

CHAPTER XV.

THE RIVER AVEN AND THE RIVER LIVET.—THE SPEY ABOUT BALLINDALLOCH.

THE River Aven, tributary to the Spey at Ballindalloch on the right bank, has its source in the very bosom of the Cairngorum Mountains—a circumstance that sufficiently accounts for the very wide ravage it committed during the flood. Its lonely crystal lake is surrounded by frightful precipices, rising on all sides, sheer up, almost to the very ridges of those towering heaps which are now admitted to be higher than any land in Great Britian. Nothing in our island can approach so near to the wilder and more savage parts of Swiss scenery. Cairngorum and Beinbainac rise almost perpendicularly from its western and northern edges; and the vast foundations of Benmacdui and Bein-main overhang its southern extremity, in frightful masses, that seem as if poised for immediate projection into the valley; so that, for several of the winter months, the sun never shines on the surface of the lake. These are the sources of the pure and transparent Aven, the glaciers which hang in their ample bosoms furnishing exhaustless supplies to its stream, by means of the cataracts that continually pour down into it. All traces of man are lost amid the grandeur of these regions. No tree or shrub is to be seen; and no living creature, save when the eagle soars from the verge of the cliff athwart the vacant ether, awakening the echoes with his scream, or when the ptarmigan flutters its low flight across the mountain brow, or perhaps when some stragglng deer from the Forest of Mar,

That from the hunter's aim hath ta'en a hurt,
May come to languish.

How terribly grand would have been the feelings excited in the bosom of him who could who have sat, on the 4th of August last, by the side of that solitary lake, to have beheld each furrow in the faces of the frowning cliffs converted into a separate cataract! How sublime their mingled sound, as they blended

with the howling of the storm, the hoarse murmur of the agitated lake, and the chilling splash of the sheeted rain, heightened, as these effects would have been, by the conviction that there was probably no other mortal within a circuit of many miles!

The Aven issues in a large stream from its lake, and flows with so great pellucidity through its deep and dark glen, that many accidents have occurred to strangers, by its appearing fordable in places which proved to be of fatal depth. This quality is marked by an old doggerel proverb—

The water of Aven runs so clear
It would beguile a man of an hundred year.

At *Poll-du-ess*, a little way above the first inhabited place called Inchrory, the river is bounded by perpendicular rocks on each side. There the bed of the stream is 44 feet broad, and the flood was 23 feet above the usual level. Deep as the ravine was, the river overflowed the top of it. From correct measurements taken, the column of water that passed here, with intense velocity, appears to have been about 1200 square feet in its transverse section.

Towards the lower part of the farm of Inchrory, two rills are seen to trickle over the face of the lofty gneiss cliff bounding the glen on the right, bestowing on its dark front singularly striking perpendicular streaks of a beautiful alabastrine whiteness. These are stalactitic incrustations, formed by the evaporation of water, holding calcareous matter in solution. A few yards farther down, we found an extensive marl bank reposing on the inclined talus at the base of the hill. This had been evidently laid there by the small burn of *Caochan-saraig*, which descends from the hill through a steep ravine, generally dry in summer. The marl has been deposited in various states, according to the reduced or swollen condition of the burn at the time of its deposition. In some parts it appears like a stalactite, the burn having spread weakly over the bank, and produced it thus by evaporation, and it is found in this form in all stages of induration, some specimens being easily crumbled between the fingers, whilst others yield to a hammer with great difficulty. But the great mass of the bank consists of a fine powder, mechanically brought down by the burn, and left there, as any other soil might be. Amongst this levigated matter, I found a number of shells of the genus *Helix*. These approach the globular in shape, and measure about seven-tenths of an inch in their widest diameter. The volutions are four in

number, rounded, and delicately striated, diagonally and transversely, the angle of the fossa between the volutions being obtuse. The aperture is ovate. Most of the specimens I picked up are bleached white, but there are individuals among them beautifully marked with four chesnut-brown spirals on each volution. That towards the base is about the twentieth part of an inch in breadth; that immediately above it is merely a line. The next above this is of the same width as the first, and the fourth is like the second. These shells are different in size, shape, and confirmation, from the common *Helix putris*, or from the *Helix tentaculata* of Gmelin, and others—animals which abound in our ditches and ponds in the lower part of the province of Moray, and which have originated all our marl-beds. Indeed, I have not been able to discover any *Helix* quite agreeing with them in any author I have had it in my power to consult.* The streams I have mentioned descend from a moss covering the flat summit of the hill, where there is doubtless an extensive marl deposit. If the insect could be found there alive, it would be an interesting fact, as it would raise the thermal line of existence, of this species at least, to a point greatly higher than I have been able to discover the *Helix putris*, or any other, in this country. And, if the exuviae alone are to be met with, the circumstance that it did once exist alive there, would go far to establish a deterioration of climate. The whole right side of the glen, for two or three miles, so far as it sweeps around the hill where the marl manifests itself, is covered with one unvarying emerald carpet of the richest possible grass; whilst the slopes of the hill on the left, though they afford what may be called good hill pasture, are uniformly covered with brown heath.

In the Hill of Dellnalit, near Inchroy, several openings appeared, evidently from the same cause as those of Beinachavirin and Tomanurd. A number of considerable landslips have also taken place. One of these, below Dalestie, has brought down about 500 yards of the hill, measuring from above downwards, till it reach the haugh. No less than 15 acres of the haugh have been carried away or ruined by the river. At the upper end of it stood a tall stone, called *Clach-na-Tagart*, or the Priest's Stone, where tradition said that a priest was burned for some scandal against the Church. The flood has swept away

* I have transmitted specimens to Dr. Fleming, the highly scientific author of "British Animals," and hope that his well known acquaintance with the minutest object of this branch of natural history may yet enable me to state in the Appendix the precise name of the creature alluded to in the text.

this monument of infamy, which had stood for so many ages. Another great landslip appears above Torbain, near which place, at Alt-tre-chaochan, there is an inexhaustible rock of fluor-spar.

