

THE tin of petrol has proved more than a match for the team of horse-flesh, and the coach and four has been supplanted by the motor charabanc. It is a distinct loss to the picturesqueness and charm of Highland travel, for the gaily-coloured vehicle with scarlet-uniformed whip and guard, long bugle-horn and clattering horses was an attractive spectacle upon the highway; and many an artist found it to be a valuable feature in the landscape, giving life with the necessary splash of colour in the foreground of his picture. But it has now been rendered as obsolete as the sedan-chair. So far as expeditionness of travel is concerned, it is well. If the motor car does not, like some other modern inventions, annihilate space, it can at least be said to bridge distance, and one can now reach out-of-the-way places in a fifth part of the time formerly occupied by the stage-coach. The journey from Dunkeld to Braemar, approximately a distance of fifty miles which took, with the usual stoppages, ten hours by coach, can now be covered in a couple, all going well.

But the expeditious car has at least one distinct disadvantage, for its occupants have not the opportunity, formerly enjoyed, of viewing the scenery. The rapidity with which they are whirled along does not give time for any permanent impression to be made upon the mind. Tourists carry away only a confused idea of the attractive features of the district through which they have passed. A modern minor poet puts the case in the form of a satirical quatrain of question and answer—

"Where did you wend your rapid way,
Through what sweet woodland aisles?"
"I do not know! But I can say
I've done two hundred miles."

And, although a cockney tourist once said, after a brief visit to Braemar, that he could not understand the pleasure some people

took in "sitting gazing at a lot of heverlasting 'ills," yet the panorama of mountain scenery, when the towering heights seem to be moved by an invisible hand, like the side-scenes on a gigantic stage, brings in general great delight and many surprises to the summer tourist; more especially so when the heather is in bloom, for then the richness of colouring and blending of many hues is surpassingly beautiful.

There are many places of historical and artistic interest on the journey between Blairgowrie and Braemar. About midway between the former town and Bridge of Cally, the turreted mansion-house of Craighall arrests the attention. It stands on the summit of a precipitous cliff which rises over two hundred feet from the dark pools of what has been called "the ireful Ericht." That river is formed by the union of the Arillo and the Blackwater, a short distance below Cally House, and a couple of miles further down, between Glenericht and Craighall, it sweeps through a narrow ravine swirling into a gully at right angles to its course, the sides of which consist of steep wooded slopes and precipitous cliffs, one of these rising to a height of three hundred feet.

The scene recalls the lines of the National Bard, inspired by another Perthshire stream that rushes through a wooded Highland pass:—

"The braes ascend like lofty wa's
O'erhung wi' fragrant spreading shaws."

and it fills the mind with an admiration that is mingled with a sense of awe.

The Clerk-Ratrays trace their descent back to the time of Malcolm Canmore. The ruins of their ancestral seat, the Castle of Rattray, lie about a mile to the east of that village.

An old tradition has it that in the reign of James V., John Stewart, the third Earl of Athole, married Grizel Rattray, only daughter of Sir John Rattray, and expected to acquire the property, but her father married again and had by his second wife two sons and one daughter. As the years passed, the Earl's feelings of disappointment deepened, and he at length sent a band of his retainers, who attacked the Castle and slew the

inmates, including Rattray and one of his sons. A devoted nurse on hearing the tumult fled to the woods with the younger boy, and escaped to Dundee. The Earl then took possession of the property, but some years after the rightful heir appeared and claimed to be served heir to the barony. The influence of the Earl was so strong in Perth, where he had a town house, that the authorities refused to carry out the legal process and King James arranged that it should be done in Dundee.

The Ratrays afterwards acquired Craighall. The mansion occupies a very defensible position on the summit of a lofty cliff. "It can be approached," says the *Statistical Account*, "only from the south. On each side of the entrance, a little in advance of the House, are two round buildings, evidently intended for protection, with small openings for missile weapons as if for the use of archers, a mode of defence very common in former ages."

Two hundred years ago the proprietor was Thomas Rattray, who was Bishop of Dunkeld. His eldest daughter married, in 1720, John Clerk, M.D., Edinburgh, the founder of the present family. In 1825 the house was reconstructed by James Clerk-Rattray, Baron of Exchequer. The grandfather of the present proprietor was Lieut.-General James Clerk-Rattray, who served with great distinction in the Crimean and Indian Mutiny campaigns, and was engaged in the relief and defence of Lucknow. The present proprietor, Colonel Burn-Clerk Rattray, is the son of the Rev. John Burn-Murdoch, of Higgins Neuch, Stirling. He passed through Woolwich, and served in the Royal Engineers in the South African War, and held the appointment of Chief Engineer there for several years. His wife is a daughter of Sir James Ramsay, Bart., of Banff, and a sister of the Duchess of Atholl, M.P. for West Perthshire.

