

"Point at my heart, my bosom's bare"—
The indignant, brave Cam-rusaidh cried;
"Spare not, for I shall never spare";
The arrow flew—the ruffian died.

Death danced exulting on the string,
And drove the unerring shafts before,
Till fifty dipp'd their eagle wing
Into the cat'rans' vital gore.

The remnant fled, the gory vale
Now stained, the trembling widows' tread,
And lovers mourn the daring dead.
And mothers join the crouching wail.

The mountain gale, unhooded, twists
The golden locks of Althe Bann,
As Allan's cold, pale lips she kissed,
Those lips she ne'er should kiss again.

SOME VICTORIAN TALES.

IN 1848, on the death of Sir Robert Gordon, who tenanted Balmoral Castle, the Prince Consort purchased the reversion of the lease from the Duke of Fife, and, a few years after, entered into full possession, when the old Castle was pulled down and the present imposing building erected according to the plans of Sir Gilbert Scott.

In the same year Queen Victoria and Prince Albert spent their first autumn holiday at Balmoral, and enjoyed many excursions among the neighbouring hills. The Queen's love of the Highlands increased year by year. She found, as many earlier Scottish Sovereigns found in the hunting palace of Kindrochet, recreation and rest

"Amid the mountain scenes sublime,
After from Courtly care."

In August, 1849, Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort visited Ireland, where they were received in the chief towns with "Caed mile faithe." From Belfast they crossed over in the "Victoria and Albert" to the Clyde, and after spending most of the day seeing the sights of Glasgow and receiving addresses, they travelled to Perth, which they reached about four o'clock, and spent the night in the George Inn, now the Royal George Hotel.

Next morning they started on the long journey by road to Balmoral.

In Her Majesty's *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands*, a brief but rapid description of the various stages and scenery of what has come to be known as the *Royal Route* is given. The passage is as follows:—

"Wednesday, August 15, 1849. At a quarter to eight we started. The two boys and Vicky were in the carriage with us. Alice followed with the ladies. It was a long journey, but

through very beautiful scenery. We saw the Grampians as we left Perth. We first changed horses at Blairgowrie, 15 miles. Then came a very long stage of 20 miles, to the Spital of Glenshee. We first passed the house of a Lieut.-Colonel Clark Rattray, called Craig Hall, overhanging a valley or glen above which we drove, and after this we came into completely wild Highland scenery, with barren rocky hills, through which the road winds to the Spital of Glenshee, which can scarcely be called a village, as it consists of only an inn and two or three cottages. We got out at the inn, where we found Mr. Farquharson (of Invercauld) and his son, and some of his men. Here we had some luncheon, and then set off again. The next stage of 15 miles to Castleton is over a very bad, and at night positively dangerous road, through wild grand scenery, with very abrupt turns and steep ascents. One sharp turn is called *The Devil's Elbow*. The Farquharson men joined us again here, some having gone on before, and others having followed from the inn, skipping over stones and rocks with the rapidity and lightness peculiar to Highlanders. They remained with us till we were able to trot on again. We drove through a very fine pass called *Cairn Wall*."

For a number of years, and especially before the extension of the railway to Ballater, the journey to and from Balmoral was made by this route, and during the residence of the Court in the Highlands there was considerable coming and going by the Spital. The Queen's Messenger, with the correspondence of the Court and the Royal despatches, passed daily to and from Perth in a carriage that was usually very dusty or bespattered, and many of the visitors to the Castle took the same route.

It was the custom when the Queen travelled up or down to appoint some gentleman in each district as the officer of the road, to accompany the Royal carriage on horseback, and see that everything went smoothly. Mr. William Shaw, Finegand, held the office for some years over the portion of the road between the Spital and Persie, a distance of ten miles.