The Haugh of Della-vorar, or the Lord's Haugh, is so called from Montrose having encamped here, on his return from his expedition to the North, during the Covenanted times of 1644 and 1645. Some remains of iron still denote the spot where the army forges were placed. Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, also encamped here fourteen days before the battle of Killiecrankie, and made a day's march to Braemar, where he encamped on another haugh, also since named Della-vorar. Five acres were carried off here.

Captain MacGregor has ordered a mark to be cut in the Rock of Inbher-cor-du, to mark the height of the flood, which was 18 feet above ordinary level, where the breadth of the channel was 86 feet. The farm of Keppoch lost six acres of ground, and the river opened an entirely new channel through it. Immediately opposite to it, 250 yards of the face of a very steep hill shot right down through a birch grove, carrying part of the trees along with it. A boy was driving home his cattle at the time it gave way, and he and they narrowly escaped being buried in the ruins. "When I see'd it comin' doon," said he, "I thought the hill was fa'in'. The grund and stanes gaed dancin' ower the taps o' the trees, an' the beasts war sae fleggit that they cantered awa' through the corn, ilk ane his ain gate hame." The Mill of Delnabo was completely sanded up by the tributary burn called The Alnac. "Indeed," said the miller, "the height the burns rose to that day was just *a'thegither ridiculous*." The good man had no sooner repaired his damage, than the subsequent flood again demolished everything.

We may form some idea of the tremendous nature of the fall of rain, high up among the mountains, from what was observed even at Tomintoul, where the farrier told us that, from two slates having been blown out within two rows of the ridge of his roof, which created a hole of something less than 18 inches square, 80 Scotch pints, or about 40 gallons of rain water entered during the twelve hours between the morning and the evening of the 3d of August. The whole valley was covered by the flood, the river appearing like a vast moving lake, where it was impossible to distinguish the real channel except from the greater velocity of its current.

The scenery immediately above the Bridge of Campdale is very beautiful. Abrupt rocks, covered with rich wood, rise from the right bank, whilst that on the left recedes, forming a lovely little nook of retirement, surrounded by green slopes, and knolls

bedropt with trees. In this delightful spot an industrious retail shop-keeper, called Tom Meldrum, took up his abode, building, digging, and planting, till he had converted his residence into a little paradise. He was thriving, as his industry merited; and, to crown his comforts, he married a very nice-looking woman. His substantial stone and lime house was placed 15 yards from the brink of the river, and 12 above its level. My attention was attracted to it by the heaps of sand that environed it, from which it seemed to have been dug out, by the bundles of straw that were laid on the roof in lieu of the thatch which had been torn off, and by the cracked and undermined appearance of the walls. (Plate XLV.) Tom was from home, but I accosted Mrs. Meldrum, who was walking about with a melancholy and depressed air. "It was about six o'clock on Monday night that the flood cam' on us in ten minutes time," said she, "an' we had aneuch ado to escape to the brae-side. It took eight o' the stoutest men in the hail country, wi' the risk o' their lives, to get oot my kist. We syne saw the waters rise ower the eaves o' oor thatch, an' that wus the way that a' thing wus till ten o'clock neist mornin', when we cam' back, an' fund that a' the sma' kinkind o' articles had been floated oot at a back wundo'. But waur nor a' that, the hail o' Tam's goods, tea, sugar, an' siclike, war a' gane; an' the sugar a' meltit! A hunder pound wudna mak' it up till us. An' oor comfortable hoos, too, see hoo its ruined, an' it biggit but twa years ago; an' the gairden new taen in; an' a' destroyed, as ye see! But it's the Lord's wull, an' we maun submit. An' syne, the wee pickle furniture that wus saved, Tam an' me, we grew sae frightit that when we saw the Awen begud to rise on the twenty-seven, he wud try to get it across the water. Weel, he buckles it a'thegither on a raft, pits a tow till't, an' tries to pu' them to the tither side, whan, just as they are i' the midds o' the water, whup! doun she comes, like the side o' a hill, breaks the rope, an' aff they a' gaed to the sea! An' see, noo, sir, the hoos is as bare as a barn, an' a sand an' weet! Oor bit comfortable house! We canna leeve ony langer here, that's for certain, an' whar we're to gang, I'm sure I dinna ken!"

The Old Bridge of Campdale, built by General Wade, of two arches of 48 and 20 feet span, had the smaller one carried off, a circumstance that saved the larger. (Plate XLVI.) The height of the flood here was not less than 21 feet, where it floated over a breadth of nearly 200 feet.

Much destruction was committed by the Conglass, a large tributary from the right. A great extent of new channel had been formed at the point where we crossed it. A large part of the glebe of Kirkmichael was carried off by the Aven. It also

cut away 3 acres of the Kirktonhaugh, and inundated the dwelling of Thomas Cameron. Leaving it and its furniture to their fate, the inmates fled to the house of Peter Grant, the boatman of Dalnagarn, which was conceived to be so far from the river as to be perfectly secure. There some masons were lodged, with the intention of commencing the piers of a bridge next day; and they looked at the rising river with scientific eyes, in the hope of getting some instruction from it as to how they should make their work most secure. The flood speedily deluged this house, too; all fled from it: and in less than five minutes, it was tearing up the trees, and rolling them so furiously down, that the people were compelled to abandon all hope of saving the furniture, horses, and cattle on the premises. When night fell, the tops of the houses were still seen above the stream; but when day broke in the morning, not only the whole houses were gone, but the ground they stood on was cut away to the depth of many feet, and to the extent of 60 or 80 yards beyond them, and the main body of the stream was running in a channel 200 or 300 yards from its former bed, directly through the spot where they had stood. Above 4 acres of land were lost at this point. The most remarkable circumstance of all was, that the horses and cattle, which they had left in the stalls the previous night, were found quietly feeding on the hill side in the morning. The Lochy, a tributary on the left bank immediately opposite, ran quite through the garden belonging to the house of Inverlochy, cut away and destroyed 7 acres, and made a new channel for itself. At Milton of Inveroury, too, a new channel was created, an island of 8 acres formed, and 12 acres of valuable arable land carried away.

