

THE BLACK ISLE.

- Approaches.—(a) By rail (L.M.S.) or road from Muir of Ord, or from Dingwall, by Conon, a few miles farther north.
- (b) By ferry (1) from South Kessock (see p. 405) (continuous service, cars, 1s.; motor cycles, 6d.); (2) from Fort George to Chanonry Point, about 1½ miles from Fortrose; (3) from Nigg to Cromarty; (4) from Invergordon to Balblair.
- (c) By steamer to Cromarty from Leith and Aberdeen or from Invergordon three times daily, in connection with the principal trains. (See L.M.S. Railway Time-table.)

THE Black Isle is neither black nor an island. It is really a peninsula, and so far from being black it is green—a pleasant country of woods, meadows and corn-fields. It contains some of the best agricultural land in the Highlands and is famous for its crops and cattle.

The Black Isle—also called Ardmeanach, or the "middle ridge"—lies between the Cromarty, Moray, Inverness and Beaully Firths.

Kilcoy Castle, a few miles from Muir of Ord (p. 411), is a good example of the residences that were erected by owners of great estates in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Redcastle, on the shore of the Firth, is said to have been built by William the Lion in 1179, and contests with Dunvegan Castle, in the Isle of Skye, and other buildings, the right to be called the oldest inhabited house in Scotland. Queen Mary is said to have visited the castle, and the vicissitudes it has survived include a burning in Cromwell's time.

Munlochy, a pretty village, is snugly situated in a valley at the head of a picturesque little bay, empty, however, at low tide. South of the village is Drumderfit, "the Ridge of Tears," the site of a fierce clan conflict in 1372, commemorative cairns of which remain. On the south side of the entrance to Munlochy Bay is the headland of Craigiehowe, with a cave, the reputed den of a giant; and on the other, the wooded Lady or Ormond Hill, on which stood the castle of the Thanes of Ross.

On the left a few miles from Munlochy is seen, on the left, Rosehaugh House, a modern mansion. The place once belonged to the famous Sir George Mackenzie—"the

Bluidy Mackenzie"—founder of the Advocates' Library, now the National Library of Scotland. A little above is Arkendeith Tower, an ancient fortalice.

Eleven miles from Muir of Ord is Avoch (*avoch*—"ch" as in "loch"), a pretty village at the head of a small bay.

FORTROSE.

Early Closing.—Thursday.

Hotel.—*Royal Station* (24 rooms; R. & b., 8s.).

Population.—850.

Sports.—Bathing, boating, tennis, bowls, cricket, golf (Visitors: day, 2s.; week, 10s.; month, 25s.), sea-fishing.

Fortrose, with its close neighbour, Rosemarkie, is growing in favour as a seaside resort. The curvature of the coast-line, with its fine sandy beach, forms a sheltered bay, adjoining the harbour, the Chanonry promontory acting as a natural breakwater and thus affording smooth and calm waters in nearly all conditions of weather. The royal burgh claims to have the highest average (1325.8 hours) for sunshine and the lowest average (23.83 ins.) for rainfall in Scotland, over a long spell of years.

Fortrose (locally pronounced with the accent on the first syllable) was formerly the cathedral town of Ross, and had a bishop's palace and a castle, of which all traces have disappeared. It was also in bygone days a famous seat of learning.

Fortrose Cathedral, completed in 1485, is for the most part a ruin, a condition due chiefly to the Reformation, although Cromwell is said to have carried off much of the stonework to Inverness to be used in the construction of his castle there.

The Cathedral formerly consisted of choir and nave with aisles to each, lady chapel, western tower, and a detached Chapter House. This last and the south aisle of chancel and nave are all that is left.

Acting as a buttress at the junction of the south aisle of nave and chancel is the rood turret, "a very elegant though singular composition." The top is modern. On the large bell in the spire is the name of Thomas Tulloch, Bishop of Ross in 1460. In this aisle or transept are the graves of the famous Rory Macleod ("Rory More") and of many chiefs of the Mackenzies.

The Chapter House, renovated some years ago, has a beautiful groined roof. The upper story is now a court room, and is used for the meetings of the Town Council.

