south side of the road. The Post Office, up the brae-face, is not usually thronged with visitors; but there are occasions when hundreds of telegraphic messages are despatched in a single day. A cross-road leads to the Church from the south side of the river, crossing the Dee by a suspension bridge. This structure is now reserved for foot-passengers; lightly built, it was never intended for heavy traffic. The original Free Church of Crathie stood on high ground on the south side of the river above the bridge, where also is situated, on the Abergeldie estate, the famed Lochnagar Distillery. The old building, which dated from 1825, stood nearer the suspension bridge, and was the first licensed Distillery in Upper Deeside; curiously enough, the distiller was an old smuggler. A hundred years ago we find Deeside described as a district where "the chief dependence of the peasantry" was illicit making of whisky, without which they would not have been able "to meet the exactions of their landlords". It is not so many years since all strangers were received with suspicion in many Highland glens, an apparent inhospitality which was accounted for by the natural fear that the visitor might be an exciseman in disguise.

The little village of Easter Balmoral is situated near the south end of the suspension bridge; about a mile eastward is an old hamlet, Clachanturn, which was at one time of considerable local importance, a large market having been regularly held there; and, were one to believe almanac lists, it still flourishes. The hamlet is about a mile west of Abergeldie Castle, and its rather peculiar name is understood to be a corruption of Clach-an-tigherna, "the laird's village", referring to the lord of the manor. The village has dwindled away; its Inn, its Ferry, and other institutions, have vanished, the "Smiddy" only remains. In this case there is no room for the old complaint in Highland parishes that "since the disuse of arms, there is scarcely a tolerable smith to be met with"

Bonnie lassie, will ye go
To the birks o' Abergeldie?

These are the first two lines of an old song; though the words

may be "doggerel" the air is tuneful, and accordingly Robert Burns transferred it to his "Birks o' Aberfeldy", with the result that our Abergeldie is defrauded. We do not remember that birches are particularly plentiful at Aberfeldy, but certainly they abound at Abergeldie, and are beautiful. The old song has long made Abergeldie popular, and sufficed to draw attention to a place now famous from its connection with Balmoral. The Duchess of Kent's occupancy for several seasons deepened the interest in the old Keep; then the Prince of Wales, and later the Empress Eugenie, had use of it; at present the Duke of Connaught has here his Highland home, in close proximity to his Royal Mother. The Castle is by no means imposing, but what it lacks in dignity is compensated for by picturesqueness and historic interest. The castellated portion claims of course the most attention, though its architecture has been described as faulty; but the additions made by the Queen have very considerably modified the faults and increased the comforts of the building. The main entrance door, which faces the south, is adorned with a horse-shoe "for luck"; thus popular beliefs are not altogether ignored in Royal Palaces! The original entrance was, according to custom, of narrow dimensions; within is the "dungeon", where the ring to which prisoners were chained in the good old times is still pointed out. Of all the inhabited buildings we have passed on our walk it has the distinction of being the oldest; history is silent as to the date of the erection of the tower. Abergeldie formed at one time part of the Earldom of Mar, when it is believed the ancient family of Mowat came into possession. There is a tradition that one of these Mowats exercised his powers so ruthlessly that "his 'Tree' was hardly ever teeme". The Castle is on the right bank of the Dee,

Abergeldie Castle.

but there is reason to believe that at one time both it and the site of Balmoral were on the left. Evidences of this fact may be observed by the curious, but will not attract the attention of the casual traveller. Traces of the old channel of the river are particularly noticeable below the suspension bridge. The Geldie Burn, which gives name to the Castle, enters the Dee at the west end of the buildings, and formerly supplied water to a defensive moat. The Gordons came into possession of Abergeldie towards the end of the fifteenth century, the first laird of that name being a son of the first Earl of Huntly. The present proprietor is the sixteenth Gordon in possession, and has the honour of being the only member of the great family of that name, who were once such territorial magnates in Deeside, still in possession of his ancestral acres.

The mountain-measuring parson, whom we have already quoted, visited Abergeldie in 1810, and, in referring to the hospitality he experienced from Captain and Mrs. Gordon, states that their "excellent birch wine appeared to me superior to the finest Champagne"; another writer calls it "delicious". Birch trees are probably as numerous now as they were then in this neighbourhood, but the making of wine from them—which, by the way, was rather a tedious process—has long been discontinued. The last occasion of which we have mention of this native wine being produced at Abergeldie was at the funeral of the laird who died in 1831.

About half a mile up the Geldie Burn the site of St. Columba's Chapel may be observed, surrounded by a small burial ground, fringed with trees. The walls of the Chapel—which some hold was dedicated to St. Valentine—are completely gone; but part was standing until the middle of last century, when it was removed by neighbouring farmers to build dykes. The burial ground, like that of Inverey, contains no tombstones; the last interment, that of a soldier known as "the Blue Drummer", is said to have taken place about a hundred and fifty years ago. Certainly in pre-Reformation days there appears to have been no lack of places of

worship in Deeside, and, though small and mean judged by the present standard, they were conveniently situated and suitable for the requirements of the age. It may be mentioned here that there was also a Chapel at Balmoral, of which both site and name have been lost; and there are other doubtful instances in the valley.

Creag nam Ban, "the women's crag", on the south side of the river, overlooks Abergeldie Castle. It is a beautifully wooded eminence, and commands a particularly fine view of Strathdee. Balmoral Castle is seen, but not Abergeldie; among the mountains visible may be named Lochnagar, the Coyles of Muick, Mount Keen, Morven, Craigendarroch, Geallaig and the Cairngorms. The scene, mountain and valley, reminds us that

> A lovelier stream than Dee, Phœbus sees
> Not in his wide career.

The ascent is no great matter; try it, faire ladye! Moreover, on this hill our Princess Royal brought a Hohenzollern to her feet! The future general and emperor was glad of the encouragement of a chance piece of white heather before he risked a question, the answer to which concerned two great nations. White heather has its peculiar signification, and is not to be promiscuously presented! But according to tradition the name of the hill had been acquired from less pleasant associations—on the top we are told witches were burned. We have even had the hollow where the stake was fixed pointed out to us! It is just three hundred years ago since the laird of Abergeldie had judicially devolved on him the trial of a certain witch—this is matter of history; legend says that ultimately a well-known witch, Katie Rankie, was removed from the Castle dungeon to suffer on Creag nam Ban.

The tradition of this witch-burning appears also in another shape—a not uncommon feature. It seems that a warlock and a witch had both been condemned to death, and were imprisoned together in Abergeldie Castle till arrangements could be made for their execution. The witch, however, contrived to escape, but the warlock undertook to re-capture her if he himself were pardoned. Both, being considered experts in their unholy calling, were

obnoxious to the good people of the district; but as, if there was any difference in guilt between them, the woman was the more deserving of death, the warlock's terms were agreed to. He was accordingly set free, and had scarcely set out in pursuit of his associate when he spied a hare, in which form he had no difficulty in recognising the witch. Transforming himself into a greyhound, he gave chase, and had almost caught the hare when she changed herself into a mouse, and disappeared in a stone dyke. The warlock was equal to the occasion; the hound became a weasel and thus caught the mouse. The animals thereupon resumed their original forms, and the warlock led the witch to the place of execution on Creag nam Ban.

Till a comparatively recent date the access to the Castle from the north road was unique; the Dee could only be crossed by risking oneself in a big box, balanced between two lines of rope, called a "cradle", the venturesome visitor and the "cradle" being guided over the river by a guy rope. The most memorable accident occurred in 1824, when a newly-married couple, Peter Frankie, gamekeeper at "The Hut", Alltnagiubhsaich, and Barbara Brown of Crathienaird, were drowned together; the "accident" was attributed by some to the malignancy of a disappointed suitor of Babby's. A neat suspension foot-bridge has taken the place of the "cradle".

Between Crathie Burn and Bridge of Gairn the north side of the valley is dominated by a long hill, Geallaig "the white mountain", probably so named from the stones with which it is so plentifully covered. Its length would be monotonous were it not for occasional breaks in the outline, trees, especially birches, frequently bristling to the summit. A rather straggling hamlet, Micras, Western and Eastern, lies at the base of Geallaig, the inhabitants of which were at one time held in little estimation by their neighbours. Their houses were formerly of the very rudest description; now they have been replaced by buildings of a quite modern type, and one looks here in vain for an example of the Highland hut which, a generation past, photographers made so well

known. There was, centuries ago, a Chapel in Micras, the site of which may be distinguished, as one walks along the road, from a standing-stone which served for the reading desk, and is believed to have been at one time part of a Druidical Circle.

As we pass Micras, a frolicsome puppy darts from the wood and gives us a noisy, if not joyous, welcome. An old dame, faggot-burdened, soon follows and hastens to assure us of Ossian's harmlessness. We are all immediately on the best of terms, especially the collie, who is particularly delighted as we address him in the few suitable Gaelic words at our command. "You'll no be from Lochaber", says she, "like my doggie"? The old lady is extremely garrulous, favouring us with her opinions on various subjects. She is much exercised by the movements of the planets; to her astrology is no pretended science; she is not to be turned from her belief that there is "a heap o' truth in the planets". The Queen had passed that day with such a train that the dusty road was easily accounted for. "There's nae a Queen that ever I read o' like the Queen o' Britain"—we cannot but note the use of the word "Britain" in such a place. At one time, it appears, she had a grievance—Her Majesty's deer were wont to come down and eat up the old lady's turnips, but her complaint was duly heard. Oh, yes, she remembers when Her Majesty first came to Balmoral, for she went up the south side of the river, as she would not trust the suspension bridge at Crathie though it had been tested. She can also tell of the time when Sir Robert Gordon leased Balmoral; her

A Native of Glen Gelder.

mother then had a small holding in Glen Gelder, which she had to leave to make room for deer. Though provided with a better house, she had thrown a parting malediction at Sir Robert—he would not get a stag as long as old Jean was alive! Sir Robert's bad luck in the chase more than once caused him to inquire "Is that witch, Jean, still alive"? It would seem, however, that Jean's prophecy was not based on supernatural information, but was due to a knowledge of the erstwhile ambassador's lack of skill in handling the rifle. As we talk together an unexpected opportunity occurs for hearing her opinion on the new woman; it is conveyed in forcible terms. The incident was not without its grotesque side; a lady and gentleman pass us on cycles, the lady, who was of substantial build, being towed by her companion. The rope had apparently been accustomed to such work, for knots were numerous. As we parted we praised the surrounding country, but were told "this is not such a grand place as ye would think". Doubtless, from her point of view, she was right; a large patch on the back of her jacket bore written evidence that Deeside has to send across the ocean for bread.

Beyond Micras we pass Coillecriech, noted among travellers no less as a beautiful spot than for its famed little hostelry. The view from this neighbourhood is particularly attractive; the Girnock joins the Dee on the opposite side, having a hill at each angle of the confluence. The hill on the west bank of the burn is Creag Ghiubhais, "the rock of firs"; that on the east side is Creag Phiobaidh. Both are tree-clad, firs prevailing, but with not a few birches at the base; higher up, larches are interspersed. Honest "James Brown" rails at the "silly novel-readers" who call Creag Ghiubhais "by the ridiculous name of the Sister Hill, because, say they, it is so very like Craigendarroch, that it must be its sister! A pretty notion, indeed, which shows what comes of too much reading novels and other profane unprofitable works . . . for who ever heard of hills having sisters, brothers, uncles, or other relations"? These Girnock hills are, however, a beautiful couple, and we should not blame any "silly novel-reader" of the present

day who might dub them the Sister Hills. Farther up the Girnock, the Coyles appear bare compared to the lower hills; the distant prospect is closed by the crest of Lochnagar. The foreground of the picture is enlivened by the Dee, which here flows with considerable velocity, not a few "white horses" being visible. The river has formed several islands near the mouth of the Girnock; the two oldest are wooded, but the third, which dates only from 1881, is tree-less. Strath Girnock is now devoted to agriculture, but formerly it paid more attention to smuggling; "black bothies" were numerous.

But greater glens than that of the Girnock are now in view as we proceed on our way, for the openings of Glen Gairn and Glen Muick lie before us, and the prospect is promising as we approach the end of another stage. The course of the Dee for the last

In Glen Gairn.

two or three miles is irregular, with two great bends, the Gairn confluence being at the one and the Muick at the other. The

Gairn, which we cross close to its mouth by a handsome arch—the remains of its predecessor may be seen a few yards up-stream—is the Dee's largest tributary, its chief head-stream rising near the summit of Ben Avon, while another springs from a point in the glen within a mile of the Quoich. The valley of the Gairn is not remarkable for its picturesque features; Macgillivray says: "There is, in truth, little of the picturesque, and nothing of the magnificent in Glen Gairn". In the same chapter, however, the great naturalist describes the Gairn as winding "among birch woods, corn-fields, and green pastures"; and certainly the head of the glen, where it is confined between the two Craigendals, with Ben Avon towering above, is "magnificent" enough. The glen is about twenty miles long, the stream flowing generally parallel to the Dee. Cultivation is confined to a narrow belt, sometimes contracting to vanishing point, at others laboriously broadening into crofts. Sheep take the place of cattle where the heather-covered soil refuses to be tickled into crop-bearing; beyond the habitations of men the red deer claim sole possession. The "skirlin'" curlew, the whistling plover, and the noisy oyster-catcher unite with the heath-cock in making the glen lively. The matrons and maidens of the thatched-covered cottages are adepts at "a Scottish washing"; and, though they have forgotten the art of making wine from the birches at their doors, they are still familiar with crotal. On the left bank of the stream near the bridge may be observed the ruined church of the parish of Glengairn, with the burial ground which contains the grave of the last Mackenzie of Dalmore, but the parish has not forgotten its dedication to St. Mungo, for the faithful still worship at Lary, two miles up the glen. A little farther up there is the small burial ground of Dalfad, with the almost indistinguishable ruins of a tiny Chapel; beyond this is the little Church of the *quoad sacra* parish. Rineaton, now part of Invercauld, was long the property of a branch of the Macdonalds who claimed descent from the Lords of the Isles. Their burial ground is close to the old mansion house. Macgregors, also, were at one time numerous

in the glen, Dalfad having belonged to them. They bore their full share of the long-continued persecution to which their clan was subjected; nevertheless Dalfad sent twenty-four men to Culloden, of whom it is said no fewer than eighteen fell on the field.

The Gairn crossed, we have the old turnpike holding due east through the famous Pass, but the road *via* Ballater winds round Craigendarroch. Near the west end of the Pass there are two

Craigendarroch—from the west.

points not without particular interest. The ruins of Gairn Castle, an erstwhile hunting-seat of the Forbes family, stand on a knoll; of the building only a very small part of the wall remains standing, and even in 1831 it was spoken of as "now almost cleared away". The site is somewhat out of the way, and as the ruins are not imposing the old castle is scarcely observable. Near by is the farm of Abergairn, long noted for possessing lead; but several attempts at mining have not yielded profitable results.

CHAPTER VII.

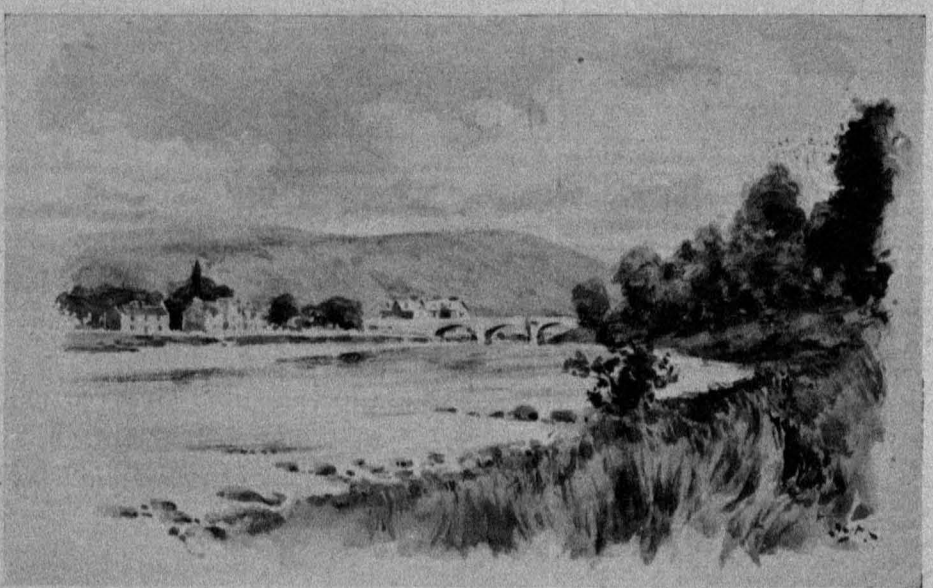
Ballater.

Look, oh look, from the bower!—'tis the beautiful hour
When the sunbeams are broad ere they sink in the sea;
Look, oh look, from the bower!—for an amethyst shower
Of glory and grandeur is gemming the Dee!

BALLATER, the western terminus of the railway, is the capital, as well as the most popular resort, of the Deeside Highlands. The attractions of the district are numerous; the village is a veritable centre of beauty, with an almost ideal situation, only a degree less grand than that of Castletown. Nature, however, does not repeat herself; there is a series of pictures in the valley without any replicas. This spot, like others to the westward, is almost mountain-locked, but the particular feature is a tree-crowned crag. Craigendarroch, "the hill of oaks", is of little account for size, but its peculiar mound-like shape, its covering of oaks and pines, and its patches of bare rock, render it as noticeable as picturesque whether the approach is made from the west or from the east. The river sweeps round Craigendarroch, forming a large haugh on which the village is built. The opposite side of the river is commanded by Pannanich Hill, of which the slope facing Ballater is known as Craig Coillach. To the south-west are the Coyles of Muick, those fine miniature mountains which have more than once attracted our attention; from no other stand-point are these beautiful peaks seen to such advantage. Behind them lie the Conachcraig Hills, the range on the west side of Glen Gelder; and above all towers Cac Carn Beag, the summit of Lochnagar. This prospect may be obtained from many points in the village, particularly from the

bridge which spans the Dee, and is unquestionably the grandest scene in the neighbourhood.