The houses Ballaneillan, on the left bank, though standing on an elevated site, above two hundred yards from the Aven, were yet surrounded by the flood, which sent a powerful stream between them and the hill; and had this not eventually burst a passage for itself through a field, not only the buildings, but the whole farm, must have gone.

A small burn, entering on the left, forced the river over against the beautiful wooded bank of Dalrachney, on the right, of which it cut away two hundred yards in length, and 15 yards in horizontal breadth, leaving a sandy precipice, 90 feet high, *from which a mass of little less than 90,000 cubic yards was removed!* We met with a Mr. and Mrs. Yeats here, an amusing couple. When a question was put, the woman opened her mouth to reply, like an impatient turkey, but, before she could get out half a dozen words, she was silenced by the sharp "Haud yer tongue, woman!" of her husband, who proceeded to deliver the

response himself, with the gravity of an oracle. He told us of a small lake on his farm, which, he assured us, contains a ploughman, his plough, and a yoke of oxen. The man was ploughing in the very field where Mr. and Mrs. Yeats were then reaping, when, scared by a thunderstorm, the animals galloped off with plough and man into the loch. As the oxen are always heard bellowing in bad weather, their tremendous routings on the 3d and 4th of August last may be conceived.

The Reverend Charles Macpherson of Tomintoul estimates the average breadth of the strath completely excavated into a river channel at 250 yards. The length of the inhabited and cultivated part of it is about sixteen miles, which would leave about 1220 acres totally useless. But, deducting one half of this for what usually lay under the river, and there remain above 600 acres of the best soil destroyed, great part of which, however, was in lines and patches of pasture and wood, hardly recognizable in an estimate of loss, and which can be only brought into view by such a general calculation as this; for, in the usual summation of damage, nothing is taken into account, but such pieces of land as have been swept, *en masse*, from particular fields; but even from this latter mode of calculation, the Duke of Gordon's factor, Mr. Skinner, makes out a loss, on the Aven alone, of from sixty to eighty acres of arable, belonging to His Grace.

In the afternoon of the 1st, Mr. Skinner, who lives at Drumin, immediately above the junction of the Livet, observed an unusually dark cloud on the top of Cromdale Hill, that rises to the north between the Aven and the Spey. It was so very remarkable in its appearance, that it excited universal notice. The barometer stood with him at thirty on that day, but gradually fell till the 3d, when it stood at 28·2.

The River Livet was very destructive. It rose at the bridge of Nevie twelve feet above its ordinary level. It was towards evening that it came down, in a few minutes, and broke directly through the middle of the house of John Grant, shoemaker, above the bridge, on the right bank, sweeping the centre of it entirely out, and leaving the ends; after which it assailed the arch, of forty-six feet span, and tore down the upper part of it. Grant's wife and four children, and his apprentice, were saved with great difficulty; but his account books were lost, and all his furniture was carried away, except a few articles that were arrested by the fall of the roof on them. His watch was buried by the fall of a gable, and was afterwards found with no other damage than a broken glass. Nothing could be more miserable than the situation of this poor man and his family, harboured as

they were in a temporary hovel, patched up at one end of the ruins, with the miserable remains of his furniture piled up on the sand heaps that half buried the place, whilst a lately purchased skin of bend leather, now all his stock-in-trade, was hanging without, over the end of a shed, as there was not room for it within. (Plate XLVII.) But it is truly delightful to record that I beheld a neat new cottage, of substantial stone and lime, rising on the face of the bank, out of reach of the river, built by a general, voluntary, and gratuitous turn out of his neighbours. John Grant and his family fled for refuge from the flood to the house of Alexander Innes, below, but to the right of the bridge. Thither the deluge pursued them; both families were placed in the greatest hazard, and had again to flee for their lives. Innes, anxious to save some papers, returned to the house, was met, as he came out again, by a tremendous rush of water, four or five feet deep, and was only rescued from drowning by the intrepidity of Lachlan Macpherson and John Grant, two stout blacksmiths, who, at the risk of their lives, plunged in to his aid.

The Bridge of Livet, near Minmore, supposed to be as old as the ancient hunting-seat of Castleton, on the left, consisted of three long straggling picturesque arches, hopping, as it were, from one group of rocks to another, rather than springing boldly from bank to bank, its very plan sufficiently marking its extreme antiquity. Nothing could be more lovely than this little scene, when I saw it formerly. Three neat clean-looking cottages, built in a row, lined a magnificently constructed new road in front of them. Beside and behind them were gay little gardens, intermingled trees, and the river rushing clear and sparkling, in little rapids, among the ledges of the smooth worn schistose rock, the whole scene being beautifully closed in by banks of hanging wood. It was but a few days before the flood, that Mr. Macpherson Grant, and the party from Ballindalloch, were struck by the picture of happiness and contentment, exhibited by a woman, one of the cottagers, who was seated in a sunny nook of her smiling garden, knitting, and carolling a merry mountain ditty to her children. "About six o'clock on the fatal night of the 3d," said a woman I conversed with, "the waters cam' doon in a moment, whan we waur a' oot gatherin' sticks in the brae yonder, and filled the road. A whillie after that it fell a wee, an' some o' Smith the merchant's goods were gotten oot, but doon it cam' again, swept awa' Smith's gable, an' a'thegither, and we didna' get oor fit in ower the door again till sax o'clock on Tuesday evening." Immediately after the flood, the party from Ballindalloch found the same woman they had formerly

seen so happy, wringing her hands, and loudly lamenting the ruin that had befallen them. The metamorphosis produced by two devastating days was sad, indeed. The old bridge much demolished, and one of its arches gone—the trees torn away—the gardens annihilated—the new road in front dug into a great ravine filled with water—the gable of the houses gone—all of them injured—and, as all surrounding circumstances pleasingly harmonized during its prosperity, so now those of its adversity were without one point of relief. (Plate XLVIII.) An immense breach has taken place in the road, immediately opposite to the burial-ground of Dounan, situated on a picturesque point of rock overhanging the Livet. There the river rose 26 feet in the ravine. It would be well that this failure should be speedily repaired, for as strange sights are said to be sometimes seen in the little field of the dead, filling the space between the road and the river, the Glenlivet farmers returning from market may require to use the spur here, to flee from others than “the inhabitants o’ the earth.”

