, weighing about fifty pounds, is preserved in Invercauld House.

Let us now return to the south side of the river opposite Invercauld. The wooded crags have evidently suffered much in recent hurricanes; here and there a patch has been bared, especially on Creag Clunie. A huge rock, part of the crag, it is believed, fell long years ago, and now rests on the north side of the road. It is known as the Meikle Stane o' Clunie, also as Erskine's Stone. At one time fairy-haunted, it was a landmark between the Erskines (or Macgregors rather) of Clunie and Ballochbuie, and the Farquharsons of Invercauld. It would seem that there never had been much love lost between the two lairds, and ultimately, as usual, the weaker had to go to the wall. The mansion house of Clunie was a little to the west of the "Stane"; a few yards to the east is the Queen's private entrance to the Ballochbuie.

Meikle Stane o' Clunie.

At Invercauld Bridge we cross over to the north bank of the Dee, as from this point to the east lodge of Balmoral the old south road and the old Bridge of Dee were, by an equitable arrangement, made over to the Prince Consort on his purchase of Balmoral. This bridge is a handsome granite structure massive yet elegant, but while built according to modern ideas it lacks the picturesque beauty of the General Wade bridge between one and two hundred yards farther down the river; the one, however, acts as a foil to the other. We have always found it impossible to cross Invercauld Bridge without a long look up the river and a long look down. Up—a fir- and birch-clad crag closes the view, while the broadened channel of the river has turned bouldery; down—birches and pines fringe the south bank, the graceful Stuc Eoin of

Old Bridge of Dee, Invercauld.

Lochnagar bounding the prospect: the foreground is occupied by the old bridge; grey with age, miniature trees grow among its arches. Duncan Calder, the seer of Glen Lui, prophesied that a thorn bush would grow from a pool here—and was laughed at. But in 1752 the pool was covered by Wade's bridge, and in course of time a thorn bush shewed itself on one of the piers.

Permission is granted by Her Majesty for the use of the old bridge by those who wish to see the Falls of Garbh Allt in the Ballochbuie Forest. These Falls are well worthy of a visit, but they are more noted for grace than for volume. "The Smuggler's Shank", an old route in smuggling days over Lochnagar to Forfarshire, passed by the Falls.

Proceeding on our eastward way we find the road wooded on both sides; there is no room for arable land. A private bridge, belonging to Her Majesty, crosses the Dee, the road leading to Danzig Shiel and through the Ballochbuie. The former name arose from the proprietors of a sawmill once stationed in the Forest having at the same time a business in Danzig. The house is one of the numerous Balmoral "shiels", and is frequently visited by Her Majesty. Ballochbuie Forest was bought by the Queen from Farquharson of Invercauld, the purchase being commemorated by a stone with the following inscription: "Queen Victoria entered into possession of Ballochbuie on the 15th day of May, 1878. 'The bonniest plaid in Scotland'". There is a tradition that the last Macgregor of

Danzig Shiel.

Ballochbuie sold the forest to Farquharson of Invercauld, with a suggestion that the transaction took place at the point of a skian-dubh! One account says that the two lairds accidentally met, and that, in order to disguise himself from his pursuers, Ballochbuie promised his lands to Invercauld should the latter let him have his plaid. Ballochbuie is an excellent forest with many fine pines, and in severe storms affords shelter for deer from the White Mounth forest. It had its "peat-moss"—still unexhausted; the old road and ford across the river are observable.

We are now at the Muir of Inver, a long narrow tree-planted strip, loved of roe deer, on the north side of the river, opposite the Ballochbuie. It was "planted" about the year 1829, and the trees prevent an extended prospect. Some might call the walk through it monotonous, especially at a part where the almost houseless road is uncompromisingly unbending. But there are undoubted compensations! The mixture of fir and larch never seems to pall; the lighter green of the larches brightens the scene. Anon the Dee will be seen "glintin'" through the trees as it flows merrily along. Indeed the sound of the hurrying river is a sonata; now heard as though it were the wind playing among the pines; then there's a brattling and a clattering; followed by a hum like the distant sound of a great crowd, toned and subdued into a pleasant ever-changing melody.

The Dee at Muir of Inver.

A deep
And solemn harmony pervades
The hollow vale from steep to steep,
And penetrates the glades.

With such music we approach Inver Inn, getting a peep of the "Barns" of Ben Avon as we near that noted hostelry.

Inver Inn is sheltered from north winds by Creag na Spaine, and is faced by the Woods of Garmaddie; there is now promise of the valley opening up. The old inn was on the other (south) side of the road; on 9th September, 1715, the Earl of Mar wrote from Braemar directing the Kildrummy men to assemble there "on the following Monday". Some of them required not a little gentle pressure, for they wisely opined that they would be safer at home than fighting for the Stewarts. "The Inver", as it is familiarly termed, is an excellent resting place with a long reputation. Among its erstwhile hosts "Civil Bonnets", as he was called by his guests, is not yet forgotten; undismayed by the first arrival of royalty and the consequent influx of important personages, the bonnetted landlord readily adapted himself to altered circumstances. Questioned as to how he conducted himself, he invariably replied: "I was civil to them, and gave them a bonnet". And so he himself became known as "Civil Bonnets"; at least so our informant told us over a bowl of Mrs. Thow's punch. But in "The Aberdeen Magazine", of June, 1831, we read of "our excellent friend, Civil Bonnets, whose whisky-bottle and humble bow are ever at command".

Inver Inn.

A few yards beyond Inver we cross Feardar Burn near its junction with the Dee. Here there is a meal-mill close to the

road-side, the site of which as a mill is of equal date—as we are told—with the burn which drives it. It may be pointed out, however, that there is no particular antiquity involved in that statement; evidence is not wanting to shew that Fearder Burn had at one time joined the Dee nearer the inn. Mill of Inver has quite a homely look, and its unexpected appearance is welcomed. We had almost said that it is the first mill we have passed on our walk, but that would be an injustice to the mill on the Clunie in Auchindryne.

Mill of Inver.

Glen Feardar, like other tributary glens of the Dee, was at one time much more populous than in the present day. The district is perhaps better known as Aberarder. It had even a church of its own, which was dedicated to St Manire; the burial ground may still be distinguished, and is overshadowed by a big larch. A market was also held in its vicinity. In this district "bonnet" lairds were numerous, and held such lively times that at last they made life impossible to each other, and their continual feuds rendered cultivation impracticable, so that the natives had to choose between famine or removal. An appeal, however, was made to Finla Mor of Invercauld, Bailie for the Earl of Mar. He summoned these gentlemen, to the number of nineteen, to meet him in a certain barn, a common rendezvous at Aberarder, taking care to be accompanied by a sufficient number of his retainers. The lairds were at once put on trial for various misdeeds, when, as might be expected, each was found guilty of some offence for which hanging was the proper punishment. Sentence of death was immediately pronounced, and soon eighteen of them were pendent

from the rafters. The nineteenth appears to have been the only criminal wise enough to avoid the hangman's rope. Alarmed at the non-return of his companions, who were led out one by one to the improvised judgment hall, he seized an unexpected opportunity and escaped. Lairds, even "bonnet" ones, could not be "justiced" in such a wholesale manner without their friends raising some outcry. The judge was accused of private administration of justice as well as secret execution; but he triumphantly shewed his superior that his court had more than 365 windows—for the barn was made of wicker-work like many other erections of the time. The glen was formerly noted for its fairies, while it also boasted a giant of enormous proportions. His grave is still pointed out far up the burn, and as it is about twenty feet long there need not have been much lamentation at his decease. A famous "Pass", the Bealach Dearg, crosses the head of the glen and leads over the Gairn to Inchrory. The Braemar end of this Bealach was close to the churchyard. Tullochcoy, a small estate on the left bank of Feardar Burn near the mill, was at one time the property of a member of the Farquharson family, but the laird was indiscreet enough to take part in the rising of 1715, with the result that he had to part with his patrimony to Invercauld.

Resuming our walk along the valley, we notice a change in the character of the trees which line the road. As soon as Feardar Burn is crossed, birches, of which there are a great number, monopolise the hill slopes on our left, and the change is not unpleasant. A few minutes' walk brings us to a noted point on Deeside—Carn na cuimhne, "the cairn of remembrance". The old turnpike may be traced on our right; between it and the river, opposite the mouth of Gelder Burn, a flagstaff draws attention to the cairn. It is enclosed by a dyke, larches also marking off the ancient rendezvous. "Carn na cuimhne" was the slogan, or war-cry, of the Farquharsons, and the cairn itself was thus formed: each man as he came up to the muster ground added a stone to the heap; on the return from the expedition each survivor removed a stone; those left, representing the fallen and missing, were added to the

cairn. Thus the latter represented the losses of the clan, and was a veritable "cairn of remembrance".

The road now passes through what was a clachan known as the Street of Monaltrie. The "Street", which has completely disappeared, was built for the occupation of local soldiers on the disbanding of their regiments after the close of the American war. Monaltrie House stood on the hill-face to the left, and was burned while in the occupancy of Government troops after the battle of Culloden. The house was rebuilt under the shadow of Craigendarroch; but the Farquharsons of Monaltrie, of Inverey, of Auchindryne, of Tullochcoy, of Balmoral, are gone.

The "steep frowning glories of dark Lochnagar" look down on us at Carn na cuimhne; we now distinguish the highest peak as well as the symmetrical Meikle Pap; between them is the great corrie with its "frowning glories". As we dally by the way, enjoying the view up Glen Gelder, a heron settles down at the mouth of the burn, and, "with stately step and slow", proceeds to search for food. The coincidence of "the heron stalks" in this vicinity, mentioned by Saunders Laing in his "Caledonian Itinerary", struck us as almost comical.

Below Carn na cuimhne the valley broadens and Balmoral comes into view.

CHAPTER V.

Balmoral.

Hail to thy waters! swiftly flowing Dee!
Hail to their shaded pure transparency;
Hail to the royal oak and mountain pine,
With whose reflected pride those waters shine.

WE have now, in our journey from Braeriach's top and the pellucid waters of the Wells, reached, almost, the midway station on the Royal Dee. That of itself were good reason for pausing here, longer than at any other point, on our walk; but there is much else at this point on the northern road down Dee. Look around! Saw you ever nature and art so united? River, mountains, trees, rocks, houses, all blend into one most perfect whole. No wonder that we stop, and gaze across the river at yonder stately pile; no wonder that our beloved Queen says in "Leaves": "Every year my heart becomes more fixed in this dear Paradise, and so much so now, that all has become my dear Albert's own creation, own work, own building, own laying out, as at Osborne, and his great taste, and the impress of his dear hand have been stamped everywhere". With touching pathos these simple words come home to all. On 8th September, 1848, the Queen and Prince Albert saw Balmoral for the first time, and, in concluding her description of the scene, Her Majesty writes: "All seemed to breathe freedom and peace, and to make one forget the world and its sad turmoils". Fifty years have fled since these words were penned; and how many are the "turmoils" that gracious Lady has had, in the ordering of Providence, to pass through! In these, as in everything else, she has been, and is, a model to her people.

Between the mouth of the Gelder and Balmoral Bridge the

Balmoral Castle.

Dee makes a beautiful semi-circular sweep towards the north; Balmoral Castle stands with its rear very near the south bank of the river in the middle of this curve. Situated on a terraced haugh, the Castle is embosomed among pines and birches; the ornamental grounds are planted with trees of many varieties, from Wellingtonias to shrubs; on the higher grounds pines predominate. In front, to the south, hill rises on hill, culminating, some five or six miles off, in the bold outline of Lochnagar. The lower hills are charmingly tree-clad; westward, the Woods of Garmaddie and the Ballochbuie, mountain-backed, close the prospect; eastward, the valley, less mountainous, is confined by wooded eminences of graceful contour; while the river, as it hastens swiftly along, gives life to the picture. A fringe of trees along the road-side acts as a screen, and the Castle has become not a little obscured by the growth of trees planted within the grounds since its erection. To view the scene to the best advantage, a position should be taken on the higher ground to the north.

Balmoral was of old part of the great Earldom of Mar. A branch of the Inverey Farquharsons acquired the estate, and became known as the Balmoral Farquharsons. The lairds of Balmoral fought at Killiecrankie, and in the Rebellions of 1715 and 1745. In the latter, Farquharson appeared at the head of his men at the battle of Falkirk, where he was wounded. Latterly he retired to his other property of Auchlossan, farther down the Dee, and Balmoral was ultimately purchased by the Earl of Fife, in whose family it remained for about a century. It was rented by the Right Hon. Sir Robert Gordon, on whose death in 1847 the lease was acquired by the Prince Consort, who bought the freehold five years after. A cairn on Craig Gowan was erected "to commemorate the purchase of Balmoral Estate, October 11th, 1852".

Sir Robert Gordon added considerably to the Castle, which is thus described in "Leaves": "It is a pretty little Castle in the old Scottish style. There is a picturesque tower and garden in front, with a high wooded hill; at the back there is a wood down to the Dee, and the hills rise all around . . . The scenery is wild,

and yet not desolate". But the inconsiderable mansion of a county magnate was soon found inadequate for royal requirements. It was accordingly superseded by the present building, which was completed in 1856. The Castle is in the Scottish Baronial style of architecture, but with many deviations and innovations, which, while they add to the internal comfort, do not detract from the external dignity of the building. The outstanding feature is a fine tower; the whole structure, built of local light grey granite, which has been treated with a severe yet elegant simplicity, presents a general appearance at once graceful and commanding. The Prince Consort himself designed the main features of the building; the professional architect was Mr. William Smith of Aberdeen. Previous to the Queen's first visit to Balmoral, Sir James Clark, the Court Physician, certified as to the salubrity of the bracing climate of Upper Deeside, an opinion endorsed by the Earl of Aberdeen; and as now for almost half a century Her Majesty has regularly spent about a third of the year under the shadow of Lochnagar, these statements have been amply verified. Thus Balmoral, which was so recently a place of only local importance, has become of world-wide reputation. Her Majesty's guests have been the great men and women of the earth, monarchs, statesmen, and warriors, as well as the most distinguished scientists and artists of the day. Every profession has received due royal recognition, and been honoured with commands to appear at the Castle.

The Dee is crossed near the east lodge of the Castle by a public bridge, which, as well as the new Invercauld Bridge, was erected by the Prince Consort. Balmoral and Ballochbuie may be said to lie between these two bridges; and, in accordance with the arrangement already referred to, the right bank road was there closed—otherwise a royal residence would have been impossible. Numberless improvements have been made; there is scarcely a spot which has not in some way or other been enhanced in beauty. The neighbouring estate of Abergeldie, to the east, is held on lease by Her Majesty; and as Birkhall—at one time part of Abergeldie—

also belongs to the Queen, the royal possessions stretch for a considerable distance along the south side of the Dee. Several beautiful "shiels" have been erected by Her Majesty in the finest situations. Danzig Shiel has already been mentioned; in Glen Gelder, about half-way between the Castle and the summit of Lochnagar, there is the lonely Gelder Shiel, or Ruidh na Bhan Righ, "the Queen's Shiel". The following description of it, copied from "Leaves", affords a glimpse of the simplicity of royal life in the Highlands: "The Empress [Eugenie] was pleased with the little Shiel, which contains only two small rooms and a little kitchen.

Gelder Shiel.

It stands in a very wild solitary spot, looking up to Lochnagar, which towers up immediately above the house . . . We walked along the footpath above the Gelder for a mile and a half, the dogs, who had come up, following us. The Empress talked a great deal, and mostly pleasantly, about former times. When we came back to the little Shiel, after walking for an hour, we had tea. Brown had caught some excellent trout and cooked them with oat-meal, which the dear Empress liked extremely, and said would be her dinner. It was a glorious evening—the hills pink, and the sky so clear".

The rising ground to the south of the Castle is dotted with the residences of royal servants; the hill-tops near the river are surmounted by memorial cairns. The most remote cairn is the Princess Royal's, on Canup Hill in the Woods of Garmaddie, opposite the

Inver; the most outstanding is a large granite pyramid, prominent from the public road, on pine-clad Creag an Lurachain, one of the tops of Creag a' Ghobhainn, "the blacksmith's craig": "To the beloved memory of Albert, the great and good Prince Consort, erected by his broken-hearted Widow, Victoria R., August 21st, 1862". Craig Gowan, a corruption of Creag a' Ghobhainn, a beautiful hill covered with birches, is of almost historical importance. Numerous bonfires have here commemorated royal and national events; perhaps the celebration, on 10th September, 1855, of the fall of Sevastopol, and a Scottish poet's verses thereupon, of which we quote two stanzas, have attracted most attention:

A horseman sweeps at the dead of night
  Through the forest braes of Mar;
And headlong is his star-lit flight—
  The messenger of war!
Wildly panteth his foaming steed,
  Yet for brae nor bank stays he,
But flies, with a Highland eagle's speed,
  By the rushing waves of Dee.
In the cot the herd-boy lifts his head
  At the strange and startling sound;
And stares, with slumber's wondering dread,
  As the hoof-sparks flash around.
The roe-buck springs from his lonely lair
Beneath the birch-tree's branches fair,
  While down his sides the fear-drops stream;
And the white owl sails through the troubled air,
  Like the creature of a dream!