The village, which now ranks as a burgh, had evidently not anticipated that honour. Its streets shew little appearance of plan; its so-called Square—in which stands the Church of three united parishes, Glenmuick, Tullich, and Glengairn—doubtless now presents deficiencies to the æsthetic inhabitants. Ballater, however, is not dependent upon the regularity of its streets, or the elegance of its buildings. Not that the summer visitor does not receive

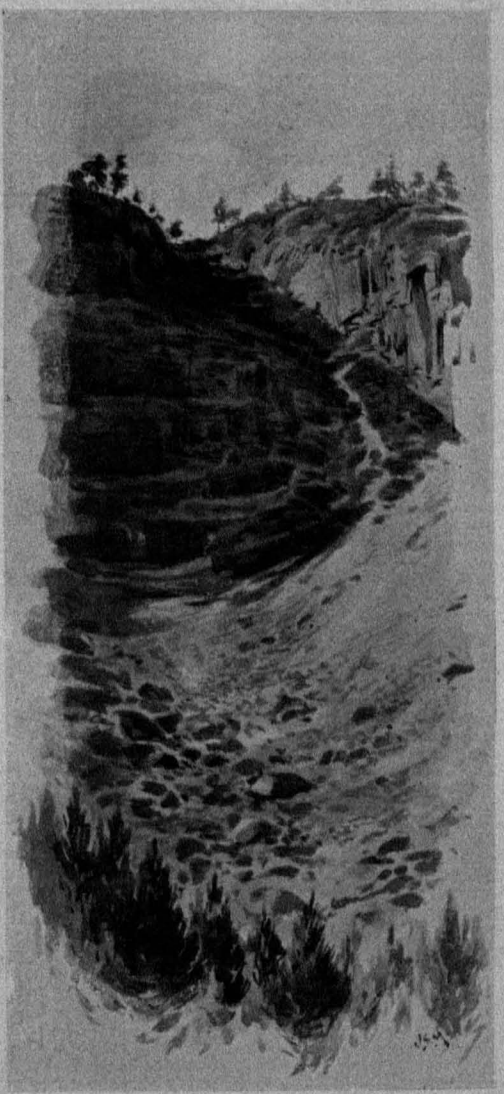


Ballater Bridge.

attention—for it is to the strangers within its gates that the village owes its prosperity; and within the last few years numerous "villa" residences have been built in the outskirts. The village boasts of Barracks built in cottage style for the accommodation of the Royal Guard of Honour when Her Majesty is at Balmoral. The architecture is quite unlike that generally favoured by the War Office, the detractors of which assert that the plans for the Barracks at an Indian Hill Station and those at Ballater had got misplaced! The railway station is not unworthy of the district, and can boast of the arrival and departure of more royal and noble

personages than any other provincial station in the United Kingdom. Close to the station are the Albert Hall, Victoria Hall, and Gordon Institute, important buildings for the erection of which the burgh is indebted to the late Mr. Alexander Gordon, a London brewer, who was born in Strath Girnock.

The name "Ballater" is of some antiquity, for there is mention in the fifteenth century of "Balader", a little hamlet, long disappeared, at the eastern end of the Pass, near the present entrance to the offices of Monaltrie House, where also St. Nathalan's Church is believed to have stood. Nothing can now be traced of this chapel, but not many years ago the exact position of the churchyard was said to have been accidentally discovered. St. Nathalan's Day, was regularly observed till recent years, when football was played in the then wall-less churchyard of Tullich; now a prize-shooting is connected with the time-honoured festival.



In the Pass of Ballater.

Craigendarroch is separated from the hills on the north by a deep, narrow, rocky gorge, known as the Pass of Ballater. The craig on the north side of the Pass is Creag an t-Seabhaig, "the hawk's

craig", from which, at some remote period, Craigendarroch appears to have become detached. The narrowness of the Pass leaves little more than room for the road, which is almost overhung by rocks with trees bristling in the most unlikely places. This old turnpike is of much easier gradiant than the new road through the village and round Craigendarroch. Indeed one wonders why such a steep route has been selected, since nature presented a much easier way. A proposal was made to continue the Deeside railway as far as Braemar, and we humbly think it is matter for thankfulness that legislative sanction was then only granted to Bridge of Gairn. A goods line was thereupon constructed, where the road *should* have been; but it proved unsuitable, and the track now serves as a promenade for Ballater visitors.

Monaltrie House occupies a fine site at the eastern foot of Craigendarroch. It has been known in its time as Ballater House and as Tullich Lodge; and was the mansion house of the Farquharsons of Monaltrie till 1857, when Monaltrie lapsed to Invercauld. About two miles to the eastward, on a birch-clad knoll, will be observed a high slender obelisk, erected in memory of William Farquharson of Monaltrie, who died in 1828. He was a nephew of Francis Farquharson, the "Baron Ban", who fought at the head of the Farquharsons at Culloden. At his subsequent trial the "Baron Ban" was condemned to death and his estates forfeited; but he was subsequently pardoned, and on payment of £1613 0s 9d—how exactly the Treasury calculates values!—was reinstated in Monaltrie. Monaltrie formerly gave name to the local Inn which, however, dropped "Monaltrie Arms" with such haste that one is reminded of the fact that after the battle of Culloden,

Monaltrie House.

"most of the old signs of naval and military heroes gave way to the Head of the Duke of Cumberland". "I was yesterday out of town", says Horace Walpole, on 16th April, 1747, "and the very signs at the inns, as I passed through the villages, made me make very quaint reflections on the mortality of fame and popularity! I observed how the 'Duke of Cumberland's Head' had succeeded almost universally to 'Admiral Vernon's', and his had left but few traces of the 'Duke of Ormond's'. I pondered these things in my heart, and said to myself, Surely all glory is but as the *sign over an inn door*"! There is a very plaintive little ballad about one of the Monaltrie Farquharsons which is worth quoting here, though its *raison d'etre* has, we believe, become lost:

"Hark! hark! it is the horn
On mountain breezes borne.
Awake! it is the morn:
Awake, Monaltrie!

One word to his fair bride,
Who's sleeping by his side,
We can no longer bide;
Away, Monaltrie!

She sits in her lone tower,
At evening's pleasant hour;
Dark shades around her lower—
Come back, Monaltrie!

What shrieks of wild despair
Awake the midnight air?
'Tis a frantic lady fair,
Who seeks Monaltrie.

That evening by his side,
Reposed his lovely bride.
Fair Agnes there has died
For Young Monaltrie.

The present Monaltrie House is in the old parish of Tullich, the church of which was dedicated to St. Nathalan, Bishop of Aberdeen, who died in 452. The Bishop is said to have resided here frequently and to have been buried within the church, which "long continued famous for miracles wrought by his relics, which were preserved there till the change of religion". Near by is the Key Pool, so named from an interesting legend connected with St. Nathalan, some of the incidents of which occur in other traditions. It records that Nathalan had committed a great sin, for which he considered that only exceptional penance could procure absolution. Accordingly he obtained an iron girdle which he locked, and, casting the key into a pool of the river—at that time flowing to the northward of its present course—agreed with himself that if

ever he found it again he should consider that Heaven had accepted his self-inflicted punishment. Shortly afterwards he set out for Rome in order, the profane say, to afford Heaven the better opportunity of shewing its powers. He had not been long in Rome when the inevitable fish was caught, and, on being brought to his lodging and opened, was found to contain the key which had been thrown into the Dee at Tullich. Needless to say Nathalan thereupon rejoiced exceedingly, and quickly rid himself of his inconvenient waist-belt; ultimately, he acquired such a saintly reputation that he was canonized. This legend is also prettily connected with the record of a great famine in Deeside, during which Nathalan sowed his fields with sand and was soon rewarded with an abundant crop of corn. When he began, with the assistance of his parishioners, to harvest the heaven-sent grain, a sudden storm threatened to damage it, on which Nathalan forgot himself, and grumbled, like an ordinary farmer, at the weather. In a moment all was again fair, but with this fresh evidence of divine interposition Nathalan felt his own utter unworthiness; and so, locking a chain round his ankle, he threw away the key. The rest we know.

The Pass of Ballater—East entrance.

The most famous pre-Victorian event of the century at Ballater was that of the "flood" of 1829, to which we have already made several references. On 3rd August, 1829, the thunder and lightning at Ballater were unprecedented, but the inhabitants retired to rest without apprehension, the river having begun to

subside. In the early hours of the next morning, however, there was a rude awakening, for the Dee had overflowed its banks, and a stream four feet in depth rushed along the streets, some houses being filled with water to a depth of six feet. The consternation of the people can be easily imagined, as, only partially dressed, many of them had to leave their houses. Sir Thomas Dick Lauder quaintly says: "It is impossible to say how many of the tedious out-works of courtship were swept away" by that flood! Considerable damage was of course done in the village, but the most unfortunate occurrence was the destruction of the bridge over the Dee, one of Telford's elegant structures. The present bridge, which was opened by Her Majesty, is the fourth which has been constructed, almost at the same point, within the past hundred years.

'Tis a glorious glen—'tis a royal land,
With its ridges of mountain blue;
They rise all round, like a brother band,
All clad in their azure hue.

Crossing Ballater Bridge, and holding up-stream, we soon find ourselves at the confluence of the Muick. Of all the Dee's tributary glens that of the Muick, "wild sow", is the finest as well as the most interesting. Well may it be called a royal glen, for the left bank of the stream is in Her Majesty's possession; it is only the right side that gives title to the "Baronet of Glenmuick". The particular natural objects of interest in the glen are: the Falls, the Coyles, Loch Muick, Falls of Glas Allt, Dubh Loch, and Lochnagar; the buildings include Knock Castle, Birkhall, Allt-nagiubhsaich Lodge, Gasallt Shiel, on the left side, and Braichlie and Glenmuick House on the other.

The church of Glenmuick stood within the burial ground, near the confluence with the Dee; in 1794 it is described as "a very old house, thatched with heath". It was burned on the night the foundation-stone of the new church at Ballater was laid. Some of us have laughed at the pulpit intimation said to have been made by a Highland clergyman: "There will be no Lord's Day here next Sunday, as my wife requires the church for a drying loft

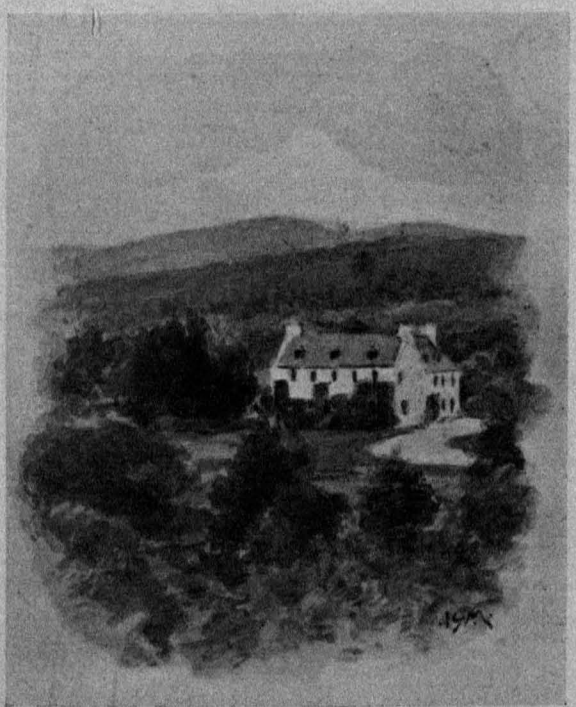
It can be gathered, however, that considerable liberties were at one time taken with parish churches; there is a tradition that the minister's wife of Glenmuick had nests for her poultry *inside* the church, and that the building accidentally caught fire, on the occasion mentioned, while she was looking for eggs with a lighted bit of fir! The burial place of the Gordons of Abergeldie is within the churchyard, but the most interesting tombstone is a rough slab close to the entrance gate, with the rudely cut inscription: "1596 I. M. 1722". The initials refer, it is believed, to John Mitchell, a native of the glen, the dates being the years of his birth and death respectively. Near the western dyke of the churchyard there are several coffin-shaped slabs bearing initials and dates only; some even without that meagre record. They are probably of considerable antiquity, as they must have been placed there when the art of cutting on granite was little known.

The ruins of Knock Castle will be observed about a mile to the west of the churchyard, on a little hillock, a spur of Ardmeanoch. Tradition says that there was a stronghold here in the days of Wallace, and that its then owners, the Durwards, had an underground passage connecting it with Gairn Castle. Ultimately Knock came into the possession of the Gordons, as part of the estate of Birkhall, and became a favourite seat of the lairds of Abergeldie, who allowed it to become ruinous about a hundred years ago. Strath Girnock, referred to in the previous chapter, was at one time possessed by a branch of the Forbes

Glenmuick House.

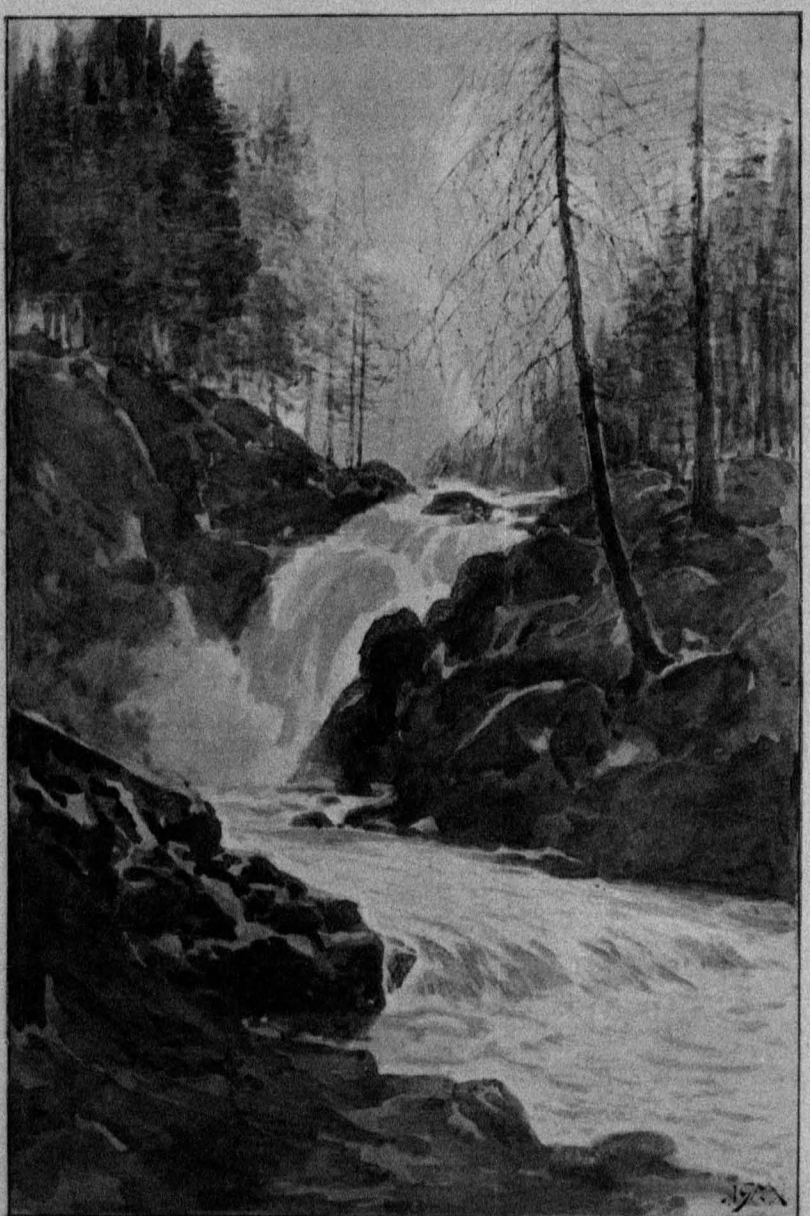
family that was at continual fued with the lairds of Knock. A Forbes ended the feud only too successfully—for himself. He surprised Knock's seven sons as they were casting peats, and, having slain them, stuck their heads on their "flaughter" spades. On receiving tidings of the annihilation of his whole family Knock fell down dead. Gordon of Abergeldie took speedy action, and condemned Strath Girnock to death. Forbes was immediately hanged from his own roof-tree, while his lands were forfeited to the judge, who also acquired, at the same time, the estate of Knock in succession to his kinsman.

The modern house of Braichlie is built on the site of the old castle of that name. The encounter between Gordon of Braichlie and Farquharson of Inverey is referred to in our second chapter—the interesting historical ballad is rather long for these pages. The south side of Glen Muick became the property of Farquharson of Invercauld in 1749, and was sold, in 1863, to Mr., afterwards Sir, James T. Mackenzie. The latter erected Glenmuick House, a large pile in the Tudor style of architecture, with a commanding position. Near it he also built an Episcopal Church, and, hard by, the family vault.



Birkhall.

Birkhall is a delightful residence, surrounded by trees of various



The Falls of Muick.

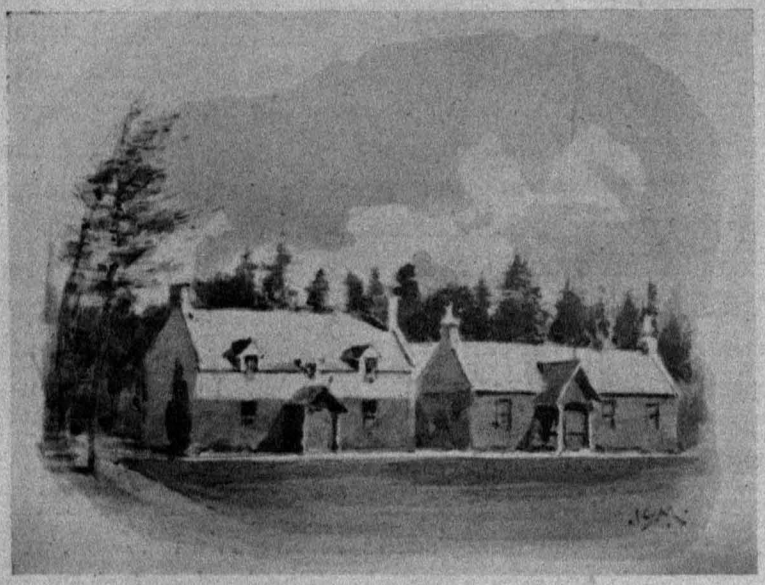
kinds. The original building, which dates from 1715, was a plain three-storied house facing the Muick; but considerable additions have latterly been made. It was purchased by the Prince Consort for the Prince of Wales, who re-sold it to Her Majesty, by whom it is generally "lent" to members of the Royal Family and other important personages. As shewing the changes that take place, it may be mentioned that, within memory, strawberries and cream were supplied to the public in the drawing-room, and so recently as 1845 birch wine was sold there at a shilling per bottle.

The Coyles of Muick have already been admired for their fine outlines. The highest peak attains a height of nearly two thousand feet, and is surmounted by a cairn on which there is a stone with the following inscription: "Erected by command of Queen Victoria in remembrance of the marriage of Albert Edward Prince of Wales and Alexandra Princess of Denmark, 10th March, 1863".

At its Falls the Muick makes a plunge of about thirty feet into a deep pool, forming a charming scene in the Linn Wood, at a point where the glen is much contracted. The banks of the river are graced with trees, and, though the sides of the glen are here rocky, vegetation is profuse; altogether the spot is worthy of the popularity which it enjoys. Even in Pennant's days the Falls were famous, for he tells us that the Pool was "supposed by the vulgar to be bottomless". Salmon, of course, are unable to pass the Falls. Up to this part of the glen there has been a succession of crofts, interspersed with wood; now the country undergoes a sudden change. Emerging from the Linn Wood, we appear to enter a desolate region; cultivation practically ceases, one small croft only is visible; we have entered the haunts of the red deer.

