

THE BLUE HILL.

BY ALEXANDER CRUICKSHANK, LL.D., *Vice-President*,
AND ALEXANDER COPLAND, *Ex-Chairman*.

WE do not propose in this paper to write of the lofty Cairngorm which dominates Glen More, but to direct attention to the eminence nearer home which has somehow got almost its Saxon titular equivalent. This explanation at once disposes of any false expectations—or, at all events, should do so. How, when, and why this part of the Grampian ridge, which passes through the parish of Banchory-Devenick about four and a half miles S.S.W. of Aberdeen—and there shuts out from view the interesting and ancient inheritance of Dugald Dalgetty, namely, Drumthwhacket—obtained its cerulean distinctive title—the Blue Hill—we have been at pains to endeavour to trace, but our success, truth to say, has not been commensurate with the labour and travail we have devoted to the quest. The reason appears to be that those whose business it was to record, for the benefit of future generations, this vital and important explanation have culpably neglected to do so.

Our earliest topographical writer, James Gordon, Parson of Rothiemay—whose name we mention with unfeigned respect, generated of admiration for his rare talents and useful geographical works—did not foresee our difficulty, or we feel sure he would have obviated it. He described the “feilds nixt to the gaites of the citie”, [Aberdeen] as being “fruitfull of corns, such as oats, beir, quheat”, &c., but, remember, that was within a zone or belt of a mile round the town. For he mentions—“bot any wher after you pas a myll without the toune, the country is barren lyke, the hills craigy, the plains full of marreshes and mosses, the feilds are covered with heather or peeble stons”. The Blue Hill, being beyond the limit of fertility, did not receive special notice. That the hills were “craigy”, and continued so, at all events, from about 1660 till 1732, we have picturesque illustration in the East prospect of Aberdeen, by Gregory Sharpè, appended to Gordon’s “Description of Both Touns

of Aberdeen", printed by the old Spalding Club. But the hills must have got wonderfully rubbed down and rounded since that time—probably by the process which geologists call denudation—for we know for a fact that the proposal of a Shoremaster of Aberdeen to shove the nose of the Grampians into the sea to form a breakwater was not adopted, and that the Grampians were timeously saved from that indignity by the discovery and adoption of concrete. However, the smoothing-down process, in whatever way it was done, was carried so far that superficial observers now mistake the Blue Hill for a mere ridge, and hesitate to accord to it the honours of a hill. The same people daily, however, speak of the Castle Hill and the Broad Hill, neither of which can be compared in elevation above sea level with the Blue Hill, although they were placed above each other twice over. Let us ask any such objector the question—What is a hill? Is it not, in the language of dictionary-makers, "a natural elevation of land, an eminence"? and does not the Blue Hill conform exactly to these definitions? To be sure it does. Hence another reason for the propriety of this venture to correct an erroneous and hurtful impression. The Blue Hill *is* a hill, approach it from any quarter you please, and, although it is not precisely the culminating point of the Grampians in the parish of Banchory-Devenick, according to the Ordnance Surveyors, it comes in only a matter of 16 feet short of that proud position, and, when you mount the view tower so handsomely provided by Lord Provost Stewart, the proprietor of the estate, only 3 feet, so that the difference is hardly worth considering.

By about a century after the time of the Parson of Rothiemay, the zone of fertility by reclamation of land round the town had been largely extended, through the indomitable energy and enterprise of the native improvers and cultivators of the soil, encouraged by the reasonable feu rents which the town—in ignorance of the latter-day doctrine that property is robbery—accepted for the shaggy moorlands, bog, and "marreshes" of such subjects as, for example, the forest of Stocket, for which feu rents so low as 2s. 6d. per acre were agreed for. The good example

extended, and the surroundings of the Blue Hill, and far beyond it, were affected by the age and rage for improvements, so that ultimately it became the proud boast of after times—"Abirdene and twal' miles roun', and whaur are ye"? The visitor to the Blue Hill, therefore, now looks upon a landscape of a much more cheerful, ornamental, and fertile character than Gordon of Rothiemay, Dugald Dalgetty, or their great-great-grandchildren could have dreamed of. It may be objected that the military alumnus of Marischal College had no children, as he re-acquired the ancient "long, waste moor that lies five miles south of Aberdeen", not by re-conquest, but by pacific inter-marriage with Mrs. Hannah Strachan, a matron well stricken in years, the widow of the crop-eared Covenanter whose presumptuous purchase of Drumthwacket determined the side which Dugald Dalgetty took in the civil war. Well, we submit, "all's well that ends well". A brood of chicks on Drumthwacket is not necessary to our illustration, and perhaps, upon the whole, it is just as well that the race ended with the redoubtable Dugald, the companion-in-arms of the Lion of the North—the immortal Gustavus—and the great Marquis of Montrose.