But on flies the steed, with flowing mane,
  On his dark and desolate track,
And proudly he champeth the useless rein,
  For Vict'ry rides on his glossy back!
On to the gentle Lady's halls,
  Who wears old Scotland's crown;
And "Hurrah, hurrah", the horseman calls,
  "Sevastopol is down"!
    Swift as light
    Is the tidings' flight,
And, with beating heart, but air serene,
  'Neath the glorious stars of a Highland night,
    Forth steps the Queen!
"Fire the pile on Craig Gowan's height"!
  The fair Victoria cries,

While the triumph-glance of Britannia's might
Beams through her queenly eyes :—
"Light the pile on Craig Gowan high,
Light the mountain's head,
Till every peak 'neath my Highland sky
With the victory-fire is red"!

The news was conveyed by the station-master of Banchory, the then nearest railway station and telegraph office to Balmoral. The bonfire had been prepared the previous year, a false report having caused its premature construction. Times are changed, and so are we; a better instance of this cannot be imagined than the recent journey of the Czar of Russia to Balmoral, when such a national welcome was extended to him; "byegones are byegones". One cannot help admiring the forethought of the canny Aberdonians in having removed the Sevastopol cannon from the public square of their city to the secluded grounds of Robert Gordon's College!

There are several statues and other memorials within the Castle grounds that require particular mention. The first is the bronze Jubilee statue of the Queen, which stands on a granite pedestal, and "was erected by the tenants and servants on the properties of Balmoral, Birkhall, and Abergeldie, together with the servants in Her Majesty's Household, natives of Crathie, in commemoration of the 50th year of her reign". There is also a statue to the Prince Consort, by Theed; the Prince is represented in Highland costume, his right hand resting on the head of a favourite dog, the left grasping a rifle. The base is of rustic design, consisting of rough blocks of granite, with the simple inscription: "Albert, 15th Oct., 1867". There is also a granite obelisk to the Prince's memory erected "by the servants and tenants on the estates of Balmoral, Abergeldie, and Birkhall, as a humble tribute of affection for their beloved Master, 1862".

Lochnagar is the highest mountain on the south side of the Dee, and of all the great mountains of Scotland none is more generally or deservedly popular. Its elegant contour, its great corries, and its lochs combine to render it of the utmost interest to lovers of nature; while it has gained no small repute from Her

Lochnagar—"the steep frowning glories".

Majesty's long residence at its base, as well as by him on whom Lochnagar through Ida looked on Troy :

> Years have rolled on, Lochnagar, since I left you,
> Years must elapse ere I tread you again ;
> Nature of verdure and flowers has bereft you,
> Yet still are you dearer than Albion's plain.
> England ! thy beauties are tame and domestic
> To one who has roved o'er the mountains afar :
> Oh for the crags that are wild and majestic !
> The steep frowning glories of dark Lochnagar !

In spite of Byron's admiration for Lochnagar, it has been said that he never climbed its steep sides ; certainly in his time the taste for mountaineering was little developed. We do not care, however, to go behind the scenes, or to enquire too narrowly how the poet was so fortunate in his inspiration. Suffice it to say that poetry and fact are in this instance wedded, and had not Byron "discovered" Lochnagar some other would. Almost all the way from the Wells this mountain has been an object of distant admiration ; a personal acquaintance compels adoration. Lord Tennyson, in the recently issued Memoir of his father, lets the world, for the first time, know that the famous Locksley Hall poem is not a personal experience of the Laureate ; no more does Byron in his verses describe how *he* "roved a young Highlander o'er the dark heath". Standing about Ballaterach, he must frequently have gazed on "dark Lochnagar", but the lame boy was not likely to be able to climb "where the snow-flake reposes". The genius of these poets was quite equal to the creation and construction of both poems, without the one suffering mental distraction and humiliation, or the other being laid on his back from physical exhaustion for the same cause.

Our progress along the banks of the Dee may be regarded by some as accompanied by an indiscriminate pæan ; there is, however, nothing to retract. It would be fruitless to catalogue the individual charms of the scene at Balmoral, beyond what we have already attempted ; we would humbly sum them up by saying that its prevailing characteristics are repose and dignity.

The spire of Crathie Church comes into view soon after we have caught sight of Balmoral, of which it is the parish Church. The foundation stone of the present building was laid by the Queen on 11th September, 1893; a bazaar in connection with the church was held in the Balmoral grounds on 4th and 5th September, 1894; and the church was dedicated on 18th June in the following year. These were naturally important functions, as Her Majesty made the old church her regular place of worship from her first visit to Deeside. The Queen contributed handsomely to the new building, which is moreover adorned with numerous royal gifts. There are bazaar and bazaars; but which other has enjoyed such patronage as the Crathie Church Bazaar, held eight miles from a railway station? The proceeds befitted the occasion, amounting as they did to £2400.

Crathie Church.

The Church stands on the road-side, a little to the east of the Castle, on a site occupied by its predecessor since 1804, at the base of Craig Ghuie, and at a height of about a thousand feet above sea-level. The structure is worthy of the royal parish, and is a fitter model for imitation than the exceedingly plain, not to say ugly, barn-like building which it has displaced. Built of light grey granite from Inver, it stands east and west and is cruciform, having nave, transepts and apse, with a central tower at the crossing. The south transept is reserved for

Crathie Church, 1804-1893.

the Queen, and has a separate entrance. Sentiment may occasionally regret the homely edifice where sovereign and subject worshipped reverently together for so many years, but the service is no less sincere in the new building, and one feels that the present temple is more becoming for divine worship. Nature, too, is helpful here, and inspires one with a holy calm as the works of God silently praise Him. As we neared the sacred edifice, the setting sun illumined the slopes of Lochnagar, tinting its sparkling snow-patches with a delicate rose-pink, and all was still. Suddenly, as we circumambulated the church, the organ pealed forth and choir voices sang:

"Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin".

Approaching the western entrance, the organ-blower beckoned us to a seat, and we felt it was "good for us to be there". And "Peace, perfect peace" rang in our ears during the rest of the walk to Ballater.

The pre-Reformation Church of Crathie was dedicated to St. Manire, whose name is retained by a pool in the Dee near the Castle, and belonged to the Abbey of Cambuskenneth. The ruined walls, ivy-clad, may be seen from the new building, surrounded by the churchyard, and close to the north bank of the river. The churchyard is a pattern of neatness, an example to many country parishes.

Not a few servants in the Royal Household who died at Balmoral are buried in Crathie churchyard, and to each an appropriate headstone has been erected by Her Majesty. The most interesting of these is that placed over the grave of John Brown, the Queen's personal attendant for many years. Brown's family belonged to the parish for generations; he himself was born about half a mile to the north of the Castle. The proverb that a prophet has no honour in his own country is inapplicable in the present instance, for in the district where he was best known John Brown is held in affectionate remembrance. The inscription on his tomb-stone reads:

THIS STONE IS ERECTED
IN AFFECTIONATE
AND GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF
JOHN BROWN,
THE DEVOTED AND FAITHFUL
PERSONAL ATTENDANT
AND BELOVED FRIEND OF
QUEEN VICTORIA,
IN WHOSE SERVICE HE HAD BEEN FOR 34 YEARS.
BORN AT CRATHIENAIRD, 8TH DEC., 1826;
DIED AT WINDSOR CASTLE, 27TH MARCH, 1883.

"That friend on whose fidelity you count,
that friend given you by circumstances
over which you have no control, was
God's own gift".

"Well done, good and faithful servant,
Thou hast been faithful over a few things;
I will make thee ruler over many things;
Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord".

The burial vault of the Farquharsons of Monaltrie is within the churchyard. One is struck with the number of monuments bearing Gaelic names, an indication of the former prevalence of that language in the district. Indeed it is not so many years since services in Gaelic were conducted in Crathie Church.

CHAPTER VI.

Balmoral to Ballater.

Now turn I to that God of old
  Who mocked not any of my ills,
But gave my hungry hands to hold
  The large religion of the hills,
And set me in a pleasance rare
  Of moor and wood and waters cool,
As Lebanon divinely fair,
  As purple Tirzah, beautiful.

ONCE more we have a public road on either bank of the river; that on the left is the more frequented. The south road is the more picturesque, but it labours under two disadvantages: there, as the saying goes, one cannot see the wood for the trees, and the construction of the turnpike leaves much to be desired. The present north road is a modern affair; its predecessor is occasionally in evidence, the old milestones clashing with the new. The fiftieth milestone from Aberdeen is opposite the Castle; not many yards to the eastward, where Crathie Burn is crossed, the ruined arch of the old bridge still stands by the road-side.

Old Bridge—Crathie Burn.

What may be called the public buildings of Crathie stand in line in this neighbourhood. We have the Post Office, the Church, the School, and the Free Church—the latter a neat little building on the

south side of the road. The Post Office, up the brae-face, is not usually thronged with visitors; but there are occasions when hundreds of telegraphic messages are despatched in a single day. A cross-road leads to the Church from the south side of the river, crossing the Dee by a suspension bridge. This structure is now reserved for foot-passengers; lightly built, it was never intended for heavy traffic. The original Free Church of Crathie stood on high ground on the south side of the river above the bridge, where also is situated, on the Abergeldie estate, the famed Lochnagar Distillery. The old building, which dated from 1825, stood nearer the suspension bridge, and was the first licensed Distillery in Upper Deeside; curiously enough, the distiller was an old smuggler. A hundred years ago we find Deeside described as a district where "the chief dependence of the peasantry" was illicit making of whisky, without which they would not have been able "to meet the exactions of their landlords". It is not so many years since all strangers were received with suspicion in many Highland glens, an apparent inhospitality which was accounted for by the natural fear that the visitor might be an exciseman in disguise.

The little village of Easter Balmoral is situated near the south end of the suspension bridge; about a mile eastward is an old hamlet, Clachanturn, which was at one time of considerable local importance, a large market having been regularly held there; and, were one to believe almanac lists, it still flourishes. The hamlet is about a mile west of Abergeldie Castle, and its rather peculiar name is understood to be a corruption of Clach-an-tigherna, "the laird's village", referring to the lord of the manor. The village has dwindled away; its Inn, its Ferry, and other institutions, have vanished, the "Smiddy" only remains. In this case there is no room for the old complaint in Highland parishes that "since the disuse of arms, there is scarcely a tolerable smith to be met with".

Bonnie lassie, will ye go
To the birks o' Abergeldie?

These are the first two lines of an old song; though the words

may be "doggerel" the air is tuneful, and accordingly Robert Burns transferred it to his "Birks o' Aberfeldy", with the result that our Abergeldie is defrauded. We do not remember that birches are particularly plentiful at Aberfeldy, but certainly they abound at Abergeldie, and are beautiful. The old song has long made Abergeldie popular, and sufficed to draw attention to a place now famous from its connection with Balmoral. The Duchess of Kent's occupancy for several seasons deepened the interest in the old Keep; then the Prince of Wales, and later the Empress Eugenie, had use of it; at present the Duke of Connaught has here his Highland home, in close proximity to his Royal Mother. The Castle is by no means imposing, but what it lacks in dignity is compensated for by picturesqueness and historic interest. The castellated portion claims of course the most attention, though its architecture has been described as faulty; but the additions made by the Queen have very considerably modified the faults and increased the comforts of the building. The main entrance door, which faces the south, is adorned with a horse-shoe "for luck"; thus popular beliefs are not altogether ignored in Royal Palaces! The original entrance was, according to custom, of narrow dimensions; within is the "dungeon", where the ring to which prisoners were chained in the good old times is still pointed out. Of all the inhabited buildings we have passed on our walk it has the distinction of being the oldest; history is silent as to the date of the erection of the tower. Abergeldie formed at one time part of the Earldom of Mar, when it is believed the ancient family of Mowat came into possession. There is a tradition that one of these Mowats exercised his powers so ruthlessly that "his 'Tree' was hardly ever teeme". The Castle is on the right bank of the Dee,

Abergeldie Castle.

but there is reason to believe that at one time both it and the site of Balmoral were on the left. Evidences of this fact may be observed by the curious, but will not attract the attention of the casual traveller. Traces of the old channel of the river are particularly noticeable below the suspension bridge. The Geldie Burn, which gives name to the Castle, enters the Dee at the west end of the buildings, and formerly supplied water to a defensive moat. The Gordons came into possession of Abergeldie towards the end of the fifteenth century, the first laird of that name being a son of the first Earl of Huntly. The present proprietor is the sixteenth Gordon in possession, and has the honour of being the only member of the great family of that name, who were once such territorial magnates in Deeside, still in possession of his ancestral acres.

The mountain-measuring parson, whom we have already quoted, visited Abergeldie in 1810, and, in referring to the hospitality he experienced from Captain and Mrs. Gordon, states that their "excellent birch wine appeared to me superior to the finest Champagne"; another writer calls it "delicious". Birch trees are probably as numerous now as they were then in this neighbourhood, but the making of wine from them—which, by the way, was rather a tedious process—has long been discontinued. The last occasion of which we have mention of this native wine being produced at Abergeldie was at the funeral of the laird who died in 1831.

About half a mile up the Geldie Burn the site of St. Columba's Chapel may be observed, surrounded by a small burial ground, fringed with trees. The walls of the Chapel—which some hold was dedicated to St. Valentine—are completely gone; but part was standing until the middle of last century, when it was removed by neighbouring farmers to build dykes. The burial ground, like that of Inverey, contains no tombstones; the last interment, that of a soldier known as "the Blue Drummer", is said to have taken place about a hundred and fifty years ago. Certainly in pre-Reformation days there appears to have been no lack of places of

worship in Deeside, and, though small and mean judged by the present standard, they were conveniently situated and suitable for the requirements of the age. It may be mentioned here that there was also a Chapel at Balmoral, of which both site and name have been lost; and there are other doubtful instances in the valley.

Creag nam Ban, "the women's crag", on the south side of the river, overlooks Abergeldie Castle. It is a beautifully wooded eminence, and commands a particularly fine view of Strathdee. Balmoral Castle is seen, but not Abergeldie; among the mountains visible may be named Lochnagar, the Coyles of Muick, Mount Keen, Morven, Craigendarroch, Geallaig and the Cairngorms. The scene, mountain and valley, reminds us that

> A lovelier stream than Dee, Phœbus sees
> Not in his wide career.

The ascent is no great matter; try it, faire ladye! Moreover, on this hill our Princess Royal brought a Hohenzollern to her feet! The future general and emperor was glad of the encouragement of a chance piece of white heather before he risked a question, the answer to which concerned two great nations. White heather has its peculiar signification, and is not to be promiscuously presented! But according to tradition the name of the hill had been acquired from less pleasant associations—on the top we are told witches were burned. We have even had the hollow where the stake was fixed pointed out to us! It is just three hundred years ago since the laird of Abergeldie had judicially devolved on him the trial of a certain witch—this is matter of history; legend says that ultimately a well-known witch, Katie Rankie, was removed from the Castle dungeon to suffer on Creag nam Ban.

The tradition of this witch-burning appears also in another shape—a not uncommon feature. It seems that a warlock and a witch had both been condemned to death, and were imprisoned together in Abergeldie Castle till arrangements could be made for their execution. The witch, however, contrived to escape, but the warlock undertook to re-capture her if he himself were pardoned. Both, being considered experts in their unholy calling, were

obnoxious to the good people of the district; but as, if there was any difference in guilt between them, the woman was the more deserving of death, the warlock's terms were agreed to. He was accordingly set free, and had scarcely set out in pursuit of his associate when he spied a hare, in which form he had no difficulty in recognising the witch. Transforming himself into a greyhound, he gave chase, and had almost caught the hare when she changed herself into a mouse, and disappeared in a stone dyke. The warlock was equal to the occasion; the hound became a weasel and thus caught the mouse. The animals thereupon resumed their original forms, and the warlock led the witch to the place of execution on Creag nam Ban.

Till a comparatively recent date the access to the Castle from the north road was unique; the Dee could only be crossed by risking oneself in a big box, balanced between two lines of rope, called a "cradle", the venturesome visitor and the "cradle" being guided over the river by a guy rope. The most memorable accident occurred in 1824, when a newly-married couple, Peter Frankie, gamekeeper at "The Hut", Alltnagiubhsaich, and Barbara Brown of Crathienaird, were drowned together; the "accident" was attributed by some to the malignancy of a disappointed suitor of Babby's. A neat suspension foot-bridge has taken the place of the "cradle".

Between Crathie Burn and Bridge of Gairn the north side of the valley is dominated by a long hill, Geallaig "the white mountain", probably so named from the stones with which it is so plentifully covered. Its length would be monotonous were it not for occasional breaks in the outline, trees, especially birches, frequently bristling to the summit. A rather straggling hamlet, Micras, Western and Eastern, lies at the base of Geallaig, the inhabitants of which were at one time held in little estimation by their neighbours. Their houses were formerly of the very rudest description; now they have been replaced by buildings of a quite modern type, and one looks here in vain for an example of the Highland hut which, a generation past, photographers made so well

known. There was, centuries ago, a Chapel in Micras, the site of which may be distinguished, as one walks along the road, from a standing-stone which served for the reading desk, and is believed to have been at one time part of a Druidical Circle.