On one occasion when the Royal carriage halted at the Spital Hotel to take on a fresh team, one of the little company

gathered there had the effrontery to go forward and put his hands on the door to get a closer view of the occupants. Mr. Shaw rode forward, and raising his riding-whip, cried "Stand back, you rascal, or I'll crack your crown!" and he overheard the Queen say to the Prince Consort, "What did the gentleman say about the Crown?"

There is a dangerous bit of road at the foot of Glenshee where a number of accidents have taken place. It is called "The Lair Brae." After a steep descent, the road, which is now altered, took a sharp turn to the right, and immediately after crossed a narrow bridge. On one journey south, the horses of the Royal carriage took fright and dashed down the hill in spite of the efforts of the postillions. Mr. Shaw put his horse to full speed, and seizing hold of the bridle of the near leader, he succeeded in bringing the carriage to a standstill. Knowing by long experience the dangerous nature of the road, he used to declare, not without pride, that he had once saved the Queen's life.

A mile or two further south stands the old House of Dalruizean. It was occupied in these days by Miss Rattray, an aged Highland lady. In order to see the Queen pass, and pay her respects to the Royal party, she had given orders to have her high-backed chair set at her gateway, and when the carriage appeared, she rose to make her curtsy. When the Queen observed the silver-haired old lady, she ordered the carriage to be stopped, and told the then youthful Prince Edward of Wales and the Princess Royal to stand up that the lady might the better see them. Miss Rattray invoked the blessing of God upon the Queen, the Prince Consort, "and their beautiful children," and the Queen exclaimed "Dear old lady, dear old lady!" and the little wayside interview ended.

Taking a drive one day from Balmoral with some of her guests, the Queen was tempted by the sunshine to go further than was originally intended, and the distance was such that it was feared the horses would not be able to accomplish the return journey. An attendant was therefore sent to a farm to ask for fresh horses. The farmer explained that he had but one pair of carriage horses, but that if these were put on the wheel,

and Her Majesty's own leaders retained, he would guarantee that his horses would take the carriage safely home. The attendant demurred at this, saying that Her Majesty required two pairs. But the farmer said, "I will speak to the Queen about it," which he did, and the Queen said his was an excellent arrangement. After the horses had been yoked, and the Royal party had driven off, he returned to his house, saying to his wife, "When I explained the thing to Her Majesty, she said she would do just as I told her. She seems to be a real sensible lady!"

One of the disadvantages of residing in Glenshee in these earlier days was that there was a postal delivery only once in two days. The foot-post went to the Bridge of Cally the one day and returned the next, so that there were two days' letters and papers delivered at the same time. But the Queen, quite unconsciously, helped to effect an improvement. One of Her Majesty's Ministers was always in attendance at Balmoral during her residence there. One of these, Lord John Manners, Postmaster General, whose summer residence was at Birnam, made his arrangements for his journey north. He wrote one Friday to the proprietor of the Invercauld Arms at the Spital requesting him to have lunch ready and a pair of fresh horses for the Braemar stage, on the following Monday. His letter lay during Saturday and Sunday at Bridge of Cally, and on the Monday he passed the post-runner with it in his bag, somewhere between Persie and Glenshee. To his astonishment and annoyance he found that his letter had not been received, and that there were neither luncheon nor horses awaiting him. The following day a letter was dispatched to Lord John containing his own postmarked envelope, expressing regret for the occurrence, and pointing out the inconvenience of the existing arrangements. Within a week a Postal Inspector appeared from Edinburgh, and a few weeks later an additional foot-post was appointed, and thereafter all received their morning paper on the day of its publication, and correspondence without undue delay.

