

## LOCHLEVEN AND THE BISHOPSHIRE.

TILL the remarkable discovery was made, not quite half a century ago, that Lochleven trout will rise to the lure, the only interest attaching to the now well and widely known Kinross-shire lake was of a historical character. The interest centred in two buildings that stood—the one a monastery, the other a castle—on different islands of the lake. One of those buildings, associated with the sainted name of Serf or Servan, “the dark-attired Culdee” (whose hermit disciples, be it remembered, enjoyed in their lonely Inch the pious benefactions of Macbeth), has indeed quite succumbed to the weight and wear of ten centuries. The other, representing for its predecessor as well as itself a less remote antiquity, is also a mere ruin; but it still maintains above ground a sufficiency of coherent tower and wall to satisfy the gaze of the antiquarian visitor. It has traditions, received from the ancestral castle, of Wallace and the English Edwards; but its own proper memories of Queen Mary are its richest possession. The veriest urchin that has dipped into the romance of Scottish history is familiar with every turn of the story that connects the name of Mary with this isolated tower. He knows how she was brought thither a prisoner in the summer of 1567, how she

was compelled here to sign away her right to the Scottish crown, and how, after a year's detention, she cleverly managed to turn the tables on her enemies by locking them in the castle and escaping with the keys in a boat. Her beauty, her spirit, the variety of her fortunes, and her fate have all combined to make the relation of her life in all its details singularly interesting; and certainly that portion of her short reign which she was forced to spend, discrowned and a captive, in Lochleven Keep, was both long enough and momentous enough to be memorable. It may be doubted, however, if the imaginative scenes of Scott, as portrayed in the twenty-first and subsequent chapters of *The Abbot*, have not given a fresh and an additional interest to the facts of history. The calculation may be ventured that for one that is drawn to the shores of Lochleven by *The Tales of a Grandfather*, there are three that come on account of *The Abbot*.

The revival of its historical fame dates from 1820. A new and more powerful attraction to Lochleven was discovered about thirty years later. Then, for the first time apparently, the public realised the fact that the trout of Lochleven, already famous for their flesh tint and flavour, were willing to furnish sport by rising to the seduction of fly or minnow. For centuries previous to this the capabilities of the loch for the supply of good eating in fish were well known, and were largely and regularly utilised, both by the proprietors and the poaching inhabitants of the neighbouring farm-towns and villages. The net was the legitimate implement of capture, and besides trout,

char—which seem to have disappeared from the lake since the reduction of the water level in 1830, perch, pike, and eels were taken in great quantities. The pike were occasionally of monstrous size; even trout of fabulous weight—18 lb. for instance—were enclosed in the nets; and it appears from a document of the sixteenth century, signed by the Primate of Scotland, that eight barrels or casks of salted eels, forming part of the feu-mails of the adjoining lands of the Bishopshire, were sent annually to the pantry of the Archbishop of St Andrews. It is not, however, the market or the table value of the fish that now gives the lake the high place it holds in public estimation, but the splendid opportunities for sport which its waters afford. No inconsiderable part of the pleasure of Lochleven angling is the precariousness of the sport. Excellent baskets may be made—good baskets are the rule—but the individual angler finds a peculiar piquancy in the uncertainty of securing one. It is never safe to bet on a Lochleven basket. A full one is not seldom the good fortune of the novice, at the same time that the accomplished artist on the same bit of water, perhaps from the same boat, despite his experience of innumerable lakes and streams, expends the skill of a lifetime to little or absolutely no purpose at all. The weather is almost as puzzling a factor in Lochleven angling as the sheer caprice of the trout. What is good fishing weather for other waters may be the very worst possible for Lochleven. Scott speaks in his novel of successful fishing with a breeze from the west. He could hardly have spoken so from experience. On the whole, a cold east wind with a grey sky is a much

more favourable atmospheric condition for lively sport on Lochleven. But the puzzling things about the Lochleven trout, upon which one inquires in vain for reliable information, are legion. To what variety of trout does it belong? Whence come its flavour and its bright colour? Why does it sulk, often for a whole season, amongst ooze or rannoch at the lake bottom? How is it incapable of racial culture outwith its parent lake? Two things are certain: it affords rare pastime when it happens to be in a sportive temper; and it adds a unique charm to the "spread" of the breakfast-table.

Since solitary anglers and social angling clubs began to frequent Lochleven the scenery of the Kinross-shire lake district has begun to be heard about. The loveliness of its horizon, it must be owned, has been a late and a gradual discovery. Much depends on the state of the weather, more on the season of the year. In November or February, for example, a duller pond than Lochleven, a bleaker environment than its melancholy flats and dour hills, could hardly be imagined. But in almost any month of the year the casual visitor coming unadvisedly may hurry off with such an impression of its "muddy wave and dreary shore" as half-a-dozen views of its better aspect will not easily efface. The normal appearance of the lake is probably a neutral grey, and it is from this circumstance apparently that it derives its name of Leven—though the vulgar derivation which connects the name with the number eleven is, even in this philological age, as rampant as ever. The local rustic will tell you that the lake is eleven miles in circuit, that it bears on

its breast eleven islands, has eleven tributary burns, contains eleven kinds of fish, and is, or was, enclosed by the lands of eleven lairds. You will, of course, accept neither his premises nor his conclusion. But in spite of the generally bleak aspect of Lochleven there are occasions when it will recall in no unfavourable comparison the softer graces that constitute the charm of Ulleswater. Given, however, the broken light of a pure May morning, or the steady radiance of a meilow September afternoon, and the vision of Lochleven and its surrounding scenery is such a picture of life and gaiety in the one case, of serenity and repose in the other, as haunts the memory and enchants the imagination for ever.