As we pass Micras, a frolicsome puppy darts from the wood and gives us a noisy, if not joyous, welcome. An old dame, faggot-burdened, soon follows and hastens to assure us of Ossian's harmlessness. We are all immediately on the best of terms, especially the collie, who is particularly delighted as we address him in the few suitable Gaelic words at our command. "You'll no be from Lochaber", says she, "like my doggie"? The old lady is extremely garrulous, favouring us with her opinions on various subjects. She is much exercised by the movements of the planets; to her astrology is no pretended science; she is not to be turned from her belief that there is "a heap o' truth in the planets". The Queen had passed that day with such a train that the dusty road was easily accounted for. "There's nae a Queen that ever I read o' like the Queen o' Britain"—we cannot but note the use of the word "Britain" in such a place. At one time, it appears, she had a grievance—Her Majesty's deer were wont to come down and eat up the old lady's turnips, but her complaint was duly heard. Oh, yes, she remembers when Her Majesty first came to Balmoral, for she went up the south side of the river, as she would not trust the suspension bridge at Crathie though it had been tested. She can also tell of the time when Sir Robert Gordon leased Balmoral; her

A Native of Glen Gelder.

mother then had a small holding in Glen Gelder, which she had to leave to make room for deer. Though provided with a better house, she had thrown a parting malediction at Sir Robert—he would not get a stag as long as old Jean was alive! Sir Robert's bad luck in the chase more than once caused him to inquire "Is that witch, Jean, still alive"? It would seem, however, that Jean's prophecy was not based on supernatural information, but was due to a knowledge of the erstwhile ambassador's lack of skill in handling the rifle. As we talk together an unexpected opportunity occurs for hearing her opinion on the new woman; it is conveyed in forcible terms. The incident was not without its grotesque side; a lady and gentleman pass us on cycles, the lady, who was of substantial build, being towed by her companion. The rope had apparently been accustomed to such work, for knots were numerous. As we parted we praised the surrounding country, but were told "this is not such a grand place as ye would think". Doubtless, from her point of view, she was right; a large patch on the back of her jacket bore written evidence that Deeside has to send across the ocean for bread.

Beyond Micras we pass Coillecriech, noted among travellers no less as a beautiful spot than for its famed little hostelry. The view from this neighbourhood is particularly attractive; the Girnock joins the Dee on the opposite side, having a hill at each angle of the confluence. The hill on the west bank of the burn is Creag Ghiubhais, "the rock of firs"; that on the east side is Creag Phiobaidh. Both are tree-clad, firs prevailing, but with not a few birches at the base; higher up, larches are interspersed. Honest "James Brown" rails at the "silly novel-readers" who call Creag Ghiubhais "by the ridiculous name of the Sister Hill, because, say they, it is so very like Craigendarroch, that it must be its sister! A pretty notion, indeed, which shows what comes of too much reading novels and other profane unprofitable works . . . for who ever heard of hills having sisters, brothers, uncles, or other relations"? These Girnock hills are, however, a beautiful couple, and we should not blame any "silly novel-reader" of the present

day who might dub them the Sister Hills. Farther up the Girnock, the Coyles appear bare compared to the lower hills; the distant prospect is closed by the crest of Lochnagar. The foreground of the picture is enlivened by the Dee, which here flows with considerable velocity, not a few "white horses" being visible. The river has formed several islands near the mouth of the Girnock; the two oldest are wooded, but the third, which dates only from 1881, is tree-less. Strath Girnock is now devoted to agriculture, but formerly it paid more attention to smuggling; "black bothies" were numerous.

But greater glens than that of the Girnock are now in view as we proceed on our way, for the openings of Glen Gairn and Glen Muick lie before us, and the prospect is promising as we approach the end of another stage. The course of the Dee for the last

In Glen Gairn.

two or three miles is irregular, with two great bends, the Gairn confluence being at the one and the Muick at the other. The

Gairn, which we cross close to its mouth by a handsome arch—the remains of its predecessor may be seen a few yards up-stream—is the Dee's largest tributary, its chief head-stream rising near the summit of Ben Avon, while another springs from a point in the glen within a mile of the Quoich. The valley of the Gairn is not remarkable for its picturesque features; Macgillivray says: "There is, in truth, little of the picturesque, and nothing of the magnificent in Glen Gairn". In the same chapter, however, the great naturalist describes the Gairn as winding "among birch woods, corn-fields, and green pastures"; and certainly the head of the glen, where it is confined between the two Craigendals, with Ben Avon towering above, is "magnificent" enough. The glen is about twenty miles long, the stream flowing generally parallel to the Dee. Cultivation is confined to a narrow belt, sometimes contracting to vanishing point, at others laboriously broadening into crofts. Sheep take the place of cattle where the heather-covered soil refuses to be tickled into crop-bearing; beyond the habitations of men the red deer claim sole possession. The "skirlin'" curlew, the whistling plover, and the noisy oyster-catcher unite with the heath-cock in making the glen lively. The matrons and maidens of the thatched-covered cottages are adepts at "a Scottish washing"; and, though they have forgotten the art of making wine from the birches at their doors, they are still familiar with crotal. On the left bank of the stream near the bridge may be observed the ruined church of the parish of Glengairn, with the burial ground which contains the grave of the last Mackenzie of Dalmore, but the parish has not forgotten its dedication to St. Mungo, for the faithful still worship at Lary, two miles up the glen. A little farther up there is the small burial ground of Dalfad, with the almost indistinguishable ruins of a tiny Chapel; beyond this is the little Church of the *quoad sacra* parish. Rineaton, now part of Invercauld, was long the property of a branch of the Macdonalds who claimed descent from the Lords of the Isles. Their burial ground is close to the old mansion house. Macgregors, also, were at one time numerous

in the glen, Dalfad having belonged to them. They bore their full share of the long-continued persecution to which their clan was subjected; nevertheless Dalfad sent twenty-four men to Culloden, of whom it is said no fewer than eighteen fell on the field.

The Gairn crossed, we have the old turnpike holding due east through the famous Pass, but the road *via* Ballater winds round Craigendarroch. Near the west end of the Pass there are two

Craigendarroch—from the west.

points not without particular interest. The ruins of Gairn Castle, an erstwhile hunting-seat of the Forbes family, stand on a knoll; of the building only a very small part of the wall remains standing, and even in 1831 it was spoken of as "now almost cleared away". The site is somewhat out of the way, and as the ruins are not imposing the old castle is scarcely observable. Near by is the farm of Abergairn, long noted for possessing lead; but several attempts at mining have not yielded profitable results.

CHAPTER VII.

Ballater.

Look, oh look, from the bower!—'tis the beautiful hour
When the sunbeams are broad ere they sink in the sea;
Look, oh look, from the bower!—for an amethyst shower
Of glory and grandeur is gemming the Dee!

BALLATER, the western terminus of the railway, is the capital, as well as the most popular resort, of the Deeside Highlands. The attractions of the district are numerous; the village is a veritable centre of beauty, with an almost ideal situation, only a degree less grand than that of Castletown. Nature, however, does not repeat herself; there is a series of pictures in the valley without any replicas. This spot, like others to the westward, is almost mountain-locked, but the particular feature is a tree-crowned crag. Craigendarroch, "the hill of oaks", is of little account for size, but its peculiar mound-like shape, its covering of oaks and pines, and its patches of bare rock, render it as noticeable as picturesque whether the approach is made from the west or from the east. The river sweeps round Craigendarroch, forming a large haugh on which the village is built. The opposite side of the river is commanded by Pannanich Hill, of which the slope facing Ballater is known as Craig Coillach. To the south-west are the Coyles of Muick, those fine miniature mountains which have more than once attracted our attention; from no other stand-point are these beautiful peaks seen to such advantage. Behind them lie the Conachcraig Hills, the range on the west side of Glen Gelder; and above all towers Cac Carn Beag, the summit of Lochnagar. This prospect may be obtained from many points in the village, particularly from the

bridge which spans the Dee, and is unquestionably the grandest scene in the neighbourhood.

The village, which now ranks as a burgh, had evidently not anticipated that honour. Its streets shew little appearance of plan; its so-called Square—in which stands the Church of three united parishes, Glenmuick, Tullich, and Glengairn—doubtless now presents deficiencies to the æsthetic inhabitants. Ballater, however, is not dependent upon the regularity of its streets, or the elegance of its buildings. Not that the summer visitor does not receive

Ballater Bridge.

attention—for it is to the strangers within its gates that the village owes its prosperity; and within the last few years numerous "villa" residences have been built in the outskirts. The village boasts of Barracks built in cottage style for the accommodation of the Royal Guard of Honour when Her Majesty is at Balmoral. The architecture is quite unlike that generally favoured by the War Office, the detractors of which assert that the plans for the Barracks at an Indian Hill Station and those at Ballater had got misplaced! The railway station is not unworthy of the district, and can boast of the arrival and departure of more royal and noble

personages than any other provincial station in the United Kingdom. Close to the station are the Albert Hall, Victoria Hall, and Gordon Institute, important buildings for the erection of which the burgh is indebted to the late Mr. Alexander Gordon, a London brewer, who was born in Strath Girnock.

The name "Ballater" is of some antiquity, for there is mention in the fifteenth century of "Balader", a little hamlet, long disappeared, at the eastern end of the Pass, near the present entrance to the offices of Monaltrie House, where also St. Nathalan's Church is believed to have stood. Nothing can now be traced of this chapel, but not many years ago the exact position of the churchyard was said to have been accidentally discovered. St. Nathalan's Day, was regularly observed till recent years, when football was played in the then wall-less churchyard of Tullich; now a prize-shooting is connected with the time-honoured festival.

In the Pass of Ballater.

Craigendarroch is separated from the hills on the north by a deep, narrow, rocky gorge, known as the Pass of Ballater. The craig on the north side of the Pass is Creag an t-Seabhaig, "the hawk's

craig", from which, at some remote period, Craigendarroch appears to have become detached. The narrowness of the Pass leaves little more than room for the road, which is almost overhung by rocks with trees bristling in the most unlikely places. This old turnpike is of much easier gradiant than the new road through the village and round Craigendarroch. Indeed one wonders why such a steep route has been selected, since nature presented a much easier way. A proposal was made to continue the Deeside railway as far as Braemar, and we humbly think it is matter for thankfulness that legislative sanction was then only granted to Bridge of Gairn. A goods line was thereupon constructed, where the road *should* have been; but it proved unsuitable, and the track now serves as a promenade for Ballater visitors.

Monaltrie House occupies a fine site at the eastern foot of Craigendarroch. It has been known in its time as Ballater House and as Tullich Lodge; and was the mansion house of the Farquharsons of Monaltrie till 1857, when Monaltrie lapsed to Invercauld. About two miles to the eastward, on a birch-clad knoll, will be observed a high slender obelisk, erected in memory of William Farquharson of Monaltrie, who died in 1828. He was a nephew of Francis Farquharson, the "Baron Ban", who fought at the head of the Farquharsons at Culloden. At his subsequent trial the "Baron Ban" was condemned to death and his estates forfeited; but he was subsequently pardoned, and on payment of £1613 0s 9d—how exactly the Treasury calculates values!—was reinstated in Monaltrie. Monaltrie formerly gave name to the local Inn which, however, dropped "Monaltrie Arms" with such haste that one is reminded of the fact that after the battle of Culloden,

Monaltrie House.

"most of the old signs of naval and military heroes gave way to the Head of the Duke of Cumberland". "I was yesterday out of town", says Horace Walpole, on 16th April, 1747, "and the very signs at the inns, as I passed through the villages, made me make very quaint reflections on the mortality of fame and popularity! I observed how the 'Duke of Cumberland's Head' had succeeded almost universally to 'Admiral Vernon's', and his had left but few traces of the 'Duke of Ormond's'. I pondered these things in my heart, and said to myself, Surely all glory is but as the *sign over an inn door*"! There is a very plaintive little ballad about one of the Monaltrie Farquharsons which is worth quoting here, though its *raison d'etre* has, we believe, become lost:

Hark! hark! it is the horn
On mountain breezes borne.
Awake! it is the morn:
Awake, Monaltrie!

One word to his fair bride,
Who's sleeping by his side,
We can no longer bide;
Away, Monaltrie!

She sits in her lone tower,
At evening's pleasant hour;
Dark shades around her lower—
Come back, Monaltrie!

What shrieks of wild despair
Awake the midnight air?
'Tis a frantic lady fair,
Who seeks Monaltrie.

That evening by his side,
Reposed his lovely bride.
Fair Agnes there has died
For Young Monaltrie.

The present Monaltrie House is in the old parish of Tullich, the church of which was dedicated to St. Nathalan, Bishop of Aberdeen, who died in 452. The Bishop is said to have resided here frequently and to have been buried within the church, which "long continued famous for miracles wrought by his relics, which were preserved there till the change of religion". Near by is the Key Pool, so named from an interesting legend connected with St. Nathalan, some of the incidents of which occur in other traditions. It records that Nathalan had committed a great sin, for which he considered that only exceptional penance could procure absolution. Accordingly he obtained an iron girdle which he locked, and, casting the key into a pool of the river—at that time flowing to the northward of its present course—agreed with himself that if

ever he found it again he should consider that Heaven had accepted his self-inflicted punishment. Shortly afterwards he set out for Rome in order, the profane say, to afford Heaven the better opportunity of shewing its powers. He had not been long in Rome when the inevitable fish was caught, and, on being brought to his lodging and opened, was found to contain the key which had been thrown into the Dee at Tullich. Needless to say Nathalan thereupon rejoiced exceedingly, and quickly rid himself of his inconvenient waist-belt; ultimately, he acquired such a saintly reputation that he was canonized. This legend is also prettily connected with the record of a great famine in Deeside, during which Nathalan sowed his fields with sand and was soon rewarded with an abundant crop of corn. When he began, with the assistance of his parishioners, to harvest the heaven-sent grain, a sudden storm threatened to damage it, on which Nathalan forgot himself, and grumbled, like an ordinary farmer, at the weather. In a moment all was again fair, but with this fresh evidence of divine interposition Nathalan felt his own utter unworthiness; and so, locking a chain round his ankle, he threw away the key. The rest we know.

The Pass of Ballater—East entrance.

The most famous pre-Victorian event of the century at Ballater was that of the "flood" of 1829, to which we have already made several references. On 3rd August, 1829, the thunder and lightning at Ballater were unprecedented, but the inhabitants retired to rest without apprehension, the river having begun to

subside. In the early hours of the next morning, however, there was a rude awakening, for the Dee had overflowed its banks, and a stream four feet in depth rushed along the streets, some houses being filled with water to a depth of six feet. The consternation of the people can be easily imagined, as, only partially dressed, many of them had to leave their houses. Sir Thomas Dick Lauder quaintly says: "It is impossible to say how many of the tedious out-works of courtship were swept away" by that flood! Considerable damage was of course done in the village, but the most unfortunate occurrence was the destruction of the bridge over the Dee, one of Telford's elegant structures. The present bridge, which was opened by Her Majesty, is the fourth which has been constructed, almost at the same point, within the past hundred years.

'Tis a glorious glen—'tis a royal land,
With its ridges of mountain blue;
They rise all round, like a brother band,
All clad in their azure hue.

Crossing Ballater Bridge, and holding up-stream, we soon find ourselves at the confluence of the Muick. Of all the Dee's tributary glens that of the Muick, "wild sow", is the finest as well as the most interesting. Well may it be called a royal glen, for the left bank of the stream is in Her Majesty's possession; it is only the right side that gives title to the "Baronet of Glenmuick". The particular natural objects of interest in the glen are: the Falls, the Coyles, Loch Muick, Falls of Glas Allt, Dubh Loch, and Lochnagar; the buildings include Knock Castle, Birkhall, Allt-nagiubhsaich Lodge, Gasallt Shiel, on the left side, and Braichlie and Glenmuick House on the other.

The church of Glenmuick stood within the burial ground, near the confluence with the Dee; in 1794 it is described as "a very old house, thatched with heath". It was burned on the night the foundation-stone of the new church at Ballater was laid. Some of us have laughed at the pulpit intimation said to have been made by a Highland clergyman: "There will be no Lord's Day here next Sunday, as my wife requires the church for a drying loft".

It can be gathered, however, that considerable liberties were at one time taken with parish churches; there is a tradition that the minister's wife of Glenmuick had nests for her poultry *inside* the church, and that the building accidentally caught fire, on the occasion mentioned, while she was looking for eggs with a lighted bit of fir! The burial place of the Gordons of Abergeldie is within the churchyard, but the most interesting tombstone is a rough slab close to the entrance gate, with the rudely cut inscription: "1596 I. M. 1722". The initials refer, it is believed, to John Mitchell, a native of the glen, the dates being the years of his birth and death respectively. Near the western dyke of the churchyard there are several coffin-shaped slabs bearing initials and dates only; some even without that meagre record. They are probably of considerable antiquity, as they must have been placed there when the art of cutting on granite was little known.