Alltnagiubhsaich Lodge, formerly known as "The Hut", is part of the estate of Birkhall. A hundred years ago the house was merely a sod-covered, one-chimneyed building, when doubtless it received its sobriquet; soon, however, it developed into "a most commodious cottage belonging to Captain Gordon of Abergeldie". It is one of the most charming of Her Majesty's Shiels; the Queen and the Prince Consort frequently spent a day

or two under its roof. Here also the Prince of Wales and other members of the Royal Family have passed many a pleasant evening after a day among the stags on Lochnagar. The house is embosomed among firs—from which it derives its name—and is described in "Leaves" as "our humble little abode". The ascent of Lochnagar is usually made by a path which commences at "The Hut".



Alltnagiubhsaich Lodge.

Loch Muick.

Loch Muick, which is over two miles in length, is grandly situated, being almost wholly encompassed by steep mountains. The declivities on both sides are grooved by torrents, particularly on the north shore, to which Lochnagar slopes, and its banks are fringed with trees. The Queen thus describes a boat excursion on

the loch : "The scenery is beautiful here, so wild and grand—real severe Highland scenery, with trees in the hollow. We had various scrambles in and out of the boat and along the shore, and saw three hawks, and caught seventy trout. I wish an artist could have been there to sketch the scene, it was so picturesque—the boat, the net, and the people in their kilts in the water and on the shore". Writing about the south side of the loch, the Queen says that it "is very fine indeed, and deeply furrowed by the torrents, which form glens and corries where birch and alder trees grow close to the water's edge. We landed on a sandy spot below a fine glen, through which flows the Black Burn. It was very dry here, but still very picturesque, with alder-trees and mountain-ash in full fruit overhanging it. The moon rose, and was beautifully reflected on the lake, which, with its steep green hills, looked lovely. To add to the beauty, poetry, and wildness of the scene, Coutts played in the boat, the men, who row very quickly and well now, giving an occasional shout when

The Falls of Glasallt.

he played a reel. It reminded me of Sir Walter Scott's lines in 'The Lady of the Lake':

> 'Ever, as on they bore, more loud
> And louder rung the pibroch proud.
> At first the sound, by distance tame,
> Mellow'd along the waters came,
> And, lingering long by cape and bay,
> Wailed every harsher note away'".

Glas Allt, "grey burn", rises near the summit of Lochnagar, and, flowing in its last stage through a deep gorge, forms a noted water-fall, about one hundred and fifty feet in height. Glasallt Shiel, the most remote of Her Majesty's Deeside residences, is built close to the shore of Loch Muick where Glas Allt enters. The Shiel, which is on the Abergeldie estate, was erected by the Queen, and its position may be briefly described as unique and romantic. It is solitary in the extreme—the nearest house being several miles distant—while it has the advantage of there being no thoroughfare. Dubh Loch, a mountain tarn about two miles beyond the Shiel, is reached by a pony-path; it is "very wild, the hills, which are very rocky and precipitous, rising perpendicularly from it". On a certain occasion when stalking on the White Mounth forest the Duke of Edinburgh shot a stag which took to

Glasallt Shiel.

the loch. His Royal Highness was the only swimmer of the party, and accordingly followed it into the water, and gave the *coup de grace.* Between Glasallt Shiel and Dubh Loch a small cairn will be observed marking the spot where the Marquis of Lorne proposed to the Princess Louise—Her Majesty, very considerately, having gone that day to Pannanich Wells.

The Spital of Muick is opposite Alltnagiubhsaich Lodge. As the name implies, an hospice had at one time existed here; it was succeeded by a hostelry; the latter, in its turn, giving way to a forester's cottage. Here the driving road ends, but pedestrians cross over to Forfarshire by the Capel Mounth, a noted mountain pass which had, no doubt, given frequent occasion for the exercise of the old churchmen's hospitality.

Glen Muick has taken no small space for its description, but it is an exceptional valley; and, if apology be needed, we must crave pardon for having dismissed it so summarily.

An account of Ballater and its vicinity would be incomplete without particular reference to Pannanich. The Wells of Pannanich are about two miles down the river from Ballater Bridge. Probably they date from the flood, but their history commences in 1760. It would appear that there was then an old woman at the foot of the hill, much afflicted with scrofulous sores, whose sufferings the faculty had failed to alleviate. A fancy seized the invalid to bathe in a bog at Pannanich, the bluish scum of which, somehow or other, attracted her notice. She bathed and bathed; the result can be guessed—she was completely cured! Though there was then no daily paper her case soon became famous; so from the bog developed the Wells. Farquharson of Monaltrie, the "Baron Ban", was then the proprietor of Pannanich; he erected a hamlet there for the benefit of the crowds that flocked to the now popular springs. The fame of the Wells increased so much that the hamlet of Pannanich soon became insufficient for the accommodation of visitors, and so Ballater was founded. Ballater has gone on prospering; but evil days have fallen on "Wells" generally, and Pannanich is no exception. There is, however, still an inn there,

beautifully situated above the Dee; and the springs flow as freely as ever, but faith is a vanishing virtue. It is amusing to read now of the curative powers which were attributed to these mineral waters. In 1793 a surgeon advertises in the "Aberdeen Journal" that he "will attend at the Wells every week, and will pay due attention to convalescents dispersed in different hamlets for the benefit of the goat-milk". The medicinal qualities of the Wells are stated to be too strong for the very young, old, or infirm, and the public warned that they would have "little effect unless continued a month or six weeks, and drunk only in the morning on an empty stomach". We are gravely told that "some people will drink of a morning seven or eight quarts without feeling the least uneasiness . . . but in no case should the quantity exceed two Scottish pints". A writer in 1825, speaking of the baths here, says: "None of them is very inviting . . . The lower classes are extremely credulous respecting the medicinal virtues" of the Wells; and "groups of care-worn and sickly creatures, whose narrow funds excluded them from the bath-house, were patiently catching the water as it trickled over the discoloured stones on the open side of the hill".

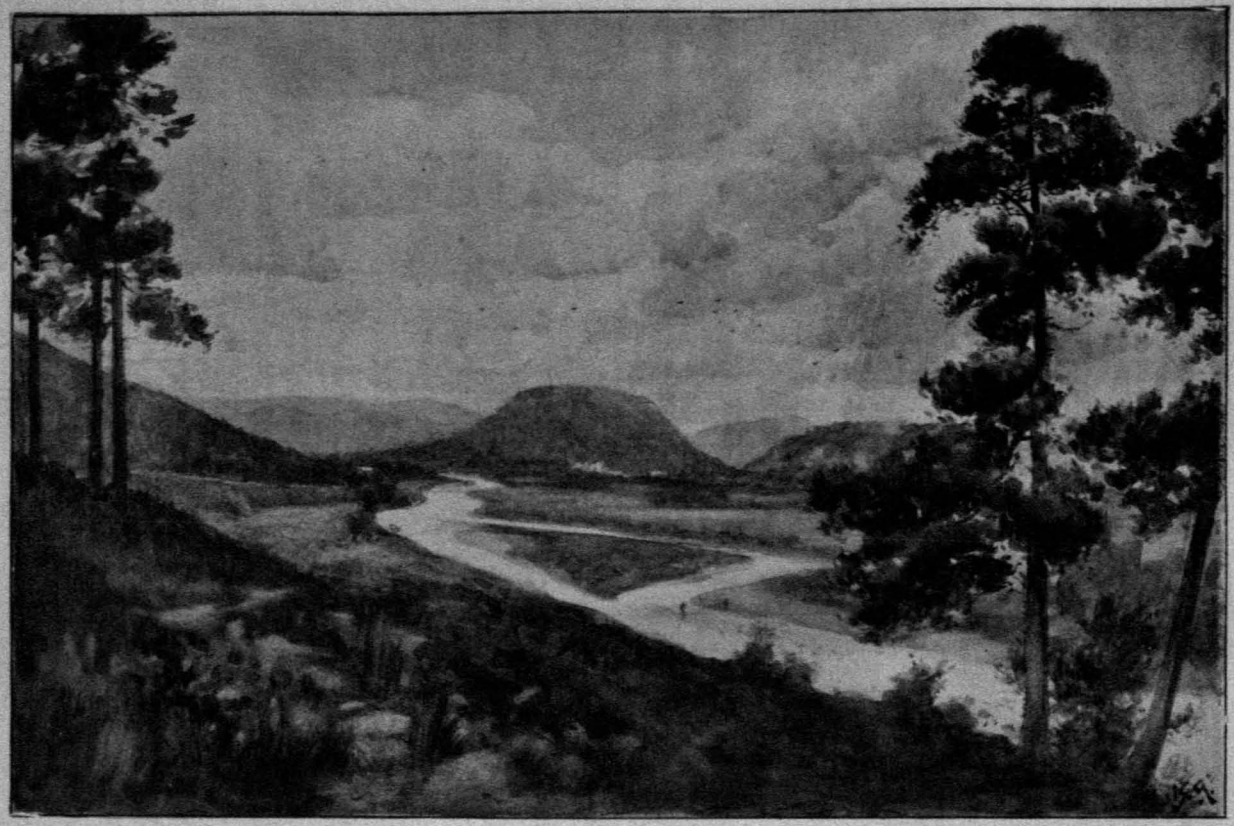
CHAPTER VIII.

Ballater to Aboyne.

Ye may wander at will, from the sea to Glen Lui,
From grey Silver City to heath-clad Braemar,
Seek shelter and silence on stern Ben Muich Dhui,
Or woo the wild grandeur of dark Lochnagar;
Yet ne'er in your roaming, from morn-break till gloaming,
Shall scene more endearing ere lighten the way,
Than where the Dee gliding, through beauty abiding,
Salutes with soft murmur sweet Cambus o' May.

WE leave Ballater with reluctance, for it is almost impossible to turn one's back on Lochnagar without a pang, though great and notable mountains will still be found confining the valley, and a succession of charming pictures awaits the traveller's gaze. Yet we feel that soon we must cross the burn which arbitrarily divides the Highlands from the Lowlands. We have said "arbitrarily"; but the boundary is generally accepted, and we are not prepared to dispute the popular verdict. Each stage of our journey has had its own attractions. If the stranger is not impressed with that fact from what has been shewn him, the shortcoming is by no means to be attributed to nature. The stage on which we are now entering differs much from those we have already traversed; variety always has charm, and there will be no lack either of scenic effect or of human interest.

There are two roads eastward from Ballater, one on either bank of the river; we shall mainly follow the more popular, that on the north side. We confess, however, to an affection for the road on the right bank of the Dee; it is more distinctly Highland than its modern rival on the other side; it is better wooded; and its roadway is not so painfully excellent. We do not expect cyclists



The Dee from Pannanich.

to be of our mind; but pedestrians soon weary of a trimly kept, monotonously flat thoroughfare.

On this south road Ballaterach farm-house, over a mile eastward from Pannanich, is notable as the residence for a short time of Lord Byron when a boy. It has been much visited by the poet's admirers; a "box" bed was full of interest, under the belief that Byron had occupied it. This bed, however, was burned in 1868, when the steading took fire; so there is an end to one fiction. The real bed was disposed of long before the fire, being turned into a cheese-press at Dee Castle, a short distance to the east of Ballaterach. Byron's landlord was a Robertson who had married one of the Macdonalds of Rineaton, referred to in a previous chapter. His second daughter was that "Mary" who is so affectionately addressed in the following poem:

When I roved a young Highlander o'er the dark heath,
And climbed thy steep summit, oh Morven of snow!
To gaze on the torrent that thundered beneath,
Or the mist of the tempest that gathered below,
Untutored by science, a stranger to fear,
And rude as the rocks where my infancy grew,
No feeling, save one, to my bosom was dear;
Need I say, my sweet Mary, 'twas center'd in you?

Yet it could not be love, for I knew not the name,—
What passion can dwell in the heart of a child?
But still I perceive an emotion the same
As I felt, when a boy, on the crag-covered wild:
One image alone on my bosom impressed,
I loved my bleak regions, nor panted for new;
And few were my wants, for my wishes were blessed;
And pure were my thoughts, for my soul was with you.

I arose with the dawn; with my dog as my guide,
From mountain to mountain I bounded along;
I breasted the billows of Dee's rushing tide,
And heard at a distance the Highlander's song:
At eve, on my heath-cover'd couch of repose,
No dreams, save of Mary, were spread to my view;
And warm to the skies my devotions arose,
For the first of my prayers was a blessing on you.

I left my bleak home, and my visions are gone;
The mountains are vanish'd, my youth is no more;

As the last of my race, I must wither alone,
  And delight but in days I have witness'd before :
Ah ! splendour has raised, but embitter'd, my lot ;
  More dear were the scenes which my infancy knew :
Though my hopes may have fail'd, yet they are not forgot ;
  Though cold is my heart, still it lingers with you.

When I see some dark hill point its crest to the sky,
  I think of the rocks that o'ershadow Culblean ;
When I see the soft blue of a love-speaking eye,
  I think of those eyes that endear'd the rude scene ;
When, haply, some light-waving locks I behold,
  That faintly resemble my Mary's in hue,
I think on the long flowing ringlets of gold,
  The locks that were sacred to beauty, and you.

Yet the day may arrive when the mountains once more
  Shall rise to my sight in their mantles of snow :
But while these soar above me, unchanged as before,
  Will Mary be there to receive me?—ah, no !
Adieu, then, ye hills, where my childhood was bred !
  Thou sweet flowing Dee, to thy waters adieu !
No home in the forest shall shelter my head,—
  Ah ! Mary, what home could be mine but with you ?

Mary Robertson was six years senior to Byron, whose age when he left Ballaterach was about *eight ;* she married an excise officer at Crathie, and died in Aberdeen in 1867. Moore says that the "Mary" was Mary Duff ; another authority gives Mary Chaworth that honour ; both are wrong. The district of Ballaterach has not yet forgotten the poet, as several of the inhabitants are lineal descendants of men who settled there when Dee Castle was originally built. At the neighbouring farm of Graystone the mistress of the house points out, with pride, several ash chairs, dating from last century, which had doubtless been used by Byron, who was a frequent caller at Graystone. He is said then to have had big prominent eyes, and to have been of a frolicsome disposition. The then tenant of Graystone, an ancestor of its present occupant, was a wheel-wright, who, when he saw the boy approaching, took the precaution of closing his workshop ! The neighbouring miller of Inchmarnoch had also to stop his mill when he appeared ! In spite of his boyish tricks—perhaps on account of them—Byron is lovingly remembered at Ballaterach.

Dee Castle is the modern name of Candecaill, "Woodhead mentioned in an old song of which we have only two verses:

We'll up the muir o' Charlestown,
An' o'er the water o' Dee,
An' hine awa' to Candecaill,
It's there that we should be.
A red cloak o' calico,
A saddle an' a whip,
A hingin'-mouthed bridegroom
That lays me doon to sleep.

Candecaill was an ancient residence of the Gordons in connection with their Inchmarnoch estates, having been built about the middle of the fifteenth century. The first Marquis of Huntly made it his principal Deeside residence. The house was burned in 1641, and was allowed to become ruinous. It is not unworthy of notice that skilled workmen from Huntly were employed at the erection, several of whom, as we have already seen, settled in the district. Little remains of the old building—only a small portion of the west gable. The upper floor of the present structure is occupied as a dwelling house; the lower was till lately used as a Roman Catholic Chapel. The hill of Little Tulloch, overlooking it, has, as we are informed in "The New Statistical Account", "the remains of what is called 'My Lord's House' . . . The use of this building is reported to have been for obtaining a view during a deer-hunt". The Earl of Mar in his celebrated journey up Deeside in 1715—how war correspondents and reporters would have attended him in these days!—made a halt here, ostensibly to enjoy a deer-hunt in Glen Tanner, but really to further his plans for the Rising.

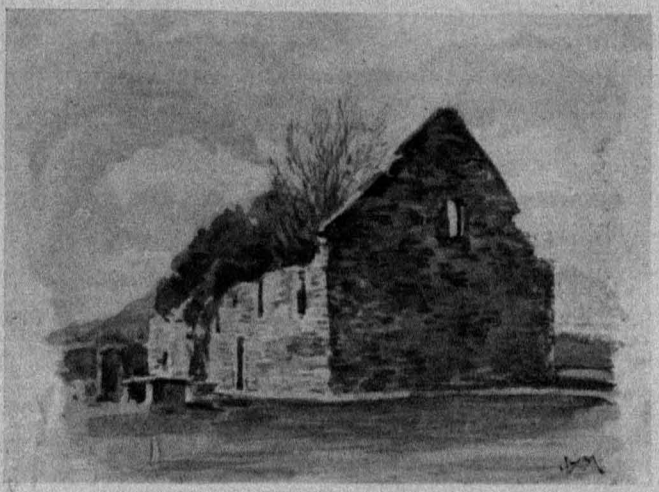
Inchmarnoch was at one time an independent parish, but long ago it became merged in Glenmuick. Its church and burial ground can still be traced; the Dee has made an island of the site, and the flood of 1829 exposed several graves. The bell of the church had, as was not uncommon in old times, been suspended from a neighbouring tree; Bellbrae, in the immediate vicinity, owes its name to this circumstance. The Marnoch "shooting" was no small function, and took place on 2nd March, old style. The

ruined church of Glentanner stands between the road and the river. It was rather a small building, of which only the west gable now remains. Its predecessor was known as the Black Chapel of the Moor from having been thatched with heather. This part of the valley is now practically without inhabitants; the site strikes one as having been inconvenient for the worshippers, but doubtless, when first erected, the church served its purpose. Mary Robertson of Ballaterach, whom Byron apostrophised, is interred here, so the lonely little burial ground by the river-side has a peculiar interest.

Glentanner Churchyard.

Returning to Ballater Bridge, we now set out on our walk to Aboyne, by the north road, with not a few backward glances, especially in the neighbourhood of Tullich, at the great panorama, one of the grandest prospects on Deeside, of which Lochnagar forms the back-ground. Tullich was once a place of no small importance; in pre-Ballater days it ranked as the capital of the district. Here were an Inn and Post Office, as well as the parish church; and here was held St. Nathalan's Fair. In the days when the Knights Templars had an interest here the churches of Glenmuick and Glengairn were vicarages of Tullich, a circumstance which shews the relative position of these now combined parishes. Now all is changed; the village has disappeared, and with it its hostelry and Post Office—the latter known as Tullich-in-Mar. Even the market betook itself to Ballater; but the cross, alas, was used for building materials, and the church is a ruin. The church probably dates from about 1450, but its font is of earlier design. There are three sculptured stones here which bear ample testimony

to the antiquity of the churches of Tullich—one probably referring to the days of sun-worship; another to the time of the Culdees; the third to early Roman Catholic days. Traces may still be observed of the fort built round the church by the Knights of St. John, who held the patronage in the thirteenth century. Within the church is the burial aisle of the Farquharsons of Whitehouse, the recently deceased laird of which claimed to be the head of the Farquharson clan. An uninscribed monument is an object of no little curiosity; the style is accounted for by the circumstance that it was erected in memory of a distinguished local Freemason. The famous reel of Tullich is said to have been improvised here, on a certain stormy Sunday, when the priest failed to put in an appearance.