These introductory remarks, like the oysters or kitty-wakes proffered as ticklers and provocatives of the appetite, we trust will not injure what we desire to foster. So without more ado we maintain that to obtain an adequate conception and enjoyment of the magnificent series of views which the Blue Hill affords, it is necessary to go there, and it may be convenient to take along with the reader the guidance and illustration which in loquacious detail follows.

There are several routes to the Blue Hill all more or less interesting, and not differing much in distance from the centre of the city. For our own part, having a liking for old world ways, we recommend the reader to accompany us by the remains of the ancient highway, which, leaving the Green, where the great Pasch market and other principal fairs were held in the olden time, crossed the Denburn—now invisible but still existent—by the Bow Brigg, the stones of which are in careful keeping, ascended by the Windmill Brae, and still passes on to the Hardgate by the

Crabstone, a silent witness of bloody deeds. The Hardgate still leads onwards to the Bridge of Dee, that noble and lasting monument of the practical benevolence of two illustrious churchmen, Bishops Elphinstone and Dunbar. The bridge was begun to be built in 1500 and was finished in 1527. As then built the bridge was 15 feet wide, but in 1841 was commenced the work of widening it to 26 feet within the parapets as it now exists. In June, 1639, therefore, Lieut.-Colonel Johnstone had a fifteen-feet wide bridge to defend against Montrose and the Covenanters, and right pluckily did he do so on the 18th and 19th of that month, until he was struck down by the shattering of a turret by the enemy's cannon. It is said that the bridge was insufficiently manned on the second day of the battle—that a great many of the defenders absented themselves on the 19th to attend the funeral of John Forbes, a burgher shot on the previous day. But, as there were no newspaper reporters to take down, for glorification, the names of persons attending funerals in those days, that could not be the reason of the large funeral attendance, and the motive must have been respect for the deceased, or some other motive common to soldiers in all ages who have a reasonable regard for self-preservation.

After passing the Bridge of Dee, the ancient highway lay westwards along the south bank of the river until it passed the Burn of Leggart, when it skirted upwards the east side of the Tollohill in the line of the present road, and passed over the higher part of the ridge between the Blue Hill and the Cran Hill, and so down by "Benholms Stables", near Banchory Hillock, and the farm of Greengate to the "Caulsey". This "Caulsey", kept in remembrance by the farm of Causeyport, was a causeway laid through the extensive mosses which then existed by the Town of Aberdeen, who were tolltakers at that early date in Kincardineshire. The nature of this part of the country can yet be vividly realised by inspection of the district. The highway in its primitive condition may be judged by a bit that still lies unimproved south of the farm of Craighhead, where it skirts a piece of rough moor. This road

was the eastermost passage from the river Tay to the river Dee of Sir James Balfour (1630-1657), and was called the Calsey or Couey Monthe passage. The Town of Aberdeen did not lay the Calsey in 1684 for nothing, as already indicated. Macfarlane states that in 1725 "the said town settis in tack the said port [Calsay-port] to a man who gathers up from every horse (?) that passes through eight pennies Scots". The road was described at that time as a large highway which passes from Aberdeen to Edinburgh "alongs this Calsey". Probably running footmen with staves were needed when the lumbering grand coaches of these early times stuck in mud or bog. The present coach road to the east of the Blue Hill was not formed until about 1797, as might be inferred from the circumstance that it does not appear in the road maps of 1775.

On thinking over the matter, it appeared somewhat strange that the town of Aberdeen should have anything to do with this causeway with right to exact tolls in the Mearns. Upon application to Mr. A. W. Munro, at the Town-House, he was good enough to clear up the matter by reference to the volume of "Charters and other Writs Illustrating the History of the Royal Burgh of Aberdeen, 1171-1804". This is the explanation: "The Prouest and Baillies and Counsell of the burghe of Aberdeen" presented "a supplicatioun to the Lordis of secret counsall" [the Privy Council] "setting furth that the calseyes in Cowiemont ar now so worn and decayed as there will be no possibilitie of passage in this approaching winter and the supplicants hes done alreadie all that lyes in thame for the mending and vpholding of these calseyis, bot the work is so great and the manie other burdenis lying vpoun the said burghe", &c., &c. A most matter-of-fact and plain statement of the case. "Footmen, Horses, Kows, and Noet will certainly stick in the bogs of Finnan Moss and be laired there, my Lordis, if something be not done to mend the calseyes before the approaching winter". "My Lordis finding by thair awne knowledge and also by the report and declaratioun of Barons and gentlemen that the reparatioun and vpholding of the saids Calseyis is a most important and necessar

