

SOME GRAMPIAN AND SUTHERLAND RECOLLECTIONS.*

BY JAMES MACAULAY, M.D.

ONE of the articles in the last number of the Journal it was a great pleasure to see. It was an account of "A School-Boy Walk over the Pentlands". The writer says that "the school-boy who is entered at the Pentlands between 9 and 12 years of age may find his way to the top of Ben Muich Dhui or Cairn Toul in all the greater comfort when he is 18 or 20". On further inquiry I found that this Pentland excursion was made by boys from my own old school, the Edinburgh Academy. All the places mentioned, Colinton and Bonaly, Habbie's Howe and the Glencorse reservoir, awakened memories of my own school-boy days, seventy years ago. I can only say that a muster of as many as five and twenty Academy boys, on a summer Saturday forenoon, for a Pentland Hills excursion, is a very pleasant fact to know. And this in times when there is so great a mania for mere athletics! The pursuits of natural history give as much healthy exercise as rougher sports, and will yield in after life more gratifying recollections. The senses and the brain get exercise, as well as the limbs and the muscles. Nor is there any lack of joyous or even boisterous fun, as the record of this Pentland trip shows. May there be many more of such holiday rambles! At Eton and Rugby and Harrow there are always a number of boys who are proud of their Museums, and who delight in getting new specimens

* Our readers will doubtless welcome this chapter of reminiscences from the pen of the respected and venerable octogenarian Dr. Macaulay, Editor for many years past of *The Leisure Hour*. He writes with true Highland instinct, under the influence of the best traditions of the north, and there are many points on which all mountaineers are in deepest sympathy with him. At his great age he can hardly hope to botanise again among the recesses of the Clova mountains, but we trust he may long continue able to enjoy a pleasant autumn holiday among his native heather.—*Ed.*

for them. To be a field naturalist need not imply any neglect of common games and sports. And let it be remembered that the most distinguished travellers and the best of mountaineers, from De Saussure and Von Humboldt to Conway and Whymper, have always been naturalists as well as climbers; and by their descriptions of *living* objects and of human life have made their books lively and popular.

It was this early love of natural history that brought to me the privilege, a few years later, when attending the Botany class as a medical student, to be included in special expeditions led by the Professor. Robert Graham was the Professor in those days. William Jackson Hooker was still at Glasgow, before he was appointed Director of Kew Gardens. At Edinburgh University, Baird was then Principal, Hope held the chair of Chemistry, and the veteran Jameson that of Natural History, as well as the Curatorship of the Museum.

My first expedition to the mountains of Forfar and Aberdeen was in 1831. There were no railroads at that time. We travelled on the top of the mail-coach to Forfar, and thence on foot to the Clova mountains. Old James Macnab, the head gardener, and the helper of the Professor in his classes at Inverleith Row, acted as manager and treasurer of the excursion.

Our number in this expedition was sixteen. It was necessary to limit the number, to lessen the chance of separation in travel, and to make sure of supplies or accommodation for all. There were only seven or eight students, of whom I was the youngest, and among them was the much-loved and accomplished Edward Forbes, who, after a life of busy movement and great distinction as a traveller, and as head of the School of Mines in Jermyn Street, came back to Edinburgh to occupy, for too short a time, the chair once filled by Jameson. Others among the students rose to honourable though less eminent rank, but it was by the elder men of the expeditions that their records were made bright and their memories fragrant. Here are some of them:—Sir William Jardine, Bart.; Prideaux; J. Selby, J.P., of Twizell House, Northumberland; Dr. Kaye Greville,

author of the "Flora Edinensis"; Martin Barry, M.D., a quaker, whose adventurous ascent of Mont Blanc was made in times before Alpine trippers became common; Dr. Green, a physician of Boston, U.S.A., who shouted with enthusiastic delight on first seeing a daisy; James Wilson of Woodville, brother of John Wilson, the more celebrated but not more cultured brother, known to fame as "Christopher North";—these were among the seniors of our expeditions—sportsmen, or experts in science, in whose company it was a delight and a privilege to travel.

Of the last named, James Wilson, a memorial volume was published, nearly forty years ago, by the Rev. Dr. James Hamilton, of Regent Square. The dry humour, quiet manner, and wide knowledge of James Wilson are well described in the once-famous book of Mr. Lockhart, "Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk". His brother-in-law, Sir John M'Neill, of Persian and Imperial renown as a diplomatist, tells that Wilson at first under Jameson was tempted to the study of geology and mineralogy, but his own tastes and his love of open air pursuits led him to prefer entomology, ichthyology, and all departments of zoology, and he became the first naturalist of his times in Scotland. Who would believe that he wrote nearly a thousand pages of the "Encyclopædia Britannica", under a dozen headings, from "Angling" to "Zoophytes", covering the entire range of the Animal Kingdom? To "Constable's Miscellany" and "The Edinburgh Cabinet Library" he was also a large contributor. Such a man was a welcome addition to Professor Graham's botanising excursions. With the young students he was a great favourite, to whom he was always ready to give information and advice on subjects with which Graham, a man of like geniality and disposition, was less familiar. Humour and good sense, cheerfulness and gravity, poetry and piety, were blended in happiest proportions in James Wilson. Dr. Greville was his closest comrade, both being keen anglers and entomologists. There were others who combined sport with zoology, and one who cared for sport alone, but one of the most agreeable of the whole party, Captain Graham, R.N., a brother of the Professor.

