

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE RIVER NETHY.

THE damage done by the river Nethy, tributary to the Spey, on the right bank is enormous. Mr. Forsyth, of the Dell of Abernethy, was on his way down from Rothiemurchus, in his gig, on the morning of the 4th. On reaching the summit above Gartenmore, he was astonished to see the public road in front of the cottages of Cuillachie flooded, as I have described it in the last chapter. Aware of the difficulties he would have to encounter, two of his people came to meet him on horseback, easily passing round the impediment, by riding over the rough muir to the south. These lads entered the water before Mr. Forsyth, and piloted him along the road till, being ignorant of the broken cross drain, the horse of one of them plunged over head and ears into it, and he and his rider narrowly escaped drowning. Having turned the vehicle, and got out with great difficulty, Mr. Forsyth proceeded by the old road.

The river here assumed the appearance of a lake of several miles in extent, having its margin skirted by the houses of Tullochgorum,\* Curr, Ballintomb, Belliefurth, Ballimore, Coul-nakyle, Rothiemoon, Tomdhu, Gartenmore, and Boat of Garten, variegated with little islands, consisting of hillocks, elevated specks of corn fields, and the farm houses of Cuillachie, Tomchrochar, Tombae, and Lord Seafield's wood establishment at Broomhill. As Mr. Forsyth approached the Bridge of Nethy, the first sight he saw was a house on the left bank bowing its roof towards the river, and disappearing headlong into it. The work of destruction went on with fearful rapidity. In fifteen minutes the road leading up the left bank, towards the house of Dell, was swept away, and a large breach made in the field beyond it. Unable to proceed in the gig, Mr. Forsyth walked up the river-side, large masses of the bank tumbling every now and then into the torrent. After getting near the corner of his garden, where a rill 2 feet wide and 2 inches deep, was wont to run, he found his farther progress arrested, and his house surrounded, by a broad and powerful current, of so great depth as to be quite unfordable. He saw the back of his house, about 60 or 70 yards before him. In it were his children; and he had no means of knowing what might be the extent of the

\* Famous for giving name to the spirited Strathspey so called.

operations of the river beyond. A half rotten paling, that had as yet resisted this sudden foreign flood, appeared dipping from either bank into the stream before him. What it might be in the middle he did not know ; for there it was already submerged. The hazard was tremendous ; but, goaded on by his anxiety, he took his determination. Poising a long ladder on the quivering poles, he made a desperate adventure. By God's providence, he achieved it, and found all safe in the house, though the water was a foot deep in it. This alarming state of things was caused by a tributary called the Dorback, rushing into the Nethy from its right bank ; and, with the usual influence of such lateral streams, driving the Nethy over towards its left bank, which it cut through, and, bursting over Mr. Forsyth's luxuriant field of turnips, ruined his farm, and sent that newly created river down the hollow that interrupted his return home. This stream continued till the breach was repaired, but Mr. Forsyth's simple mode of embanking is speedily executed. Three rows of strong piles are driven down, sloping slightly to the river, and are left above ground of the height of the intended embankment. Two feet intervenes between the rows of piles, as well as between the piles of each row, and the piles of the different rows cover each other individually, as rear rank men do those in the front rank. Young fir trees, with all their branches on, are then laid diagonally across between the piles, but differing from Colonel Mackintosh of Farr's plan so far, that, instead of the points of the brush being turned down the stream, they are laid so as to oppose it, by which means they arrest the sand and mud brought down by the river, and each successive stratum of them is covered by it in its turn. Six inches of gravel is laid over each layer of brush, between the piles, and whole fir tree logs are placed along, between the rows, over the gravel. These layers are repeated till the work is of sufficient height, and large stones are thrown in at top, to give solidity to the mass, which speedily assumes all the appearance of a natural bank, by the daily accession it receives from the river. I saw this embankment, which in a few days excluded the water, and perfectly withstood the appendix flood of the 27th of August.

The Nethy carried off a barn and cowhouse at Inchtomack, and did great damage to the fields there, as well as to all the land along its course. As it is the great medium of transport to the Spey, of the timber from the magnificent native pine forest that covers this district, it is of the highest importance to have the stream clear for floating. To facilitate this, a new cut was made for the river, in 1813, at great expense, through the moss of Cluihaig. The banks are from 10 to 15 feet deep, and

six or eight strata of roots of trees are to be seen in its sides, in the natural position, all the growth of successive ages. The trunks of some lie horizontally embedded in the moss; others have evidently been burnt to the surface. In one part of the bank, the lowest stratum is of birch roots, about two feet above the gravel the moss rests on. Then come three successive strata of fir roots, 18 inches apart—another stratum of birch roots—and above that one or two more of fir, that do not seem to have attained any great size. Lastly, there are firs now rooted and growing on the surface, but these are small and stunted, and are called, in the language of the country, *darrachs*. In the evening of the 3d of August, the Nethy burst its bulwarks, demolished this work, and returned to its former and natural channel.

In casting a drain on the farm of Dell, in 1825, and at a depth of five feet below the surface, half a wooden platter was found, together with the knot of a birchen rope, called in Scotland a *woodie*, as also several other curious cuttings of small sticks. The soil consisted of two feet of mould next the surface, and three feet of moss below. Mr. Forsyth was kind enough to send me the platter. It has much the appearance of having been made by a knife, and is so cut as to imitate those concentric circles frequently put on such vessels by the rustic turner.