Rosemarkie (*Marine* (52 rooms; R. and b., 9s. 6d.)) is of greater antiquity than Fortrose. A monastery was founded here in the seventh century by the Culdees, and in 716 an endowment for it was obtained from the King of Scotland by St. Boniface, or Curitanus, who is said to have come from Italy, and to have visited Scotland for the purpose of inducing the ecclesiastics to conform to the practice of the Church of Rome. In 1125, David III founded the Bishopric of Ross in Rosemarkie, but in 1250 the See was transferred to Fortrose. In the middle of the fifteenth century the two towns were united by royal charter, and the name of Fortrose was given to the new burgh.

Rosemarkie has good sands for bathing, and is near very pretty rural scenery.

A sculptured stone, with Pictish carving and symbols, in the churchyard is supposed to have marked the grave of St. Maluag or Moluog—"My Luke"—a follower of St. Columba, and the reputed founder of the monastery in Rosemarkie.

Fortrose and Rosemarkie are in close touch with *Nairn* and *Inverness* by the ferry to Fort George (p. 389).

The Burn of Eathie, the scene of Hugh Miller's early discoveries, from which it has been well said he "dug his geological reputation," is 5 miles eastward from Rosemarkie, along the shore of the Moray Firth, and may be reached by boat or on foot. In Miller's *Old Red Sandstone* it is dealt with at length.

The Fairy Glen, half a mile from Rosemarkie, is in the valley through which flows the Rosemarkie Burn.

Cromarty.

Access.—Ferry to and from South Kessock (p. 405) in connection with trains (see L.M.S. time-table). Bus from Kessock Ferry or Fortrose.

Early Closing.—Wednesday.

Hotels.—*Royal, Cromarty Arms, Watt's*.

Population.—1,114.

Recreation.—Safe bathing, boating, sea-fishing, bowls, golf, tennis, etc.

Cromarty is a quaint, quiet little town that has fallen on evil days through the diversion to other ports of its trade and the decline of its fishery. It stands on a magnificent bay forming a safe harbour and entered between the Sutors, two bluff headlands distant from each other about three-quarters of a mile.

The thatched cottage which was the Birthplace of

Hugh Miller (who gives a delightful description of his native town in *My Schools and Schoolmasters*) stands near the eastern end of the town. Within are a number of relics of the great geologist—fossils, manuscripts, and letters from eminent contemporaries, including Carlyle, Darwin, Agassiz, Sir Thomas Dick Lauder and Chalmers. Adjoining is the house occupied by Miller on his marriage.

At the head of what is known as "the Pèys" (or the Pay) is a small cottage on which Miller made his start as a journeyman mason, while his last work with the chisel was a small headstone for the grave of his first child, Elizabeth. This, with its simple inscription, can still be seen in the old burying-ground of St. Regulus.

On high ground behind the town is the Miller Monument.

The Parish Church is one of the oldest in Scotland.

The South Sutor is approached from the east end of the town, and footpaths lead to the summit. The views during the ascent and from the Look-out—a level, moss-covered point overhanging the sea—are delightful. "A fine range of forest scenery stretches along the back-ground, while in front the eye may wander over the hills of seven different counties, and so vast an extent of sea, that, on the soberest calculation, we cannot estimate it under a thousand square miles."—(*Hugh Miller.*)

The Eathie Burn (*see also* p. 419), 3 miles distant, may be entered from the seaside by following the high-road westward for about a mile, there taking a branch road, crossing over to Navity, and thence by the next turning reaching the beach, which must be followed westward until "where a mossy streamlet comes brattling from the hills," one sees "on turning a sudden angle, the bank cleft to its base, as if to yield the waters a passage." The nearer, and perhaps easier, way is by following the main road to a cottage in the corner of a field adjacent to the burn, and then proceeding along the track at the edge of the stream until a pathway is reached leading into the burn.

Nigg (ferry across the Firth) has an 18-hole golf course. In Nigg churchyard, 2 miles from the ferry, is a Celtic sculptured stone, and at Shandwick, 2 miles to the north, is another.

INVERNESS TO JOHN O' GROATS.

THIS route has been described as far as Muir of Ord on pp. 406-7 and 411. Eighteen miles from Inverness is Dingwall, the county town of Ross-shire, a royal burgh (dating from 1224), and, through its Academy, an educational centre for the north and west. (*Hotels: National, Royal, Railway, Caledonian.*) It has an old town hall and cross, a golf course, and is a good centre, but to tourists it is chiefly important as the junction of a short branch line to Strathpeffer and of the railway to the West Coast.

STRATHPEFFER SPA.

