



"A BIT OF THE BORDER."

## SOME SOUTHERN SCOTTISH UPLANDS.

By T. R. GILLIES.

WHEN a respected friend in high repute as a Topographer informed us that he was about to make an expedition to the sources of some of the principal rivers in the south of Scotland, and gave us the chance of accompanying him, we closed with the offer at once, without ever thinking of inquiring what the object of his expedition was. Enough for us that it was to be an excursion across hill country, and that there were objects of interest and scenery on the route which could not fail to make it attractive. This included a journey through the upper parts of Tweeddale, Annandale, and Eskdale, and the lower part of Liddesdale; and it was agreed, making a virtue of what was, considering the line of march, almost a necessity, that it should be an easy-going pedestrian excursion—a proposal acquiesced in by the less responsible part of the expedition, with a special stipulation as to the easy-going aspect which the walking tour should assume—born of a desire to linger for a while amid the pleasant scenery of the pastoral hills of southern Scotland. To the Topographer we left the study of the hydrography and archæology of the district traversed. He may, possibly, at a future time publish the result of his investigations; but meanwhile, as the route is a comparatively unfrequented and unknown one, a short account of it from a holiday point of view may be perhaps acceptable.

Leaving Edinburgh on a Monday morning in the month of July, we took the train out for a short distance, and started from Broomlee Station, some sixteen miles from the metropolis. A short walk from Broomlee Station brought the expedition to West Linton, on the old Edinburgh road. The only object of interest here was the ancient statue on the top of Lady Giffard's Well (erected 1666), which forms

an appropriate ornament in the centre of this irregularly-built and rather picturesque village. The well itself was rebuilt not many years ago, and the weather-beaten old effigy looks all the more archaic now that it has been placed on a modern pedestal. The Topographer—in pursuance of his hydrographical investigations—contemplated a visit to the Heaven Aqua Well—a once famous mineral spring near the turnpike to the north of the village; but he was persuaded to take its virtues (pronounced equal to those of Tunbridge) for granted, and, crossing the river Lyne, we set off on our way to Dolphinton. The road leads through an unfrequented and sparsely-populated country, consisting of moorland pasture, varied here and there by woodland and cultivated fields. On the right the Mendick Hill rises above the surrounding heights, and soon in front a distant view is to be had of Dolphinton Hill, which, with Tinto and Walston Hill, forms a connecting link between the Pentlands and the Highlands of Galloway.

At Dolphinton numerous Roman and Druidical remains are pointed out. If half of them are genuine, the Roman population of this district must have been twenty times as numerous as its present inhabitants. The Topographer was sceptical, and hinted that the plentiful supply of Roman camps and forts arose from the fact that the district is a pastoral one, in which old sheepfolds were numerous. The walls gradually tumble down, are overgrown with grass, and the result is a distinctly marked *prætorium*. That many genuine traces of the Roman occupation have been found in this part of Scotland is unquestionable, but if all the Roman camps and tumuli that are pointed out be genuine, the whole Roman army must have been here. What they found to make it worth their while to entrench themselves here, and how they managed to live, it would be interesting to know. Tumuli and mounds formed by the action of the water are frequently pointed out as ancient works; and as to ruined sheepfolds, it is "*Prætorium* here, *prætorium* there" all the way to the border, though some patriarchal shepherd in the district would probably "mind the biggin' o't". We did not go out of our way to see any of the

Roman or other ancient remains, and contented ourselves with a casual stare at such as happened to come in our way. These were quite numerous enough.

On the route towards Biggar are some excellent views of the surrounding hill country. Passing the beautifully situated Edmonston House, we arrived at Biggar late in the afternoon, and having made ourselves comfortable at the Elphinstone Arms, and had a short rest, daundered out to see the lions of the place. The first of these is Boghall Castle, of which only three corner towers remain. These, with a fourth, which has now disappeared, marked the corners of the enclosure or curtain wall that surrounded the inner castle—a common form of stronghold in ancient times. Boghall Castle was held for the Commonwealth against General Leslie's army. It has been reduced to its present sorry dimensions less by the destructive effects of the elements than by the vandalism of people in the neighbourhood, who used the stones to build drains and dykes.

