

THE MENTEITH HILLS.

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WHOEVER is acquainted with that charming book, Dr. Brown's "Horae Subsecivae", will recollect the dainty manner in which the author has handled the girl-queen's residence in Inchmahome. Poor Mary! Tradition would make her out to have been a ubiquitous wanderer, planting trees, and tending bowers here, there, and everywhere, and consecrating by her presence bedrooms and windows in baronial halls and castles throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Near this isle, in the Lake of Menteith, where Mary when a mere child spent a week or two in the dead of winter, and where she is said to have had a child-garden, is the stretch of hills to be brought under the notice of our readers.

Baillie Nicol Jarvie must have seen them when he paid his eventful visit to Aberfoyle. They extend from the Clachan to Callander. Although the highest of the Hills of Menteith has an elevation of only 1401 feet, and can be surmounted almost without pausing, yet their situation, in the centre of Scotland's finest scenery, makes them well worth our consideration.

Hills, like prophets, are not without honour, "save in their own country". We are ready to own acquaintance with the distant, albeit failing to recognise worth at our very doors. The Menteith Hills are not generally known; and yet most persons that have ascended them have brought back an astonishing report of having seen fourteen lochs. We have been up several times without having seen all the traditional or conventional fourteen, but let us pay all due respect to tradition. For the sake of the soil or of the marl they contained, several of the fourteen have been drained, as the Loch of Letter, which appears

from an old map to have been as large as the Dhui Loch in the vicinity, and others of the number have been shaded from observation by the trees recently planted to fringe their shores.

Living within a two hours' walk from the summit, we could wait for a convenient season. We did not expect to see the fourteen lochs; but, if it were only to see Loch Katrine, which, to all appearance, would rather come our way and leave Glasgow dry; Lochs Achray and Vennachar, with the surrounding objects mirrored from their surface; the palmate Drunkie; Loch Lubnaig, bending itself round to embrace Ben Ledi; the Lake of Menteith, or Loch o' Port, whose comeliness and homeliness contrast with the variety and bustle suggested by rocks and fields and trees; and Loch Ruskie,

“ Where broad extended, far beneath,
The varied realms of fair Menteith ”,

the trouble of ascent would be repaid with lordly munificence.

We had several strings to our bow; and, with a flourish of trumpets, in the shape of aneroid, compass, prospect-glasses, map, our “Hayward”, vasculum, geological hammer, shepherd's crook, &c., we set out one dewy morning in May to do the unknown Ben Gullipen, and renew our acquaintance with Ben Dearg.

We were a lad of eighteen, of an inquiring turn of mind, and the writer. On the way to the Dhui (Doo) Loch—seldom “Loch Dow”, as in the maps—our talk was of place names:

Ruskie means “rough”. The isle in its loch contains the ruins of the castle of Sir John Menteith, the betrayer of Wallace. If Dr. Munro, of Crannog fame, were here, he might discover evidences of a previous habitation under the foundation of Menteith's Castle. We cannot pronounce an opinion on such matters; but, sinking to the knees in a grey clay when fishing for perch here, we thought there might be reason for inferring the presence of diatoms in this loch. It is 444 feet above sea level.

Why, do you ask, is this parish called the Port of Menteith?

This is a big question. Teith is from the same root as Tay, Dee, &c., and means flowing water. Menteith is "the moor of the Teith". As to Port, perhaps (for in this line *perhaps* must be used extensively) it was in Roman times the port or gate to and from the Highlands. Seeking a derivation, however, in the solid ground of history, we should say that the parish as a whole has been called Port, or the Port, from the holding in it of that name. In 1466 James III. erected Port in Menteith into a burgh of barony, and about the same time Port is associated with other holdings in the immediate neighbourhood—Arntammy, Monyvreckie, Gartmulzie, Mullen, &c. In 1500, Buchquhopil, Torry, Drungy, Boquhassil, Doletter, and Portbank are mentioned as holdings in Menteith. We have the present Portend to explain matters for us. The monks passing their days in the Priory of Inchmahome knew the landing place at Portend as *the port*. This was their landing place, their port; next, it became a farm; then a burgh of barony, and hence a name which has been appropriated by the parish.

If these derivations be deemed unsatisfactory, we have still another. Slovenly speech turns the Tscheepurt pass between Monyvreckie and Callander into the Teapot pass (tiobairt, a fountain). Sound the letter *r* more emphatically, and modify the first syllable just a little, and you get "the port"!

