

## SOME SOUTHERN SCOTTISH UPLANDS.

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(Concluded).

ABOUT ten o'clock on the morning after our arrival at Moffat we started (in the usual shower of rain) to find our way across to the head of Eskdale. Walking up Moffatdale a mile or so, we struck off to the east, near Drumcrieff, on a mountain track which runs up by Craigbeck Hope, across the head of Wamphray Glen, and over the shoulder of Loch Fell, known as the "Cowl Road" or "Colts Road". We should not like to take a colt up, and still less down, the part of this road which lies on the east side of Wamphray Glen. The origin of the name we know not. The suggestion of the dominie at Davington, that it is so called because it is such an "awkward road"—in allusion to the Scottish expression "as awkward as a cowt"—is chiefly commendable for its ingenuity. Possibly the idea of the strength or activity required on the part of the traveller who uses this road may have originated the name. Sir Walter Scott gives this as the explanation of the by-name of the Northumberland chief, known as "The Cowl of Keeldar". The popular epithet of "cowl" is "expressive of his strength, stature, and activity". The word is possibly derived from the Scottish verb to "cow"—*i.e.*, to surpass or overcome.

About half a mile up the glen leading from Moffatdale we enjoyed the only blink of sunshine we were privileged to see that day, and, seated by a limpid burn, indulged in an "eik" to the after-breakfast smoke over the hitherto unlooked-at morning papers. As we proceeded across the hills, where the purple heath was in full glory, the road, at first a sort of rough cart track, gradually degenerated into a foot-path, and we soon arrived at the west side of Wamphray Glen, and, descending into the glen itself, reached the *pièce*

*de resistance* of the Cowt Road—a stiff climb up the ridge or shoulder of Loch Fell, which slopes down into the head of Wamphray Glen at an angle of 45 degrees or so. And just when the expedition had reached the most exposed part of this ridge, far from shelter of any description, Jupiter Pluvius lost all sense of moderation. A thunderstorm among the hills is impressive, and we should not have cared to miss the spectacle, but the deluge of rain that descended was the heaviest we ever saw. Camped down under umbrellas and huddled in waterproofs, we “tholed” the worst of it. Looking across Wamphray Glen, we could see the clouds slowly travelling along, below and in front of us; and, away down in fair Annandale, the sun was shining brightly all the while, and lighting up the fresh green fields far as the eye could reach. Across on Hartfell the dark clouds hung all day, and that seemed to be the storm-centre from which the thunder came.

As the weather showed no signs of clearing, we got under weigh again, and struck across the head of Loch Fell (2256 feet in height) towards the head of Dryffe Water. Passing it we reached the watershed between Annandale and Eskdale—a flat and somewhat boggy expanse. Here, as so often happens in Highland districts when a path gets into boggy ground, the track disappears entirely, and we floundered as best we might through the marsh, and between the spongy nature of the ground and the still-descending rain were completely saturated. Crossing to the north of the source of the Black Esk, we reached one of the minor tributaries of the Garwald (which is itself a tributary of the Esk), and, in spite of the wet, halted for lunch by the side of the stream. Not that there was much demand for water; the expedition had been too well soaked to care for water in that way. Even the Topographer, who had been pursuing his hydrographical investigations under rather disadvantageous circumstances, could only pronounce the contents of the stream to be very fair water—for mixing purposes. It was a time, in short, when the most rigid teetotaler would have known that the hated alcohol was a medicine to be used *ad libitum*.

We had resolved to make for Davington, which is a few miles nearer the source of the Esk than Eskdalemuir; so, striking down the side of the stream, we reached the main branch of the Garwald, and on its banks came to a shepherd's cottage—the first house of any sort we had passed for ten miles. Knocking at the door, the shepherd's wife hospitably invited us inside, and, in reply to our inquiries, informed us that the distance to Davington was "better than a mile". This, as the Topographer remarked, showed how fond they are of walking in Eskdale. They would need to be; for they are many miles from the nearest railway station, and there are no coaches in Eskdalemuir, and no means of locomotion except walking will do for the long glens and "hopes" at the top of which the shepherds' houses are often situated. In districts nearer the railway, however, walking is going out of fashion among the villagers. When the Topographer went into the abode of a rural shoemaker to get a projecting nail removed from his boot, it was evident that the shoemaker's wife, when she found we were on a walking tour, entertained a high respect and admiration for us. "Noo-a-days", she said, "the folk about here wad raither wait three oors for a train than walk twae miles. It's jist doonricht pride and laziness". And we think that she meant what she said, and that her lament over the degeneracy of modern times did not originate in any regret as to the effects which the abandonment of pedestrianism would have on the demand for shoe leather—especially as neither the "souter" nor she would hear of any payment for the repairing of the Topographer's boot.

