ROTHIEMURCHUS

THE "FOREST CABIN," WHERE THE AUTHOR LIVED. *Frontispiece.*

ROTHIEMURCHUS

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

NOTE

The following sketches, with the exception of the last two, appeared originally in the *Art Journal*, and are now collected and republished with a few alterations. Owing to the death of the author they have not had the advantage of his personal revision. The illustrations are reproduced from photographs taken by Mr. W. Dempster and Mr. Clarence G. Kerr.

I

ROTHIEMURCHUS

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I

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Of all the districts overshadowed by the extensive Cairngorm range the most magnificent, by universal consent, is Rothiemurchus. It is a region entirely unique. There is nothing like it elsewhere. If Scotland as a whole is Norway post-dated, this part of the country is especially Norwegian. Scotland is famous for its artistic colouring, which Millais compared to a wet Scotch pebble; but here the colouring is richer and more varied than in any other part of the country. The purples are like wine and not like slate, the deep blue-greens are like a peacock's tail in the sun, the distant glens hold diaphanous bluish shadows, and a bloom like that of a plum is on the lofty peaks, which changes at sunset into a velvety chocolate or the hue of glowing copper

in the heart of a furnace. A day here in October is something to be remembered all one's life, when the tops of the mountains all round the horizon are pure white with the early snow, and their slopes are adorned with the brilliant tints of faded bracken, golden birch and brown heather, and all the low grounds are filled with the unchangeable blue-green of the firs. At Rothiemurchus the landscape picture is most beautifully balanced, framed on both sides by heath-clad hills, which rise gradually to the lofty uplands of Braeriach and Cairngorm, with the broad summit of Ben Macdhui rounding up its giant shoulders behind the great chain itself, all coiffed with radiant cloud, or turbaned with folded mist, or clearly revealed in the sparkling light, bearing up with them in their aged arms the burden of earth's beauty for the blessing of heaven. All the views exhibit the most harmonious relations to one another, and each is enhanced by the loveliness of its neighbour.

Rothiemurchus is a high-sounding name. It is a striking example of the genius which the ancient Celtic race had for local nomenclature. It means "the wide plain of the fir trees," and no name could be more descriptive. Nothing but the fir tree seems to grow over all the region. It has

miles and miles of dark forest covering all the ground around, and usurping spots that in other localities would have been cleared for cultivation. You see almost no trace of man's industry within the horizon. Whatever cornfields there may be are entirely lost and hid within the folds of this uniform clothing of fir-forest. All is Nature, primitive, savage, unredeemed. In the centre of the vast plain rises the elevated upland of Tullochghru, about a thousand feet above the sea-level, whose farms have a brighter green, smiling in the sunshine, contrasted with the surrounding brown desolation. It seems to emerge like an island out of an ocean of dark-green verdure flowing all around its base, and breaking in billows far up the precipices of the Cairngorms. The scenery as a whole is on such a gigantic scale that the individual features are dwarfed. The huge mountains become elevated braes or plateaus, and miles of mountainous fir-forest seem to contract into mere patches of woodland. No one would suppose that the hollow which hides Loch Morlich in the distance was other than a mere dimple in the forest, and yet it is more than three miles in circumference, and opens up on the spot a large area of clear space to the sky. The eye requires to get accustomed to the vast dimensions

of mountain and forest to form a true conception of the relative proportions of any individual object. Nothing can be more deceptive than the distances, which are always supposed to be much shorter than they really are.

The crest of the Grants of Rothiemurchus is a mailed hand holding a broadsword, with the motto, "For my Duchus." Duchus is the name which they gave to their domain. It is a Gaelic word meaning a district which is peculiarly one's own. Rothiemurchus was always regarded by its proprietors as standing to them in a very special relation. Very touching expression has been given to this sentiment in that popular work, *The Memoirs of a Highland Lady*, published some few years ago. The attachment of the authoress, who was a daughter of Sir John Peter Grant of Rothiemurchus, to her native place was unbounded. She constantly speaks of her beloved "Duchus"; and when about to accompany her father to India, when he was made a judge in Bombay, she gives a pathetic picture of her last walk in the "Duchus" with her youngest sister. Her fortitude gave way when she heard the gate of her home closing behind her, and she wept bitterly. "Even now," she says, after long years of absence, "I seem to hear the clasp of that

gate ; I shall hear it till I die ; it seemed to end the poetry of my existence." Even the casual visitor feels this strange spell which the place exercises upon him ; and if one has spent several summers in wandering among its romantic scenes, the fascination becomes altogether absorbing. Season after season finds your feet drawn towards this charming region ; and no other spot can replace it, no other scenery surpass it in its power over the imagination and the heart. There is little reference made in *The Memoirs of a Highland Lady* to the natural characteristics of Rothiemurchus. The book does not describe the grand mountain scenery, or give any account of the deer-stalking in the forest, or of the climbing of the great peaks of the Cairngorm range. It is occupied entirely with the mode of life and the social relations of this remote region at the beginning of last century. But you feel conscious all the time of the presence of the mountains. You feel that the grand scenery is not the mere background of human action, but mingles with it in the most intimate manner ; and all this makes the reading of the book, so full of artless simplicity and natural piquancy and humour, peculiarly delightful.

The railway station for Rothiemurchus is

Aviemore, which has entirely changed its aspect in recent years. In the old coaching days it had hardly a single building except the inn, where the horses were baited and passengers on the way to Inverness halted to refresh themselves. This quaint hostelry, looking like an ancient Scottish peel, is still standing but is no longer used as an inn. Its upper garden wall marked the height to which the Spey rose during the celebrated Moray floods, which Sir Thomas Dick Lauder so graphically described, when living sheep were brought across the river and left in the trees of the garden by the overwhelming waters. The whole country was inundated and became one great lake, and the face of the hill behind was seamed with white roaring waterfalls, and a dense mist filled all the air. Aviemore is now a busy junction where innumerable trains in the summer months pass north and south, and passengers from all parts of the world meet each other on the platforms. A row of new villas is built along the line and a modern hotel, with a noble background of hills and an incomparable view in front of the Cairngorm range, where all the great peaks are seen grouped together in the most effective manner, occupies the rising ground behind.

The lands of Rothiemurchus are bounded on

the west by the Spey that flows past Aviemore, at the foot of Craigellachie. This storied rock is not included in the possessions of this branch of the family, although it formed the slogan or war-cry of the whole clan, "Stand fast, Craigellachie." It comes out boldly from the general line of hills, and forms a most conspicuous feature in the landscape. It is composed of mica-slate broken into ledges and rocky slopes, and in some places is quite precipitous. It is covered mostly with purple heather, interspersed with weeping birches and bushes of willow. The bare spaces are clothed with bracken, whose golden tints in autumn are indescribable; and even the hard exposed rock is weathered and frescoed with yellow and hoary lichens. It is a rich feast of colour to the eye at all seasons of the year, and exhibits a poetry of fleeting hues fairer than an equal portion of sky, which it blots out, would show. By a poetic instinct it was chosen as the symbol of the clan, and its enduring steadfast character shadowed forth their unchanging faithfulness amid all the strains of life. The fame of this rock in the landscapes of their native region has always powerfully impressed the imagination of the warlike people. It has been the scene of many a gathering of the clan in times of war and foray; and from this central

spot the fiery cross used often to be sent round to summon the clansmen together. Ruskin, during his visit to this region, greatly admired the picturesqueness of Craigellachie; and he speaks thus of its associations: "You may think long over the words 'Stand fast, Craigellachie,' without exhausting the deep wells of feeling and thought contained in them—the love of the native land, and the assurance of faithfulness to it. You could not but have felt it, if you passed beneath it at the time when so many of England's dearest children were being defended by the strength of heart of men born at its foot, how often among the delicate Indian palaces, whose marble was pallid with horror, and whose vermilion was darkened with blood, the remembrance of its rough grey rocks and purple heather must have risen before the sight of the Highland soldiers—how often the hailing of the shot and the shrieking of the battle would pass away from their hearing, and leave only the whisper of the old pine branches, 'Stand fast, Craigellachie.'"

II

ROTHIEMURCHUS

(*Continued*)

II

ROTHIEMURCHUS—*continued*

THE Spey, as it forms the western boundary of Rothiemurchus, has a somewhat diversified course, being mostly swift and shallow, with extensive margins of white pebbles in its bed; but where the high road from Aviemore crosses it by a modern iron bridge, it expands into a deep and wide pool as black as Erebus, as if it concentrated in itself all the peaty waters of its source in the bogs of Drumochter, and gives one an impressive idea of the might of the river. The Spey is not a classic stream. No poet has sung its praises, but the murmur of its tide has found articulate expression in the beautiful strathspeys which echo the swiftness of its pace and the swirl of its waters. It has been associated as no other British river has been with our national dance music. Its tributaries from Rothiemurchus, each "a mountain power," swell its volume and add to the beauty of the scenes through which they flow. They

traverse the whole extent of the region from east to west, from the bare, bleak heights of Braeriach and Cairngorm to the rich green meadows which the Spey has made for itself in the low grounds. The vast pine-forests would be oppressive without those voices of Nature that inform the solitudes, and destitute of those silvery pools which mirror the alders and birches. The Luineag issues from Loch Morlich, and exposes for most of its course its sparkling wavelets to the open sky, and the Bennie, uniting the stream that comes from the Larig Pass and the river which carries off the surplus waters of Loch Eunach, hides itself in the depths of the woods, whose green folds hush the soliloquies which it holds with itself. They form together at Coylum Bridge—which means the meeting of the waters, or literally the twofold leap —the Druie, a capricious river that often shifts its channel and converts much fertile land into a wilderness of sand and gravel. With its vagaries have been connected the fortunes of the House of Rothiemurchus, which were to be prosperous so long as the course of the river continued the same, but disastrous should it change its bed and work out a new channel for itself. Twice, at least, this change has happened, when the property passed from the Shaws to the Grants, and during the

THE DRUIE IN SNOW.

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great Moray floods which devastated the whole district.

The subject streams of Rothiemurchus, which are the size of rivers and speak powerfully of the great range of mountains in which they rise, gather to their generous heart the whispered wanderings of a hundred rills. They bring down the grand music of the mountains, the roar of the tempest, and the sigh of the wind and the swoop of the mist in the wild corries, and the soft murmur of the upland brook. In the rhythm of their song may be detected all the mystic tones in which the mountains converse with one another. The Luineag is the stillest water, for its bed is least rugged; but the Bennie is full of large granite boulders over which it rushes with a swift, clear current, whose harshness is made musical by the listening air. It is the sound of the Bennie alone that is heard, when the night deepens the oppressive stillness and lonesomeness by hushing all other noises, and the great mountain range looms on the horizon beneath the stars—a gigantic silhouette, a geological dream, a vision of the primeval ages, whose shade inundates all the landscape, and turns all the amphitheatre of valleys black as ebony.

Nowhere are there more magnificent fir-forests

than those of Rothiemurchus. These forests, about sixteen square miles in extent, are the relics of the aboriginal Caledonian forest which covered all this region with one unbroken umbrageous mass; and there are here and there many of the old giants which the hand of man never planted, still growing in the loneliest recesses, and giving an idea of what the whole primeval forest must have been in its prime, ere the woodman, about a century and a half ago, invaded its solitudes and ruthlessly cut down its finest trees to be converted into timber. Most of the trees that now cover the area are of comparatively recent planting, and though well grown do not display the rugged picturesqueness for which the fir in its old age is so remarkable. A plantation of young Scotch firs is as formal as one of any other species of the pine tribe, and presents an orderly and monotonous appearance; but as the tree grows older, it develops an amount of freedom and eccentricity of shape which no one would have expected of its staid and proper infancy. Its trunk loses its smoothness and roundness, and bursts out into rugged flakes of bark like the scales on the talons of a bird of prey or the plates of mail on an armed knight. Its boughs cease to grow in symmetrical and horizontal lines, and fling them-

ROTHIEMURCHUS PINES. *To face page* 17.

selves out in all directions gnarled and contorted, as if wrestling with some inward agony or outward obstacle like a vegetable Laocoön. Its colour also changes; the trunk becomes of a rich tawny red, which the level afternoon sun brings out with glowing vividness, and the blue-green masses of irregular foliage contrast wonderfully with this rusty hue and attest the strength and freshness of its life. Such old firs are indeed the trees of the mountain, the companions of the storms that have twisted their boughs into such picturesque irregularities, and whose mutterings are ever heard among their sibylline leaves. They are seen to best advantage when struggling out of the writhing mists that have entangled themselves among their branches; and no grander background for a sylvan scene, no more picturesque crown for a rocky height, no fairer subject for an artist's pencil exists in Nature. While the rain brings out the fragrance of the weeping birches, those "slumbering and liquid trees," as Walt Whitman calls them, that are the embodiments of the feminine principle of the woods, it needs the strongest and hottest sunshine to extract the pungent, aromatic scents of the sturdy firs, which form the masculine element of the forest.

The fir is an old-world tree. Its sigh on the

stillest summer day speaks of an immemorial antiquity. Its form is constructed on a primitive pattern. It is a relic of the far-off geological ages, when pines like it formed the sole vegetation of the earth. It is the production of the world's heroic age, when Nature seemed to delight in the fantastic exercise of power, and to exhibit her strength in the growth of giants and monsters. It has existed throughout all time, and has maintained its characteristic properties throughout all the changes of the earth's surface. It forms the ever-green link between the ages and the zones, growing now as it grew in the remote past, and preserving the same appearance in build and figure.

It is a novel experience to wander on an autumn afternoon through the unbroken forests of Rothiemurchus. The Scotch fir usually looks its best at this time, for the older leaves that have a yellow withered hue have been cast and the new ones developed during the summer shine with a beautiful freshness and greenness peculiar to the season. Wherever a breach occurs among the trees, the ground is everywhere covered with a most luxuriant growth of juniper bushes, some of which are of great age and attain a large size. The grey-green of the foliage contrasts beautifully

with the dark blue-green of the firs. A dense undergrowth of heather, into which the foot sinks up to the knee, clothes all the more open spaces. Where the trees crowd together more closely the heather disappears, and in its place the ground is carpeted with thickly clustering bushes of the bilberry and cranberry, whose vivid greenness is very refreshing to the eye. The huge conical nests of the black ant, composed of withered pine-needles, are in constant evidence; while on the forest paths, when the sun is shining, may be seen myriads of the industrious inhabitants passing to and fro on their various avocations. The labour involved in the construction of these nests must be enormous. Many of them are old and abandoned, and over these the cranberry and bilberry bushes, which are ever pushing forward their roots on new soil, spread themselves so that they are half or wholly covered with a rank, evergreen vegetation, indicating their origin only by the undulations they make in the ground. The aromatic smell that pervades all the air is most refreshing. It stimulates the whole system as you fill your lungs with its invigorating breath. The sanative influence of the fir-forest is most remarkable. The plague and the pestilence disappear, the polluted atmosphere is deodorised, and

with an effect as magical as that of the tree which sweetened the bitter Marah of the wilderness, the presence of the Scotch fir purifies the most deadly climate.

