

THE BRAEMAR HIGHLANDS AFTER THE '45.

THE second volume of "Historical Papers Relating to the Jacobite Period", recently published by the New Spalding Club, contains some exceedingly interesting reading for those accustomed to resort to "the playground of the Cairngorms". Colonel Allardyce, the editor of the work, has embodied in this volume a number of documents dealing with the suppression of the rebellion in the Highlands. They are mostly reports from officers of the various "posts" that were established to over-awe the Highlanders; and, while they furnish interesting details of the localities and of the work engaged in, they are also highly entertaining, owing to the singular views occasionally expressed, and the quaint language in which, as a rule, these views are couched.

One of the most notable documents in the collection is a "Memorial concerning a cross road from Inverlochry, by Ruthven of Badenoch, and through Braemar to Aberdeen". This road is urged as a necessary complement to "the present patent and fine Roads lately made from South to North thro' the most inaccessible Mountains in the Highlands of Scotland", "which surprizing performance (never once thought practicable in former Ages) will justly eternize his Majesty's Name in that Kingdom". Alas! for the loyalty of the memorialist, the roads have perpetuated the name of their maker, General Wade, and not the name of George II. ! The "inaccessibleness" of the Grampians, "for want of fit passages and Roads, either across, or on each side of them", had, in the opinion of the writer, been a national blessing at one time. It prevented "a Total Conquest of the British Island" by the Roman legions; it frustrated the expeditions of Adrian and Severus; and, later, it checked the conquest of Scotland by Edward I. of England. But this very inaccessibleness proved a source of trouble to the Scottish Kings, who had difficulty in repressing "the frequent Commotions and Insurrections of the Turbulent Highlanders and Borderers". Hence—

“Malcolm the 3rd, King of Scots, one of the wisest of their Princes, did build a Strong Castle in the Brae of Mar, in the very center of the Grampians, call'd the Castle of Kindrochit, and that out of pretext of a Summer Residence, for his diversion of Deer-hunting, but in effect to bridle the Stubborn disposition of the fierce and lawless Inhabitants, and more particularly the Stance of the said Fortress, was pitched upon as most necessary by reason of the inaccessibleness of that Country and its central Situation, which made it always remarkable for being the Commonplace of Rendezvous of the whole Turbulent and disaffected People of those parts, there being equal expeditious access to the same in some few Days from the several remotest Corners of the Highlands, and where they could rest securely, without fear of being attacked even by much superior Numbers, and the Inhabitants themselves by reason of their situation, were still amongst the first and last in Arms, in all Insurrections time out of mind”.

Then follows an account of the building (in 1628) of Braemar Castle and of its burning (in 1689); and, having regard to a newspaper controversy a few years ago as to whether the present Castle (built in 1748) was an entirely new structure or super-imposed on the old walls, it may be well to quote what the memorialist (probably writing about 1747) says of the ruins—“The whole Vaults, Mason and Iron Work being entire (as it is still at this day) and nothing wanting but Roof, Josting and Flooring, in a Country that abounds with Fir-wood and Slate”. Coming, then, to his proposal for a cross road, the memorialist furnishes sundry arguments in its favour, which culminate in the following:

“There is one other weighty Reason and Consideration, not as yet mentioned or taken notice of (which of itself) besides the many former convincing Arguments would be sufficient Motive for leading the said Road from East to West, and Garrisoning the Castle of Braemar as aforesaid, which is that now since the Familys of Gordon and Seaforth are happily converted from Popery, and consequently that Religion visibly upon the decline in their Countries, and most of the Northern Bounds. The Brae of Mar is the only remaining part of the Nation where Popery flourishes most, where there will be more than two hundred people hearing Mass all at once, and sometimes three or four Priests and Jesuits conveened together, with their Superior at

their head, in full defiance of the Government and the Laws and disregarding the Ministers of the Established Church, whose pains to suppress them is fruitless, since by far the greatest part of the Commons are of the Roman Faith, and not to be forced into a decent and legal behaviour by the smaller number, and all this occasioned for want of a Garrison in the said Castle of Braemar, there being no Soldiers to be call'd for nearer than about 40 miles for suppressing such illegal and Tumultuous meetings”.