The Dorback, that joins the Nethy at Dell, did serious injury along its banks. Alexander Fraser, the fox-hunter, at the Drum of Dorback, a place, in an out-of-the-way corner, far up its stream, had his house situated some twelve feet above the level of the water. "I thought nothing," said he, when telling the story himself, "of the height o' the water on the Monday night, until about the gloamin', when down she cam', in a few minutes space, fearfully upon us. First she struck the gable o' the byre, and it went. Syne the gable o' the firehoose\* partly fell, an' the water began to come in on us at sic a rate, that I made haste to get oot the wife and the sax bairns, the suldest o' them nae mair than twal' year auld. Wi' some ado I carried them to the bare braeside. I then steekit the door o' the hoose, to haud oot as muckle o' the water as possible, and made a hole through the back o't, to lat oot what was in. Syne, wi' the help o' some neebours, I got oot a muckle kist o' drawers, and twa cloth kists. By this time the furniture was going fast, and we tied a strong rope to a new bed, but we had hardly done that, when the water cam' and carried off bed, and house, and a'thegither. Syne the barn, fu' o' corn, and a' kind o' fairmin' tools and gear, gaed aff too. For lang the wife and bairns clang to the bank, seein'

\* Dwelling-house.

a' thing ta'en awa', cauld and weet as wund and water could mak' them, ill wullin' to leave it till the last. But, when the last houp, the hoose, was gane, I got them carried aff to a neebour's barn. It wis a' we could do to get to the bank aifter the hoose was gane, standin' as it did on a wee bit plain by the waterside. But that, and my garden, field, and corn-yard, are a' gane to the sea, and the place is noo a bare *claddock*,\* without a vestige o' onything that might gar ye believe it had ever been the bield o' ony human creature." I understand that this poor fellow's house and farm were furnished in a very superior manner to those of most of his condition.

At some distance below the Dell of Abernethy, and on the right bank of the river, lay the *Iron Mill Croft*, the history of which is so curious as to demand a very particular detail. We are informed by the Reverend John Grant, in his statistical account of this parish, that those immense tracts of pine still covering the country at the roots of the Cairngorum Mountains, the relics of the great central forest of Scotland, were, down to the beginning of the eighteenth century, of little or no value to the proprietors. At that period, the Laird of Grant got a merk, or twenty pence, a-year, for whatever one man chose to cut and manufacture with his axe and saw. Then the Laird of Rothiemurchus, commonly called MacAlpin, brought it to five shillings a-year, and a pound of tobacco. Some time previous to the year 1730, however, a branch of the York Buildings Company purchased a portion of the forest of Abernethy for £7000, and continued to work it till 1737—"the most profuse and profligate set," says Mr. Grant, "that ever were heard of in this corner. Their extravagancies of every kind ruined themselves and corrupted others. Their beginning was great indeed, with 120 working horses, sawmills, iron mills, and every kind of implement, and apparatus of the best and most expensive sorts. They used to display their vanity by bonfires, tar barrels, and opening hogsheads of brandy to the country people, by which five of them died in one night. They had a commissary for provisions and forage, at a handsome salary, and, in the end, went off in debt to the proprietors and the country." Mr. Grant, however, allows them the credit of having made roads, introduced sawmills, and taught the inhabitants how to conduct the manufacture and transportation of wood. They also cut a passage through a rock in Spey, that greatly impeded the process of floating. And, as the floats formerly made up were extremely clumsy and very ill put together, so they were conducted in a very hazardous manner by a man, sitting in what

\* A barren spot covered with stones.

was called a *currach*—"made of a hide, in the shape, and about the size of a small brewing kettle, broader above than below, with ribs, or hoops of wood, in the inside, and a cross stick for the man to sit on, who, with a paddle in his hand, went before the raft to which his currach was tied by a rope. These currachs were so light, that the men carried them on their backs home from Speymouth. There is one of them now (1794) in the parish of Cromdale, below this. The York Buildings Company had eighteen of these currachs in their employment at first, with which they made little progress, till Mr. Aaron Hill, one of their number, constructed the large raft, as it is at present, consisting of two or three branders of spars in the bottom, joined end to end, with iron or other loops, and a rope through them, and conducted by two men, one at each end, who have each a seat and oar, with which they keep the raft in the proper direction."

It is wonderful how little is now known about this company at Abernethy. Some large cast-iron pillars, two of which have been used by Mr. Forsyth to prop the roof of a cart shed, and two iron beams, with the mark  $\frac{1}{2}$ , and the date 1730, are among the few vestiges that remain of them. It was believed that the company had had an iron-mill somewhere about the croft called by that name; and it was known that they carried iron-ore from the hills of Lecht, at the source of the Burn of Conglass, near Tomintoul, to Abernethy, and smelted it there. A hammer-head, 21 inches high, by 11 and 12 at the base, which must have been moved by machinery for pounding the ore, still lies on the top of a high bank, on the right side of the Nethy, immediately over the Iron-Mill Croft. But the croft itself bore no traces of any such work having been there, and was all cultivated, except a part of it at the lower end, covered by a grove of tall alders, standing between the arable ground and the river running to the west. Such was the state of things, when the flood of the 3d and 4th of August scooped out a new and very broad channel for the river, right through the arable croft, and a part of the alder grove, excavating it to the depth of 6 or 8 feet. Under this, and in the middle of its new channel, to the astonishment of every one who has seen it, appear the lying beams or framework of a gangway across the water. (Plate XLII.) A platform on the left of the sketch, which is nicely jointed and morticed together, seems to have been the foundation of the mill-house. There seem to have been upright posts in some of the beams, probably to support a platform above; the sluices for conveying water to the works, and for the escape of flow-water, appear to have been between these upright posts. The whole timber is