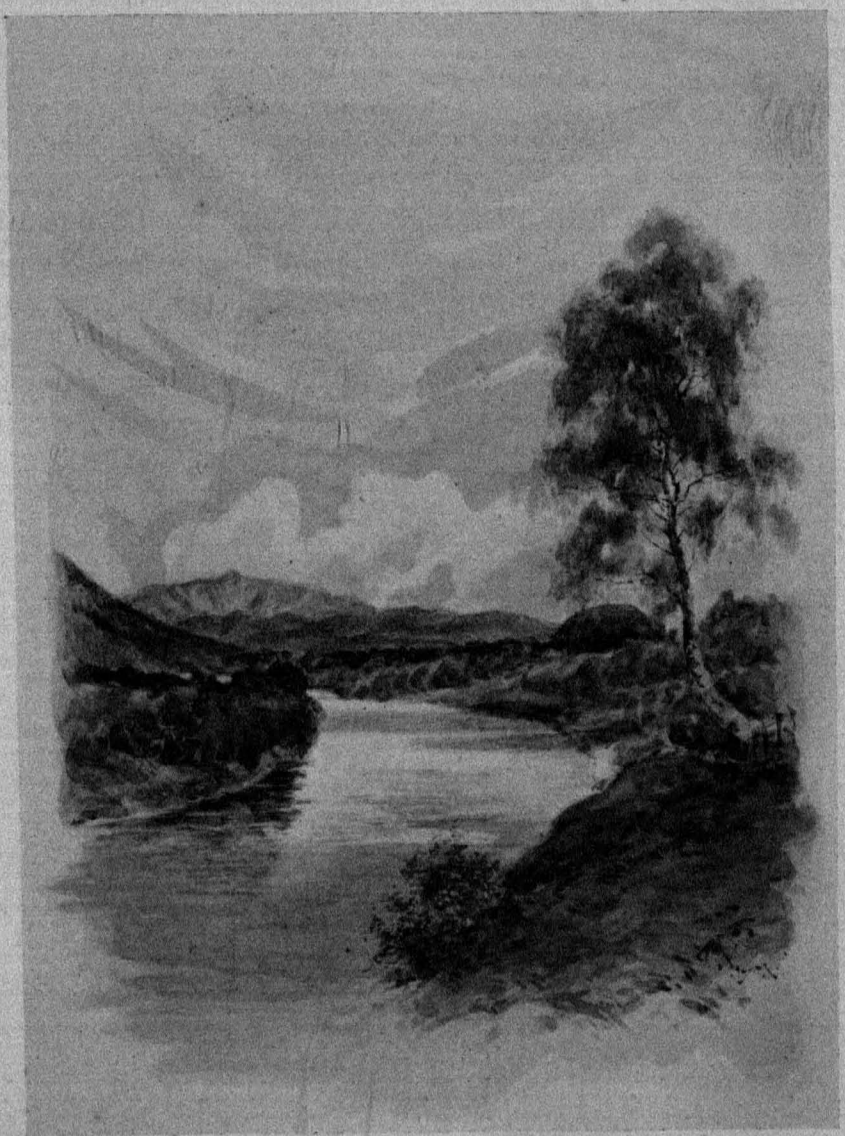


Kirk of Tullich.

Tullich Burn joins the Dee a little to the south of the church; along its right bank there is a path, the usual route to the summit of Morven—the "Morven of snow" of Byron. Morven, "the big mountain", on the watershed of Dee and Don, has an imposing appearance; viewed from the other side of the Dee its shape is somewhat conical; seen from the eastward it has rather a massive individuality, though its outline is not without grace. It is a favourite ascent of mountaineers, as it is conveniently situated, and the view from the summit is varied and extensive. The Queen ascended it in 1859. The earliest recorded ascent (1776) is by Cordiner, who gives the following account of the view from the summit. The description shows little acquaintace with mountain

prospects generally, but is quite in keeping with the language adopted by writers in the last century after performing similar "feats": "On ascending a high and steep hill, and gaining its summit, beheld one of those astonishing Alpine scenes, whose greatness so wonderfully fills the human mind. The prospect immediately below was a wide-extended, deep, and dreary valley, a desert moor, spread with dark brown heath, where verdure seemed to be denied; and beyond, a range of mountains the most magnificent imaginable: these enormous piles seemed crowded to the sky: the clouds that broke upon their tops, and floated down the intermediate spaces, gave striking evidence of their immense magnitude and various distance: their shades mingling with the shadows of the clouds that hovered round them, made the vast cliffs towering above, look over the lower regions of the air in the most august and gigantic forms. These constitute part of the hilly region of Braemar".

A short distance beyond Tullich the Dee makes a fine northward sweep, known as Cambus o' May, presenting one of the most charming of the many fine scenes in which the valley abounds. The river is bordered with trees, and birches are plentiful: Macwhirter might here count "Graces" by the hundred. Road, river, and railway are close together; it would be almost possible to fish from the carriage window while the train halts at the most picturesque station in the north, the platform of which shews the natural rock, enriched with heather. Cambus once had its Inn; the house, except a corner which had to give place to the railway, stands at the west end of the station. On the subsidence of the flood of 1829 a lively trout was found in the plate-rack of the Inn, which, according to our friend "James Brown", was there "doomed to die a miserable death"; but Sir Thomas Dick Lauder tells how the hospitable innkeeper restored it to the river. The incident is quoted as graphically shewing the unprecedented height to which the Dee rose on that occasion. Ballaterach may be observed across the river in a beautiful little valley drained by Pollagach Burn, a small stream which flows between Pannanich



The Dee at Cambus o' May.

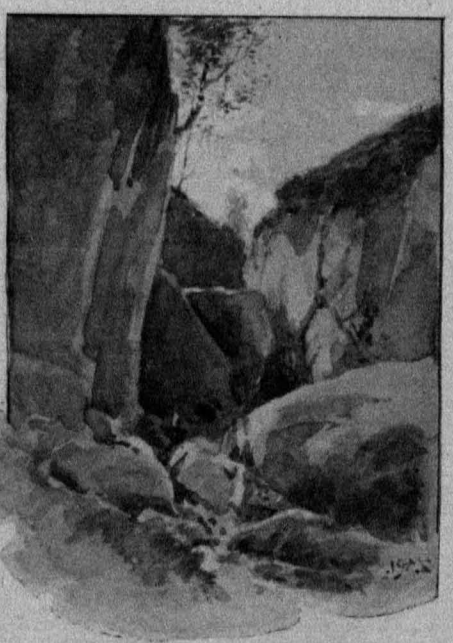
Hill and the range of hills on the left bank of the Water of Tanner.

Oh ! placid lake, could'st thou reflect
The scenes that passed upon thy shore,
When belted knights and warriors bold
Assembled round the brave Canmore.
When stately oaks their shadows cast
Athwart thy waters, smooth and clear,
Thy bosom was a loved retreat
Of Malcolm brave, and Margaret dear.

We now enter the Muir of Dinnet, in the valley of Cromar, which, though not without attraction for the ordinary lover of nature as well as for the historian, is a Paradise for the antiquarian. The interest of the latter centres in Loch Kinord and Loch Davan, of which the former is both the larger and the more important. They now form two distinct lochs; Kinord—probably a corruption of [Malcolm] Canmore, there are numerous spellings—lies to the south; but there is no doubt that in distant ages all the lower ground in this vicinity had been one great lake. The neighbourhood also abounds with "cairns", history and tradition both agreeing that numerous conflicts have taken place here. Culblean Hill, the south-eastern spur of Morven, gives name to the battle of Culblean, fought on its eastern slope in 1335 between the armies of David II. and Baliol. Edward I. and his army twice

Loch Kinord.

encamped on the Muir of Dinnet, and James IV. made a short stay there in 1504. Loch Kinord is mostly surrounded by birches, and has numerous creeks and peninsulas, as also several prettily-wooded islets. The largest of the latter, Castle Island, is partly artificial, and was under cultivation so lately as 1794; the Castle from which it derives its name is ascribed to Malcolm Canmore. James IV. had probably lived in it when at Dinnet in 1504; in 1647 it was garrisoned by the Earl of Huntly, and taken from him by the rebels. With regard to Loch Davan there is a suggestion that here we have the site of the Roman Devana. There is abundant evidence that Dinnet was a very considerable settlement in prehistoric times. An extraordinary number of interesting articles have been found in Loch Kinord, details of which will be found in Mr. Michie's book on the subject; but it is outside our province to attempt to satisfy the insatiable antiquarian. We must, however, refer to the beautiful little building erected here by Sir William C. Brooks as a museum in connection with the numerous "finds" that have been made in the locality; and it is no less our duty to protest against the vandalism of a recent proprietor of Kinord, who summarily emptied the museum, and irreparably damaged articles of antiquity that cannot be replaced. As an indignant hotel-keeper, with whom we sojourned immediately after the affair, remarked: "It's an awfu' thing tae grapple wi' ignorance". The hopelessness of this struggle was thus expressed by the Greeks: "Against stupidity even the gods fight in vain".



The Vat.

Vat Burn rises on Culblean and flows into Loch Kinord. A few

hundred yards from the Loch the burn passes through a curious cave, known as the Vat from its shape, which gives name to the burn itself. The cavity is open at the top, the sides being formed of rock, in some parts over fifty feet in height, with a few trees which have taken root in the crevices. The outlet from the Vat is an inconsiderable aperture, so that when the streamlet is in flood this peculiar spot is rather interesting. Its popularity is almost to be regretted, at least with a certain class who have disfigured the interior with names and initials. The Vat was a resort of the notorious freebooter Gilderoy, of the proscribed clan Macgregor, who suffered for his crimes in Edinburgh in 1636. The bold cateran was accustomed to say that of all his haunts in this part of Aberdeenshire the Burn of Vat was the warmest, and the glens of Cushnie the coldest. The couplet:

> Dowie was the day Jock Tam was married,
> For Culblean was burned, and Cromar was harried.

is said to refer to one of Gilderoy's exploits, but is also attributed to Mackay's visit to the district after the battle of Killiecrankie.

The churchyard of Coldstone, a little to the north of Loch Davan, contains the grave of the author of the "Caledonian Itinerary", and accordingly deserves mention in the present work.

The Boat of Dinnet.

Dinnet House, recently erected, is the mansion in connection with the estates of Kinord and Cromar; both it and the church of Dinnet are in close proximity to the railway station. The Dee is here crossed by a bridge; formerly there was a ford and a ferry. The ford was at one time guarded by a fort, which can still

be traced; it has been suggested that "Dinnet" is derived from two Gaelic words, dun, "a fortification", and ath, "a ford". The superseded ferry is still known as Boat of Dinnet. Near this point Edward I. is believed to have crossed the Dee on his southward march in 1296.

Resuming our walk eastward from Dinnet to Aboyne, there is little to describe of outstanding interest. We cross the Burn of Dinnet—the outflow of Loch Kinord; and in doing so are held to step from the Highlands into the Lowlands. We pass Ferrar on the north side of the road; here the first Earl of Sutherland was born, his father being Adam Gordon, a son of the second Earl of Huntly. This, it may be remembered, is not the first indication we have had of the numerous important off-shoots of the great family of the Gordons.

CHAPTER IX.

Aboyne.

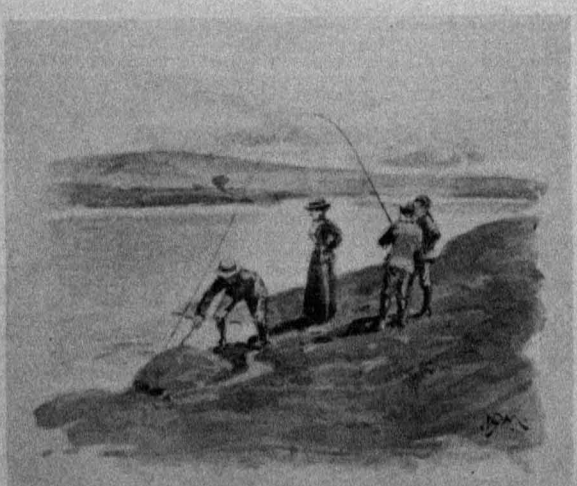
The Earl o' Aboyne to Old England's gone,
An' a' his barons wi' him ;
Sair was the heart his fair lady had,
Because she wasna wi' him.

. . . . . .

When she was lookin' o'er her castell wa',
She spied twa boys comin' ;
"What news, what news, my bonnie boys ?
What news hae ye frae Lunan" ?

"Good news, good news, my lady gay,
The lord o' Aboyne is comin' ;
He's scarcely twa miles frae the place,
Ye'll hear his bridles ringin'".

THERE are four places on Deeside which nature seems particularly to have favoured, and which have become in these days popular resorts. Two of them, Braemar and Ballater, we are now familiar with ; the third, Aboyne, with its neighbourhood, is here described ; the fourth, Banchory, will be dealt with by and by. Aboyne has its regular visitors, a numerous and enthusiastic band, who sing its praises in no low tone, claiming for it a position second only to Braemar. Aboyne, however, differs from Braemar and Ballater in one great feature ;



Salmon Fishing.

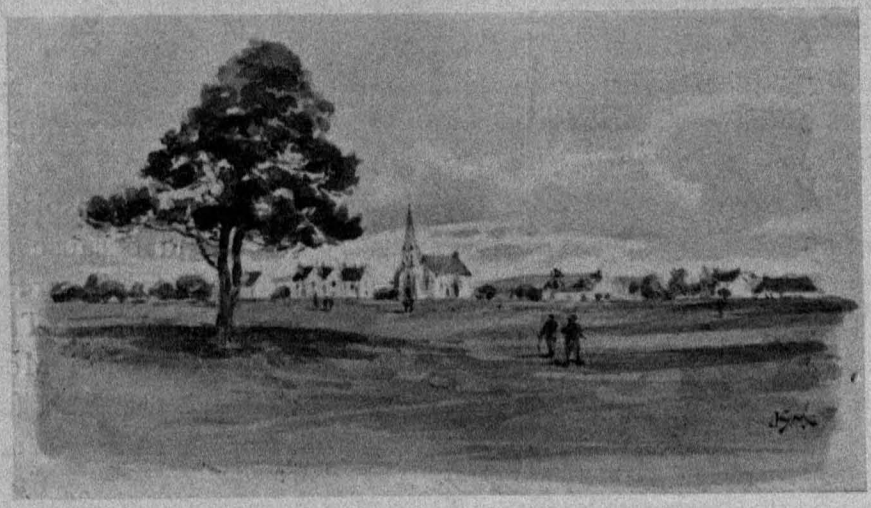
the mountains have become hills, and the village is not threatened by their embrace. Continuous ranges still confine the valley, and though of comparatively moderate elevation they present such a variety of form, and are so pleasantly wooded, that grandeur is exchanged for grace. The hills, moors, and streams, while presenting numerous attractions to those who are content to be simple lovers of nature, abound with game and fish, and are consequently much affected by sportsmen.

The hill of Mortlich, nearly two miles northward, is conspicuous from many points, both because of its height, and because of a granite obelisk, sixty feet high, crowning the summit, erected in 1868 to the memory of the tenth Marquis of Huntly. There are also two mountains at no great distance, Morven and Mount Keen, which, raising their crests on either side of the Dee, form important features in the landscape. Mount Keen is the most easterly "mountain" in Scotland, that is, if we subscribe to the contention of many Scottish mountaineers, that eminences under three thousand feet in altitude are not to be included in their list.

On the points of antiquity and historical importance Aboyne is certainly to be ranked with Braemar rather than Ballater. The Castle of Aboyne, like that of Braemar, in old times afforded protection to a considerable village, and was in like manner a great centre of events, many of them of national importance. The Barony of Aboyne was formerly called Bunty; the tolbooth, it may be mentioned, was demolished at the end of last century, when it is stated "all traces of the pot and gallows also are nearly effaced".

The village, which is situated on the left bank of the river, is locally known as Charlestown, having been so named from Charles, the first Earl of Aboyne. The village has a "Green", an excellent substitute for a Square; here markets are held, and golf and other games indulged in. Its amenity was threatened by the railway, but the construction of a short tunnel has preserved entire the spot where more than once Montrose assembled the Gordons and his other followers in the north. Formerly the village stood about a

mile to the eastward, in the vicinity of the earlier church of the parish, then known as Formastoun; the ruined walls of the old manse serve to direct attention to the churchyard. The east end



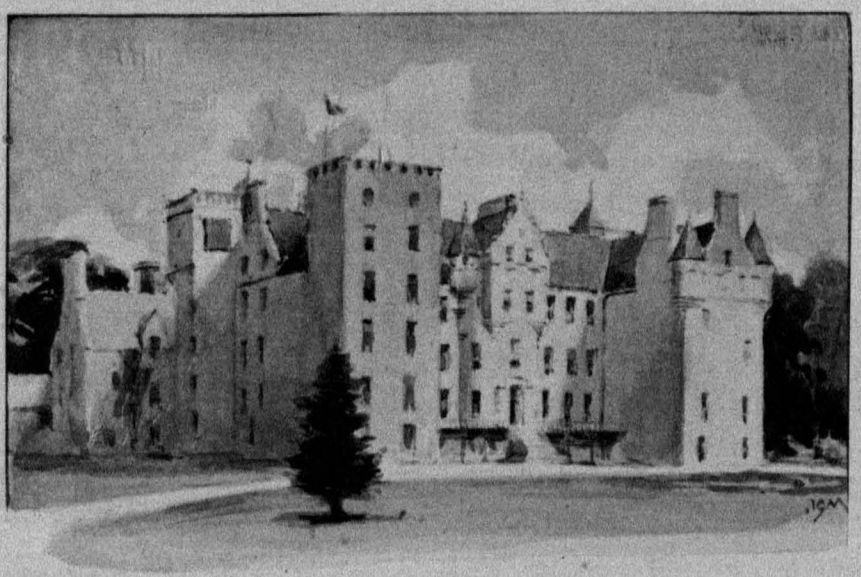
Aboyne—The Green.

of the site of the church is enclosed as the burial ground of the Inneses of Balnacraig and Ballogie, but is in a neglected state. A striking evidence of antiquity was recently found almost under the door-step of the old church—one of the eight Oghams known to exist in Scotland. Possibly the churchyard had originally been a Pictish burial place, as the stone bears a Runic inscription signifying, according to those learned in such matters, that a son of a Pictish king was buried there. This Ogham and many other relics of antiquity are preserved in the Castle and grounds.

The Loch of Aboyne is immediately to the west of the old churchyard, and is one of the most beautiful sights in the neighbourhood. This fine sheet of water is artificial, but all traces of art have long since disappeared; its wooded islets might well be attributed solely to nature. The Loch is much frequented by curlers, who find the situation suitable for important matches.

Aboyne Castle, the principal entrance to which is from the north side of the village, is believed to date from the eleventh century, and to have been one of the residences of Alexander III.

