OLD MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

LIKE the wise-hearted women of Israel, who brought their many-coloured gifts to the work of the tabernacle, the women in the Highlands, in by-gone years, spent much of their time at the spinning-wheel. The whirr of the wheel sounded in every home, and was the common accompaniment to the family converse in cot and clachan. Hand-spinning is now one of the lost arts, and the spinning-wheel has become an antique, but, until the middle of the nineteenth century, it was as much a part of the household furnishings as the girdle or the porridge-pot.

The people wore their home-woven cloths, made from the wool of their own sheep; for special wear it was sometimes dyed a dark blue. The tailor went his rounds among the shielings, and where employed was included as a member of the household, thus saving the family long journeys for measuring and fitting, and assuring that the work would be more expeditiously completed.

Another of the duties of the women which has fallen out of practice, was that of milking the ewes after the lambs had been taken from them, and turning the milk into cheese.

Jane Elliot, in her version of that pathetic ballad, "The Flowers of the Forest," opens with the lines :—

> "I've heard the lilting, at our yowe-milking,
> Lasses a-lilting before the dawn of day,"

and she leaves the impression that the milking at the ewe-buchts in the early morning was, in general, an occasion for mirth and song, and an opportunity for love-making. In Glenbeg it was the custom two centuries ago for the women and children to go for a month in summer to the moorland pastures, where the ewes grazed, to milk them there. They took up their quarters in roughly-built shiels, to which all the necessary furnishings,

cooking utensils, dishes, food supplies, fuel, and even spinning-wheels, were carried on the backs of ponies. The bed-boxes, which were left in the shiels throughout the year, were annually refilled with fresh heather for a mattress. The process followed was to cut the supply of heather and allow it to dry; then gather it into lengths of nine inches and pack it tightly into the boxes with the flower uppermost, thus making a wholesome and comfortable bed. Their staple diet was oatmeal porridge and ewes' milk, and their beverage was not tea, for there was none in the country, but whey produced in the cheese-making, or water, "sparkling fresh from some glad mountain spring."

Besides milking the ewes, the women also did the sheep-clipping in its season. The men caught and bound the sheep, and laid them before the women, who sheared off the fleece, and an expert clipper could reach a total of a hundred head in a day.

One of the difficulties and dangers of sheep-farming in those days arose from the number of foxes who made their burrows among the rocky places in the hills. They were so numerous, it is said, that they almost exterminated the mountain hares. In winter they moved south, but returned to the higher altitudes in spring. It was found necessary for the safety of the flock to fold the sheep every night. The folds were built with strong dry stone walls, and, although the foxes could have leaped over them, being of a suspicious nature, they never did so. The shepherd led out the sheep in the morning to some fresh pasture ground, and in the afternoon turned them back, so that they could move slowly home and reach their fold before the close of the day. He remained all day beside them, for if one strayed far from his view it was sure to fall a prey to some prowling reynard. Professional fox-hunters were employed to destroy these pests, and they either hunted them from their burrows with terriers, or stopped up the mouth of the hole at night when the occupant was abroad, and then ran him down with strong rough-haired greyhounds. The shepherd had to be on the watch also against feathered foes, such as eagles and ravens, which preyed on the lambs, and the king of birds would not hesitate to attack a man when foraging for its food.

For six months, from November, the sheep were sent each year to the lower districts of Perthshire and Forfarshire, the expense of which was almost equal to the rent of the farm; and the practice is continued to this day. If this were not done, very serious losses might be caused by a prolonged snowstorm. One of the farmers in Glenbeg lost in a single night, fifty years ago, five hundred sheep and five horses. These had gone into a deep gulley half-way up the valley, to the left of the road, for shelter from the storm, and the snow gathered over them and choked up the channel of the burn, and the water, coming up through the snow, suffocated them all.

Before the introduction of turnips (circa 1780), the cattle and horses were also sent south for the winter, generally to the Carse of Gowrie, where they were fed on wheat straw, but no charge was made for the fodder, as, during their stay, they converted the straw into valuable manure. The stirks returned in poor condition to the Highlands in the month of May, after which they were fattened on the rich mountain pastures, and then sent to the market. In the middle of the nineteenth century oilcake was introduced for winter fattening, and since then the cattle have increased greatly, both in size and weight.

For some centuries Lanark Moor was regarded as the principal market place for blackfaced lambs, which the northern farmers purchased from the south-country breeders. Before the start of the auction-mart, fifty or sixty years ago, the flockmasters did their own bargaining, and frequently got their lambs from the same *hirsels* year after year. Before the advent of the railway, the journey from the Highlands to Lanark was done on foot. Along with their shepherds, the flockmasters walked to Edinburgh from Glenshee, making the distance of eighty miles in two stages. After spending a night there, they, next day, completed the remaining fifty miles to the scene of the sales. Returning with their flock of lambs, they travelled by easy stages, and when night fell enclosed them in some field by the way, but never ceased to guard them with their sheep-dogs; and, for the whole of a week, they never had their clothes off. These long journeys could only be done by men in the full vigour of life, and the sustaining power of their endurance was oatmeal.

It is very conclusive proof that plain fare contributes to length of life, to learn that Donald Ramsay, one of the family who for several generations occupied Cronaherie, was a man of vigorous constitution and temperate habits, whose maxim was "Drink little that you may drink long." Like Norval's father he was "a frugal swain." If he was to be late in getting home from some tryst or other long journey, he never allowed anyone to sit up for him, but contented himself with some spoonfuls of cold porridge, and went to bed; and was astir in the morning before any of the other inmates. His custom was to retire to rest about nine o'clock at night, and to be up at five in the morning. He died in 1842, at the age of ninety-two.

His father, of similar habits, had also exceeded the four score and ten years. He was born in 1710, and could remember seeing the Rebels, under the Earl of Mar, pass down Glenbeg on their way south on the disastrous expedition of 1715. As an incident showing the family sympathy with the Stuart cause, it is told that, after the suppresion of the Rebellion, royal troops were sent into the disaffected parts of the Highlands, and some were stationed at the Spital. They one day commandeered some hay, belonging to Ramsay, who farmed Liannoch Mor near the Spital, and compelled him to carry a burden of it across the river on the plank that then served the purpose of a foot-bridge. When he reached the bank, closely followed by two or three soldiers, he suddenly dropped his burden, and, catching up the end of the plank, he tumbled them all into the water, and, though they had their muskets with them, he escaped up the shoulder of Bengulbein before they could get their priming renewed. History does not relate if he was punished for his misdemeanour, but, like the old woman with the tongs, his action demonstrated unmistakably which side he was on.

