



ABERFOYLE.

A B E R F O Y L E.

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IT has been conjectured—(one is never quite safe in handling Gaelic roots without conjecturing a great deal)—that the name, Aberfoyle, has to do with the junction of the two streams, the Avondhu and the Duchray, which here unite to form the Forth. A hamlet situated near the forkings might be called an Aber—something or other. It is refreshing to think that no amount of cocksureness about the origin of the name can add aught to the beauty of the place so named.

Aberfoyle is still known as “The Clachan,” although it might now with greater propriety be called a suburb of Glasgow, whose wealth has made it the handsome village it is. The worthy dignitary of Glasgow who could not expect the accommodations of the Sautmarket in the Clachan of Aberfoyle would now see enough to draw out of him the exclamation of Dominie Sampson, “Prodigious!” “The chiefs and grit men” might yet be found birling at the usquebaugh in by there;” but, however “ramstam we gang on them,” we are in no danger of getting the broken head or the tasting of the cauld dirk which Andrew Fairservice spoke about. We shall ever find the good folks of Craiguchty—the old name of the ground on which Aberfoyle now stands—willing to make our visit both a pleasure and a profit, a pleasure to us and a profit to themselves.

On a late visit to this interesting village, our attention was drawn to the weapon which the Bailie so dexterously used in the inn at the Clachan. We too rashly expressed a doubt as to the genuineness of the implement, hinting that the Magistrate might have made use of some other coultter. We shall never again express our doubts on this point in Aberfoyle at least, for the obliging guide was, in the first place, evidently hurt in his feelings by our scepticism, and, in the second place, he made toilsome efforts to hurt *our* feelings by the use of strongly sulphurous Saxon words, mixed with equally strong, finely rolling Gaelic (we “have the Gaelic” so far as to understand such words—we had been in the Highlands before.) Perhaps it might be wise and kind to advise the tourist to Aberfoyle to believe that the coultter he sees in the tree near the Hotel is the genuine article referred to in “Rob Roy.”

The famous Rob Roy was intimately connected with this district. His paternal acres, and other acres of which he took

more than a paternal care, are in close proximity to Aberfoyle. Hence you may hear the people having the good luck to be born and brought up in the locality proudly declare, "this is the Rob Roy country" or "this is the Macgregor country." When Rob was in the flesh he was feared rather than admired. He has to thank Wordsworth and Scott for his current credit. Mr. Cunninghame Grahame of Gartmore, who knows intimately about robbers and robbing, judging from his writings, has pleasantly called Rob "an unofficial local Chancellor of the Exchequer who did his work thoroughly." Any attempt to sift fact from fiction in the case of Rob Roy Macgregor would be as needless, and perhaps dangerous, as to decide whether the coulter we saw was the veritable weapon of the Bailie.

The district is closely associated with some of our ancient superstitions. The Rev. R. Kirk, translated from Balquhider to Aberfoyle, who completed the first metrical version of the Gaelic Psalms in 1684, and who had written an "Essay on the Nature and Action of the Elves, Faunes, or Fairies or the Lyke," was, it is said, translated from Aberfoyle to Fairyland one day as he was quietly walking on a height near his manse. Mr. Cunninghame Grahame, in "Notes on the District of Menteith," assures us that "a man might easy travel far and fare much worse than have his dwelling in the Fairy Hill." Notwithstanding this traditional translation, there is a gravestone in Aberfoyle Churchyard marking his supposed resting place, and handing down the fame of his Gaelic scholarship, *linguæ Hibernicæ lumen*.

Aberfoyle has been happy in the poets it has inspired. Not to mention Sir Walter Scott, *facile princeps*, we have Dr. Richardson, the son of a former minister, who was Professor of Latin in Glasgow University, and a great Shakesporean scholar. He wrote a "Farewell to Aberfoyle," beginning—

"To thee my filial bosom beats,
On thee may heaven indulgent smile;
And glad thy innocent retreats,
And bless thee, lovely Aberfoyle."

William Glen, the author of "A Wee Bird cam' to oor Ha' Door," wrote a spirited song, called, "Mary of Sweet Aberfoyle." Several local songs owe their origin to a visit paid to Ledard, in 1821, by Thomas Atkinson and David Robertson, booksellers in Glasgow.

Dr. Graham, who wrote the well-known "Sketches of Perthshire," was for forty-eight years minister of this parish. In his "Statistical Account," written almost exactly a century ago, he tells us that his parish was a remarkably healthy one, which we can well believe, and he gives as proof the fact that there were seven or eight persons above eighty years of age alive in the district, one man had recently died aged 97, and

the acting grave digger was 101. It must be remembered there was no registration of births, deaths, and marriages in these times. Mr. Graham tells us that he preaches English in the forenoon, and Gaelic, "which is chiefly in use," in the afternoon. The names of farms and fields in Aberfoyle parish resemble a page from Mr. Kirk's Psalter, which we forbear to quote.

The accompanying photograph shows the principal buildings of the village and the now comfortable road winding across the hills to the Trossachs. The slate quarries, to which we owe so much of our temporal comfort, are well worth a visit from us did time permit.

Here your guide leaves you with a hearty "fare fa' ye and good-bye."