work, and finding no other expedient for the present how the saide calseyis salbe mendit and vpholdin bot be the uplifting of the dewtie following, thairfor My Lordis gave granted and ordained that all passengers travelling be the said calseyis and all horse loads or cartis sheep and noet comeing or going that way should pay to the burghe of Aberdein—everie footeman twa pennies, everie horsman eight pennyes, everie horse load of whatsumevir comodities eight pennies, every ten sheep eight peneys, everie kow and oxe foure pennies, and every cart of whatsumevir comodities twa shillings”. The Provost, Baillies, and Council were further empowered “to caus big and sett ane port at suche pairt and place of the calseyis as they from tyme to tyme sall think expedient and to close the port and suffer none to have passage that way bot such as sall pay”, &c. And this authority was granted for the space of nynteine yeeres from 17th July, 1634. These powers were renewed by the States of Parliament 22nd February, 1661, for a further nineteen years. The glorious Restoration having followed, the King’s Majestie and Estates of Parliament, on 3rd December, 1669, on another supplication, empowered and renewed authority to the petitioner to “vse all legall and fair means” for uplifting the said tolls and to apply the moneys for the upkeep of the calseyis at the sight of Sir John Keith of Keith-hall, the Lairds of Elsick, Haddo, and Pitfodells. Anyone looking at the height of the modern Calseyport road above the fields on either side, where it is joined by the remains of the old road west of Greengate, and keeping in mind what the undrained morass must have been, can pretty accurately estimate the absolute necessity of the calseyis being repaired and maintained, and also the dangers of being “smored” in the bog by anyone attempting to “shun” the toll.

The burgh subsequently got rid of the surveillance of the Laird of Elsick in the maintenance of the Calseyis, as his lands were ultimately acquired by the Magistrates as managers of the Guild Brethren’s Hospital, and were about 1760 feued out by them in ten lots for an annual feu-duty amounting to 188 bolls of oatmeal. This

transaction affords another rare opportunity for people who, looking at the present rentals of these lands, and forgetting the immense labour and expense involved in reclaiming and improving them, imagine that the Magistrates made an inconsiderate and imprudent bargain. They did nothing of the kind. They acted according to their light and the circumstances of their time, and could not by possibility foresee and reckon upon the present state of matters and the value of land.

The lands of Elsick lie spread out in our view from the tower in the near foreground, south-east from the bays of Cammachmore and Skateraw, to Quoscies and Wedderhill in S.S.W. The Kirk of Cookney rises on the extensive hill range running inland from Muchalls, forming the background to the south and westwards, and a line drawn eastwards from Wedderhill and the Auchlee Monument to Cammachmore would indicate their northern boundary.

If the reader will keep these details in mind he will understand that it was along this Calsey or Couey Monthe that the Covenanting armies, led by the Earls Mareschall, Montrose, and the other southern lords who pitched their p'allions near the Bridge of Dee in 1639 led their forces. We are told that they encamped on the Tollohill, and doubtless the heath-covered slope up to the Blue Hill was their camping ground. So soon as the army topped the ridge running between the Cran Hill and the Blue Hill, the Aberdeen of that date lay in their view. The bridge across the river, the great Kirk of St. Nicholas, the Tolbuith, the Greyfriars Monastery, converted into Mareschall College, and the congeries of thatched and red-tiled houses crowded on St. Catherine's Hill, the Port Hill, &c. There is no standpoint near Aberdeen where a more comprehensive view of the city then or now can be obtained than from the Blue Hill. There was no wood upon it at that time. It was clad like Drumthwacket with heather, perchance mixed with whins and broom. Robertson, writing in the beginning of this century, states that various attempts had been made by planting to disguise the barrenness of the prospect and the sterility of the soil; and we know that

the present firs and larches, which on the crown of the hill stand scarce twenty feet high, were not planted until 1832, fully 60 years ago. There was, up till that time at all events, nothing specially blue about the hill so far as we have been able to discover—nothing to specially distinguish it from its neighbours as the “Blue” Hill. No doubt for a very temporary period, in the long summer days of 18th and 19th June, 1639, the five blue banners of the Covenanting army, and the “blew ribbins” which each Covenanting soldier wore about his “craig” and scarffwyse down by his left arm, and the bushes of “blew ribbins”, called pannashes, stuck upon their heads, must have created a blue look out on the hillside for the burghers of Aberdeen. That “blew ribbin” also turned out a sair thing for the dogs of Aberdeen; for a “blew ribbin” having been tied about a dogges neck in derision by an uncovenanted jaud in Abirdene, the “soldiours” took mortal offence at the insult, “and every dogge, messen, and whelp was killed and slain, so that neither hound nor messen or other dog was left alive”. That was surely a slaughter of the innocents.

It has been suggested that the name Blue Hill is a corruption of the Gaelic, Dubh Hill—“the black or dark hill”; but surely this hill in the olden time was no blacker than its neighbours. Again, because the hill was gorgeous purple when the heather was in bloom, and at a distance, which lends enchantment to the view, became blae, the name has been attempted to be traced to the Gaelic *blath* (the *th* silent), signifying bloom, flowers, blossom. The puzzlement of the name is so perplexing and bewildering that, like Juliet, we seek relief by paraphrasing, “Oh! Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo”?