The author of *Waverley*, accompanied by his legal friend Clerk, a relative of the family, visited Craighall in 1793, and was so charmed with the appearance of the house, as it then was, and its environs that he made it the model for his description of Tullyveoloin Castle in his novel, although he acknowledged that he combined with it features drawn from other old mansions, such as Grandtully, Bruntisfield and Ravelstone.

Between Craighall and Bridge of Cally lies a property known as Mause. It has a ghost story connected with it, entitled "The Ghast o' Mause." The ghost in this tale was a four-footed one, a collie (some accounts say a fox to which no dog would give chase), which appeared by night to a farmer, and being endowed with the power of speech, urged him to remove the body of a cattle-drover who had been murdered when on his way home from the market with the proceeds of his sales in his pocket.

The dog's repeated appeal was "Bury the bones," and it described where these were to be found. The result was that the remains were lifted from a shallow grave by the burn-side, and removed with a considerable show of respect and formality to the Churchyard of Blairgowrie. One cannot but suspect that the person who committed the foul deed had something to do with the appearance of the collie by night, and its wonderful gift of human speech.

Two valleys converge at Bridge of Cally, one running north through the parish of Persie to Glenshee, and the other, known as Strathardle, leading to the village of Kirkmichael, and thence taking a westerly direction through Straloch to Moulin and Pitlochry. There are no less than four parishes in Scotland bearing the name of Kirkmichael, two in the north and two in the south, which is proof of the veneration in which the Archangel Michael was held by the people. The old name of the valley was Strath na muice-brice, the Strath of the spotted wild sow, but, at a later date, the name was changed to Strathardle from arid fhail, meaning high or noble blood, from the fact that a Danish leader was slain in a battle in the upper valley at a time when these invaders were harrying the country. The grassy mound of his grave can still be seen.

The Church in Persie was formerly, as far back as 1785, a Chapel of Ease, but in 1849 the parish, *quoad sacra*, was formed from outlying portions of others, such as Caputh, Bendochy and Kirkmichael. About 1830 the minister was the Rev. John Duncan, afterwards known in the Church as Rabbi Duncan, on account of his great linguistic talents. He was appointed Professor of Hebrew and Oriental languages in the Free Church

Theological College, Edinburgh. Professor Knight's little volume *Colloquia Peripatetica*, recording Duncan's observations on religion and philosophy, as well as his *Deep Sea Soundings*, reveal him as a man of original and philosophic mind. It is a little remarkable that he is remembered by the people less on account of his scholarly attainments than by reason of his eccentricities and occasional lapses of memory to which great minds are liable. It is told of him that on going to officiate at a wedding a few miles off, on the way he pulled out his mull to take a pinch of snuff, a practice to which he was much addicted, like many of his brethren, and, as there was a breeze blowing, he turned his pony round in order to protect the contents, but forgetting to turn him back again, he went home to his lodgings, quite unconscious that he had failed to keep his appointment. On another occasion he went to officiate in a neighbouring parish, and when he arrived in the winter afternoon at the manse, was shown to his bedroom to remove his muddy boots. But when the evening-meal was announced, it was found that he had become so absorbed in thought that he had undressed and gone to bed. His people were very much attached to him, and, with Highland hospitality, showed him much kindness. As there was no manse until a later date, he lodged a mile or two from the Church, and rode over on the Sunday morning. He wore no gloves and some of his flock, noticing his benumbed fingers in wintry weather, pressed their own mittens upon him. When he left Persie no less than fifteen pairs of these were found in the pulpit.

The late Rev. Mr. Cowan, U.F. Church, Elgin, who studied under Dr. Duncan in the Free Church College, has, in his *Reminiscences*, given some illustrations of the Professor's absence of mind, as well as of his learned disquisitions. He tells us that Duncan had one day written some Hebrew sentences on the black-board, but finding he had mislaid his pointer, he asked for the loan of a walking stick. A smart cane was handed to him, and at the end of the hour he left the College carrying it in his hand. One of the students said to the donor, "You should go after him and claim your stick." "Oh," was the reply, "it isn't mine. I knew what he would do, so I gave him Thomson's!"

But in spite of such foibles he was held in high esteem. Professor Knight, who, as a student, lodged with him, has left us enough to show that he was a man of the deepest piety and childlike simplicity. He left Persie and was ordained minister of Milton Church, Glasgow, in 1836, and Aberdeen University, his *alma mater*, conferred on him the degree of LL.D. in 1840.