Near the steadings of some of the farms can be seen strongly-built stone kilns, or the remains of these, which were used last century for burning the lime-stone, then in great demand as a fertiliser of the soil. The lime-stone was quarried on the Cairnwell, where it is found in abundance. So much is this the case that when, about fifty years ago, the ground was

surveyed for a light railway between Blairgowrie and Braemar, it was estimated that the carriage of the lime-stone would prove a valuable source of revenue. Certain difficulties, however, arose, and the scheme never materialised. General Wade, who made use of the lime in the construction of his bridges, declared that its quality was as good as any he had found in Scotland.

But the kiln was in common use long before our agriculturists took to using lime as a fertiliser, for all corn grown in these high altitudes required to be kiln-dried before being used for food. The crop was occasionally frosted before being ripe, and the effect was to make the meal less palatable, but its nutritive properties were not destroyed. In some homes hot water was poured on the dry meal and stirred to form brose, but this implied stronger powers of digestion, especially if it were taken three times a day.

No doubt some people would feel aggrieved if they were asked to dine on porridge and milk, but it has been sometimes commended even by those who could afford a much richer fare. One of the Earls of Airlie was in the habit of staying a night or two, when shooting in the neighbouring valley of the Isla, in the farmhouse of one of his tenants. He arrived, on one occasion, about midday unexpectedly, and Mrs. Stewart had no dinner prepared, but she soon made a bowlful of good stiff porridge, and set it before him along with a jug of cream, and, after the repast, he declared he had never in his life enjoyed a better dinner. Possibly his walk among the hills gave an added relish, in accordance with the old Latin adage *Fames optimum condimentum*.

But there was another form of hospitality which was supplied by the smugglers, who carried on their illicit operations in the corries and among the peat-hags of the Cairnwell or the Glas Maol, and took the liquor for disposal in small casks or cogies, holding five or six gallons, slung on the backs of Highland ponies. They were careful to avoid the public road, and their route southward lay through the valley called Glacklochan, which opens beside the farm of the Tomb, and rises to the south side of Cronaherie. The Rev. Allan Stewart, who was minister of the parish at the close of the eighteenth century, on

one of his visits to Cronaherie, was told that the smugglers had passed down and left a cask there, and he immediately proceeded to unbutton his waistcoat and open his shirt collar. It was his custom on such an occasion to give a toast in Gaelic to the following effect :—

"The minister of the parish,
The dominie of Kirkmichael,
Robbie Petrie, the fiddler,
For ever! Amen!"

An old man, Donald Ferguson, who passed away a year or two ago, remembered seeing in his youth the ponies with their little cogies pass down the glen. He got a taste of the contents, which he pronounced "verra fine"; but the gaugers in time searched out the secret stills, and put an end to the traffic.

Highland Funerals.

Until recent years, when the use of a hearse has become more general, the company of mourners bore the coffin on staves in relays of eight, and, as long distances had sometimes to be traversed, the party walked four deep, and at certain stages the bearers were relieved and fell to the rear, where refreshments were dealt out from the vehicle following. When a friend who wished to render a little monetary assistance, once asked a cottar how much it would take for a funeral from his house, he received the prompt reply, "Twa gallons!" Even the poorest made an effort to provide a liberal supply of refreshment on such an occasion.

The rivalry of neighbouring parishes was not even absent from such a solemn concern. It only lay concealed, like the fire below the grey peat ash, to be blown into flame by a breath of wind. There was a certain etiquette that had always to be observed, that none but the inhabitants of the district through which the funeral passed were allowed to act as bearers. At the boundary between these parishes the charge was handed over. But on the Cairnwell there is a portion of debatable land, a level stretch of road of from one hundred to two hundred yards, claimed both for Perthshire and Aberdeenshire. Jealous of their rights, and fiery of temperament, one can understand how this undefined boundary sometimes became a *casus belli* between the Braemar and Glenshee mourners, and how

the spirit of rivalry occasionally drove out their feelings of decency and order, and confusion ensued. On one occasion, in the struggle for possession, the coffin was thrown to the ground and burst open, with a result that for the time quelled the angry passion of the mourners. On another occasion a muscular leader gave timely warning in Gaelic to the approaching bearers by calling out—"If you venture to cross the boundary, you will bring one corpse over, but I warrant you will carry four back."

The large number of changes that have taken place in the Highlands during the past century may have resulted in the disappearance of some customs that were old-fashioned and picturesque, but they have proved beneficial in lightening the toil of the women, and giving to the children larger opportunities of education and advancement.

As education broadens the mind, it renders it less liable to be influenced either by passion or prejudice, two feelings which entered largely into the relations of the clans in former generations.

With the breaking up of the Clan system, the jealousies and animosities of neighbouring peoples have gradually given place to the nobler spirit of concord and mutual respect.

The forays, feuds and fightings that so long disturbed and disfigured the Highlands are now things of the past, and what is also a matter of great importance, the solemn duty of the rites of the burial of the dead is now conducted "decently and in order."

A Memorable Epitaph.

Lord Cockburn when attending the Circuit Courts took many journeys through the Highlands, and coming from Aberdeen he took the route by Braemar and Glenshee. He gives a graphic description of the scenery by the way and when at Glenshee he visited the graveyard, and was so impressed by the inscription on a tombstone that he has thought it worthy of a place in the record of his Tours. The following is the passage, which is dated the 19th September, 1846 :—

"19th September, 1846.