The minister of the parish, who wrote the topographical description of his diocese for the New Statistical Account, and is careful to explain that Devenick is from a wonder-working saint named Davinicus, gives us no help in this matter of the name. The worthy gentleman, following the excellent example of the bishops in Catholic times, bridged the Dee at Cults, but left not a plank to take us over our difficulty. All that he mentions about the culminating

point of his parish (and for that we are thankful, although it is slightly inaccurate) is—"The most elevated part of the Tollohill, the eastermost range of the Grampians, is in the Kincardine division of the parish, and afforded a station for the gentlemen who were employed by Government to make the trigonometrical survey of the island". The operations of these gentlemen will be referred to further on. Now, the Blue Hill was the station referred to, and, as previously noticed, the Blue Hill is not exactly the most elevated part of the parish. As for the latest local topographical account of the parish of Banchory-Devenick, it does not contain mention of the Tollohill, the Blue Hill, nor the Cran Hill.

Before leaving this part of the subject, it may be mentioned that Robertson, who compiled a survey of the county about the beginning of this century, gives graphic descriptions of the physical aspect of the country hereabouts. His zoology seems somewhat antiquated, for he described a "flying reptile" which haunted the neighbourhood of woods at that time, called the "Dracoolvan". We recognise under this terrific designation a comparatively innocent insect called now-a-days the dragon-fly. Then the east wind was not any more genial or amicable than now, for Robertson suggests that the cause of this wind's "unfriendliness" to "the feelings of man" is a subject not unworthy of investigation, and he enforces the suggestion by sundry weighty arguments, to all which those acquainted with rheumatics will cordially agree. The abundance of hares in Robertson's time in this part of the country was phenomenal; "dozens in every field—more hares than sheep in the county"—which glowing accounts raise recollections of soup and visions of roasted hare, which, alas! are now only distant memories. In fact, although the Hare Moss still exists in the immediate neighbourhood of the Blue Hill, a maukin has not been seen in it within living memory, and Portlethen fishwives have long ceased to have nervous fears of impending disaster when wicked boys, for entertainment, raised the cry, "There's a baud's foot in your creel". The hare, with his reserved contemporary, the badger, has emigrated, and

although the fox occasionally visits Kincorth, or harbours among the Tullos whins when they are allowed by Zoroaster to attain luxurious growth, and the squirrel has taken up his abode on the lands of "The Incorporation", and the rabbit and the hedgehog are yet in evidence, the *feræ naturæ* are not so abundant as of yore.



THE BLUE HILL CAIRN.

WHEN, about 1837, the senior writer of this paper began his visits to the Blue Hill (which he has continued yearly ever since), along with his father, the late Dr. Cruickshank, of Marischal College, the trees around the cairn were only two or three feet high, and for many years after they did not obstruct the view, as they increased in height only very slowly, owing to their exposed situation. But by 1879 they greatly obstructed the prospect, and, accordingly, in that year Mr. David Stewart, younger of Banchory (whose father, since deceased, had purchased

the estate from the trustees of the late Mr. Alexander Thomson), erected at his own cost, for the public convenience, the present solid and substantial cairn. It looks like a small round tower, expanding on the east side into a stair, which rises to a platform about eight feet in diameter, forming the top of the cairn, affording an unobstructed view all around the horizon. An iron rail guards the outside of the stair, while the platform is enclosed by a handsome iron railing with convenient seating. In the centre of the platform a granite millstone has been fixed, from the eye of which rises a large flagstaff. A bronze plate on the north side of the cairn bears the following inscription :—

THIS BRONZE PLATE
Was Affixed in 1891
TO
THE BLUE HILL CAIRN
BY
DAVID STEWART OF BANCHORY
LORD PROVOST OF THE
CITY OF ABERDEEN
To commemorate its erection by him
On this the highest point of his Estate
At the suggestion of
Dr. A. GERRARD and Dr. A. CRUICKSHANK

The Cairn is 13 feet high and the
Hill 467 feet above the sea
It affords an extensive view over
Sea, Plain, Valley, and Hill,
The sea horizon being 28 miles distant
And the land horizon varying from
SIX to SIXTY miles.

The accompanying map and rough diagram—the latter the work of an inexperienced hand—show the relative position of the principal hills as seen on the horizon and foreground, while the table indicates the parishes in which they lie, their distances and directions from the Blue Hill, with their heights above the sea.

The prospect naturally divides itself into three parts—first, the level expanse of the sea; second, a long coast line, partly high and partly low; and third, a great tract of land surface marked by considerable inequalities of height above the level of the sea. Taking the view as a whole between the visible points in the horizon, its diameter from east to west is 88 miles, from south-east to north-west 57 miles, and from north to south 44 miles.