The ruins of Knock Castle will be observed about a mile to the west of the churchyard, on a little hillock, a spur of Ardmeanoch. Tradition says that there was a stronghold here in the days of Wallace, and that its then owners, the Durwards, had an underground passage connecting it with Gairn Castle. Ultimately Knock came into the possession of the Gordons, as part of the estate of Birkhall, and became a favourite seat of the lairds of Abergeldie, who allowed it to become ruinous about a hundred years ago. Strath Girnock, referred to in the previous chapter, was at one time possessed by a branch of the Forbes

Glenmuick House.

family that was at continual fued with the lairds of Knock. A Forbes ended the feud only too successfully—for himself. He surprised Knock's seven sons as they were casting peats, and, having slain them, stuck their heads on their "flaughter" spades. On receiving tidings of the annihilation of his whole family Knock fell down dead. Gordon of Abergeldie took speedy action, and condemned Strath Girnock to death. Forbes was immediately hanged from his own roof-tree, while his lands were forfeited to the judge, who also acquired, at the same time, the estate of Knock in succession to his kinsman.

The modern house of Braichlie is built on the site of the old castle of that name. The encounter between Gordon of Braichlie and Farquharson of Inverey is referred to in our second chapter—the interesting historical ballad is rather long for these pages. The south side of Glen Muick became the property of Farquharson of Invercauld in 1749, and was sold, in 1863, to Mr., afterwards Sir, James T. Mackenzie. The latter erected Glenmuick House, a large pile in the Tudor style of architecture, with a commanding position. Near it he also built an Episcopal Church, and, hard by, the family vault.

Birkhall.

Birkhall is a delightful residence, surrounded by trees of various

The Falls of Muick.

kinds. The original building, which dates from 1715, was a plain three-storied house facing the Muick; but considerable additions have latterly been made. It was purchased by the Prince Consort for the Prince of Wales, who re-sold it to Her Majesty, by whom it is generally "lent" to members of the Royal Family and other important personages. As shewing the changes that take place, it may be mentioned that, within memory, strawberries and cream were supplied to the public in the drawing-room, and so recently as 1845 birch wine was sold there at a shilling per bottle.

The Coyles of Muick have already been admired for their fine outlines. The highest peak attains a height of nearly two thousand feet, and is surmounted by a cairn on which there is a stone with the following inscription: "Erected by command of Queen Victoria in remembrance of the marriage of Albert Edward Prince of Wales and Alexandra Princess of Denmark, 10th March, 1863".

At its Falls the Muick makes a plunge of about thirty feet into a deep pool, forming a charming scene in the Linn Wood, at a point where the glen is much contracted. The banks of the river are graced with trees, and, though the sides of the glen are here rocky, vegetation is profuse; altogether the spot is worthy of the popularity which it enjoys. Even in Pennant's days the Falls were famous, for he tells us that the Pool was "supposed by the vulgar to be bottomless". Salmon, of course, are unable to pass the Falls. Up to this part of the glen there has been a succession of crofts, interspersed with wood; now the country undergoes a sudden change. Emerging from the Linn Wood, we appear to enter a desolate region; cultivation practically ceases, one small croft only is visible; we have entered the haunts of the red deer.

Alltnagiubhsaich Lodge, formerly known as "The Hut", is part of the estate of Birkhall. A hundred years ago the house was merely a sod-covered, one-chimneyed building, when doubtless it received its sobriquet; soon, however, it developed into "a most commodious cottage belonging to Captain Gordon of Abergeldie". It is one of the most charming of Her Majesty's Shiels; the Queen and the Prince Consort frequently spent a day

or two under its roof. Here also the Prince of Wales and other members of the Royal Family have passed many a pleasant evening after a day among the stags on Lochnagar. The house is embosomed among firs—from which it derives its name—and is described in "Leaves" as "our humble little abode". The ascent of Lochnagar is usually made by a path which commences at "The Hut".

Alltnagiubhsaich Lodge.

Loch Muick.

Loch Muick, which is over two miles in length, is grandly situated, being almost wholly encompassed by steep mountains. The declivities on both sides are grooved by torrents, particularly on the north shore, to which Lochnagar slopes, and its banks are fringed with trees. The Queen thus describes a boat excursion on

the loch : "The scenery is beautiful here, so wild and grand—real severe Highland scenery, with trees in the hollow. We had various scrambles in and out of the boat and along the shore, and saw three hawks, and caught seventy trout. I wish an artist could have been there to sketch the scene, it was so picturesque—the boat, the net, and the people in their kilts in the water and on the shore". Writing about the south side of the loch, the Queen says that it "is very fine indeed, and deeply furrowed by the torrents, which form glens and corries where birch and alder trees grow close to the water's edge. We landed on a sandy spot below a fine glen, through which flows the Black Burn. It was very dry here, but still very picturesque, with alder-trees and mountain-ash in full fruit overhanging it. The moon rose, and was beautifully reflected on the lake, which, with its steep green hills, looked lovely. To add to the beauty, poetry, and wildness of the scene, Coutts played in the boat, the men, who row very quickly and well now, giving an occasional shout when

The Falls of Glasallt.

he played a reel. It reminded me of Sir Walter Scott's lines in 'The Lady of the Lake':

> 'Ever, as on they bore, more loud
> And louder rung the pibroch proud.
> At first the sound, by distance tame,
> Mellow'd along the waters came,
> And, lingering long by cape and bay,
> Wailed every harsher note away'".

Glas Allt, "grey burn", rises near the summit of Lochnagar, and, flowing in its last stage through a deep gorge, forms a noted water-fall, about one hundred and fifty feet in height. Glasallt Shiel, the most remote of Her Majesty's Deeside residences, is built close to the shore of Loch Muick where Glas Allt enters. The Shiel, which is on the Abergeldie estate, was erected by the Queen, and its position may be briefly described as unique and romantic. It is solitary in the extreme—the nearest house being several miles distant—while it has the advantage of there being no thoroughfare. Dubh Loch, a mountain tarn about two miles beyond the Shiel, is reached by a pony-path; it is "very wild, the hills, which are very rocky and precipitous, rising perpendicularly from it". On a certain occasion when stalking on the White Mounth forest the Duke of Edinburgh shot a stag which took to

Glasallt Shiel.

the loch. His Royal Highness was the only swimmer of the party, and accordingly followed it into the water, and gave the *coup de grace.* Between Glasallt Shiel and Dubh Loch a small cairn will be observed marking the spot where the Marquis of Lorne proposed to the Princess Louise—Her Majesty, very considerately, having gone that day to Pannanich Wells.

The Spital of Muick is opposite Alltnagiubhsaich Lodge. As the name implies, an hospice had at one time existed here; it was succeeded by a hostelry; the latter, in its turn, giving way to a forester's cottage. Here the driving road ends, but pedestrians cross over to Forfarshire by the Capel Mounth, a noted mountain pass which had, no doubt, given frequent occasion for the exercise of the old churchmen's hospitality.

Glen Muick has taken no small space for its description, but it is an exceptional valley; and, if apology be needed, we must crave pardon for having dismissed it so summarily.

An account of Ballater and its vicinity would be incomplete without particular reference to Pannanich. The Wells of Pannanich are about two miles down the river from Ballater Bridge. Probably they date from the flood, but their history commences in 1760. It would appear that there was then an old woman at the foot of the hill, much afflicted with scrofulous sores, whose sufferings the faculty had failed to alleviate. A fancy seized the invalid to bathe in a bog at Pannanich, the bluish scum of which, somehow or other, attracted her notice. She bathed and bathed; the result can be guessed—she was completely cured! Though there was then no daily paper her case soon became famous; so from the bog developed the Wells. Farquharson of Monaltrie, the "Baron Ban", was then the proprietor of Pannanich; he erected a hamlet there for the benefit of the crowds that flocked to the now popular springs. The fame of the Wells increased so much that the hamlet of Pannanich soon became insufficient for the accommodation of visitors, and so Ballater was founded. Ballater has gone on prospering; but evil days have fallen on "Wells" generally, and Pannanich is no exception. There is, however, still an inn there,

beautifully situated above the Dee; and the springs flow as freely as ever, but faith is a vanishing virtue. It is amusing to read now of the curative powers which were attributed to these mineral waters. In 1793 a surgeon advertises in the "Aberdeen Journal" that he "will attend at the Wells every week, and will pay due attention to convalescents dispersed in different hamlets for the benefit of the goat-milk". The medicinal qualities of the Wells are stated to be too strong for the very young, old, or infirm, and the public warned that they would have "little effect unless continued a month or six weeks, and drunk only in the morning on an empty stomach". We are gravely told that "some people will drink of a morning seven or eight quarts without feeling the least uneasiness . . . but in no case should the quantity exceed two Scottish pints". A writer in 1825, speaking of the baths here, says: "None of them is very inviting . . . The lower classes are extremely credulous respecting the medicinal virtues" of the Wells; and "groups of care-worn and sickly creatures, whose narrow funds excluded them from the bath-house, were patiently catching the water as it trickled over the discoloured stones on the open side of the hill".

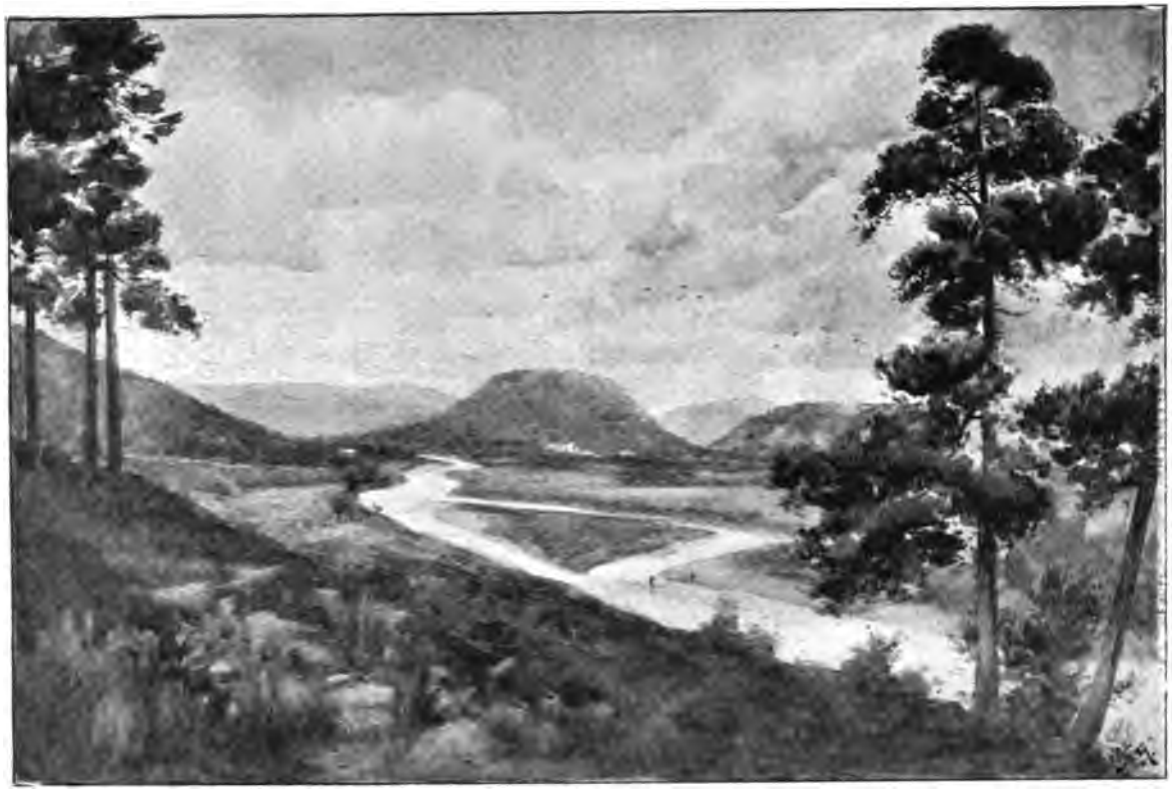
CHAPTER VIII.

Ballater to Aboyne.

Ye may wander at will, from the sea to Glen Lui,
From grey Silver City to heath-clad Braemar,
Seek shelter and silence on stern Ben Muich Dhui,
Or woo the wild grandeur of dark Lochnagar;
Yet ne'er in your roaming, from morn-break till gloaming,
Shall scene more endearing ere lighten the way,
Than where the Dee gliding, through beauty abiding,
Salutes with soft murmur sweet Cambus o' May.

WE leave Ballater with reluctance, for it is almost impossible to turn one's back on Lochnagar without a pang, though great and notable mountains will still be found confining the valley, and a succession of charming pictures awaits the traveller's gaze. Yet we feel that soon we must cross the burn which arbitrarily divides the Highlands from the Lowlands. We have said "arbitrarily"; but the boundary is generally accepted, and we are not prepared to dispute the popular verdict. Each stage of our journey has had its own attractions. If the stranger is not impressed with that fact from what has been shewn him, the shortcoming is by no means to be attributed to nature. The stage on which we are now entering differs much from those we have already traversed; variety always has charm, and there will be no lack either of scenic effect or of human interest.

There are two roads eastward from Ballater, one on either bank of the river; we shall mainly follow the more popular, that on the north side. We confess, however, to an affection for the road on the right bank of the Dee; it is more distinctly Highland than its modern rival on the other side; it is better wooded; and its roadway is not so painfully excellent. We do not expect cyclists



The Dee from Pannanich.

to be of our mind; but pedestrians soon weary of a trimly kept, monotonously flat thoroughfare.

On this south road Ballaterach farm-house, over a mile eastward from Pannanich, is notable as the residence for a short time of Lord Byron when a boy. It has been much visited by the poet's admirers; a "box" bed was full of interest, under the belief that Byron had occupied it. This bed, however, was burned in 1868, when the steading took fire; so there is an end to one fiction. The real bed was disposed of long before the fire, being turned into a cheese-press at Dee Castle, a short distance to the east of Ballaterach. Byron's landlord was a Robertson who had married one of the Macdonalds of Rineaton, referred to in a previous chapter. His second daughter was that "Mary" who is so affectionately addressed in the following poem:

When I roved a young Highlander o'er the dark heath,
And climbed thy steep summit, oh Morven of snow!
To gaze on the torrent that thundered beneath,
Or the mist of the tempest that gathered below,
Untutored by science, a stranger to fear,
And rude as the rocks where my infancy grew,
No feeling, save one, to my bosom was dear;
Need I say, my sweet Mary, 'twas center'd in you?

Yet it could not be love, for I knew not the name,--
What passion can dwell in the heart of a child?
But still I perceive an emotion the same
As I felt, when a boy, on the crag-covered wild:
One image alone on my bosom impressed,
I loved my bleak regions, nor panted for new;
And few were my wants, for my wishes were blessed;
And pure were my thoughts, for my soul was with you.

I arose with the dawn; with my dog as my guide,
From mountain to mountain I bounded along;
I breasted the billows of Dee's rushing tide,
And heard at a distance the Highlander's song:
At eve, on my heath-cover'd couch of repose,
No dreams, save of Mary, were spread to my view;
And warm to the skies my devotions arose,
For the first of my prayers was a blessing on you.

I left my bleak home, and my visions are gone;
The mountains are vanish'd, my youth is no more;

As the last of my race, I must wither alone,
And delight but in days I have witness'd before :
Ah ! splendour has raised, but embitter'd, my lot ;
More dear were the scenes which my infancy knew :
Though my hopes may have fail'd, yet they are not forgot ;
Though cold is my heart, still it lingers with you.

When I see some dark hill point its crest to the sky,
I think of the rocks that o'ershadow Culblean ;
When I see the soft blue of a love-speaking eye,
I think of those eyes that endear'd the rude scene ;
When, haply, some light-waving locks I behold,
That faintly resemble my Mary's in hue,
I think on the long flowing ringlets of gold,
The locks that were sacred to beauty, and you.

Yet the day may arrive when the mountains once more
Shall rise to my sight in their mantles of snow :
But while these soar above me, unchanged as before,
Will Mary be there to receive me?—ah, no !
Adieu, then, ye hills, where my childhood was bred !
Thou sweet flowing Dee, to thy waters adieu !
No home in the forest shall shelter my head,—
Ah ! Mary, what home could be mine but with you ?

Mary Robertson was six years senior to Byron, whose age when he left Ballaterach was about *eight ;* she married an excise officer at Crathie, and died in Aberdeen in 1867. Moore says that the "Mary" was Mary Duff; another authority gives Mary Chaworth that honour ; both are wrong, The district of Ballaterach has not yet forgotten the poet, as several of the inhabitants are lineal descendants of men who settled there when Dee Castle was originally built. At the neighbouring farm of Graystone the mistress of the house points out, with pride, several ash chairs, dating from last century, which had doubtless been used by Byron, who was a frequent caller at Graystone. He is said then to have had big prominent eyes, and to have been of a frolicsome disposition. The then tenant of Graystone, an ancestor of its present occupant, was a wheel-wright, who, when he saw the boy approaching, took the precaution of closing his workshop ! The neighbouring miller of Inchmarnoch had also to stop his mill when he appeared ! In spite of his boyish tricks—perhaps on account of them—Byron is lovingly remembered at Ballaterach.

Dee Castle is the modern name of Candecaill, "Woodhead", mentioned in an old song of which we have only two verses:

We'll up the muir o' Charlestown,
  An' o'er the water o' Dee,
An' hine awa' to Candecaill,
  It's there that we should be.
A red cloak o' calico,
  A saddle an' a whip,
A hingin'-mouthed bridegroom
  That lays me doon to sleep.