Angling.—Visitors at the Spa and Ben Wyvis Hotels can fish Loch Luichart. The Strathpeffer Hotel has fishing on the *Blackwater* and Loch Luichart. Distances.—Inverness, 23 m.; Oban, 122 m.; Aberdeen, 131 m.; Edinburgh, 215 m.; London, 610 m.

Early Closing.—Thursday.

Golf.—There is a course of 18 holes on high ground, about 15 minutes' walk from the Pump Room. Visitors: 2s. 6d. per day; 10s. per week; 17s. 6d. fortnight; 30s. per month. Season family ticket £1 1s. per member for three or more.

Hotels.—*Ben Wyvis* (92 rooms; R. & b. fr. 10s. 6d.), *Highland* (R. & b. fr. 12s. 6d.), *Spa* (56 rooms; R. & b., 13s.), *Strathpeffer, Kildonan, Macgregor's* (private), (22 rooms; R. & b., fr. 7s. 6d.).

Strathpeffer Spa is a prettily situated village of modern creation on the sloping sides of a fertile valley near the foot of Ben Wyvis, and in the centre of some of the finest scenery in the Highlands. Its waters are rich in sulphuretted hydrogen and sulphur, resembling those of Harrogate and Moffat, but containing more sulphuretted hydrogen than any in Britain.

The Pump Room is open for treatments each weekday from 7.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and waters are served daily from 7.30 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 11.45 a.m. to 1 p.m. The treatments include Sulphur, Peat, Foam and Paraffin Wax Baths, Aix and Vichy Douches, Plombieres, Inhalation, Radiant Heat, High Frequency, Diathermy, Infra-Red Rays and Massage.

Opposite the Pump Room is the entrance to the Gardens, in which are tennis courts and putting and

bowling greens, and the Pavilion, with concert room, dance hall and restaurant.

Among the best short excursions are—

1. Knockfarrel (720 feet) and the Cat's Back (882 feet). The shortest ascent of Knockfarrel is by a pathway from the Ben Wyvis Hotel garage. On the summit is one of the best-preserved vitrified forts in the country. The Cat's Back is the western end of the same ridge. To the summits and back is about 4 miles. In the valley behind them are the wood-fringed shores of Loch Ussie.

2. Raven's Rock (874 feet), a good viewpoint about 2 miles north-west, and best reached by walking along the railway from Achterneed station.

3. View Rock (500 feet) is picturesquely situated 2 miles from the Spa *via* Loch Kinellan. (From it Loch Achilty and the Falls of Rogie can be conveniently visited.)

4. Falls of Rogie, 3 or 4 miles west, on the Ross-shire Blackwater. Famed for their leaping salmon, they are seen to most advantage from a chain bridge which spans the river below them.

5. Loch Garve.—About 4 miles beyond the Rogie Falls. The road lies through mountainous and romantic scenery. The return can be made by train from Garve station.

6. Loch Achilty (5 miles) is a beautiful sheet of water surrounded by birch and fir-clad hills, including the wooded pyramid of Tor Achilty. Farther on the same road are the Lily Loch, the Falls of Conon (10 miles) and Loch Luichart.

7. Circular Drive by Brahan and Dingwall (16 miles).—This excursion lies through varied and beautiful scenery. The road is by Contin (or Kinnahaird) to within a short distance of Moy Bridge. Instead of crossing the bridge it keeps straight on and passes up a shaded hill-road to the left of Brahan Castle, the former stronghold of the Earls of Seaforth, Chiefs of Clan Mackenzie. (Grounds open twice weekly in summer—usually Tuesday and Thursday; admission 1s., for Ross Memorial Hospital, Dingwall.)

8. Ascent of Ben Wyvis (3,420 feet).—The summit can be reached on the backs of ponies, or on foot from near Achterneed station. Distance about 10 miles.

From Dingwall the route skirts Cromarty Firth. From Evanton village the *Black Rock* can be visited, and there is a track up beside the Glass river to Loch Glass. Crowning Knock Fyrish is a representation of the Gates of Negapatam—erected (to give employment in bad times) by Sir Hector Munro of Novar (1726–1805), who won distinction as a General (and a fortune) in India.

A little way beyond Novar a good, though somewhat

hilly, road branches off to the left and strikes almost due north across the hills *via* Aultnamain Inn to the Dornoch Firth at Wester Fearn. This road reaches a height of 782 feet above sea-level and commands magnificent views.