The foot-post for a number of years was a simple-minded, steady-going elderly man, familiarly known as "Peter." In his collection of pence in lieu of stamps, he once found a penny which had been skillfully manipulated so as to show the figure

of Britannia on both sides, and he found it useful in helping him to secure a little refreshment on his weary way. In giving change, however, on some occasion, he incautiously parted with his penny. It was a loss too grievous to be borne, and he accordingly wrote to the Master of the Mint requesting him to coin him two pennies, one with heads and the other with tails on both sides, frankly confessing they were to be used "for tossing purposes." To his intense amazement, in the course of a fortnight, he received a communication from the head office in Edinburgh dispensing with his services in a month's time. When the people became aware of "Peter's" plight, a petition, generally signed, was dispatched to the Postal authorities, testifying that while he had been foolish he was trustworthy in the discharge of his duties, begging that his notice of dismissal be withdrawn, and this was done, and "Peter" ever after tossed on equal terms with his associates.

One of the keepers in the Glen was named Sandie Duff, but on account of his surname he was known in the district as "Lord Fife." It happened that there was an auction in front of the Spital Hotel of some odds and ends of stock, and a cow had passed under the hammer. Some one called out "Wha got the coo?" and the auctioneer replied "Lord Fife," whereupon an elderly gentleman sprang from a seat in front of the Hotel and declared, in somewhat forcible language, that he had nothing whatever to do with the cow; he did not want it, and refused to receive it. It was the Earl of Fife, who happened to be travelling north, and he took a hearty laugh when he was informed that the purchaser of the cow was his neighbour's keeper, Sandie Duff.

The late Mr. Alexander McKenzie Smith of Finegand (whose forebears held the property of Dalmore on the Upper Dee, prior to its occupation by the Duffs, when its name was changed to Mar), in the latter years of his life spent several months each season in the Glen, and along with some of his neighbouring landowners took a deep interest in local affairs, among other things, in the services in the Parish Church, which he sought to brighten and render more generally attractive.

He impressed on the minds of the Kirk Session the benefits of instrumental music in leading the praise, and suggested that

a subscription book should be sent round the parish to obtain money to purchase a suitable organ.

The members of the Session objected to the proposal, on the ground that the introduction of an instrument would create dissension and split the congregation.

The following summer he intimated that he had purchased an organ for presentation to the Church, and that it was then at Blairgowrie railway station, and he was agreeably surprised when each of the objectors at once offered to send a cart to fetch it to the Church.

Feeling, too, that a lengthy discourse was not for edification, he approached the minister with the suggestion that, with a larger service of praise, the sermon might be considerably curtailed. He was again met with the objection that this would create dissension. The following Sunday at the close of the service he assembled the people outside the Church, and put the matter before them, asking all who were of his mind on the subject to hold up their hands, when there was an immediate and favourable response, and the question was settled *nemine contradicente*. Mr. MacKenzie Smith's memory, as a bright-spirited, warm-hearted and generous friend, is still revered among the older residents.

The inhabitants are inured to hardship by the severities of the weather, and although one of General Wade's officers declared that the meteorological report for the year was "nine months of winter and three months wet weather," some of them attain to a great age. The oldest inhabitant at the time of writing was the widow of Mr. Alexander Keay of Dalhuzean, who was in her ninety-fourth year, and was then good for a four-mile walk. A native of Colliace, Perthshire, she could boast of having been the first bride brought to the Glen from any outside district. (Mrs. Keay died in 1927, in her 96th year.)

Although removed from much that is now-a-days considered to be essential to human happiness, the people in general are contented, capable and intelligent, the long winter nights affording them abundant opportunity of cultivating their minds. Queen Victoria in her "Journal" frequently refers to the good-breeding, simplicity and intelligence of the Highlanders.

When the Rev. Dr. Badenoch, London, visited Colonel Macdonald Macdonald forty or fifty years ago at Slochnacraig, he was invited to preach in the Parish Church. As he approached the Church on the Sunday morning, he was met by Major Collinson Hall, who was lessee of the Invercauld shootings at the top of the Glen, who wished him good-morning, saying, "I understand, Dr. Badenoch, you are to preach to-day." "Yes," was the reply. "I intend to say a few simple words to a few simple people." "Well," said Major Hall, "I have been shooting-tenant here for several years, and have become well acquainted with several of the people, and it is my opinion they will take the best you have to offer them."