"The instant that Castleton disappears, which it does in a mile or so after it is left, we are in a new world. From being

surrounded by wood, there is not a single leaf. No villages, no travellers, no Dee—nothing but great heavy mountains, with tops powdered with grey broken granite, a few large stone-streaked corries, solitude and game. This continues about ten miles up Glen Clumy. And then comes a glorious plunge down Glenbeg. It is literally a plunge—a long, deep, rapid descent, faced at first by a towering and splintered rock, and requiring a mile or two to lay us on the level below. And so we come to the hospice of Glenshee, where we found a very nice inn—excellent eggs, butter, and oatcakes and milk, which the flocks of Abraham could not have surpassed. A party of five Irishmen went away last week, after being there since the 12th of August, and killing nearly 1600 brace of grouse. This autumnal influx of strangers is a very recent occurrence in Scotch economy. Almost every moor has its English tenant. They are not to be counted by ones, or pairs, or coveys, but by droves or flocks. On the whole these birds of passage are useful. They are kind to the people, they increase rents, they spend money, and they diffuse a knowledge of, and a taste for, this country. The only misfortune is that though some of them try to imitate Celticism, on the whole, the general tendency is to accelerate the obliteration of everything peculiarly Highland.

"I spent part of the hour that we gave to the Spital in examining its small and very lonely burying ground. The chapel of ease is quite new; but one or two tombstones showed that here dust had been long rendered unto dust. I found the following inscription. It refers only to mortal and natural feelings, and is composed with singular simplicity; and its affection is rather deepened by recency.

"1845.

"Erected by Peter Macgregor, in memory of his son John, who died at Inverherothy, June, 1844, aged 22. Low he lies here in the dust; and his memory fills parents, sister, and brother with grief. Silent is the tongue that used to cheer them."

THE RAIDS OF THE CATERANS.

FOR several centuries Glenshee and the neighbouring glens were subjected to the thieving raids of the caterans who came from the western districts of Lochaber, Badenoch and Upper Argyle. The word caterau is a combination of the two Gaelic words *Kath* and *fear*, in combination *ceithern*, signifying fighting men. These men followed the same occupation as the Border Raiders, who found a great deal of profit and enjoyment in pillaging their neighbours' cattle, a process which kept the Borderland for centuries in a constant state of ferment.

Much of the same system of plundering went on at the like date among the Highland clans. We learn from *Pitcairn's Triols*, for instance, that in 1591 "The Earl of Ergyle was charged on complaint of Lord Ogilvie of Airlie, to appear before the King and Privy Council on the 28th October, for raiding Glen Elay (Isla) on the 21st August last, when they murthorit all the inhabitants they could lay hands on, to the nowmor of XVIII. or XX., and took much spulzie, including a grit nowmor of nolt, schiep, etc. None of the accused appeared on the day appointed and they were pronounced rebels."

There was no moral turpitude attached in those days to the business of cattle-lifting, indeed, it was regarded from the caterans' point of view as an occupation of heroism and glory, and their exploits as worthy of being celebrated in song. According to the old couplet—

> "To toom a fauld or sweep a glen,
> Are just the deeds of pretty men."

At a later date they were called "cleansers," from the clean sweep they made wherever they went, for even the widow's cow did not escape their clutches. In more modern times they came to be recognised as mountain robbers, and treated

accordingly. Many of these raiding bands came by way of Glen Tilt, to Glenlochsie, then by the back of Bengulbeine to the Rhidorrach, in Glenbeg, and crossed the eastern ridge into Glenbrighty, which gave them an entrance into Glenisla. That and the valleys to the south of it seem to have been a favourite field for their predatory operations, and so frequently did they visit it, that their track between Glenlochsie and Glenbrighty is still known as the Caterans' Road.

One of these raids, which took place in 1602, has become historical on account of its termination in what is known as "The Battle of the Cairnwell," which took place on the eastern shoulder of that height, at a point where the public road passes, at an altitude of 2000 feet, into Aberdeenshire, and where, at a later date, the zig-zag bend known as "The Devil's Elbow" was cut on the slope. The raiders had come from Lochaber, by way of Mar Forest, and having collected a large herd of cattle or spulzie in Glenshee and Glenisla, were on their return journey through the pass between the Cairnwell and the Glas Maol. But the men of these two glens had been called out to make an effort to recover the spoil, and although the Glenisla contingent did not join actively in the pursuit, but remained on the hill-tops, the men of Glenshee overtook the spoilers, encumbered with their booty, as they were crossing the County march. The raiders concealed themselves in a large depression on the hill-side, still known as "The Caterans' Howe," in order the better to withstand the attack of their infuriated pursuers, and a fierce battle took place. So stoutly did the caterans defend themselves, and such havoc did they play with their arrows and claymores, that the men of Glenshee seemed likely to suffer defeat, had it not been for the intervention of a noted archer of the name of Grant, otherwise Cam Ruadh (the one-eyed red-haired man). As a native of Glentaitneach, he was in duty bound to support the attack, but he had unfortunately taken an oath the previous day that for twenty-four hours he would refrain from shedding blood.

Cam Ruadh, although small in stature, was a man of great fighting qualities. He was endowed with length of arm, keen vision, sureness of aim, and fleetness of foot. It could be said

of him, as was said of the Black Dwarf, that "he displayed a degree of strength which seemed to be utterly inconsistent with his size." That his arm should have been stayed at the critical time by the vow he had taken was nothing short of a calamity for Glenshee. But the hour came at length when he was free to engage in the conflict, and he did so with disastrous effect on the caterans. He had cunningly taken up a position on the hillside at the back of a boulder, from which he could look down into the caterans' camp, and from whence he could send his shafts among them without himself being seen. This caused consternation among them, and it brought new hope to the sorely spent men of Glenshee. But a gust of wind raised the Cam Ruadh's plaid above the stone, and revealed his hiding-place, and several of the caterans pressed up the hill to put and end to their fierce assailant. He fled towards Braemar, one arrow wounding him in the shoulder. His brief but deadly assault had, however, saved the situation, for the Braemar men, led by McKenzie of Dalmore, now arrived upon the scene to support their kinsmen of Glenbeg, and the caterans, finding themselves attacked both in front and rear, took refuge in flight. Both sides suffered severely. The caterans' dead, one of whom was a chief named McDiarmid, were buried beside their encampment. It is said that in Glenbeg alone a score of widows, mostly MacKenzies, mourned the loss of their husbands that day. The miller of Glenshee and his seven sons were all among the slain. He was engaged in a hand-to-hand combat, when told that his sons had fallen. "We must fight to-day," he cried, "and lament to-morrow!" But there was to be no to-morrow for him.