Between 3 and 4 miles from Novar is Alness, a large village with golf links, distilleries, and a ferry across to the Black Isle. From Alness the main route continues eastward past Invergordon (*Royal, Caledonian*). As one of the bases of the Grand Fleet, Invergordon increased during the War from a village to a large industrial town of 15,000 inhabitants. (Steamer to Cromarty.)

The way continues close to the coast as far as Kilmuir and then turns across the peninsula (for *Nigg*, see p. 420) towards Tain, an ancient and thriving town on the southern shore of the Dornoch Firth (*Royal, Railway, St. Duthus*).

A quarter of a mile from the station is a particularly good golf course. Visitors: day, 2s. 6d.; week, 10s.; month, £1 10s. Ladies: 2s., 7s. 6d., and £1.

A massive tower forms the entrance to the Court House and County Buildings, but the architectural treasure of Tain is the restored ruin of St. Duthus' Chapel. The saint, often known as St. Duthac, is said to have been born on the site of the building. He became known as "the godly Bishop of Ross," and was reburied within the precincts of the chapel in 1253. The church, as now restored, was built in 1487. The Papal Bull authorizing its erection is in the archives of the burgh. The pulpit was presented by Regent Moray in recognition of the zeal of the inhabitants for the Reformation.

The story that James IV was born in the Abbey of St. Duthus in 1473 lacks confirmation, but for twenty years at least he made regular visits to the venerated shrine of St. Duthus, to do penance, it is supposed, for the part he took in his father's death. In 1527 James V made a pilgrimage barefooted to the shrine.

Four miles south-east, not far from Fearn station, are the remains of the Abbey of Fearn, a portion of which is still used as the parish church. Eight miles beyond Fearn, not far from Tarbat Ness Lighthouse, is Portmahomack, a fishing station and bathing resort.

Four miles west from Tain the Dornoch Firth is crossed by the Meikle Ferry (raise a flag to call the attention of the ferryman on the north side), from which it is $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles by road to Dornoch, and a further 10 to Golspie *via* the Mound.

From Tain the route to the north runs along the southern coast of Dornoch Firth, through Edderton to Ardgay (*Balnagown Arms* (14 rooms; R. and b., 8s. 6d.),

Commercial). As we pass through the Edderton district, Skibo Castle, surrounded by woods, is prominent on the Sutherland side of the firth. (*Main Route Resumed on p. 425.*)

BONAR BRIDGE TO LOCHINVER (49 miles).

From Ardgay the main road crosses the valley to Bonar Bridge (*Bonar Bridge; Caledonian*) and then passes along the northern shore of the Kyle of Sutherland. At Inveran (4½ miles) cross the river Shin and strike up Strath Oykeil to Oykeil Bridge (18 miles), where are some fine falls. Hence the road continues to climb, past Loch Craggie, reaching its highest point about 2 miles farther. It now descends through increasingly grand scenery to Loch Borralan (*Attencealgach Hotel*), beyond which the road from Ullapool comes in on the left. (*See p. 415.*)

Five miles north of Inveran and 11 miles from Bonar Bridge is Lairg (*Sutherland Arms*), at the southern end of Loch Shin, a fine sheet of water, 17½ miles long, containing trout and *salmo-ferox*. It can be fished by visitors at the hotels at Lairg and Overscaig.

From Lairg public motors run to Tongue (2¾ hours) to Scourie (3½ hours), and to Lochinver (3½ hours).

MOTOR ROUTES FROM LAIRG.

1. Lairg to Tongue (37 miles).—The route is up Strath Tirry, past the *Crash Inn*, to the foot of Ben Klibreck (3,154 feet), and winds round the western side of that hill to the *Allnaharra Hotel*, at the upper end of Loch Naver, a sheet of water 7 miles long. The loch contains salmon, large trout, and *salmo-ferox*. It can be fished by guests at the *Allnaharra Hotel*. Half a mile north of the hotel a road leads along the north side of Loch Naver and then down Strath Naver to Bettyhill. The Tongue road strikes north and after rising to about 750 feet makes for the southern end of Loch Loyal. The lake is about 5 miles long, and is surrounded by high hills. One of these, Ben Loyal (2,504 feet), has a curiously splintered summit. The loch contains splendid trout and large *salmo-ferox* and may be fished (on permit) by residents at the Tongue Hotel, as can also the neighbouring Loch Craggie and other lochs. The road skirts the western shore of Loch Loyal and then runs due north to the village of Tongue, at the head of the Kyle of Tongue, and in the neighbourhood of much mountain scenery of a grandly picturesque character. Near the village are the ruins of Castle Varrich, an old feudal keep. The *Borgie Lodge Hotel* between

Tongue and Bettyhill, offers exclusive fishing (on five lochs) and shooting.

