



GATHERING STONE, SHERIFFMUIR.

SHERIFFMUIR.

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EVEN apart from its historic associations, the field of Sheriffmuir (so called from the wapenshaws of which it was once the scene) is well worth visiting. It lies high on the slopes of the "hills ayont Dunblane;" the air is bracing with the breath of wood and heather; the distance from Stirling is not inconvenient, and the route now to be suggested affords an excursion of great variety, and at successive points commands a series of beautiful and striking views.

It is best to walk from Stirling ($6\frac{1}{2}$ miles), lunch at the inn on Sheriffmuir, and return *via* Dunblane. This route enables us to take the Battle Stone on the way. Leaving the town by Wallace Street, we follow the tramway line over the bridge, pass Causewayhead and the Wallace Monument, and keep on towards Bridge of Allan, still guided by the tram line, till, within half-a-mile of that village, we have passed the lodge and gate of Airthrey. Here we turn to the right. A twenty minutes' walk brings us to the heights, which command a fine view of Demyat to the right, with the Monument and the Castle further back. This is the best point from which to commence the ascent of Demyat. For Sheriffmuir, however, we follow the road. A pleasant walk of $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles brings us to the inn, famous for its tidiness, its tea, its home-baked scones, and the friendly hospitality of its proprietors. On leaving the inn, we turn to the right, till we reach a small clump of wood, through which a footpath leads to the Battle Stone. Tablets affixed to the trees now obviate the need of further direction. The Battle Stone itself is covered with an iron grating (see illustration), and bears a brass plate with inscription. Returning, we once more follow the guidance of the tablets, and are set in the way of Dunblane. Just before we reach it, above the farm of Dykedale, we enjoy one of the finest views of Dunblane, with the old Cathedral tower in the foreground, and the hills and moors behind. If time permits, the traveller may walk through the quaint old village, and visit the beautifully restored Cathedral. Train or walk back to Stirling.

The strategical importance of Stirling has been recognised since the days of Hadrian. The battle of Sheriffmuir gave one more proof of it, and one last instance of the saying that "Forth bridles the wild Highlandman." It was to effect the passage of the Forth—not, indeed, at Stirling Bridge, which Major-General Wetham held with a considerable force,

but probably at the Fords of Frew—that Mar advanced from Perth on the 14th of November, 1715. If he could pass the Forth, he hoped to be able to make a junction with the Jacobites who had risen in the north of England. But on the day when he moved from Perth, Argyle advanced from Stirling to bar his progress, and posted himself at Sheriffmuir, with his left flank resting on Dunblane. On the 15th, Mar advanced from Auchterarder ; for a night the armies lay over against each other ; the battle was fought on the 16th. Every one knows the issue, or non-issue, of the famous fight—

“ Some say that we wan,
And some say that they wan,
And some say that nane wan ava, man.”

On the right the Jacobites swept the redcoats before them, and Wetham never drew rein till he was safely over Stirling Bridge. But on the other wing Argyle beat the insurgents back to the Allan. Whoever won the battle, the Royalists reaped the fruits of victory. Argyle held the field ; the Forth was not crossed ; on the same day the English rebels were crushed at Preston, and Mar’s forces presently melted away.

The battle of Sheriffmuir is doubly interesting to Stirling people from the presence at it of a hero who made the Stirling district the scene of many exploits. The Jacobites were guided through Perthshire by no less a person than Rob Roy. The outlaw probably cared no more for King James than for King George ; it is certain that his sympathies, such as they were, were with his patron Argyle ; and when the fight began he showed his love of fair play by keeping out of it. To quote again from the old ballad—

“ Rob Roy stood at watch
On a hill for to catch
The booty, for aught that I saw, man,
And never advanced
From the place he was stanced
Till nae mair to do was at a’, man.”