Candecaill was an ancient residence of the Gordons in connection with their Inchmarnoch estates, having been built about the middle of the fifteenth century. The first Marquis of Huntly made it his principal Deeside residence. The house was burned in 1641, and was allowed to become ruinous. It is not unworthy of notice that skilled workmen from Huntly were employed at the erection, several of whom, as we have already seen, settled in the district. Little remains of the old building—only a small portion of the west gable. The upper floor of the present structure is occupied as a dwelling house; the lower was till lately used as a Roman Catholic Chapel. The hill of Little Tulloch, overlooking it, has, as we are informed in "The New Statistical Account", "the remains of what is called 'My Lord's House' . . . The use of this building is reported to have been for obtaining a view during a deer-hunt". The Earl of Mar in his celebrated journey up Deeside in 1715—how war correspondents and reporters would have attended him in these days!—made a halt here, ostensibly to enjoy a deer-hunt in Glen Tanner, but really to further his plans for the Rising.

Inchmarnoch was at one time an independent parish, but long ago it became merged in Glenmuick. Its church and burial ground can still be traced; the Dee has made an island of the site, and the flood of 1829 exposed several graves. The bell of the church had, as was not uncommon in old times, been suspended from a neighbouring tree; Bellbrae, in the immediate vicinity, owes its name to this circumstance. The Marnoch "shooting" was no small function, and took place on 2nd March, old style. The

ruined church of Glentanner stands between the road and the river. It was rather a small building, of which only the west gable now remains. Its predecessor was known as the Black Chapel of the Moor from having been thatched with heather. This part of the valley is now practically without inhabitants; the site strikes one as having been inconvenient for the worshippers, but doubtless, when first erected, the church served its purpose. Mary Robertson of Ballaterach, whom Byron apostrophised, is interred here, so the lonely little burial ground by the river-side has a peculiar interest.

Glentanner Churchyard.

Returning to Ballater Bridge, we now set out on our walk to Aboyne, by the north road, with not a few backward glances, especially in the neighbourhood of Tullich, at the great panorama, one of the grandest prospects on Deeside, of which Lochnagar forms the back-ground. Tullich was once a place of no small importance; in pre-Ballater days it ranked as the capital of the district. Here were an Inn and Post Office, as well as the parish church; and here was held St. Nathalan's Fair. In the days when the Knights Templars had an interest here the churches of Glenmuick and Glengairn were vicarages of Tullich, a circumstance which shews the relative position of these now combined parishes. Now all is changed; the village has disappeared, and with it its hostelry and Post Office—the latter known as Tullich-in-Mar. Even the market betook itself to Ballater; but the cross, alas, was used for building materials, and the church is a ruin. The church probably dates from about 1450, but its font is of earlier design. There are three sculptured stones here which bear ample testimony

to the antiquity of the churches of Tullich—one probably referring to the days of sun-worship; another to the time of the Culdees; the third to early Roman Catholic days. Traces may still be observed of the fort built round the church by the Knights of St. John, who held the patronage in the thirteenth century. Within the church is the burial aisle of the Farquharsons of Whitehouse, the recently deceased laird of which claimed to be the head of the Farquharson clan. An uninscribed monument is an object of no little curiosity; the style is accounted for by the circumstance that it was erected in memory of a distinguished local Freemason. The famous reel of Tullich is said to have been improvised here, on a certain stormy Sunday, when the priest failed to put in an appearance.

Kirk of Tullich.

Tullich Burn joins the Dee a little to the south of the church; along its right bank there is a path, the usual route to the summit of Morven—the "Morven of snow" of Byron. Morven, "the big mountain", on the watershed of Dee and Don, has an imposing appearance; viewed from the other side of the Dee its shape is somewhat conical; seen from the eastward it has rather a massive individuality, though its outline is not without grace. It is a favourite ascent of mountaineers, as it is conveniently situated, and the view from the summit is varied and extensive. The Queen ascended it in 1859. The earliest recorded ascent (1776) is by Cordiner, who gives the following account of the view from the summit. The description shows little acquaintace with mountain

prospects generally, but is quite in keeping with the language adopted by writers in the last century after performing similar "feats": "On ascending a high and steep hill, and gaining its summit, beheld one of those astonishing Alpine scenes, whose greatness so wonderfully fills the human mind. The prospect immediately below was a wide-extended, deep, and dreary valley, a desert moor, spread with dark brown heath, where verdure seemed to be denied; and beyond, a range of mountains the most magnificent imaginable: these enormous piles seemed crowded to the sky: the clouds that broke upon their tops, and floated down the intermediate spaces, gave striking evidence of their immense magnitude and various distance: their shades mingling with the shadows of the clouds that hovered round them, made the vast cliffs towering above, look over the lower regions of the air in the most august and gigantic forms. These constitute part of the hilly region of Braemar".

A short distance beyond Tullich the Dee makes a fine northward sweep, known as Cambus o' May, presenting one of the most charming of the many fine scenes in which the valley abounds. The river is bordered with trees, and birches are plentiful: Macwhirter might here count "Graces" by the hundred. Road, river, and railway are close together; it would be almost possible to fish from the carriage window while the train halts at the most picturesque station in the north, the platform of which shews the natural rock, enriched with heather. Cambus once had its Inn; the house, except a corner which had to give place to the railway, stands at the west end of the station. On the subsidence of the flood of 1829 a lively trout was found in the plate-rack of the Inn, which, according to our friend "James Brown", was there "doomed to die a miserable death"; but Sir Thomas Dick Lauder tells how the hospitable innkeeper restored it to the river. The incident is quoted as graphically shewing the unprecedented height to which the Dee rose on that occasion. Ballaterach may be observed across the river in a beautiful little valley drained by Pollagach Burn, a small stream which flows between Pannanich

The Dee at Cambus o' May.

Hill and the range of hills on the left bank of the Water of Tanner.

Oh ! placid lake, could'st thou reflect
The scenes that passed upon thy shore,
When belted knights and warriors bold
Assembled round the brave Canmore.
When stately oaks their shadows cast
Athwart thy waters, smooth and clear,
Thy bosom was a loved retreat
Of Malcolm brave, and Margaret dear.

We now enter the Muir of Dinnet, in the valley of Cromar, which, though not without attraction for the ordinary lover of nature as well as for the historian, is a Paradise for the antiquarian. The interest of the latter centres in Loch Kinord and Loch Davan, of which the former is both the larger and the more important. They now form two distinct lochs; Kinord—probably a corrup-

Loch Kinord.

tion of [Malcolm] Canmore, there are numerous spellings—lies to the south; but there is no doubt that in distant ages all the lower ground in this vicinity had been one great lake. The neighbourhood also abounds with "cairns", history and tradition both agreeing that numerous conflicts have taken place here. Culblean Hill, the south-eastern spur of Morven, gives name to the battle of Culblean, fought on its eastern slope in 1335 between the armies of David II. and Baliol. Edward I. and his army twice

encamped on the Muir of Dinnet, and James IV. made a short stay there in 1504. Loch Kinord is mostly surrounded by birches, and has numerous creeks and peninsulas, as also several prettily-wooded islets. The largest of the latter, Castle Island, is partly artificial, and was under cultivation so lately as 1794; the Castle from which it derives its name is ascribed to Malcolm Canmore. James IV. had probably lived in it when at Dinnet in 1504; in 1647 it was garrisoned by the Earl of Huntly, and taken from him by the rebels. With regard to Loch Davan there is a suggestion that here we have the site of the Roman Devana. There is abundant evidence that Dinnet was a very considerable settlement in prehistoric times. An extraordinary number of interesting articles have been found in Loch Kinord, details of which will be found in Mr. Michie's book on the subject; but it is outside our province to attempt to satisfy the insatiable antiquarian. We must, however, refer to the beautiful little building erected here by Sir William C. Brooks as a museum in connection with the numerous "finds" that have been made in the locality; and it is no less our duty to protest against the vandalism of a recent proprietor of Kinord, who summarily emptied the museum, and irreparably damaged articles of antiquity that cannot be replaced. As an indignant hotel-keeper, with whom we sojourned immediately after the affair, remarked: "It's an awfu' thing tae grapple wi' ignorance". The hopelessness of this struggle was thus expressed by the Greeks: "Against stupidity even the gods fight in vain".

The Vat.

Vat Burn rises on Culblean and flows into Loch Kinord. A few

hundred yards from the Loch the burn passes through a curious cave, known as the Vat from its shape, which gives name to the burn itself. The cavity is open at the top, the sides being formed of rock, in some parts over fifty feet in height, with a few trees which have taken root in the crevices. The outlet from the Vat is an inconsiderable aperture, so that when the streamlet is in flood this peculiar spot is rather interesting. Its popularity is almost to be regretted, at least with a certain class who have disfigured the interior with names and initials. The Vat was a resort of the notorious freebooter Gilderoy, of the proscribed clan Macgregor, who suffered for his crimes in Edinburgh in 1636. The bold cateran was accustomed to say that of all his haunts in this part of Aberdeenshire the Burn of Vat was the warmest, and the glens of Cushnie the coldest. The couplet:

> Dowie was the day Jock Tam was married,
> For Culblean was burned, and Cromar was harried.

is said to refer to one of Gilderoy's exploits, but is also attributed to Mackay's visit to the district after the battle of Killiecrankie.

The churchyard of Coldstone, a little to the north of Loch Davan, contains the grave of the author of the "Caledonian Itinerary", and accordingly deserves mention in the present work.

The Boat of Dinnet.

Dinnet House, recently erected, is the mansion in connection with the estates of Kinord and Cromar; both it and the church of Dinnet are in close proximity to the railway station. The Dee is here crossed by a bridge; formerly there was a ford and a ferry. The ford was at one time guarded by a fort, which can still

be traced; it has been suggested that "Dinnet" is derived from two Gaelic words, dun, "a fortification", and ath, "a ford". The superseded ferry is still known as Boat of Dinnet. Near this point Edward I. is believed to have crossed the Dee on his southward march in 1296.

Resuming our walk eastward from Dinnet to Aboyne, there is little to describe of outstanding interest. We cross the Burn of Dinnet—the outflow of Loch Kinord; and in doing so are held to step from the Highlands into the Lowlands. We pass Ferrar on the north side of the road; here the first Earl of Sutherland was born, his father being Adam Gordon, a son of the second Earl of Huntly. This, it may be remembered, is not the first indication we have had of the numerous important off-shoots of the great family of the Gordons.

CHAPTER IX.

Aboyne.

The Earl o' Aboyne to Old England's gone,
An' a' his barons wi' him ;
Sair was the heart his fair lady had,
Because she wasna wi' him.
. . . . . .
When she was lookin' o'er her castell wa',
She spied twa boys comin' ;
"What news, what news, my bonnie boys ?
What news hae ye frae Lunan" ?
"Good news, good news, my lady gay,
The lord o' Aboyne is comin' ;
He's scarcely twa miles frae the place,
Ye'll hear his bridles ringin'".

THERE are four places on Deeside which nature seems particularly to have favoured, and which have become in these days popular resorts. Two of them, Braemar and Ballater, we are now familiar with ; the third, Aboyne, with its neighbourhood, is here described ; the fourth, Banchory, will be dealt with by and by. Aboyne has its regular visitors, a numerous and enthusiastic band, who sing its praises in no low tone, claiming for it a position second only to Braemar. Aboyne, however, differs from Braemar and Ballater in one great feature ;

Salmon Fishing.

the mountains have become hills, and the village is not threatened by their embrace. Continuous ranges still confine the valley, and though of comparatively moderate elevation they present such a variety of form, and are so pleasantly wooded, that grandeur is exchanged for grace. The hills, moors, and streams, while presenting numerous attractions to those who are content to be simple lovers of nature, abound with game and fish, and are consequently much affected by sportsmen.

The hill of Mortlich, nearly two miles northward, is conspicuous from many points, both because of its height, and because of a granite obelisk, sixty feet high, crowning the summit, erected in 1868 to the memory of the tenth Marquis of Huntly. There are also two mountains at no great distance, Morven and Mount Keen, which, raising their crests on either side of the Dee, form important features in the landscape. Mount Keen is the most easterly "mountain" in Scotland, that is, if we subscribe to the contention of many Scottish mountaineers, that eminences under three thousand feet in altitude are not to be included in their list.

On the points of antiquity and historical importance Aboyne is certainly to be ranked with Braemar rather than Ballater. The Castle of Aboyne, like that of Braemar, in old times afforded protection to a considerable village, and was in like manner a great centre of events, many of them of national importance. The Barony of Aboyne was formerly called Bunty; the tolbooth, it may be mentioned, was demolished at the end of last century, when it is stated "all traces of the pot and gallows also are nearly effaced".

The village, which is situated on the left bank of the river, is locally known as Charlestown, having been so named from Charles, the first Earl of Aboyne. The village has a "Green", an excellent substitute for a Square; here markets are held, and golf and other games indulged in. Its amenity was threatened by the railway, but the construction of a short tunnel has preserved entire the spot where more than once Montrose assembled the Gordons and his other followers in the north. Formerly the village stood about a

mile to the eastward, in the vicinity of the earlier church of the parish, then known as Formastoun; the ruined walls of the old manse serve to direct attention to the churchyard. The east end

Aboyne—The Green.

of the site of the church is enclosed as the burial ground of the Inneses of Balnacraig and Ballogie, but is in a neglected state. A striking evidence of antiquity was recently found almost under the door-step of the old church—one of the eight Oghams known to exist in Scotland. Possibly the churchyard had originally been a Pictish burial place, as the stone bears a Runic inscription signifying, according to those learned in such matters, that a son of a Pictish king was buried there. This Ogham and many other relics of antiquity are preserved in the Castle and grounds.

The Loch of Aboyne is immediately to the west of the old churchyard, and is one of the most beautiful sights in the neighbourhood. This fine sheet of water is artificial, but all traces of art have long since disappeared; its wooded islets might well be attributed solely to nature. The Loch is much frequented by curlers, who find the situation suitable for important matches.

Aboyne Castle, the principal entrance to which is from the north side of the village, is believed to date from the eleventh century, and to have been one of the residences of Alexander III.

The original structure stood on a mound, encircled by a morass; the present building stands on an island, to form which Tarland Burn was partly diverted. The Castle—a plain substantial edifice surrounded by extensive plantations, comprising many varieties of trees—is the residence of the Marquis of Huntly, the Chief of the Gordons, in whose family the lands of Aboyne and others remained in unbroken descent for nearly five hundred years. We referred in last chapter to the fording of the Dee at Dinnet by Edward I., but he did not cross till he had paid a visit to the

Aboyne Castle.

neighbouring stronghold of Aboyne, rifling its charter-chest, and carrying away all the important documents therein. In the Covenanting days the Gordons placed themselves on the King's side, and bore a full share in the many conflicts which ensued; as a consequence the second Marquis of Huntly was beheaded in Edinburgh in 1649. There still exists in the Castle the ancient hiding-hole, and remnants of the secret staircase which led from it in the wall.

The village of Tarland lies to the north-west of Aboyne, and is also a place of some antiquity; in 1165 we find that the church

was gifted by the Earl of Mar to the Priory of St. Andrews. An agreement dated 1222, shews how carefully Churchmen looked after their temporal rights then, whatever they may now do, one pound annually being exacted from one of their vassals for permission to work off their lands. The lairds of Drum—who will be more particularly mentioned later on—were proprietors of Tarland for nearly two hundred years.

About midway between Tarland and Aboyne the remains of the Castle of Coull may be observed. A stronghold of the Durwards, it was formerly an imposing building, but the ruins are now insignificant. The Church of Coull is said to have been founded by St. Nathalan, about 450; its bell, according to tradition, tolled of itself on the death of a Durward.

The Dee is crossed by a handsome suspension bridge at the south-west end of Charlestown. Two hills attract attention on the south side of the river here, Birsemore and Craigendinnie, the latter presenting a peculiar appearance owing to the straggling pines which dot its summit. Between these hills there is a picturesque route to the Forest of Birse, known by the rather suggestive name of the Cateran Road, and also locally as the Fungle. Aulddinnie Burn flows through the Fungle, in some parts in a deep gorge crowded with firs. Sir William C. Brooks has constructed a "Rest and be Thankful", and cut a gap in the trees, so that a view may be had of Aboyne and vicinity. Who has not heard the expression: "As auld as the hills o' Birse" and so been impressed with their antiquity? Yet it seems that the mountains of Birse are not referred to, but a long-lived family named Hill who resided in that parish!

> There towering Keen o'erlooks the tenfold cloud,
> and shoots its conic head into the sky,
> Whilst sable mists its sloping sides enshroud,
> and halfway hide it from the wondering eye.