On the opposite side of the valley, midway between Cally and the old Inn of Persie, which is now converted into a shooting-ledge, stands the modern mansion-house of Ashmore, from which estate Lord Ashmore, one of the Lords of Session, takes his title.

To the north of this is the height called Kingseat (1178 feet), from which, in old time, the Scottish kings were in the habit of viewing the great bear-hunts which in earlier days were a favourite form of sport in the Highlands. Kingseat, formerly in the possession of Sir James Ramsay, Bart., of Bamff, now belongs to Mr. Norman Methven of St. Martin's Abbey. About a mile beyond the old Persie hotel Mr. Rice has built himself a handsome shooting-ledge. Passing Bleaton, at the junction of the road that strikes off on the right to Alyth, one comes to the clachan of Dalrulzean, with its smithy and old-fashioned dwellings, where the blacksmith "so like his work was he," used to be known as "the de'il o' Dalrulzean."

The mansion-house of Dalrulzean standing near the road was a plain white-washed building, such as is frequently seen in the north, but it must have occasionally been the scene of intense excitement in the long gone years when raiding was a common practice in the Highlands, for the Rattrays were stock-breeders like most of their neighbours, and at one time held a grazing in Glenbeg, which lay directly in the track of the rovers from the west.

The property was purchased after the death of the last proprietrix, Miss Rattrey, by Mr. Thorncroft, and the old-time mansion-house has now been modernised and improved both in point of comfort and appearance.

The whole stretch of country between Dalrulzean and the village of Kirkmichael belonged for some hundreds of years to the Spaldings of Ashintully, whose family records give an insight to the rough and ready methods of settling disputes, and of the

strained relations that existed between neighbours in those far-off days. The Stewarts were, in the seventeenth century, the most powerful family in Athole, and, for some difference of opinion, in the year 1587, a band of men, including Sir James Stewart of Auchmadies, Sir James Stewart of Baleschin, and Patrick Blair of Auldblair, "besieged the Place of Ashintully, and took Andro Spalding, the laird, their prisoner," probably with the intention of exacting a ransom for his release. When the case at length came before the Court in Edinburgh, John Stewart, the Earl of Athole, became cautioner for the appearance of his kinsmen, and as they failed to compare he was "unlawit," and fined a hundred merks for each, and they were "adjudgait to be denouceit rebellis, and put to the horn, and all their movabill guidis escheit, as fugitives."

In the unhappy experience of Andro's successor, David Spalding, we have an echo of the Gowrie Conspiracy, for we find from Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials*, that he was before the Court no less than four times between the years 1609 and 1612 charged with harbouring Alexander Rathven of Freeland, a relative of the two principal conspirators, thus showing his sympathy with those who attempted to deal with a Stuart King, James VI., as the Athole Stewarts had dealt with his father. Though the case was eventually dropped, Spalding's legal expenses would undoubtedly be heavy.

To the north of what was formerly part of the barony of Ashintully in the Blackwater district lies Glenkilry, with its modern mansion standing a short distance from the public road. The property is now under the trustees of the late Mr. Patrick Allan Fraser. Mr. Allan, an Arbroath solicitor, married the daughter and heiress of the Rev. James Fraser of Hospitalfield, minister of Arbroath, and with her inherited that property and assumed her family name. He was a man of cultivated taste in the fine arts, and of generous and even beneficent disposition. He acted the part of Malenas to the son of his manager at Glenkilry, by sending him for training in his profession to Florence, and Mr. Durward Lely, the popular Scottish tenor, by afterwards taking the leading role in several of the English Operas in London and the provinces, as well as in the United

States, proved that his patron's estimate was a thoroughly sound one. Mr. Allan Fraser's principal public benefaction was connected with Arbroath. His house of Hospitalfield, which is acknowledged to be the original of Scott's "Monkbarns" in *The Antiquary*, and so called from part of the barn walls of the old Abbey being incorporated in the present building, was transformed by his architectural skill into "a picturesque romance in stone and lime" in the Scottish Baronial style. Here he gathered together a large and valuable collection of pictures, statuary and curios, and he bequeathed his house with all its treasures for the purpose of art education, and after his death in 1890, it became a residential school for art students.