Wide as the waterway is below the rocks, the river rose 12 feet, swept off a wooden bridge on stone pillars, rushed impetuously on the three dwelling-houses of the Milltown, and carried them and their outhouses away. Widow Macwilliam’s house was so suddenly filled that she very narrowly escaped with her life, losing everything else, even her watch and money. A few effects of John Macpherson, merchant-tailor, were saved by great boldness, and by breaking a hole through the roof; but much the greater part was lost. All the tailor’s substance had not departed from him, however, for I saw a very superior range of new buildings rising on the side of the hill, to contain a house and shop, which, I doubt not, will yet be the wonder of the twin glens of the Aven and the Livet. The flood excavated a new channel for the Livet, which now enters the Aven 100 yards lower down than it did formerly. Nearly 50 ostensible acres have been destroyed by the Livet, on the Duke of Gordon’s property; but I shall notice His Grace’s total damage in an after part of this work.

The old house of Kilmaichly, on Mr. Macpherson Grant’s property, on the left bank of the Aven, occupies the flat summit of a green knoll, embosomed in a grove of ancient trees, and overlooking a rich assemblage of wooded banks, and long withdrawing terraces and haughs. But its beauties have been already painted by the tender and glowing pencil of the Man of Feeling, who has drawn a rural picture from it that would throw a charm over an infinitely less interesting reality*. The old fir trees are still prominently observable, and the house and its accompani-

* See the 87th Number of the Lounger.

ments, though somewhat in decay, yet remain in a state sufficiently fresh to recall the author's fascinations. The old lady and her ancient butler are, indeed, no longer here in corporeal existence; but blunt must be the fancy of that individual who could visit this classic spot without finding it haunted by their venerable forms.

The flood of 1768 cut a channel through the lower ground of Kilmaichly, isolating a part of it from the rest of the farm, and that of the 3d and 4th of August last restored the river to its old bed. A remarkable hill, long, flat-topped and steep-sided in form, stretches down through the haughs, from the junction of the Livet with the Aven. It is evidently the remnant of a plain, in which the rivers once met at a much higher level. On this there is a Druidical circle; and, on the top of the wooded hill of Craggan, near the lower termination of the Duke's property, there are large remains of cairns, and rude walls of fortification.

The farm of Haughs of Kilmaichly lost two acres; some steep banks of wood have been cut into precipices above the burn of Tomore, and the farm of Craigroy, on the left bank, has had two acres swept off.

The rapid Burn of Tomore descends from the mountain of Benrinnas on the right. John Cly, the meal-miller of Tomore (Plate XLIX.), a sturdy, hale, independent minded old man of seventy-five, has been singularly persecuted by floods, having suffered by that of 1768, and by three or four inundations since, but especially by that of 1783, when his house and mill were carried away, and he was left penniless. He was not a little affected by that calamity which fell upon him, and on no one else, but his indomitable spirit got the better of everything. About seven years he undertook to improve a piece of absolute beach, of two acres, entirely covered with enormous stones and gravel. But John knew that a deep rich soil lay below, buried there by the flood of 1768. He removed the stones with immense labour, formed them into a bulwark and enclosure round the field, trenched down the gravel to the depth of 4 or 5 feet, and brought up the soil, which afterwards produced most luxuriant crops. His neighbours ridiculed his operations while they were in progress, saying that he would never have a crop there. "Do ye see these ashen trees?" said John, pointing to some vigorous saplings growing near, "are they no thriving?" It was impossible to deny that they were. "Well," continued John, "if it wunna produce corn, I'll plant it wi' ash trees, and the laird, at least, will hae the benefit." The fruits of all John's labours were swept away by the direful flood of the 3d of August.

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But pride of his heart, as this improvement had been, the flood was not able to sweep away his equanimity and philosophy together with his acres. When some one condoled with him on his loss, "I took it frae the Awen," said he, with emphasis, "and let the Awen hae her ain again." And, when a gossiping tailor halted at his door one day, charitably to bewail his loss, he cut him short, by pithily remarking, "Well! if I have lost my croft, I have got a fish-pond in its place, where I can fish independent of any one." After the year 1783, he built his house on a rock, that shewed itself from under the soil at the base of the bank, bounding the glen of the burn. (Plate L.) During the late flood, the water was dashing up at his door, and his sister, who is older than he, having expressed great terror, and proposed that they should both fly for it; "What's the woman afcared o'?" cried John, impatiently, "hae we no baith the rock o' nature an' the Rock o' Ages to trust till?—We'll no stir one fit!" John's first exertion after the flood was to go down to Ballindalloch, to assist the Laird in his distress. There he worked hard for three days, before Mr. Grant discovered that he had left his own hay-stack buried to the top in sand, and insisted on his going home to disinter it. When Mr. Grant talked to him of his late calamity, "Odd, Sir," said he, "I dinna regaird this matter hauf sae muckle as I did that slap i' the aughty-three, for then I was in a manner, a marked man. Noo we're a' sufferin' thegither, an' I'm but neebourlike." Mr. Grant says that the people of this district bear misfortunes with a wonderful degree of philosophy, arising from the circumstance of their being deeply tinged with the doctrine of predestination. I was much gratified by my interview with honest John Cly. Whilst I was sketching him unperceived, Mr. Grant was doing his best to occupy his attention. "Well now, John," said Mr. Grant to him, pointing to an apparently impracticable beach of stones a little way up the glen, "if you had improved that piece, as I advised you, it would have been safe still, for you see the burn hasn't touched it at all." "Na, fegs!" replied John, with a most significant shake of his head, "gin I had gruppit her in wi' the stanes that cam' oot o't, whaur wad she hae been noo, think ye?—Odd, I kent her ower lang." The flax-miller's croft shared the same fate as John Cly's, and the mill, full of flax, was sanded up to the beams of the first floor.

