

OUTLYING NOOKS OF CAIRNGORM.—No. II.

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AN LOCHAN (The Green Lochan). This romantic little loch lies in the "Slugan", or throat of Glen UAINE. More, at the entrance from Abernethy.

The hills rise steeply on each side, but with more breadth on the right, where the road passes. The hill on the right is called Creag Loisgte (the Burnt Hill), and that on the left Creag nan Gall (the Lowlanders' Hill). These names are descriptive, and, doubtless, refer to forgotten incidents of the past. The lochan is oval in form, and about 600 yards in circumference. It has neither inlet nor outlet, but is fed from underground sources. The water is of a delicate green colour and exquisitely clear. Looking down from the bank, some 10 or 12 feet, one can watch the tiny trout swimming about, and wonder at the strange gathering of logs and roots, the relics of ancient forests, that lies in the bottom. Between the banks and the water there is a strip of ground which in an August day may be found gay with violets, bluebells, and St. John's Wort, with here and there thistles, dandelions, and wild strawberries. If the day be calm, all above and around is reflected on the surface of the water with wondrous beauty. The tufts of grass, the patches of purple heath, like clots of blood, the pines standing singly or in clumps, the ledges of rock, with the masses of loose stones sloping downwards from the cliff, the clouds, the blue sky, and the glorious sun are all there—

"For not a feature of those hills  
Is in the mirror slighted".

So sings Wordsworth of St. Mary's Lake. Scott has a similar passage; so has Shelley in his poem, "The Recollections", but with a subtlety of thought and felicity of expression beyond either of the others. When one looked, as Coleridge has it, "with head bent low and cheek aslant",



the beauty of the scene was marvellously enhanced. The colours took a more delicate tint, the sun shone with more chastened radiance. Things were in a manner transfigured. It became difficult to distinguish between the seeming and the real. The mind itself was caught as if in a spell. Fancy ruled. Now the thought was of our rude forefathers, and we listened as if for the horn of one of the old barons of the glen, or the wild shouts of the caterans as they drove their prey through the pass or turned fiercely on their pursuers. Anon, other thoughts arose. The scene seemed a glimpse of fairy-land, and we felt as if it would have been no surprise to have heard the fairy maidens liltng "Croch-ailan" as they milked the deer, or to have seen "Donald More" himself with his elfin band sailing their skiffs on the lake or holding gay revels on the green.

The question is often asked—What causes the greenness of the water? In the "Survey of the Province of Moray" (1798) it is said:—"The rocky banks rise around to a great height, and are closely clothed with the ever-verdant pine, *by the reflection of which the water is always seen of the deepest green colour in every possible situation*". It is strange that a man so shrewd and intelligent as the Rev. Mr. Leslie should have committed himself to such an opinion. The explanation is not a bit better than the old belief that the water is green because the fairies washed their clothes in it! Some twenty years ago Sir Robert Christison gave his opinion, as the result of enquiry, that pure water was colourless, but Tyndall and Aitken have proved, by various experiments, that this is a mistake. The colour of distilled water is blue-green. At the same time, owing to matter held in suspension or solution, the colour may be greatly varied. The Lake of Como is of a deep blue; the Maggiore is greener. Brodick Bay takes a green hue from the grains of yellow sand, whereas Loch Lomond is of a brown colour. In Australia a gum tree cast into the water will soon tinge it of a fine blue. It may be well to notice that there are three other "green" lochs in the Cairngorm district. One is on Ben Muich Dhui, another on Cairn Toul, and the third on Cairngorm of



Derry. The latter is the one referred to by William Smith, Rynuie, Abernethy, in his fine hunting song (Gaelic) "Allt an Lochain Uaine".

(The Dark Sithan of the Double Outlook).

SITHEAN- This Sithan stands on the Cairngorm side,  
 DUBH-DA- a little beyond the Green Loch. The  
 CHOIMHEAD. name is a word picture. It accurately

describes the hill as commanding a double view—looking on the one side to Glen More and on the other to Abernethy. Tradition says the place was a favourite haunt of the fairies. On the south side a little burn finds its way through rough rocks and shaggy wood to the glen below. On its bank, opposite the Sithan, there are the remains of a smuggling bothy, which was famous in its day. I was told by an old man, dead many years ago, that once when standing in front of the bothy on a summer evening, he heard the fairy piper playing on the Sithan. The piper was going his round, and one could mark when he got to the end of his beat and turned back, but nothing could be seen. Here is an older and more romantic story :— Robin Oig, son of one of the Barons of Kincardine, famed as a hunter, was returning one day from the glen when he met a party of fairies on their march, with pipers. The music was the sweetest he ever heard. He listened entranced. As they passed by he noticed that the pipes were of silver, sparkling with jewels. Throwing his bonnet among the little folks with the cry, in Gaelic—"Mine to you, yours to me", he snatched the pipes. The procession moved on, and the music pealed out sweeter than ever. Stewart hid his prize in his plaid and hurried home. But when he looked, lo! he had nothing but a broken spike of grass and an empty puff-ball. The moral is not ill to find.