Across the Blackwater from Dalrutzan, and in the county of Forfar, is the district of Blacklunans (the black pools), and the estate and residence of Mr. Robertson, of Drumfork. Blacklunans enjoys the privilege of having a sub-post office, and it is by that route that the postal service by motor car goes to Glenshee. Although there is no village, there is at least a centre of intercourse and illumination in the local school. It was here that that muscular preceptor, Mr. McCombie Smith, spent his days among his youthful pupils. In his time he was a heavy-weight athlete of no mean order, for he ranked at the Highland Gatherings with men like Donald Dinnie, whose sister he married, and James Fleming, the champions of last century. He contributed numerous articles to the magazines on athletics, local lore and antiquities, but his chief work is a history of the McCombies, the well-known Aberdeenshire stock-rearers, which was published by Messrs. Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh, in 1887.

Mount Blair (2441 feet), to the north of Blacklunans, is an isolated height of the Grampians, lying between the head of the Blackwater and Glenisla, having a circumference at the base of five miles. From its summit an extensive view over three counties is obtained. This includes the fertile strath between Birnam Wood and Dunsinane, and thence eastward to Dunottar Castle, Kincardineshire. Milton of Blacklunans and part of Mount Blair belong to Dr. Peter Shaw, Blairgowrie, eldest son of the late Mr. William Shaw, Finegand.

THE GLEN OF THE FAIRIES.

THE Valley of the Shee lies on the extreme north-east of the County of Perth, which for variety of scenery and diversity of climate surpasses any other county in Scotland.

The parish takes its name from the Gaelic word, *shìth*, signifying *fairies*, the belief in which was more general a few centuries ago than it is now. The word also means *peace*, and in these matter-of-fact days that would seem to be the more appropriate term. There are, however, some inhabitants who can remember when the Glen folk were called by their neighbours, "The fairies," from the name of the parish.

The Valley forms part of what is known as the Royal Route, or avenue from the south to the upper waters of the River Dee.

Ever since Malcolm Canmore built himself a hunting palace at Braemar in 1050, and took his fair Queen, Margaret, to share in the sport, the Pass of Glenshee has been frequented by travellers, of all degrees, from the occupant of the Throne to the humblest of his subjects.

Until the time of General Wade, in the first half of the eighteenth century, the journey was made either on horseback or on foot, for the road was little better than a cattle track, down which great herds used to be driven to the fairs and trysts in Perth, Stirling, and Falkirk.

Last century a daily service of four-in-hand coaches was maintained throughout the summer months, between Dunkeld and Braemar, and, although the road in many places did not exceed twelve feet in width, and was accounted one of the most dangerous in Scotland, the whips performed their anxious role so well, with such skill and knowledge of their teams, that no accident of any serious nature ever happened. The motor car has now displaced the more picturesque but cumbersome coach, and a great improvement has been effected on the highway by the conjoint effort of the Ministry of Transport

The Shaws claim as an ancestor the valiant Captain Sheagh (Shaw), who led the Clan Chattan in the contest for supremacy which took place on the North Inch of Perth in 1396, and which the great novelist has so graphically described in the *Fair Maid of Perth*. Dr. Shaw is the grandson of a public spirited man and a benefactor to the poor, Mr. Peter Shaw, Finegand, who was all his life connected with the parish of Glenshee. He was born at Dalnaglar in 1782. He was the second son of William Shaw of Dalnaglar and Margaret his wife (daughter of John Robertson of Cray and Susan, daughter of Patrick Small of Leonach). In 1808 he married Margaret, elder daughter and co-heiress of Andrew Stewart of Blacklunans and Drumfork, and so became proprietor of Milton and Westerton of Blacklunans. His brother, Captain James Shaw, married the other daughter of Andrew Stewart, and became proprietor of Drumfork.

In 1840 Peter Shaw's services to the community were publicly recognised by the presentation of a gold watch and chain, now in the possession of his grandson, bearing the following inscription:—

Presented
to
P. Shaw, Esq.,
of Milton & Westerton.
by

The inhabitants of Glenshee and Blackwater
in testimony of their gratitude for his zealous
exertions in promoting their temporal and
spiritual interest and especially for his
gratuitous labours among the afflicted.
Jany., 1840.

After his death in 1849 a tombstone was erected to his memory by public subscription in Glenshee Churchyard, bearing an inscription which testifies in similar terms to his sterling worth and valued services to the community.

and the local District Council at a cost of £27,000. The road has been widened, gradients reduced, and, although "The Devil's Elbow" has not been cut off, it has been made less fearsome than it was. Some portions of the way still demand alertness and caution on the part of the chauffeur, but there is now a surface and breadth of roadway that makes the journey reasonably safe and enjoyable. Glenshee extends a distance of seven miles between Cray and Glenlochside. It is sheltered on the east and west by off-shoots of the Grampians, the higher points rising to 2500 feet. The valley is interspersed with patches of timber, chiefly fir and birch, the latter being of natural growth and of no great size, but, as the most graceful of forest trees, adding a singular charm, at all seasons, to the landscape. Alders also here and there fringe the stream, although, as the climate is severe and winter gales frequent, there is little timber of any marketable value, a fact which should be carefully noted by those who contemplate the afforestation of the Highlands.