The Water of Tanner joins the Dee about a mile westwards from Charlestown, and is crossed by the south road at Bridge of Ess. Here the channel of the Tanner is rocky, and its banks

Where the Tanner joins the Dee.

beautifully tree-lined, in thorough keeping with which a square ivy-clad tower, guarding the bridge, serves as a lodge to the mansion house. The glen is some dozen miles long; in 1854 the upper part was converted into a deer forest, but of old it was famed for firs. Oak also flourished, as we were reminded by the "Countess of Aboyne", a ship, launched at Aberdeen, built entirely of that wood from the banks of the Tanner. The glen was at one time so notorious for smuggling that on illicit distillation being stamped out, some of the natives had to seek a livelihood elsewhere. Many trees have been felled, but the forest is far from being denuded, pines plentifully adorning the hill-sides. The Tanner rises a little to the west of Mount Keen, a conical-topped mountain prominent from many points in Deeside. Mount, or rather *Mounth*, Keen is one of the principal summits of The Mounth, a name of great antiquity which is applied to the range on the south side of the Dee, Lochnagar, the White Mounth, being its highest point. The Queen crossed Keen in 1861, and thus describes part of the journey: "Mount Keen was in great beauty before us, and as we came down to Coirebhruach and looked down Glen Tanner, the scenery was grand and wild. Mount Keen is a curious conical-shaped hill, with a deep corrie [Corrach] in it . . . . We came in sight of a new country, and looked down a very fine glen—Glen Mark. We descended by a very steep but winding path, called the Ladder, very grand and wild". An inscribed stone marks the spot, a little above Glentana House, where Her Majesty lunched on the return journey.

At Bridge of Ess.

Glen Tanner was once owned by some half dozen proprietors,

but ultimately their lands became part of the Aboyne possessions, and were purchased from the Marquis of Huntly by Sir (then Mr.) William C. Brooks, who prefers to call it "Glen Tana". Since the glen came into Sir William's possession it has been improved and beautified in numberless ways, as indeed have all his properties on Deeside. Even the south road between Charlestown and Bridge of Ess, not to mention others, has been improved, the Baronet being considerate enough to provide suitable seats for comfortably viewing the scenery. He has also erected many drinking fountains,

Glentana House.

and put old wells in order, often inscribing them with quaintly interesting mottoes. The mansion house, about four miles from Charlestown, was erected by him, and, while of considerable dimensions, is elegantly artistic. Near by is a church dedicated to St. Lesmo, who died in 731, which Sir William has built over the ruins of the little mansion of the erstwhile Lairdship of Braeloine. Affecting the former style in the district, the roof is heather-thatched; above the unplaned couplings hang antlers of deer, while the skins are used as pew coverings. A burial ground surrounds the chapel, the neighbourhood of which is reserved as the "Sanctuary" of the Forest. Above Glentana House the red deer are in possession, their privacy intruded on only by a forester's cottage at Etnach.

CHAPTER X.

Aboyne to Banchory.

The hills and dells, and knowes and glades are clad in purple sheen,
And far away beneath the pines what sea of glossy green !
Soft carpet for the weary feet, sweet solace for the brain—
Here rest awhile and listen to nature's soothing strain.
A holy calm now breathes around in murmur of the trees,
And wakes the music of the heart in every passing breeze.

THE portion of the Dee now to be described is the most sequestered between Castletown and the sea, and is therefore less familiar to most travellers than the western reaches of the river. This is accounted for by the circumstance that the railway passes through Lumphanan, and thus keeps at some distance from the Dee, the fine turnpike through Kincardine o' Neil being practically deserted as a thoroughfare—except, indeed, by cyclists and the enthusiasts who do not grudge walking a few miles to visit one of the finest portions of Strathdee.

The course of the Dee between Aboyne and Banchory is a series of loops, the greatest of which is a northerly one towards the village of Kincardine o' Neil. The distinguishing characteristics of the valley are wood and gentle eminences; we should not be wrong to call the scene, in our poet-friend's words:

A pleasance rare, of moor and wood, and waters cool.

In the previous section of our walk one might be apt to think that the Dee had quite emerged from its bounding hills, but once more the river appears to retreat to comparative solitude. We remember that, even when we first traced the Dee from Wells to Sea, we were much impressed by the dignity with which it flowed between Aboyne and Banchory; somehow it appeared to us that the river

was conscious it had left the Highlands, and it was necessary to prepare, even at this stage, for its farewell to the land.

There is no direct road on the south side of the river between Aboyne and Banchory; the parts of the parishes of Birse and Strachan that there border on the Dee are somewhat sparsely populated, and the tree-clad little hills slope down almost to the river's brink. We keep therefore more or less closely by the left bank. Leaving Aboyne, and passing the Loch, we diverge from

The Loch of Aboyne.

the railway, approaching the Dee near Bridge of Dess. Let us first, however, make a digression to look at the spot where Macbeth was slain.

O'er the Mounth they chased him then
Intil the woods of Lumphanan.
. . . . . .
This Macbeth slew they there,
Intil the woods of Lumphanan.

At Dess two hills attract particular attention—Mortlich and Clochnaben; the latter, on the other side of the Dee, is noticeable at many points of our journey owing to the huge mass of rock—not unlike one of the "Barns" of Ben Avon—on its summit. Beyond Dess we pass through Auchlossan, a farm celebrated among agriculturists. Up to 1860 it was a loch, but was then drained, and the reclaimed ground taken into cultivation; it, however, shews a tendency to relapse. A short distance to the left are the remains of Auchinhove Castle. There is little to indicate its former existence, but the old ash trees and the causewayed approach tell of a nobler building than the present ruined farm steading. The estate of Auchinhove has belonged to the Duguid family from about 1434. The laird took part in the Rebellion of 1745, and had his Castle burned by the Duke's orders. This Duguid is known to have raised a considerable sum of money for "the cause", and the following excerpt from "The Statistical Account" of 1793 is of interest in this connection: "Very lately above £100 sterling, all in Queen Anne's shillings, were found by two herds . . . near Auchhove . . . Tradition says that it is only a part of 50,000 merks hid here in 1745 by one Malcolm, a servant belonging to Mr. Duguid of Auchhove, who unfortunately joined in the rebellion, and that the rest was secreted in a man's boot". Near the site of the Castle is the Howff; at one time a place of some strength, it was latterly used as burial ground for the

Clochnaben.

Duguids. The appearance now presented by the Howff is almost as disappointing as that of the Castle; it is a mound with little more than traces of walls. A gravel pit, opened close to the west side, has partly undermined the wall there, but further operations of that nature have been interdicted, and a rude fence with a locked gate now protects this ancient structure. There are no apparent evidences of interments.

The Peel Bog, close to the west side of the railway, is a most interesting antiquity, dating probably from the twelfth or thirteenth century. It is a circular mound, surrounded by a moat, about twelve feet in height, and forty-six yards in diameter. It was at one time occupied by the Durwards, who are believed to have erected a wooden building on it. This, about the year 1400, possibly, was succeeded by a stone fort, which, in its turn, gave way to a more modern structure. The latter was partly in existence previous to 1782, and was known as Haa-ton; but the usual "zealous agriculturist" removed all the materials for building purposes to the neighbouring farm of Bogloch. Edward I., as we have already seen, made himself pretty much at home on Deeside; there is also mention of his receiving the submission of Sir John de Malvill at the Peel Bog on 21st July, 1296.

A battle was fought at Lumphanan on 15th August, 1057, between Malcolm III. and Macbeth, in which the latter was killed. "Macbeth's Cairn" is on Perkhill, a little to the north of the station, and is believed to mark the site of the King's grave. The cairn is a great flat mass of stones, with a well-like opening in the centre, and is now enclosed by a dyke and surrounded by young trees. And now

> Ride fast, spair neither horse nor gear;
> Through darksome pass and lanelie glen
> Till fair Kincardine's haughs appear.

Just before crossing Bridge of Dess, on the way to Kincardine o' Neil, one can scarcely fail to observe a peculiar stone built into the dyke on the road-side. The stone is circular, but only the half of it is visible, with, in the centre, a very suggestive hole; it

is believed to have been used as a base for the local gibbet. A few yards up the burn there is a more attractive sight—the Sloc, or Slog, of Dess, a beautiful little water-fall. Below the bridge the burn is harnessed to some purpose—a little manufactory, with crow-stepped gables and ivy-covered wall, combines the picturesque with the useful.

Slog of Dess.

The view from Bridge of Dess is worth more than a passing notice. Westward the valley of the Dee attracts attention, while eastward it seems as charming as ever, blocked at the lower end by wooded hills. On the left we have the finely situated, tree-surrounded, Desswood House, and further along Kincardine Lodge in a commanding position; on the right, across the Dee, is Carlogie within a beautiful curve of the river.

In coaching days the village of Kincardine o' Neil was an important stage and a bustling little place. All the traffic along Deeside passed through it, and it was also a favourite halting-place with drovers using the Cairn o' Mounth road. At one time it was the most westerly post office on Deeside. Certain landowners here objected to the proposed Deeside railway, and were successful in their opposition. Other proprietors of course benefited, and travellers have become reconciled to the detour by Lumphanan. The village consequently lost importance, but once more the public have begun to appreciate the charms of this sequestered spot.

Kincardine o' Neil is a place of considerable antiquity; in 1233 Alan the Durward erected an Hospital close to the Dee, while three hundred years before that date St. Erchard, whose well is still pointed out, is said to have been the patron of the Church

The most interesting feature is the ruined Church with its ivy-covered walls. In 1725 it is described as "a good edifice, higher and wider than any other upon Dee, thatch'd with heather . . . yet it's shorter by a half, as appears by the remaining walls, than it has been within these hundred years". The harling has partly dropped off from the west gable, allowing a portion of a fine old window to be traced. In the latter part of the century the markets, as in certain other Scottish parishes, encroached considerably upon the churchyard. "Many hundreds of persons assemble themselves in the kirkyard with horses, creels, and baggage of all kinds; some let their horses, several scores in number, run loose among the graves, and others tie them up by the sides of the church as to stalls; some . . . erect tents and booths, while others expose their wares upon the graves of the dead, and in the very porch of the Church", and greater indecencies followed at night. The more sensible heritors and the minister of the parish had considerable trouble before they were successful in ousting the markets from the churchyard, for, as usual, "vested interests" asserted themselves. Among the latter were several "of the lowest distillers of whisky, who contrived to open back doors from cottages into the kirkyard", and thus had an advantage over their neighbours. "Meat and drink were sold in almost every house in the village, even down to 1834, not on market days only, but also on the day after, or until such time as their stock provided for the

Kincardine o' Neil.

purpose was consumed". The opposition strove to shew that the space at the back of the church, where, as was then customary, there were no graves, "was known as the 'Ballgreen'" from the use to which it had been of old put; that playing of ball was succeeded by "weapon-shawings", "particularly near parish churches"; and that markets in churchyards were the legitimate successors to such "weapon-shawings" and to butts for shooting. Though the churchyard was freed from this reproach, it was succeeded by another in the beginning of the present century, when the turnpike was cut through the north side of the burial ground.

The area of the old church has now been divided among the heritors of the parish, and the churchyard has become crowded with tombstones. But the authorities do not seem to encourage meditation among the tombs, and the passing strangers are denied the opportunity of reading the history of the parish on its grave-stones.

According to tradition the Durward's Hospital had stood on the haugh between the village and the present ferry-boat station. It need scarcely be mentioned that there is now no trace of this building, nor of the bridge over the Dee that was also erected by the Durwards. The ferryman's cottage is on the south side of the river, on the edge of the wood; its appearance and situation are quite ideal, and haunt us as we strive to recall some long-forgotten incident in romance. The north bank of the river is here a favourite walk.

Neil Burn, from which some say the parish takes name, flows through the village. At the east end is "Cochran's Croft", which, according to tradition, was a royal grant to the tenant in return for kindly entertainment.

Of all the hostelries so fair,
  Built for the traveller's dwelling,
On Deeside far beyond compare,
  Kincardine is excelling.

This on the authority of Joseph Robertson, travestying the lines of a great poet. In his time the Inn at Kincardine o' Neil was

The Dee at Kincardine o' Neil.

a great favourite with travellers. "Oh! the glorious breakfasts, the splendid dinners, and the magnificent suppers we have there enjoyed! Oh! the attentive, civil, obliging, active, bustling, careful, providing, buxom, inimitable Hostess! Oh! her bills, whose moderation makes you stare, and the dram from her own private bottle, whose strength brings tears to your eyes"! These were the halcyon days of Kincardine o' Neil, and, though our own experience does not date so far back, the description recalls many pleasant recollections of travelling "adventures" in the Highlands.

Resuming our journey, we pass on the left Borrowstone House, in the vicinity of which there was of old a hamlet with the principal Inn of the district. Nearing Sluie Woods, we make a divergence to the north-east to visit the ruins of Maud Castle, which are by no means imposing, the walls being only about six feet in height. The inside dimensions are about twenty feet by seventeen, so that the building had probably been of the nature of a tower or keep. There are indications of outworks on the east side of the castle, which now stands a few feet above the level of a moss, on the east, called Moss Maud. Nothing authentic is known of its history; by some it is described as one of the hunting-seats of the Bishops of Aberdeen in the fourteenth century; others assert that it existed in the days of Robert the Bruce, and that his Queen spent a night there. Edward I. passed through Kincardine o' Neil on his return from Kildrummy Castle, and it is very probable that he had paid Maud Castle a passing visit, as it was situated on his route.

The handsome bridge over the Dee at Potarch is strikingly in keeping with the scenery. Here the Cairn o' Mounth road crosses the river, being one of the "chief passages from the Tay to the Dee". Before the erection of the bridge the river was forded at Inchbaire, a short distance eastward. The bridge was completed in 1813, and is a bridge with a history. The "New Statistical Account of Scotland" throws an interesting side-light on the manner in which funds were raised for the erection of such expensive structures. According to that excellent authority a collection was made "in the church of Boindie for building an

bridge over Dee, at Pittarch". A peculiar accident happened to the bridge when it was nearly completed; loose trees, which were being floated down the river, almost entirely demolished it. The builder was not only successful in procuring compensation from the owners of the trees, but an Act of Parliament was passed in 1813 whereby the liability of those who floated timber is more precisely established and extended. The flood of 1829 did considerable damage to the piers, the consequent repairs being evident. The bridge is built over a vein of porphyry, which can be traced from Clochnaben to Bennachie. A few yards above the bridge the channel of the river is very much contracted, being at one point about 22 feet in breadth at low water, but before the rocks were blasted to permit the passage of floats the channel had been even narrower, being noted as the narrowest point in the course of the river east of the Linn. This part of the river has become known as "Caird Young's Leap", from having been leapt by that "notorious caird or gipsy, who, as the story goes, broke half the prisons in Scotland, and in particular, broke the prison of Aberdeen, and let out all the prisoners, writing on the door 'Rooms to Let'. When Young leapt over the Dee here, he was being pursued for having killed a man when fishing on the Water o' Gadie; for this he was afterwards executed in Aberdeen, which he having slain the man in self-defence, was by many thought a great pity".

The Dee is finely wooded at Potarch, especially on the right bank. The south thoroughfare has now of course lost its importance, and consequently the bridge is not of such service as formerly, but it gives convenient access to the parish of Birse as well as to the valley of the Feugh. On the building of the bridge the markets held at Marywell, a village in Birse, were transferred to Potarch, an Inn being at the same time erected at the market stance at the south end of the bridge.

Towards Banchory, the road is bordered for a considerable distance by dark pines, and we are cut off from the river by two wooded eminences, Trustach and Cairnton. The ancient Forest of Trustach lay between the Dee and Canny Burn, a tributary

stream which we cross at Bridge of Canny, where there was formerly an Inn. As in numerous other instances, business dwindled at this road-side hostelry when the locomotive displaced the Four-in-hand. There is one circumstance about the manner in which the last hostess conducted business that is worth mentioning. Travellers always received a hearty welcome, but the closure was applied to idle natives. Their maximum allowance at the Defiance Inn was "a gill and a pint", after which they had to betake themselves elsewhere. Thus she kept up in her own way the venerable custom of testifying on the "Clach an doichal". Our mountaineering friends, the authors of "Our Tour", explain that the "Clach an doichal" is a stone placed outside the house door, and that by coming out and striking it with a stick the guid-wife signifies her unwillingness to receive visitors"; two crossed sticks placed at the door answered the same purpose—a polite Celtic way of saying "Not at home".

Scolty.

The Aberdeen Water Supply is drawn from the Dee at Cairnton, below Potarch, where the river flows over rock between well-wooded banks. The water is conveyed, partly through a

tunnel, to a reservoir at Invercanny, where the opening ceremony was performed by the Queen on 16th October, 1866. This is but one of the many kindly acts performed by Her Most Gracious Majesty to the city of Aberdeen, the inhabitants of which the Queen has been pleased to call her "good neighbours".

There are extensive woods between the Canny and Banchory, especially on the hills on the south side of the river, of which the most prominent is Scolty, distinguishable by a tower on its summit. Passing Inchmarlo, with Blackhall on the other side, we enter the burgh of Banchory.

CHAPTER XI.

Banchory.

The sun shines clear upon bonnie Dee,
and bright on its birken bowers,
And steals through the shade of the chestnut tree
to the Baron's old grey towers.
And many a flower in the summer-tide
springs up by the silvery water;
But the fairest flower on all Deeside
was the Baron's youngest daughter.

A SON of Banchory, writing of his native place, modestly asserts that it is "one of the most choice spots in the North of Scotland"; but have we not heard the bleakest glen in the Highlands similarly described by a prejudiced Celt? In our responsible position, as faithful chroniclers and exponents of the charms of the Dee valley, it is our duty to admit Banchory to a high place in our "preferred list". Unquestionably nature has done a great deal for Banchory; the marvel is that the century had begun before the nucleus of a town had been founded in such a delightful situation. The little country town came into existence with Scottish deliberation, but its builders have failed to make the best use of its natural advantages, and cannot be congratulated upon their success in laying it out. In 1885 the place had become so populous that it attained the dignity of a police burgh.