perfectly fresh, and the mortice ends of the beams are all carefully numbered with the axe. The haugh above must have formed a reservoir for supplying the machinery with water. On the brow of the high right bank of the Nethy, the flood has exposed a bed of charcoal 18 inches thick, probably deposited there for the use of the smelting works. A fine spring of water, issuing from the left bank of the river, immediately opposite to the site of the iron-mill, is known to this day by the name of Crowley's Well, from a certain John Crowley, one of the workmen who constructed it, and that with much trouble and care in its formation and embellishment, as has been made more apparent by the operation of the flood. This has brought into view a wooden spout, laid along the base of the bank, some two feet below the surface, with an inclination downwards towards the well, thereby collecting all the springs within its range to one point. There is a flagstone laid endwise in front, with a bore of two inches diameter, through which the water flows; and, not many years ago, an iron spout, inserted in this bore, allowed vessels to be filled with ease, without disturbing the well. The lower haugh is said to have been wholly occupied by the company's gardens and houses. People say that a considerable quantity of silver plate was found in a cellar there, together with several other heavy articles of value, which they could not carry away with them, in the hasty moonlight retreat they were compelled to make.

The excavations of the River Nethy, on the Iron Mill Croft, are extremely interesting to the geologist. We have here the history of the operations of a river for exactly a century. At this time, 100 years ago, the English company were pounding iron-ore with their ponderous hammers, moved by active machinery, in the bed of the River Nethy. These actors move off the stage, bonfires, tar-barrels, and all, and the river, in some of its floods, soon obliterates all traces of them or of their works, by filling up its bed with rounded masses of stone, mingled with gravel, and so, by shutting itself out of one channel, compelling its stream to seek another, considerably to the westward. But floods succeed floods; and the quieter portions of each successive inundation spread over the ground, where, by degrees, they deposit a deep and fertile soil, forming a rich haugh of land, the surface of which is six or eight feet above the level of the ground the works stood on. The greater part of this beautiful flat is subjected to tillage, whilst the seeds of some neighbouring alder trees find their way into a portion of it, and spring up into a grove. The trees grow till they become tall and majestic; and agricultural labour goes on, till the iron-mill is as much

forgotten as the face and figure of John Crowley, who worked in it ; when comes the flood of the 3d and 4th of August last, tears off the shroud that covered it, and brings all back again to light, save the busy human beings, who once animated the scene.

The whole of the Iron Mill Croft has disappeared, and is now a waste of sand, gravel, and stones. The sawmill immediately below was demolished, and two houses carried away. The river, previous to the flood, had a meandering course down towards the Bridge of Nethy ; but, after making its burst on the 4th of August, it cut out a new bed for itself, in one broad straight line of destruction, annihilating the haughs on both sides. Terror and confusion spread fast among the inhabitants at Bridge of Nethy. Some were stupified ; and others, more collected, removed their effects. The river filled the smithy, and extinguished the smith's fire. One beautiful cottage, surrounded by a blooming and luxuriant garden, occupied the ground at the west end of the handsome bridge, and immediately above the approach to it. It was inhabited by Alexander Mitchell, an industrious tailor, who had made it particularly nice. About six o'clock in the morning, the river set its stream to work against its left bank, and soon swept away cottage, garden, and road, scooping the ground and gravel out to an immense depth, and cutting off all communication with the west end of the bridge. About eight o'clock, a number of people were standing on the middle of it, wondering at the immensity and the roaring of the river, that was carrying down large trees, and tossing them up perpendicularly, when all at once the enormous mass of timber building composing the saw-mill of Straanbeg, about 500 yards above, moved bodily off, steadily and magnificently, like some three-decker leaving dock. On it came grandly, without a plank being dislodged. It was tremendous—it was awful to see it advancing on the bridge. The people shuddered. Some moved quickly away ; and others, spell-bound, instinctively grasped the parapet to prepare for the shock ; its speed was accelerated ; it was already within 100 yards, and the increased velocity of the current must bring it instantaneously upon them ; destruction seemed inevitable, when all at once it struck upon a bulwark, went to pieces with a fearful crash, and, spreading itself abroad all over the surface of the waters, it rushed down to the Spey in one sea of wreck. The bridge was of grey granite, its central arch thirty-six feet, and its two side arches twenty-four feet span, and of a solidity that promised an endurance for ages. But the river having once breached through beyond its western land-breast, undermined it on the flank, swept away the western arch, and gravelled the others up eighteen inches above the

spring. (Plate XLIII.) The height of the flood, above ordinary level, at the bridge, was 15 feet, where it was spread out to a width of about 200 yards. Of four saw-mills that were in full operation here, one only could be restored, the very sites of the others having been so ruined as to render it impossible to re-establish them. The works formed all along the river for facilitating the process of floating, have so completely disappeared, that, to replace them, and to clear the channel of the immense quantities of large stones left in it, must be the work of years. The cottages on the right bank of the river were considered safe; but a clump of alders, at some distance below the bridge, divided the stream, and threw a strong current against them, that very speedily carried away three of them, with their furniture and gardens.