The suppression of sedition, however, does not seem to have concerned the authorities so much as the putting down of the “ Depredations of the Thieves of Rannoch, Lochaber, and Glengary”, though in some of the reports the thieving—cattle-raiding, to wit—is ingeniously associated with rebellion. It is described as “ a Scheme Artfully contrived, to Nurse and encourage the barbarity and idleness of these people, and may be called the principal spring of Rebellion”, the addition being made that “this practice of Thieving is the sure and known Means of training up a number of people to the use of Arms, who on the least prospect of plunder are ready to join in any Rebellion or Tumult”. Several descriptions are given of the passes and routes by which raided cattle were driven—descriptions that are perfectly accurate, though some of the names of places seem to have been written phonetically. Here is one of these descriptions :

“The Thieves from Rannoch, Lochaber, and Glengary in driveing Cattle from the Counties of Angus, Mearns, Aberdeën, and Bamff, usually take the following Routes. Those who Rob from the two first Counties drive their Plunder through the Glens of Clova, all along the Mountains South side of the River Dee, and must pass near Glenclunie or Glenshee, so as to fall into the Hills of Athole or the Forrest of Guiley, and in either of these Routes must afterwards cross the Chain betwixt Dalwhinnie and Dalnardocho, unless alarmed and driven Northward towards Ruthven.

“The Thieves in conveying their Plunder from Bamff and Aberdeenshires, if from the Country twixt Dee and Don, they must go through the Forrest and mountains of Morvaine, then by Loch Bulg, and from thence to the Forrest of Guiley or Mountains of Marr, and so fall into the former Route.

“Betwixt Don and Spey they must pass through the Mountains of Glenoughty and Glenavin, and afterwards fall into the

Mountains of Abernethy, or further South take the Route formerly mentioned, but at any rate all the plunder from the four Shires, must pass betwixt Ruthven of Badenoch and Blair”.

A more detailed description of the various routes followed by the “thieves” is given thus :

“When Cattle are Stolen from Angus or Mearns, or from any part of Aberdeenshire South of Dee, they generally come through the Hills betwixt Glentamar and Glensesk, Then through the Hills of Glenclova and Corryvooe and cross the Carnvalg betwixt Glenshee and Glenclunie, Next through the Baddoch, Glentatnick, Cornriogh, Glenbeg, Glenmore, and Glenfearnell (which are all betwixt Braemarr and Braes of Angus).

“After they bring Cattle the length of the Braes of Clova, they sometimes turn through Glen Callader and Ballochbuee, and crossing Dee below Invercauld, pass through the Hills betwixt Invercauld and the Water of Gairden, then through Glenluy and Glenguissich, and at Stromwoldick, and then into the Hills of Badenoch.

“When Cattle are Stolen from any part of Aberdeenshire betwixt Dee and Don, they generally drive them through the Hills and Forrest of Morvine, and pass at Altnashein or Loch Builg, near Ribbalachlagan, betwixt Gairnside and Inchrory, then they go into Glenavin and Cross the River of Avin at Loch Avin, afterwards pass through the Braes of Glenfechy into the Hills of Badenoch”.

To control these routes, a company of soldiers, having its headquarters first at Tarland and afterwards at Braemar Castle, was divided into posts, stationed at Inchrory, Ribbalachlagan, Dubrach, Glenclunie, Spittal (spelled *Spittle*) of Glenmuick, and Clova. The posts were either increased or shifted—probably the latter—for mention is made of one at Spittal of Glenshee; an officer patrolling in this district complains that “Its a most Dismal Country as I ever saw, being full of boggs”—he “Cross’d some very High Mountains”.* But cattle reiving was not the only offence

* This reminds the writer of a remark once made to him in Sutherlandshire by a member of the Ordnance Survey staff—“What ! You’ve come here to see the country ? Why, there’s nothing here but rocks, and locks (*sic*), and mountains”.

dealt with by the Hanoverian soldiers. An officer at Braemar apprehends a man for wearing the plaid "contrary to Act of Parliament"—"this fellow came past the Castle in his plaid with all the assurance imaginable"—and sends him to Aberdeen, "to be punished as the law directs". The result is not satisfactory, from the point of view of the officer, who thus writes :

"In my last report I mentioned to you that I had taken up a Man for wearing the Plaid and had sent him to Aberdeen, as Mr. Farquson of Inver Cald did not act as a Justice of the Peace. The Sergt. who went with the Prisoner is now return'd, and informs me that he carry'd the prisoner before the Sheriff of the County, with his plaid on as first taken. The Sheriff said in the prisoner's behalf, that it was only a Dyed Blanket, and not a Plaid, the Sergt. ask'd the Sheriff if the people might wear their Plaids if Dyed, the Sheriff told the Sergt., that the intent of the Act of parliament, was not to oppress the poor, and dismiss'd the prisoner, notwithstanding the Sheriff's Judgment, I shall take up all persons that I find wearing those Dy'd Blanketts as the Sheriff is pleas'd to call them. . . .

"Since my last I have taken up and sent to Aberdeen another Highlander, for wearing a Plaid of different colours, which I think the Sheriff cannot well call a Blanket, as he was pleased to call the other".

A detailed examination of these reports, however, would take us too far afield; and perhaps sufficient has been said to indicate the interesting nature—topographically and otherwise—of the documents given in Colonel Allardyce's new volume.