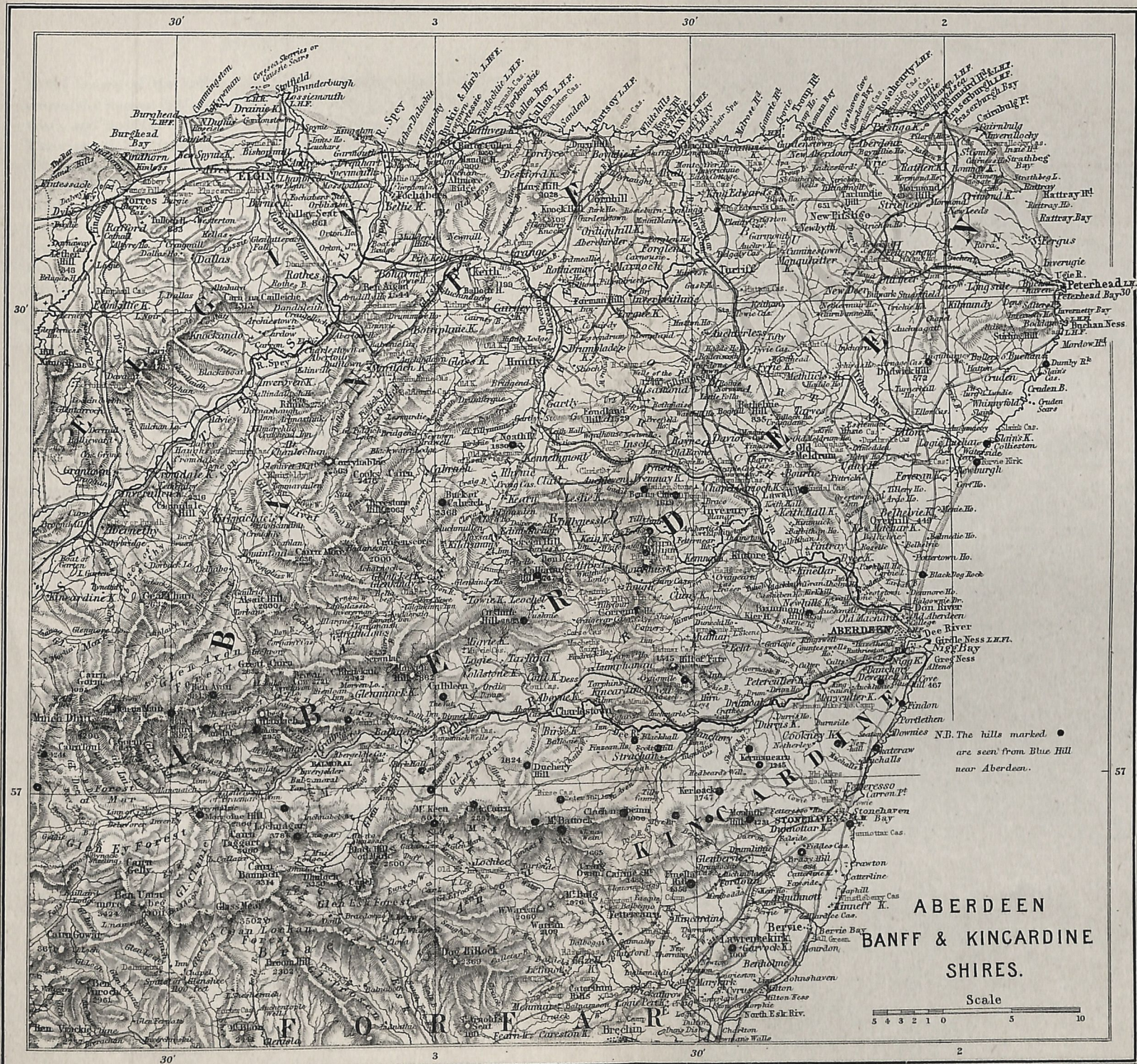
The arc of the sea horizon has a radius of 28 miles, which should render visible the mouth of the South Esk, but the elevation of the adjacent land prevents this view to the southward, Dunnottar Castle terminating the prospect in that direction. In like manner the Bullers of Buchan should be the extreme point visible to the north along the coast, but owing to its projection the intermittent flash of the Buchan

Ness Lighthouse can be seen. The distance from Dunnottar Castle to Buchan Ness is 40 miles, but only about 35 miles are actually seen, parts of the coast being hid by heights.

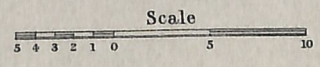
The Kincardineshire part of the coast, 15 miles long, from Dunnottar Castle to the mouth of the Dee, is mostly high and rocky, as is the Aberdeenshire part for the northern 10 miles from Collieston to Buchan Ness. The cliffs in the former line rise in some places to more than 200 feet, and in the latter to 80. The middle 15 miles of coast line, from the mouth of the Dee to Collieston, present a line of sand overflowed by the tide, which has been blown by the wind into a series of dunes, mostly covered with bent grass. The three northmost miles of these dunes, from the mouth of the Ythan to Collieston, broaden out to a distance of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles into the far-famed Sands of Forvie, one of the dunes reaching an altitude of 100 feet.