Captain Grant of Birchfield lost eight acres of very fine haugh land, forty bolls of grain, together with the hay, turnips, and potatoes, and this on a farm of twenty-five acres. The adjacent farm of Rothiemoon lost above three acres of land, and the whole crops and grass were covered with gravel. A very curious relic of antiquity was discovered on this farm, by the flood having swept away about twenty yards of a green bank, opposite the house of Coulnakyle. This was a square stone building, about six feet wide and five feet high, having nine feet of bank over it. I had not the good fortune to see it, but Captain Grant thinks it must have been a place of concealment, as that which is now the bed of the Nethy was covered with growing timber about a century ago. The farm of Tombea lost four acres of land, and the greater part of the rest of it was covered with sand and rubbish.

Captain Macdonald of Coulnakyle, whose place is situated in the angle between the right bank of the Nethy and the right bank of the Spey, seeing his people tired with their day's work of carrying hay, on the evening of the 1st August, desired them to leave off. "You had better continue as long as you can, sir," said his overseer to him, "for ye'll lead nae mair these twa or three days to come." "Phoo!" said Captain Macdonald, "the mercury promises good weather." "That may be," said the man; "but dinna ye see twa suns i' the sky? Wha ever saw gude wather come aifter sic a fearsome sign as yon." Next day the mountains forming the horizon far up the strath, appeared as if they were only a few miles off, and Captain Macdonald fancied he should have to laugh at his weather-wise overseer. But at nine o'clock, the wind shifted to the north, the barometer fell from 29 to 28½, at which point it continued whilst it rained for 42 hours, without intermission, the thermometer being all

the while at 50°. At seven o'clock in the morning of the 4th the house was surrounded. Captain Macdonald, who, as a sailor, has weathered many a rough gale, saw some of the floaters attempt to come with a boat over part of the inundation, when the wind blew so strong as "to put him in mind of Spithead in a fresh gale," so that it instantly filled the boat with water. The weather on the 5th was more calm and clear, and Strathspey was one vast sea, the water not having had time to run off below. "I am satisfied," said Captain Macdonald, "that I might have sailed a fifty-gun ship from the Boat of Bellifurth to the Boat of Garten, a distance of seven or eight miles." At the Broomhill, the extreme height of the flood above ordinary level was twenty feet, where it was about a mile broad, but the water comparatively dead. Of Captain Macdonald's farm of 200 acres, 150 were completely ruined by depositions of gravel and sand, to the depth of three feet, and covered with large trees.

Before leaving the district of Abernethy, I have to notice a wonderful ravine formed in the side of Bein-a-chavirin, near the Dhu-Lochan, above the bridle-road from Strathspey to Braemar, and about a quarter of a mile from the march of that country. It extends a mile in length down the steep slope of the mountain, is from forty to fifty yards wide, and of proportionable depth. Its former contents are now spread all over the base of the hill, covering an immense surface. The mountain side was formerly an entire and beautiful green sward, and there was no stream or spring there; but the new channel is now occupied by a rill, the remains of the tremendous burst of subterranean water that occasioned it. Soon after it took place, a man passing on horseback, who was not aware of the water-charged and unstable nature of the *debris* that had fallen from it, got so entangled in it that his horse broke its leg, and soon afterwards died.

At Bellifurth, a considerable lake, the remains of the flood, still covers *the muckle meadow*, and must continue to do so till removed by drainage or evaporation.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE RIVER DULNAN—THE SPEY—THE TILCHEN, ETC.

LET us now give our attention to the river Dulnan, a large tributary to the Spey from its left bank. In a lonely spot among the hills, this stream, and a small burn that runs into it,

surrounded Mr. Gordon of Lynevuilg's shepherd, and a boy who was with him, and kept them there, with no other food than meal and water, for two days, in the most dreadful state of suspense. And, at Eilan Dorch,\* an infirm woman of 90, with her widowed daughter and grand-daughter, were so environed by the flood, and the island so cut away, that they expected every moment to be swept off, with their houses, cattle, and all they possessed. But it pleased Providence to subdue the deluge, when nothing but a mere fragment of the isle remained. The saw-mill of Dalnahatnich was nearly carried off, and the miller's house was so inundated that he was compelled to flee from it.

The Bridge of Sluggan, 32 feet span, was swept away; and, opposite to that place, the small farm of Inchlun was completely inundated. The occupant, a poor old man, of 90 years of age, much gone, both in body and mind—his wife, an old woman—and a younger son, a cripple, with his wife and children—were all carried out from their inundated home by the elder son, who was the only efficient member of the family. It was truly afflicting to see the old man poised upon his son's shoulders, utterly unconscious of his danger, in the state of idiocy to which he was reduced, shouting out with childish joy at his strange and novel situation.