We afterwards found, however, that the distance to Davington was very much "better" than a mile. The shepherd's wife measured her mile as the crow flies—across a considerable hill. But when the expedition reached the side of the Garwald, now swollen with the thunder spate, "where ford there was none", no bridge was to be seen. Back we went to the guidwife to see where the bridge was; and, with many apologies, she explained that there was no bridge, and that she had "clean forgot" the effect the heavy rainfall had had on the Garwald, which was running swift,

deep, and turbid, with a force that would have carried away anyone attempting to ford it. So, instead of a mile across hill, we had to go rather "better" than two miles down to get a footbridge, and then strike across the hill to Davington, which we reached about 7.30 p.m., after having been on the tramp for nine hours. We found there was no inn or lodging-house in the locality, but got very comfortable quarters in a shepherd's house. The shepherd's wife was very kind and attentive, and soon had our wet clothes drying before the kitchen fire, whilst "ben the hoose", having made ourselves comfortable with a change of raiment from our knapsacks, we were soon paying assiduous attention to a well-spread table. The rain had now abated somewhat, and, as our boots were too thoroughly soaked to be available, and it was too wet to go out with slippers for that gentle evening stroll which is the best "rest" a pedestrian can have after a day's walking, the stock of boots belonging to our pastoral host was turned out for inspection, and a selection made from it. The Topographer got a pair of wooden clogs, which were about an inch too short for him, and in which he hobbled along in such an extraordinary fashion as to excite the sympathies of the village dominie, who came out to commiserate with him on his evidently footsore condition. We had an interesting crack with the dominie about the places in the district, about which he seemed to be well informed. In this part of Eskdale there is not much breadth of a valley, as the hills close in on each side. Some three miles to the north, Ettrick Pen, as it is called (though it is a much more prominent feature in Upper Eskdale than on Ettrick-side), rises to a height of 2269 feet. To the west is Loch Fell, and on the east a range of lower hills dividing Eskdale from Teviotdale. The scenery in general character is much like that of Tweedsmuir, and the whole district is laid out in sheep farms.

Next morning we started to walk down Eskdale to Langholm, and, reversing the circumstances of the previous day, had a more pleasant experience of what a Moffat man called the "partial weather", for we had it dry nearly the whole day, whilst all around there seemed to be a heavy rainfall.

Loch Fell, where we had crossed the hills on our way from Moffatdale, was black with thunder clouds, and we could hear the thunder on either side of us. Three miles from Davington we came to Eskdalemuir Church and School, and the two or three houses forming the village. They are situated in one of the most picturesque parts of the dale, where the beauties of hill and wood and stream combine to form one of the pleasantest of the many pleasant scenes through which the expedition passed. A short distance below Eskdalemuir Church we crossed the Esk, and took the road on the east side, which is not only a shorter route to Langholm, but also gave us an opportunity of seeing the Druidical remains by the side of the Esk, a mile and a half below Eskdalemuir Church, consisting of two large circles of stones—one almost complete, and the other in a fair state of preservation. Remains of a number of Roman camps are also said to exist in this neighbourhood; but these we did not visit.

The road on the east bank of the Esk keeps well up the side of the dale, and affords a very good view all around. But after a few miles walking we descended to lower levels, and crossed the Esk once more. Two miles further on we came in sight of the old-fashioned Bentpath Inn—a roadside hostelry at which we had resolved to break our journey. Indeed, it was Hobson's choice, for all the way from the head of Eskdale to Langholm there is not another house of entertainment. Near it is the village of Wester Kirk, of which a school and schoolhouse and library form the most conspicuous buildings. The school seemed to be well frequented, and we made the acquaintance of some of the children, who walked several miles along the road on their way home, turning off finally into some of the glens or "hopes" that open into this part of Eskdale. We had already passed two schools—one at Davington and one at Eskdalemuir—so that Eskdale is fairly well provided with schools. Indeed, considering the thin and widespread population of the whole district from Tweedsmuir to the Border, the schools are numerous, and much better than one would have expected. And they are well taken advantage of.