Even the more elevated arable land on the Aven has not escaped, for some very high banks have been undermined on the left, and large masses of the upper fields hurled down. The farm of Lagmore has lost three acres, and the whole haugh of Dalnashach, of six acres, has been carried off.

The entrance to the pleasure grounds of Ballindalloch is on the right bank of the Aven, at the south end of the noble bridge. There the river is bounded on either side by schistose rocks, and the approach, running along the brink, commands occasional peeps of the clear river through the trees below, whilst it is shaded by the foliage of those that climb the hill above. The rocks terminate at the upper end of the lawn, the river sweeps away to the left, and the approach continues to thread its way through the trees at the base of the wooded bank, stretching to the right, and forming the boundary of the plain on that side. The lawn thus forms an angle at its upper extremity, between the line of the bank and that of the river. Its surface, though apparently level, has in reality a slight inclination towards the house, the antique and massive towers of which rise about half way down its length, having little more than the breadth of the garden between it and the bank to the right. The lawn, especially below the house, is finely wooded with timber trees of great age, dropped singly in some places, and thickening into groves in others. Below the house the line of bank on the right, and the course of the Aven on the left, continue to diverge from each other, and the general form of the whole plain may be said to be that of an obtuse-angled triangle, the obtuse angle of which lies between the Aven and the Spey, subtended by the bank which forms the long side of the figure. The extensive part of the plain below the lawn, was laid out in a rich and very highly cultivated farm, enclosed with fine old hedge-rows.

About seven o'clock in the evening of the 3d, the Aven suddenly overflowed its banks, for 900 yards along its course, from the point where it leaves the rocks, covering the lawn, rushing down towards the house, surrounding it, and flooding the lower storey and outhouses. The garden, of four acres, embraces the house on the side looking up the lawn, as well as on that side fronting the bank. The water forced a passage through the upper garden door, increased till one o'clock in the morning, partially subsided, and then again increased till seven o'clock. The situation of the house, on the morning of the 4th, thus became very alarming; and the garden wall between it and the river having given way, large pieces of it continued to fall in, and a body of water, of 25 yards in width, and of immense force, rushed for twenty-four hours through the aperture, right against the house. The situation of the family, thus shut in by a raging deluge, was dreadful. The ground-floor, where the dining-room is, had above three feet of water in it; streams were pouring violently through all the vaulted passages of the old mansion, and great part of this period of dread was veiled in the thickest

darkness, whilst the rain and the tempest continued to add to the other horrors. All manner of exertion was used to save the furniture, as well as the horses, which were standing three and four feet deep in the stables. A boat was sent from the ferry, some miles below, to remove the inhabitants, but the flood had already so far abated that it was not made use of.

When the waters subsided, it was discovered that the river had taken a slice out of the lawn, and established itself 50 yards nearer to the house; and its operations seemed to indicate a determination to cut its way directly through towards it. Its former bed beyond was filled with gravel and enormous stones, proving that here, as in most other places I have visited, the flood was in reality in a great measure composed of such materials. Part of the lawn was cut into chasms, and the rest covered with sand, trees, and wreck. The garden was filled 4 feet deep with sand, leaving the tops of the fruit trees alone visible, which, as they were loaded with apples and pears, presented a strange and melancholy spectacle. A deep ravine was excavated between the house and the bank. The whole shrubbery stretching along the base of the bank below the house was demolished. And, finally, the flood, bursting across the rich enclosures of the farm, spread devastation over 130 acres of the finest land, bearing the heaviest crops of all kinds of produce—cutting away much of the ground—deeply scarifying the soil from other parts—digging some places into holes—covering others with gravel—and utterly annihilating its promising fruits. Besides the land injured, which is nearly to the extent of the whole surface, above 18 acres are calculated to be irrecoverably lost.

It is a singular fact that the small birds, of which there was rather an over abundance at Ballindalloch, all left the place after the flood. The lawn trees, too, which had been flooded round the roots, were immediately struck with the chill of autumn, and prematurely assumed its variegated livery. Here, as everywhere else, fish were strewed over the deluged grounds. This flood is calculated to have exceeded that of 1768, at Ballindalloch, by six feet. At the Bridge of Aven, where the water-way of the two arches is 105 feet, the rise of the river was twenty-three feet; and, at the upper end of the lawn, where it first escapes from the rocks, the rise was ten feet on a water-way of 222 feet.

The farms of Delnapot and Pitcroy, on the left bank of the Spey, suffered severely. On the latter, a fine haugh of fifteen acres was utterly ruined, and the river is now working a new channel through it. The rapid burn of Aultyoulie, entering

from the left, carried away the corn-mill and saw-mill of Pitcrov. These were built about fifty years ago, and never excited the smallest suspicion of risk. The bench of the saw-mill, $11\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet broad, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, containing two circular saws, and 100 weight of iron attached to it, was carried down the Spey for twelve miles, and landed on the Heathery Isle, above Arndilly, quite uninjured.

Below Ballindalloch stands the Church of Inveraven, which was so environed by a burn on one side, and the Spey on the other, that it threatened to yield to the fate predicted for it in the old prophecy, that "the Kirk of Inveraven will gang doun Spey fu' o' folk."

The flood of 1768 isolated a great tract of ground which was taken as a farm, seven years ago, by James Macpherson. This spirited young man erected buildings on it, and improved and limed the ground, which produced great crops. Macpherson, his sister, a carpenter, and a neat herd-boy remained on the island till the greater part of the ground was covered, and the water was flowing in a stream towards the house. At seven o'clock in the evening of the 3d, they all committed themselves to a small boat, and Macpherson, being an expert timber-floater, effected a landing on the left bank. Next morning, nothing was visible but his houses and a hay stack. He resolved to make a desperate attempt to save his cattle and horses; and, accompanied by a young man of the name of Clark, he, at five o'clock in the morning of the 4th, crossed to the island, through the mountainous waves; whilst a man, who witnessed the daring exploit, declared, "That it made him blind to look at them." Having reached the houses, he found the cattle and horses standing up to their backs in the water, perfectly cramped with cold. Their only resource was to force hay or straw in underneath their feet, and so to raise the animals by degrees above the water. They had no sooner accomplished this, than the creatures lay down, being quite exhausted with their twenty-four hours' immersion; but the most extraordinary part of their history was, that they actually slept for three days afterwards without intermission.