The original structure stood on a mound, encircled by a morass; the present building stands on an island, to form which Tarland Burn was partly diverted. The Castle—a plain substantial edifice surrounded by extensive plantations, comprising many varieties of trees—is the residence of the Marquis of Huntly, the Chief of the Gordons, in whose family the lands of Aboyne and others remained in unbroken descent for nearly five hundred years. We referred in last chapter to the fording of the Dee at Dinnet by Edward I., but he did not cross till he had paid a visit to the



Aboyne Castle.

neighbouring stronghold of Aboyne, rifling its charter-chest, and carrying away all the important documents therein. In the Covenanting days the Gordons placed themselves on the King's side, and bore a full share in the many conflicts which ensued; as a consequence the second Marquis of Huntly was beheaded in Edinburgh in 1649. There still exists in the Castle the ancient hiding-hole, and remnants of the secret staircase which led from it in the wall.

The village of Tarland lies to the north-west of Aboyne, and is also a place of some antiquity; in 1165 we find that the church

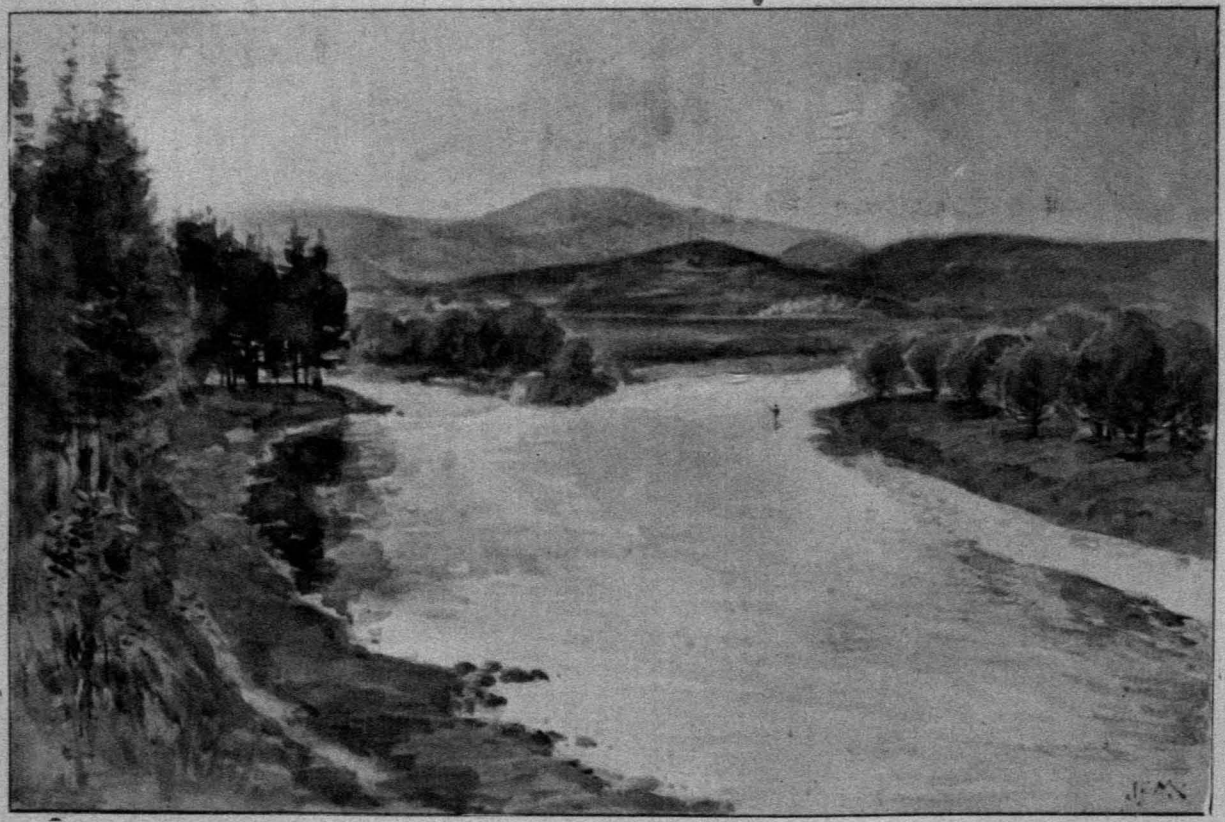
was gifted by the Earl of Mar to the Priory of St. Andrews. An agreement dated 1222, shews how carefully Churchmen looked after their temporal rights then, whatever they may now do, one pound annually being exacted from one of their vassals for permission to work off their lands. The lairds of Drum—who will be more particularly mentioned later on—were proprietors of Tarland for nearly two hundred years.

About midway between Tarland and Aboyne the remains of the Castle of Coull may be observed. A stronghold of the Durwards, it was formerly an imposing building, but the ruins are now insignificant. The Church of Coull is said to have been founded by St. Nathalan, about 450; its bell, according to tradition, tolled of itself on the death of a Durward.

The Dee is crossed by a handsome suspension bridge at the south-west end of Charlestown. Two hills attract attention on the south side of the river here, Birsemore and Craigendinnie, the latter presenting a peculiar appearance owing to the straggling pines which dot its summit. Between these hills there is a picturesque route to the Forest of Birse, known by the rather suggestive name of the Cateran Road, and also locally as the Fungle. Aulddinnie Burn flows through the Fungle, in some parts in a deep gorge crowded with firs. Sir William C. Brooks has constructed a "Rest and be Thankful", and cut a gap in the trees, so that a view may be had of Aboyne and vicinity. Who has not heard the expression: "As auld as the hills o' Birse" and so been impressed with their antiquity? Yet it seems that the mountains of Birse are not referred to, but a long-lived family named Hill who resided in that parish!

> There towering Keen o'erlooks the tenfold cloud,
> and shoots its conic head into the sky,
> Whilst sable mists its sloping sides enshroud,
> and halfway hide it from the wondering eye.

The Water of Tanner joins the Dee about a mile westwards from Charlestown, and is crossed by the south road at Bridge of Ess. Here the channel of the Tanner is rocky, and its banks



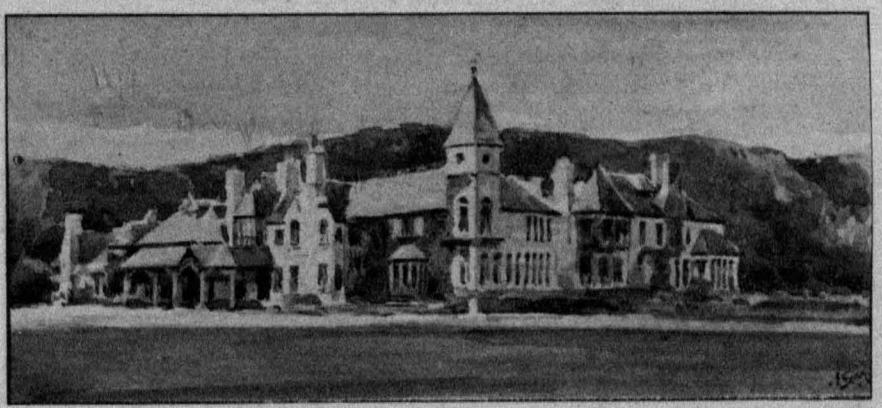
Where the Tanner joins the Dee.

beautifully tree-lined, in thorough keeping with which a square ivy-clad tower, guarding the bridge, serves as a lodge to the mansion house. The glen is some dozen miles long; in 1854 the upper part was converted into a deer forest, but of old it was famed for firs. Oak also flourished, as we were reminded by the "Countess of Aboyne", a ship, launched at Aberdeen, built entirely of that wood from the banks of the Tanner. The glen was at one time so notorious for smuggling that on illicit distillation being stamped out, some of the natives had to seek a livelihood elsewhere. Many trees have been felled, but the forest is far from being denuded, pines plentifully adorning the hill-sides. The Tanner rises a little to the west of Mount Keen, a conical-topped mountain prominent from many points in Deeside. Mount, or rather *Mounth*, Keen is one of the principal summits of The Mounth, a name of great antiquity which is applied to the range on the south side of the Dee, Lochnagar, the White Mounth, being its highest point. The Queen crossed Keen in 1861, and thus describes part of the journey: "Mount Keen was in great beauty before us, and as we came down to Coirebhruach and looked down Glen Tanner, the scenery was grand and wild. Mount Keen is a curious conical-shaped hill, with a deep corrie [Corrach] in it . . . . We came in sight of a new country, and looked down a very fine glen—Glen Mark. We descended by a very steep but winding path, called the Ladder, very grand and wild". An inscribed stone marks the spot, a little above Glentana House, where Her Majesty lunched on the return journey.

At Bridge of Ess.

Glen Tanner was once owned by some half dozen proprietors,

but ultimately their lands became part of the Aboyne possessions, and were purchased from the Marquis of Huntly by Sir (then Mr.) William C. Brooks, who prefers to call it "Glen Tana". Since the glen came into Sir William's possession it has been improved and beautified in numberless ways, as indeed have all his properties on Deeside. Even the south road between Charlestown and Bridge of Ess, not to mention others, has been improved, the Baronet being considerate enough to provide suitable seats for comfortably viewing the scenery. He has also erected many drinking fountains,



Glentana House.

and put old wells in order, often inscribing them with quaintly interesting mottoes. The mansion house, about four miles from Charlestown, was erected by him, and, while of considerable dimensions, is elegantly artistic. Near by is a church dedicated to St. Lesmo, who died in 731, which Sir William has built over the ruins of the little mansion of the erstwhile Lairdship of Braeloine. Affecting the former style in the district, the roof is heather-thatched; above the unplaned couplings hang antlers of deer, while the skins are used as pew coverings. A burial ground surrounds the chapel, the neighbourhood of which is reserved as the "Sanctuary" of the Forest. Above Glentana House the red deer are in possession, their privacy intruded on only by a forester's cottage at Etnach.

CHAPTER X.

Aboyne to Banchory.

The hills and dells, and knowes and glades are clad in purple sheen,
And far away beneath the pines what sea of glossy green !
Soft carpet for the weary feet, sweet solace for the brain—
Here rest awhile and listen to nature's soothing strain.
A holy calm now breathes around in murmur of the trees,
And wakes the music of the heart in every passing breeze.

THE portion of the Dee now to be described is the most sequestered between Castletown and the sea, and is therefore less familiar to most travellers than the western reaches of the river. This is accounted for by the circumstance that the railway passes through Lumphanan, and thus keeps at some distance from the Dee, the fine turnpike through Kincardine o' Neil being practically deserted as a thoroughfare—except, indeed, by cyclists and the enthusiasts who do not grudge walking a few miles to visit one of the finest portions of Strathdee.

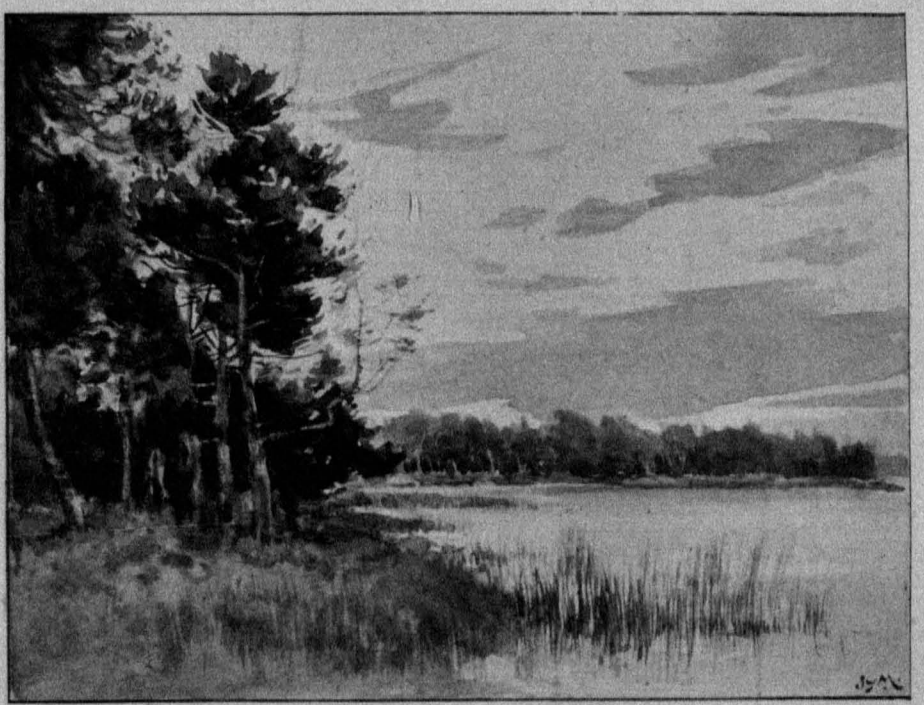
The course of the Dee between Aboyne and Banchory is a series of loops, the greatest of which is a northerly one towards the village of Kincardine o' Neil. The distinguishing characteristics of the valley are wood and gentle eminences; we should not be wrong to call the scene, in our poet-friend's words:

A pleasance rare, of moor and wood, and waters cool.

In the previous section of our walk one might be apt to think that the Dee had quite emerged from its bounding hills, but once more the river appears to retreat to comparative solitude. We remember that, even when we first traced the Dee from Wells to Sea, we were much impressed by the dignity with which it flowed between Aboyne and Banchory; somehow it appeared to us that the river

was conscious it had left the Highlands, and it was necessary to prepare, even at this stage, for its farewell to the land.

There is no direct road on the south side of the river between Aboyne and Banchory; the parts of the parishes of Birse and Strachan that there border on the Dee are somewhat sparsely populated, and the tree-clad little hills slope down almost to the river's brink. We keep therefore more or less closely by the left bank. Leaving Aboyne, and passing the Loch, we diverge from



The Loch of Aboyne.

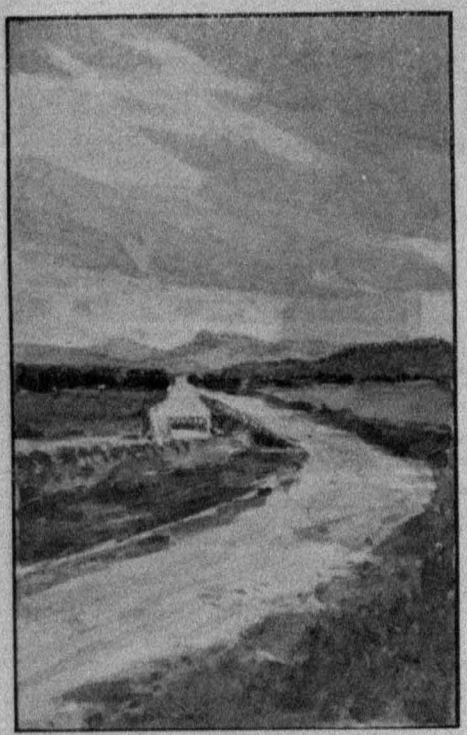
the railway, approaching the Dee near Bridge of Dess. Let us first, however, make a digression to look at the spot where Macbeth was slain.

O'er the Mounth they chased him then
Intil the woods of Lumphanan.

. . . . . .

This Macbeth slew they there,
Intil the woods of Lumphanan.

At Dess two hills attract particular attention—Mortlich and Clochnaben; the latter, on the other side of the Dee, is noticeable at many points of our journey owing to the huge mass of rock—not unlike one of the "Barns" of Ben Avon—on its summit. Beyond Dess we pass through Auchlossan, a farm celebrated among agriculturists. Up to 1860 it was a loch, but was then drained, and the reclaimed ground taken into cultivation; it, however, shews a tendency to relapse. A short distance to the left are the remains of Auchinhove Castle. There is little to indicate its former existence, but the old ash trees and the causewayed approach tell of a nobler building than the present ruined farm steading. The estate of Auchinhove has belonged to the Duguid family from about 1434. The laird took part in the Rebellion of 1745, and had his Castle burned by the Duke's orders. This Duguid is known to have raised a considerable sum of money for "the cause", and the following excerpt from "The Statistical Account" of 1793 is of interest in this connection: "Very lately above £100 sterling, all in Queen Anne's shillings, were found by two herds . . . near Auchhove . . . Tradition says that it is only a part of 50,000 merks hid here in 1745 by one Malcolm, a servant belonging to Mr. Duguid of Auchhove, who unfortunately joined in the rebellion, and that the rest was secreted in a man's boot". Near the site of the Castle is the Howff; at one time a place of some strength, it was latterly used as burial ground for the



Clochnaben.

Duguids. The appearance now presented by the Howff is almost as disappointing as that of the Castle; it is a mound with little more than traces of walls. A gravel pit, opened close to the west side, has partly undermined the wall there, but further operations of that nature have been interdicted, and a rude fence with a locked gate now protects this ancient structure. There are no apparent evidences of interments.

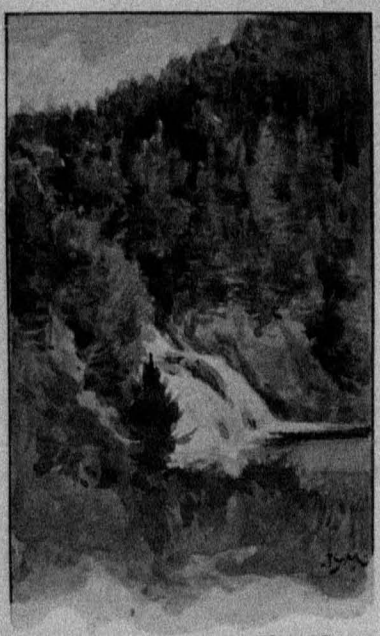
The Peel Bog, close to the west side of the railway, is a most interesting antiquity, dating probably from the twelfth or thirteenth century. It is a circular mound, surrounded by a moat, about twelve feet in height, and forty-six yards in diameter. It was at one time occupied by the Durwards, who are believed to have erected a wooden building on it. This, about the year 1400, possibly, was succeeded by a stone fort, which, in its turn, gave way to a more modern structure. The latter was partly in existence previous to 1782, and was known as Haa-ton; but the usual "zealous agriculturist" removed all the materials for building purposes to the neighbouring farm of Bogloch. Edward I., as we have already seen, made himself pretty much at home on Deeside; there is also mention of his receiving the submission of Sir John de Malvill at the Peel Bog on 21st July, 1296.

A battle was fought at Lumphanan on 15th August, 1057, between Malcolm III. and Macbeth, in which the latter was killed. "Macbeth's Cairn" is on Perkhill, a little to the north of the station, and is believed to mark the site of the King's grave. The cairn is a great flat mass of stones, with a well-like opening in the centre, and is now enclosed by a dyke and surrounded by young trees. And now

> Ride fast, spair neither horse nor gear;
> Through darksome pass and lanelie glen
> Till fair Kincardine's haughs appear.

Just before crossing Bridge of Dess, on the way to Kincardine o' Neil, one can scarcely fail to observe a peculiar stone built into the dyke on the road-side. The stone is circular, but only the half of it is visible, with, in the centre, a very suggestive hole; it

is believed to have been used as a base for the local gibbet. A few yards up the burn there is a more attractive sight—the Sloc, or Slog, of Dess, a beautiful little water-fall. Below the bridge the burn is harnessed to some purpose—a little manufactory, with crow-stepped gables and ivy-covered wall, combines the picturesque with the useful.



Slog of Dess.