Some weeks later a party of McDiarmid's kinsmen appeared in Glentaitneach with the purpose of avenging themselves upon Cam Ruadh, whose shafts had stricken down among others, their leader, the Baron McDiarmid. It was a wet and misty morning, and when they chanced upon him, herding his cattle and wrapt in an old ragged plaid, they failed to recognise him. He at once guessed what their mission was when they enquired as to the whereabouts of Cam Ruadh's shieling, and, as he was unarmed, he feigned to be a half-witted loon, whose business

was to tend the cows. He answered their enquiries in a foolish way, and showed a childish curiosity about the weapons they carried, particularly with their bows and arrows. One of them innocently offered to show him how to use the bow, if he would tell them where they could find Cam Ruadh. He even permitted him to try his feeble hand in shooting a few arrows across the stream. Carrying the bow with him, he was sent through the water to gather up and return the arrows, but, when he had collected them, he suddenly stepped behind a convenient boulder, and fitting an arrow to the thong, to their astonishment called out, "I am the Cam Ruadh!" His ruse was so successful and his skill as an archer so much dreaded, that the McDiarmids beat a hurried retreat and vanished in the mist.

Another similar attempt upon the life of Cam Ruadh was made at a later date, this time in the winter season, and the caterans found themselves caught in one of those terrific snow-storms that endanger the life of both man and beast. They however, in an exhausted state, reached Cam Ruadh's cottage, and standing in the gloom, near the little window, they overheard him say to his wife that on such a night he would willingly offer shelter to the cateran himself, and they were emboldened to make themselves known, and called upon him to be as good as his word. After they had delivered up their arms to his wife, and she had hidden them away, they were admitted to the shelter and comfort of his ingle-side, and a substantial meal was set before them, with a taste from the household cogie, and the kindly feeling aroused by such hospitality resulted in a pact of mutual goodwill and helpfulness, and Cam Ruadh was ever after left in the peaceful enjoyment of his smallholding.

Though he had taken part in many of these raiding conflicts, he had come safely through them all, and died like a peaceful grazier on his own bed.

About the middle of last century, a gillie of the name of Grewar, a noted stalker, discovered in a rocky cavern on the side of Bengulbeine a bundle of weapons, rusty and decayed, which were supposed to have belonged to the famous archer of Glentaitneach. Grewar parted with them, for a consideration,

to one of the shooting tenants, and no one can now tell what has become of them.

Donald Mor Campbell, Chief of Lochaber Caterans.

Up to the time of his marriage Donald was a quiet-living man, who refused to take part in any cattle-lifting expedition, but his wife became envious of the spoils (spulzie) brought home by some of their neighbours, and she taunted him with his lack of pluck and manliness, until he felt compelled to set out with a band of caterans to capture a creach of cattle and satisfy her of his prowess. For years afterwards he was the leader of the raiders from Lochaber, and became a terror to the inhabitants, especially of Glenshee, Glenisla, Glenclunie, Glenprosen, and Lintrathen. His last raid took place in the time of the harvest in the year 1665, the year preceding that of the fierce encounter called the Battle of the Cairnwell. Donald and his men had successfully lifted a lot of cattle in Lintrathen, Glenprosen and Glenisla, and they drove them by their usual route by Glenbrighty, over the southern shoulder of Craigleach, across Glenbeg, up the back of Bengulbeine, by Alt-na-duich (the thieves' burn), and down to the foot of Glentaitneach, which they reached next morning.

They had travelled the cattle all night, as expeditiously as possible, and halted at the foot of Coire Shith (Cor He, the fairies' burn), there to rest the cattle and take breakfast. From there their usual route was by Glenlochsie and Glentilt to Rannoch and Lochaber. On reaching their halting-place at Cor He, they posted the usual sentinels around their camp. A heavy mist enveloped the valley. A strong party from the raided glens was in pursuit, and was close upon their track. The mist prevented them from seeing the caterans before they themselves had been observed. Donald Mor and two of his men fired, but, their priming being damp, only one of the guns showed the priming alight, without exploding the charge, and a collie belonging to the pursuers saw it, and ran back to its master's feet in fear. This gave them warning, and three of the Ogilvies crept forward, and seeing three shadowy forms, each chose one and fired. Two of them fell, the third fled with

the rest of the caterans, driving a few cattle before them up Glenlochsie. The greater part of the creach was recovered. One of the slain was Donald Mor. He was a handsome man and well clad. His plaid and kilt were of one piece, twelve yards long. He was buried on the east side of the Churchyard, where now stand the Manse cottages, formerly the school, stable, and coach-house. Some of his friends from Lochaber attended his funeral. The expenses were defrayed by "Little Eppie," wife of the tenant of the Spital Inn, who requited herself by selling Donald's clothes and silver buttons. Ogilvie of Holt, Lintrathen, who slew Donald, always went about armed, and, when in his home, sat facing the door with his gun close at hand, fearing the caterans' revenge, but no one ever ventured to do him harm.

The silver buttons from Donald's coat and waistcoat, three dozen in all, were purchased by Ramsay of Cronaheric, and were worn some years later by his son, the Duine, who got the by-name of Puton Aragid (silver button). The greater number of them were afterwards sold to a silversmith, but a few still remain in the possession of the family of the late Major P. Chalmers. The particulars of the attack upon the caterans at Coire Shith were related by the late Mrs. Robertson, Slochnacraig, who learned them from her father, tenant in Cuthells, so that her record reaches back to the middle of the eighteenth century.

One of the notable figures in Mar in the days of the caterans was a member of the Dalmore MacKenzie family. He was known as Gilleasbuig McConnich, alias Gilleasbuig Urrasach, or Gillespie the Proud. From a tale that is told of him connected with Glenshee, he might also have been known as the Irascible. He seems to have gone about his duties armed cap-a-pie, for, besides the usual complement of weapons, including sword, bow and arrows, skean-dhu, and targe, he carried a number of dirks, two of them concealed in the sleeve of his jacket. It happened that he, and some others, were taking some timber on their ponies to the south through Glenshee, when they met some of the Glen folk, not so well equipped as Gillespie, engaged with their ponies and currachs, or panniers, carrying

home their peats. Some bantering or raillery passed between the two parties, and, Gillespie's Highland blood being stirred, he sprang in among the Glenshee company, calling them "Elves of Glenshee," and with his dirk cut the ponies' girths, so that the currachs rolled over upon the hillside, and he threatened further to turn his dirks upon themselves.