At the well-known stage, the Bridge of Carr, the old bridge, long since disused, was always a picturesque object, but the flood has rendered it still more so, by entirely removing the remains of its wing-walls, and leaving its tall, round-shaped, skeleton arch, standing thin and meagre-like, opposed to the plump, well conditioned body of the more substantial modern erection. (Plate XLIV.) The inn stables on the left, though on the top of the rock, and 10 or 12 yards back from its brink, would have been carried away, but for the failure of the old wing-walls, and the south gable of the inn itself was very nearly going. A bridge over the Burn of Aultnacarnoch, on the Inverness road, was demolished. Immediately below the Bridge of Carr, the river swept away a fine bank of alders, and, cutting back for more than 10 yards in breadth, and for several hundred yards in length, carried away Captain Cruickshank's dairy, and very nearly his dairymaid along with it, leaving his house of Dalrachney standing within a few yards of the mouldering brink of a gravel precipice 40 or 50 feet high. On the opposite side, it swept off three ridge-breadths of land for an extent of 300 yards.

\* The Dark Island, so called from the sun being excluded from it during some of the winter months by the deep pine forest in which it is embosomed.

Near the Hamlet of Carr, on the right bank, a slate rock has been laid bare, which, if properly wrought, might turn out to some account. About 150 yards to the westward of the houses, there is a small patch of land surrounded by a few stunted birches, called *Croft-na-croich*, or the Gallows Croft, having the following story attached to it:—

“Near the end of the 17th century, there lived a certain notorious freebooter, a native of Lochaber, of the name of Cameron, but who was better known by his cognomen of *Padrig Mac-an-Ts'agairt*, Peter the Priest's son. Numerous were the creachs or robberies of cattle on the great scale, driven by him from Strathspey. But he did not confine his depredations to that country; for, some time between the years 1690 and 1695, he made a clean sweep of the cattle from the rich pastures of The Aird, the territory of the Frasers. That he might put his pursuers on a wrong scent, he did not go directly towards Lochaber, but, crossing the River Ness at Lochend, he struck over the mountains of Strathnairn and Strathdearn, and ultimately encamped behind a hill above Duthil, called, from a copious spring on its summit, *Cairn-an-Sh'uaran*, or The Well Hill. But notwithstanding all his precautions, the celebrated Simon, Lord Lovat,\* then chief of the Frasers, discovered his track, and dispatched a special messenger to his father-in-law, Sir Ludovick Grant of Grant, begging his aid in apprehending *Mac-an-Ts'agairt*, and recovering the cattle.

“It so happened, that there lived, at this time, on the laird of Grant's ground, a man also called Cameron, surnamed *Mugachmore*, of great strength and undaunted courage; he had six sons and a stepson, whom his wife, formerly a woman of light character, had before her marriage with *Mugach*, and as they were all brave, Sir Ludovick applied to them to undertake the recapture of the cattle. Sir Ludovick was not mistaken in his man. The *Mugach* no sooner received his orders, than he armed himself and his little band, and went in quest of the freebooter, whom he found in the act of cooking a dinner from part of the spoil. *Mugach* called on *Padrig* and his men to surrender, and they, though numerous, dreading the well-known prowess of their adversary, fled to the opposite hills, their chief threatening bloody vengeance as he went. The *Mugach* drove the cattle to a place of safety, and watched them there till their owners came to recover them.

“*Padrig Mac-an-Ts'agairt* did not utter his threats without

\* Born at Beaufort 1668; executed on Towerhill 9th April, 1747, in the 80th year of his age.

the fullest intention of carrying them into effect. In the latter end of the following spring, he visited Strathspey with a strong party, and waylaid the Mugach, as he and his sons were returning from working at a small patch of land he had on the brow of a hill, about half-a-mile above his house. Mac-an-Ts'agairt and his party concealed themselves in a thick covert of underwood, through which they knew that the Mugach and his sons must pass; but seeing their intended victims well armed, the cowardly assassins lay still in their hiding-place, and allowed them to pass, with the intention of taking a more favourable opportunity for their purpose. That very night they surprised and murdered two of the sons, who, being married, lived in separate houses, at some distance from their father's, and having thus executed so much of their diabolical purpose, they surrounded the Mugach's cottage.

"No sooner was his dwelling attacked, than the brave Mugach, immediately guessing who the assailants were, made the best arrangements for defence that time and circumstances permitted. The door was the first point attempted, but it was strong, and he and his four sons placed themselves behind it, determined to do bloody execution the moment it should be forced. Whilst thus engaged, the Mugach was startled by a noise above the rafters, and looking up, he perceived, in the obscurity, the figure of a man half through a hole in the wattled roof. Eager to despatch his foe as he entered, he sprang upon a table, plunged his sword into his body, and down fell—his stepson! whom he had ever loved and cherished as one of his own children. The youth had been cutting his way through the roof, with the intention of attacking Padrig from above, and so creating a diversion in favour of those who were defending the door. The brave young man lived no longer than to say, with a faint voice, 'Dear father, I fear you have killed me!' For a moment the Mugach stood petrified with horror and grief, but rage soon usurped the place of both. 'Let me open the door!' he cried, 'and revenge his death, by drenching my sword in the blood of the villain!' His sons clung around him, to prevent what they conceived to be madness, and a strong struggle ensued between desperate bravery and filial duty; whilst the Mugach's wife stood gazing on the corpse of her first-born son, in an agony of contending passions, being ignorant, from all she had witnessed, but that the young man's death had been wilfully wrought by her husband. 'Hast thou forgotten our former days of dalliance?' cried the wily Padrig, who saw the whole scene through a crevice in the door; 'How often hast thou undone thy door to me, when I came on an errand of love, and wilt thou not