The view from Bridge of Dess is worth more than a passing notice. Westward the valley of the Dee attracts attention, while eastward it seems as charming as ever, blocked at the lower end by wooded hills. On the left we have the finely situated, tree-surrounded, Desswood House, and further along Kincardine Lodge in a commanding position; on the right, across the Dee, is Carlogie within a beautiful curve of the river.

In coaching days the village of Kincardine o' Neil was an important stage and a bustling little place. All the traffic along Deeside passed through it, and it was also a favourite halting-place with drovers using the Cairn o' Mounth road. At one time it was the most westerly post office on Deeside. Certain landowners here objected to the proposed Deeside railway, and were successful in their opposition. Other proprietors of course benefited, and travellers have become reconciled to the detour by Lumphanan. The village consequently lost importance, but once more the public have begun to appreciate the charms of this sequestered spot.

Kincardine o' Neil is a place of considerable antiquity; in 1233 Alan the Durward erected an Hospital close to the Dee, while three hundred years before that date St. Erchard, whose well is still pointed out, is said to have been the patron of the Church

The most interesting feature is the ruined Church with its ivy-covered walls. In 1725 it is described as "a good edifice, higher and wider than any other upon Dee, thatch'd with heather . . . yet it's shorter by a half, as appears by the remaining walls, than it has been within these hundred years". The harling has partly dropped off from the west gable, allowing a portion of a fine old window to be traced. In the latter part of the century the markets, as in certain other Scottish parishes, encroached considerably upon the churchyard. "Many hundreds of persons assemble themselves in the kirkyard with horses, creels, and baggage of all kinds; some let their horses, several scores in number, run loose among the graves, and others tie them up by the sides of the church as to stalls; some . . . erect tents and booths, while others expose their wares upon the graves of the dead, and in the very porch of the Church", and greater indecencies followed at night. The more sensible heritors and the minister of the parish had considerable trouble before they were successful in ousting the markets from the churchyard, for, as usual, "vested interests" asserted themselves. Among the latter were several "of the lowest distillers of whisky, who contrived to open back doors from cottages into the kirkyard", and thus had an advantage over their neighbours. "Meat and drink were sold in almost every house in the village, even down to 1834, not on market days only, but also on the day after, or until such time as their stock provided for the

Kincardine o' Neil.

purpose was consumed". The opposition strove to shew that the space at the back of the church, where, as was then customary, there were no graves, "was known as the 'Ballgreen'" from the use to which it had been of old put; that playing of ball was succeeded by "weapon-shawings", "particularly near parish churches"; and that markets in churchyards were the legitimate successors to such "weapon-shawings" and to butts for shooting. Though the churchyard was freed from this reproach, it was succeeded by another in the beginning of the present century, when the turnpike was cut through the north side of the burial ground.

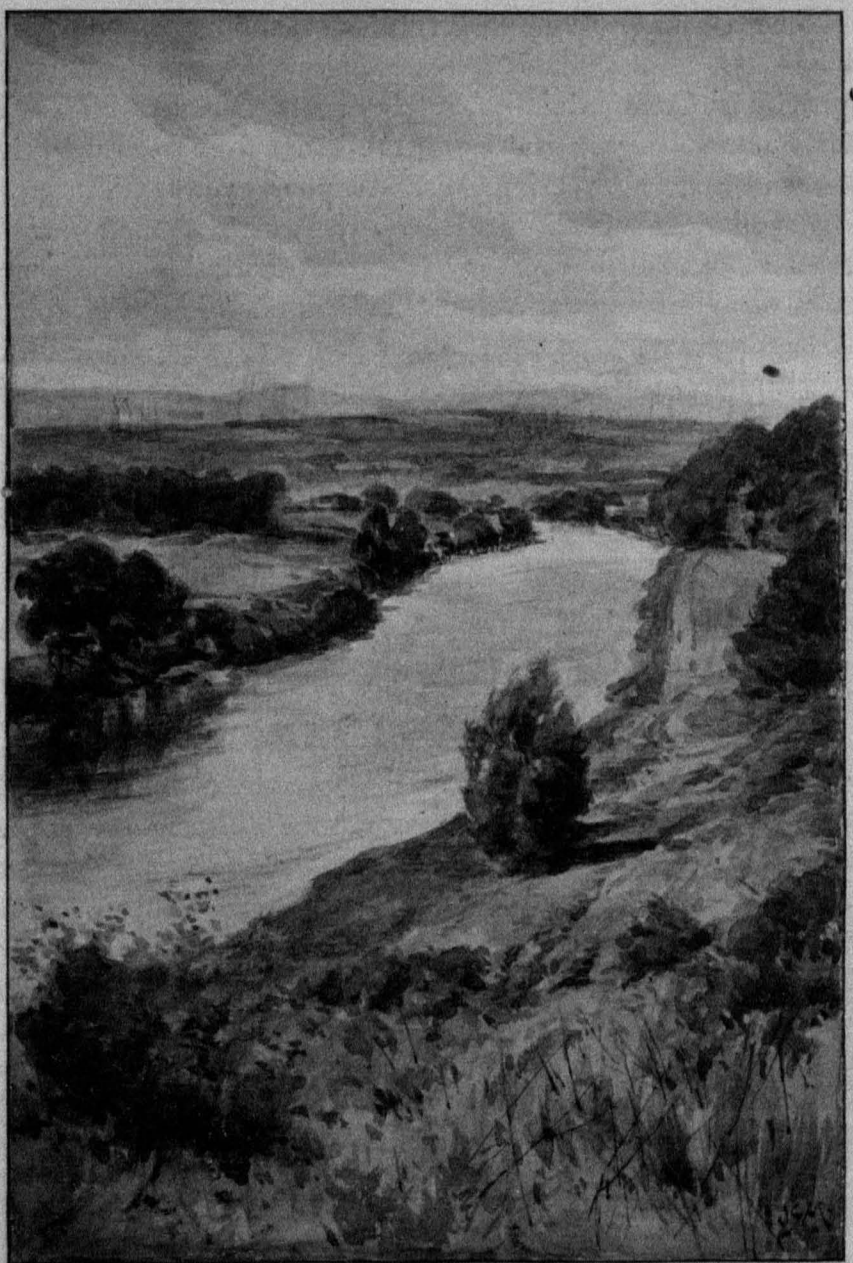
The area of the old church has now been divided among the heritors of the parish, and the churchyard has become crowded with tombstones. But the authorities do not seem to encourage meditation among the tombs, and the passing strangers are denied the opportunity of reading the history of the parish on its grave-stones.

According to tradition the Durward's Hospital had stood on the haugh between the village and the present ferry-boat station. It need scarcely be mentioned that there is now no trace of this building, nor of the bridge over the Dee that was also erected by the Durwards. The ferryman's cottage is on the south side of the river, on the edge of the wood; its appearance and situation are quite ideal, and haunt us as we strive to recall some long-forgotten incident in romance. The north bank of the river is here a favourite walk.

Neil Burn, from which some say the parish takes name, flows through the village. At the east end is "Cochran's Croft", which, according to tradition, was a royal grant to the tenant in return for kindly entertainment.

> Of all the hostelries so fair,
> Built for the traveller's dwelling,
> On Deeside far beyond compare,
> Kincardine is excelling.

This on the authority of Joseph Robertson, travestying the lines of a great poet. In his time the Inn at Kincardine o' Neil was



The Dee at Kincardine o' Neil.

a great favourite with travellers. "Oh! the glorious breakfasts, the splendid dinners, and the magnificent suppers we have there enjoyed! Oh! the attentive, civil, obliging, active, bustling, careful, providing, buxom, inimitable Hostess! Oh! her bills, whose moderation makes you stare, and the dram from her own private bottle, whose strength brings tears to your eyes"! These were the halcyon days of Kincardine o' Neil, and, though our own experience does not date so far back, the description recalls many pleasant recollections of travelling "adventures" in the Highlands.

Resuming our journey, we pass on the left Borrowstone House, in the vicinity of which there was of old a hamlet with the principal Inn of the district. Nearing Sluie Woods, we make a divergence to the north-east to visit the ruins of Maud Castle, which are by no means imposing, the walls being only about six feet in height. The inside dimensions are about twenty feet by seventeen, so that the building had probably been of the nature of a tower or keep. There are indications of outworks on the east side of the castle, which now stands a few feet above the level of a moss, on the east, called Moss Maud. Nothing authentic is known of its history; by some it is described as one of the hunting-seats of the Bishops of Aberdeen in the fourteenth century; others assert that it existed in the days of Robert the Bruce, and that his Queen spent a night there. Edward I. passed through Kincardine o' Neil on his return from Kildrummy Castle, and it is very probable that he had paid Maud Castle a passing visit, as it was situated on his route.

The handsome bridge over the Dee at Potarch is strikingly in keeping with the scenery. Here the Cairn o' Mounth road crosses the river, being one of the "chief passages from the Tay to the Dee". Before the erection of the bridge the river was forded at Inchbaire, a short distance eastward. The bridge was completed in 1813, and is a bridge with a history. The "New Statistical Account of Scotland" throws an interesting side-light on the manner in which funds were raised for the erection of such expensive structures. According to that excellent authority a collection was made "in the church of Boindie for building an

bridge over Dee, at Pittarch". A peculiar accident happened to the bridge when it was nearly completed; loose trees, which were being floated down the river, almost entirely demolished it. The builder was not only successful in procuring compensation from the owners of the trees, but an Act of Parliament was passed in 1813 whereby the liability of those who floated timber is more precisely established and extended. The flood of 1829 did considerable damage to the piers, the consequent repairs being evident. The bridge is built over a vein of porphyry, which can be traced from Clochnaben to Bennachie. A few yards above the bridge the channel of the river is very much contracted, being at one point about 22 feet in breadth at low water, but before the rocks were blasted to permit the passage of floats the channel had been even narrower, being noted as the narrowest point in the course of the river east of the Linn. This part of the river has become known as "Caird Young's Leap", from having been leapt by that "notorious caird or gipsy, who, as the story goes, broke half the prisons in Scotland, and in particular, broke the prison of Aberdeen, and let out all the prisoners, writing on the door 'Rooms to Let'. When Young leapt over the Dee here, he was being pursued for having killed a man when fishing on the Water o' Gadie; for this he was afterwards executed in Aberdeen, which he having slain the man in self-defence, was by many thought a great pity".

The Dee is finely wooded at Potarch, especially on the right bank. The south thoroughfare has now of course lost its importance, and consequently the bridge is not of such service as formerly, but it gives convenient access to the parish of Birse as well as to the valley of the Feugh. On the building of the bridge the markets held at Marywell, a village in Birse, were transferred to Potarch, an Inn being at the same time erected at the market stance at the south end of the bridge.

Towards Banchory, the road is bordered for a considerable distance by dark pines, and we are cut off from the river by two wooded eminences, Trustach and Cairnton. The ancient Forest of Trustach lay between the Dee and Canny Burn, a tributary

stream which we cross at Bridge of Canny, where there was formerly an Inn. As in numerous other instances, business dwindled at this road-side hostelry when the locomotive displaced the Four-in-hand. There is one circumstance about the manner in which the last hostess conducted business that is worth mentioning. Travellers always received a hearty welcome, but the closure was applied to idle natives. Their maximum allowance at the Defiance Inn was "a gill and a pint", after which they had to betake themselves elsewhere. Thus she kept up in her own way the venerable custom of testifying on the "Clach an doichal". Our mountaineering friends, the authors of "Our Tour", explain that the "Clach an doichal" is a stone placed outside the house door, and that by coming out and striking it with a stick the guid-wife signifies her unwillingness to receive visitors"; two crossed sticks placed at the door answered the same purpose—a polite Celtic way of saying "Not at home".

Scolty.

The Aberdeen Water Supply is drawn from the Dee at Cairnton, below Potarch, where the river flows over rock between well-wooded banks. The water is conveyed, partly through a

tunnel, to a reservoir at Invercanny, where the opening ceremony was performed by the Queen on 16th October, 1866. This is but one of the many kindly acts performed by Her Most Gracious Majesty to the city of Aberdeen, the inhabitants of which the Queen has been pleased to call her "good neighbours".

There are extensive woods between the Canny and Banchory, especially on the hills on the south side of the river, of which the most prominent is Scolty, distinguishable by a tower on its summit. Passing Inchmarlo, with Blackhall on the other side, we enter the burgh of Banchory.

CHAPTER XI.

Banchory.

The sun shines clear upon bonnie Dee,
and bright on its birken bowers,
And steals through the shade of the chestnut tree
to the Baron's old grey towers.
And many a flower in the summer-tide
springs up by the silvery water;
But the fairest flower on all Deeside
was the Baron's youngest daughter.

A SON of Banchory, writing of his native place, modestly asserts that it is "one of the most choice spots in the North of Scotland"; but have we not heard the bleakest glen in the Highlands similarly described by a prejudiced Celt? In our responsible position, as faithful chroniclers and exponents of the charms of the Dee valley, it is our duty to admit Banchory to a high place in our "preferred list". Unquestionably nature has done a great deal for Banchory; the marvel is that the century had begun before the nucleus of a town had been founded in such a delightful situation. The little country town came into existence with Scottish deliberation, but its builders have failed to make the best use of its natural advantages, and cannot be congratulated upon their success in laying it out. In 1885 the place had become so populous that it attained the dignity of a police burgh.

We have admitted Banchory to a high place in the Dee valley, but in doing so we only endorse popular opinion. It is undoubtedly *the* Deeside resort of Aberdonians, for on holiday occasions it is crowded with visitors; excursionists flock to it in thousands as compared to the hundreds who spend their holiday further up the valley. This is no doubt largely due to the fact that Banchory is but eighteen miles from Aberdeen; we have observed, however, that the popular taste for scenery is generally correct.

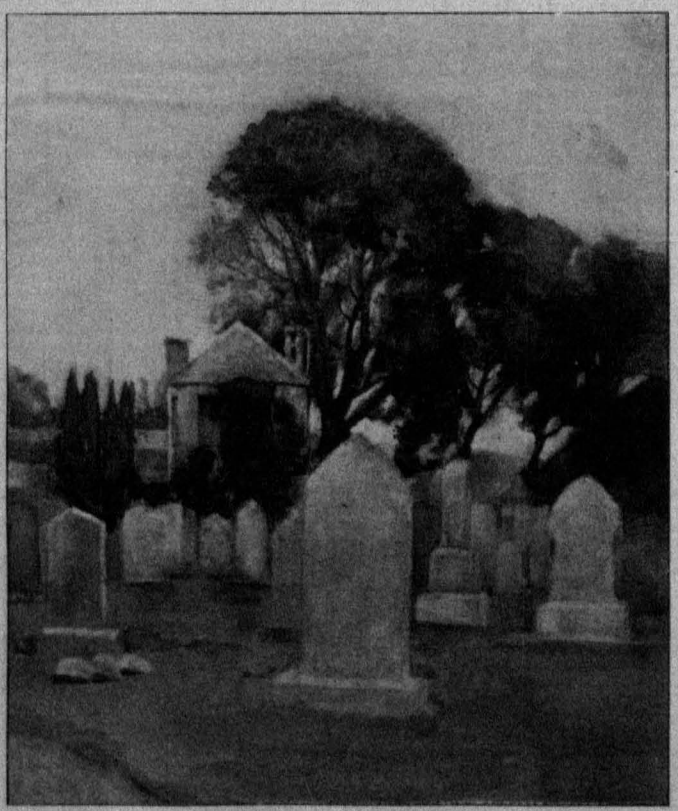
Banchory is built on a slope facing the south, and is sheltered on the north by the long Hill of Fare; immediately opposite, on the other side of the river, are the hills of Goauch, Scolty, and Tilquhillie, all closely wooded. The beauty of the situation of Banchory can only be fully realised when a stand is taken on the north slope of one of these latter hills. The beholder cannot fail to admire the panorama at his feet, and to remark the large portion of the adjacent country under wood. The Dee, as in previous

High Street, Banchory.

pictures, is an important and beautiful feature of the landscape; and though we are now well into Lowland scenery, it is not less interesting than in its upper reaches.

The Hill of Fare comes into more particular view a little to the east of Aboyne, but it is too flat to be attractive. It is a short range, rather than an individual hill; the summit most prominent from Banchory is the eastern top, which, though by no means the highest, is dignified by the name of Meikle Tap. The southern slope is noticeable as being the scene of the battle of Corrichie, fought on 28th October, 1562, between the royal forces and an

army headed by the Earl of Huntly. He was defeated and slain, and Queen Mary, then in Midmar Castle, is said to have afterwards viewed the scene of battle from the rock now called the "Queen's Chair"; "Queen Mary's Well" lies between the battle-field and the "Chair". At this time the Queen spent nearly three months in Aberdeen; Moray, her base-born brother came with her, and the victory at Corrichie was more an aid to his avaricious scheming than a help to the cause of Queen Mary. The savage brutality of the man is shewn by his sending for trial to Edinburgh the dead body of the old Earl, and causing, on the Castlegate of Aberdeen, the head of his son, the "Bonnie John Gordon" of song, to be cut off in presence of the Queen.



Banchory Churchyard.

Though Banchory is of yesterday, its parish, Banchory-Ternan, has a respectable antiquity. St. Ternan, the patron saint, flourished about 440, and according to tradition was interred within the church. There is indirect evidence that the parish had been of note in early times, for more than one writer refers to "the Monastery of Banchory". There is mention of a village in the vicinity of the

church so early as 1324; in 1472 the Abbot of Arbroath grants a title to a house and croft within the kirktown. The Barony Court of Leys was long held here; the Court Books shew the curious cognisance taken by the local judicial authorities of the time. We mentioned "weapon-schawings" in churchyards in the previous chapter; in 1626 the Leys Court instituted fines on absentees at such gatherings, and thereafter several offenders were dealt with; in 1629 "flytters and bakbytters" are threatened with the stocks; in 1634 "brousters" are prohibited from selling ale to the Laird's servants—and so on.

The kirktown was latterly known as Townhead; there is a tradition that some of the buildings occupied the present bed of the Dee to the south of the churchyard. St. Ternan is said to have been baptized by St. Palladius, and presented by Pope Gregory the Great with a bell, called the "Ronnecht", which, like the church bell of Coull, had a remarkable power—it followed St. Ternan, of its own accord, when he went on pilgrimage! It is suggested by Jervise that the small square bell found "a few years ago, when a pathway was being made along the brink of the river from Banchory Lodge to the railway station", was this famous "Ronnecht", but unfortunately it has disappeared. A still more precious relic, associated with St. Ternan, is also lost—a copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew cased in silver and gold, which was preserved in Banchory till the Reformation. The "watch-house" in the churchyard has a bell bearing the inscription: "PETRVS. STENS. ROTTERDAMI. ME. FECIT. Aº. 1664. SOLI. DEO. GLORIA".

Some ca' me this, some ca' me that,
Whatever name best befa's me,
But when I walk thro' St. Johnstone's town
George Burnett they ca' me.

. . . . . .

Some ca' me this, some ca' me that,
Whatever name best befa's me,
But when I am on bonny Deeside
The Baron o' Leys they ca' me.

. . . . . .