No compulsory clause is required here, for the parents all seem alive to the advantages of education. But some of the children have a long way to go to school, and the younger ones cannot be trusted with safety to find their way. A heavy rain may change a burn across which they walked almost dryshod in the morning into a foaming torrent by the time they come back; and more than once young school children have lost their lives in this way. And, of course, in winter the chance of a sudden snowstorm is a still greater danger. The long walk seems to be the last thing that would be considered an obstacle. The children are fond enough of outdoor exercise. When a dominie, in a parish that shall be nameless, was kind enough to leave his school for a short time to accompany us across the hill and point out one or two places we wanted to know about, he had hardly turned his back before the schoolboys made out by a back door, and rushed down to the burn, shouting and whooping, to engage in the amusing sport of "guddling". The dominie smiled apologetically, and explained that the most of the bigger boys were away at the sheep-clipping, and that he was not very strict with the few that were attending the school. What the school Inspector would have thought if he had made a "surprise visit" is matter of speculation. Probably he does not go into these out-of-the-way places oftener than he can help.

Passing several beautifully situated mansion houses, with finely laid-out policies on the banks of the Esk, we came at last to the brow of the hill, whence Langholm Lodge and the town itself—with Langholm Hill and Monument in the background—make up an excellent view. Descending by the road which skirts the enclosing wall of the policies of Langholm Lodge for more than a mile, we entered Langholm about 6.30 p.m., where the work-people, having ceased their labours for the day, were standing about their doors, and eyed the expedition with considerable curiosity as we proceeded through the town to our hotel in the Market Square.

Langholm, like most other cloth-manufacturing towns in the south of Scotland, owes its prosperity to the develop-

ment of an industry which was at first prosecuted on a most limited scale—a small cloth mill, employing a few hands, and erected for the purpose of supplying the wants of the scattered pastoral population of the district. The excellent and substantial fabrics produced, however, soon made a wider market for themselves, and Langholm, with its plentiful water supply, has been meeting a constantly increasing demand for its manufactures all over the world. It is a thriving place; and in the new part of the town a number of good houses have been built of late years. Besides the monument on the top of the hill to General Sir John Malcolm, there is another in the Market Square to his brother, Sir Pulteney Malcolm.

Next day we made an early start on our way to Liddesdale and Hermitage Castle. Our route lay down Eskdale, past Gilnockie, where, on the left bank of the Esk, is the tower of the Hollows, the residence of the well-known Borderer, Johnnie Armstrong, who was hanged by James V., along with his retinue; past Cannobie and the lea, where “there was racing and chasing” after young Lochinvar and the runaway bride; then, crossing the Liddel (which is here the boundary between Scotland and England), we got the Carlisle train at Riddings Junction, and went north with it to Steele Road. A walk of a couple of miles across country brought us to the Hermitage Water at Newlands—a shooting lodge belonging to the Duke of Buccleuch, who has estates here. Hermitage Castle is also his property. His Grace seems to own most of the land about here, and probably about half of our route was either on or in the immediate neighbourhood of his property. Sometimes a whole parish owns his sway. The Topographer, a pretty fair Conservative on some points, made some rash remarks about the land laws, and the system which allowed so much of the national soil to get into the hands of one proprietor. There can be no doubt that the Buccleuch estates are well and liberally administered in the present generation, but he reminded us of King James’s rebuke to the Laird of Buccleuch, who urged him to demolish some powerful Border neighbour as a reiver:—

“ Now haud thy tongue, Sir Walter Scott,  
Nor speak of reif or felonie,  
For had every honest man his awin kye,  
A right pair clan thy name would be ”.