We should expect the majority of place names here to be Gaelic, for in Aberfoyle public worship was conducted in that language till 1772, while in Callander the men and women of last generation used it. So Letter means slope, *cf.* Dullater, "the black slope" on the other side. Auchrig is connected with royalty, for there are here a height called Tomanrigh; a cup-marked (?) stone; a stone with the impress of a very large foot upon it, known as Samson's thumb; and a huge slab of conglomerate supported by sides of the same, and forming a palace, where, as far as strength and majesty go, any monarch might reside. Jackdaws have now claimed for a nesting-place the Palace of the Skellachan. Ben Dearg is so called from the reddish colour

of the conglomerate here. Ben Gullipen, called Guilbneach, is "the whaup's hill", and Drunkie the "trysting place".

An English tourist, having crossed the Guallann from Drymen, pronounced the Menteith people to be most intemperate; "they have a Loch of Port, another of Whisky (Ruskie), another Drunkie, and then their drink becomes Vinegar (Vennachar). All these I saw and testify to".

At the farm of Castle are the ruins of an old tower, said to have been built by Sir John Menteith, but never completed. It was formerly known as Casteal na Clod, "the castle of divots".

We ascend the Letter Hill, and mark the Cock Hill running towards Callander. The stance of the Cock Hill Fair has kept the name of the hill within the range of local knowledge.

Ominous cairns here and there on these heights indicate where luckless travellers have lost their lives to winter's anger or the murderer's avarice. In these lonely passes and wild places, men lawless and reckless as the celebrated Rob Roy made their evil gains. A cattle dealer and drover were robbed and murdered here, and the two cairns a few yards apart mark the spot. At another cairn a pedlar fell under the knife; and at another a smuggler was slain in a scuffle, and his body was hidden in that bog, &c.

The Tiobairt, a strong spring of pure water near Glenny, was the scene of a skirmish between the Grahams of Menteith and the Stewarts of Appin, soon after the battle of Pinkie. The Stewarts were returning from the fight or from some foray in the south, and passing through Menteith they came to a house where a wedding was about to be celebrated, and where, in consequence, a tempting feast was laid out. With scant ceremony the hungry strangers helped themselves, and resumed their journey northward, without saying "thank you". The Earl of Menteith, who was one of the invited guests, was wroth on arrival at the house, and resolved they should pay for their dinner or leave it on the moor. He and his followers pursued them, and overtook them at Tiobairt na Reil. He upbraided them for their malversation, and indignantly challenged them—

“ Yellow-haired Stewarts of smartest deeds
Who would grab at the kale in your sorest needs”.

A Stewart finished the stanza—

“ If smartness in deeds is ours by descent,
Then I draw, and to pierce you this arrow is sent”.

A sanguinary engagement ensued, wherein nearly all the Grahams were slain, and Donald Stewart, with a single comrade, escaped under cover of night to tell a sad tale in Appin.

In more settled times than those, and in a generation accustomed to more definite and childlike language in their devotions than ours, a Monievreckie farmer never neglected in harvest to put up the petition, “ O God, be Thou pleased to stay the wild blasts of Balloch dhui till such time as our corn is all safe in the band ”.

Ben Gullipen is stated in some maps to be 1744 feet high. Depending on our map rather than on the aneroid, we were all at sea when preparing the rough draft of this article; and, hardly daring to express our doubts, we blundered along, making the best of it. A trustworthy map marks the height 1357 feet. The Letter Hill is 1270; Ben Dearg, 1401; and the Craig of Monievreckie, 1254 feet high. On the east side of this craig is a frightful precipice, where the boldest mountaineer will find “ a foeman worthy of his steel”. The Craig of Port also is precipitous. At the local games a good prize was given to the man first at the summit. It was an event of go-as-you-please, and all-fours were resorted to for a considerable part of the stent. On several occasions the prize was gained by a titled baronet, who, however, holds his honour by the will of the people and not by the word of the sovereign.

In the glack between Ben Gullipen and Ben Dearg lies Lochan Balloch, surrounded by its rocky circlet. However much difficulty it may have had in cutting its outlet, this loch might be made to discharge itself by the way of Ruskie and the Goodie without much trouble. The sharp sand around its banks was used in former days by field workers for covering “ the straits ” wherewith hooks and scythes were sharpened. Lochan Balloch is the property

of G. A. Cox, Esq. of Invertrossachs. Invertrossachs (locally "trosshachs") has displaced the former name, Drunkie. The height between us and Loch Drunkie is Craig Bhacain, "the rock of hindrance", and another is Meall Gamhainn, "the stirks' hill". At Invertrossachs, in the autumn of 1869, Her Majesty the Queen resided for a few days with several members of the Royal Family.