We have admitted Banchory to a high place in the Dee valley, but in doing so we only endorse popular opinion. It is undoubtedly *the* Deeside resort of Aberdonians, for on holiday occasions it is crowded with visitors; excursionists flock to it in thousands as compared to the hundreds who spend their holiday further up the valley. This is no doubt largely due to the fact that Banchory is but eighteen miles from Aberdeen; we have observed, however, that the popular taste for scenery is generally correct.

Banchory is built on a slope facing the south, and is sheltered on the north by the long Hill of Fare; immediately opposite, on the other side of the river, are the hills of Goauch, Scolty, and Tilquhillie, all closely wooded. The beauty of the situation of Banchory can only be fully realised when a stand is taken on the north slope of one of these latter hills. The beholder cannot fail to admire the panorama at his feet, and to remark the large portion of the adjacent country under wood. The Dee, as in previous

High Street, Banchory.

pictures, is an important and beautiful feature of the landscape; and though we are now well into Lowland scenery, it is not less interesting than in its upper reaches.

The Hill of Fare comes into more particular view a little to the east of Aboyne, but it is too flat to be attractive. It is a short range, rather than an individual hill; the summit most prominent from Banchory is the eastern top, which, though by no means the highest, is dignified by the name of Meikle Tap. The southern slope is noticeable as being the scene of the battle of Corrichie, fought on 28th October, 1562, between the royal forces and an

army headed by the Earl of Huntly. He was defeated and slain, and Queen Mary, then in Midmar Castle, is said to have afterwards viewed the scene of battle from the rock now called the "Queen's Chair"; "Queen Mary's Well" lies between the battle-field and the "Chair". At this time the Queen spent nearly three months in Aberdeen; Moray, her base-born brother came with her, and the victory at Corrichie was more an aid to his avaricious scheming than a help to the cause of Queen Mary. The savage brutality of the man is shewn by his sending for trial to Edinburgh the dead body of the old Earl, and causing, on the Castlegate of Aberdeen, the head of his son, the "Bonnie John Gordon" of song, to be cut off in presence of the Queen.

Banchory Churchyard.

Though Banchory is of yesterday, its parish, Banchory-Ternan, has a respectable antiquity. St. Ternan, the patron saint, flourished about 440, and according to tradition was interred within the church. There is indirect evidence that the parish had been of note in early times, for more than one writer refers to "the Monastery of Banchory". There is mention of a village in the vicinity of the

church so early as 1324; in 1472 the Abbot of Arbroath grants a title to a house and croft within the kirktown. The Barony Court of Leys was long held here; the Court Books shew the curious cognisance taken by the local judicial authorities of the time. We mentioned "weapon-schawings" in churchyards in the previous chapter; in 1626 the Leys Court instituted fines on absentees at such gatherings, and thereafter several offenders were dealt with; in 1629 "flytters and bakbytters" are threatened with the stocks; in 1634 "brousters" are prohibited from selling ale to the Laird's servants—and so on.

The kirktown was latterly known as Townhead; there is a tradition that some of the buildings occupied the present bed of the Dee to the south of the churchyard. St. Ternan is said to have been baptized by St. Palladius, and presented by Pope Gregory the Great with a bell, called the "Ronnecht", which, like the church bell of Coull, had a remarkable power—it followed St. Ternan, of its own accord, when he went on pilgrimage! It is suggested by Jervise that the small square bell found "a few years ago, when a pathway was being made along the brink of the river from Banchory Lodge to the railway station", was this famous "Ronnecht", but unfortunately it has disappeared. A still more precious relic, associated with St. Ternan, is also lost—a copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew cased in silver and gold, which was preserved in Banchory till the Reformation. The "watch-house" in the churchyard has a bell bearing the inscription: "PETRVS. STENS. ROTTERDAMI. ME. FECIT. Aº. 1664. SOLI. DEO. GLORIA".

Some ca' me this, some ca' me that,
  Whatever name best befa's me,
But when I walk thro' St. Johnstone's town
  George Burnett they ca' me.

. . . . . .

Some ca' me this, some ca' me that,
  Whatever name best befa's me,
But when I am on bonny Deeside
  The Baron o' Leys they ca' me.

. . . . . .

Then forth she went her Baron to meet,
Says "Ye're welcome to me fairly,
Ye'se hae spice cakes, and seed cakes sweet,
And claret to drink sae rarely".

Leys is situated about a mile northward from the churchyard. There was a Loch of Leys, at one time of considerable size; its island castle was the residence of the Burnetts till they removed to the more commodious habitation of Crathes Castle. The Loch was, however, gradually reclaimed, and by the middle of the present century had completely disappeared. A canoe, formed out of a single tree, was discovered during the drainage operations. A grant of King Robert the Bruce to the ancestors of the Burnetts includes "*lacum de Banchory cum insula ejusdem*". The island, which was artificial, appears on record three times in the seventeenth century under the name of "the isle of the Loch of Banchory".

Inchmarlo House—which we passed before entering Banchory—has one of the finest positions on Deeside; opposite Blackhall Castle, it has the hills of Goauch and Scolty as foreground, and is itself surrounded by woods, among which are not a few venerable trees. The estate, originally Church property, ultimately fell into the hands of the family of Douglas of Glenbervie. The present house was erected about a hundred years ago by John Douglas, who also owned Tilquhillie.

Blackhall Castle.

The Dee is crossed at Banchory by a bridge dating from 1798, at the south end of which is the gate-way of the approach to

Blackhall Castle. The previous façade was surmounted by the figure of a goat—the crest of the proprietor—with the motto "Che sara sara". Cut life-size, it was a striking piece of sculpture, never failing to attract attention, the motto also, which means "What will be, will be", being frequent matter of conjecture. The goat stood above the gate-way long after the Russells had ceased their connection with Blackhall, but now occupies a more humble position at the Mains. The approach to the Castle is about two miles in length, and it is difficult to imagine one more picturesque. The river flows closely alongside the avenue; on the south side there is high wooded ground sloping from Scolty. The present building, erected by the proprietor, Mr. James T. Hay, is a beautiful structure on a splendid site with a secluded position. It is very noticeable, however, both from the railway and the north road, the grey granite of the Castle being conspicuous among the woods with which it is surrounded. The Russells had a small burial ground, "The Howff", a few yards westward from the Castle. It is now an enclosure of four plain walls, for the entrance door has been built up, and the slab with their arms has fallen to the ground—as though in response to the motto.

Scolty, almost a thousand feet in height, occupies the western angle formed by the Dee and the Feugh; wooded to the summit, it has paid frequent tribute to the timber merchant. It is best known from a high round tower on the top, visible from considerable distances, which was erected as a monument to the memory of General Burnett of Banchory. The trees on the summit of the hill now conceal the prospect formerly enjoyed here, and the tower has become unavailable as vantage-ground. On our last visit we thought of what Sir William C. Brooks has done for the Fungle, and Sir David Stewart for the Blue Hill, and prayed for a similar benefactor on Scolty. But when we looked around us, and observed the damage wilfully or thoughtlessly done by the public, we sorrowfully departed.

The Bridge of Feugh is a short mile from Banchory, and presents the most picturesque spot in the neighbourhood. The

Water of Feugh is a considerable stream, rising in the highest part of the Forest of Birse, and has two important tributaries, the Aven and the Dye. It joins the Dee opposite Banchory Lodge, and is crossed near its mouth by the south road over this well-known bridge. The bridge, which is built on rock, cannot be described as an elegant structure, but the channel of the Feugh is here particularly striking. We generally find that rivers have "falls" and "rapids" in the upper part of their course only, and, as they approach the end of their career, settle down to a tranquil ending; but it is not so with the Feugh. Its banks here are lined with trees, and its channel is rocky and uneven in the extreme. The stream cannot be said to flow; it rather writhes and dashes over and between rocks, and, viewed on the occurrence of a "spate", is both impressive and magnificent.

Tilquhillie stands on the old, old lands,
And the name of the Douglas is there.

Tilquhillie Castle is one of the most interesting antiquities in the neighbourhood of Banhory, and occupies a somewhat elevated position to the south-east of the Bridge of Feugh. The Castle dates from the sixteenth century, and is now in use as a farmhouse. It lays no claim to architectural beauty, but is a good example of the semi-fortified buildings of its time. About a hundred years before its erection the lands of Tilquhillie, which

Tilquhillie Castle.

The Bridge of Feugh.

formed part of the Church lands of Banchory, passed into the possession of the Douglases, in which family, with the exception of a short break, it has since remained, the present proprietor being the fourteenth in lineal descent. The laird of 1562 took part in the battle of Corrichie under the Earl of Huntly. He was ultimately pardoned, but had to live for some time in retirement at Tilquhillie, under the name of "James the Grieve"; he built the present Castle in 1576. About 1647 it was garrisoned by the Covenanters, the then laird being an officer in the Royal Army. The Castle commands an extensive eastward prospect, and, with its ivy-clad walls, its crow-stepped gables, and its moss-covered roof, is suggestive of the romantic past.

The valley of the Feugh is divided between the parishes of Birse and Strachan, the latter taking name from the Aven. The village of Strachan is situated near the confluence of the Dye with the Feugh; a short distance westward is Castle Hill, where, according to tradition, Alan the Durward had a stronghold. Bowbutts, at the east end of the village, and several mounds in the neighbourhood, recall the times when archery was practised. Bridge of Dye, by which the Cairn o' Mounth road crosses the Dye, is a fine old arch; its former importance is shewn by Acts of the Scottish Parliament, in the seventeenth century, authorising tolls to be levied for its upkeep. Near it is Spitalburn, where, as the name implies, there was in old times an hospice for the accommodation of the many travellers who here crossed the Mounth. Between the Dye and the Aven there is a range of hills culminating in Mount Battock, near the junction of three counties, Aberdeen, Forfar, and Kincardine. Clochnaben is, however, the most familiar top on account of a huge rock which gives name to the summit, and is exceedingly prominent from the valley of the Dee. This rock is about a hundred feet in height, and has gradually come into evidence through the wearing away of the surrounding softer material; but such a prosaic explanation of its existence has not always sufficed. The Rev. George Knowles, minister of Birse, who died in 1789, wrote a poem on the subject, where we are informed

that the stone formerly lay "low in a plain", and so was conveniently at hand in a fight between "The D-v-l and his Dame". The last verse accounts for its present position :

" Have at you now, you Beldame ", roared the fiend,
And hurled the rock through the resounding skies ;
Dreadful it fell, and crushed his breathless friend,
And there entombed Her Hellish Highness lies !

Finzean is on the north side of the Feugh, about three miles above its confluence with the Aven. The mansion is pleasantly situated in a richly wooded district ; part of the house dates from 1686. A reference to the Farquharsons of Finzean will be found in Chapter IV.

The Fungle, which we have mentioned more than once, leads southward to the Feugh, past the ruins of an old castle in the centre of the Forest of Birse, which is said to have been built, by Sir Thomas Gordon of Cluny, about the middle of the sixteenth century. In the beginning of the eighteenth century it was tenantless, and so opportunity was taken of this circumstance by a band of caterans, who held possession for a time. Mount Battock overlooks the Forest, and so one is tempted to associate the following verses with the temporary residence of the reivers in Birse Castle :

Mount Battock, how dark is the cloud on thy brow,
How grateful its gloom to the valley below !
For the hand of the reiver has smitten so sore,
The days of our mourning will never be o'er.
He came in the night ; he has taken and slain
The wale of our flocks and the flower of our men ;
The fold now is silent, the shieling is still,
No herd in the valley, no flock on the hill.

CHAPTER XII.

Banchory to Aberdeen.

Hurrah for the wild waves that round us sweep,
Wi' their crests o' feathery foam!
Oh hurrah for the warden that needs nae sleep—
For the sea that shields our home!

BETWEEN Banchory and Aberdeen there is an excellent road on either side of the river; each has so many attractions that we find it difficult to make selection. We shall mainly follow, however, the north road, but it will be necessary to cross and recross the Dee in order to do justice to our subject. As the sea is neared, particular objects of interest seem to crowd upon each other, on both sides of the valley; sometimes the one, sometimes the other, presents the more picturesque route. We are not to particularise the scenery, for it is beautiful all the way to the ocean, and so we shall content ourselves with references to the more notable points, and to places of antiquarian or historical interest. Suffice it to say that there is not a mile in this section which is not possessed of some attraction—in proof of which we need only add that the lower part of the valley is over-run by summer and autumn visitors.

Crathes Castle.

Crathes Castle is the first point of note after leaving Banchory. It is an exceedingly interesting building, and is thus described in

"Baronial Antiquities": "Deeply retired in luxuriant woods . . . Though consisting of the elements common to most of the northern mansions—a multitude of conical turrets, high crow-stepped and angular dormer windows—there is something quite peculiar in the arrangement of these details . . . they are, as it were, crowded and pressed together . . . The turrets run into kindred forms in the towers and gables, and are depressed below the higher levels of the edifice. The outline is lumpish, but the general effect of the middle grouping is one of extreme richness and picturesqueness". Though not generally known, it possesses a specimen of a simple variety of formal garden not uncommon in Scotland. The Castle occupies high ground on the north side of the road, and is considered a good example of the Franco-Scottish style of architecture, the oldest part dating from the beginning of the sixteenth century. The present proprietor, Sir Thomas Burnett, is the twelfth baronet and twenty-fourth laird of Leys—the connection of the Burnetts with Deeside dating from 1324.

Close to Crathes station is the farm of Baldarroch—the name, "Oaktown", shewing the long hold the Celts had on Deeside. In a scarce pamphlet, "The Dance of Baldarroch", this farm is referred to as "the spot where superstition and witchcraft were last believed in Scotland, anno 1838"—we are by no means certain, by the way, that that date saw an end to such beliefs. The "manifestations" alluded to in this pamphlet are also dealt with in two other publications, but the explanation is provokingly simple. It seems that in the year mentioned two servant girls at Baldarroch considered that they had cause to be dissatisfied with their mistress, and accordingly they subjected the household to a series of petty annoyances, which, at the time, were attributed to witchcraft.

The Dee is crossed south of Crathes station by Durris Bridge, of which we shall take advantage in a brief visit to Durris. The bridge looks sound enough, and "sufficient for the ordinary traffic of the district", and we are therefore somewhat startled by duplicate notices at each end. The one tells us that we cross at our own risk, as the bridge is the private property of the laird of Durris;

the other announces that the County Council has nothing to do either with bridge or passenger. Once on the south side, we soon reach Kirkton of Durris, where the road crosses the Burn of Sheeoch, "the Fairy's Burn", a streamlet which rises on Kerloch. The dell here formed by the burn comes as a pleasant surprise, being one of the prettiest spots on lower Deeside. The district of Durris was originally a thanedom; its Castle was a place of some note during the times of Alexander III. and Edward I. Its site, about a mile to the east of Kirkton, is still pointed out, but the building has completely disappeared, as well as a bridge which is supposed to have spanned the Dee there. The Frasers of Durris were at one time a powerful family; their connection with Deeside dates from the time of King Robert the Bruce, the first of the family, Sir Alexander Fraser, having married a sister of the King. The burial aisle of the Frasers is at the east end of the church; the oldest inscription extant is dated 1594, but later proprietors have not hesitated to use their tomb.

The Duke's Tower.

Durris House occupies a fine position a little to the south of the road; surrounded by trees, it is rather an imposing structure, the oldest part having been built more than two centuries ago. From the Frasers the estate passed by marriage to the Earl of Peterborough, whose daughter and heiress married the second Duke of Gordon. The Duke, however, did not acquire Durris till after a protracted lawsuit, the successful termination of which was celebrated by the erection of a tower on Keith's Hill, a small eminence between the road and the river. The tower, now surrounded by trees, is octagonal in shape, and, having a height of

about sixty feet, is a conspicuous object in the district, and affords a fine view from the summit. The only inscription is the date "1825" above the door, which doubtless at the time was considered sufficient to indicate its *raison d'etre* to future generations. The Duke sold the estate in 1834, and a few years after the purpose of the tower had apparently been forgotten, for in 1842 we read that it was built "to mark the spot in the river where the Irvines once drove several of the Keiths into the water and drowned them"; and even such an authority as the Ordnance Survey map names it "Keith's Tower". So it is just as possible to be too brief in a monumental inscription as it is to be verbose. The name Keith is also here associated with Keith's Stone and Keith's Pot, the latter a deep pool in the river around the former. The tradition concerning these names is more interesting than the incorrect origin attributed to the Duke's Tower, and possibly herein is to be found the source of the confusion in the nomenclature of the latter. It is a version of the old old story: a young Keith fell in love with a daughter of Drum, who reciprocated his passion, notwithstanding her parents' objections and the feud which existed between the Irvines and the Keiths. The lovers were surprised during a stolen interview, and Keith had to flee for his life. In swimming across the Dee he rested on a boulder, afterwards known as Keith's Stone, and was shot.