The "Cadger's Brig" is an ancient footbridge over Biggar Water, where it passes the town, and it is said to have got its name from an incident that occurred at the time of the "Battle of Biggar", of which Blind Harry gives an account. The night before the battle, Wallace, disguised as a cadger, had visited the English camp, with the view of getting information as to the strength of the enemy. His disguise was successful, but after his departure suspicion was aroused, and he was pursued. He turned on his pursuers at the bridge, and, killing one of them, made good his escape to the Scottish camp, which is said to have been pitched on the side of Tinto Hill, several miles distant.

Biggar Kirk, an old collegiate church, built in 1545, is an interesting specimen of ecclesiastical architecture, and some parts of it have recently been restored. The restoration, however, has been very judiciously carried out, and the architectural features of the church and tower have been admirably preserved.

Biggar Water, a tributary of the Tweed, is at one part of its course on the same level as the Clyde; and, indeed, in times of flood, some of the surplus water of the Clyde

finds its way into the Biggar Water. The expedition, emphatically declining the Topographer's proposal that we should accompany him a mile or two up Biggar Water to a certain "Wee Well" that he had heard of, and the water of which he wished to test, turned into sleeping quarters.

Next morning, undeterred by a steady downpour of rain, we took the train down to Broughton, and, crossing Biggar Water, started to visit the source of the Tweed. After a walk of a couple of miles, the valley of the Tweed opens out on our left, and the ruins of Drummelzier Castle, with a background of hills and trees, is our first view of Tweeddale. Soon we are by the side of the river itself, clear and beautiful, even as seen through the rain. One gazes for the first time on the upper reaches of the "shallow, brawling Tweed" with an interest which arises from something more than the mere natural beauties of the scenery—great though these are—for the poetical and historical associations which are connected with the Tweed account to a great extent for the position which it holds as the most interesting of Scottish rivers. The poet, listening to the murmur of its current—

" Heard something more in the stream as it ran  
 Than water breaking on stones.  
 Now the hoofs of a flying mosstrooper ;  
 Now a bloodhound's bay half caught ;  
 The sudden blast of a hunting horn ;  
 The burr of Walter Scott.

. . . . .  
 . . . . . but for the ballads and wails  
 That make passionate dead things, stocks and stones,  
 Make piteous woods and dales,  
 The Tweed were as poor as the Amazon,  
 That for all the years it has roll'd  
 Can but tell how fair was the morning red ;  
 How sweet the evening gold".

Our first point was the Crook Inn, near Tweedsmuir, some eight or nine miles off, and it rained pretty steadily all the way thither, Culter Fell, and the hills surrounding it, being almost entirely hid in the mist and rain-clouds.

The scenery now becomes more mountainous—not rugged like the hills of the north, but soft and green, the hills being clothed with grass to the very top, and rising one behind another in curved outlines. Cultivated fields get scarcer as we go on, and soon there is nothing to be seen but sheep farms, and not a sound to be heard but the occasional call of a ewe that has missed its lamb or the more feeble voice of a lamb calling for its mother.

At the Crook Inn, a favourite resort of anglers, quite a modern building, and a much more commodious house than one would expect to find in such a place, the expedition halted, changed their wet garments, and ordered dinner. The sun having now broken out, we enjoyed the passing gleam with something of the rough epicureanism of Burns's "Jolly Beggars":—

"Sae merrily the banes we'll pyke  
And sun oursel's about the dyke,  
And at our leisure, when ye like  
We'll whistle owre the lave o't".