The cultivated land has a breadth of from a quarter to half a mile, and produces, under careful management, fair crops, but the harvest is occasionally late and always precarious.

The Spital of Glenshee, where the Church and Manse, the Hotel and Old Spital Farm are situated, receives its name from the hospital that stood there in long by-gone years, for the convenience of travellers. The word in its Latin form signifies "apartments for strangers," and, as an Inn, or Hospice, it would be a great boon to those journeying between Perth and the western district of Aberdeenshire. Its site was on the east side of the road, a short distance beyond the Manse. As the Cairnwell road was generally closed to traffic for two or three months in winter by snow-wreaths, and always an arduous journey on foot, it was a great boon to travellers to have a place of rest and refreshment in the vicinity; and, from the name Shanspital on the Clunie, it is evident there was a hospital on the north side of the pass as well as the south, and as *sean* means old, the hospice on the Clunie was clearly of an earlier date than that of Glenshee. It is more than likely that the Glenshee institution was built and kept by one of the

religious orders of monks, similar to that of St. Bernard. It must have been a hospice of some importance, for there is, at least, one charter extant, signed by King Robert II. there. On the parapet of General Wade's bridge at the Spital, the altitude is given as 1100 feet. That is approximately the figure for the highest cultivated land in Scotland. The parish may be described as of an Alpine character. There are many varieties distinctly Alpine in the flora and fauna to be found in the upper valleys of the Shee and its tributary streams. In the depth of winter the goosander, the snow-bunting, and the ptarmigan white as snow, are frequently seen there. Winter may be reckoned as lasting from November to April, and occasional snowstorms during that period render traffic and outdoor work impossible. It is a common experience to have to deal with snow-wreaths of from four to ten feet in depth. This means that the inhabitants become inured to cold, as well as to discomfort.

Before coal became available, a good deal of labour was expended each summer on the moors in cutting, drying and storing the peat fuel, to ensure a "happy fireside clime" in spite of frost and snow. No one who has not experienced the force of a fierce Highland storm, can understand the danger and, indeed, terrors of it, through bewilderment and physical exhaustion. Hardly a season passes without some poor wanderer being found on the hill or highway in his last sleep. During my ministry the feeble ray of a tallow candle might have been seen every dark winter night, shining from the little window of a cottage on the hillside, because the gudewife had been told that had there been a light shown there, a faithful shepherd, who had succumbed through fatigue at no great distance from her door, might have been saved.

Many a little dwelling has been drifted-up overnight, and when the gudeman opened his door in the morning it was to find himself confronted by a wall of snow. To cut a way out would mean filling the floor with melting snow, so the usual method adopted was to push a boy or girl, armed with a shovel, up the chimney, always built conveniently wide, who proceeded to dig a track, or it might be a tunnel, to the door.

There are many poetical descriptions of autumnal colourings in a Highland glen, but there are few so vivid and fanciful as that of Arthur Clough in the long-vacation pastorals entitled *The Boats of Tober na Vuolich*, in which he records the sayings, doings and goings of an Oxford Rowing Party:—

"Then when brackens are changed, and heather blooms are faded,
And amid russets of heather and fern, green trees are bonnie;
Alders are green, and oaks, the rowans scarlet and yellow;
One great glory of broad gold pieces appears the aspen,
And the jewels of gold that were hung in the hair of the birch-trees,
Dandelions, here and there, her coronet, necklaces and earrings,
Cover her now, o'er and o'er, she is weary and scatters them from her."

Sometimes the herds of deer, driven from their corrals in the forest by the pangs of hunger, come down in hundreds to forage in the farmer's kailyard or among his turnip-pits. If the storm be prolonged, the deer are fed on hay by the keeper, and become so tame that, if he be not early astir, the stags will rattle with their horns on his door to remind him of his duty.