There is no wood more durable than the timber of the old Scotch fir. It is proof, owing to its aromatic odour, against insect ravages; and its texture is so hard and compact that it resists the decay of the weather. So charged with turpentine are the firs of Rothiemurchus, that splinters of the wood used to be employed as candles to light up the dark nights, when the people gathered together in some neighbour's cottage to ply their spinning-wheels and retail their gossip and old stories. These wood torches when set in sconces would burn down to the socket with an unwavering and brilliant flame, and would thus give forth a large amount of light and heat at the same time. The darker days of late autumn were always brightened for us by splendid fires made of old roots which had been left in the ground when the patriarchal trees were cut down, and which contained a vast amount of resin. I know no fires so delightful—not even those made of the pine branches of the Vallombrosa forest in Italy—blazing up at once, as they do, and continuing to the end clear and bright, while emitting a pleasant

fragrance which fills all the room, and creating a most healthy atmosphere, which counteracts the noxious influence of the rain and damp. The trees in this cold mountain climate do not grow very rapidly, but they are valuable in proportion to the slowness of their growth; the part of the wood which is exposed to the sunshine being little more than sap-wood of small value, while the part which is turned to the north, and grows in stormy situations and takes long to mature, is hard and solid and very valuable. It is of a fine red colour, and when cut directly to the centre or right across the grain is very beautiful; the little rings formed of the annual layers being small and delicate, and in perfectly even lines. The best part is nearest the root.

About two hundred years ago, such was the abundance of timber and the difficulty of finding a market for it, that the laird of Rothiemurchus got only 1s. 8d. a year for what a man chose to cut down and manufacture for his own use. The method of making deals was by splitting the wood with wedges, and then dressing the boards with axe and adze; saw-mills with circular saws and even the upright hand-saw and plane being altogether unknown. A very old room in Castle Grant is still floored with deals made in this way,

showing the marks of the adze across the boards. As a specimen of the immense size of the trees that were cut down in the forests of Glenmore and Rothiemurchus, there is preserved at Gordon Castle a plank upwards of six feet in breadth. The trees when felled were made into rafts and floated down the Spey into the sea. Large heaps of old roots dug up from the peat-bogs and from the clearings in the forest may be seen piled up beside every cottage and farmhouse for household fires; and everywhere the people seem to be as dependent upon the forests as the peasants of Norway. Indeed, what with the forests and the mountains and the timber-houses, one might easily imagine oneself wandering in some Dovrefield valley, instead of at the foot of the Cairngorm range.

For the contemplative and poetic mind there is no more impressive scene than a fir-forest. It is full of suggestion. It quickens the mind, while it lays its solemn spell upon the spirit like the aisles of a cathedral. Here time has no existence. It is not marked as elsewhere by the varying lights and shades, by the opening and closing of the flowers, by the changes of the seasons, and the appearance and disappearance of various objects that make up the landscape. The fir-forest is

independent of all these influences. Its aspect is perennially the same, unchangeable amid all the changes that are going on outside. Its stillness is awe-inspiring. It is unlike that of any other scene in Nature. It is not solitude, but the presence of some mystery—some supernatural power. How vividly, in the ballad of the "Erl King," does Goethe describe the peculiar spirit or supernatural feeling of the forest. The silence is expectant, seems to breathe, to become audible, and to press upon the soul like a weight. Sometimes it is broken by the coo of a dove which only emphasises it, and makes the place where it is heard the innermost shrine, the very soul of the loneliness. Occasionally you hear the grand sound of the wind among the fir-tops, which is like the distant roar of the ocean breaking upon a lee-shore. Sometimes a gentle sigh is heard far off, how originating you cannot tell, for there is not a breath of wind, and not a leaf is stirring; it comes nearer and waxes louder, and then it becomes an all-pervading murmur. It is like the voice of a god; and you can easily understand how the fir-forest was peopled with the dim, mysterious presences of this northern mythology. In its gloomy perspectives, leading to deeper solitudes, there seem to lurk some weird mysteries

and speechless terrors that keep eye and ear intent. You have a strange sense of being watched, without love or hate, by all these silent, solemn, passionless forms, and when most alone you seem least lonely.

III

LOCH-AN-EILAN

III

LOCH-AN-EILAN

LOCH-AN-EILAN is one of the loveliest bits of scenery in Scotland, and the special show-place of the district. All roads in Rothiemurchus therefore lead to it. But the high-road goes round from Aviemore by the Doune, which is the residence of the proprietor. Doune House is a square, modern building, substantially constructed, in the midst of spacious parks and richly-wooded policies, on the banks of the Spey, whose soft, cultivated beauty contrasts strikingly with the bare rocks and brown, heath-clad mountains around. A high mound crowned with trees lies to the east, from which the mansion received its name. It was originally a fort, and tradition says that it was inhabited by a brownie which faithfully served the household for many years, probably a personification of the protection which the mound afforded. This family seat was occupied for many years by the Duke and Duchess of Bedford. The Duchess was the

daughter of the famous Jane, Duchess of Gordon, who lived on the neighbouring property of Kinrara, and seems to have inherited the vivacity of disposition and the active benevolence of her mother. A large number of the leading men of the day were entertained in the Doune during her occupancy, among others Lord Brougham. A dispute arose one night among the visitors as to whether the Lord Chancellor of England carried the Great Seal about with him when he travelled. The Duchess put the matter to the test at once, and marching at the head of her friends to the bedroom of Lord Brougham, who was lying ill at the time, she persuaded him to imprint a cake which she had just baked with an impression of the Seal, which, of course, settled the question.

Rothiemurchus originally belonged to the powerful family of the Comyns, who owned all the lands of Badenoch. With the displacing of the Comyns is associated a tradition of the Calart, a wooded hill to the west of the little loch of Pityoulish. In the pass close to this loch one of the Shaws, called Buck Tooth, waylaid and murdered the last of the Comyns of Badenoch. The approach of the Comyns was signalled by an old woman seated on the top of the Calart engaged in rocking the tow, and Shaw, with a consider-

able force of his clansmen, sprang from his ambush and put them all to the sword. The graves of the Comyns are still pointed out in a hollow on the north side of the Calart, called Lag-nan-Cumineach. Unswerving tradition asserts that this Shaw was no other than Farquhar, who led thirty of the clan Chattan in the memorable conflict with the thirty Davidsons of Invernahaven, on the North Inch of Perth, in 1396. His remains were interred in the churchyard of Rothiemurchus, and a modern flat monument with an inscription, and with the five cylinder-shaped stones, the granite supporters of the original slab, resting upon it, indicates the spot. Tradition says that these curious stones appear and disappear with the rise and fall of the fortunes of the House of Rothiemurchus. During the Duke of Bedford's tenancy of the Doune, a footman removed one of them to test the truth of this tradition. But he was obliged speedily to restore it, owing to the indignation of the people. A few days after putting back the stone upon the grave he was drowned in fording the Spey, and his death was considered in the district the just punishment of his sacrilege.

The Shaws held possession of Rothiemurchus till they were finally expelled by the Grants of

Muckerach in 1570. On account of their frequent acts of insubordination to the Government, the lands of the Shaws were confiscated and bestowed upon the Grants, "gin they could win them." Many conflicts took place between the two rivals, one of them in the hollow now occupied by the large, well-stocked garden of the House. Though defeated and slain, the chief of the Shaws would not surrender his rights, but even after death continued to appear and torment the victor, until the new laird of Rothiemurchus buried his body deep down within the parish church, beneath his own seat; and every Sunday when he joined in the prayers of the congregation he had the satisfaction of stamping his feet upon the body of his enemy. The last of the Shaws of Rothiemurchus was outlawed on account of the murder of his stepfather, Sir John Dallas, whom he hated because of his mother's marriage to him. One day, walking along the road near a smithy, his dog, entering, was kicked out by Dallas, who happened to be within, when the furious young man drew his sword and cut off Dallas's head, with which he went to the Doune and threw it down at his mother's feet. The room she was in at the time is still pointed out, and the smithy where the murder occurred is now part of the garden. It

is said that on the anniversary of the tragedy, every August, the scent of blood is still felt in the place, overpowering the fragrance of the flowers.

Muckerach Castle, some three miles from Grantown, and now in ruins, was the earliest seat of the Rothiemurchus family. The lintel-stone of the doorway was removed and built into the wall of Doune House. It has carved upon it the date of the erection of the Castle in 1598, and the proprietor's arms, three ancient crowns and three wolves' heads, along with the motto, "In God is all my trust." Several members of the Rothiemurchus family greatly distinguished themselves in the world of diplomacy and politics. Sir John Peter Grant, a clever barrister, was first M.P. for Great Grimsby and Tavistock, and in 1828 was appointed one of the Judges of the Supreme Court of Bombay. His son was Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and ultimately Governor of Jamaica, and for his valuable services was knighted. His sister, who married General Smith, of Baltiboys, in Ireland, wrote the charming *Memoirs of a Highland Lady*, giving a social account of Rothiemurchus in the early years of last century.

Not far from the garden of the Doune, on a knoll which commands an extensive view, is the

mansion-house of the Polchar, where the late Dr. Martineau resided for many years. The house has long sloping roofs and low walls, and is well sheltered by trees from the blasts which in winter must blow with great violence here.

From June to November the venerable divine was accustomed to come to this place from London, and the change no doubt helped to prolong his valuable life. When he came first to Rothiemurchus he found that everything was sacrificed for the sake of the deer forest. Old roads were shut up, and the public were excluded from some of the grandest glens. Dr. Martineau set himself to counteract this spirit of exclusiveness, and in a short time he succeeded in securing free access to the loneliest haunts of Nature. Of an extremely active habit of body, he climbed the heights and explored all the recesses of the Cairngorms. In his later years, however, he seldom moved beyond the scenes around his own door. His refined face and earnest manner always impressed one. I shall not soon forget his look, when I called upon him on his ninety-second birthday to offer my congratulations and good wishes, as of one already a denizen of another world, who had brought its far-reaching wisdom and experience to bear upon the fleeting things of time. The family of Dr.

Martineau have done an immense amount of good in the locality, having founded a capital library for the use of the inhabitants and visitors, and a school for wood-carving, with an annual exhibition and sale of the articles made by the pupils, which has stimulated the artistic taste of the young people in a wonderful degree.

Passing the low-browed manse, whose situation in the shadow of Ord Bàn is exceedingly picturesque, a beautiful path at the foot of the hill conducts the visitor to Loch-an-Eilan. A stream flows all the way from the loch beside the path, which is over-arched by graceful birch-trees, such as MacWhirter loved, and which he actually painted on the spot several years ago while residing at the manse in a series of studies of the Lady of the Woods, exceedingly beautiful and true to nature. The slender trees here hang their long waving tresses overhead and cast cool shadows over the white path, while the murmur of the stream soothes the senses and makes one see visions and dream dreams. In a little while the northern shore of Loch-an-Eilan comes in sight, embosomed among dark-green fir-forests. It occupies an extensive hollow, overshadowed on the east by the bare round mountain mass of Creag Dubh, one of the outer spurs of the Cairngorm

range, while on the other side rise up the grey precipitous rocks of the Ord Bàn, clothed with birches and pines to the top. Ord Bàn is composed mostly of primitive limestone and bands of mica-schist very much bent and twisted by the geologic forces to which it owed its origin. It is easily ascended, and the view from the summit, owing to its central position, is both extensive and magnificent, including the two horizons to the north-east and south-west, with their clothing of dark fir-forests in one direction, and of birch-woods in the other. Loch Morlich shows itself distinctly in its wide basin glancing in the sun, while far over the wild mountains that surge up tumultuously in the south-west, Ben Nevis storms the sky with its broad summit.

Charles V. said of Florence, "It is too beautiful to be looked upon except on a holy day." The same might be said in a truer sense of Loch-an-Eilan, for it is a sanctuary of Nature. Its beauty touches some of the deepest chords of the heart. It is not a mere landscape, it is an altar picture. It is a poem that gives not merely a physical or intellectual sense of pleasure, but awakens the religious faculty within us, creating awe and reverence like a holy hymn. One of its great charms is its unexpectedness. It comes upon

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you with a sense of surprise in the heart of the woods. Its water is the spiritual element in the dark fir-forest. It is to the landscape what the face is to the human body—that which gives expression and imagination to it,—and therefore it lends itself easily to spiritual suggestiveness. It is the face of Nature looking up at you, revealing the deep things that are at the heart of it. All around the loch are fir-woods, miles in extent, in whose depths one may lose oneself. But here at the lochside one comes out into a wide open space, and finds a mirror in which the whole sky is reflected. There is a sense of freedom and enlargement. One sees more of the shadow than of the sunshine among the fir-trees, and only bits of the blue sky appear high up between the green tops of the trees; but here the whole heavens are seen not only above but below, with the double beauty of reflection. The water makes the blue sky bluer, and the golden sunshine brighter. The sight awakens the thought that it is good to have clear open spaces in our life, in which heaven may be brightly imaged. It is good to have in our souls parts devoted to a different element from that of which our life is mostly composed, in which we may have large glimpses of the world that is above us, the spiritual and eternal

world. Life must broaden if it is to brighten. Over the narrow stream the trees arch, shutting out the sky. To the shores of the wide lake they retreat, leaving it open to the whole firmament.

IV

LOCH-AN-EILAN

(Continued)

IV

LOCH-AN-EILAN—*continued*

THE little island which gave the loch its name was originally a crannog or artificial lake-dwelling. After affording a secure retreat for ages to the primitive inhabitants by its wicker huts built on wooden platforms, it finally formed a foundation for a Highland feudal stronghold of considerable dimensions, covering all the available space and appearing as if rising out of the water. Tradition asserts that it was originally built by the Red Comyns, who once owned all the country round about. The lands of Rothiemurchus having been granted by Alexander II. to Andrew, Bishop of Moray, in 1226, the Earl of Buchan, son of Robert II., better known on account of his ferocity as the Wolf of Badenoch, took forcible possession of these lands, and was in consequence excommunicated. In revenge he sacked and burned the Cathedral of Elgin. For this sacrilegious act he had to do penance by standing barefoot for

three days at the door of the cathedral, and was restored to the communion of the Church on condition that he would return to the Bishop of Moray the lands he had wrested from him. This castle was one of the possessions which the Wolf gave up. During his occupation we may well suppose that it was the scene of many bloody deeds and crimes. It was afterwards bestowed in lease upon the Shaws, whose chief dwelt there for more than a hundred years without molestation. From the Shaws it ultimately passed to the Grants of Muckerach, who have continued to hold it ever since. One event only has been recorded since they took possession. In 1690, after the disastrous battle on the "Haughs of Cromdale," so long celebrated in song and dance in Scotland, the remnant of the defeated adherents of James II., the followers of Keppoch under General Buchan, fled to Loch-an-Eilan for refuge, and made an attempt from the mainland to seize the castle, which was defeated by the Rothiemurchus men under their valiant laird. A smart fire of musketry greeted them from the walls of the castle, the bullets for which were cast by Grizzel Mor, the laird's wife, and they were repulsed with great loss. Since then the castle has become a roofless ruin, whose time-stained

THE CASTLE, LOCH-AN-EILAN *To face page* 41

walls, mantled with a thick growth of ivy, add greatly to the picturesque appearance of the loch. The stumps of the huge fir-trees, from which the timber for the roofing and flooring of the castle was obtained, may still be seen on the margin of the peat-bogs behind the loch from which the people of the neighbourhood obtain their fuel, preserved as hard and undecayed as ever after the lapse of all these centuries. It has been persistently said that a zigzag causeway beneath the water led from the door of the castle to the shore, the secret of which was always known only to three persons. But the secret has never been discovered, and the lowest state of the loch has never given any indication of the causeway. On the top of one of the towers the osprey or sea-eagle, one of the rarest of our native birds, used to build its nest. For several seasons unfortunately the birds have abandoned the locality, possibly because they were not only persecuted by the crows, which stole the materials of their eyrie, but also frightened by the shouts of visitors on the shore starting the curious echo from the walls of the castle. I was fortunate enough, one recent summer, to see the male bird catching a large pike and soaring up into the sky with it, held parallel to its body, with

one claw fixed in the head and the other in the tail. After making several gyrations in the air, with loud screams, it touched its nest, only to soar aloft again, still pertinaciously holding the fish in its claws. A seagull pursued it, and rising above, attempted to frighten it, so that it might drop the fish, but the osprey dodged the attacks of the gull, which finally gave up the game and allowed the gallant little eagle to alight on its nest in peace, and feed its clamorous young ones with the scaly spoil. The fish in Loch-an-Eilan are principally pike, which often attain a large size, especially in the eastern bays, being there so little disturbed.