The "banes" consisted of some toothsome mutton chops (one can always depend on the mutton in this locality) discussed in the dining-room of the "Crook", after which we hitched our chairs up against a fence in front of the inn "fornent the sun", where, with the peace-inspiring pipe, we compensated ourselves for the hardships and discomforts of the forenoon by dawdling away the afternoon. The Topographer unearthed a stray volume or two of the Waverley Novels from the inn library, and gave a much-appreciated series of readings from "Old Mortality" and "The Antiquary". Specially appropriate in this district, where one can hardly walk a mile without running against a *soi-disant* "Roman Camp", was the interview between Edie Ochiltree and Monkbarns.

The road past the Crook Inn is the old coach road from Edinburgh to Dumfries, and, after walking along it for a mile or so, we came to the "Bield", a well-known inn in the old coaching days. Its comfortable appearance and picturesque surroundings suggested a further halt, so we deposited our knapsacks and sauntered down to the side of

the Tweed, where the Topographer, having accidentally gone in with his boots on, consoled himself with a bathe in a fine pool at the bottom of a narrow, deep chasm under the bridge. Crossing the river, we came to the Tweedsmuir Church, which occupied a picturesque site close to the foot of Talla Water. It is scarcely worth while mentioning that there are remains of a Roman camp here. The Topographer examined the water of the Talla, now added to the Edinburgh water supply. He pronounced it when unmixed to be somewhat "hard", though clear, and consisting almost entirely of spring water.

We next proceeded to visit the remains of a "Druidical Temple", half a mile or so further up the side of the Tweed, and of which a few large stones are now all that remain. A more modern tradition records that from this spot Little John, hiding behind one of the big stones, shot a gigantic border reiver on the side of the river, whose death-place is marked by a cairn of stones. Either the little man or the traditionary historian must certainly have drawn a long bow, for the distance is about a third of a mile. Tweedsmuir Kirk, the "Bield", nestling among the trees, the bridge and the cottages adjoining it, make a very pleasant view as seen from the "Druidical Temple", and we spent a good part of the evening reclining on the bank, listening to the bleating of the sheep, on the "green hills far away", and watching the beams of the setting sun gradually leaving one top after another as the shadows crept upwards, or gazing on "the silver Tweed" as it rippled past the foot of the bank on which we reclined. The Tweed in its upper reaches is a lightsome river, flowing briskly and noisily over a shallow stony bed with but few still pools. If one were to imagine a presiding genius for it, as the ancients did in giving a tutelary deity to each stream, or our ancestors in making them the abode of water kelpies, he would be a cheerful and beneficent one, quite distinct from the personation of the Esk or the Till, or any other comparatively slow-running stream. The difference of character is recognised in the old stanza, which seems to impute a malevolent genius to the deep, slow-running stream:—

"Says Tweed to Till,  
 'What gars ye rin sae still' ?  
 Says Till to Tweed,  
 'Though ye rin wi' speed  
 An' I rin slaw,  
 For ae man that ye droon,  
 I droon twa' ".

Returning to the "Bield", and having ascertained that there was nothing to be seen at the ruins of Oliver Castle on the hillside behind—at which we were considerably relieved, as, otherwise, the Topographer would, from a sheer sense of duty, have dragged the expedition up to it, and thus spoiled the *dolce far niente* of the evening—we made a comfortable evening meal, and, after smoking a final pipe down on the banks of the Tweed, retired early to rest.

The Topographer was up betimes next morning pursuing his hydrographical studies, and the rest of the expedition also turned out at a creditably early hour. The rain was too steady to admit of a start till 9.30 a.m., when, encouraged by a temporary cessation of the downpour, we set out for Tweedshaws,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles further on, and close to the source of the Tweed. The rain came down heavily at intervals, and we were glad to reach the shelter of the shepherd's cottage at Tweedshaws about noon. The road winds up through a beautiful pastoral country, but very quiet and lonely. We met no one but a solitary tramp by the way. Indeed, tramps were almost the only passengers we met during nearly the whole tour. They seem to prefer the unfrequented roads. Probably they find the people in out-of-the-way places more unsophisticated and inclined to believe the stories of distress and hardships with which they seek to move the hearts of the charitable. Some of them are comparatively quiet, and carry small pedlar's wares, which they seek to dispose of. But many of them are unruly characters, and no shepherd in these lonely districts cares to leave his wife and family without the protection of a good collie dog. Otherwise some "sorner" or masterful beggar may come up and be violent and insolent in his demands. A tramp who had been at Tweedshaws a day or two