A line of majestic oaks, skirting the water's edge, but high above it, were swept away from the farm of Wearach, and most of them landed on that of Dandaleith, 12 miles below; and, to pass over smaller injuries done to other farms, Dalvannan had 12 acres, a croft adjacent to it 5 acres, and Delgarvon 15 acres, utterly destroyed. The sum total of Mr. Macpherson Grant's loss amounts to £8000. That experienced by his tenantry was great, afflicting, and productive of much misery; but, in so over-

whelming a calamity, it is pleasing to remark the Christian temper with which it is borne. Mr. Grant says, in one of his letters to me, that "they talk of nothing but how they are to recover and restore their farms, and have never mentioned the word *abatement*, leaving that to my own decision.* Our friend John Cly has already begun the restoration of his croft, which, he says, "*was a great deal waur i' the seventeen hunder and aughty-three!*" Eleven families have been made destitute in the parish of Inveraven; some of these have lost property to the extent of between £100 and £200 each.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE KNOCKANDO BURN—THE RIVER SPEY TO LOWER CRAIG-
ELLACHIE—THE RIVERS DULLAN AND FIDDOCH.

THE Knockando Burn, entering from the left, is extremely small, but it was swollen by the flood to a size equal to that of the Spey in its ordinary state. The high promontory, on the neck of which the manse of Knockando stands, shoots forward towards the steep opposite banks of the burn, interrupting the continuity of its haughs by a narrow pass, leaving room only, at the base of the precipice, for two cottages, a small garden, and a road. Where the glen opens, a little way above, there stood a carding-mill, a meal-mill, and the houses of their occupants. Of the two cottages at the bottom of the promontory, one was inhabited by the old bellman, his wife, and daughter, and a blind beggar-woman who had that night sought quarters with them. The other was tenanted by a poor, lame woman, who keeps a school for girls and young children. On Monday evening, the 3d, the bellman's daughter came running to the manse. "For the love o' gudeness come an' help my father and mother! The burn's like to tak' awa' baith thersel's and their hooses. The mistress has cruppen oot at a wundo, an' is stan'in' i' the yaird among the kail-castocks, an' she binna whirled awa' else," and, hastily shuffling a small parcel into the hands of the lady of the house, saying, "keep that, mem, for it belongs tae the mistress," she disappeared. The parcel contained the hard-earned trifle the schoolmistress had gained by teaching—all that had been saved from her house. By the time the Reverend William

* Mr. Grant has since fully warranted the confidence reposed in him by making abatements to the full extent of their losses, thus taking them entirely upon himself, in addition to all he has suffered as proprietor.

Asher reached the spot, a stout, determined fellow had succeeded in carrying the schoolmistress to the face of the precipice, where she stood on a sloping ledge, leaning on her crutch, exposed to the fury of the elements. The same gallant fellow, at the risk of his life, ventured in for the bellman's wife, and took her up on his back, but if it had not been for the aid of the bystanders, both would have been lost. To return again was impossible, and yet, there the bellman and the blind beggar-woman stood, linked together, with only their head and shoulders above the current. A long ladder at the manse was thought of, but ere it arrived, the house had so given way, that there was no place to rest its end on. Ropes, therefore, became the only alternative. A stout man, who had early made his way into the place, secured one end of them to a post near the cottages, and the other being drawn tight was attached to a tree on the precipice. The man then, grasping the bellman firmly by the collar, and holding hard by the rope, dragged himself and his charge through the furious current, where he had no footing, and, by wonderful exertion, both were landed safely, and the poor beggar woman was rescued in a similar manner, and in a half drowned state. "Nae wonder that our teeth are chatterin'," said the bellman, "seein' that we war stan'in' sae lang yonder, wi' the water up to the sloat o' the breast, in dread a' the time that the neist jaw wad whirl us awa' to yeternity."

After the flood the prospect here was melancholy. The burn that formerly wound through the beautiful haugh, above the promontory, had cut a channel as broad as that of the Spey, from one end of it to the other. The whole wood was gone; the carding-mill had disappeared, the miller's house was in ruins, and the banks below were strewed with pales, gates, bridges, rafts, engines, wool, yarn, and half-woven webs, all utterly destroyed. A new road was recently made in this parish, and all the burns were substantially bridged; but, with the exception of one arch, all yielded to the pressure of the flood. Mr. Grant of Wester Elchies' damage is estimated at £820. The parish of Knockando returned twelve cases of families rendered destitute by this calamity.

The flood, both in the Spey and its tributary burn, was terrible at the village of Charlestown of Aberlour. On the 3d of August, Charles Cruickshanks, the innkeeper, had a party of friends in his house. There was no inebriety, but there was a fiddle; and what Scotsman is he who does not know, that the well jerked strains of a lively Strathspey have a potent spell in them that goes beyond even the witchery of the bowl? On one who daily inhales the breezes from the musical stream that gives

name to the measure, the influence is powerful, and it was that day felt by Cruickshanks with a more than ordinary degree of excitement. He was joyous to a pitch that made his wife grave. I have already noticed the predestinarian principles prevalent in these parts. Mrs. Cruickshanks was deeply affected by her husband's unusual jollity. "Surely my goodman is daft the day," said she gravely, "I ne'er saw him dance at sic a rate. Lord grant that he binna *fey!*"*

When the river began to rise rapidly in the evening, Cruickshanks, who had a quantity of wood lying near the mouth of the burn, asked two of his neighbours, James Stewart and James Mackerran, to go and assist him in dragging it out of the water. They readily complied, and Cruickshanks, getting on the loose raft of wood, they followed him, and did what they could in pushing and hauling the pieces of timber ashore, till the stream increased so much, that, with one voice, they declared they would stay no longer, and, making a desperate effort, they plunged over head, and reached the land with the greatest difficulty. They then tried all their eloquence to persuade Cruickshanks to come away, but he was a bold and experienced floater, and laughed at their fears; nay, so utterly reckless was he, that, having now diminished the crazy ill-put-together raft he stood on, till it consisted of a few spars only, he employed himself in trying to catch at and save some haycocks belonging to the clergyman, which were floating past him. But, while his attention was so engaged, the flood was rapidly increasing, till, at last, even his dauntless heart became appalled at its magnitude and fury. "A horse! a horse!" he loudly and anxiously cried, "Run for one of the minister's horses, and ride in with a rope, else I must go with the stream." He was quickly obeyed, but ere a horse arrived, the flood had rendered it impossible to approach him.