Let the Editor indulge me by allowing a single extract from Dr. Hamilton's "Life of James Wilson", a book which contains numerous letters about the excursions. He writes to his wife from Clova, 5th August, 1831 :

" We reached Forfar about 3 p.m. There we hired a cart for our knapsacks, and also bought thirty or forty threepenny loaves and a round of cold beef, and started on foot for this little hamlet, which is situated in a wild secluded valley, through the centre of which flows the South Esk. At Forfar we had previously regaled ourselves on cheese and bread and ale ; and in the course of our pedestrian progress in the evening we got bannocks and milk in a cottage by the roadside. It was past 10 before we got to Clova, where we regaled ourselves on tea and bread, and went to bed thereafter. The bed, for the greater part of the party, consisted of a layer of hay upon the floor, with a blanket or two over the top of it. I was voted into one of the two beds properly so called, out of respect, I suppose, to my years and reverend character ; and although I resisted this indulgence for some time, I was forced to submit to the kindness of my fellow-travellers. I was much refreshed by a sound sleep, and awoke about a quarter-past six with the unaccustomed feeling that I had got enough. My neighbours were by this time stirring in the adjoining room ; so I got up, and we breakfasted a little after seven. Most of the party started for the hills to collect their plants, and I took my rod and fished up the river about three miles and back again, and killed five dozen of trouts. Two others who tried angling killed three dozen between them ; so we had a pleasant addition to our dinner. I returned to the house in good time, but it was towards seven before the botanists descended from the mountains. They got many rare and curious plants, the arrangement and pressure of which presented a busy candle-light scene for some hours in the evening".

The " mountains " ascended by the botanists it is not possible for me now to name or to spell correctly, having at hand no Ordnance Survey map or report. But on many a separate and far-distant height were gathered " rare and curious plants ". These are still in my herbarium, not always with the exact habitat noted, only " Clova mountains " as the central place whence excursions were made that took long summer days to accomplish. The inspection of these

plants recalls the happy days when they were searched for and discovered. To name two or three only:—*Lychnis Alpina* was found in profusion at the very top of a lofty mountain, amidst the weather-worn debris of what had been once solid granite. Of *Saxifraga rivularis*, and *Saxifraga nivalis*, the habitat in both cases is given "Lochnagar". *Azulea procumbens*, the dwarfed representative of a lovely tribe, was found on many a hill. The *Potentilla alpestris*, *Juncus triglumis*, and scores of others, of various degrees of rarity or beauty, from the lovely flowers and ferns to the lowliest lichens and club-mosses, are among the specimens in my "hortus siccus". One of them, *Lycopodium alpinum* is marked as coming from the "Clova and Cairngorm" ranges. The upland lochs and streams furnish aquatic spoils. Some of us were not such keen collectors as the regular botanists, and we found greater pleasure in observing the names and the uses made of the commonest plants by the mountain people. It was interesting also to hear on the spot what plants were badges of clans. *Erica tetralix* is the badge of the Macdonalds, and *Erica cineria* (more frequently found white than its cross-leaved neighbour) is that of the Macalisters, just as *Myrica gale* is the badge of the Campbells in Argyllshire. Hawthorn is the plant badge of the Forfarshire Ogilvies. To Sir John Ogilvy of our Clova days we were indebted for courteous permission to trespass over all his domains, and to share his rights of property on field or flood. James Wilson, in one of his letters, tells of his going to "a romantic shooting-hut of Sir John Ogilvy about a thousand miles up in the air", where he was regaled with milk and whisky, and was fortunate enough to capture fine specimens of very rare beetles! More welcome plants to come upon were the berry-bearing ground-bushes upon which grouse, blackcock, and ptarmigan feed, such as *Arbutus alpina* or *Rubus chamaemorus*.

In the Sutherland expedition of 1833, the sportsmen of the party were more comfortable and independent of the botanists of the Clova mountains. They had a long car, mounted on wheels, for the capital roads, and this car was

dismounted and used as a boat when a loch or river or fiord tempted the anglers. Graham and his foot-travellers ranged the whole county up to the extreme corner, the *ultima thule* of "Cape Wrath". Ben Hope is one of the grandest, though not one of the loftiest of the Scottish mountains; the Kyle of Tongue is not inferior to the loveliest of Norwegian fjords; Lochs Shin, Craggie, and Eribol are as dear to anglers as they are charming to artists; and the whole of the coast scenery, with gigantic cliffs and sea-worn caves, is a worthy part of the sea-girt "Caledonia, stern and wild". All the places on the route to Dunrobin Castle and Invergordon have long been familiar to travellers, and to guests of the Sutherland family, but in my herbarium many less known names appear. Altnaharrow, Inchnadamf, Cashel Dhu, Dornoch, Ben Loyal, Scourie, and many other habitats of plants are given, both on the Sutherland property and in "the Reay Country". Nor did the botanists get all the rarities. Sir William Jardine and Mr. Selby secured for their museums some fine specimens of birds, such as the black-throated diver—gorgeous creatures, as large as geese, and extremely rare in this country. Splendid salmon and the great loch trout (*salmo ferox*) were caught by the anglers everywhere.

In population and in wealth the growth of all Scotland has been immense during the century drawing to a close, but in the highlands there has been depopulation. On this subject, however, I must restrain myself. The readers of this Journal may differ on many questions, but all must regret to know that the men of other times have been cleared away to give place to sheep-walks and deer-forests, and will join in the words of Robert Burns:

"Farewell to the highlands, farewell to the north,
The birth-place of valour, the country of worth;
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,
The hills of the highlands forever I love".