A snow-clad range is a magnificent sight, especially on a frosty moonlight night, but a heavy snowfall in rural places causes labour and trouble, and cuts one off from communication with the outside world. It suspends all traffic. Even travelling on foot becomes a toilsome affair. Its effects are sometimes astonishing. After a snowstorm and gale the minister went on a Sunday morning to conduct service in the parish school, a mile and a half further down the Glen than the Church. The road was filled in parts from dyke to dyke, and the only footing, in some places, was on the top of one of them. When he, at length, reached his destination, there was no school to be seen, it was hidden under a huge snow-wreath. On the far side a part of the teacher's house was visible, and he and one or two others who had followed him, were admitted to the parlour, where a short service was held, and the "two or three" voices joined in singing the praise of Him who "giveth snow like wool, and scattereth the hoar frost like ashes," and who "sendeth forth His word, and melteth them."

Such experiences help one to enter into the mind of the Canadian child poetess who wrote the lines:—

"Deep in the lonely forest,
High on the mountain side,
Long is the dreary winter,
Short is the summer tide!"

But the summer makes great amends, especially when there are mountains and moors, lochs and streams within reach; and, when August comes, the moorlands assume their regal dressing, and the Glen puts on its gay coat of many colours, for the harmonies of purple, chrome and green, the grey of lichen rock and boulder, and the brown and blue of the winding river, make up a scene of loveliness and grandeur worth going far to see.

hands of Sir Archibald Birkmyre, Bart., Calcutta, who has already built a new mansion house, and carried out extensive improvements.

But there are other signs of crofters' shielings and humble homes of former generations to be seen in these upper valleys besides the tumble-down walls in the Shenavel birken-shaw. In the valley of Glenbeg, stretching north from the Spital, there are still traces to be found of its cultivation, and its occupancy by many families, a century or two ago.

At the first glance one might say, what a dreary, uninteresting glen it is! A little stream, bordered by a couple of hundred yards of rough pasture, and on either side, the hills, rising steeply, their slopes interspersed with verdure, heather and rocky terrain! With the exception of a clump of birch at the entrance, and a rowan tree here and there, planted to ward off the evil spirits, it is devoid of timber. And yet, bare and cheerless as it looks, it was, long ago, a scene of busy Highland life, studded with heather-thatched dwellings, round which the children romped, and the scent of peat-reek filled the air. It is now a striking illustration of a depopulated glen, a place not of human activities and domestic experiences, but of old-time memories and peaceful contemplation. On both sides of the valley, half a mile or so from the Rhidoroch, where the keeper's lodge, now the only inhabited house in Glenbeg, is situated, there can be seen the green mounds of what were shielings or steadings of farms, large and small, occupied for centuries by a hardy, industrious and long-lived race. On the eastern slope, by the side of the Allandrie Burn, the outline of the house and offices of a large grazing called Cronaherie is still visible, along with the track of a water course leading from a pool on the burn to the steading. A mountain spring of ice-cold water, called "the spring on which the sun never shone," flows from the southern bank, and shows why the site of the farm was chosen; and the stack-yard terraces can also be distinguished. Some three hundred yards to the south of Cronaherie, and by the side of another water-course, the remains of a second dwelling-place can be seen. It was called Lagana-griene (the hollow of the bones), and a mile and a half north

THE UPPER GLENS.

GLENSHÉE extends to a couple of miles north-west of the Spital, to a point called the Shenavel, near the junction of the two valleys, Glenlochsie and Glentaitnesch, or the pleasant vale; and this upper district was well populated a hundred and fifty years ago, by families of Macintoshes, MacKenzies, Lamonts, Lyons, and Grants. There are only heaps of stones and clumps of birch now seen where once were homesteads. A rent-roll of the early years of last century showed that over a score of tenants paid rent on land there, which is now included in a couple of grazings.

One of the birches on the opposite slope has a history attached to it. It is known as "MacKenzie's Tree." One of the tackmen, named MacKenzie, had in some way offended one of the Straloch lairds, possibly by trespassing upon his land, which lay on the south side of the hill, and he sent a small band of retainers, armed with sword and bow, to apprehend him and carry him to Strathardle to answer the charge.

MacKenzie was at work in a field, and when he saw the men coming down the hill-side, he suspected their errand, and sent to his cottage for his bow and arrows. When the leader called upon him to yield himself a prisoner, his reply was a shaft which quivered in the bole of the tree beside which he stood, and MacKenzie cried out that if he advanced a foot further his next arrow would strike him down. When they found him so fully prepared to resist them, after a few minutes' consultation, they decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and set off to Strathardle, leaving MacKenzie in the enjoyment of his freedom.