before our visit had attempted to take shelter in the stable against the will of the collie dog, who had a pup there, and, with a fairly deep impression of her teeth on his leg, he had to beat a speedy retreat. He sought shelter at the next house—a few miles distant—where, no doubt, he made capital out of his mishap. This wandering, roving life seems to have a strong fascination for these poor tramps, who will endure almost any hardships rather than settle down to a regular calling. What becomes of them in winter is a mystery. But all through the summer you will find them—tinkers, pedlars, gaberlunzies, beggars—wandering alone or in pairs over the most unfrequented parts of the country. They do not look particularly happy some of them, but they must have some strong yearnings for freedom of existence to endure the hard life which they lead. And better this than falling back into the slums of some of our large towns, which, in all probability, is the only alternative open to them. Indeed, we—also on the tramp—look upon them in some degree as brethren who are indulging that same tendency to revert to a simpler form of existence, which more or less animates every human being. And if they have sacrificed more of the conventionalities of life in giving way to that tendency, it only shows that they are truer to the “great, glad, aboriginal instincts” than we can pretend to be.

The shepherd of Tweedshaws and his wife were both from home, but their daughter—an active and intelligent young lass—has evidently been accustomed to see strangers hospitably treated in her father’s house, and soon set before us an appetising lunch—crisp cakes, well-baked scones, fresh and butter milk, butter, cheese, and a large supply of gooseberry jam—which rapidly diminished before the attack of the expedition.

The obliging dominie of Tweedshaws directed us how to find our way to the source of the Tweed, which, now a very small stream, wimples down the glen at the back of the house; and in a hayfield, about a fourth of a mile further up, we come to the very source—a small spring well, which one could cover with a broad-brimmed hat. Here, at a height of 1784 feet above sea level, the “silver Tweed”,

clear and cold, has the first beginning of its course of 96 miles through some of the fairest scenery of southern Scotland. About half a mile further up is "Tweed's Cross", an imaginary point on the ridge which separates Tweeddale from Annandale; and close to the road on the same ridge is the march where the three counties of Peebles, Lanark and Dumfries met—a threefold watershed as well as a threefold boundary:—

"Where Annan, Tweed, and Clyde  
Rise a' oot o' ae hillside".

The view from the top of Tweeddale is one befitting the chief watershed of the south of Scotland. Behind are the hills of Tweeddale, whilst to the east Hartfell and the hills of Moffatdale, in front a long range of hills with the kenspeckle outline of Queensberry Hill in the background, and to the westward the Lowthers and a long stretch of hills make up an impressive panorama.

Walking on a mile or two we come to the edge of "The Deil's Beef Tub"—the huge ravine, wild and solitary, where the Annan has its source. The scenery on the Annandale side is much more rugged than that of Tweeddale; indeed, in the whole tour we did not again come across any district so green and fertile as the upper part of Tweeddale, or one where the hills were so completely covered to their tops with fine pasture. The view, looking down Annandale, was more varied in its features. The rugged sides of "The Deil's Beef Tub" gave place to smoother slopes, and trees and cultivated fields appeared further down; and soon the lower part of Annandale, stretching across a breadth of several miles of fields and woodland, lay spread before us.

The afternoon's walk to Moffat was made under more favourable circumstances as regarded weather, and the only incident was the discovery, under the dry arch carrying the road across a deep ravine, which we explored, of another couple of tramps preparing to camp out for the night. They had a fire lighted, and their preparations for tea were in progress. In answer to our inquiries, they assured us that this was one of the best "ludgins" in the district.

*(To be concluded in next Number.)*