Some weeks after, one of those who had been attacked chanced to meet Gillespie on the Blackwater, and, being more equally matched, took up his challenge, and a furious hand-to-hand combat took place, when both combatants fell, it was supposed, mortally wounded. They were carried unconscious into a neighbouring cottage, one being laid on the kitchen bed, and one in the ben-end. They both, however, rallied, and later on the gude-wife received a great shock when she discovered Gillespie, with his dirk between his teeth, crawling in the passage, for he was too weak to stand, bent on administering the *coup-de-grace* to his helpless opponent.

The cause of Gillespie was afterwards taken up by the men of Mar, and a body of them set out for Glenshee with the purpose of taking revenge or exacting tribute, and there seemed likely to be a fierce encounter; but when another body of Braemar men was seen coming down Glenbeg to help their neighbours, the Glenshee band realised that they were outnumbered, and thought it prudent to come to terms with their opponents, some of whom were their own clansmen.

These days of bickering and bloodshed are long passed away, and, although the rivalry of neighbouring glens still continues, it now takes a more peaceable form, in the shape of trials of skill and muscle, in the Highland Gatherings, which prove such an attractive and profitable source of entertainment in the summer months.

The raids of the caterans were stamped out in the latter part of the seventeenth century. By that date firearms had come into more general use, and the means of defence had thus increased, and the chance of getting safely away with a creach was proportionately diminished.

Besides, at that date the clans began to realise the necessity for closer union, in order to give effective support to the Stuart dynasty, which had become imperilled.

The influence of the Reformation was not felt among the people beyond the Grampian range, and a large number of Highlanders were attached to the Roman Catholic Church; and they supported the claims of a Royal House which was of the same faith as themselves. James II. succeeded his brother, Charles II., on the throne in 1685. In 1688, finding himself out of popular favour, he abdicated, and, in 1689, the crown passed to the Protestant claimant, William of Orange.

The Rebellion of '15, when the rebels, under the Earl of Mar, marched south through Glenshee, and that of the '45, when Prince Charles Edward raised his standard at Glenfinnan, were but phases of the prolonged and strenuous religious struggle between the Protestants and Catholics for supremacy. As the majority of the clans sided with the Stuarts, so did they suffer after their defeat at Culloden. By the Disarming Act of 1747 they were deprived of their fire-arms, besides being forbidden to wear their distinctive dress, and thousands of the Highlanders left their native hills and crossed the seas to find new homes in the New World. Those who remained at home were naturally incensed by the severe penalties inflicted upon them. They were not only disarmed but deprived of the right of hunting and fishing. It was little wonder, therefore, that feeling ran high, and that there were occasional fatal encounters between the clansmen and their warders, and cases of revenge for some act of harshness.

One Captain Miller was deliberately shot dead on the Cairnwell, when he was conveying his wife on her way to the South, and who rode behind him on a pillion. The assassin was one Donald Dubh, one of the Clan McKenzie, who was otherwise known as the Ephiteach, or the Egyptian, and he rode with the affrighted lady to the Rhidorrach and then disappeared among the hills. He was afterwards captured and lodged in Braemar Castle, but his rescue was effected while the guard were engaged in some evening revelries. Captain Millar's grave used to be seen by the side of the road at the Cairnwell.

Another instance of a similar nature was the murder of Sergeant Davies, who had command of a military post situated at the Clachan of Inverey, on Upper Deeside. It was the practice for these little Highland garrisons to meet one another at some spot situated midway between their stations, and the company quartered at the Spital was in the habit of meeting that of Inverey somewhere at the head of Glenclunie twice a week. On 28th September, 1749, the two little companies met at the rendezvous, but Sergeant Davies from Inverey, being a keen sportsman, spent the day with his gun stalking deer, and from that day he was no more seen alive. Search was made on the hills, but without avail.

Nine months later the son of Farquharson, in whose house the sergeant had lodged, received a message from a shepherd in Glenclunie that he had something to say to him. When he went to his shieling he told him he had had a visit from the sergeant's ghost, who urged him to bury his bones. The apparition also directed him to the place where he would find them. The two men went together to the Hill of Christie and dug a grave in the peat moss and placed the bones in it.

The ghost had further told the shepherd who had committed the deed, naming two men who were hunting on the hill the day of the murder, Clark and Macdonald.

Five years after the tragedy these men appeared in the High Court of Justiciary to stand their trial for the murder of Sergeant Davies. The judges were Lord Justice Clerk Alva and Lords Strichen, Drummore, Elchies and Kilkerran. The prisoners were defended by Mr. Alexander Lockhart and Mr. Robert Macintosh, a son of the Laird of Dalmunzie.

The shepherd testified to the two visits of the sergeant's ghost, and to the charge against the accused, then some circumstantial evidence was led regarding some articles, such as a purse, ring, and penknife, belonging to the sergeant and seen in the possession of the accused. The prosecution then called for Angus Cameron, who declared that he and a companion, who had since died, were hiding, for political reasons, among the heather on the Hill of Galcharn on the 28th September, 1749, and two hours before sunset, saw Clark, whom he knew,

and another man meet with a person like an officer on the opposite slope, the Hill of Christie, and, after some altercation, when the latter moved away they raised their guns and shot him. While they were handling the body Cameron and his friend thought it prudent to decamp. The jury returned a verdict of "not guilty."

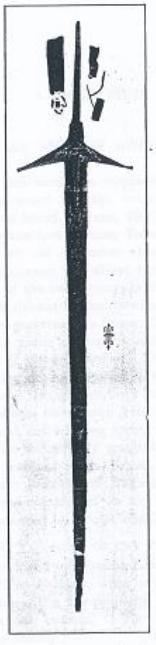
The case excited wide-spread interest, and the peculiar features of it have all been set forth by such masters of literature as Scott, Hill Burton, and Andrew Lang.