open it now to give me way to punish him, who has, but this moment, so foully slain thy beloved son? Ancient recollections, and present affliction, conspired to twist her to his purpose. The struggle and altercation between the Mugach and his sons still continued. A frenzy seized on the unhappy woman. She flew to the door—undid the bolt—and Padrig and his assassins rushed in. The infuriated Mugach no sooner beheld his enemy enter, than he sprang at him like a tiger, grasped him by the throat, and dashed him to the ground. Already was his vigorous sword-arm drawn back, and his broad claymore was about to find a passage to the traitor's heart, when his faithless wife, coming behind him, threw over it a large canvas winnowing sheet, and, before he could extricate the blade from the numerous folds, Padrig's weapon was reeking in the best heart's blood of the bravest Highlander that Strathspey could boast of. His four sons, who witnessed their mother's treachery, were paralyzed. The unfortunate woman herself, too, stood stupified and appalled; but she was quickly recalled to her senses by the active clash of the swords of Padrig and his men. 'Oh, my sons! my sons!' she cried, 'spare my boys!' But the tempter needed her services no longer—she had done his work. She was spurned to the ground, and trampled under foot, by those who soon strewed the bloody floor around her with the lifeless corpses of her brave sons.

"Exulting in the full success of this expedition of vengeance, Mac-an-Ts'agairt beheaded the bodies, and piled the heads in a heap on an oblong hill, that runs parallel to the road, on the east side of Carr Bridge, from which it is called *Tom-nan-Cean*, The Hill of the Heads. Scarcely was he beyond the reach of danger, than his butchery was known at Castle Grant, and Sir Ludovick immediately offered a great reward for his apprehension, but Padrig, who had anticipated some such thing, fled to Ireland, where he remained for seven years. But the restlessness of the murderer is well known, and Padrig felt it in all its horrors. Leaving his Irish retreat, he returned to Lochaber. By a strange accident, a certain Mungo Grant of Muckrach, having had his cattle and horses carried away by some thieves from that quarter, pursued them hot foot, recovered them, and was on his way returning with them, when, to his astonishment, he met Padrig Mac-an-Ts'agairt, quite alone, in a narrow pass, on the borders of his native country. Mungo instantly seized and made a prisoner of him. But his progress with his beasts was tedious; and, as he was entering Strathspey at *Lag-na-caillich*,\* about a mile to the westward of Aviemore, he espied

\* The Old Woman's Hollow.

12 desperate men, who, taking advantage of his slow march, had crossed the hills to gain the pass before him, for the purpose of rescuing Padrig. But Mungo was not to be daunted. Seeing them occupying the road in his front, he grasped his prisoner with one hand, and brandishing his dirk with the other, he advanced in the midst of his people and animals, swearing potently, that the first motion at an attempt at rescue by any one of them, should be the signal for his dirk to drink the life's blood of Padrig Mac-an-Ts'agairt. They were so intimidated by his boldness, that they allowed him to pass without assault, and left their friend to his fate. Padrig was forthwith carried to Castle Grant. But the remembrance of the Mugach's murder had been by this time much obliterated, by many events little less strange, and the laird, unwilling to be troubled with the matter, ordered Mungo and his prisoner away.

Disappointed and mortified, Mungo and his party were returning with their felon captive, discussing, as they went, what they had best do with him. "A fine reward we have had for all our trouble!" said one. "The laird may catch the next thief her's nanesel for Donald!" said another. "Let's turn him loose!" said a third. "Aye, aye," said a fourth, "what for wud we be plaguing oursel's more wi' him!" "Yes, yes! brave, generous men!" said Padrig Mac-an-Ts'agairt, roused by a sudden hope of life from the moody dream of the gallows-tree, in which he had been plunged, whilst he was courting his mournful muse to compose his own lament, that he might die with an effect striking, as all the events of his life had been; "Yes, brave men! free me from these bonds! it is unworthy of Strathspey men—it is unworthy of Grants to triumph over a fallen foe! Those whom I killed were no clansmen of thine, but recreant Camerons, who betrayed a Cameron! Let me go free, and that reward of which you have been disappointed shall be quadrupled for sparing my life!" Such words as these, operating on minds so much prepared to receive them favourably, had well nigh worked their purpose. But, "No!" said Muckrach sternly, "it shall never be said that a murderer escaped from my hands. Besides, it was just so that he fairly spake to the Mugach's false wife. But did he spare her sons on that account? If ye let him go, my men, the fate of the Mugach may be ours; for what bravery can stand against treachery and assassination?" This opened an entirely new view of the question to Padrig's rude guards, and the result of the conference was, that they resolved to take him to Inverness, and to deliver him up to the Sheriff.

As they were pursuing their way up the south side of the

river Dulnan, the hill of Tom-nan-cean appeared on that opposite to them. At sight of it, the whole circumstances of Padrig's atrocious deed came fresh into their minds. It seemed to cry on them for justice, and, with one impulse, they shouted out, "Let him die on the spot where he did the bloody act!" Without a moment's farther delay, they resolved to execute their new resolution. But on their way across the plain, they happened to observe a large fir tree, with a thick horizontal branch growing at right angles from the trunk, and of a sufficient height from the ground to suit their purpose, and doubting if they might find so convenient a gallows where they were going, they at once determined that here Padrig should finish his mortal career. The neighbouring birch thicket supplied them with materials for making a withe, and, whilst they were twisting it, Padrig burst forth in a flood of Gaelic verse, which his mind had been accumulating by the way.\* His song, and the twig rope that was to terminate his existence, were spun out and finished at the same moment, and he was instantly elevated to a height equally beyond his ambition and his hopes. No one would touch his body, so it hung swinging in the wind for some twelve months or more after his execution; and, much as he had been feared when alive, he was infinitely more a cause of terror now that he was a lifeless corpse. None dared to approach that part of the heath after it was dark; but in daylight people were bolder.