From Tongue there is a good road eastward (44 miles) to Thurso (p. 480), by Bettyhill and Melvich, each with hotels.

A road runs westward from Tongue to Durness (*hotel*) (about 20 miles). Loch Erribol (salt water) can be crossed by a ferry (no motors carried).

2. Lairg to Scourie (44 miles).—The first portion of the road is along the eastern side of Loch Shin. Then the road skirts Lochs Griam and Merkland, both of which can be fished by guests at the Overscaig Hotel, 16 miles from Lairg. Beyond Loch Merkland is Reay Deer Forest, of which Ben Hee (2,864 feet) is the highest point. Then comes Loch More, the nearest hotel to which is at Overscaig, 11 miles distant. At 31 miles from Lairg is Achfary. Soon afterwards the road reaches Loch Stack, under the cone of Ben Stack (2,864 feet), and the river *Laxford* that flows from it. The lake is one of the most famous in Scotland for its fish, but it is not open to the public. The *Laxford*, a fine salmon river, also is strictly preserved. At 37 miles from Lairg is Laxford Bridge. From it a road runs northward to Durness and one southwest to Scourie (44 miles) (*hotel*), a village on the coast.

Between Laxford and Durness motors run in connection with the Lairg-Scourie service. At the end of 5 miles from Laxford Bridge the road to Durness reaches *Rhiconich*. Two miles short of Durness a road branches off left to *Keodale Hotel* (20 rooms) where there is a Ferry across the Kyle of Durness giving access to the road to Cape Wrath. The hotel keeps a motor on the west side to convey parties to and from the lighthouse (10 miles distant). One mile east is *Smoo Cave*, which has a high local reputation. Close to Balnakiel (1½ miles) are some ancient stones and the ruins of a church.

3. Lairg to Lochinver (47 miles).—From Lairg to Rosehall (11 miles), thence by the side of the *Oykeil* to Oykeil Bridge and hotel (16 miles), and thence over the watershed of Sutherland, with mountain peaks pricking the skyline in all directions, and numerous lochs within easy reach, all containing trout, to *Attencealgach Hotel* (26 miles), a good resting-place, close to Loch Borralan. Hotel guests can fish Loch Borrolan and the *Ledbeg*, which flows out of it, and also numerous near-by lochs and trout streams.

Lochinver is described on p. 416.

LAIRG TO THURSO.

Main Route Resumed.

Having crossed the Dornoch Firth at Bonar Bridge, the road now runs seaward again along its northern side to

Dornoch, a few miles short of which Skibo Castle (p. 424) is passed on the right. Dornoch, created a Royal Burgh by Charles I in 1628, is the capital of Sutherland and almost the smallest county town in Scotland (population less than 800). It has a Cathedral, erected in the first half of the thirteenth century; the tower of an ancient castle which was the bishop's palace; good hotels (*Sutherland Arms* (35 rooms; *R. and b.*, 10s.), *Dornoch* (98 rooms; *R. and b.*, 12s.), *Campbell's* (*temp.*) (12 rooms; *R. and b.*, 6s. 6d.), *Macrae's* (*temp.*)) and boarding-houses; miles of links with two 18-hole golf courses; and extensive sands sloping gently to the water, ensuring perfectly safe and pleasant sea-bathing. On three sides are heath-clad mountains and pine-covered hills. The climate is bracing and invigorating. Salmon and trout fishing can be had in the neighbourhood. But it is as a "Golfers' Paradise" that Dornoch most strongly appeals, and has become so popular that during the season the accommodation is unequal to the demand. Golf at Dornoch dates back to 1619, and the Dornoch Golf Links are the third earliest mentioned in history.

Golf.—The older of the two golf courses has a length of 6,350 yards. "A distinctive feature—one peculiarly its own—is the large number of table greens, while along the fairway the ground sweeps in graceful undulations, with numerous little promontories and bays which are a common source of trouble. The grass is always short and water never lies."