The most striking feature of the southward view is the belt of carse that crosses the middle of Scotland, with the Forth worming and winding its way through it like a thread of silk. This waist-band is sixty miles long, and from eight to sixteen broad. Houses and hamlets, sunny copses and fertile fields, are a pleasing sight in contrast with the broad, black flat of Flanders Moss; while the Earl's Seat beyond the Kippen and Gargunnoch heights lifts up its head to look across at us; the monument on Abbey Craig, with its historic and patriotic suggestions; the old castle of Stirling, on its rock of dolerite, as couchant lion watching and warding all beneath; the gaunt tower of Gartincaber rejoicing in its fresh whitewash; the Cleish and Saline and Pentland Hills on our left, with the heights on both sides of the Clyde on our right, not distinctive enough to be differentiated at this distance—so fair a prospect

"Wot I nowher noon".

Six battlefields are before us—Stirling Bridge, 1297; Bannockburn, 1314; Sauchie Burn, 1488; Gartloaning, near Gartmore, where Lords Lennox and Forbes attempted to avenge the murder of James III.; Sheriffmuir, 1715; and Falkirk, 1746.

Resting on the brae-side are Kippen, made glorious by sunshine reflected from its extensive vineries, and Buchlyvie, whose inhospitable baron has not greatly impaired its fair fame. Aberfoyle, once worth visiting, is not seen. There are its slate quarries, with Ben Venue at their back. Away in the distant west and north are seen the crests of mighty Bens, which we take to be Ben Cruachan, Ben Laoigh, Ben Nevis, Meal Ghaordie, Lawers, Vorlich, Chonzie, &c.; but we must not be too sure of our most intimate friend's identity when he is far away.

Returning home by the roundabout way of Coilantogle and Callander, let us discourse on the geology of these Hills of Menteith.

The geology of the Hills of Menteith deserves more than a passing notice. Although the survey of the district has not been completed, and sheet 38 has not, therefore, been published, yet the Officers of the Survey are most courteous and always ready to render help where help is needed, and to them the writer owes much of the information in what follows.

A line drawn from Inch Caillaoich in Loch Lomond, through Aberfoyle and Leny House near Callander, to Comrie divides the district into two geological areas. This line coincides with "the great fault" or dislocation, extending from Dumbartonshire to Stonehaven. The Lower Old Red Sandstone has been brought down against an older set of strata, conveniently termed the Central Highland metamorphic rocks, by this fault. This metamorphic strip may be divided into two groups of rocks, the relations of which to each other have not been determined yet, and raise questions not yet answered. A narrow belt, nowhere exceeding half-a-mile in breadth, lies next to this line of fault, consisting of a series of igneous rocks, radiolarian cherts, graphitic schists, limestone grits, and conglomerates, which, according to the Reports of the Director General of the Geological Survey, are probably of Lower Silurian age (Arenig), and identical with the rocks at Ballantrae. The rocks lying north of this belt consist of slates, phyllites, schistose grits, &c., arranged in bands more or less parallel with those already mentioned. The well-known Aberfoyle slates correspond with one of these bands, while a broad belt of schistose grit forms the conspicuous mountains of the district, Ben Lomond, Ben Venue, Ben Ledi, Stuc a Chroin, and Ben Vorlich.

A small outcrop of the Loch Tay limestone, with its accompanying mica schists and igneous intrusions, occurs in the neighbourhood of Strathyre, and extends through Balquhidder, to Glen Dochart and Loch Tay. Near Letter and Auchrig may be seen an old lime-kiln. The limestone

found here, formerly quarried in Aberfoyle and converted into lime for agricultural purposes (a tenant in Braendam in 1763 is required, by terms of his lease, to carry lime from Lenny or Ballochinduy), is probably a calcareous fault-breccia and not an ordinary sedimentary limestone.

The continuity of these bands is more or less interrupted by a series of faults approximately of a north and south direction. The best known of these faults is the "Loch Tay Fault", extending from Loch Drunkie on the south to Ardeonaig on Loch Tay, which, in its course, skirts the western shore of Loch Lubnaig, crosses it at Ardhullarie More, and coincides with the trend of Glen Ample. Many of the minor features of the district are determined by one or other of these dislocations.