Then forth she went her Baron to meet,
Says "Ye're welcome to me fairly,
Ye'se hae spice cakes, and seed cakes sweet,
And claret to drink sae rarely".

Leys is situated about a mile northward from the churchyard. There was a Loch of Leys, at one time of considerable size; its island castle was the residence of the Burnetts till they removed to the more commodious habitation of Crathes Castle. The Loch was, however, gradually reclaimed, and by the middle of the present century had completely disappeared. A canoe, formed out of a single tree, was discovered during the drainage operations. A grant of King Robert the Bruce to the ancestors of the Burnetts includes "*lacum de Banchory cum insula ejusdem*". The island, which was artificial, appears on record three times in the seventeenth century under the name of "the isle of the Loch of Banchory".

Inchmarlo House—which we passed before entering Banchory—has one of the finest positions on Deeside; opposite Blackhall Castle, it has the hills of Goauch and Scolty as foreground, and is itself surrounded by woods, among which are not a few venerable trees. The estate, originally Church property, ultimately fell into the hands of the family of Douglas of Glenbervie. The present house was erected about a hundred years ago by John Douglas, who also owned Tilquhillie.

Blackhall Castle.

The Dee is crossed at Banchory by a bridge dating from 1798, at the south end of which is the gate-way of the approach to

Blackhall Castle. The previous façade was surmounted by the figure of a goat—the crest of the proprietor—with the motto "Che sara sara". Cut life-size, it was a striking piece of sculpture, never failing to attract attention, the motto also, which means "What will be, will be", being frequent matter of conjecture. The goat stood above the gate-way long after the Russells had ceased their connection with Blackhall, but now occupies a more humble position at the Mains. The approach to the Castle is about two miles in length, and it is difficult to imagine one more picturesque. The river flows closely alongside the avenue; on the south side there is high wooded ground sloping from Scolty. The present building, erected by the proprietor, Mr. James T. Hay, is a beautiful structure on a splendid site with a secluded position. It is very noticeable, however, both from the railway and the north road, the grey granite of the Castle being conspicuous among the woods with which it is surrounded. The Russells had a small burial ground, "The Howff", a few yards westward from the Castle. It is now an enclosure of four plain walls, for the entrance door has been built up, and the slab with their arms has fallen to the ground—as though in response to the motto.

Scolty, almost a thousand feet in height, occupies the western angle formed by the Dee and the Feugh; wooded to the summit, it has paid frequent tribute to the timber merchant. It is best known from a high round tower on the top, visible from considerable distances, which was erected as a monument to the memory of General Burnett of Banchory. The trees on the summit of the hill now conceal the prospect formerly enjoyed here, and the tower has become unavailable as vantage-ground. On our last visit we thought of what Sir William C. Brooks has done for the Fungle, and Sir David Stewart for the Blue Hill, and prayed for a similar benefactor on Scolty. But when we looked around us, and observed the damage wilfully or thoughtlessly done by the public, we sorrowfully departed.

The Bridge of Feugh is a short mile from Banchory, and presents the most picturesque spot in the neighbourhood. The

Water of Feugh is a considerable stream, rising in the highest part of the Forest of Birse, and has two important tributaries, the Aven and the Dye. It joins the Dee opposite Banchory Lodge, and is crossed near its mouth by the south road over this well-known bridge. The bridge, which is built on rock, cannot be described as an elegant structure, but the channel of the Feugh is here particularly striking. We generally find that rivers have "falls" and "rapids" in the upper part of their course only, and, as they approach the end of their career, settle down to a tranquil ending; but it is not so with the Feugh. Its banks here are lined with trees, and its channel is rocky and uneven in the extreme. The stream cannot be said to flow; it rather writhes and dashes over and between rocks, and, viewed on the occurrence of a "spate", is both impressive and magnificent.

Tilquhillie stands on the old, old lands,
And the name of the Douglas is there.

Tilquhillie Castle is one of the most interesting antiquities in the neighbourhood of Banhory, and occupies a somewhat elevated position to the south-east of the Bridge of Feugh. The Castle dates from the sixteenth century, and is now in use as a farmhouse. It lays no claim to architectural beauty, but is a good example of the semi-fortified buildings of its time. About a hundred years before its erection the lands of Tilquhillie, which

Tilquhillie Castle.

The Bridge of Feugh.

formed part of the Church lands of Banchory, passed into the possession of the Douglases, in which family, with the exception of a short break, it has since remained, the present proprietor being the fourteenth in lineal descent. The laird of 1562 took part in the battle of Corrichie under the Earl of Huntly. He was ultimately pardoned, but had to live for some time in retirement at Tilquhillie, under the name of "James the Grieve"; he built the present Castle in 1576. About 1647 it was garrisoned by the Covenanters, the then laird being an officer in the Royal Army. The Castle commands an extensive eastward prospect, and, with its ivy-clad walls, its crow-stepped gables, and its moss-covered roof, is suggestive of the romantic past.

The valley of the Feugh is divided between the parishes of Birse and Strachan, the latter taking name from the Aven. The village of Strachan is situated near the confluence of the Dye with the Feugh; a short distance westward is Castle Hill, where, according to tradition, Alan the Durward had a stronghold. Bowbutts, at the east end of the village, and several mounds in the neighbourhood, recall the times when archery was practised. Bridge of Dye, by which the Cairn o' Mounth road crosses the Dye, is a fine old arch; its former importance is shewn by Acts of the Scottish Parliament, in the seventeenth century, authorising tolls to be levied for its upkeep. Near it is Spitalburn, where, as the name implies, there was in old times an hospice for the accommodation of the many travellers who here crossed the Mounth. Between the Dye and the Aven there is a range of hills culminating in Mount Battock, near the junction of three counties, Aberdeen, Forfar, and Kincardine. Clochnaben is, however, the most familiar top on account of a huge rock which gives name to the summit, and is exceedingly prominent from the valley of the Dee. This rock is about a hundred feet in height, and has gradually come into evidence through the wearing away of the surrounding softer material; but such a prosaic explanation of its existence has not always sufficed. The Rev. George Knowles, minister of Birse, who died in 1789, wrote a poem on the subject, where we are informed

that the stone formerly lay "low in a plain", and so was conveniently at hand in a fight between "The D-v-l and his Dame" The last verse accounts for its present position :

> " Have at you now, you Beldame ", roared the fiend,
> And hurled the rock through the resounding skies ;
> Dreadful it fell, and crushed his breathless friend,
> And there entombed Her Hellish Highness lies !

Finzean is on the north side of the Feugh, about three miles above its confluence with the Aven. The mansion is pleasantly situated in a richly wooded district ; part of the house dates from 1686. A reference to the Farquharsons of Finzean will be found in Chapter IV.

The Fungle, which we have mentioned more than once, leads southward to the Feugh, past the ruins of an old castle in the centre of the Forest of Birse, which is said to have been built, by Sir Thomas Gordon of Cluny, about the middle of the sixteenth century. In the beginning of the eighteenth century it was tenantless, and so opportunity was taken of this circumstance by a band of caterans, who held possession for a time. Mount Battock overlooks the Forest, and so one is tempted to associate the following verses with the temporary residence of the reivers in Birse Castle :

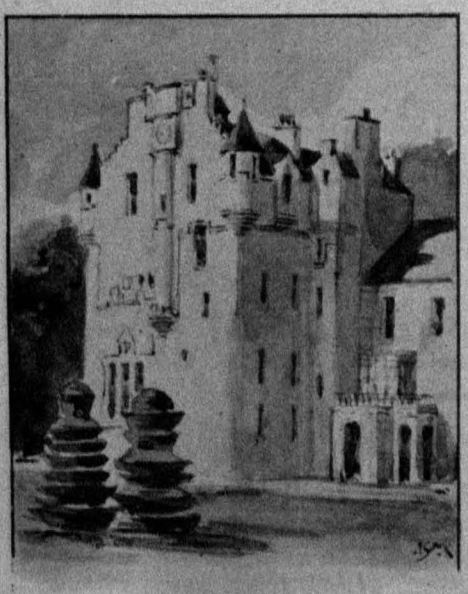
> Mount Battock, how dark is the cloud on thy brow,
> How grateful its gloom to the valley below !
> For the hand of the reiver has smitten so sore,
> The days of our mourning will never be o'er.
> He came in the night ; he has taken and slain
> The wale of our flocks and the flower of our men ;
> The fold now is silent, the shieling is still,
> No herd in the valley, no flock on the hill.

CHAPTER XII.

Banchory to Aberdeen.

Hurrah for the wild waves that round us sweep,
Wi' their crests o' feathery foam!
Oh hurrah for the warden that needs nae sleep—
For the sea that shields our home!

BETWEEN Banchory and Aberdeen there is an excellent road on either side of the river; each has so many attractions that we find it difficult to make selection. We shall mainly follow, however, the north road, but it will be necessary to cross and recross the Dee in order to do justice to our subject. As the sea is neared, particular objects of interest seem to crowd upon each other, on both sides of the valley; sometimes the one, sometimes the other, presents the more picturesque route. We are not to particularise the scenery, for it is beautiful all the way to the ocean, and so we shall content ourselves with references to the more notable points, and to places of antiquarian or historical interest. Suffice it to say that there is not a mile in this section which is not possessed of some attraction—in proof of which we need only add that the lower part of the valley is over-run by summer and autumn visitors.



Crathes Castle.

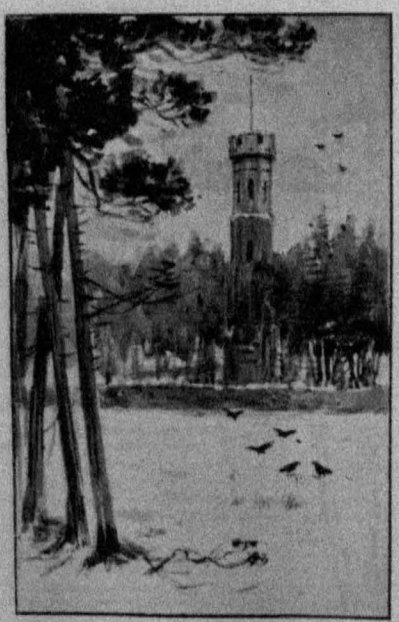
Crathes Castle is the first point of note after leaving Banchory. It is an exceedingly interesting building, and is thus described in

"Baronial Antiquities": "Deeply retired in luxuriant woods . . . Though consisting of the elements common to most of the northern mansions—a multitude of conical turrets, high crow-stepped and angular dormer windows—there is something quite peculiar in the arrangement of these details . . . they are, as it were, crowded and pressed together . . . The turrets run into kindred forms in the towers and gables, and are depressed below the higher levels of the edifice. The outline is lumpish, but the general effect of the middle grouping is one of extreme richness and picturesqueness". Though not generally known, it possesses a specimen of a simple variety of formal garden not uncommon in Scotland. The Castle occupies high ground on the north side of the road, and is considered a good example of the Franco-Scottish style of architecture, the oldest part dating from the beginning of the sixteenth century. The present proprietor, Sir Thomas Burnett, is the twelfth baronet and twenty-fourth laird of Leys—the connection of the Burnetts with Deeside dating from 1324.

Close to Crathes station is the farm of Baldarroch—the name, "Oaktown", shewing the long hold the Celts had on Deeside. In a scarce pamphlet, "The Dance of Baldarroch", this farm is referred to as "the spot where superstition and witchcraft were last believed in Scotland, anno 1838"—we are by no means certain, by the way, that that date saw an end to such beliefs. The "manifestations" alluded to in this pamphlet are also dealt with in two other publications, but the explanation is provokingly simple. It seems that in the year mentioned two servant girls at Baldarroch considered that they had cause to be dissatisfied with their mistress, and accordingly they subjected the household to a series of petty annoyances, which, at the time, were attributed to witchcraft.

The Dee is crossed south of Crathes station by Durris Bridge, of which we shall take advantage in a brief visit to Durris. The bridge looks sound enough, and "sufficient for the ordinary traffic of the district", and we are therefore somewhat startled by duplicate notices at each end. The one tells us that we cross at our own risk, as the bridge is the private property of the laird of Durris;

the other announces that the County Council has nothing to do either with bridge or passenger. Once on the south side, we soon reach Kirkton of Durris, where the road crosses the Burn of Sheeoch, "the Fairy's Burn", a streamlet which rises on Kerloch. The dell here formed by the burn comes as a pleasant surprise, being one of the prettiest spots on lower Deeside. The district of Durris was originally a thanedom; its Castle was a place of some note during the times of Alexander III. and Edward I. Its site, about a mile to the east of Kirkton, is still pointed out, but the building has completely disappeared, as well as a bridge which is supposed to have spanned the Dee there. The Frasers of Durris were at one time a powerful family; their connection with Deeside dates from the time of King Robert the Bruce, the first of the family, Sir Alexander Fraser, having married a sister of the King. The burial aisle of the Frasers is at the east end of the church; the oldest inscription extant is dated 1594, but later proprietors have not hesitated to use their tomb.



The Duke's Tower.

Durris House occupies a fine position a little to the south of the road; surrounded by trees, it is rather an imposing structure, the oldest part having been built more than two centuries ago. From the Frasers the estate passed by marriage to the Earl of Peterborough, whose daughter and heiress married the second Duke of Gordon. The Duke, however, did not acquire Durris till after a protracted lawsuit, the successful termination of which was celebrated by the erection of a tower on Keith's Hill, a small eminence between the road and the river. The tower, now surrounded by trees, is octagonal in shape, and, having a height of

about sixty feet, is a conspicuous object in the district, and affords a fine view from the summit. The only inscription is the date "1825" above the door, which doubtless at the time was considered sufficient to indicate its *raison d'etre* to future generations. The Duke sold the estate in 1834, and a few years after the purpose of the tower had apparently been forgotten, for in 1842 we read that it was built "to mark the spot in the river where the Irvines once drove several of the Keiths into the water and drowned them"; and even such an authority as the Ordnance Survey map names it "Keith's Tower". So it is just as possible to be too brief in a monumental inscription as it is to be verbose. The name Keith is also here associated with Keith's Stone and Keith's Pot, the latter a deep pool in the river around the former. The tradition concerning these names is more interesting than the incorrect origin attributed to the Duke's Tower, and possibly herein is to be found the source of the confusion in the nomenclature of the latter. It is a version of the old old story: a young Keith fell in love with a daughter of Drum, who reciprocated his passion, notwithstanding her parents' objections and the feud which existed between the Irvines and the Keiths. The lovers were surprised during a stolen interview, and Keith had to flee for his life. In swimming across the Dee he rested on a boulder, afterwards known as Keith's Stone, and was shot.

Close to the Duke's Tower is Park Bridge over the Dee, the crossing of which presents no terrors, for it is the property of the railway company who ensure safety by exacting a slight toll. Cairn-mon-earn, on the south side of the river, overlooks the valley here; its cairn-crowned summit is noticeable a great part of the way between Banchory and Aberdeen.

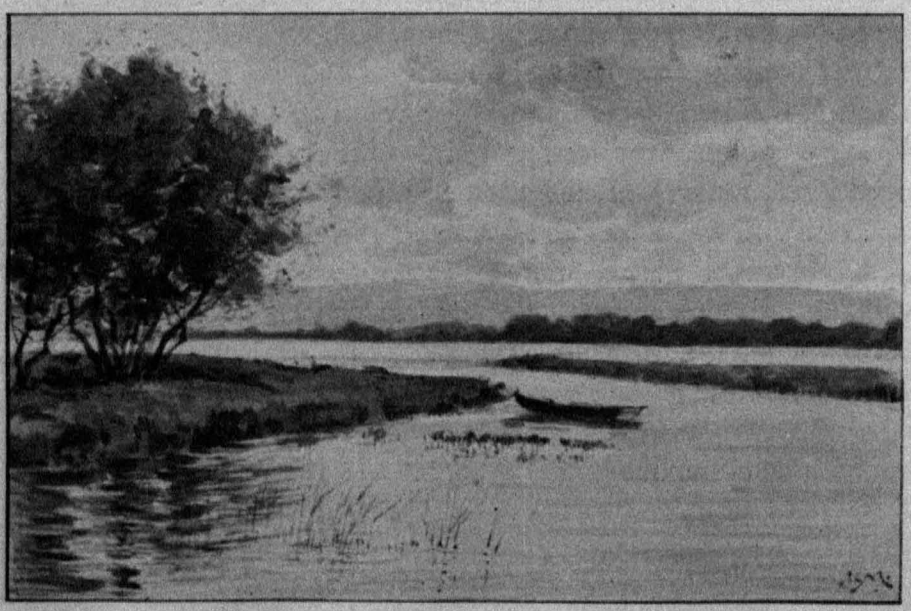
The laird o' Drum's a huntin' gane,
A' in a mornin' early,
An' then he spied a weel-faur'd May
Was shearin' at the barley.

. . . . . .

"But haud your tongue, my brither John,
What needs it thee offend, O?

I've marriet a wife to work and win,
Ye've marriet ane to spend, O".
. . . . . .
"For gin I wir deid, an' ye wir deid,
An' baith in ae grave laid, O,
When seven years are come and gane
Ye'd no ken my banes from yours, O".

Returning to Crathes, we resume our walk along the north road, soon entering the parish of Drumoak, the chief interest of which centres in Drum Castle. The lands held by the lairds of Drum, as we have already indicated, included much more than the present considerable estate. Park, which we first traverse, reminds us of this fact; originally it formed part of the "Park" of Drum. Park House is situated close to the left bank of the river, and has been well described as "handsome"; built in 1822, in the Grecian style of architecture, it is distinguished by its classical open front, while well-laid out grounds contribute to the amenity. Loch of Drum, on the north side of the road, is a beautiful little sheet of



The Loch of Drum.

water, fed by the Burn of Corrichie, and is fringed with trees. The Loch was at one time of considerable extent, but its dimensions

have been curtailed by drainage operations; an eminent authority suggests that it has much the appearance of a place where crannoges, or lake dwellings, might be found. "King's Well", at its north-east end, is suggestive of the time when Drum was a royal forest.

Drum Castle.

The Tower of Drum Castle is unmatched for antiquity on Deeside; it dominates the building, lending dignity to the comparatively modern erections included in the term "Castle". Tradition has it that the Tower was erected by King William the Lion, a belief supported by various circumstances. "Its architecture is of the oldest and simplest description. The well in the dungeon, the thickness of the walls, the vaulted roofs, the windows few, small, and far from the ground, the absence of any entrance lower than the first floor, which was only reached by steps originally removable in times of danger, all shew that it was built for security and defence; whilst its position, commanded on the north and west by a contiguous range of rising ground, proves that its strong walls were not intended to withstand cannon". It was doubtless frequently attacked during the private feuds of earlier ages, but has apparently remained undamaged. In 1640, during the Civil War, it was beseiged by General Munro, to whom it

was surrendered. It was remarked in 1782 that "there is neither crack nor crevice in the walls, nor is an inch of it out of plumb"; and this statement still holds good. The modern part of the Castle dates from 1619. There is a small adjoining chapel of older date, which contains the burial place of the family. The grounds are of considerable extent, and well timbered; the *tout ensemble* presents all the features of the demesne of an ancient family.