Sir Thomas Dick Lauder realised the capabilities of Loch-an-Eilan for figuring in romance, and has given us a vivid description of its picturesque features in his story of *Lochandhu*. It combines within the small area of three miles in circumference all the elements of romantic scenery. There is no monotony, but, on the contrary, an infinite variety along its shores, which form coves and inlets and low, rocky points and gravelly beaches and open green banks. On the east side the rocky precipices rise almost immediately from the water and fling a dark shadow over it. The path here is seldom used,

and one rarely meets a visitor in the solitude. On the nearer or western side there is a large promontory of green meadow-land, standing out against the richly-wooded background of the Ord Bàn, on which is situated an ornamental cottage with a red roof, which in summer is frequented by crowds of visitors who come from all parts of the country in carriages and on bicycles and make delightful picnics on the shore. The site of this picturesque cottage was first occupied by a house which was built by a General Grant for his widowed mother in accordance with her own wishes. This General was originally a turnspit in the kitchen at Doune. Quarrelling one day with the cook, the boy cut off her hair with his knife and then ran off down the avenue at full speed. The cook came crying to her master who shouted after him in Gaelic, "Come back, you black thief, and get your wages." "Wait till I ask for them," was the reply. He then enlisted as a soldier and rose rapidly from the ranks to the highest position in the Indian army and amassed a large fortune. He never came back to his native glen, but he provided for all his relations and gave his mother a pension, on which she lived happily for many years, not priding herself very much on her son's wonderful career, nor held

in any high consideration by her neighbours in consequence. On the promontory below the cottage stands a rough granite monument intimating that at this point General Rice, who did a great deal of good in the locality during his sojourn in it, and whose portrait may be seen in almost every house, was drowned by the breaking of the ice while skating on the loch on 26th December 1892.

The southern end of the loch is formed by precipitous grey rocks in the background, crowned with dark woods, the haunt in former times of the wild cat, and surmounted at the highest point by a monument now almost entirely concealed by the trees, erected by her husband to the Duchess of Bedford, whose favourite outlook was from this place. The shore here consists of magnificent moraines covered with grass, heather and bracken, which produce in their autumnal fading the most gorgeous effects of colour. Beyond these immediate boundaries the open country reveals itself, taking into the horizon the round peaks of the Boar of Badenoch and the Sow of Atholl, and so completing the magic picture of the loch by the ethereal blue colours of the far distance. The quieter bays are white with whole navies of water-lilies, and when the hills and open parts of the

woods are crimson with the heather in full bloom, almost changing the water of the loch by the enchantment of its reflection into wine and contrasting with the rich blue-green of the fir-trees, there is no finer sight to be seen in all the land. It was feared at the time that the terrible conflagration which ravaged the wooded shores on the eastern side some years ago would destroy for ever much of the beauty of the loch. But while a vast portion of the luxuriant undergrowth of the woods was burnt down on this occasion, the loss was more than made up by the revelation of the varied rocky features of the scene, which this undergrowth had hidden by a monotonous covering of uniform vegetation ; and now, after the rains and storms of several winters have washed away the charred and blackened wrecks, the recuperative powers of Nature have already spread over the naked spaces a healing mantle of tenderest green. The woods at the head of the loch were left altogether untouched ; and here, by the side of the charming path, which at every step discloses some new combination of beautiful scenery, there is a number of very ancient firs, whose gnarled, exposed roots form the banks of the path, and whose venerable trunks and branches overshadowed the spot long before the castle on the

island was built. They are the relics of the great aboriginal Caledonian forest; their huge red boles, armoured from head to foot with thick scales like a cuirass, Nature's own tallies, record in the mystic rings in their inmost heart the varying moods of the passing seasons.

Beyond Loch-an-Eilan is a much smaller loch where the conflagration began, and which, therefore, suffered greater havoc in the destruction of its woods. It is called Loch Gamhna, or the Loch of the Calves, on account of its old connection with the creachs which used to take place along its shores. On the eastern side there is a path through the forest called Rathad-na-Meirlich, or "the reivers' road," because along it the cattle stolen by the Lochaber marauders in Speyside were driven to the south. There is a tradition that Rob Roy himself took part in such raids, and was no stranger in these parts. An old fir-tree, to which the Speckled Laird of Rothiemurchus, as he was called, tied a bullock or two during these forays, in order to procure immunity for his own herds, was standing until it was burnt down by the recent forest fire. I possess some fragments of this old tree, so surcharged with turpentine that they act like torches, and burn down to the hand that holds them with a

steady bright flame. Several of the Macgregors whom Rob Roy took with him from the south to aid in one of these expeditions remained behind and settled in Rothiemurchus, and became allied with the laird's household. A tombstone preserves their memory in the churchyard. The laird, Patrick Grant, who got the name of Macalpine because of his friendliness to the unfortunate clan Alpine or Macgregors, was greatly helped by Rob Roy in a time of sore need. Mackintosh, the nearest neighbour of Grant, built a mill just outside the west march of Rothiemurchus, and threatened to divert a stream from Grant's lands to it. A fierce quarrel arose between the two lairds on this account, and Mackintosh threatened to burn the Doune to the ground. Marching for this purpose with his men, he suddenly encountered the forces of Rob Roy, and fled precipitately. Rob Roy set fire to Mackintosh's mill, and sent him a letter in Gaelic, in which he threatened to kill every man and burn every house on the Mackintosh estate, unless he promised to abstain in future from molesting Rothiemurchus. A song was composed on the occasion, entitled "The Moulin Dhu," or Black Mill, the tune of which is one of the best reel tunes in Highland music.

The Street of the Thieves is the most celebrated of the forest paths of Rothiemurchus; but the whole district is full of paths, used for more innocent purposes. They are most intricate and bewildering to one who does not know the ground, but are easily traversed by the natives. Being covered with russet carpets of pine-needles, as if Nature herself had made them, and not man, they are always dry and elastic to the tread. What heavenly lights and shades from the branches overhead play upon them; and how the westering sun with its level rays brings out the red hues, until the forest paths glow in sympathy with the splendid *Abendglühen* on the sunset hills!

The dense mass of vegetation in these forests strikes one with astonishment. Not an inch of soil but is covered with a tangled growth of heather, blaeberry and cranberry bushes and juniper; and feeding parasitically upon the underground stems are immense quantities of the yellow *Melampyrum* or cow wheat, and pale spikes of dry *Goodyera*, that looks like the ghost of an orchis. Here and there in the open glades the different species of *Pyrola*, or winter-green, closely allied to the lily of the valley, send up from their hard round leaves spikes with waxen balls of delicate whiteness and tender perfume.

The one-flowered *Moneses grandiflora*, exceedingly rare, is found in some abundance in the woods at the south-west end of the loch. And it may chance that in some secret spot the charming little *Linnæa*, named after the father of botanical science, may lurk, reminding one of the immense profusion with which it adorns the Norwegian forests in July. The mosses are in great variety and extraordinary luxuriance, especially the rare and lovely ostrich-plume feather moss, which grows in the utmost profusion on the shady knolls. The Rothiemurchus forests have always been famous for their rare fungi, especially for their *Hydna*, a genus of mushroom, which has spikes instead of gills on the under surface of its cap. One species, the *Hydnum ferrugineum*, is found only in these forests, and exudes, when young, drops of blood from its spongy substance. There are innumerable ant-hills of various sizes, some being enormous, and these must have taken many years to accumulate. You see them at various stages. Some are fresh and full of life, crowded with swarms of their industrious inhabitants. But many are old and deserted, either half grown over with the glossy sprigs of the cranberry, or completely obliterated by the other luxuriant vegetation.

All through the forest you see little mounds covered with blaeberry and cranberry bushes, which clearly indicate their origin. They were originally ant-hills. Each particle of them was collected by the labours of these insects. If you dig into them you will find the foundation to be composed exclusively of pine-needles, and you can trace the tunnels and galleries made by the ants. It is a curious association this—of plant and animal life—a kind of symbiosis. The struggle between the two kinds of life is seen here in a most interesting way. The wave of the undergrowth of the forest, in its slow, stealthy, irresistible progress, encroaches upon the ant-hills, and forms at first a ring round their base. Gradually it creeps up their sides, and you see one-half of the ant-hill covered with cranberry bushes and the other half retaining its own characteristic appearance of a heap of brown fir-needles with the ants swarming over them, busy at their work. But the vegetable wave still advances and finally extinguishes the last spark of animal life on the mounds, and rolls its green crest over their buried contents. In this remarkable way the soil of the forest is formed by a combination of the labours of plant and animal life. Looking at the vast mass of animal and

vegetable life, you feel that there is something almost terribly impressive in this rapacious, ever-splendid Nature, tirelessly working in its unconscious forces, antagonistic to all stability. You have an overpowering conception of vital energy, of individual effort, upreaching to the sun and preserving the equilibrium of Nature!

One has no idea from the uniform clothing of the fir-forests of the extraordinary irregularity of the ground, except here and there in the open parts and places bare of timber, where the ups and downs of the landscape may be seen to perfection. Huge moraines and heaps of river-drift show what elemental forces were at work, in the later geologic periods, in moulding the aspects of the scenery. Volcanic forces first piled up the gigantic granite masses of the mountains on the horizon, and great glaciers planed down their sides and deposited the débris over the low grounds where the forest now creeps. The past here seems to be all Nature, a theatre where only the physical powers have been operating. Human life at the beginning must have been on too small a scale to contend with the mighty natural forces, and was soon wiped out and effaced. In a fir-forest, with its heather and juniper, man could find almost no subsistence in his primitive state—

no kind of scenery could have been so inhospitable to him. And yet over the green upland slopes of Tullochghru, where the ground has not been broken for centuries, great quantities of burial cairns and circular dwellings and artificial mounds or places of popular assembly show that there was here, in far-off times, a large population. At a place called Carn-rhu-Ænachan, near the Croft, where evidences of glacial action are most striking, there is a green hillside which must have been the earliest clearing in the great aboriginal forest, on which lies a half-hidden stone with three cup-marks rudely hollowed out on its surface by a flint implement, surrounded by faint traces of human habitation. These cup-marks are as significant as the footprints which Robinson Crusoe saw on his lonely island. They are the only ones I have been able to find in all the district. They people the past for us, and give it that human interest without which the grandest scenery becomes desolate and uninviting. They show that where man had made a home for himself in the primeval forest, there beside it he prepared an altar for the unknown god of his unconscious worship. Older far, and of happier memory than the castellated lair of the Wolf of Badenoch on Loch-an-Eilan, these primitive cup-marks speak,

not of man's inhumanity to man, but of man's reverence and upward look of soul, and of the peace that binds heaven and earth. The eternities of the past and the future are associated with these rude symbols. We feel that the persons who scooped them out with their flint tools were men of like passions with ourselves; that they had similar experiences and similar fears and hopes. Their dust has utterly disappeared, their memories have altogether perished, but what they dedicated to religion has survived, has shared in the immortality of religion; and Nature has here preserved the first feeble steps of primitive man along the upward path with sacred inviolability amid the inhospitable waste.

V

GLEN EUNACH

V

GLEN EUNACH

ROTHIEMURCHUS is essentially a sporting estate. More than three-fourths of its lands have no agricultural or pastoral value, and are fit for no other purpose than a deer forest. The vast upland regions and luxuriant fir-woods would hardly yield any subsistence for sheep or cattle, and the climate is too bleak and cold for them. But they are admirably adapted for the antlered denizens of the forest, which frequent in large herds the mountain corries, where the patches of grass have a peculiarly fattening quality and the deer thrive well. The deer forest of Rothiemurchus has always occupied a high place in the estimation of sportsmen, and commands a large rental. It has often been held season after season by the same tenant, and the result has been uniformly satisfactory. For the accommodation of the deer-shooters, a very elegant and commodious lodge, Drumintoul, has

been built on the other side of the Druie, not far from Loch Pityoulish, from whence access is obtained to the high grounds by a capital driving-road through the woods. Glen Eunach forms the principal part of the deer forest, and from this circumstance its magnificent scenery is not so well known as it ought to be. It is naturally the object of the proprietor and tenants to keep the glen secluded to avoid the scaring of the deer. But before the stalking season commences, parties are allowed to visit the place with certain necessary precautions. To the vast majority of visitors to the district, however, it must obviously be a sealed spot.

Entering by a gate at Loch-an-Eilan, over which the Scottish Rights of Way Society has fixed a board indicating that this is the commencement of the public road to Braemar by the Larig Pass, you skirt the northern shore of the loch, which you soon leave behind, and proceed through old fir-forests around the base of the bare mountain mass of Creag Dubh, one of the outer spurs of the great Cairngorm range. This hill is well worth ascending for the sake of the splendid view which the top commands of the whole region. A pathway leads to the summit, the fir-trees becoming more dwarfed and stunted the higher up you climb. Near the top of the first height

there is a gully where the deer often resort, and the ground is torn up by their combats during the rutting season. In this place I have several times found a curious moss which grows only on the droppings of deer, a species of *Splachnum*, which has a very fine appearance with its large red capsules and bright green foliage. Developing only on animal substances, it seems to reverse the great rule that plants precede animals in the scheme of creation. On the highest ridge the ground is remarkably bare and storm-scalped. The winds rush over it with almost irresistible fury, even on a comparatively calm day, and sweep everything before them. The vegetation that clothes this bleak altitude is Polar in its character, rising only an inch or two above the soil, or creeping along and holding firmly by its roots. Arctic willows and azaleas form the only patches of verdure among the large heaps of white granite débris; and over the tangled masses of dark mosses and lichens that cling closely together for mutual help against the common foe, a curious stringy lichen of a straw colour, the *Alectoria sarmentosa*, unknown except in such Polar situations, forms tortuous knots. A bit of ground with its characteristic plants from this ridge would remind one of a spot in Greenland or Spitzbergen.