Close to the Duke's Tower is Park Bridge over the Dee, the crossing of which presents no terrors, for it is the property of the railway company who ensure safety by exacting a slight toll. Cairn-mon-earn, on the south side of the river, overlooks the valley here; its cairn-crowned summit is noticeable a great part of the way between Banchory and Aberdeen.

The laird o' Drum's a huntin' gane,
A' in a mornin' early,
An' then he spied a weel-faur'd May
Was shearin' at the barley.

. . . . . .

"But haud your tongue, my brither John,
What needs it thee offend, O?

I've marriet a wife to work and win,
Ye've marriet ane to spend, O".
. . . . . .
"For gin I wir deid, an' ye wir deid,
An' baith in ae grave laid, O,
When seven years are come and gane
Ye'd no ken my banes from yours, O".

Returning to Crathes, we resume our walk along the north road, soon entering the parish of Drumoak, the chief interest of which centres in Drum Castle. The lands held by the lairds of Drum, as we have already indicated, included much more than the present considerable estate. Park, which we first traverse, reminds us of this fact; originally it formed part of the "Park" of Drum. Park House is situated close to the left bank of the river, and has been well described as "handsome"; built in 1822, in the Grecian style of architecture, it is distinguished by its classical open front, while well-laid out grounds contribute to the amenity. Loch of Drum, on the north side of the road, is a beautiful little sheet of

The Loch of Drum.

water, fed by the Burn of Corrichie, and is fringed with trees. The Loch was at one time of considerable extent, but its dimensions

have been curtailed by drainage operations; an eminent authority suggests that it has much the appearance of a place where crannoges, or lake dwellings, might be found. "King's Well", at its north-east end, is suggestive of the time when Drum was a royal forest.

Drum Castle.

The Tower of Drum Castle is unmatched for antiquity on Deeside; it dominates the building, lending dignity to the comparatively modern erections included in the term "Castle". Tradition has it that the Tower was erected by King William the Lion, a belief supported by various circumstances. "Its architecture is of the oldest and simplest description. The well in the dungeon, the thickness of the walls, the vaulted roofs, the windows few, small, and far from the ground, the absence of any entrance lower than the first floor, which was only reached by steps originally removable in times of danger, all shew that it was built for security and defence; whilst its position, commanded on the north and west by a contiguous range of rising ground, proves that its strong walls were not intended to withstand cannon". It was doubtless frequently attacked during the private feuds of earlier ages, but has apparently remained undamaged. In 1640, during the Civil War, it was beseiged by General Munro, to whom it

was surrendered. It was remarked in 1782 that "there is neither crack nor crevice in the walls, nor is an inch of it out of plumb"; and this statement still holds good. The modern part of the Castle dates from 1619. There is a small adjoining chapel of older date, which contains the burial place of the family. The grounds are of considerable extent, and well timbered; the *tout ensemble* presents all the features of the demesne of an ancient family.

The Irvines of Drum are one of the oldest Scottish families, and have remained in possession of their ancestral estate for an unusually long period; the present laird is the twenty-second of his line. On 4th October, 1324, King Robert the Bruce granted a charter of Drum to William of Irewyn who had accompanied him from Annandale, and was his companion in many wanderings and dangers. The Irvines have taken a prominent part in national affairs, from the battle of Harlaw, in which Sir Alexander Irvine lost his life, to recent times; with the Burgh of Aberdeen their relations have always been of the most friendly and intimate nature. Drum's Aisle in the southern transept of St. Nicholas Church of Aberdeen contains a brass, and two stone effigies to members of this family.

Gormack Burn, from the Hill of Fare, and Leuchar Burn, from the Loch of Skene, meet to the east of Drum Castle, close to the road, forming the Burn of Culter. Near their confluence, says "The Statistical Account", "are the remains of a rampart called the guard-dike. Tradition informs that a strong guard of armed men was stationed here to prevent all communication between the sound and the infected, while the plague raged in Aberdeen and its environs, about 130 years ago". The church of Peterculter is on the north side of the Dee, in the angle formed by the Burn of Culter; almost opposite, on the other side of the river, is the ruined church of Maryculter. The parish of Peterculter, which at one time included Maryculter, was originally known as "Kulter", and the district is still called Culter. The present edifice dates from 1779; recent additions, though no doubt improvements, do not add to the style of the building. Apparently two old entrances, on

The Dee at Culter.

the south and east sides, have been built up. The churchyard is surrounded by patriarchal trees; eastward there is a wooded stretch of the Dee, westward the prospect is closed by Normandikes. St. Peter's Well is a little to the east of the church; at one time remarkable for the quality of its water, it has fallen on evil days, and is now disused. A considerable village has sprung up in this neighbourhood, the origin of which may be attributed to Culter Burn. At one time there was a saw-mill near its mouth, as well as a snuff manufactory; and here in 1750 a Manxman erected the first mill for the manufacture of paper by machinery in Scotland—all the machinery having been driven by the burn. The present paper works are the seat of a large and important industry; one is inclined to forget their black smoke when looking at such specimens of their manufacture as the present.

The illustration on the previous page shews that the scenery of the Dee is not less interesting as we near the mouth of the river. Its winding course is here, as in other reaches, lined with trees; between Culter and Bridge of Dee there is a succession of pebbly beaches, sandy coves, wooded islets and sequestered nooks. Let us take our stand on a little knoll on the south side, opposite Culter, and enjoy for a little the charming prospect. The rough Scottish firs with which the knoll is covered are so widely apart that there is no difficulty in obtaining a view; the trees themselves interest us, for have they not evidently suffered from fights with storms, and only the fittest survive? The great high stalk of the paper works emits a long train of smoke, high above the village, which, vanishing heavenwards, does not seem to interfere with the amenity of the neighbourhood. The village itself, its houses dotted over a south-facing slope, is entitled to be called beautiful—at least at this distance; none the less that its fires are lighted by the smoking chimney. Then what a foreground!—the river curving and lost among trees, while stately mansions overlook the pastoral scene.

Normandikes may be observed between the railway and the river; it is generally held to be the site of a Roman camp and is

one of the greatest antiquities on Deeside. A supposed "Roman Ford" across the Dee is also pointed out. The camp is of oblong rectangular form, the northern enclosing wall being about a thousand yards in length. A spacious enclosure, now planted with wood, it is believed to have been made by Lollius Urbicus, who has been described as "the gallant lieutenant of Antoninus", a Roman Emperor who died A.D. 161.

Culter House, a short distance to the north of the church, was once described as "one of the most beautiful and best finished gentlemen's seats in the north"; the plainness of the exterior is redeemed by the fine old trees which shelter the building. "The oldest part of the house is ascribed to Sir Alexander Cumming, created the first baronet of Culter in 1672; a very extravagant and haughty knight who had his horse shod, at the Queen's wedding, with silver shoes, so lightly fastened on that, when the animal caracoled, they fell off and were picked up by the mob". In early times Alan the Durward—with whose name we are by this time familiar—held part of the lands of Culter; in 1247 it became the property, by royal grant, of the Allans of Wauchop, from whom it descended to the Cumins of Inverallochy. The baronetcy has long been extinct.

The greater part of the parish of Maryculter was granted in 1187 by William the Lion to the Knights Templars, who were succeeded by the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. The Menzies of Pitfodels acquired portions of the Templar lands between 1528 and 1618; the mansion was probably built about the latter date. The ancient churches of Maryculter and Peterculter, though on opposite sides of the river, are only about a quarter of a mile apart; their situation gives colour to the old saying that "care was taken that the clergy should not want fish in time of Lent". In 1545 we find that the holder of the Preceptory lands was bound to furnish his superior with "thre barrell of salmont yeirlie". Maryculter House is close to the ruins of the old church, and is approached by a pleasant tree-lined drive. A short distance to the east is Mill Inn, near which a bridge has been recently erected over the river. The

Mill of Maryculter Friendly Society was established in 1830; it met and dined at least once a year, and included many gentlemen of social position. Special rooms were reserved for the Club at the Mill Inn, but it was by no means confined to one meeting-place. The last meeting was held in 1859 at Alford. Near the Inn is a beautiful little water-fall known as Corbie-Linn. Kingcausie House has a fine situation on the south side of the river. A verse of a now forgotten ballad calls attention to the fine woods here:

> The woods o' Kin'cousie are a' o'ergrown
> Wi' mony a braw apple-tree—
> Sae will ye no leave the Gallowgate Port,
> An' come to Kin'cousie wi' me"?

A tower on the hill of Auchlee attracts attention from many points. It was erected in memory of John Irvine Boswell, of Balmuto and Kingcausie, who died in 1860.

Blairs College, to the east of Kingcausie, is an institution for the education of young men desirous of qualifying for the Roman Catholic priesthood. The estate, at one time the property of the Knights Templars, latterly belonged to the Menzies of Pitfodels, and was gifted in 1827, by the last of that old family, to the Church of Rome.

Resuming our walk from Culter along the north side of the river, we soon become impressed with the fact that we are nearing the end of our journey; evidences crowd on us that we are entering what may be termed suburban Aberdeen. We pass numerous houses, many of them elegant villas with delightful situations. At Milltimber,

Valley of the Dee at Milltimber.

a short distance to the east of Culter, we may cross to the south road by the new bridge, but we shall content ourselves with a passing glance at the vista along the Dee. Kingcausie faces us on the south; here and there we have charming peeps up and down the valley. It was a Summer Saturday afternoon as we passed along, and we had but to look at the numerous pic-nic parties, large and small, scattered all over Milltimber, to realise the popularity and the appreciation of the beautiful in nature. Further east, Murtle House, a fine building in the Grecian style of architecture, close to the left bank of the river, is specially noticeable; the Den of Murtle is a charming little ravine. In 1163 the Barony of Murtle was granted by Malcolm IV. to the Bishop of Aberdeen, whose successors held the lands for several hundred years.

Cults, a village halfway between Culter and Aberdeen, owes its ever-increasing prosperity to Aberdonians, who are keenly alive to its fine southern exposure, and to the exquisite views here of the valley. East of Cults the north road, which enters Aberdeen at

Ardoe House.

Mannofield, holds away from the river, so we cross to the south side by a handsome foot-bridge, erected in 1837 by the Rev. Dr.

Morison, the minister of Banchory Devenick, to enable his people to get over safely to Church.

Ardoe House was erected in 1878, and, built in the Scottish Baronial style of architecture, is a mansion worthy of its prominent position. The lands of Ardoe were at one time held, along with Banchory, by the Meldrums; in the sixteenth century they formed two properties known respectively as the Sunny Half and the Shady Half of Ardoe. In 1744 Ardoe was purchased by John Fordyce, who had been a gunner's mate on board the *Centurion*, under the command of Lord Anson, in a voyage round the world. The gallant sailor rode, it is said, on horseback from London to Aberdeen with his prize-money in specie in his saddle-bags! The late Mr. Alexander Ogston, a descendant of the Ogstons of Ogston—an erstwhile parish in Morayshire—bought Ardoe in 1839, and was succeeded in the property by his son, Mr. Alexander M. Ogston. The latter in 1880 acquired Heathcot, the adjoining estate on the west; on which, it may be mentioned, is the only Hydropathic

The Dee at Heathcot.

establishment on Deeside. The south side of the valley has many attractions in this neighbourhood, and several other mansions adorn

the landscape. One is especially struck with the view looking up the river; Cults, on the opposite side, is here seen to the best advantage. One cannot help contrasting Cults with Culter in this respect—the former is indebted to the smoke of Aberdeen for its existence as a village, the latter, as we have shewn, is debtor to none! The inhabitants may be of different classes, but nature has dealt impartially with the situation of the villages.

Banchory House.

The church of Banchory Devenick was built in 1822 on the site of the previous edifice—one of the last parish churches in Scotland where the Episcopal ritual was performed. It was anciently a prebend of St. Machar Cathedral, granted to the See in the twelfth century by Malcolm IV. St. Devenick, the patron saint, is said to have been one of St. Columba's disciples who was sent to the north of Scotland about the end of the ninth century.

The Barony of Banchory, a separate property from the Kirklands, was bestowed in the thirteenth century by Alexander II. to the Monastery of Arbroath; the Abbot of which, in 1256, granted a charter of it to Alan the Durward. Later, the Meldrums held the Barony for over two hundred years, and since that family parted with it there have been many changes in the proprietorship. The lairds in 1618 were the Gardynes of Dorlaithers, who, in that year, added the Kirklands to the Barony. About the middle of the

present century the then proprietor purchased Leggart, a small estate to the east, the picturesque little "Den" of which may be observed as Bridge of Dee is neared. Banchory—which thus embraces the Kirklands, the Barony, and Leggart—is now held by Sir David Stewart, ex-Lord Provost of Aberdeen, who succeeded his father in 1887. The mansion, built in 1840, is a charming residence in the Tudor style of architecture, and occupies the site of a smaller house erected in 1621 by the Gardynes. Situated on an elevated position, the grounds are finely wooded and present a beautiful prospect, especially from the neighbourhood of the Bridge of Dee. The Prince Consort stayed here while attending the meeting of the British Association at Aberdeen in 1859; a granite obelisk on Tollo Hill, a short distance south of the House, commemorates the visit. Five interesting sculptured stones are preserved near the House; and the stones of a cist have found a resting place by the side of one of the ponds which adorn the grounds. The cist had, it is believed, been removed from higher ground in the immediate vicinity, and during the removal the cover, a particularly large flat stone, had unfortunately been broken into two pieces. A short distance southward from the House

The Prince's Obelisk.

The Dee near Banchory House.

is the Blue Hill, noted for the extensive prospect obtainable from the tower on its summit. The panorama includes the North Sea from Buchan Ness to beyond Dunnottar, but the westward prospect is particularly interesting, especially to lovers of Deeside —such distant points as Beinn a' Bhuird, Beinn Bhrotain, and Cairn Toul being visible. The public are indebted to Sir David Stewart for the facilities afforded them of enjoying a view of almost phenomenal extent, and of these much advantage is taken.

A bridge doth reach across the river Dee,
Whereon seven stately double Arches be :
Who built this sumptuous work if ye would know,
The Myter which is carved thereon doth shew.

The city of Aberdeen has now expanded to this bridge, but so early as 1529 the property of the structure itself was con-

The Bridge of Dee.

veyed to the Town Council. The founder was Bishop Elphinstone of Aberdeen, who died in 1514, before its completion; Bishop Dunbar finished it in 1527, and also gifted certain lands for its maintenance. The bridge was practically rebuilt in 1723, and widened in 1842. At the north-east end there was formerly a chapel, dedicated to the Virgin Mary; at the south-west end there was a port and watch-tower. Two historic events that took place here deserve mention. In 1589 the bridge was held by the forces of the Earl of Huntly, who fled before the royal army; in

1639 Viscount Aboyne defended it against the Marquis of Montrose. There are several inscriptions on the bridge which tell its story, and there are also "Masons' Marks" which will interest "the craft". A marked stone shews the height of the river during the famous "flood" of 1829, a recurrence of which is evidently not expected there.

The Bridge of Dee was formerly the only means of communication between Aberdeen and the south; now there are three other bridges to the eastward—the Railway Bridge, the Wellington Suspension Bridge, and the Victoria Bridge. In old times the entrance to the city from the Bridge of Dee was by the Hardgate, a hilly narrow road which crossed the Burn of Ruthrieston, by a quaint little three-arched bridge erected in 1693, close to the river. One may well look at brig and road and wonder if meaner entrance could have been to any city; yet long before Glasgow was much else than a hamlet crouching round the Cathedral of St. Mungo, Aberdeen had won for itself, as a city, fame in commerce, learning, and art. The healthiest and the handsomest of Scotland's "boro' touns" is indebted for its proud position to-day to the salubrity of the valley of the Dee, and to the influence of five centuries of education.

But our walk along the banks of the Dee does not include a sojourn in Aberdeen with its 140,000 inhabitants, nor does the scope of our undertaking permit us to describe "Bon-accord". We therefore refrain from entering the city here, continuing our way by the south side of the river, whence we shall see much to admire of the "Silver City by the Sea". The road on the south side passes through the parish of Nigg, the prominent church of which attracts notice. We are reminded of its old connection with the Abbey of Arbroath by Abbotswell, a farm on our left, a short distance east of which the river, it is believed, flowed at one time directly to the sea at the Bay of Nigg. East of the Suspension Bridge the Dee was diverted, in 1872, in connection with certain harbour improvements. The old channel was a little to the north of the present one; part of it is utilised as a dock,

In old times the Dee formed a considerable estuary here, now improved out of existence, the river flowing closely past Torry, an old burgh of barony incorporated with Aberdeen. The mouth of the Dee forms the harbour entrance, having the North Pier on the one side and the South Breakwater on the other. Torry Fort, mounting nine guns, commands the entrance, while Girdleness Lighthouse gives notice to mariners of the position of the harbour, with a warning to avoid the grim rocks which guard the mouth of the river on the south side; there is a sandy shore on the north.

Torry.

From Wells to Sea the Dee has a course of 85·2 miles; the area of its basin is 817·2 square miles—we take these figures from a Blue Book, so their fractional accuracy is not to be questioned. Having given this information our pleasant task is over, our pilgrimage ended. The story of the Dee has been told by pen and pencil, and nothing remains but to close our book with the words of The Preacher: "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again".

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