Seeing that he must abandon all hope of help in that way, Cruickshanks was now seen, as if summoning up all his resolution and presence of mind, to make the perilous attempt of dashing through the raging current, with his frail and imperfect raft. Grasping more firmly the iron-shod pole he held in his hand, called in floater's language a *sting*, he pushed resolutely into it; but he had hardly done so when the violence of the water wrenched from his hold that which was all he had to depend on. A shriek burst from his friends as they beheld the wretched raft dart off with him, down the stream, like an arrow

* " 'I think,' said the old gardener, to one of the maids, 'the gauger's *fie*;' by which word the common people express those violent spirits, which they think a presage of death."—*Guy Mannering*."

freed from the bow-string. But the mind of Cruickshanks was no common one to quail before the first approach of danger. He poised himself, and stood balanced, with determination and self-command in his eye, and no sound of fear or of complaint was heard to come from him. At the point where the burn met the river, in the ordinary state of both there grew some trees, now surrounded by deep and strong currents, and far from the land. The raft took a direction towards one of these, and seeing the wide and tumultuous waters of the Spey before him, in which there was no hope that his loosely connected logs could stick one moment together, he coolly prepared himself, and, collecting all his force into one well-timed and well-directed effort, he sprang, caught a tree, and clung among its boughs, whilst the frail raft hurried away from under his foot, was dashed into fragments, and scattered on the bosom of the waves. A shout of joy arose from his anxious friends, for they now deemed him safe; but *he* uttered no shout in return. Every nerve was strained to procure help. "A boat!" was the general cry, and some ran this way and some that, to endeavour to procure one. It was now between seven and eight o'clock in the evening. A boat was speedily obtained from Mr. Gordon of Aberlour, and, though no one there was very expert in its use, it was quickly manned by people, eager to save Cruickshanks from his perilous situation. The current was too terrible about the tree to admit of their nearing it, so as to take him directly into the boat; but their object was to row through the smoother water, to such a distance as might enable them to throw a rope to him, by which means they hoped to drag him to the boat. Frequently did they attempt this, and as frequently were they foiled, even by that which was considered as the gentler part of the stream, for it hurried them past the point whence they wished to make the cast of their rope, and compelled them to row up again by the side, to start on each fresh adventure. Often were they carried so much in the direction of the tree as to be compelled to exert all their strength to pull themselves away from him they would have saved, that they might avoid the vortex that would have caught and swept them to destruction. And often was poor Cruickshanks tantalized with the approach of help, which came but to add to the other miseries of his situation, that of the bitterest disappointment. Yet he bore all calmly. In the transient glimpses they had of him, as they were driven past him, they saw no blenching on his dauntless countenance, they heard no reproach, no complaint, no sound, but an occasional short exclamation of encouragement to persevere in their friendly endeavours. But the evening wore on, and still they were un-

successful. It seemed to them that something more than mere natural causes was operating against them. "His hour is come!" said they, as they regarded one another with looks of awe; "our struggles are vain." The courage and the hope which had hitherto supported them began to fail, and the descending shades of night extinguished the last feeble sparks of both, and put an end to their endeavours.

Fancy alone can picture the horrors that must have crept on the unfortunate man, as, amidst the impenetrable darkness which now prevailed, he became aware of the continued increase of the flood that roared around him, by its gradual advance towards his feet, whilst the rain and the tempest continued to beat more and more dreadfully upon him. That these were long ineffectual in shaking his collected mind, we know from the fact, afterwards ascertained, that he actually wound up his watch while in this dreadful situation. But, hearing no more the occasional passing exclamations of those who had been hitherto trying to succour him, he began to shout for help in a voice that became every moment more long drawn and piteous, as, between the gusts of the tempest, and borne over the thunder of the waters, it fell from time to time on the ears of his clustered friends, and rent the heart of his distracted wife. Ever and anon it came, and hoarser than before, and there was an occasional wildness in its note, and now and then a strange and clamorous repetition for a time, as if despair had inspired him with an unnatural energy. But the shouts became gradually shorter, less audible, and less frequent, till at last their eagerly listening ears could catch them no longer. "Is he gone?"—was the half-whispered question they put to one another, and the smothered responses that were muttered around but too plainly told how much the fears of all were in unison.

"What was that?" cried his wife in delirious scream—"That was his whistle I heard!"—She said truly. A shrill whistle, such as that which is given with the fingers in the mouth, rose again over the loud din of the deluge, and the yelling of the storm. He was not yet gone. His voice was but cracked by his frequent exertions to make it heard, and he had now resorted to an easier mode of transmitting to his friends the certainty of his safety. For some time his unhappy wife drew hope from such considerations, but his whistles, as they came more loud and prolonged, pierced the ears of his foreboding friends like the ill-omened cry of some warning spirit; and, it may be matter of question whether all believed that the sounds they heard were really mortal. Still they came louder and clearer for a brief space; but at last they were heard no more, save in his frantic

wife's fancy, who continued to start as if she still heard them, and to wander about, and to listen, when all but herself were satisfied that she could never hear them again.

Wet, and weary, and shivering with cold, was this miserable woman, when the tardy dawn of morning beheld her, straining her eyeballs through the imperfect light, towards the trees where Cruickshanks had been last seen. There was something there that looked like the figure of a man, and on that her eyes fixed. But those around her saw, alas! too well, that what she fondly supposed to be her husband was but a bunch of wreck, gathered by the flood into one of the trees, for the one to which he clung had been swept away.