The foundation lines of the old Castle of Dalmunzie, so long the residence of the Macintoshes, can still be seen on the south side of the Lochsie, a short distance from its junction with the Taitnesch. The property passed a few years ago into the

of Cronaherie there stood another shieling called Gormel (the green hill); but, about two hundred years ago, it was almost overwhelmed by an avalanche, when a family of Ramsays who inhabited it, made a wonderful escape in the middle of the night, and it was afterwards deserted.

On the opposite side of the valley from Cronaherie, and not far above the highway, stood one or two other dwellings, Laganamer (the trough-shaped hollow), and Craigdearg (the red crag), and, on the top of a steep bank, Clachnahernan, or Clacherna (the burial place of the lairds).

The late Major P. Chalmers, Blairgowrie, well known in his time as an expert swordsman and military instructor in Stirling and Perth, gathered, at first hand, the tales and traditions of his ancestors, the Ramsays, who for two hundred years were tenants in Cronaherie. He acknowledged that it was by hearing in his youth from some of his relatives of the skill and prowess of McComie Mor of Finegand that he conceived the idea of attaining distinction in the art of swordsmanship. In his unpublished notes on the family in Glenbeg, he tells of the arrival of the founder of the family, Alexander Ramsay, in the middle of the seventeenth century. Alexander was a son of Ramsay of Tullimurdoch, near Alyth. His father had been killed in an engagement with the Ogilvies, and he had taken up the family feud. The Ogilvies had appeared at Tullimurdoch, where he lived with his widowed mother, with the intention of carrying him off, and he proposed to give himself up in order to save the house from the flames; but the high-spirited mother refused her assent, saying she would rather see him slain than a prisoner in the hands of their enemies. He then determined to attempt his escape by night, and after slaying one of their guard, he fled in the direction of the Blackwater. Knowing that he would be pursued with hounds, when he reached the stream, near Dalrulzion, he made a gash in one of his hands, and with the blood traced a wide circle on the heather, with the object of baffling the pursuit, and then sprang into the river, and wading up the water for some distance, got out on the opposite bank. He continued his flight to Strathardle, and found shelter in the hut of a friendly shepherd at a spot still known to old inhabitants

as Ramsay's bed, or rock (Leabaidh Ramsay). After two days he learned that his pursuers were on his track, and he again took to the hills, this time in the direction of the Spital, and there was befriended by a cobbler, who tied an apron round him, put a black patch over one of his eyes, and an old shoe and hammer into his hands, transforming him hastily into an apprentice. When the Ogilvies arrived they failed to recognise him, seated on a stool, busily engaged cobbling an old shoe; and, after a vain search, they returned to their own homes. Ramsay felt himself safe in Glenbeg, and took service with MacKenzies of Cronaherie, afterwards of Finegand, whose daughter he married, and eventually became tenant in his father-in-law's farm. He was known in the locality as Alastair Greussach (the shoemaker's Alexander) on account of the protection afforded him. It is said he settled in Glenbeg about the year 1640. He died in 1702, and his tombstone can be seen in the Churchyard of Glenshee. He was succeeded in Cronaherie by his son Donald, who, about 1680, married Isabel Bain (the fair Isabel), daughter of Mackintosh, alias McComie, of Forthar. She was probably the granddaughter of M'Comie Mor.

There is a romantic story told concerning Donald's sister, who was accounted a handsome and attractive young woman. The son of a proprietor of Strathardle had fallen in love with her, and they had become betrothed, but his father had other prospects in view, and endeavoured to break off the match. As his efforts were unsuccessful, he had recourse to strategy. He pretended to relent and consent to the marriage, and invited the young lady to accompany him to Dundee, with the ostensible purpose of purchasing some apparel and furnishings for the wedding and her new home. When they reached the town he showed her some of the principal sights, and finally suggested they should visit one of the ships in the harbour. He had already arranged a plot with the captain of a ship that was to clear for the Mediterranean that afternoon. Miss Ramsay was invited to go below to the Captain's cabin. The laird excused himself, promising to return in a short time. As time passed she became anxious at his non-appearance, and her anxiety deepened to grief and despair when she found the ship had

started on its voyage, and was moving down the estuary of the Tay, and realised that she had been basely beguiled from her home and friends, and was being carried she knew not where.