Sir Walter had evidently gone with his friend, Robert Macintosh, whose home was within a few miles of Gleney, to view the scene of the murder, and he describes it in these terms—"A more waste tract of mountain and bog, rocks and ravines, extending from Dubrach to Glenshee, without habitation of any kind, until you reach Glenclunie, is scarce to be met with in Scotland."

It is said the counsel for the defence believed the accused to be guilty. The shepherd, McPherson, swore in cross-examination that the ghost spoke "as good Gaelic as ever he heard in Lochaber." "Pretty well," said Macintosh to Scott after the trial was over, "for the ghost of an English sergeant."

It would appear from these old tales of raiding and rivalry that the parish could never have been known as "The Glen of Peace." But, happily, the age of tribal feud and lawlessness has passed away, and peace has been so established that the inhabitants can go about their avocations and take their night's rest secure from pillage and bloodshed. And though many of the old shielings are now only recognisable by a heap of stones, or a grassy mound on the hillside, it is better so, for these could not afford the larger scope and higher standard of living which are so striking a feature of the present time. Efforts are made here and there to provide small holdings for those whose tastes incline to agriculture but who have not sufficient capital to stock an ordinary farm, but, in the higher altitudes at least, the conditions are neither promising nor attractive. Such holdings carry a very limited amount of stock, so that after providing for rent there is barely sufficient return on which to

rear a family decently. The pathetic words from the letter of a young woman on a smallholding, "Here there is nothing but hunger and hard work," contain much more than an evidence of a discontented state of mind. It is the same feeling which has impelled many to make the great adventure of emigration. The brave Highlanders, whose forefathers endured with patient courage, the privations and trials of a hand-to-mouth existence in an austere climate, have attained a higher ideal of the decencies, comforts and enjoyments of life, and have, many of them, gone forth to make fortunes and to colonise the world; while those who remain enjoy privileges and opportunities undreamt of a century ago.



The antique claymore, with pieces of wooden clasp remaining. The gold ornamentation is shown at the side.

A RARE FIND.

AN ANCIENT SWORD.

WHILE no one would be surprised were old swords or dirks discovered on the track frequented by the Caterans, there was found in June, 1905, in a peat-moss in a small hollow near the foot of Glen Taitneach, 2¼ miles N.W. from the Spital, an old claymore which has aroused much curiosity. The peat-moss lies about three-quarters of a mile from the junction of the two streams which form the Shee, and is about 600 yards distant in the direction of the head of Glen Taitneach from the gamekeeper's house. The hollow of the peat-moss is some sixty yards in breadth, and is partly surrounded by a few clumps of stunted birches. The gamekeeper's house stands on the rising ground between the foot of Glen Lochsie and Glen Taitneach. Its surroundings indicate that there have been human dwellings thereabout from ancient times, having good cultivable land, and a strong spring of excellent water near by, which now also supplies by gravitation the new shooting-lodge, some four hundred yards distant, which was erected in 1907. The property belonged to Hugh R. D. Macintosh, Esq., of Dalmunzie, representative of an old family of the district, but was afterwards sold to Sir Archibald Birkmyres, Bart.

The Finding of the Sword.

The sword was found by Thomas Ramsay, a native of Glenshee, a son of Miller Ramsay, when cutting peats for Charles Robertson, gamekeeper on the property, whose son, Alexander, then a lad, was also present. The following is Ramsay's description of the finding :—

"My spade first laid bare the tang and cross-guard ; seeing that it was a sword I proceeded with great care. It was covered

with peat, above which was a long cairn of stones of from seven to about thirty pounds, which were partly sunk into and were mostly grown over by the peat. The depth over the sword was in all about two feet three inches. It lay with the point towards the west, and was imbedded in a thick layer of tallow or other grease. The sword was sheathed. The sheath was of oak, most of which crumbled away on exposure to the air. The photograph shows the small fragments of the sheath I was able to save. The grip around the tang had entirely rotted away. The pommel was not found. Notwithstanding the protecting mass of grease, the sword was terribly rusted. I found it broken across, four and a quarter inches from the point, the parts being only slightly separated. Believing that the sword had been placed over the grave of a deceased warrior, and that the stones had been placed to mark the grave, or possibly to prevent the body being dug up and devoured by wolves, I dug under where the sword lay to a depth of upwards of two feet, but found no trace of human remains or anything else other than the hard subsoil."

Major Chalmers, himself an expert swordsman, took an early opportunity of examining this interesting find and came to the conclusion that it was much the oldest sword he had ever seen. Viewing it in this light he persuaded Charles Robertson to hand it over to Major Pullar, Dunbarney, whom he knew to be a collector of ancient weapons. Knowing its value and the interest it would arouse among fellow collectors and others, Major Pullar sent it on exhibition to the National Museum of Antiquities, George Street, Edinburgh, its proper repository. In the report of the transactions of the Society it is stated :—

"This fine sword has a total length of three feet six and a half inches, the length of the handle measured on the tang (which is all that remains) is eight and three-quarter inches, and the breadth of the blade at insertion in the guard is one and three-quarter inches, tapering regularly to a thin and slightly rounded point three-eighth inch in breadth. A few inches of the point end are unfortunately separated from the blade ; and the few fragments that were saved of the wood which seemed to have formed the mounting of the grip. At about a third of the length

of the blade from the handle is a mark inlaid in yellow metal, but so much hidden as to be made out only by careful scrutiny."

Mr. Guy F. Laking, M.V.O., F.S.A., Keeper of the King's Armoury, and author of *The Armoury of Windsor Castle*, writing to Mr. Fenton, from whom he had received a photograph of the sword, says :—"I am greatly interested in the photograph of the Highland Claidheamh-mor. Indeed, I consider it one of the most interesting Scottish weapons I have ever seen. The coarseness of its make, together with certain technical peculiarities, lead me to believe it to be one of the most primitive of its particular type of weapon. I think it would be quite safe to assign it to a date probably within the first quarter of the fifteenth century or possibly of the last years of the preceding century.

"It will be noticed that the customary pierced trefoil ends of the guillons seen on the Highland two-handed swords of the latter part of the fifteenth century have not yet in this specimen made their appearance. Also, by the photograph, it is interesting to note that the projecting lug from the centre of the guillon lying upon the face of the blade is roughly forged in a separate piece, and not, as in the later specimens, drawn out of the guillons themselves.