The Creag Dubh, though looking like an independent summit over Loch-an-Eilan, whose sky-line it forms, is in reality the elevated foot of the Sgòran Dubh, a lofty hill opposite Braeriach, and only two or three hundred feet lower in height. The easiest way to ascend the Sgòran Dubh is over the long-extended ridge at the back of Creag Dubh, rising higher and higher by gentle elevations to the sharp conical summit. On the sky-line, not far behind the ridge of Creag Dubh, is a huge boulder left by glacial forces on this exposed point called the "Argyll Stone." After the disastrous battle at Aberdeen, Montrose fled across the country to the Spey, intending to make use of the ferry-boats on the river to pass over to the other side. But finding them removed and an armed force waiting to oppose his passage, he marched his army back through the forest of Abernethy, where he remained for several days, and then proceeded through the forest of Rothiemurchus over the hills down into Badenoch. Argyll followed fast upon his heels and caught sight of the vanishing host at this point. Learning that many of the natives had joined the standard of Montrose, Argyll took vengeance upon the whole district, which he laid waste with fire and sword. Not far from the Argyll Stone there is another large

boulder called Clach Mhic Allan, or the Duke of Atholl's Stone. The Duke was taking refuge behind it, when he was set upon and killed near the summit of the ridge.

At another index board of the Scottish Rights of Way Society in the heart of the forest two ways meet and cross each other. The one to the left leads through the Larig to Braemar, the other to the right is the path to Glen Eunach. Near the point of divergence there is a small shallow lake, which in hot summers is often dry. For about a mile and a half the road proceeds in a straight line on a uniform level through the well-grown plantation which has superseded the old aboriginal forest of giant trees. In this wood I have several times seen and heard the crested tit—a bird which is now almost wholly confined to the Rothiemurchus forest and is becoming more rare, though once it was abundant wherever the ancient Caledonian forest extended. By and by you come to the pass of the glen, where the precipitous banks on either side contract, and the stream, deep down below, forces its way with considerable difficulty, roaring and foaming, over the great boulders that fill its bed. Directly opposite on your left hand is the bare, elegantly-shaped cone of Carn Eilrig, which rises to an imposing altitude

from this point. It is the "sanctuary" of Rothiemurchus, where, in former times, the deer escaping into it were not allowed to be shot. This humane practice, however, no longer obtains. This hill, like a grand, solemn sphinx, is set to guard the portals of a mountain region of mystery and romance. The murmurs of the stream in its bed are all-pervading. You hear them a good way off—filling all the air like the voices of a multitude. The steep rocks on either side, according to the folk-lore of the place, are inhabited by two different "brownies," perpetually quarrelling and shouting at one another. Wild shrieks and mocking laughter are heard, especially when the belated pedestrian approaches the pass at twilight, and recalls, with fear and trembling, its uncanny reputation. No mortal was ever the friend of the one "brownie" without deeply offending the other, who manifested his anger in very offensive ways. The sound of many waters at the pass accounted for a good deal of this supernatural superstition. Beyond the pass the last solitary firs of the forest contend with the elements, and are twisted and dwarfed by the severity of the struggle; but you hardly notice them, for they are extinguished by the universal magnitude of the inorganic masses and forces around. From this

ON THE GLEN EUNACH ROAD. *To face page* 63.

point the pass opens up a wide treeless waste of utter solitude. Terraces of moraine matter, broken and gleaming white in the sunshine, indicating the different levels at which the stream formerly ran, bank up its course, and little rills coursing down the mountains from both sides fall into it to swell its volume. This region has never been animated by human life. It is above the zone of cultivation. No ruins of hamlets, with nettles growing round the cold hearth-stones, cluster on the spots where the turf is softest and greenest among the heather, to testify of forcible evictions and heart-broken farewells, and of the new homes of exiles far away across a world of seas. The peace here is not the peace of death, to which man's works return, but the peace of the primitive, untamed wilderness. From time immemorial the region has been dedicated to the noble pastime dear to the old kings and chieftains of Scotland. Large herds of red deer frequent the corries; but you may wander for days over the boundless waste without seeing a single antler, when all at once you may behold on the ridge over your head a score of deer standing motionless, gazing at you with their horns piercing the sky-line like skeleton boughs. It is a grand sight, but it is only momentary, for, scenting danger,

they disappear over the shoulder of the mountain, noiselessly, like a dream, into the safe shadows of another glen.

On the right-hand side, shortly after the pass is traversed, a solitary pine may be seen on the high ground isolated at a considerable distance from the last straggler, which marks the spot where the old inhabitants of Rothiemurchus used to take leave of their friends when they went to the summer shielings. This was considered an important occasion, and several old-world ceremonies were performed in connection with it. A large company helped to lead the cattle and to carry the dairy utensils and household bedding of the women who were to stay behind and occupy the rudely-constructed bothies, where they carried on the manufacture of butter and cheese for winter consumption. After seeing to their comfortable settlement in the huts, usually constructed in some green sheltered place beside a mountain rill, the friends would depart to their own farms down in the low grounds, and at the end of three or four months, the women of the shielings would return home laden with the products of their summer industry. Glen Eunach, as I have said, was never inhabited. It had no agricultural capabilities, but here and there beside the streams

there were green spots that grew very nourishing grasses, which enabled the cows to give large quantities of milk, and the shielings of Glen Eunach in ancient times were justly celebrated. On the left-hand side of the stream there is a large extent of ground principally covered by moraines, which is hid from the visitor along the road by the elevated terraces forming the banks of the stream. Among these moraines is a small lake, marked on the Ordnance map by the curious name of "Loch Mhic Ghille-Chaoile," which means the *loch of the lean man's son*. It obtained this curious name from the circumstance that a native of Rothiemurchus was killed beside it long ago, in connection with the raiding of the cattle in the summer shielings of Glen Eunach one Sunday morning by the Lochaber reivers. The herdsman in charge of the cattle, as the Rev. Mr M'Dougall graphically tells us, rushed to the church of Rothiemurchus, where the people were met for worship, and informed them of the robbery. Mac Ghille-Chaoile, who was the fleetest of foot, because of his hereditary leanness, outstripped his companions in the pursuit, and came up alone with the marauders at the little loch in Glen Eunach, where he found the cattle gathered together in one spot ready to be removed. Here

a fierce altercation took place, in consequence of which Mac Ghille-Chaoile was slain. Taking up his body and hiding it in a hollow near at hand, called "Coire Bo Craig," the raiders decamped, so that when the rest of the pursuers arrived they saw no trace either of their companion or the reivers. Some five or six weeks later, a Lochaber woman visiting Rothiemurchus told the people of the manner of Mac Ghille-Chaoile's death, and of the spot where his body was concealed, as she had been told by the reivers, whereupon his friends brought down his remains and laid them devoutly in the churchyard. The loch after this became associated with his name, and the discovery in recent years of an old rusty dirk beside the loch, with which probably the ruthless murder was committed, gave confirmation to the story.

Crossing the stream by a wooden bridge you come to the first bothy, built of timber, for the use of deer-stalkers. Here it is customary to leave the road and climb Braeriach, over heath and peat bogs, by a foot-track by the side of a tributary burn that comes down from the heights. From this point you do not see the full proportions of the mountain; you see only a part of its long-extended sides rising tier above tier to the sky. You must go farther away in order to take

in the whole view. Perhaps the best point of observation is the railway station at Aviemore, where you see the huge mountain rising up from the extensive fir-forest of Rothiemurchus in a long, swelling, massive slope, with immense rounded shoulders, catching alternate sunshine and shade from the passing clouds, and exhibiting, even under sudden gleams of light, a peculiarly grey, barren aspect. About a thousand feet from the summit the uniformity of the slope is broken up by two great corries, divided from each other by a narrow neck or ridge connecting the shoulders of the mountain with the top. One of them is occupied by a bright green transparent tarn, perhaps the highest lakelet in Britain, into which a streamlet trickles down the face of the cliff in a series of waterfalls, a mere slender thread in dry weather, but presenting a magnificent sheet of unbroken foam when swollen by a storm. The corries look at a distance, when filled with the afternoon shadows, like the hollow eye-sockets of a gigantic skull. In the rifts and shady recesses patches of snow linger almost throughout the whole year, and appear dazzlingly white by contrast with the dark rocks around.

The loneliness of the wooden bothy is oppressive. I have rested in it both in storm and in

calm. Even on the brightest summer day it is desolate in the extreme; and the rivulet that murmurs past has a forlorn sound, as if it missed the cheerfulness of human habitations. This one bothy emphasises the solitude, as a single tree does in a treeless wilderness. It reminds you of social instincts and companionships for which there is no gratification in this glen. I remember spending an hour or two in it along with the Master of Balliol and Professor Jones, having been compelled to take refuge from a wild storm which shrouded all the mountains in a dense, leaden mist, and soughed in fierce gusts among the corries, raising the voice of the stream that flowed behind to a loud upbraiding. A cheerful fire of wood dispelled the gloom and made us warm and cosy. In one recess there was a rude bed, with a shelf and candles and tea-cups, proving that the hut was often occupied at night. You can imagine the eeriness of the solitary tenant, especially if he had a superstitious mind filled with the ghost stories of the district. The very coldness of the night would give him a sensation of the supernatural, such as might precede the advent of a spectre, and the wailing of the winds would seem like the voices of the dead. A feeling of expectancy would take possession of

him as if some mysterious being were coming out of the vast darkness to hold commune with him. The very room itself would be filled with some unknown presence, some one of the powers of darkness. It is a wonder that anyone can be found hardy enough to pass through such an experience. One must be matter-of-fact and unimaginative indeed to do so. But a summer day in such a spot is a delicious sensation, when the whole glen is filled with a subdued and softened light, and the mountain sides seem as if a blue smoke were rising over them like a veil, giving them a spectral charm, and the ripple of the streams is musical, and the purple heather just beginning to bloom and to tint the bogs has a faint odour, a "caress of scent," the very soul of perfume.

VI

GLEN EUNACH

(*Continued*)

VI

GLEN EUNACH—*continued*

BEYOND the first bothy the scenery becomes grander and lonelier. The glen contracts, the slopes of Braeriach on the one side and those of the Sgòran Dubh on the other become steeper and loftier. Nature is more awe-inspiring, and seeks to impress us more and more the nearer we approach to her heart. In a short time the great precipices of the Sgòran form peaks and spires of indescribable grandeur. The face of the perpendicular cliffs, more than two thousand feet in height, is broken up into deep rifts, with long trailing heaps of débris at the foot, and great outstanding buttresses of rock, as if these mighty masses required additional support; and the colour of the granite is a rich dark blue, like the bloom on a plum. The rocks have caught this hue from the sky during untold ages of exposure to sun and storm. The effect of these gigantic rocks with wreaths of mist and cloud writhing up

their sides, and revealing more and more of their great height and steepness, cannot be described in words. The stream at the foot of these precipices flows darkly and sluggishly over a wide peaty hollow amid the stumps and tortuous roots of old pine-trees, testifying that this place was once densely wooded with the primeval forest. How these trees could exist then, and why they cannot flourish now, is a problem not easy to solve. It is not that the climate or any of the conditions requisite to the growth of the pine-tree have changed. The probable reason is not the height of the spot, or the bleakness of the climate, but the exposure of the individual trees, when planted, to the prevailing storms. When once a gap was made in the serried ranks of the pines as they grew in the original wood, they yielded one by one to the force of the tempest; and the reason why we cannot now make our planted firs to grow in such a situation, where we see thousands of their fallen progenitors cumbering the ground with their bleached remains, is that we cannot imitate the slow, gradual method of Nature in giving them the shelter which, through long centuries of mutual crowding together, they afforded to each other.

Farther on the picture is complete when the

PRECIPICES ABOVE LOCH EUNACH.

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first glimpse of Loch Eunach is seen at the next bothy, which is built of stone, and is meant for longer habitation. There a waterfall tumbles down from a huge bastion of Braeriach, the sound of which is lost in the immeasurable silence; while beyond it the mountain ascends out of sight, plateau above plateau. Loch Eunach reposes in the hollow between the great cliffs of Sgòran Dubh and the gigantic sides of Braeriach, whose gloomy shadows are cast down upon its waters. From its situation it is exposed to all the winds of heaven, which often come in immense sweeps, lifting the water in blinding spindrift far over the shores. A universal darkness sometimes gathers over it on the brightest day without a warning, in a moment, and torrents of slanting rain descend that sting your face and wet you through and through. But the clouds and the mist vanish as rapidly as they appear, and an azure world is revealed in the clear depths below, unflecked and dazzling, and the clouds, even when they again form, are suspended overhead in soft, ethereal masses in reposeful majesty and calm, and the waters are broken everywhere by multitudinous swift-flowing ripples, that seem like shuttles working backwards and forwards, weaving the sheen of the waves that glance in the sun like

watered silk. The lower end of the loch is dammed by huge banks of granite sand of the whitest hue, formed by the disintegration of the rocks around by the ever-restless waters; and here a walk along the shore reveals tufts of Alpine vegetation, *Oxyria* and *Alpine Lady's Mantle* and rare *Hieracia*, such as delight the botanist's eye and heart. Loch Eunach, like many of our Alpine lochs, abounds with delicate char, which make excellent eating.

The head of the glen, beyond the loch, is shut in by a lofty and rugged amphitheatre of cliffs called Corrour, which pass across between Braeriach and Sgòran Dubh, and down whose dark faces are long streaks and patches of light green, marking water-courses. Between the loch and these cliffs there is a large tract of level land, of wonderful smoothness and verdure, which is a favourite haunt of the deer. Here they may often be found in the earlier and later seasons of the year, cropping the rich grass in security, while in summer they seek the higher elevations for the sake of the cooler air. This spot used to be included in the shielings of Rothiemurchus. One summer, about the beginning of the eighteenth century, Lady Mary, the wife of the famous laird, Patrick Grant, surnamed Macalpine,

accompanied the maidens to the shielings of Corrour, for change of air; and there, without nurse or doctor, in a mere hut tenanted by the cattle, was suddenly born her second son John, who got the name of Corrour from this circumstance. This son had a distinguished career as an officer in the army, and died abroad after a good deal of service. This incident has been commemorated by the name of Corrour being given to a large villa recently built by a relation of the present laird on the way to Aviemore. In all the district there is not a grander spot than Corrour. There are very few that can come up to it in all Scotland. The scenery of the deep corrie recalls that of Loch Coruisk among the Cuchullin Hills in Skye, and Loch Eunach equals, if it does not surpass, the wonderfully wild view of Loch Avon from the heights of Ben Macdhui above it. In that weird caldron of the storms, that den "where," as Wordsworth boldly says, "the earthquake might hide her cubs," the imagination could revel in the most dreadful shapes of ancient superstition. We do not wonder that before the Highland fancy, in such lonely places, visions of water-bulls and ghostly water-kelpies should shape themselves out of the gathering mists.