A little inland of each end of the middle 5 miles of this 15 miles of dunes, a conspicuous object is seen to the north-east over Aberdeen. At the south end is the little conical Hill of Tarbathie (168), surmounted by a round building, and at the north end the row of white-washed houses of Leyton Coastguard Station, on a height 114 feet above the sea. Along the Belhelvie Links, just landward of the line of dunes between these two objects, Captain Colby, R.E., in 1817, with Ramsden's steel chain, measured the Belhelvie base line of the Trigonometrical Survey, to verify the computed length of the sides of the many larger triangles formed over the country between hill tops where the angles of these triangles were observed with the theodolite. The final triangle used in computing this base had its angles observed at the Blue Hill, Tarbathie Hill, and Leyton, and its three sides were computed (from these data, with those from the great triangulation of other parts of the country) to be about 13.3, 8.4, and 5 miles long. On checking these computations, by using the Belhelvie base line as a side of better-conditioned triangles, with angles at Brimmond, Dudwick, &c., in eastern Aberdeenshire, the final result was that the base line as measured was found to be 26,517.530 feet, and, as computed by triangulation, 0.240 feet more. It will thus be seen that the Blue Hill was an important station in the principal triangulation for the Ordnance Trigonometrical Survey of the country in connection with the Belhelvie base line of verification.

The view over the part of Kincardineshire is generally of a bleak moorland character. North-eastward are the hills of Nigg, stretching by the Church of Nigg to the south end of the Bay of Nigg. West of the Church they were not planted with trees till about 1840. Eastward is the Loch of Loirston, with gravel mounds on its east side forming part of the moraine of the glacier which came down the Dee valley. The fishing village of Cove, once famous for penny weddings and salmon dinners, lies a mile east of the loch. Southwards about three miles from Cove, snugly nestling at the foot of the Hill of Findon, are some



**ABERDEEN
BANFF & KINGCARDINE
SHIRES.**



NB. The hills marked ●
are seen from Blue Hill
near Aberdeen.

of the houses of the fishing village of Findon, or Finnan—*magnum et venerabile nomen* (according to the late Dr. Joseph Robertson) fifty years ago and for centuries before that time. Ichabod! Ichabod! The moss of Finnan is nearly exhausted, and there is but one fishing boat in the harbour of Finnan, where numerous fleets rode at anchor in bygone days, or serenely rested on the rocky beach. And “Finnan haddies”, what of them? The modern “finnan” is a fraud and alien product of the “Mononday’s” fish of the trawler unguently treated with the sawdust of soft Swedish white wood, in place of the blue and aromatic smoke of the peat and the bog fir. Avoid them even when insinuatingly offered at the breakfast tables of the grand hotels of the metropolis. On the north limb of the Hill of Portlethen the fine steading of Mains of Portlethen and the well-laid-out fields of that model farm will be seen, and, if the day is clear and your optics good, some of the prize doddies on the grass, the models of the handsome black bull which figures on the grass bank at Portlethen Station. On a rising ground a little above and to the south-east of the station, past which trains are constantly running, is perched the Kirk of Portlethen (the red kirk). Away over the eastern ridge of the hill, upon which you will perceive a farm-house planted in an airy and conspicuous situation, is the fishing village of Portlethen, or Port-Leviathan, because tradition has it that the whale that swallowed Jonah, coasting northwards attended by a group of sympathising *balanae*, unfortunately entered the bay of Steinhive, or “Stinking Hive”, according to Captain Richard Frank, and this visit having acted as an emetic, the prophet was got rid of at Portlethen, where in their sickness the whales got stranded. Keeping still southwards, about a mile farther on is Cammachmore Bay, with the fish town of Downies on its south side; while farther on about a couple of miles, at the south end of Cran Hill, Skateraw Harbour and village is reached. Whether the one bay was nominated by the Celt and the other by the Norseman cannot with certainty be now ascertained. But the philologist must rejoice in the sonorous, vigorous, and expressive names which have been bestowed upon these places, and which, indeed, need no explanation. The next point, that of Carron, hides from our view the county town of Kincardineshire, but you will perceive across the streak of blue, a black, rocky, jagged headland, jutting into the sea. This is the rocky coast line south of Stonehaven, which, being composed of conglomerate or plum-pudding rock, like softer plum-pudding, has to give way to the ravening appetite of the sea. On the south rocky promontory bounding the third bay south from Stonehaven, called Castle Haven, is perched the ruins of Dunnottar Castle—the cruel prison of the Covenanter and the last refuge of the insignia of royalty in the days of the Commonwealth; from whence the regalia of Scotland was deftly abstracted by the stratagem of two Scottish ladies, and buried for safety under the pulpit of the kirk of the neighbouring parish of Kinneff.