Much of the reposeful charm of Lochleven towards the end of the angling season is furnished by the lofty outline of the Lomonds, more especially that part of the range above the village of Scotlandwell known as the Bishop Hill. The peace as of some "mountain of the Lord" steals from the pastoral slopes and tranquil hamlets of this stately rampart, which, entering the soul of the unsuccessful angler, consoles him for his toom basket, and is the best recompense for his toilsome day. Nor is the charm of the hills around him the spell of natural beauty only. Legendary and poetical associations haunt the landscape. It was among the Cleish Hills to the south-west that Sir David Lyndsay's hero, Squire Meldrum, was reared, and it was at "green Benarty's base," at the south end of the loch, that the Fife representative at Holyrood, when the Queen held her wake, had his dwelling. But Benarty recalls a couplet which comes

as a sedative to the heat of our present political life—

“Happy’s the man that belongs to nae party,  
But sits in his ain house, and looks at Benarty.”

The Lomonds again, to the east, are the Harz of Kinross-shire, for fairies and witches and dark *diablerie*. The Bishop Hill is a local Brocken. Many a Walpurgis Night of revelry has been celebrated on its broad top by the wan light of waning moons. It was here wonned the wee wee man under a moss-grey stane, whose face was like the cauliflower, for he neither had blude nor bane. He could play on his reed pipe, however, with a skill that Amphion might have envied :—

“ It rang sae sweet on the green Lomond  
That the night wind lowner blew,  
And it soopit along the Loch Leven  
And walkened the white sea-mew.

It rang out sae sweet through the green Lomond,  
So sweet but and so shrill,  
That the weasels lap out of their mouldy holes  
And danced on the midnight hill.

The corbie craw cam’ gledging near,  
The earne gaed veering by,  
And the trouts lap out of the loch Leven  
Charmed with the melody.”

The Bishopshire, as in memory of St Moak\* the

\* I am informed by a learned correspondent (W. J. N. Liddall, Esq., of Navty) that the whole of Portmoak was at one time Kirklands, owned by the Archbishop of St. Andrews, the prior of St. Serf, and the “minister” of Scotlandwell. The Archbishop was the superior of farms and fishings from Powmill and Balgedie, by Kinneston, to Brackly. Mr Liddall also points out a Bishopshire in the parish of Machar, in Aberdeenshire.

eastern shore of Lochleven between the Lomonds and the water edge is called, has its special attraction in poetical history, for here it was the brief earthly career of poor Michael Bruce was run, beginning in a weaver's cottage in Kinnesswood—to native throats *Kinaskit*—a primitive village, once merry with hand-loom and pirn-wheels, now lying like a bleached buckie from which all life has been long ago exhaled. A couple of miles farther east, in the churchyard of Portmoak, is the young poet's grave and simple memorial. The region is well worthy of a visit, yet not one in a thousand anglers to Lochleven thinks of the pilgrimage. Bruce deserves to be remembered. It was for the villagers of his day that he wrote, still a youth in his teens, such paraphrases as "Few are thy days," "O happy is the man," and "The beam that shines"—hymns which are as familiar to the memory and as dear to the pious heart of his country as are the songs of Burns themselves. Indeed, a parallel might be drawn between the work which Bruce did for sacred song and that which was done by Burns in the profane department of lyrical verse. We mean no offence to "rantin', rovin' Robin." Bruce divorced such doggerel as "O mother, dear Jerusalem," from our fine old church tunes, just as Burns, some thirty years later, cleansed the enchanting old Scottish airs of the unutterably vicious or silly words to which they had been wedded. In his native land at least Bruce lives in his hymns, independently of the beautiful ode to the winged "Attendant of the Spring," by which he is known in England. Whether he wrote that ode is a question not now to be decided. One

cannot in this case trust to internal evidence, and the historical evidence seems to the utterly candid mind to be as strong for John Logan as for Michael Bruce. There is something for the Logan authorship, after all, in the fact that Logan claimed it. The controversy, needless to say, was not of Bruce's making. It is a pity that so sweet a lyric as the "Address to the Cuckoo," and so gentle a life as that of Michael Bruce, should be embittered and disturbed by controversy.

Briefly, the case for Logan is this : First, he claimed it, printed it as his, and stuck to his claim to the last. Secondly, it was handed about (as Dr Robertson of Dalmeny affirmed), "and highly extolled among his literary acquaintances in East Lothian long before its publication, probably—though not certainly—in 1767," that is, not later than 1767 at latest : Logan was then nineteen years of age, Bruce twenty-one. Thirdly, Mrs Hutcheson, the wife of an Edinburgh merchant and cousin to Logan, assured Dr Anderson that she saw the Ode in her relative's handwriting before it was published. And, briefly, the case for Bruce is this : First, the Ode was seen before publication in his handwriting by various persons ; and, secondly, his correspondence is reported to have borne a reference to a composition he was writing about a "gowk." It is to little purpose to catalogue the influential names that appear on each side in the controversy. They are pretty equally balanced. With a sentimental partiality for Michael Bruce, I must repeat my judgment that whether Bruce or Logan wrote the Ode is not now to be decided.