To be alone on the shores of such a loch during

a tempest would be the height of sublimity. All Ossian's terrors would be seen in the writhing mists and foaming waters and frowning rocks appearing and disappearing through the clouds, and the howling of the winds would seem like the spirits of the lost. Even on the brightest summer day, when sitting on the pure white granite sands on the margin of the loch, one feels as if sitting "on the shore of old romance," and has an eerie sensation as if the veil that separated the seen from the unseen were thinner in this place than anywhere else, and might be lifted up at any moment and some uncanny shape appear.

Braeriach is in the Rothiemurchus forest, which extends to the Duke of Fife's forest on the Braemar side. It is one of the foremost of the great group of mountains which forms the roof of Scotland, and occupies the most imposing elevated ground in Britain. The boundary between the counties of Aberdeen and Inverness runs along the ridge of Braeriach, and is one of the grandest lines of delimitation in the kingdom. A well-made zigzag path, constructed by the deer-stalkers for bringing down the produce of the chase from the mountain, ascends from Loch Eunach, by which it is comparatively easy to climb to the top. On

the way up many fascinating rills cross one's path, which flow down a course lined with the softest and greenest moss, inexpressibly pleasant to the eye in the desolate wilderness, while here and there cushions of the lovely moss-campion, starred with its numerous crimson blossoms, form a delightful sward by their side. You can hardly tear yourself away from the charm of the little transparent pools and from the sweet gurgling sound they make in the awestruck silence, and the delicious coldness of the sparkling water which you are tempted at every step to scoop up with your hand and drink, infusing new vigour into your parched frame. The granite rock holds these rills like a crystal goblet, and from its hard sides no particle is worn away to pollute the purity of the element or tame its brilliant lustre. The cairn crowning the highest point is only two or three yards from the brink of a tremendous precipice, which forms part of a long wall extending for upwards of two miles, perhaps the most formidable line of precipices to be found in Britain. Cairntoul, which rises up across the gorge to almost the same height as Braeriach, shapes the huge granite boulders of its top into a gigantic cairn, and bears in its highest corrie a beautiful little circular lake, which shows as green as an emerald in the afternoon light, and

gives rise to the white waters of the Garachory burn. Near the summit of Braeriach, at the north-east extremity, are five springs, which are perennial, and are called the "Wells of Dee." The rills from these springs unite a little lower down the mountain at an elevation of about 4000 feet, and farther on to the southward join the Garachory. These rills are supposed to form the principal source of the Dee. At this height you cannot distinguish the varied tones of the minstrelsy of the united stream as it breaks into foam among the numerous boulders in its course; but you hear instead an all-pervading sigh or murmur in the air, like the distant echo of the shout of a multitude, which has an indescribably grand effect upon the mind.

The panorama of the whole Highlands of Scotland, from the long broad summit of Ben Macdhui, gleaming red in the level afternoon light, surrounded by the wild grandeur of the crags about Loch Etchachan and Loch Avon, "the grisly cliffs that guard the infant rills of Highland Dee," to the highest point of Ben Nevis in the far western distance, scaling the heavens, and gathering a fringe of dark clouds around its brow, seems to spread out in one uninterrupted view before you—a tumultuous

ocean of dark mountains, with here and there the solid mass crested with glistening snow. Gazing on the sublime picture, in which the wild chaos of Nature has swallowed up all traces of man's presence, and not a single human habitation or sign of cultivation is visible in all the immeasurable horizon, you feel to the full the inspiration of the scene. So quickened is the pulse, so elevated are the feelings, that one hour in such a situation is worth a whole month on the tame level of ordinary life in the city or on the plain. The mind receives a keener edge, and is quick to perceive the interest that lies not only in the great whole of the view, but also in the smallest details of it. The mystery of the mountain is in the eye of the lonely wildflower that strives in a forlorn way to embellish the brown weather-beaten turf, and every tuft of grass that waves in the wind, and every little rill that trickles in the silence, seems to be conscious of the sublimity of the spot. Problems of the original upheaval by some mighty internal force of the mass of primary rock which forms the base of the whole group of mountains occupy and stimulate the mind. The granite detritus, of which you take up a handful from the ground beside your feet, and let it pass through your

fingers, seems like sand from Nature's great hour-glass, speaking to you of worlds that have passed away in ages for which you have no reckoning, of universal decay and death; and you are reminded that these seemingly everlasting mountains are perishing, slowly when measured by man's notions of time, but surely, for, as the poet tells us, they are only clouds a little more stable and enduring that change their shapes and flow from form to form, and at last disappear for ever in the eternal blue.

VII

LARIG GHRU

VII

LARIG GHRU

In the grand, beautifully-balanced view of the great Cairngorm range, obtained from the platform of the railway station at Aviemore, a remarkable cleft is seen between the lofty, long-extended plateaus of Braeriach and the great massive slopes of Cairngorm. This gloomy pass is called the Larig Ghru, or, to give it its full name, the Larig Ghruamach, or Savage Pass, from its extreme wildness. It is generally filled with writhing mists or dark shadows, but when the sun shines directly into it, it discloses its rocky sides moistened by the melting of the snow in the clefts above, and lit up with a silver radiance. You can then see far into its inner recesses, almost half-way through, and the vista reveals visions of bleak cliffs, red granite slopes, an almost perpendicular watercourse, rounded summits retreating one behind the other until the end is filled up with the huge shoulder of Ben Macdhui, which appears and disappears in

the mist. Grand as it looks at a distance, you can only form a true conception of its savage sublimity when you actually enter for a considerable distance into the rugged jaws of the pass itself. From both near and far points of view it has often attracted the attention of the artist, and pictures of it in oil or water-colours not seldom adorn the walls of the exhibitions of the Royal Academy in London.

The Larig Ghru pierces the great Cairngorm range from south to north, and is the principal route by which the pedestrian can cross from Speyside to Braemar. It used to be much frequented by drovers and shepherds, who transported their flocks and herds by this route from the hillsides of Aviemore and Kingussie to the markets of Castletown on the Dee. But since the opening of the Highland Railway between Inverness and Perth these markets have been discontinued, and the surplus sheep and cattle of the district are sent by train to the large towns and cities of the south; consequently the pass has fallen into desuetude as a great public road, and is now used almost exclusively by the adventurous tourists who wish to penetrate into the sublime solitudes of the Cairngorms. There never was any road worthy of the name in its palmiest days

—only a species of bridle track; but such as it was, it was kept in the best repair of which it was capable. But since its abandonment to the summer tourists, it has been allowed to revert to the wildness of Nature; and were it not for the zealous efforts of members of the Cairngorm Club, who have taken the matter in hand, it would by this time have become impassable. They have in many places smoothed the roughest parts of the track, and in others indicated its course, when it would otherwise have disappeared in bog or rocky desert, by the erection of stone men as guides. Especially welcome are these rude cairns amid the vast bewildering heaps of débris that have fallen from the lofty cliffs on both sides of the pass at its highest point, and meet together in the narrowest parts to bar the way.

A gang of labourers employed for a few weeks would have removed all these difficulties of the route, and made it easy and pleasant for the tourist, either on foot or on horseback. But there are no public funds available for this purpose; indeed, it is not considered desirable by the powers that be, that the track should be maintained at all. It would be considered a piece of good fortune if it should disappear altogether and these solitudes be entirely unvisited, so that the deer forest through

which it passes might not be disturbed. For many years the pass was closed to pedestrians, lest they should scare the game; and it was only after many unpleasant struggles that the Scottish Rights of Way Society succeeded in opening up a through communication between Aviemore and Braemar, and re-establishing the public right of way through this defile, which had existed from time immemorial, although for a period it had been foolishly suffered to pass into abeyance. But though the freedom of passage was ultimately conceded, it was restricted to the narrowest line consistent with going through at all. No margin on either side of the track was permitted, and the pedestrian has in consequence to plant his feet in the exact footsteps of his predecessors, and so make the ruts ever deeper and more trying. In this way the path is the most difficult and tiresome of any in Great Britain. It is a pity that a more generous interpretation was not given to the licence allowed, so that the arduousness of the passage might have been somewhat mitigated. No one visiting this sublime solitude for the sake of the wild scenery would wish to inflict the slightest injury upon the sport of the huntsmen—their interests would have been as sacred to him as his own; and the likelihood is that, treated with a

generous trustfulness, he might be even more zealous of the rights of the proprietor than, as human nature is constituted, he can be at present.

The entrance of the Larig Pass is about six miles from Aviemore. There are two routes by which it can be reached, both equally delightful all the way. The most direct route is by the high road past the village of Inverdruie, which consists of a cluster of grey wooden houses like a Norwegian settlement, situated in a wide clearing in the fir-forest. The clang of the blacksmith's anvil sounds musical in the still air, and the busy hum of the long row of wooden hives in the blacksmith's garden, filled with delicious heather honey, charms the summer silence. The schoolmaster's garden has bright borders of flowers in it, and the schoolhouse windows are filled with large pots of geranium in full scarlet blossom, which still further increase the resemblance to a Norwegian village. A bypath leads to the Dell, now let to summer visitors. The first lairds of Rothiemurchus lived here in the simplest fashion, and it was long used as a jointure house, commanding in the centre of the plain, beside the much-divided channels of the Druie, covered with thickets of alder and willow, a very fine view all around the horizon. The main road passes the

neat and substantial United Free Church—built with much taste, principally of the granite boulders of the place, with its interior ceiling and fittings made as fragrant as a house of the forest of Lebanon with the aromatic smell of red-grained fir boards—and makes a wide opening in the forest all the way up to Coylum Bridge. At this point a board indicating that this is the commencement of the public road to Braemar by the Larig Pass stands in the wood on the right-hand side of the road before you cross the bridge. A delightful track along the bank of the shady river takes you through thickets of alder and clumps of fir to the rustic wooden bridge that crosses the Bennie, about two miles farther up in the heart of the forest. The loud murmurs of the river, whose many boulders awaken its volume to a wilder music, accompany you all the way, and the current of cool air carried along by the flowing waters cools your heated brow. At the wooden bridge, the other route from Aviemore round by the north shore of Loch-an-Eilan and through the long fir-woods, joins this route, and both cross the Bennie over the rustic steps. A kind of ford has been made a little above, by which vehicles can cross in a most jolting fashion when the water is low. The path after a while

THE LARIG PASS.

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emerges into open pasture ground beside the quiet stream lined with alders and birches. This green oasis was once cultivated, and on the other side of the river there are the ruins of two large substantial houses connected with the farm of Altdruie. They were tenanted by Macgregors, who were brought to this region by Rob Roy from the Braes of Balquidder. The farm has been allowed to become a waste wilderness, and is now part of the great deer forest, a solitary house and stable being built for the accommodation of gillies and horses employed in connection with the sport. Beyond this bothy the path soon takes you through the luxuriant heather and gigantic juniper bushes, which form the underwood of the forest, along the bank of the stream, to the direct opening of the Larig Ghru Pass. Here at the end of a fir-wood, a stone pillar and a guide-post stand, with the necessary directions. Were it not for these patent indications, the obscure entrance would often be missed by the stranger.

For nearly a mile the path passes through a scraggy fir-forest, its narrow course almost concealed by the luxuriant heather meeting over it from both sides. The quality of the ground varies continually from soft peat-bog to hard

granite gravel and rough boulders, and one has to walk by faith and not by sight, getting many rude shocks and sudden trippings from unseen and unexpected obstacles. In wet weather this part of the route is altogether deplorable, and is the occasion of so many disasters that one becomes utterly reckless, plunging on, heedless of the sodden state of one's shoes and the draggled wretchedness of one's clothes. The track mounts continually upwards until at last you rise above the straggling forest into the wide open moorland, with a grand view all around, and the free air of heaven playing with grateful coolness on your face. Thereafter you pursue your way over huge moraines, the relics of the ancient glaciers that once swept over this region and converted it into an undulating strath of the most surprising labyrinthine heights and hollows. The path takes you along the edge of these great mounds, where their broken sides slope down precipitously to the channel of the burn that foams and roars over its boulders far below. On the other side, directly opposite you, the bare conical hill of Carn Eilrig rises to an imposing altitude. It is a magnificent spectacle, and the sound of many waters, that comes up to you and seems to fill all the hushed listening air like the shout of a multitude, is very

inspiring. The sides of the moraines are covered with masses of blaeberry and cranberry bushes loaded with their purple and scarlet berries; for whatever may be the failure of the wild-fruit harvest in the low grounds, where sudden frosts and blights in spring and early summer are so apt to wreck the richest promise, an abundant crop may always be gathered here, above the risk of such casualties. In the pass there are no less than six different kinds of berries growing—blaeberry, whortleberry, cloudberry, cranberry, crowberry, bearberry—in great abundance. The crowberry offers its refreshing black berries to the parched palate in great abundance beside the path; the cloudberry, with its broad, currant-like leaves and orange, rasp-like fruit, haunts the bogs; while the whortleberry mingles with the blaeberry in the same situations, but is easily distinguished from it by its more straggling habit and by the glaucous or grey-green colour of its leaves. Its berries are very like those of the blaeberry, only of a somewhat flatter shape and with a more refined taste.

At the large boulder, surmounted by a stone man, which crowns the highest point of this part of the pass, and which commands a splendid vista of the richly-wooded scenery of the Spey

around Aviemore, the defile contracts, and on the one side are the great precipices of Braeriach, and on the other the rugged frowning buttresses of Creag-na-Leachan, which look as if they threatened to fall down and crush the visitor. These rocky jaws of the pass are composed of red granite, which looks in the heaps of broken débris at the bottom of the defile what it really is, but up in the overhanging cliffs has taken on a dark purple bloom by weathering, which completely disguises its true character, and in stormy weather assumes a most gloomy and forbidding appearance, greatly enhancing the savage aspect of the gorge. Granite, wherever it occurs, is always characterised by a special type of scenery. It usually exhibits a tame uniformity of outline, unrelieved even by the great height to which it is often elevated. Owing to the ease with which this rock may be decomposed by the weather, and the protection which the angular rubbish thus formed gives the surface, being constantly renewed as often as it is wasted away by the elements, it forms long, uniform, gently-inclined slopes. But owing also to its being traversed by innumerable vertical joints, this rock forms savage corries and dizzy cliffs, which the decays of Nature only make more precipitous, as they remove slice after slice from

their faces. Thus the different angular exposures of the rock to the wasting powers of Nature at the front and at the back of Braeriach, for instance, have given rise to the widely-different appearances of the hill from those two points of view, which so astonish the visitor. The smooth, undulating slopes and tableland on the west side of the hill contrast in a remarkable manner with the vertical walls into which the mountain breaks down all at once on the east and north sides, descending sheer for two thousand feet into the profound, mist-hidden glens. There is no other rock which combines these apparently incongruous features on the same range—the grandeur of lofty precipices and the smoothness of sloping shoulder and level top.