"Of course it is much to be regretted that the pommel is missing. Doubtless it was a small iron or even bronze pommel of wheel form but very deep in section.

"Of course there exist a few (very few) single-handed Scottish weapons anterior to this in date, but they are of a somewhat different type, and appear to be derived from the Scandinavian sword of the eleventh or twelfth century.

"I believe the sword of which you have sent me a photograph is unique. It indeed forms a valuable link in the series of weapons we are acquainted with. I wish it were possible to see more clearly the inlaid design on the centre of the blade. The mark means nothing beyond being an early form of decoration for the blade."

One can only conjecture how it came there. It was clearly not by chance or accident, but was carefully concealed by someone

who marked the spot with large stones, so that he could recover it at a later date. Ramsay states that "it was embedded in a thick layer of tallow or other grease," showing a desire to preserve it against the effects of its moist bed. It must have belonged to someone in the neighbourhood of Dalmunzie, possibly to the laird, Macintosh; and when, after Culloden, steps were taken for the suppression of the Rebellion, and the Royal soldiery were stationed at various parts of the Highlands, a post was placed at the Spital for the purpose of collecting any arms in the possession of the inhabitants, and even forbidding them to wear the Highland dress with its dirks and *sgian dubh*, the owner wanted to preserve his claymore and hid it away in this peat-moss. He either forgot about it, or what is more likely, feared to be found with it in his possession, and there it has lain for upwards of a hundred and fifty years, until the peat cutter's prouful spade exposed it to view.

"WHAT MEAN YE BY THESE STONES?"

THE parish of Kirkmichael has long been noted by archæologists for a remarkable group of stone circles and cairns. These ruined rings and heaps of stones are to be seen on the moor to the north of Persie, and about a mile west from the highway as it passes Bleaton Hallet.

The chief feature in the group is a huge cairn or circular table of rough stones, 270 feet in circumference, and 25 feet in height. Round about this great heap stand a large number of smaller cairns. About two hundred yards further west are the remains of two concentric circles, the larger being 50 feet in diameter and the inner one 32 feet. In the vicinity there are other similar circles. About a mile to the north stands a great rolling stone, estimated to be three tons in weight, which can be oscillated with some little pressure, and a hundred yards north-west of it are several pairs of concentric circles similar in dimension to the others.

Such cairns as are found there were meant to commemorate remarkable events or famous heroes, but as there are no inscriptions on any of the stones, the names and occasions are forgotten beyond recall.

The supposition, however, is that a great battle was once fought there, and that these cairns were erected over the graves of those who fell, and that the sacredness of the spot, as a burial-ground of the brave, led to the building of these open-air temples for the observance of religious rites. On the opposite side of the Blackwater, a mile or so to the east of the house of Kingseat and on the south border of the Forest of Alyth, are a number of other and similar groups of rings and cairns.

It is true that some modern writers have rejected the belief that these stone circles have any connection with the pre-Christian faith of the nation, under the priesthood of the Druids,

and incline to the opinion that these single or concentric circles are merely the memorial stones marking the grave of some chief or leader of men, because cistvaens containing human bones and bronze weapons have sometimes been found within or near them. Aristotle states that in Spain it was the custom to set up as many stones round the grave of a chief as the number of enemies whom he had slain. But the very sameness of these circles is a proof that the practice does not apply to these ancient remains.

When we remember that Britain was the principal seat of the Druid religion, and that the priesthood possessed great power and held high authority among the people, it is not to be wondered at that, on such sacred soil as that where the brave dead were laid to rest, there should be found the relics of temples or altars where sacrifices could be offered to the sun, moon, and other deities of the ancient faith of Britain.

On the south side of the steading of Broughdarg are to be seen the remains of two Druidical circles or cromlechs. Of the larger of these, which must have measured some sixty feet in diameter, only two stones remain upright. Both of these are six feet in height, and while one is nine feet in girth the other is a foot less. All the other stones of that circle have been removed for building purposes; one is seen in the foundation of the stack-yard wall, and the others have been used in the construction of a lime-kiln, thirty feet in diameter. The other circle, lying a few yards to the north-east in a small fir wood, has half-a-dozen of the outer stones remaining, along with the central flat stone, but these have been overthrown and are sinking into the ground. There is another flat stone on the south side near the foot of a fir, the surface of which shows the marks of fire. All the larger stones with one exception are of the native blue whinstone, the remaining one being of black whin.

These cromlechs were erected long before the dawn of Christianity and when the people were sun-worshippers, just as the dwellers in equatorial regions pay their devotions to the rain-god, the influence of which is so essential to the growth of their crops, this spot must have for long been a religious

centre of great importance, and many large gatherings must have been held there. Although no information has been handed down regarding their rites and ceremonies by the Druids themselves, we can learn particulars of these from Latin historians such as Cæsar, Pliny and Tacitus; and they tell us of the varicoloured vestments of the several orders, and of the sacrifices of bullocks, goats and deer that were offered on the altars. Occasionally human beings were the victims for these sacrifices, and were offered in the belief that the gods required blood to quench their thirst, and needed the attendance of human slaves. The smaller of the two circles may have been a place of judgment, for the Druids were not only the priests but the judges and teachers of the people. They were also the counsellors of the King, and sometimes determined the affairs of the State.

Much of the religion was associated with fire, and on special occasions, bon-fires were lighted on the hill-tops. The principal festivals were held on May Day Eve, Midsummer Eve, and the last night of October. That of Midsummer Eve was for the purpose of invoking a blessing on the fruits of the earth, while that on All Hallow's Eve was as a thanksgiving for the harvest. But the chiefest of all was Beltane on May Day Eve, when every fire throughout the country was extinguished, and the people came to these temples to obtain a pine torch or peat that had been lighted from the fire of the priests, which they believed came down that night from heaven.

There is evidently a Christian adaptation of this annual festival in that which takes place in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem on the Saturday preceding Easter, when, amid much pomp and display of rich and gorgeous vestments, the expectant multitudes believe that fire comes down from heaven, and it is the eager desire of the worshippers, who represent numerous branches of the Eastern Church, to possess themselves of a candle that has been lighted from the sacred flame.