An interesting addition to the inventory of the Regalia was made the other day by the presentation to the nation of the belt of the Sword of State. This belt is found to have a buckle hole at a point which indicated a jimpy waist such as Mary Queen of Scots was known to possess, and there can be little doubt that it exactly indicates the measurement of that waist in her earlier days, when the affairs of a turbulent state, and the plots and quarrels of ambitious nobles, were beginning to bring clouds of care upon what ought to have been her happy days. The ruins of Dunnottar Castle may be seen when the sun is in the N.E., or when the view is exceptionally clear. From Dunnottar the ground gradually slopes upwards as you proceed onwards, and a little before you reach the Law of Lumgair (492), there is a slight elevation of 433 feet, which shuts out from view the farm of Kittlenaked, 400 feet, which otherwise would have proved an attractive feature in the landscape. The Law of Lumgair is five miles to the west of Dunnottar Castle, and a dozen miles S.S.W. of the Blue Hill. Then Bruxie Hill (710), and Carmont (700), are seen bounding the horizon. The Caledonian Railway runs in the hollow by the west base of the Carmont. At a distance of 21 miles, along a line running S.S.W. past Bruxie Hill, is seen the Tower of Johnston on the Hill of Garvock, two miles east of Laurencekirk. About 3 miles westwards from Skateraw Harbour the Kirk of Cookney will be perceived on a small wooded elevation, the spire or steeple of the edifice almost topping the ridge forming the horizon, S.S.W., in that direction, and to the west of it the woods of Netherley, backed by the low hills of Curlethney (804), and Meikle Carewe Hill (872). Just over Curlethney Hill is located the famous camp of Raedykes, the camping ground of Galgacus with the Caledonian army before his great battle with the Roman general Agricola, according to the late Professor John Stuart of Inchbreck, from which battle Agricola, having got a bellyful of fighting, retreated southwards.

Keeping along the horizon a far distant hill will be noticed peeping over a depression in the ridge. This hill we take to be Strath Finella (1358), in the parish of Fordoun, S.W. of Auchinblae. In the middle distance is seen the hill of Auchlee, with the conspicuous monument to the memory of the late Mr. John Boswell of Kingcausie, an eminent agriculturist and stock-breeder, and a thorough gentleman of the olden time. Ascending again to the distant horizon, at another depression to the west of Strath Finella, a group of high hills are seen towering above each other in the far distance. These are the Goyle Hill (1527), and the Hill of Gothie (1468), and probably Meluncart (1725). Again proceeding along the horizon westwards just before commencing the ascent of the conspicuous hill, Cairn-mon-earn (1245), you will notice a slug-shaped hill peeping over the ridge, Mongour (1232), and further away a higher hill rising beyond it, almost eclipsed by the eastern face of Cairn-mon-earn,

Tipperweir (1440). Look well at that hill, Cairn-mon-earn, for on Friday, the 13th day of July, 1296, Edward the 1st (Langshanks), with an army of our auld enemies the Inglishe, got their first sight of the Cytie of d'Abbardon from its conspicuous ridge, and the prospect was so inviting that they came and stayed with the burghers five days, but, somewhat shabbily, they went away without paying for their board and lodging, or so much as offering to do so. The lower hill to the right of Cairn-mon-earn is Mundernal (1035), and looking over between them is Kerloch (1747). Beyond and west of Kerloch, Clochnaben (1963), that "landmark o' the sea", asserts his claim to attention by the huge granitic bump—95 feet of rocky height—on his shoulder or caput. Towering above Clochnaben, Mount Battock's fine cone (2555) is easily distinguished from the Blue Hill, as it is also from many points near Aberdeen, such as the railway bridge near the entrance to Allenvale Cemetery. Between Mount Battock and the Peter Hill (2023) stretches a saddle of high mountain land, the highest corrugation of which is Mudlee Bracks (2259). The Aven has cut out a deep gorge between Clochnaben, Mount Battock, and the Peter Hill, and the Feugh flows through the forest of Birse on the north side of the Peter Hill. West of this hill the sky line shows a mountain range rising step by step in the Hill of Cat (2435), the Cock Cairn, and the Braid Cairn (2907), ambitiously to shut out from view the beautiful cone of Mount Keen, a little of the top of which can only be distinguished from the summit of the Braid Cairn on rare occasions, when the sun shines on Mount Keen and clouds shadow Cock Cairn and the Braid Cairn. Lochnagar, further west, attracts the eye by its wide expanse of eastern precipice, 800 feet high. At its west foot may be perceived Mor Shron of Braemar, in something like the form of a Bath bun.