The new course is shorter, and not nearly so exacting as the other, but it has several sporting holes. Its length is 5,000 yards.

Visitors: 3s. a round, 5s. a day, £1 a week, £3 a month (Ladies, 3s., 15s., and £2 5s. respectively) during June, July, August and September; 2s. 6d. a day, 10s. a week the rest of the year.

The above charges cover play on both the old and the new courses.

For the new course only the fees are (Ladies and Gentlemen): 2s. 8d. a day or 10s. a week.

North of Dornoch lies Loch Fleet, almost landlocked, and road and railway cross its head by a great embankment known locally as the *Mound*. Hence to the left a road goes up beside the Fleet river to Lairg (p. 424); the main route swings eastward once more.

A colossal statue of the Duke of Sutherland, erected by the Sutherland tenantry, comes into sight on the left. Golspie (84½ miles from Inverness) is a pleasant village with an 18-hole golf course (visitors: 2s. 6d. per day, 10s.

per week, £1 10s. per month) and an excellent beach for sea-bathing. Visitors at the *Sutherland Arms Hotel* may fish Loch Brora, which contains trout averaging one pound. At a short distance are two of the best-preserved *brochs* or Pictish towers in the Highlands. Golspie is a mile and a half from Dunrobin Castle, the princely seat of the Duke of Sutherland. Admission to the grounds is readily granted, but the house can be seen only by special order.

Beyond Golspie comes Brora (*Grand, Station, Sutherland Arms* (18 rooms; *R. and b.*, 8s. 6d.)), situated on a beautiful bay, stretching for miles, and perfect for bathing or boating. The river *Brora*, containing brown and sea trout, is free for fully half a mile from its mouth, and visitors at the two latter hotels may fish Loch Brora, 4 miles distant, one of the choicest sheets of water in Sutherlandshire. The golf course extends along the sea-shore for more than 3 miles, with turf of the finest order. (Gentlemen, 2s. 6d. a day, 10s. a week.)

Just under 100 miles from Inverness is Helmsdale, which has long been an important fishing centre, and has a golf course. On the right are the ruins of a castle, formerly a hunting seat of the Sutherland family. (*Hotels: Belgrave* (9 rooms; *R. and b.*, 9s.), *Navidale House*.)

The railway and a good road turn northward from Helmsdale through Strath Ullie, a bare valley, having little to interest the traveller after the first few miles. At Kildonan attempts have been made (sometimes with a measure of success) at gold-mining. Near Forsinard is an hotel, visitors at which may fish several neighbouring lochs. The road reaches the north coast at Melvich (*hotel*), a popular trout-fishing resort on the main road between Thurso and Tongue. The proprietor of the Melvich Hotel has fishing rights on a score of lochs.

From Helmsdale the main road, which is now in first class condition, follows the coast and immediately after leaving Helmsdale climbs steeply up to a maximum height of 747 feet in order to surmount the Ord of Caithness. The road then descends steeply to the picturesque village of Berriedale, just before reaching which there is a very fine view to the left up the Langwell Glen to the conical mountain of Morven (2,318 feet), with Scaraben (2,054 feet) to the right. (For permission to climb these

two hills apply at the Factor's Office at Berriedale). At the entrance to the Glen is Langwell House, the shooting-seat of the Duke of Portland.

Beyond Berriedale the road climbs up very steeply with hairpin bends and then follows the coast through not very interesting country past Dunbeath (*hotel*), Latheronwheel (*hotel*), also called Janetstown, and Lybster (*hotel*) to Wick, 35 miles from Helmsdale. There is a light railway from Lybster to Wick.

Wick.

Angling.—May be arranged for in the river *Wick* and neighbouring burns and lochs.

Early Closing.—Wednesday.

Golf.—18-hole course at Reiss Links, 3 miles distant (2s. per day).

Hotels.—*Station* (40 rooms; R. & b., 9s.), *MacKay's* (27 rooms; R. & b., 5s.), *Maldon* (10 rooms; R. & b., 7s. 6d.), *Rosebank*, *Nethercliffe*.

Population.—7,518.

Steamers.—Weekly sailings to and from Aberdeen and Leith by passenger steamers of the North of Scotland and Orkney and Shetland Steam Navigation Company; also to and from Scrabster, Orkney and Shetlands.

Wick is the county town of Caithness-shire. Its population expands to about 12,000 in the herring-fishing season, when two or three hundred steam and motor fishing craft leave the harbour for the fishing grounds.