Some of the pagan practices were carried on in Scotland for hundreds of years after the conversion of the people to Christianity, that of Beltane in particular, which was celebrated up to the beginning of the last century. In Glenshee the new

fire was latterly obtained from the axle of a spinning wheel, driven without lubrication till the axle was heated red hot. The General Assembly of 1649 appointed a commission with the object of putting down such superstitious practices, but it took many long years to accomplish it, for it has been deemed as easy to drag a comet by the tail out of the sky as to drive superstition out of the minds of the people.

There are evidences at Broughdarg of customs and practices which were observed at a much later date than were the rites of the Druids. Two or three hundred years ago there was a general belief in fairies, witches, and waterkelpies. For a hundred and fifty years, up to the beginning of the eighteenth century, witchcraft was a capital offence, and the poor creatures who were accounted guilty of having wrought mischief were dealt with in a most summary and cruel fashion by being burned at the stake or drowned in a lake. The westmost stone of the larger cromlech has a groove round it as if to hold an iron band or chain, and the foot of the stone is blackened and fire-cracked, a combination which serves to show that it had been used as a place of public execution.

Broughdarg takes its name from the cromlech, for while *brough* means a circular encampment, *dearg* signifies red, and is sometimes used as blood-stained; and that this is no mere fanciful description, we can learn from the Latin poet, Lucan, who, in a reference to Druidical rites, tells us that "the grooves were crimson with the blood of the sacrifices." There is great reason for thankfulness that these grey stones are the relics of an outworn creed, and that we live in a more enlightened age, and dwell in a Christian country, where we have Gospel privileges and the ordinances of grace, and in the knowledge of our deliverance from ignorance and superstition; it is the duty of all to unite in the support of missionary enterprise, so that the light of the Gospel may dawn on all heathen lands, and bring gladness to the eyes of those "who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death."

There are several large boulders in the Glen to which tradition has given special interest and prominence, and which are called by Gaelic names. Within a mile of the foot of the Glen, and

standing near the roadway, is a large stone known as Clach-na-coileach, or Cock-Stane, which tells us something of the proprietary rights and customs of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In the days of feudalism the proprietors held their lands from the lords superior on certain conditions; it might be of military service or of the payment of caenn; and, as the early Earls of Atholl were the superiors in Glenshee, they exacted kain from the inhabitants.

On one occasion, when the tax-gatherers were going their rounds, they took some of the poultry of a poor widow, who lived near Finegand, the proprietor of which was M'Comie Mor, a man of great physical strength as well as high reputation. The woman complained to M'Comie that the gatherers had taken more than their due, and he at once started in pursuit of them accompanied by several of his henchmen. He demanded the restitution of the poultry, and, when this was refused, he attacked the Atholl men, putting them to the rout, and then released the fowls. The cock immediately flew up on the stone and crowed lustily, as if in celebration of the victory, and thenceforward the stone was known as Clach-na-Coileach.

The name Finegand recalls a previous attack upon the kain-gatherers for a similar reason. The collectors rode on Highland ponies with bells attached to the bridles, so that the feuars might be warned of their arrival and bring out the dues in kind. They came in force and well armed in order to exact payment. But on one occasion they were met by an equally well equipped band of the tax-payers, organised and led by Andrew Stewart of Drumforkat. The Campbells were defeated after a fierce engagement, and some of their company were left on the field. With unrestrained ferocity the feuars cut off the heads of the slain and threw them into a moss or burn, and the scene of the conflict was named Feith nan Ceann or the Burn of the Heads; and, at a later date, the words became contracted to Finegand.

So powerful a clan as the Campbells could not brook a defeat of such a nature, and, not long after, a strong force appeared in the Glen with the intention of capturing the leader, Stewart. He, however, was warned of their approach and took refuge in a neighbouring mill, where he disguised himself by donning the

dusty suit of the miller, and, when, in their search, his pursuers reached the mill, he told them there was no person there but the miller and himself. For this exploit his descendants bore the name of Miller.

Between the river and the road, at a point opposite Dalnaglar Castle, there is a stone that recalls the primitive system of dispensing justice, before the establishment of Sheriff and Justiciary Courts. It is known as Clach-Void, the Stone of Justice, and marks the spot where the chief of the clan heard the various causes that arose. His word was law, and from his decision there was no appeal.

To the east of Inveredrie Farm, and at the north end of Loch Shechernich or Bainnie, there is another remarkable block into a winding hole in which a witch once crept after changing herself into a viper. She had been blamed by the laird for causing the death of his infant son, and when he found her on the hill he drew his sword to slay her. When she took refuge within the stone, in his rage he hacked it furiously, and the dents made by his heavy sword are still visible.

From her place of concealment she tried to reason with him, and with a hint at the folly of brooding over any injury she cried out, "Laird! as long as you look at your cradle and I at my stone we may meet and crack, but we can never be friends."

The boulder is known as Clach-na-Nathraiche, the Serpent's Stone, and bears witness to the weight of the laird's claymore, and reminds one of the soundness of a witch's philosophy.

In Glentaitneach, beyond the Shenavel, there is yet another stone with a story. The services of the parish midwife had been required in one of the shielings, and a neighbour had brought her from her cottage some miles off on his pony's croup. When she alighted on the stone she asked him what she could do to recompense him, and he replied "if she would warn him of any death in his family." She told him he would be warned by hearing the squealing of a pig, and at that moment a little pig ran in beneath the stone, which got the name of Clach-na-Muicke-breac, the Stone of the Spotted Pig. Last century the farmer of the Old Spital removed the stone for the foundation

of a dyke, but shortly after a murrain broke out among his cattle, and he thought it prudent to replace it.

On the west side of the Parish Church and on the top of one of those banks of gravel known in Scotland as *Kames*, there is an upright pillar of soft slate standing about six feet in height, and a little over two feet at its greatest breadth. It is supposed to mark the meeting place of the people in earlier days, such mounds, either natural or artificial, being known as moat-hills. There is nothing to tell the purpose or date of the pillar, but it marks a convenient place of meeting for the inhabitants of the upper glens, and in all likelihood justice was at one time administered there; and religious services may have been held around it before the erection of the first chapel. Although composed of soft stone, it has weathered the gales of many long centuries, and is a monument to the efficiency of those who set it up.