The schoolboys of Duthil, who, like the frogs in the fable, gradually began to have less and less apprehension for him, actually bragged one another on so far one day, that they ventured to pelt him with stones. A son of Delrachney, who happened to aim better than the rest, struck the birchen withe, by this time become rotten, severed it, and down came the wasted body with a terrible crash. As the cause of its descent was hardly perceptible to any of them, the terrified boys ran off, filled with the horrible belief that the much-dreaded Padrig was pursuing them. So impressed was poor young Delrachney with this idea, that, through terror and haste, he burst a blood-vessel, and died in two hours afterwards. Padrig's bones were buried about 100 yards to the north of the Bridge of Carr, but, as if they were doomed never to have rest, the grave was cut through about thirty-five years ago, when the present Highland road was made, and they were re-interred immediately behind the inn

\* This lament can still be said or sung by many in the vicinity of the spot, but the story has been already too long to admit of my giving it here.

garden. Should any idlers, who may wander after dusk along the road leading by the base of the Tom-nan-cean, see strange sights cross his path, let him recall the story I have narrated, and it may furnish him with some explanation of what he beholds.

From hence to the Spey, the course of the Dulnan is about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles, along the whole of which the crops were annihilated, and great destruction was done to the land, many acres having been swept away. At the junction of the Burn of Duthil with the Dulnan, the House of Donald Mackintosh, a weaver, was carried off, and the poor man himself remained for some time, in great alarm, on a small spot surrounded by the river and the burn. Below Lynelish, a dyer lost half his dye-house, and all his dye-stuffs. The Bridge of Carr,\* of a single arch of 65 feet span, had its southern abutment undermined by the water. An eye-witness informs me, that the moment the support gave way, the force of the immense body of water was so great that it made the arch spring 15 feet into the air. While in the act of ascending, it maintained its perfect semicircular form, but as it descended, its ends came together. So tremendous was the impetus, that the arch seemed to be carried in a body to some distance on the surface, like that of the Divie above Dunphail. When it sank, the current received a sudden check. But the waters, boiling up as if indignant at the temporary restraint, again raged along with redoubled vehemence. A stone, 30 yards below the bridge, of fully 50 tons weight, was made to perform a circumvolution. Eleven cases of destitute families have been produced by the flood in the parish of Duthil.

The Burn of Craggan, or Kirkton, tributary to the Spey, from the left bank, about a mile above Grantown, carried away its bridge, destroyed a great deal of ground and crop, and utterly demolished a house, but, as some small compensation, it brought a bed of primitive limestone into view, about 200 yards above the bridge. Mr. Houston's house of Kirkton was surrounded by the burn, and all access or egress cut off. Immediately below Kirkton is the beautiful old Churchyard of Inverallen, in which are the ruins of the church. This is the cemetery for the population of Grantown, and it is of great size. It is surrounded by wood, and stands about 12 feet above the level of the Spey, its south wall being about 15 yards from the river, and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet high. Its area is thickly set with gravestones, and, what was remarkable, the flood rose 15 feet or more here, inundated its whole surface, leaving visible only a few inches of one tombsome taller

\* Not to be confounded with the Bridge of Carr.

than the rest. There was something peculiarly striking in the circumstance, that not even the sacred mansions of the dead should have been left unvisited by the furious waters, but that their turbulent waves should have rolled, in angry contention, over the very dust of those with whom all worldly strife had for ever ceased.

The run of the Spey is quicker here ; but the flat country, for miles above, having been converted into a temporary lake, acted as a compensation-pond, and saved the banks for many miles below ; no damage having been done, except the demolition of the smallest of the three arches of 86, 40, and 20 feet span of the old military Bridge of Spey, below Grantown. This bridge rose with a steep ascent, from the low left to the high right bank, and had its roadway and northern wing-walls heightened, which occasioned a concentration of the power of the stream that produced the injury. Three feet of the arch fortunately remained, and supported the spandrel and parapet walls on the lower side. But the other parts of the bridge are much shaken, though everything that the activity of Mr. Mitchell, the Inspector for the Parliamentary Commissioners, could accomplish, has been done to save this highly useful bridge.

On Wednesday the 5th of August, Mr. Peter Forbes, farmer at Urlarmore, on the south side of Livet, despatched his servant, Donald Cameron, a tall, handsome, athletic man, about twenty-five years of age, to carry a message to Mrs. Forbes, then at Aitnoch, near the banks of the Findhorn. On arriving at the Bridge of Spey, and seeing its state, he quietly mounted the extremely narrow parapet. The river was still raging in all the fury of flood, and loud were the cries and expostulations of the spectators. Disregarding these, however, but without saying one word, Donald coolly and steadily walked onwards, with an air of perfect complacency, till he came to that part where there was a gap in the masonry of 40 feet, save in the single parapet alone. The increased cries of the beholders were luckily drowned by the roaring of the surges. Donald stayed but one moment, to cast his plaid more tightly about him, and again continued his dangerous path to the farther end of the parapet, where, leaping lightly down, he pursued his way, without once looking over his shoulder for applause, or showing the slightest symptom of being conscious that he had achieved anything extraordinary. A certain shopkeeper in Grantown, too, nicknamed *Dear Peter*, pressed by the urgency of some favourable chance of sale, did also essay the adventure of the perilous parapet. But, having a large pack on his back, he took the good mercantile precaution of doubling his security, by planting four legs,