The representatives of the Lower Old Red Sandstone cover a belt of ground, stretching from the Great Fault south-east to Kippen and Killearn; the beds occupying the lowest geological horizon are exposed along the southern margin of the fault about three miles south-west of Aberfoyle, where a vertical band of andesitic lava is seen in contact with the rocks to the north of the fault. It also occurs at intervals along the southern margin of the fault, as far as the River Earn, and is well seen in the section of the Kelty, north of Callander. This lava represents a portion of the great volcanic series of the Ochils.

For upwards of a mile southwards from the fault, the conglomerates and sandstones overlying these lavas are inclined to the south-south-east. They form the series of heights flanking the Highland hills from Conic Hill and Guallann to Aberfoyle, the Menteith hills from Aberfoyle to Callander, and the Braes of Doune and Uamdh Mhor from Callander to the north-east. As the observer proceeds further south, the angle of inclination gradually diminishes, and the beds are repeated by occasional minor folds, till a point is reached about three miles from the "Great Fault". This is the centre of a great synclinal fold, the axis of which coincides with a line drawn from the Flanders Moss to Drymen on the one side, and Braco on the other. The strata occupying the centre of this fold, which are softer

than the overlying rocks, form a hollow, while the outcrops of the lower and harder strata form the hills mentioned towards the north and the Ochils on the south.

The Menteith district is in that zone of the Old Red overlying the Ochils and Sidlaws, the beds below them being characterised by *Parkia decipiens*, and the beds above by *Psilophyton*. The conglomerates here contain specimens of rolled pebbles of the underlying conformable volcanic rocks, which proves that some of the Old Red mountains rose far enough above the waters of the Old Red "Strathmore" to permit of their denudation.

The highest beds of these Lower Old Red Sandstones in this district have yielded plants in tolerable abundance, though, as a rule, in a very fragmentary condition. On the farm of Earn (near Braendam), however, there is a quarry from which fine specimens of *Arthrostroma gracile* and *Psilophyton princeps* var. *ornatus*, were obtained five or six years ago by Officers of the Geological Survey.

A dyke of basalt (quarried near Aberfoyle and on the Braes of Doune, near Argaty, as road metal), probably of tertiary age, traverses the district.

A more recent period is represented by the rounded hills, smoothed and grooved rocks, giant boulders far from their native places, the gravel, sand, and clay dropped in heaps elongated in the direction of the ice-flow—well observed on the Torry and Lenniston muirs.

A prominent feature of the Forth valley is the fifty-foot sea-beach, which extends from Gartmore to the Forth Bridge, and may be seen on both sides of the river. After the change of sea level indicated by this raised beach, extensive tracts of peat moss seem to have come into existence.

We can refer to nothing very peculiar in the botany of the Menteith hills. The Glenny glens shelter *Herb Paris* and other rarer shade and moisture-loving plants. *Drosera anglica*, *Lythrum salicaria*, *Oenanthe crocata*, &c., find a habitat near the Lake of Menteith. *Valeriana pyrenaica* and *Claytonia perfoliata* have established themselves at Braendam. The cragginess of the Craig of the Port is

tempered down by the profusion of purple bells displayed in the summer months by the Foxglove. The *Alchemilla alpina*, so common on Ben Ledi, is here conspicuous by its absence.

Dr. White's "Flora of Perthshire", recently edited by Dr. James W. H. Trail, of Aberdeen, will indicate to the botanist what he may or may not expect to find in this Lower Forth district.

Though the fauna of the Menteith hills is not extensive, foxes and, perhaps, an occasional badger may be met with among the crags. We saw a raven soaring over the hill tops, and looking earnestly for some "awal" ewe or weakly lamb, and we may be told by some shepherd, gamekeeper, or poacher, that he once saw an eagle here, or saw a man that saw one once.

The Hills of Menteith may be reached by the Caledonian Railway (Callander station), or by the Forth and Clyde Branch of the North British (Port of Menteith station). They are more easily reached by Callander, but from Port of Menteith the tourist has the advantage of a walk along the margin of the Lake, with a fine chance of visiting Inchmahome and its ruins of a Priory, and Inch Talla and its ruins of an earl's palace, *en passant*. Come or go by what route soever he may, we are confident the tourist that loves rocks and lochs will long remember our rich blend of mountain and lowland scenery, and he will not wish, with the famous Glasgow Baillie, that his "boots had been fu' o' boiling water when he drew them on to visit the Rob Roy Country".

Enthusiastic mountaineers do not need to be reminded that there is no healing for a fevered life so efficacious as the mountain air and mountain dew. The strength and majesty and beauty of the mountain invade the human spirit, and chase away anxious cares and coward fears. On the commanding height we dream restfully for a little space; "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help".