On application to the gamekeeper at Newlands, we were entrusted with the key of the Hermitage Castle, and, leaving our knapsacks in charge of the keeper's wife, we continued our journey to the Castle itself, about a mile and a half further up the Hermitage Water. The Castle, which is situated on the east bank of the stream, is perhaps the best preserved specimen in existence of the old strongholds, the ruins of which are still to be seen here and there in the Border districts. It is said to have been originally built in 1240 by Alexander II. The building as it now exists consists of a double tower with connecting walls, and outside are the remains of a moat and rampart. The present noble proprietor has caused good care to be taken of the building ; and without, of course, attempting to renew any part of it, he has had the masonry kept in repair by pointing it, and otherwise preventing its further destruction. Such an ancient tower has, necessarily, many traditions connected with the wild “ riding times ”. It was here that William Douglas starved to death Sheriff Ramsay, an ancestor of the present Earl of Dalhousie, in 1342. According to tradition also, William de Soulis, a tyrannical lord and reputed sorcerer, held sway here, until his exasperated and oppressed vassals, having lost all patience with him, seized him and boiled him in a cauldron of molten lead. On the top of the adjoining “ Nine Stane Rig ” are pointed out the stones which supported the iron bar on which the cauldron was hung. The lead was said to have been obtained by stripping the roof of the Castle, and, according to the story, he was wrapped up in a sheet or two of lead before being placed in the cauldron.

The Castle occupies a strong position for commanding the approach to the upper part of Liddesdale, and before the days of artillery would, if properly garrisoned, have been practically impregnable. As there is a well inside the building, the only thing required for standing a long siege would





HERMITAGE CASTLE, LIDDLESDALE.

be plenty of provisions. It must, however, have taken a good many cattle and plenty of meal to keep the larder stored, and a "Feast of Spurs", with the enemy at the door, would be an unpleasant sort of entertainment. When the coast was clear, however, and the countryside and its cattle open to him, the old Border reiver probably took this peculiar feast with as much equanimity as a hungry man could be expected to do. Walter Scott of Harden has been out coursing or hunting perhaps all day, and returns empty-handed, calling loudly for his dinner. His wife has placed a dish on the table, which, on being uncovered, discloses—a clean pair of spurs; and she adds a touch of that other spur before which the boldest of Border reivers might well quail:—

“ ‘Are ye sae keen set, Wat? ’Tis weel,  
Ye winna find a dainty meal;  
It’s a’ o’ the gude Rippon steel—  
Ye maun digest it manfullie.

“ ‘Nae kye are left in Harden glen,  
Ye maun be stirrin’ wi’ your men;  
Gin ye soud bring me less than ten  
I winna roose your braverie’.

“ ‘Are ye sae modest ten to name?  
Syne, an I bring na twenty hame,  
I’ll freely gie ye leave to blame  
Baith me and a’ my chyvalrie.

“ ‘To horse! Young Jock shall lead the way,  
And soud the Warden tak’ the fray  
To mar our riding, I winna say  
But he mote be in jeopardie.

“ ‘Let ilka ane his knapsac lace,  
Let ilka ane his steil-jack brace,  
An’ deil bless him that sall disgrace  
Walter o’ Harden’s liverie’”.

And next morning some yeoman by the foot of the Cheviots would be lamenting the loss of a string of cattle carried off by the mosstroopers, or perhaps rousing his neighbours, and setting off in pursuit—with but small chance of coming up with the reivers, or recovering the stolen cattle.

The Topographer, still bent on hydrography, explored the Hermitage Water above the Castle, and one good result of his investigations was the discovery of an excellent bathing pool. After a refreshing dip in it, we returned to Newlands, and having seen the kennels, where were some fine setters and retrievers, shouldered our traps again. The keeper obligingly came with us a short distance to show us a short cut over the hills to Riccarton Junction; and, although the sky was somewhat threatening, we resolved to take that route. We started over the hill, getting as we ascended a last view of the Hermitage Castle and the valley of the Hermitage, and the Nine Stane Rig lying on the other side of the valley on our left. But a slight premonitory shower warned us of what is coming, so it was

“ Fare thee weel, sweet Liddesdale,  
Baith the hie land and the low ”,

and across country and over fences we made a straight track for the station at Riccarton, which we reached just in time to escape a deluge of rain, and, taking train for Edinburgh, brought to a close a pleasant and much-enjoyed excursion among the hills and dales of southern Scotland.