Along the north side of the valley of the Dee, from east to west, the hills visible are Countesswells, Barmekin, Fare (which hides Morven), Cushnie, Geallaig, Culardoch, Craeg na Dala, Ben Avon, Beinn a' Bhuid, Cairn Toul, and Beinn Bhrotain. The five last-named mountains are the only ones seen of the great group of the Cairngorms. Cairn Toul is seen past the slope of Beinn a' Bhuid, beyond which it is eight miles to the west. Ben Avon and Beinn a' Bhuid appear as one, the former being distinguished by huge granitic "warts", over 60 feet in height, and the latter by its fine corries facing the east. Patches of snow will often be observed late in summer in the eastern corries of Beinn a' Bhuid. Cairn Toul and Beinn Bhrotain, which are at the head of the Dee valley, on the borders of the counties of Aberdeen and Inverness, are the most distant objects (about 60 miles off) in the view.

The finest stretch of hollow seen from the Blue Hill is to the north-west, and begins at the gap eight miles broad between the hills of Countesswells and Fare, and runs thirteen miles north-west to another gap (Tillyfourie) two miles broad, between the Hills of Corrennie and

Cairn William, through which the Alford Valley Railway enters the Vale of Alford, over which, at a distance of thirty-five miles, the Buck of Cabrach is seen in the horizon. Beyond the north side of Pitfichie Hill, which appears disjoined from Cairn William, is seen a little of the cone of Tap o' Noth.

Beyond the east end of Countesswells Hill, to the N.N.W., are seen Bennachie, Brimmond and Tyrebagger Hills, and Lawall Hill near Oldmeldrum. To the north, over Cairncry (two miles N.W. of Aberdeen) are seen Overhill and Hill of Dudwick. To the N.N.E., over the city of Aberdeen, and near the coast-line, are seen Tarbathie Hill, Leyton Coastguard Station, and the Forvie Sands; and still farther N.N.E. Slains Castle, looking like a speck on the cliffs, Dunbuy Rock, and the Buchan Ness Lighthouse with a powerful glass. Tarbathie Hill is the south-east end of a series of gravel mounds, of about the same height, called the Hills of Fyfe, lying between the Ellon turnpike and the sea, and running two miles north to Millden. These mounds, similar ones traceable to the west by the Corby Loch to the banks of the Don, near Dyce, are regarded as moraines of glaciers which once moved down the valley of the Don.

The view three to five miles to the north comprises the greater part of the city of Aberdeen.

The walk to and from the Blue Hill from the centre of the city affords a fine constitutional of about nine miles. It can be seen from a good many points in Aberdeen, appearing as a flattish wooded eminence. The following may be named:—Broad Hill, Castle Hill, Victoria Bridge, South Stocket Road, west end of Union Street, Queen's Gate, Whinhill Road, and Bridge of Dee.

Such is the variety, the magnificence, and the beauty of the view from the Blue Hill. On a spring morning, in the bright sunshine, when light clouds slowly float seawards across the vast blue canopy above, the sea between Carron point and Dunnottar shines and shimmers like molten silver. The horizon landwards stretches around in a rising range of wooded and brown heath-covered ridges, until the eye reaches the Alps, draped in virgin snow, through which the precipices of dark Lochnagar, the "breasts" of Beinn a' Bhuird, and the gigantic granitic peaks of Ben Avon, assert themselves sixty miles away. Still sweeping round, variety and beauty paint the landscape. The mass of the Hill of Fare and Corrennie on the one side, with Cairn William on the other, bound the magnificent vista, which, softened by distance, is closed by the fine outlines of "the Buck". Farther round, Pitfichie and the Tap o' Noth strive to peep over the wooded ridge of Kingshill, Countesswells; and the Oxen Craig of Bennachie presents its southern aspect over the ridge to the east. Then the Mither Tap, like a cock of the north, with independence marked imperishably on its rocky peak, shoots up into the blue, and the Brimmond Hill, Tyrebagger, and the wooded slopes eastwards frame the Silver City, from whence the deep boom of Victoria,

mellowed by distance, reaches the ear. The graceful sweep of the bay northwards is traced, and bounded by the golden sands which terminate at the large dunes of Forvie, forming, like the pillar of salt, monuments of retribution and warning. Beyond, the sea, a deeper blue than the sky above, from whence it derives its colour, is framed by the rocks which rise at Collieston, and save the pleasant sandy break at the bay of Cruden, disastrous to the Danish invader, continue to Buchan Ness, whose kindly light to the mariner is more reassuring than the Inchcape Bell. Collieston ! redolent of the toothsome spelding, thy maidens no longer barefooted lilt along the golden sands, and, with tucked-up drapery, ford the Don, to bring their welcome wares to the Plainstanes of Aberdeen. The "Plainstanes" ! where are those cherished memorials of the times in which, with powdered wigs, the Provost and the Baillies, and the mercantile burgesses of the burgh, sedately strode to and fro upon their polished surface, discussing the affairs of the State and town's affairs of greater moment than robes, and cocked hats, and badges, and fireworks, and cart-horse processions ? Where are the recruiting sergeants, with their streaming ribbons, inviting enterprising young men to glory ? And the town's drummer and the hangman, where are they ? They are but memories. They have gone, vanished, evaporated, and we all must follow.