

OUTLYING NOOKS OF CAIRNGORM.—No. I.

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THIS corrie is on the north-east shoulder of the hill, away from the sun. As it is somewhat off the usual track taken to the top, it is not often visited. It is notable as one of the places where the snow lies longest; never, even in the hottest summer, does it altogether disappear.* A small stream runs in at the top, and gradually wears a way for itself. From the force of the water below, and the melting of the snow above, the channel is widened, and forms at last a sort of tunnel some ten feet in height and more than a hundred feet in length. Once when there with a friend in the month of August we were able to enter at the bottom and pass up and out at the top. The gloom and chilliness, and the closeness of the over-arching snow, gave quite a funereal character to the place, corresponding to its name of "Margaret's Coffin". Who "Margaret" was is not known. One story is that the corrie was the haunt long ago of some miserable hag who had been driven from society for her crimes, and that here she tended a flock of goats. Another tradition connects the place with the Witch of Moy, commemorated in Moritt's ballad. It is curious that there is a corrie in Badenoch of the same name with the same legend attached to it.

THESE are huge masses of granite seamed and worn so that they resemble chimney stalks. They stand at the top of the stupendous cliffs that rise wall-like from the deep bed of the Garbh Allt,

"Precipitous, black, jagged rocks,
For ever shattered, and the same for ever".

* James Grant, late keeper (Rebhoan), who has known the hill, man and boy, for more than fifty years, says that he never saw it without snow; one year there was but a patch left, which he could almost cover with his plaid.

At one time there were four or more "stalks". Two are said to have fallen in the great earthquake of 1816, and at the same time the others lost something of their height. This bit of rock scenery is very striking and well worthy of a visit.

the "Eagle's Cliff", is a bold cliff on the south side of Mam Suim (2394), facing Cairngorm. STAC NA H-IOLAIRE, Eagles have built their nests here from time immemorial. Once when passing we observed some goats feeding near the foot. Our collie barked at them, when they took refuge among the rocks, bounding from ledge to ledge with wonderful agility. They soon reached a height from which they could look down, as if with contempt, on the collie leaping and barking harmlessly far below. The scene called up Coleridge's line:—

"Ye wild goats sporting round the eagle's nest";

and Wordsworth's beautiful picture, "The Eagle's Birth-place":—

"Familiar with forgotten years that shows
Inscribed, as with the silence of the thought,
Upon its bleak and visionary sides
The history of many a winter storm,
Or obscure records of the path of fire".

BATHAICH GAELIC names are often given on the principle of resemblance. Thus we have FIONTAIG. "Mudachan Chadha-no", where the rocks are like chimneys; "Sabhalan Bhynac", the barns of Bynac; "Caisteal Sgròbach", a castellated height on the west side of Cairngorm; and "Bathaich Fiontaig", Fiontag's byre. This ridge, shaped like a byre, lies between Allt Mor and Allt na Ciste. It is now covered with wood, but formerly it was bare, and from its commanding position was often used as a post of outlook by the watchers of the passes. Alan Grant of Tulloch, who was a sort of warder of the Marches, is said to have had an encounter here with Lochaber raiders, in which one of the party was slain. There are two headstones which mark his grave. He was a Cameron, and his death led to a blood feud. His father and brother set out to revenge his death,

passing through Glen More, and down by the Caiplich. Here the father stopped, but the son said he would go further, as he wanted to see his sweetheart who lived on the Ailneag (Ailnack). Alan was at the time posted at the "Feith", a place in the Braes of Abernethy. He spied the young Cameron, and went to meet him, calling out "Hold yourself my prisoner", but Cameron hurried on. When near enough he took aim at Alan, but his gun missed fire. Alan cried out "It is vain for you to aim at me, for lead has no power over me". On this, Cameron took out a silver sixpence, and was bending it on a stone, in order to get it into his gun, when Alan, dreading the result, fired at him, and he fell dead on the spot. The stone is said to bear the mark of blood which nothing can wipe out. The place is called "Straan Chamronaich", in commemoration of the tragedy. The poor father returned home heart-broken. Like other Celts, he poured forth his grief in song. A verse runs as follows:—

" Is truagh nach deach sinn san nair,
Deich mile mun cuairt
Mun do ghabh mi an cead bhuan
An Caiblich dhiot".

THE REGION OF THE "EAGS". "EAG" means a notch, or cleft, and is a common place name. "Bynac" means the Ben of the "Eag", and, looking to it from the Abernethy side, it has a marked notch in its summit. "Ailneag" (Ailnack) is the burn of the "Eag", and the tremendous rock gorge which the water has cut in the course of ages makes the name very appropriate. Then there are the "Eags" which mark the road generally taken by the Lochaber raiders, still known as "Rathad nam Mearleach", or Thieves' Road. First there is the "Eag mhor", a long narrow gorge in the Braes of Abernethy below Geal Charn. Next there is the "Eag-chait", no doubt of old the haunt of the wild cat, on the edge of Carn Bheithir. Then there is "Eag-garbh-choire", on the eastern side of Cairngorm. Then, to mention only one more, there is "Eag-coire-na-comhlach", the corrie of meeting, on the west side of Cairngorm, near the bounds of

Badenoch. There is also a "Claise Mhearleach", on the eastern slope of Cairngorm, near Lochan na Beinne. These "Eags" seem as if they marked the line of an old water-course in the far-back ages. Strange to think that where perhaps once ran some "ancient river" the caterans should afterwards have passed to and fro on their plundering expeditions! As Tennyson says:—

"There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars, hath been
The stillness of the central sea".

And an older and greater than Tennyson has much the same idea:—

"When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watery main
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store".

—*Shakespeare.*



THE BARNs OF BYNAC.