The Irvines of Drum are one of the oldest Scottish families, and have remained in possession of their ancestral estate for an unusually long period; the present laird is the twenty-second of his line. On 4th October, 1324, King Robert the Bruce granted a charter of Drum to William of Irewyn who had accompanied him from Annandale, and was his companion in many wanderings and dangers. The Irvines have taken a prominent part in national affairs, from the battle of Harlaw, in which Sir Alexander Irvine lost his life, to recent times; with the Burgh of Aberdeen their relations have always been of the most friendly and intimate nature. Drum's Aisle in the southern transept of St. Nicholas Church of Aberdeen contains a brass, and two stone effigies to members of this family.

Gormack Burn, from the Hill of Fare, and Leuchar Burn, from the Loch of Skene, meet to the east of Drum Castle, close to the road, forming the Burn of Culter. Near their confluence, says "The Statistical Account", "are the remains of a rampart called the guard dike. Tradition informs that a strong guard of armed men was stationed here to prevent all communication between the sound and the infected, while the plague raged in Aberdeen and its environs, about 130 years ago". The church of Peterculter is on the north side of the Dee, in the angle formed by the Burn of Culter; almost opposite, on the other side of the river, is the ruined church of Maryculter. The parish of Peterculter, which at one time included Maryculter, was originally known as "Kulter", and the district is still called Culter. The present edifice dates from 1779; recent additions, though no doubt improvements, do not add to the style of the building. Apparently two old entrances, on

The Dee at Culter.

the south and east sides, have been built up. The churchyard is surrounded by patriarchal trees; eastward there is a wooded stretch of the Dee, westward the prospect is closed by Normandikes. St. Peter's Well is a little to the east of the church; at one time remarkable for the quality of its water, it has fallen on evil days, and is now disused. A considerable village has sprung up in this neighbourhood, the origin of which may be attributed to Culter Burn. At one time there was a saw-mill near its mouth, as well as a snuff manufactory; and here in 1750 a Manxman erected the first mill for the manufacture of paper by machinery in Scotland—all the machinery having been driven by the burn. The present paper works are the seat of a large and important industry; one is inclined to forget their black smoke when looking at such specimens of their manufacture as the present.

The illustration on the previous page shews that the scenery of the Dee is not less interesting as we near the mouth of the river. Its winding course is here, as in other reaches, lined with trees; between Culter and Bridge of Dee there is a succession of pebbly beaches, sandy coves, wooded islets and sequestered nooks. Let us take our stand on a little knoll on the south side, opposite Culter, and enjoy for a little the charming prospect. The rough Scottish firs with which the knoll is covered are so widely apart that there is no difficulty in obtaining a view; the trees themselves interest us, for have they not evidently suffered from fights with storms, and only the fittest survive? The great high stalk of the paper works emits a long train of smoke, high above the village, which, vanishing heavenwards, does not seem to interfere with the amenity of the neighbourhood. The village itself, its houses dotted over a south-facing slope, is entitled to be called beautiful—at least at this distance; none the less that its fires are lighted by the smoking chimney. Then what a foreground!—the river curving and lost among trees, while stately mansions overlook the pastoral scene.

Normandikes may be observed between the railway and the river; it is generally held to be the site of a Roman camp and is

one of the greatest antiquities on Deeside. A supposed "Roman Ford" across the Dee is also pointed out. The camp is of oblong rectangular form, the northern enclosing wall being about a thousand yards in length. A spacious enclosure, now planted with wood, it is believed to have been made by Lollius Urbicus, who has been described as "the gallant lieutenant of Antoninus", a Roman Emperor who died A.D. 161.

Culter House, a short distance to the north of the church, was once described as "one of the most beautiful and best finished gentlemen's seats in the north"; the plainness of the exterior is redeemed by the fine old trees which shelter the building. "The oldest part of the house is ascribed to Sir Alexander Cumming, created the first baronet of Culter in 1672; a very extravagant and haughty knight who had his horse shod, at the Queen's wedding, with silver shoes, so lightly fastened on that, when the animal caracoled, they fell off and were picked up by the mob". In early times Alan the Durward—with whose name we are by this time familiar—held part of the lands of Culter; in 1247 it became the property, by royal grant, of the Allans of Wauchop, from whom it descended to the Cumins of Inverallochy. The baronetcy has long been extinct.

The greater part of the parish of Maryculter was granted in 1187 by William the Lion to the Knights Templars, who were succeeded by the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. The Menzies of Pitfodels acquired portions of the Templar lands between 1528 and 1618; the mansion was probably built about the latter date. The ancient churches of Maryculter and Peterculter, though on opposite sides of the river, are only about a quarter of a mile apart; their situation gives colour to the old saying that "care was taken that the clergy should not want fish in time of Lent". In 1545 we find that the holder of the Preceptory lands was bound to furnish his superior with "thre barrell of salmont yeirlie". Maryculter House is close to the ruins of the old church, and is approached by a pleasant tree-lined drive. A short distance to the east is Mill Inn, near which a bridge has been recently erected over the river. The

Mill of Maryculter Friendly Society was established in 1830; it met and dined at least once a year, and included many gentlemen of social position. Special rooms were reserved for the Club at the Mill Inn, but it was by no means confined to one meeting-place. The last meeting was held in 1859 at Alford. Near the Inn is a beautiful little water-fall known as Corbie Linn. Kingcausie House has a fine situation on the south side of the river. A verse of a now forgotten ballad calls attention to the fine woods here:

> The woods o' Kin'cousie are a' o'ergrown
> Wi' mony a braw apple-tree—
> Sae will ye no leave the Gallowgate Port,
> An' come to Kin'cousie wi' me"?

A tower on the hill of Auchlee attracts attention from many points. It was erected in memory of John Irvine Boswell, of Balmuto and Kingcausie, who died in 1860.

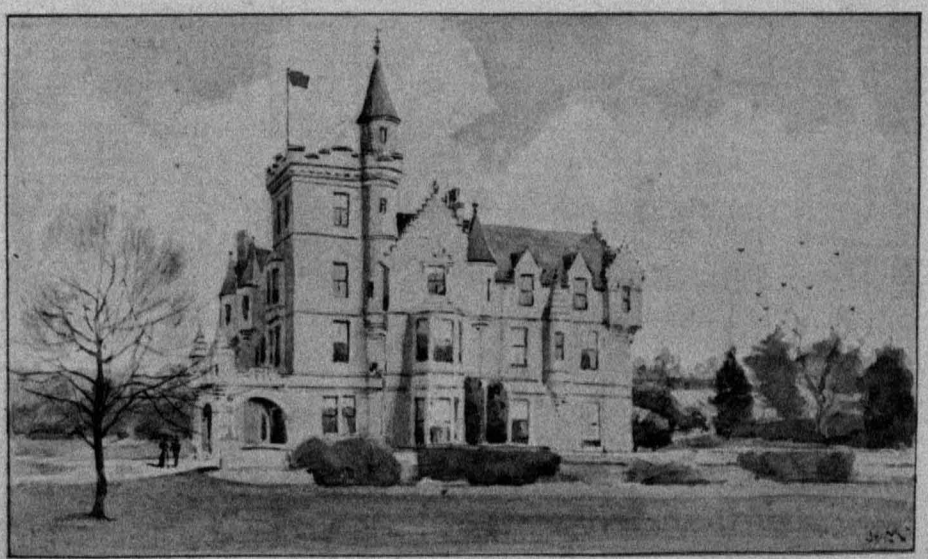
Blairs College, to the east of Kingcausie, is an institution for the education of young men desirous of qualifying for the Roman Catholic priesthood. The estate, at one time the property of the Knights Templars, latterly belonged to the Menzies of Pitfodels, and was gifted in 1827, by the last of that old family, to the Church of Rome.

Resuming our walk from Culter along the north side of the river, we soon become impressed with the fact that we are nearing the end of our journey; evidences crowd on us that we are entering what may be termed suburban Aberdeen. We pass numerous houses, many of them elegant villas with delightful situations. At Milltimber,

Valley of the Dee at Milltimber.

a short distance to the east of Culter, we may cross to the south road by the new bridge, but we shall content ourselves with a passing glance at the vista along the Dee. Kingcausie faces us on the south; here and there we have charming peeps up and down the valley. It was a Summer Saturday afternoon as we passed along, and we had but to look at the numerous pic-nic parties, large and small, scattered all over Milltimber, to realise the popularity and the appreciation of the beautiful in nature. Further east, Murtle House, a fine building in the Grecian style of architecture, close to the left bank of the river, is specially noticeable; the Den of Murtle is a charming little ravine. In 1163 the Barony of Murtle was granted by Malcolm IV. to the Bishop of Aberdeen, whose successors held the lands for several hundred years.

Cults, a village halfway between Culter and Aberdeen, owes its ever-increasing prosperity to Aberdonians, who are keenly alive to its fine southern exposure, and to the exquisite views here of the valley. East of Cults the north road, which enters Aberdeen at

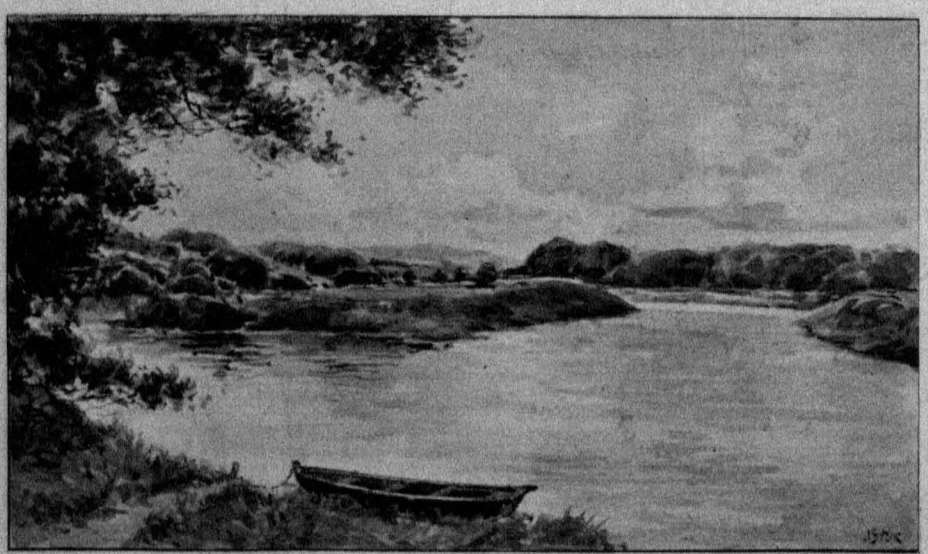


Ardoe House.

Mannofield, holds away from the river, so we cross to the south side by a handsome foot-bridge, erected in 1837 by the Rev. Dr.

Morison, the minister of Banchory Devenick, to enable his people to get over safely to Church.

Ardoe House was erected in 1878, and, built in the Scottish Baronial style of architecture, is a mansion worthy of its prominent position. The lands of Ardoe were at one time held, along with Banchory, by the Meldrums; in the sixteenth century they formed two properties known respectively as the Sunny Half and the Shady Half of Ardoe. In 1744 Ardoe was purchased by John Fordyce, who had been a gunner's mate on board the *Centurion*, under the command of Lord Anson, in a voyage round the world. The gallant sailor rode, it is said, on horseback from London to Aberdeen with his prize-money in specie in his saddle-bags! The late Mr. Alexander Ogston, a descendant of the Ogstons of Ogston—an erstwhile parish in Morayshire—bought Ardoe in 1839, and was succeeded in the property by his son, Mr. Alexander M. Ogston. The latter in 1880 acquired Heathcot, the adjoining estate on the west; on which, it may be mentioned, is the only Hydropathic



The Dee at Heathcot.

establishment on Deeside. The south side of the valley has many attractions in this neighbourhood, and several other mansions adorn

the landscape. One is especially struck with the view looking up the river; Cults, on the opposite side, is here seen to the best advantage. One cannot help contrasting Cults with Culter in this respect—the former is indebted to the smoke of Aberdeen for its existence as a village, the latter, as we have shewn, is debtor to none! The inhabitants may be of different classes, but nature has dealt impartially with the situation of the villages.

Banchory House.

The church of Banchory Devenick was built in 1822 on the site of the previous edifice—one of the last parish churches in Scotland where the Episcopal ritual was performed. It was anciently a prebend of St. Machar Cathedral, granted to the See in the twelfth century by Malcolm IV. St. Devenick, the patron saint, is said to have been one of St. Columba's disciples who was sent to the north of Scotland about the end of the ninth century.

The Barony of Banchory, a separate property from the Kirklands, was bestowed in the thirteenth century by Alexander II. to the Monastery of Arbroath; the Abbot of which, in 1256, granted a charter of it to Alan the Durward. Later, the Meldrums held the Barony for over two hundred years, and since that family parted with it there have been many changes in the proprietorship. The lairds in 1618 were the Gardynes of Dorlaithers, who, in that year, added the Kirklands to the Barony. About the middle of the

present century the then proprietor purchased Leggart, a small estate to the east, the picturesque little "Den" of which may be observed as Bridge of Dee is neared. Banchory—which thus embraces the Kirklands, the Barony, and Leggart—is now held by Sir David Stewart, ex-Lord Provost of Aberdeen, who succeeded his father in 1887. The mansion, built in 1840, is a charming residence in the Tudor style of architecture, and occupies the site of a smaller house erected in 1621 by the Gardynes. Situated on an elevated position, the grounds are finely wooded and present a beautiful prospect, especially from the neighbourhood of the Bridge of Dee. The Prince Consort stayed here while attending the meeting of the British Association at Aberdeen in 1859; a granite obelisk on Tollo Hill, a short distance south of the House, commemorates the visit. Five interesting sculptured stones are preserved near the House; and the stones of a cist have found a resting place by the side of one of the ponds which adorn the grounds. The cist had, it is believed, been removed from higher ground in the immediate vicinity, and during the re-removal the cover, a particularly large flat stone, had unfortunately been broken into two pieces. A short distance southward from the House

The Prince's Obelisk.

The Dee near Banchory House.

is the Blue Hill, noted for the extensive prospect obtainable from the tower on its summit. The panorama includes the North Sea from Buchan Ness to beyond Dunnottar, but the westward prospect is particularly interesting, especially to lovers of Deeside—such distant points as Beinn a' Bhuird, Beinn Bhrotain, and Cairn Toul being visible. The public are indebted to Sir David Stewart for the facilities afforded them of enjoying a view of almost phenomenal extent, and of these much advantage is taken.

A bridge doth reach across the river Dee,
Whereon seven stately double Arches be:
Who built this sumptuous work if ye would know,
The Myter which is carved thereon doth shew.

The city of Aberdeen has now expanded to this bridge, but so early as 1529 the property of the structure itself was con-

The Bridge of Dee.

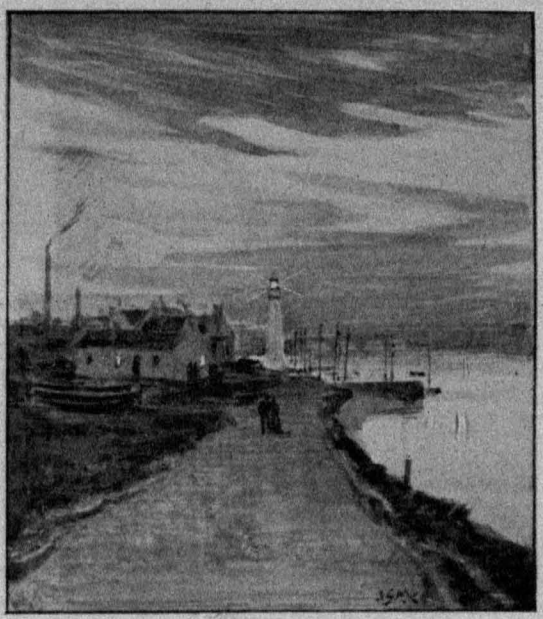
veyed to the Town Council. The founder was Bishop Elphinstone of Aberdeen, who died in 1514, before its completion; Bishop Dunbar finished it in 1527, and also gifted certain lands for its maintenance. The bridge was practically rebuilt in 1723, and widened in 1842. At the north-east end there was formerly a chapel, dedicated to the Virgin Mary; at the south-west end there was a port and watch-tower. Two historic events that took place here deserve mention. In 1589 the bridge was held by the forces of the Earl of Huntly, who fled before the royal army; in

1639 Viscount Aboyne defended it against the Marquis of Montrose. There are several inscriptions on the bridge which tell its story, and there are also "Masons' Marks" which will interest "the craft". A marked stone shews the height of the river during the famous "flood" of 1829, a recurrence of which is evidently not expected there.

The Bridge of Dee was formerly the only means of communication between Aberdeen and the south; now there are three other bridges to the eastward—the Railway Bridge, the Wellington Suspension Bridge, and the Victoria Bridge. In old times the entrance to the city from the Bridge of Dee was by the Hardgate, a hilly narrow road which crossed the Burn of Ruthrieston, by a quaint little three-arched bridge erected in 1693, close to the river. One may well look at brig and road and wonder if meaner entrance could have been to any city; yet long before Glasgow was much else than a hamlet crouching round the Cathedral of St. Mungo, Aberdeen had won for itself, as a city, fame in commerce, learning, and art. The healthiest and the handsomest of Scotland's "boro' touns" is indebted for its proud position to-day to the salubrity of the valley of the Dee, and to the influence of five centuries of education.

But our walk along the banks of the Dee does not include a sojourn in Aberdeen with its 140,000 inhabitants, nor does the scope of our undertaking permit us to describe "Bon-accord". We therefore refrain from entering the city here, continuing our way by the south side of the river, whence we shall see much to admire of the "Silver City by the Sea". The road on the south side passes through the parish of Nigg, the prominent church of which attracts notice. We are reminded of its old connection with the Abbey of Arbroath by Abbotswell, a farm on our left, a short distance east of which the river, it is believed, flowed at one time directly to the sea at the Bay of Nigg. East of the Suspension Bridge the Dee was diverted, in 1872, in connection with certain harbour improvements. The old channel was a little to the north of the present one; part of it is utilised as a dock.

In old times the Dee formed a considerable estuary here, now improved out of existence, the river flowing closely past Torry, an old burgh of barony incorporated with Aberdeen. The mouth of the Dee forms the harbour entrance, having the North Pier on the one side and the South Breakwater on the other. Torry Fort, mounting nine guns, commands the entrance, while Girdleness Lighthouse gives notice to mariners of the position of the harbour, with a warning to avoid the grim rocks which guard the mouth of the river on the south side; there is a sandy shore on the north.



Torry.

From Wells to Sea the Dee has a course of 85·2 miles; the area of its basin is 817·2 square miles—we take these figures from a Blue Book, so their fractional accuracy is not to be questioned. Having given this information our pleasant task is over, our pilgrimage ended. The story of the Dee has been told by pen and pencil, and nothing remains but to close our book with the words of The Preacher: "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again".

W. JOLLY AND SONS, ALBANY PRESS, ABERDEEN.