About a mile farther up the pass you have to cross over the stream at a point where an enormous avalanche of angular masses of rock has poured down the left side of the hill into the valley. Through this cataract of stones you hear the loud rumble of an unseen cataract of water falling from the heights and forming one of the tributaries of the stream at your feet. The spot makes a kind of *cul de sac* or a recess on the route, where you can get shelter from the wind, soft materials for a couch to lie upon, fuel to

kindle a fire, and plenty of the coldest and most delicious water, all inviting you to rest a while, and make ready an *al fresco* meal. In this favoured corner of the pass, which may well be named *le jardin*, you may gather in abundance on the slopes around the rare and interesting cornel, the *Cornus suecica*, beautiful alike in its flowering and fruiting stage. It has a large, brilliant white, strawberry-like blossom, but in the centre is a dark purple tuft, almost black, which gives it a very singular appearance. The apparent white petals are actually bracts, which remain on the plant when the flowers are fertilised, and gradually go back to the green colour of ordinary leaves, as is the case in the Christmas rose. The dark purple tuft in the centre consists in reality of the true flowers. In autumn the foliage of the cornel fades into beautiful red and orange tints, and the blossoms give place to one or more large, transparent scarlet berries. In its fruiting stage it is a very striking and conspicuous plant, and cannot fail to attract the eye even of the greatest novice in botany. I remember seeing the peasants in Norway hoeing it away as a weed in the potato-fields!

The stream above this spot for a considerable distance disappears below the ground, and the channel where it should flow is covered with

blaeberry and whortleberry bushes. Higher up you see it again pursuing its rejoicing course in the light of day and in unabated fulness, over stones covered with the softest and richest mosses of the most vivid green and golden colours. These mosses in the bed of the stream give to the music of the waters a peculiarly subdued and muffled tone, like a prolonged sigh, which greatly increases the feeling of melancholy in the forlorn waste around. The path here passes over ground peculiarly bare and storm-scalped. Hardly any vegetation grows on it save the white reindeer lichen, the brown alpine cudweed and grotesque tufts of upright clubmoss. The stones are blackened with various species of *tripe de roche*, looking like fragments of charred parchment, which crunch under your tread into black powder. Nothing can exceed the loveliness of the lemon crust of the geographical lichen, which spreads over the granite boulders everywhere in great patches, looking like maps with its glossy black fructification and little waving lines. Its vivid yellow colour contrasts in the most charming manner with the vivid red of the surface of the granite stone on which it grows. It is a perfect feast of beauty to the eye that can appreciate it.

Beyond this point you enter on a region of

extreme desolation. The stream that has been your companion all along has disappeared. You are now on the watershed of the pass, about 2750 feet above the level of the sea. On your left hand the south-west side of Ben Macdhui rises up to the lofty sky-line in almost perpendicular slopes of granite detritus, on which hardly a speck of grass, or lichen, or moss is seen. These slopes stand out against the clear blue, cloudless sky, when the sun on a bright day is shining full upon them, with the most intense scarlet radiance, like mounds of newly-burnt slag at the mouth of a mine. You have a sense of imprisonment, of oppression. Each rock and height seems endowed with personality, and impresses you with a feeling of hostile and irresistible power. The red screes take on a look of cruel menace. Where the rocks of Creag-na-Leachan form the western boundary of these screes, there is a breakneck descent from Ben Macdhui into the pass called the Chimney, which presents almost insuperable difficulties to all but the experienced climber. The course of a side stream, descending from the heights in a series of white cascades, breaks the uniformity of these great slopes, and is supposed to form the true source of the Dee. Immense heaps of rough and crowded

THE POOLS OF DEE. *To face page* 99.

blocks of stone that have fallen from the cliffs on both sides of the pass obstruct the way, and being often sharp and set on edge in all varieties of awkward positions, the footing is exceedingly precarious, and the progress over them must be slow and cautious. The stone men of the Cairngorm Club are an immense help in the perplexing intricacies of the track. Here and there oases of Alpine verdure occur among the leafless cairns, where the weary eye is refreshed by seeing frequent grey-green rosettes of Alpine cudweed upholstering mossy ground, tufts of glossy dark green Alpine rue, and, in one or two places, clusters of the rare and striking *Saussurea alpina*, with its pale blue composite flowers and large, handsome leaves. In hollow basins among these heaps of detritus are the three principal pools of Dee. They are evidently formed by the perpendicular stream that falls from the shoulder of Ben Macdhui, and is lost for a time under the cairns, to reappear at intervals in these sheets of water, where the ground is unobstructed.

Clambering over the last barrier of wreckage from the cliffs, you come down on the other side to the source of the Dee. There you see the river rushing full-bodied and complete at once from under the huge mass of moss-covered stones,

proclaiming its freedom in a loud, confused roaring. You obtain a long vista of the other side of the pass, with the narrow, rugged path gleaming white at intervals, and the noble river, which has no superior in Scotland for the clearness of its waters and the uniform swiftness of its current, winding down at its side to the cultivated glens and straths. Amid an array of giant mountains unequalled in Scotland within a similar area, forming the guardians of the pass on either side, your eye catches the magnificent steep sides and conical top of Cairn Toul, which fills up the whole southern side of the gorge. You sit down beside the clear waters that give you such a sense of overflowing, unfailing fulness, and yield yourself freely to the thoughts and feelings that arise in your heart. You feel that there is a spell upon you which it would be sinful to disturb. The imagination of a Doré could suggest nothing more wildly desolate than this secluded fountain-head of waters, with the mountain streams murmuring around it and the vast solitary peaks rising above it, shutting it out from all except the sun for a few hours at midday and the stars at night. Nothing can exceed the loneliness of the place. One coming here alone would almost thank his shadow for the suggestion of companion-

ship which it afforded. But what a field for meditation to one who is in league with the stones of the field, and who can interpret the mysterious signs in which the dumb mountains speak to him! The stream has the voice of a sibyl uttering mystic oracles; and an occasional Alpine bird flitting about, made almost tame by its ignorance of man, soothes the listening air with its tender twitter, and makes the place where it is seen and heard the very soul of the loneliness. How full of significance does every stone become, and how touching is the mute appeal of each Alpine flower by your side! You feel yourself a small and unheeded atom in the midst of the overwhelming mass of matter around you; and yet you feel at the same time that you belong necessarily to the heart of things, and supply the element of consciousness to them all, and are folded closely round in the arms of Infinite Love. In all your life you have never been so alone with Nature, in the very heart of it, as here. You seem to hear the pulse of the earth, to feel something of the eternal leisure of the mountains. Nature lays her calm cool hand upon the tumult of your heart, and while she humbles you, and makes you poor in your own esteem, she exalts and enriches you with her wealth of grand

suggestions. On a calm summer's day the mystery of the origin of the river in this spot captivates the mind and recalls all the romance and tenderness of "youth and buried time." But what must it be in winter, or in a storm, when the shallow waters are changed into raging torrents, and the wind is shrieking fiercely among the rocks, and the sky is blotted out with dark clouds, and the corries are filled with swirling mists and stinging rains and blinding snow!

VIII

GLENMORE AND CAIRNGORM

VIII

GLENMORE AND CAIRNGORM

THE estate of Rothiemurchus is very compact and is all comprehended within our horizon. Nearly the whole of it may be seen at the same time from any elevated central point. But its attractions are greatly enhanced by the estates that are immediately contiguous to it, viz. Glenmore on the north and Kinrara on the south. Glenmore is within the circuit of the same hills, and so also is a part of Kinrara, whose higher points may be seen included in the same comprehensive view. But the Ord Bàn separates between the scenery of Rothiemurchus and the scenery of Kinrara, while it reveals Loch Morlich and the landscapes around the shooting lodge of Glenmore lying at the foot of Cairngorm, which are unseen from the low grounds around. From the top of this conspicuous hill you see the horizon of Rothiemurchus to the north, a horizon of dusky fir-forests, and the horizon of Kinrara to the south, a horizon

of graceful birch-woods, another and altogether different world of beauty. Both Kinrara and Glenmore belong to the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, and Rothiemurchus comes in between them, partaking of the characters of both places, passing gradually into the upland grandeur of Glenmore, and shading insensibly into the quiet, soft loveliness of Kinrara.

To begin with Glenmore, which is bounded by the same hills to the north and east as Rothiemurchus, there are two routes by which the shooting lodge may be reached. The first is by Coylum Bridge and Altnacaber and through the fir-forests that line the banks of the Luineag or past the farm of Achnahatnich. The road is a remarkably pleasant one. The open spaces at Achnahatnich are a beautiful contrast to the dusky woods around. Before they were broken up for cultivation they were covered exclusively with an immense growth of heather and juniper bushes, from the latter of which the place gets its name of the Field of the Junipers. The light green meadows and cornfields, with the sun shining full upon them, refresh the eye through the vistas of the dark trees, and the occasional cottages, far separated from each other, relieve the oppression of the solitude. The hills are not

very high, but extremely picturesque, forming one continuous line of rounded masses of nearly equal altitude, their bases covered with pine-woods and their summits with bracken and variegated mosses and purple heather. At the western extremity they terminate in a steep declivity, with a red scaur running down the face of it. On the highest point are the ruins of an ancient Celtic fort, which commands a magnificent view, and below it is a cup-marked stone, beside which the early defenders of the fort used to worship. This ridge descends towards the uplands, and between it and the range of hills beyond there is a deep depression, which is the commencement of the Sluggan Pass, leading straight from Abernethy to Glenmore, and becoming grander as you proceed through it. A considerable stream lies far down at the bottom, and the sides of the defile are exceedingly steep, covered with a rout of trees that seem to clamber up, one beyond another, and occupy the most precarious positions. It looks more like a scene in Switzerland or Norway than any in this country. Through the Sluggan Pass the way opens out upon the richly-wooded plains of Kincardine, and the valley of the Spey northward past Boat of Garten, and the blue fields around Grantown, until the far horizon is closed by the traditionary.

sharply-cut hill called Benn-na-Claidh—or the Cut of the Sword—cleft from summit to foot by one stroke of a prehistoric giant's brand.

Returning to the Glenmore route the path reveals at every turn some new aspect of landscape loveliness. A herd of deer may often be seen quietly feeding in the open grassy spaces at a little distance from the road, unheeding the presence of the passer-by, if he does not shout to them. Feeding for the most part on the low grounds, where the grass is sweeter and more abundant, such deer seem larger than usual, and confirm a statement often made that before our native deer had been driven by men to the higher and poorer regions of our country, they were a larger race. In the superficial strata of the earth, horns of at least sixteen tines have been found; and it is a well-known fact that when a herd is confined to the luxuriant conditions of a deer-park, it will develop larger horns than when left wild on the hills. Midway on this route a rustic wooden bridge crosses the river and a path over it leads to a mineral well in the forest—which has drawn patients from far and near—and strongly impregnates the surrounding air with the smell of sulphuretted hydrogen. About two miles beyond, the shores of Loch Morlich come

LOCH MORLICH.

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in sight, and the drive up to the lodge is as fine as anything in this country. The loch itself is a beautiful sheet of water, surrounded on all sides by fir-woods, and the road passes along the edge of the water. It is about three miles round, forming a wide circular basin, every part of which is visible, without any bays or promontories. There are hardly any trout or char in it, the prevalent pike having nearly extirpated them. The loch is 1046 feet above the level of the sea; and the view, looking down its vast area to the hills beyond, seems much more extensive than one could believe, looking up at it from the reverse way. At the upper end there are great banks of the smoothest white granite sand, formed by the attrition of the waters on the rocks around, in which grow dwarf juniper bushes and willows, spreading widely and flatly over the surface, and knitting the particles of sand into a compact sward. The fir-trees and alders along these banks are most magnificent specimens of their kind. As you go round the head of the loch you come upon some giants of the ancient forest that were spared when the Glenmore Company, a firm of wood merchants from Hull, bought the forest from the Duke of Richmond for about £20,000. The timber of these glorious trees was extremely

valuable, and in all Scotland the firs of Glenmore were considered by far the grandest and oldest. The company, it is said, even with the gross wastefulness of their mismanagement, cleared £70,000 of profit. Among green and vigorous trees you come upon the wrecks of the ancient forest, trees of enormous girth and great height, stripped by the winds even of their bark, and like huge skeletons, holding up their bleached bones to the pitying heavens, or, broken by the violence of the storms, strewing the ground with the fragments of their trunks and boughs and leaving their twisted and entangled roots with large masses of the surface soil clinging to them high in air. The alders are equally magnificent and venerable. They are the largest and oldest specimens I have ever seen, their branches, tortuous by age and long resistance to the weather, knotted into the most fantastic forms. The trunks of such trees are often hollow, or filled with mouldering dust, and they are frequented by the rare crested tit, the phantom bird of these old Caledonian forests, which is oftener seen in the Glenmore woods than anywhere else. Among the interesting plants that occur in this forest are the *Moneses grandiflora*, the one-flowered winter-green, with its delicate white fragrant blossoms crowning its

lily-of-the-valley stem. The *Linnæa borealis* is also somewhat frequent in flower among the recesses of the woods. These two plants may be said to be relics of the old Caledonian forest, whose flora and fauna were similar to those of Norway and Sweden. From its far inland, inaccessible position, Glenmore was less exposed to the ravages of the invading foes than any other part of Scotland; and hence the trees were allowed to grow age after age and generation after generation with impunity—without risk of axe or fire—and it became the great nursery of the pine-forests of Scotland, where we see the conditions of the old Caledonian forests reproduced at the present day.

The road along the shores of the loch commands an unbroken view on the opposite side of the great wall of mountains between Cairngorm and Braeriach, which is one of the most stupendous lines of precipices in Britain. It rivets the attention all the way by its simple grandeur and its wide extent. This wall of mountains is not seen from other points, being lost in the mass of Cairngorm, which seems to form part of the mountains around the Larig Ghru Pass. It is only as we advance that they reveal themselves along the sky-line, forming lofty acclivities and

huge precipices, and long horizontal plateaus, rising up abruptly from the basin of the loch. The snow lingers far on in summer among the rifts and shady recesses, and brings out by contrast the blackness of the grim rocks, adding greatly to the sublimity of the landscape. On a gloomy day, when the sky is covered with dark clouds, the lofty wall of granite assumes a wild, uniformly forbidding appearance. Very little detail is seen, and the eye can form no true idea of the great height of the precipices. But on a clear bright day, the sunshine illumines each scaur and cleft of the granite rocks, and shows the great variety of their appearance, and they gain immensely in sternness of expression and in vastness of height. Glenmore Lodge before its recent reconstruction was a curious conglomeration of buildings, added, one after the other, to the original central structure. It is now a well-designed Highland lodge with a picturesque effect which harmonises well with the character of the surrounding scenery.

The ascent of Cairngorm is made by the path that winds across the stream at the bottom of the valley. The distance to the top may be about five miles by a tedious, but not a difficult route, a distinct path marking the gradual course to the

cairn that crowns the highest point. The first part of the way leads past a solitary farmhouse called Ricaonachan, which used to be the shooting lodge, for two miles through a wooded defile formed by a large burn from the southern side of Cairngorm. Crossing this burn by a rustic wooden bridge, you climb the actual side of the hill and emerge on a wide open moorland, from whence, by a long, gradual incline by a deer-shooters' zig-zag path, you are brought up to the ridge, from which the summit is soon reached. The surface of the mountain is extremely barren, consisting mostly of rough granite gravel and boulders with hardly any vegetation. The naked soil produces very few of the Alpine plants that are conspicuous on other mountains of similar elevation. Here and there a rare sedge or scale-moss gladdens the eye of the botanist; and large tufts of a chocolate-brown *Andreæa*, and patches of a snowy scalloped lichen called *Cetraria nivalis*, both almost entirely confined to the Cairngorm range, remind you of the vegetation of the Polar regions. In the southern corrie near the top, well-shaded from the sun, a large wreath of snow usually lingers till August, and then melts completely away. The mountain is entirely bare of snow for about a month or six weeks; the last relics of the past

winter almost mingling with the first fall of next winter's new snow. The origin of the large burn at the foot of the hill is from the melting of the snow in this corrie. The course of the water downwards may be traced by the tract of rich green verdure which it nourishes, and which forms a great contrast to the barren sterility of the rest of the region. It is this green tract of verdure that has given its name to the mountain.