instead of two, under him. Squatted on hands and knees, Peter pursued his path, whilst his pack kept vibrating to and fro, like the pendulum of a clock, his features being, all the while, twisted in an opposite direction to that of his load. The spectators, notwithstanding their anxiety for their Dear Peter, were convulsed with laughter, till their shouts, mingled with the thunders of the Spey, had nearly made him lose his balance. But, with all his terror, he stuck to his pack, resolving that, if he did go, he should carry his goods with him. At last, however, he succeeded in carrying all safe to the opposite side, amidst the cheers of the multitude.

Immediately below the Haughs of Cromdale, where the well-known battle was fought, the road to Ballindalloch winds round the northern base of the isolated hill of *Tomanurd*, which appears as an advanced guard of the great mass of the Cromdale mountains.\* At a point about seventy yards above the road, a phenomenon, similar to that of *Bein-a-chavirin*, took place; and, although it was on a much smaller scale, yet we are fortunate in having the evidence of eye-witnesses to this, which may enable us to judge how very grand the larger burst of water must have been when in full operation. Mr. Grant of Culquoich happened to be passing, on Tuesday the 4th of August, at the time this prodigy took place. It commenced with a quaking of the earth for sixty or seventy yards around the spot, which continued for some time. At length an immense column of water forced itself through the face of the hill, spouting into the air, and tossing around large stones, and great quantities of gravel. Sometimes it ceased altogether, and nothing was heard but the rush as of a considerable river. Again it would burst forth, like a geyser, with renewed energy, tearing up whole banks of earth, and projecting them to the distance of 300 yards. Mr. Grant compares the magnitude of the body of water to that of the River Dulnan. It was quite transparent, and had so much the appear-

\* Captain Carleton, in that part of his Memoirs touching Scottish affairs, soon after the Revolution, tells us that the Royal Army, under Sir Thomas Livingstone, coming to the north bank of the Spey, "soon discovered the Highlanders, by their fires. Immediately on sight of it, he issued his orders for fording the river, and falling upon them as soon as possible. Both were accordingly performed, and with so good order, secrecy, and success, that Cameron and Balfour, their commanders, were obliged to make their escape naked. They were about 1000 in number, of which were killed about 300. We pursued them till they got up *Crowdale Hill*, where we lost them in a fog; and indeed so high is that hill, that they who perfectly know it assured me that it never is without a little dark fog hanging over it; and to me, at that instant of time, they seemed rather to be people received up into the clouds, than flying from an enemy."

ance of boiling, that Mr. Grant at first really imagined that it must be warm. Mr. Gordon of Ballintomb also reached the spot about fifteen minutes after the first appearance of the water. He compares the noise it made to the rush of a cataract down a steep rock. Some account for it from the circumstance that there is a large boggy flat on the summit, which they suppose may have been filled by the rain; and that, having no outlet, it forced its way downwards through the body of the hill. But this is manifestly absurd, for if the weight of so lofty a column of water as that from the summit of this high hill had been brought into operation, the effects would have been enormous. I can speak to the fact of the side of the hill being particularly dry previously. I am rather disposed to think that it must contain some subterranean reservoir, which produced the effect by becoming surcharged. My friend, Mr. Jardine, civil engineer, and I, saw it some weeks after it had appeared. We measured the ravine it had opened, and found that the quantity of solid matter thrown out by it amounted to *about 7000 cubic yards*. A tiny rill of water then ran from it, but it was pure and cool. I have since learned that a neighbouring spring has gone dry—a circumstance that highly corroborates my theory of it.

At some distance below Tomanurd, the Mill of Dalvey, on the right bank, was destroyed by its burn. Some miles lower down the Tilchen, tributary to the Spey from the left, completely cleared away the whole arable and pasture land that gave richness to its confined and picturesque glen. The Meal-Mill at its mouth, is miraculously left perfectly entire, although the whole soil surrounding it disappeared to a great depth. So suddenly did the swollen stream come upon the people here, that, at Wester Straan, the first announcement of the flood given to the tenant, Henry Grant, was the falling outwards of the gable of his house, which, like the drawing of the curtain of a theatre, let the whole of his terrors burst on his eyes at once. Wild with alarm, he flew to the door, where he found a wide cascade eight feet high, pouring over between him and his farm offices. Though left in this perilous situation, he escaped destruction. Above 20 acres have been scarified and ruined at the mouth of the Tilchen. But why do I attempt to particularize, where the destruction of crop and of land has been so extensive? It is sufficient for me to state the sweeping fact that, after a careful examination, the soil and timber carried off, and other damage falling on the proprietor, is estimated at no less a sum than *£20,000 for his Strathspey estate alone*. The number of bridges destroyed are thirteen; saw-mills, three; meal-mills, two; and dwelling-houses very many. The loss of the entire crops in the

low grounds, belonging to the tenants, falls to be added to make up the grand total; and the mass of human misery that is wrapped up in this last item, may be conceived by any one who is in the least acquainted with Highland districts.