When the ship reached the African coast, she was taken ashore to Morocco, and sold into the cruellest form of slavery then existing. But her fair appearance and gentle manner gained her an entrance to the palace. She was admitted into the royal harem, and eventually became the favourite wife of the Emperor. She was exalted to high rank, and gained, in course of time, great influence at Court. After some years the laird, who had so heartlessly put her out of his way, made up his mind to pay a visit to the South of France, but the vessel in which he sailed was driven by a gale out of its course, and fell a prey to the Moorish pirates who infested the African coast. He and his fellow-voyagers were taken captive, and carried off to the slave-market in the Capital of Morocco. Passing through the streets, accompanied by her attendants, the Empress, for so the daughter of Ramsay of Cronaherie had now come to be regarded, noticed some faces that seemed to be those of Englishmen, and she requested that these captives should be brought to the palace; and to her intense amazement, she discovered that her own cruel betrayer was one of them. Instead of seeking revenge, she interested herself to obtain their freedom, and arranged for their return to their native country, bestowing many gifts upon them. Before departing, the laird, as spokesman of the band, asked her what they could do to show their gratitude, when she revealed herself by telling him that she had many times sat at his own table, and though she had suffered sorely at his hands, a more powerful Will than his had turned evil into good, and she wished to prove that she bore him no ill-will.

Some years after two of her sons, described as the Princes of Morocco, arrived at Dundee with the purpose of seeking out their mother's relatives in Glenbeg, bringing gifts for them, but the country was in the throes of the Rebellion, and it was considered too dangerous for foreigners to venture into the Highlands.

Gormel and Cronaherie were sold by Mr. Colin MacKenzie in 1770 to Mr. Mackintosh, who disposed of them ten years

later to Mr. James Farquharson of Invercauld. After his death, the trustees in 1812 determined to throw the small holdings in Glenbeg into one large grazing, and the Ramsays, MacKenzies and others left their old homes, and the valley was depopulated. Highland lairds have been sometimes blamed for the harshness of their dealings with their tenants, especially with the small crofters, and for the way in which they evicted some of these from their holdings, but no charge of such a nature was ever made against Farquharson of Invercauld. His relations with his people seem to have become quite patriarchal. He sought the good of all. When one of his tenants asked for a lease of his farm, his answer was, "Do you your own good, Donald, and I will never flit you."

In *The Highlander's Lament*, John Stuart Blackie, who never spared the landed proprietors, if he thought they neglected their duty as the protectors of the country people, depicts him as the embodiment of the kindly feeling that ought to be shown by the owner towards the tiller of the soil:—

"Then when the stout old Farquharson possessed the peopled glen,
A kindly heart, I wis, had he, where'er his feet might wend,
From winding Dee to far Glenshee, the cotlar called him friend;
From door to door his step was known; with oaken staff in hand
He stood and wore his easy talk, with the tillers of the land.
No harsh reproof they feared from him, no heartless lawyer's ban;
He owned the soil, but rather owned, the hearts of all the clan."

After leaving Glenbeg some of the Ramsays went to the Colonies and prospered there, one of them becoming a partner in the firm of McBean, Jameson & Co., Georgetown, Demerara. They left their secluded homes, where they could find little recreation or social enjoyment and but rare communication with the outside world, for spheres that offered them greater comfort and larger opportunities of advancement and improvement.

It required a vigorous constitution to stand the severities of the climate when the homes stood at an altitude of from 1300 to 1500 feet. And yet some of the inhabitants lived to a ripe old age. It is told of John Ramsay, known as Duine (the man), that in all his ninety-one years he never had a day's illness,

and was accidentally killed by the falling-in of the kiln-roof on which he was engaged executing some repairs.

Before Glenshee was constituted a separate parish, service was conducted in the Church, once a month, by the minister of Kirkmichael, but the intimation required to be safeguarded by the proviso, "weather permitting," for he had to traverse a distance of over twenty miles, by the turnpike at that time, and the chance of the road being blocked in the winter months was considerable.

When the road to Braemar was being laid by General Wade and his successor, for the work was being carried out in the fifth decade of the eighteenth century, a large number of military engineers were engaged upon it. One of the officers, along with his wife, was lodged in Laganagraine, and there a child was born to them. They were anxious to have it baptised, the belief being that a child dying unbaptised was condemned to everlasting misery, but some difficulty in securing the minister's services came in the way. Alexander Ramsay, who resided there, in all likelihood an elder of the Church, volunteered to fill the minister's place, and using the formula, "In the name of the King, and by His authority," he christened the child. The officer thanked him, saying, "It is well and quickly done," but added, "I fear it will have to be done over again."

In times of national danger a large number of men, endowed with physical vigour and powers of endurance, were recruited from the upper glen; and, though their descendants may have gone to more genial climes, and prospered there, it is saddening to reflect, in the Sabbath calm of the place, that what was once a busy valley is now desolate, and that instead of the shouts and laughter of healthy, happy children, one hears but the bleating of sheep, the gurgle of the stream, or the hiss of the distant waterfall, borne on the summer breeze.