A few hundred yards beyond the crowning cairn, there is a spring of deliciously cold water called Fuaran-a-Mharcuis or the Marquis's well, which is often a spot of blackness amid the snow, or entirely obliterated by it. The tourist is not infrequently induced to go on from this point to the summit of Ben Macdhui, which adds considerably to the arduousness of the feat. Descending over the steep cliffs by the stream on the south-western side of Cairngorm, you come to the shore of Loch Avon, which is unequalled among the Scottish lochs on account of its utter loneliness and the stern magnificence of its mountain setting. For a large part of the year the sun cannot reach it on account of the loftiness of the rocky walls which shut it in. The wind for the same reason does not often ruffle its surface, and it stretches before the eye for a mile and a half, a

THE SHELTER STONE AND LOCH AVON.

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calm mirror in which the wild solitude sees itself reflected with double grandeur. Its waters are of a startlingly blue colour, breaking at the shore into green and cobalt hues like the bickering colours on a peacock's neck. At the west end of this loch is the famous Clach Dhian or Shelter Stone, which is an immense boulder of granite resting on other stones, and thus forming a cave sufficient to accommodate five or six men. This spot is often used as a sleeping-place when the tourist is overtaken by the darkness, and it is sufficiently windproof and dry to provide fairly comfortable quarters for a summer night. Bearing south-east from this well-known landmark, and climbing up by the stream to Loch Etchachan, a foot-track leads to the top of Ben Macdhui, where an unequalled and uninterrupted view of all the Highland hills will reward the climber's pluck and perseverance.

The views from Cairngorm, notwithstanding its great elevation, are by no means remarkable — the distant ones being too vague and indistinct to produce a deep impression, and the near ones consisting of rolling billows of granite mountains unbroken by bold precipice or deep ravine, and leaving little to the imagination. But what has distinguished it more than anything else is

the peculiar crystals that are found upon it. The upward path is strewn with large pieces of granite interspersed with veins of quartz, which have been broken in order to find transparent gems. But in every case the quartz has crystallised into opaque, white hexagonal crystals, which have no beauty or value. It is very rarely that one comes upon a perfect specimen of the gem among the débris of the mountain. The best crystals have been found in drusic cavities in the granite, and they vary in colour from an almost black or dark smoky hue, to a brilliant yellow like an Oriental topaz. The largest specimen ever found is in possession of Mr. Farquharson of Invercauld. It was picked up in 1780 on the top of Ben Avon, and weighed 49 lbs. Invercauld gave £40 for it. Cairngorms have been purchased at a cheap rate by the local jewellers, but an extravagant price has been charged for them elsewhere. Very fine specimens used to be discovered on the mountain in tolerable profusion; but they are now comparatively scarce.

The other route by which Glenmore Lodge is approached is more roundabout. It proceeds past Loch-an-Eilan, the cross-road to Glen Eunach and the entrance to the Larig Ghru Pass. The track goes through the forest, which in this place is somewhat thin and open, and admits of

the continuous luxuriant growth of heather among the trees. It used to be much frequented by the country people, but it has gradually fallen into desuetude, until now it has almost ceased to be traversed. The consequence is that the heather has grown over it, obliterating the ruts of the wheels, although still leaving sufficiently distinct traces of the existence of the path, which the horse has no difficulty in pursuing. It is a delightfully soft track, freed from bumping and jerking by the elastic cushions of the heather, although it passes over irregularities of the surface, over heights and depths that might otherwise endanger the safety of the vehicle. There is no forest-path in Rothiemurchus so charming as this is. It offers at every turn far-stretching views over the forest of the open country to the west and north and splendid glimpses of the dark Cairngorm mountains on the right, while the vistas in the forest itself are enchanting. To do justice to it, one ought to traverse it leisurely on foot on a bright summer day, when every knoll and decaying old root, covered with mystic vegetation, affords endless sources of delight. Here and there huge moraines, covered with heather, and crowned by clumps of fir-trees, with wooden huts on the highest points as lookout stations

for the deer, rise up on the right hand, between you and the vast wall of mountains filling up the sky behind, and bear witness to the destructive forces that in far past glacial times sculptured the landscape. Marshy places and little lochans add the variety of their black, still, shining waters, fringed with reeds and rushes, to the whole scene, and mirror the fir-trees in their depths. I remember vividly how on one occasion the sunset glow reddened all the pines of this forest path, rested as an indescribable glory on the grey mountain peaks, and filled all the air with a suffused golden sheen that made every object which it illumined a picture. The track continues the same to the end. It takes you to the high deer-fence which separates the property of Glenmore from Rothiemurchus, when passing through the gate you come to Loch Morlich. The margin of stones and sand is decked with bright green water-mosses in great variety and with immense quantities of sundew of unusually large size. The extraordinary profusion of the tufts of this curious carnivorous plant or vegetable spider along the beach is due to the great development of insect-life which is often seen by the side of a loch, the one acting and re-acting upon the other. I was struck by the same circumstance at

Loch Gamhna near Loch-an-Eilan, where large masses of luxuriant sundews form quite a reddish-brown sward on the margin of the loch; and at Loch Insh the shore is equally covered with large tufts of the rarer long-leaved species, the *Drosera anglica*. The road comes to a large sluice where the Luineag issues from the western end of Loch Morlich, over which you pass on foot, while your vehicle crosses by a shallow ford a little farther down. This sluice was constructed to regulate the flow of the water of the loch into the river, when floats of timber, cut in the forest, had to be sent down into the Spey, and from thence on to the sea. The dam banked up the waters of the loch to a higher level than the ordinary one, and all at once the imprisoned flood was released, and carried the timber with it over every obstruction down to the Spey with great impetuosity.

The ordinary road to Glenmore Lodge is crowded with vehicles and bicycles during the season, for this is one of the show places of the district, and most of the visitors wish to ascend Cairngorm. At the lodge there gather visitors from all parts of the world, and parties can be traced by aid of a glass all the way up the slopes of the mountain to the top. In the afternoon the crowd disappears, and there falls a great

stillness upon the place. It reverts then to its wonted loneliness, enhanced by the contrast of the bustling scenes that preceded. The presence of such a multitude of people interferes no doubt to a certain extent with one's thorough enjoyment of the solitude, and is apt to take away the bloom and sentiment of romance, which requires loneliness for its development, and to prevent the peculiar thoughts which the Alpine landscapes themselves suggest, while it introduces alien ideas of the great world left behind. But the scene is on so vast a scale that humanity seems to be entirely swallowed up, and the great dumb mountains necessarily subdue the soul to a kindred peace. The popularity of Cairngorm does not seem to scare away the deer from their accustomed haunts in the neighbouring hills and corries, or to destroy in the least degree the sport of the huntsmen. There is room for all; and Nature and human nature act and re-act upon each other, for it is to be hoped that the crowd of visitors take back with them to the busy haunts of man the visions and inspirations that come to them from the everlasting hills.

IX

KINRARA

IX

KINRARA

THE names given to various localities on the banks of the Spey — that river of wondrous reels and strathspeys—are very musical. They have a poetical charm which captivates the imagination and suggests ideal pictures. Cairngorm, Rothiemurchus, Rebhoan, Altdruie, Kinrara, speak of an older language, of a haunted past, and of traditions of romance which inform all the scenes. Kinrara sounds like one of the names which the poet Campbell gave to his mystical creations of Highland lore. When we hear it we think of Lochiel, and Culloden, and Glenara. I remember the first time I came across the name. It was in the midst of the forest of Rothiemurchus, near Aviemore, that I saw it, inscribed on a white board of the Scottish Rights of Way Association with an arrow pointing the way to it to the tourist

across the rough Larig Pass from Braemar. At the head of Loch-an-Eilan, farther on, I saw the magic name again on a similar board with a similar arrow indicating its proximity. But it seemed to me to retreat the nearer I got to it, like the foot of the rainbow, and it was not till some time afterwards that I was able to locate and visit it. I then found that the reality behind the name did not belie its melodiousness. It recalled fair visions that were quite in harmony with its musical sound.

The horizon of Kinrara is quite different from that of Rothiemurchus, the district that lies next to it on the north. Rothiemurchus obtains its name from the dark, continuous forest of firs which covers the extensive plain at the foot of the Cairngorm mountains; whereas Kinrara is covered mostly with birches, which give a much softer aspect to the scenery. The principal hill of the district, which rises behind Kinrara, called Tor Alvie, is covered with birch-trees, and many fine specimens of this tree, self-sown, occur among the woods, with pure white stems and long, drooping branches. The woods are all natural. They climb over rocky ground with whose rugged features their mottled stems of black corrugated bark, below hoary with lichens and showing milk-white

smoothness of stem above, exquisitely harmonise. Here and there they gather into thick, shady clumps or open out into sunny glades, where shadow and sunlight play over the mossy ground and freckle the sward with delicious wavelets. The landscapes partake of the character of wild, disordered, natural scenes and carefully-dressed park scenery. The situation of Kinrara House is exceptionally fine. Overshadowed by the birch-clad hill behind and shrouded by groves of ornamental trees, it seems to have too much seclusion, and yet the policies cover such a wide space that they afford ample room for all the trees that crowd around. The trim and velvety lawns gradually lose their formality and merge imperceptibly into untutored wilderness. The view in front from the elevated terrace is over open and widely-extended ground on to the huge masses of mountains from the Sgòran Dubh to the dark blue hills of Glenfeshie in the distance, comprehending a vast variety of scenery within its bounds. Ridge after ridge seems to come down from the blue firmament in ever-graduating shades of deeper blue; the far horizons are full of peaks and plateaus whose vast spaces and intervals are so crowded and foreshortened that they can only be distinguished by their varying

colours, and look like a wondrous mosaic built up against the sky. In late autumn it is a painter's palette; every shade of green and red and yellow is to be seen in the foliage. The house is not visible among the trees from the public road. It has no beauty of architecture, being a plain square building, depending for its effect entirely upon the loveliness of its situation.

This retired spot was chosen by the celebrated Jane, Duchess of Gordon, as her summer residence for many years. She was devotedly attached to it, and drew to it, by the charm of her manner and her brilliant conversation, crowds of the highest nobility of England and Scotland from July to November. In London the duchess was the life and soul of courtly circles. She greatly delighted George III. by her wit and vivacity; and his household was charmed by her personification of the provincial peculiarities of the natives of Scotland and Ireland. Knowing a few words of Gaelic she could represent the nasal pronunciation and vehement gestures of a Highland minister in the pulpit, and give examples of the Scottish dialect and Aberdonian intonation, which always threw the royal listeners into convulsions of laughter. Her influence at Court was used to help on candidates for military or civil situations from the

Highlands; and the ministers of state could not resist the earnestness of her pleading when she espoused the cause of some rural protégé from Badenoch or Strathspey. Pitt, "that heaven-born minister," as he was called, was often cajoled into placing her favourites in high positions in the Treasury and Horse Guards. She was of the utmost service in increasing the military forces of our country during the Napoleonic wars. She fanned the ancient martial spirit of the people, and by the powerful patronage of the Gordon family she helped to produce a host of brave officers whose honourable deeds will long live in the annals of the British army. Dressed in Highland bonnet and feathers with tartan scarf and short tartan petticoats, she appeared on festive occasions in the district, and raised recruits by offering to dance with any likely young man to the music of the bagpipes; and at the end of the reel she handed to her partner a guinea and a cockade, in the name of King George and the Duke of Gordon. It was even said that she did not hesitate to bestow a kiss as a reward to those who enlisted in this way; and thus many scores of young men, the finest in the countryside, in spite of the remonstrances and lamentations of their female friends, were decoyed into the military

service of their country. By devices like these was formed the famous 92nd Regiment or Gordon Highlanders, which added fresh glories to the national banners in every country and clime. Mrs. Grant of Laggan wrote a song in connection with this regiment, which has always been very popular :—

"Oh, where, tell me where, is your Highland laddie gone ?
He's gone with streaming banners, where noble deeds are done,
And my sad heart will tremble till he comes safely home.

Oh, where, tell me where, did your Highland laddie stay ?
He dwelt beneath the holly trees, beside the rapid Spey,
And many a blessing followed him the day he went away."

At the southern extremity of Tor Alvie, a high cairn of stones was erected by the late Duke of Gordon, the son of this famous duchess, with a tablet commemorating the brave officers belonging to this district who fell at Waterloo—Sir Robert MacAra of the Black Watch, and Colonel John Cameron of the 92nd Regiment, and their valorous countrymen. On the eastern brow of the hill is a rustic hermitage, commanding a most magnificent view of cultivated valley and heath-clad brow, dark forests and frowning mountains. Here there is also a pillar to the memory of the last Duke of Gordon, the popular chief and landowner, which stands out prominently above every other object

in the centre of the vast landscape and is seen from all directions.

The Duchess of Gordon was as much at home among the humble cottages of the poor on her estate as among the splendours of a Court. She was greatly beloved by all her tenantry, and delighted in making others sharers in her own happiness. Mrs. Grant of Laggan said of her that "she presented the least favourable aspect of her character to the public," and that "she showed most in her Highland home, where her warm benevolence and steady friendship were most felt." There is a sprightly song in Fraser's "Gaelic Airs," which records the gaieties of the times when she was the leading star of the bright social firmament. Correspondingly great, therefore, was the gloom and sorrow when the news came that she had died on 12th May 1812; and Mrs. Allardyce of Cromarty wrote the following elegiac verses regarding the sad event:—

"Fair in Kinrara blooms the rose,
And softly waves the drooping willow,
Where beauty's faded charms repose,
And splendour rests on earth's cold pillow;
Her smile, who sleeps in yonder bed,
Could once awake the same to pleasure,
When fashion's airy train she led,
And formed the dance's frolic measure.

When was called forth our youth to arms,
Her eye inspired each martial spirit;
Her mind, too, felt the Muse's charms,
And gave the meed to modest merit.
But now, farewell, fair northern star,
Thy beams no more shall Courts enlighten,
No more lead youth, our youth, to war,
No more the rural pastures brighten.

Long, long thy loss shall Scotia mourn,
Her vales, which thou wert wont to gladden,
Shall look long cheerless and forlorn,
And grief the minstrel's music sadden;
And oft amid the festive scene,
Where pleasure cheats the midnight pillow,
A sigh shall breathe for noble Jane,
Laid low beneath Kinrara's willow."