In the neighbourhood are several interesting ruins, including Castle Sinclair and Castle Girnigoe on the coast at Noss Head, 3 miles north of Wick, and an ancient tower called the Old Man of Wick on the edge of the cliffs, 1 mile to the south of Wick Bay. Near the Old Man of Wick is some magnificent rock scenery, especially at the spot called the Bridge of Tram, where a narrow natural bridge connects the main cliff to what would otherwise be a detached skerry.

From Wick to John o' Groats, the road, about 16½ miles, for the most part runs along the coast. There is a daily motor service. Objects of interest *en route* are the modern Keiss Castle, and the ruined ancient castle.

Near Keiss are some of the finest brochs in Scotland, several of which have been opened up. One of them which may be readily visited is near the shore at Brough Head, 2 miles north of Keiss. It is conspicuous from the road by reason of a peculiar cairn which has been erected in its centre.

Two miles beyond Brough Head is Bucholly Castle, a most picturesque ruin, on the edge of the cliffs. It stands on an almost completely severed mass of rock (which is only connected to the mainland by a narrow neck of rock. It is a sort of miniature Dunottar Castle and was once a stronghold of Swayne the Pirate. Freswick Castle, on the shore, is the next object of interest and beyond it the road climbs up to a height of 325 feet on Warth Hill and commands a magnificent view, better seen from the top of the hill (412 feet) a short way off. The road then descends to Duncansby village and John o' Groats.

John o' Groats (*hotel*: 13 rooms; R. and b., fr. 8s. 6d.) is not, as is popularly supposed, the most northerly point of the mainland; for that it is necessary to go to Dunnet Head, nearer Thurso. John o' Groats is, however, 876 miles from Lands End in the very far south-west, and even the facility of modern motoring cannot banish altogether some feeling of achievement on the part of those who have come thus far. There are grand views across to Stromma island and to Ronaldsay and Hoy in the Orkneys. The beach is thickly strewn with shells, particularly with a kind of cowry, known as Groatie buckies.

According to tradition, John de Groat was one of several Dutch brothers who settled in Caithness in James IV's reign, and prospered until fratricidal strife threatened over the question of precedence at the annual family banquet. The wily John averted the danger by designing a house with eight walls, eight windows and eight doors, and a table with eight sides, so that each of the eight claimants could enter by his own door and assert that his was the seat of honour—like the Highland chieftain who haughtily declared, "Wherever the Pherson sits, that's the head of the table!" A room in John o' Groats hotel commemorates this legend.

Another explanation of the name is that, the ferryman to Orkney proving extortionate in olden days, the magistrates fixed his fee at one *groat* (fourpence); hence he became known as Johnny Groat or John o' Groats. At Canisbay Church, at Kirkstyle on the coast, there is built into the south wall of the south transept a slab (dated 1568) commemorating various members of the Groat family.

Two miles east of John o' Groats is Duncansby Head, the most beautiful headland in the north of Scotland. About a mile south of the Head are two immense pillars of rock, called the Stacks of Duncansby.

Thurso.

Access.—*Road*, via Helmsdale and Latheron. *Rail*, via Georgemas Junction. Thurso is 163 miles from Inverness by rail.

Angling.—Good sea-fishing. The Thurso is an early salmon stream of some repute.

Early Closing.—Monday.

Golf.—(9-hole course) Visitors: 1s. 6d. per day; 5s. per week; 15s. per month.

Hotels.—*Royal* (90 rooms; R. & b., fr. 8s.), *Station*, *Commercial*.

Population.—3,039.

Steamers.—Regular communication is maintained between Thurso, Wick, Aberdeen and Leith, and also with Orkney.

Thurso is the most northerly town on the mainland, and has considerable tourist traffic in the season. Steamers to and from the Orkney Isles (Scapa and Stromness) call daily (except on Sunday) at Scrabster Harbour, 2 miles north of the town. The quarrying of Caithness flag-stones, once a flourishing industry, has greatly declined. The town has an excellent beach for bathing. Thurso Castle, near the town, occupies the site of the old seat of the Sinclair family. Here was born Sir John Sinclair (1754–1835), of *Statistical Account* fame, a statue of whom, by Chantrey, stands in the square. Other objects of interest are the house of Robert Dick, baker, botanist and geologist, whose life was written by Smiles, and the Museum bequeathed to the town by Dick.