The body of poor Cruickshanks was found in the afternoon of next day, on the haugh of Dandaleith, some four or five miles below. As it had ever been his uniform practice to wind his watch up at night, and as it was discovered to be nearly full wound when it was taken from his pocket, the fact of his having had self-possession enough to obey his usual custom, under circumstances so terrible, is as unquestionable as it is wonderful. It had stopt at a quarter of an hour past eleven o'clock, which would seem to fix that as the fatal moment when the tree was rent away, for when that happened, his struggles amidst the raging waves of the Spey must have been few and short. When the men, who had so unsuccessfully attempted to save him, were talking over the matter, and agreeing that no human help could have availed him, "I'm thinkin' I could ha' taen him oot," said a voice in the circle. All eyes were turned towards the speaker, and a general expression of contempt followed, for it was a boy of the name of John Rainey, a reputed idiot, from the foot of Benrinnes, who spoke. "You!" cried a dozen voices at once, "what would you have done, you wise man?"—"I wud hae tied an empty anker-cask to the end o' a lang lang tow, an' I wud hae floated it aff frae near aboot whar the raft was taen first awa', an' syne, ye see, as the stream teuk the raft till the tree, maybe she wud hae taen the cask there too—an' if Charley Cruickshanks had ance gotten a haud o' the rope," —He would have finished, but his auditors were gone. They had silently slunk away in different directions, one man alone having muttered, as he went, something about "wisdom coming out of the mouths of fools."

The Manse of Aberlour was inundated, and, in the confusion that occurred, the cellar was drained in more ways than one by some officious assistants. Part of the glebe was swept away.*

* The Presbytery of Aberlour are said to have taken up this case. It is not the only one of the kind. The question is, What remedy has the minister in such circumstances?

The boatman's house at Wester Elchies was in imminent danger, the outhouses was carried off, and 50 acres of valuable haugh land, in crop, were covered with above two feet deep of sand and gravel. A row of venerable trees were rent away from Easter Elchies, where the stream altered its course, and threatens farther injury to a place, ornamented, more than a century ago, by the father of Lord Elchies, the distinguished judge.

The haugh, above the bridge of Lower Craigellachie, was very much cut up, and the house and nursery at the south end of the arch are gone. The widow of James Shanks, amidst the loss of her furniture, house, and her son's garden ground, lamented nothing so much as her deceased husband's watch, and his fiddle, on the strings of which hung many a tender recollection. That fiddle, the dulcet strains of which had come over her "like the sweet south breathing upon a bed of violets," stealing the tender affections of her virgin heart, till they all centred on her Orpheus Mr. James Shanks; that fiddle, to the sprightly notes of which she had so often jerked out her youthful limbs, and whirled round in the wild *pirouette* of the Highland fling, to the animating tune of *Bog-an-Lochan*; that fiddle, in fine, which had been the fiddle of her fancy, from the hey-day of her youth upwards, "was gone with the water, and was now, for ought she knew to the contrair, in Norrawa or Denmark!" The grief of Mrs. Shanks for the loss of this valued violin was more than I shall attempt to paint. Great artists often envelope the heads of their chief mourners in drapery, from a conscious inability to do justice to the passion, and so must I hide the lachrymose head of Mrs. Shanks. And how, indeed, shall I describe her joy, some days afterwards, when an idle loon, who had been wandering about the banks of the river "finding things," as he said himself, appeared before her astonished and delighted eyes, with the identical fiddle in his hand. The yell of Mrs. Shanks was said, by those who heard it, to resemble the wild shriek with which her husband was wont to inspire additional fury into the heels of the dancers, already excited by the power of his wonderful bow hand. She kissed and hugged the fiddle, and, as if its very contact had music in it, she laid hands on the astonished loon, and went a full round of the floor with him, ending with a fling that surprised every one. The fiddle had been found in the neighbourhood of Arndilly, whither it had merrily floated on the bosom of the waves. But what was yet infinitely more extraordinary, the watch, which had hung in a small bag, suspended by a nail to a post of her bed, was found—watch, bag, post, and all—near Fochabers, eight or ten miles below, and was safely restored to its overjoyed owner.

The flood was $15\frac{1}{2}$ feet higher than ordinary at Craigellachie Bridge, where the river spread over the whole haugh. This beautiful iron arch, of 150 feet span, springing boldly from the buttress on the low right bank to the high cliff on the left, was in some jeopardy, and was only saved by the works of approach yielding to the force of the stream.

The River Fiddoch enters from the right a short way below the bridge. It, and its tributary the Dullan, were by no means harmless, and all the oldest people agree that no such flood was ever seen in either. The Reverend Morris Forsyth lost a considerable part of his glebe at Mortlach, by the Dullan. The church, which was the ancient Cathedral of Mortlach, existed in the days of Malcolm Canmore, who added three lengths of his spear to the nave, in fulfilment of a vow he made previous to a battle with the Danes, in which he entirely routed them. Some of their heads were built into the wall, where their skulls may yet be seen. This is a lovely spot, combining all the richness of England with the scenery of a Highland glen. Immediately above the junction of the Dullan with the Fiddoch, a woollen manufactory and dye-work, established by Mr. Stewart, were entirely destroyed, with all their materials. From the magnificent old Castle of Balveny downwards, the beautiful haugh lands were much cut up, and a flax-mill on the estate of Kiunivie, was left in a very picturesque state, one side having fallen in, whilst the machinery hung on pegs, as if self-suspended. Kinivie is a highly interesting old house, with towers and narrow gables and roofs, old trees, thick hedges, Dutch parterres, terraces, bowery shrubs, and intricate labyrinths, and the greatest good taste has been displayed in keeping it up entirely in its original style. The damage on this small property is £750. Below the ruins of the Castle of Gauldwell, the palace of the Bishop of Mortlach, the Fiddoch rooted out a plantation belonging to Mr. Shearer of Buchromb, and terminated its devastations by sweeping away the bridges of two arches, one of 50, and the other of 10 feet span, immediately above its junction with the Spey.