The remains of the Duchess of Gordon were brought north from London when she died and laid in a spot which she had often indicated in her walks as the place where she wished to be buried. It lies not far from the mansion house in a spacious park on the banks of the river where it has a quick clear current and fills its banks from side to side, murmuring a perpetual requiem as it flows past, deepening the peace of the dead. There is no other grave but her own in this quiet resting-place; but the secluded spot was an ancient graveyard connected with some chapel dedicated to St. Eda, which disappeared

ages ago, and of which not a trace now survives. Who this St. Eda was is not known, some supposing that he was the Bishop of Farus in Ireland, but the probability rather is that this is a dedication to St. Aiden corrupted into St. Eda—the celebrated Celtic saint of Lindisfarne, who was highly popular throughout the Highlands, and had many churches consecrated in his name. A handsome monument, in the shape of a truncated obelisk, formed of granite from the neighbouring mountains, was erected on the spot by her noble husband, and on it is commemorated, at her own request, the names of all her children, with the exceptionally brilliant marriages which they had made; her own name being inscribed on a plain marble slab covering the grave. Lord Huntly planted some larches round the enclosure which have grown into fine trees and cast down an appropriate funereal shade on the sod; and Lady Huntly laid out a beautiful shrubbery and extended the larch plantation, making paths through it. To the charming scenery around Kinrara this lonely tomb gives an air of tender sadness. Sleeping there, far from the stately mausoleum where the dust of her illustrious kindred reposes, she has taken complete possession of the spot, that was so dear to her in life, by her ineffaceable

able memory which mingles with every object around, sighs in the wind, and syllables her name by the airy voices of the solitude, by the waving of the trees and the flowing of the river. One of the distinguished visitors at Kinrara during the lifetime of the duchess was Prince Leopold, the husband of the lamented Princess Charlotte, and subsequently King of the Belgians. On the day of his arrival he was taken up to the top of the Tor Alvie, and there he was surprised to meet the Marquis of Huntly, who at a preconcerted signal summoned his clansmen from their places of concealment among the heather and birch-trees around, who rose in their plaided array to give the prince a right royal welcome. "Ah!" exclaimed the prince, surprised and greatly pleased at the sight, "we have got Roderick Dhu here"—alluding to the scene in the *Lady of the Lake* where—

> "The mountaineer then whistled shrill,
> And he was answered from the hill;
> Instant, through copse and heath, arose
> Bonnets and spears and bended bows;
> And every tuft of broom gave life
> To plaided warrior armed for strife!
> Watching their leader's beck and will,
> All silent there they stood, and still."

It would take several weeks to exhaust all the

varied beauties of Kinrara. Tor Alvie, the wooded hill behind the house, affords endless walks and outlooks on the surrounding scenery. Paths through the birch-woods leading to lovely seclusions of Nature; large lochans and sheets of marshy water covered with myriads of water-lilies; dark sweeping forests of fir that skirt the bases of the mountains, and rows of pine-trees crowning an eastern height, every one of whose spear-tops the rising sun flashes into a sort of sudden presenting of arms to the celestial potentate along the whole sky-line; the rapid Spey flowing between beaches of white pebbles accumulated here and there by its waters, and under graceful trees whose light foliage throws down flickering lights and shadows on its dimpled surface; and here and there some rustic farm-house, with its cultivated fields and picturesque steadings—all these details of the landscapes, contrasting with the trim walks, the rich gardens and the trailing vines of the mansion house, make a paradise in the wilderness. Kinrara is now the shooting-lodge of the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, and has been occupied for a number of years by the Earl of Zetland.

The way to Kinrara from Aviemore skirts the foot of Craigellachie, and opens up many charm-

ing vistas of the surrounding scenery. At the foot of Craigellachie, immediately above the village, is a little lochan, concealed in a field of green mounds, called Loch Balladern. Its surface is covered with the large floating leaves and red mottled spikes of *Potamogeton* and with the little lemon flowers and neat round leaves of the *Nuphar pumila*, the smallest of the water-lilies, found only in a few of our lochs. The lochan is a lovely mirror for the birch-clad rocks that rise precipitously above it, and is full of small sweet trout. Strangely enough, during the earthquake of Lisbon, its waters were greatly agitated, dashing about in its little shrouded basin in a way that made a deep impression upon those who saw it. Almost at the gates of Kinrara is the charming Loch Alvie, of which one gets the most tantalising glimpses from the railway in passing along. The name of this little lake is derived from the fact that in former times it was visited by wild swans on their southern migratory flight from the Arctic regions. It is about a mile in length and half a mile in breadth, but has an irregular outline, forming a large promontory at the western end, running far out into the water, on which is picturesquely situated the church of the parish with the manse and glebe, which are

BRIDGE OF ALVIE AND TOR ALVIE. *To face page* 135.

almost surrounded by the loch. The Church of Alvie occupies a knoll on which there was a religious cell from the time of St. Columba. It is even older than the knoll of Adamnan at Insh, for tradition ascribes its dedication—if not its actual foundation—to St. Drostan, the nephew of St. Columba, to whom there are many dedications in the north and north-east of Scotland. This famous saint founded the Monastery of Deer, as the *Book of Deer*, the oldest MS. in Scotland, tells us, built a church and lived a hermit's life in Glenesk, Forfarshire, where he wrought some miracles and died. Under the floor of the Church of Alvie, when renewed some time ago, 150 skeletons without coffins were found—the remains probably of some ancient local battle. They were re-interred in the churchyard. The charm of the surrounding lake consists not in its magnitude or grandeur, but in the blueness of its surface when the sun shines, reflecting the shadows of the birch-trees around it, and the clouds lying still as itself above it, in the purity and transparency of the little wavelets that ripple to the shore with a placid murmur infinitely soothing to the tired spirit, and in the sheets of dazzlingly white water-lilies that cover large spaces in the quiet bogs with the most

refined bloom and verdure. From its eastern end a pleasant little burn flows through the woods, round the base of Tor Alvie, and falls into the Spey. It has sometimes happened, when swollen by the autumn storms, that the waters of the loch have risen so high as almost to cover the promontory on which are situated the church and manse; and on one occasion, during the unprecedented flood of 1829, the ministers who had been assisting at the communion on Sunday were detained on the spot till the waters abated on Wednesday. Near the top of the hills on the north side of the loch the dwarf birch, *Betula nana*, which is one of the rarest of our Alpine plants, and one of the most diminutive of our native trees, grows in considerable abundance among the bogs. One of the ministers of this parish, the Rev. William Gordon, lived to the advanced age of 101 years, remarkable for his generous nature and noble life. When the clans fled from Culloden, many of the fugitives came south past the manse of Alvie in a state of destitution and applied for relief to Mr. Gordon. The Duke of Cumberland, hearing of his beneficence and suspecting his loyalty, summoned him to his presence at Inverness by a military guard, when Mr. Gordon stated that he was straitened

between two contrary commands. His heavenly King's Son commanded him to feed the hungry; his earthly king's son commanded him to drive them from his door. Which of these two commands was he to obey? The duke, taken aback, replied, "By all means obey the command of the Son of your heavenly King," and dismissed him with several tokens of the royal approbation. In the middle of an arable field at Dalfour, about a mile west from Loch Alvie, there is a nearly perfect Druidical circle, forming a ring about sixty feet in diameter, enclosing another ring of stones of smaller size, set on end, about half that diameter. Connected with this remarkable relic, there is in the immediate vicinity a stone pillar about eight feet high, without any sculpture or inscription, recording some event which has long passed into oblivion. Beyond Loch Alvie there used to be a dreary moor, covered only with stunted heather, and incapable of being cultivated, owing to the shallowness and stoniness of the soil. The Duchess of Gordon planted it with Scotch firs, mingled with larch-trees, which have thriven and greatly relieve the barrenness of the waste. The hostelry of Lynwilg, for many years the only inn on the road past Kingussie, is welcome as a resting-place for the weary traveller. This

whole district was once part of the ancient Barony of Dunachton, which passed into the possession of the Laird of Mackintosh about the year 1500, through his marriage with the daughter of the baron. The new proprietor was a man of high character and conspicuous ability, and was much regarded by his tenants; but a conspiracy was formed against him by a treacherous member of his own clan who wished himself to rule, and so murdered his chief. He and his lawless band took refuge in a castle on an island of Loch Alvie, since burnt down, but the enraged clan besieged him there and put him to death. A few miles farther on is the romantic, richly-wooded village of Kincraig, at the end of a spur from Craigellachie, which gleams forth like a beautiful oasis in the wilderness. Here a profusion of graceful, natural birches rises up among the knolls and rocks picturesquely grouped together and hides the fashionable villas which have recently been built upon the spot. At Kincraig the Spey expands into a large lake called Loch Insh, which is a mile long and half a mile broad. Nowhere does the combination of loch and birch-wood appear so beautiful as here. The blue waters shining through the small glistening leaves, and between the silvery colonnades of the

trees, produce the most exquisite effects, especially when the multitudinous ripples on the surface laugh in the breeze and sparkle like jewels. At the foot of the loch, where the Spey flows out of it, there are two large knolls covered with fir and other trees. When the river is in flood these knolls are completely surrounded by water, and, converted into an island, are shut off from the mainland. This circumstance has given origin to the name of the loch, which means the loch of the island. On the northern mound called Ion Enonan, or Adamnan's Island, is situated the Church of Insh, whose ancient name proves that the conditions which prevail at present during spates of the river have prevailed from time immemorial. The church is the most interesting object of antiquity in the whole district. Its foundations go back to the days of St. Columba, who visited the Picts north of the Grampians, and is said by St. Adamnan, his biographer, to have converted Brudeus the King in his Court at Inverness. The dedication of this church to St. Adamnan in 690, or thereabouts, was a consequence of this visit. Previous to its occupancy as a place of Christian worship, the fir-crowned knoll had a *religio loci*, as a site of Druidic rites. It was the place where for ages the people had

been accustomed to meet and practise the adoration of the sun, and other acts of Nature-worship, and the consecration of the heathen altar was continued to the Christian Church, and the people met as of old in the same spot, with a different religion, and the Sunday of the former dispensation became the holy day of rest of the new. In a basin carved out of a slab of granite forming the sill of one of the windows of the church is preserved a very ancient square bell of cast bronze, which is one of the series of early Celtic bells still existing in Scotland. Its shape and size are like those of the bell of St. Fillan in the Antiquarian Museum in Edinburgh. It has an oval-shaped handle and a moulding round its mouth, and a big iron tongue protruding from its mouth. The basin-shaped depression in which it rests was probably the font of the original church erected on the knoll, or belonged, it may be, to the system of cup-marked stones peculiar to sun-worship, which occupied the spot in pagan times. There is a tradition connected with the bell similar to that associated with the bell of St. Fillan, that if carried away from the locality it breaks out into a constant cry of "Ion Enonan, Ion Enonan," which ceases not until it is brought back to the knoll on which the church stands.

In all probability the bell is as old as the time of Adamnan, and was blessed by him in person. The saint's day was originally a holy day of worship, but it became, as was generally the case, a fair, called Feil Columcille, or St. Columba's Market. At this fair it was the custom of the women of the district to attend dressed in white garments ; and the late aged minister of the church remembered an old woman showing him the white dress in which in her young days she went to the Fair of St. Columba, and which she carefully preserved in order to be buried in it. No doubt this was an unconscious survival of a ceremonial usage of the Early Church, in which candidates for baptism required to appear clothed in a white dress ; and the custom came afterwards to be associated with the festival day of the saint, as commemorative of his Christian work. The spot on which the Church of Insh stands, I have said, has been a sacred spot from time immemorial, and the church itself is the only one in Scotland in which Christian worship has been carried on continuously from the seventh century to the present day. The present building is no doubt the last of a series of buildings often renewed on the spot, but the lowest part of the walls shows traces of much older structures ; and until

recently, when the internal fittings were completely restored, the galleries, seats and pulpit made of fir, warped and wizened by age, were of very primitive forms and had been suffered to fall into a state of considerable dilapidation.

The road on the other side of the Spey winds along the shore of Loch Insh, and at some distance crosses the Feshie by a steep and narrow bridge, where the stream forms a deep dark pool far below. The view is very wild and somewhat alarming at this spot. The parapets of the bridge have been heightened to increase the feeling of security, but the precipitous banks of the river, and the wide Stygian pools which they enclose, excite the imagination and fill it with terror. An accident might easily occur at this place; as in point of fact one did happen to a carriage, which was upset and life was lost. The Feshie drains one of the grandest and most extensive of the Highland glens, and is a splendid stream with a large volume of water. Owing to the vast quantity of detritus it has brought down from the mountains it has formed a bar which has dammed up the course of the Spey, causing it to expand into a lake, which is now Loch Insh. During the flood of 1829 its waters filled the whole glen. A shepherd's house high up on the side of the hill,

beyond the utmost possible reach of a spate, was overwhelmed by the river, and the inmates barely escaped with their lives in the middle of the night to the highest ground they could reach, where they were imprisoned till the evening of the following day. The scenery of Glen Feshie was greatly admired by Landseer, who left as a memento of his having been in the place a drawing of a deer above the mantelpiece on the wall of a gamekeeper's cottage in the glen—now shut up in order to preserve it. Thomson of Duddingston also made several sketches of the giant firs of the forest, and during his sojourn in the district was immensely impressed by its sublimity. So overpowered with emotion was he on one occasion in the forest that he exclaimed, "Lord God Almighty!" and said to his host and companion, Sir David Brewster, that "the sky over such a scene seemed the floor of heaven." Macculloch, in one of his letters to Sir Walter Scott, before the authorship of the Waverley Novels had been found out, wrote that the unknown writer should lay the scene of his next story in Glen Feshie. Her late Majesty Queen Victoria passed through it on the way from Braemar to Strathspey, and has recorded in her journal the excited feelings which the memorable journey produced.

The extensive birch-woods of South Kinrara and Dalnavert, which add so much to the attractiveness of the landscape, were long ago called the Davochs of the Head. They were given in compensation for the head of the Laird of Mackintosh, who was decapitated while paying a friendly visit to the Earl of Huntly in 1556. Sir Walter Scott refers to this incident in an article on the "Highland Clans" which he contributed to the *Quarterly Review*. He informs us that Mackintosh, in his bitter quarrel with the Gordons, burnt their castle of Auchindoun, and thereby aroused their implacable vengeance. The earl reduced him to such extremities by his constant persecution that he had at last to surrender himself to his foe. Coming to the seat of the Gordons, he found the master absent, but yielded himself up to the countess instead, who informed him that the earl had sworn never to forgive his crimes until he should see his head upon the block. Thereupon the humbled chief knelt down and laid his head upon the kitchen dresser where the oxen were cut up for the baron's feast. No sooner did he make this humiliating allegiance than the cook, who stood behind him with the cleaver uplifted, at a sign from the inexorable countess, let the cleaver fall and severed Mac-

kintosh's head from his body by a single stroke. Dalnavert was the last remnant of the extensive possessions of the ancient Shaws, the earliest lords of this district. It now belongs to the estate of The Mackintosh. About eighty years ago the local company of volunteers used to assemble here for drill. Both the mother and the wife of the late well-known Premier of Canada, Sir John A. Macdonald, were born in this place. The mother went from thence after her marriage to Glasgow—where the great statesman was born; but he returned from America for his bride to his maternal country on the banks of the Spey.

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