The education of the youth of the parish at that time was in the hands of a conscientious old pedagogue named Alexander Wilson, who, for the greater part of his public service, received the inadequate salary of £30 a year, on which he brought up a family of two sons and two daughters, sending the former to mercantile offices in London. But the neighbours augmented his income by their gifts in kind. When any one of the stock-breeders killed a sheep or a bullock for household use, a portion of it was set aside for the dominie, and with contributions of meal and potatoes the school larder was, in this way, kept fairly well stocked. In addition to this, each of the scholars took two peats to the school throughout the winter months, one for the school-room fire, and the other for the teacher's household hearth, so that he had no fear of lack of fuel. The children got a good grounding in the three R's, without any accessories, and some who are now in the professions received the essential elements of their education in the little rural school.

With the passing of the Scottish Education Act in 1872 the reproach of an ill-requited service was wiped out, and Wilson's salary was at once raised to £100 per annum, but the good old man had by then become so habituated to the practice of thrift that he confessed that he did not know what to do with so much money.

He had no knowledge of Gaelic, and did not encourage the children to speak it at school, although it was constantly used in their own homes, and, as a consequence, that language has

died out very much in the Glen, and is now, unfortunately, forgotten by some of those who were quite familiar with it in their childhood.

A great effort is being made at the present time to prevent the language dying out in the Highlands, by insisting that the children shall receive a bi-lingual education in the public schools.

The pronunciation of Gaelic is so difficult that there is a distinction drawn in the Highlands between *good* and *bad* Gaelic, that of Argyshire being considered the purest form, the same, it is stated, as was spoken in the Garden of Eden.

One of His Majesty's Inspectors in the Highlands made up his mind to learn the language by means of a grammar and dictionary, so that he could speak to the children in the schools in their native tongue. After some months of study he felt himself qualified to address a Gaelic-speaking friend. This man listened attentively, but appeared not a little puzzled, and said, "What is that?" "That," said the Inspector, "is Gaelic." "Oh," was the humbling rejoinder, "is *that* Gaelic?"

The Aberdeen Provincial Committee for the training of teachers has recently considered the advisability of including Gaelic in the school curriculum, but, unless a body of teachers, male or female, can be secured who have gained their knowledge of the language in their youth, and who are willing to give their services in the Highlands, it will be impossible to prevent it passing out of common use.

The example of the Inspector is a warning to others of the futility of attempting to acquire a colloquial knowledge of this ancient tongue by the ordinary scholastic method.

It may help the Lowlander to appreciate some of the peculiarities of Gaelic pronunciation if we conclude this little volume by giving one or two examples of expressions of goodwill that are in common use among the Highlanders in their meeting and parting at Kirk or Market. Besides giving translation of the phrase, we add the phonetic-spelling of the words and a free rendering of the kindly sentiment.

La chi 's nach fhàic.
(The day I) see and (the day I) don't see (thee).
Laa chee 's nach sìchig.

Another form of the same—

An is a chi mi thu san la nach fhàic mi thu.
The day that I see thee and the day I don't see thee.
An laa e' chee mee oo san laa nach sìchig mee oo.
The best of luck whether I see you or no!

Another form in use where deer abound—

An is mharbhas thu fadh san is nach marbh thu.
The day killest thou a deer and the day not killest thou.
An laa varvas oo fe-adh san laa nach marv oo.
All happiness whether you kill a stag or no!

Gu ma fada beo thu is coo dhe do thaigh.
That may long live thou and smoke from thy house.
Goo mas fata byeo oo is kyoo yea toe hoy.
Scottie—Long may your lum reek.

And one other in conclusion—

A' h-uile latha sons dhut, Gun lath iuir dona dhut.
Every day good to thee, no day at all evil to thee!
A hools is-a sons ghoot, Gun is iuir dona ghoot!
"Every day good luck to thee,
And no day of sorrow be!"