

THROUGH GLEN TILT TO SCHICHALLION.

BY JAMES GRAY KYD.

HILL-CLIMBERS and other pedestrians know that September is a delightful month for walking. One escapes the heat of summer, and finds Nature in some of her most beautiful moods. Late in last September I started from Crathie with a friend to have a long-arranged walk through Glen Tilt. Our course from Crathie was by the main road, which is far too well known to need any description. But in this oft-frequented highway we found new charms which we had not known before. Our previous journeys had been made by cycle or coach; and, pleasant as these had been, we had lost some of the beauties of the road. Who but the pedestrian sees the squirrels in the Inver woods, or gets a glimpse of the rabbits playing among the brackens? And, free from the mental strain associated with more rapid modes of progression, it is he that has leisure for reminiscences both scientific and historical. He can imagine the ice sheet that once enwrapped the country and softened the contours of the mountains, or he can remember the "Standard on the Braes o' Mar," and the wanderings of the Young Chevalier. On we walked, passing through Braemar to the delicious woods which lead to Inverey,—the Zermatt of the Cairngorms, where, however, the huge Hotels Seiler are represented by the cosy cottages of the Gruers!

Our stay here was all too short, for where is there comfort like the luxury of sitting round a log fire in an Inverey kitchen? However, we have a long walk before us, and we make an early start next morning. An hour sees us crossing the Dee by the White Bridge, which, by the way, would now be more truly named the Black Bridge. The Geldie and the Bynack were forded dry shod. The morning mists were just lifting from the hills. Behind us we saw the awful precipices of the Devil's Point tumbling into Glen Geusachan, and right ahead stood Beinn a' Ghlo smiling in the morning sun.

Two hours walking found us on the water-shed 'twixt Dee and Tay; and we soon had the rippling Tilt for a companion down the Glen. A slight divergence to the right brought us up near Loch Tilt, a desolate and neglected tarn, which well repays a visit.

The Glen, always beautiful, is magnificent in Autumn. The rowan trees were ablaze, and the brackens on the hill sides formed a carpet of gold. To cross the Bedford Memorial Bridge was the most difficult part of the day's walk; and I venture to suggest that unless that bridge is soon repaired, there may be an opportunity of erecting another memorial on this spot.

The Falls of Tarf are a most refreshing sight, and a good resting point for lunch is found beside them. By this time the sky was overcast, and we had some rain during our luncheon, but by the time we reached the waterfall at the Black Bridge the sun came brightly out. After Forest Lodge the Glen changes its character and becomes more civilized. The walk towards Blair Atholl is charming; the distant views of Farragon and its neighbours among the Loch Tummel hills are especially fine. Blair Atholl was reached after a ten hours' easy tramp, and the Tilt Hotel found to be a delightful stopping-place.

The object of our next day's tramp was Schichallion, famous for its graceful form, and known to science as the scene of the investigations of Dr. Maskelyne in 1774, when he used a precipitous side of this mountain in his experiments to calculate the weight of our globe. The early morning train takes us very deliberately up to Struan, where the mail-coach for Kinloch Rannoch awaits us. We have the coach to ourselves, and find the drive up Glen Erochy enchanting. Rain came on when we were about half way on the drive, but this proved to be a blessing in disguise, as it dispelled the mists which still hung round our goal. By the time we reached the village of Kinloch Rannoch, Schichallion's cone stood clearly out against a background of cloudless blue.

Crossing the bridge over the Tummel we walked along the Aberfeldy turnpike for two miles, then struck up the

valley of the Tempar Burn; we had not made much progress when we were accosted by a band of irate gillies, who forbade us to continue our track along the burnside. They directed us to a dyke on our left running straight upward. The heather was alive with beaters, in fact they seemed to be more plentiful than the game; we seldom saw a hare, and the faint chuckle of the grouse was lost in the continuous yodeling of the beaters. We followed the dyke until it lost itself in a scree on the mountain-side, and then we struck round to the right to get on to the ridge. The latter part is fairly steep, but the ground affords good footing. The greater part of the ascent was made in heavy rain, which fortunately cleared shortly before the summit was reached, and, just as we set foot on the cairn, the sun burst out, the mists lifted, and one of the most perfect views that I have ever seen was revealed. All around us

“Hills peep o’er Hills, and Alps on Alps arise.”

Of course, in the first place we looked north-east-ward to our own family-circle of hills—the Cairngorms. They were absolutely cloudless. Turning westward :

“Buchaille Etive’s furrowed visage,
To Schichallion looked sublime,
O’er a wide and wasted desert,
Old and unreclaimed as time.

Mountain-girdled—there Bendoran
To Schichallion calls aloud,
Beckons he to lone Ben Alder,
He to Nevis crowned with cloud.

Cradled here old Highland rivers,
Etive, Cona, regal Tay,
Like the shout of clans to battle,
Down the gorges break away.

Yet the heaven denies not healing
To the darkest human things.
And to-day some kindlier feeling
Sunshine o’er the desert flings.

Ben Lawers hid Ben More from our view, and Ben Vorlich stood hazy in the distance. The Lomonds of Fife and the Firth of Tay gave a lowland and cultivated air to the east-

ward prospect. Beinn a' Ghlo was that day certainly a misnomer for the guardian of Glen Tilt.

But a blast of wind from the north, bringing snow with it, reminds us that we have fingers; so off we go down the eastward ridge, keeping slightly to the south, joining the valley of the Keltney Burn about three and a half miles from the summit. Following the path on the left hand side of the stream, we soon reach the high road about seven miles from Aberfeldy. It had occupied about two hours to attain the summit from Kinloch Rannoch, while the whole walk between Rannoch and Aberfeldy took seven hours. Exchanging our wet garments for dry ones, we started by rail on our homeward way. Holiday times do not conduce to punctual trains, and we missed our connection at Perth. An excursion train from Glasgow enabled us to get on, and Aberdeen was reached by "the wee short oor ayont the twal."