

SOME EARLY NOTICES OF THE SPEY,
THE FESHIE, ROTHIEMURCHUS,
AND GLEN-MORE.

BY C. G. CASH, F.R.S.G.S.

IN the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, are preserved some bound volumes known collectively as *The Sibbald Manuscripts*. They were bought for the Library in 1723, after the death of Sibbald, and contain papers of much interest.

Sir Robert Sibbald (1641-1722), medical man, antiquary, and naturalist, writes in one of these papers, "Upon King Charles the 2do constituting me Kings Geographer anno 1682 September 30 I applyed myself to procure descriptions from those who resided in the severall Countreys and were most capable to doe them and then I wrott myself." The Sibbald Manuscripts contain part of the material alluded to, consisting of original documents sent to Sibbald, transcripts made for and by Sibbald, and accounts composed by Sibbald himself. Some of these documents are of quite exceptional interest; such are the holograph descriptions by the two Gordons, Robert and James—the latter in many cases professedly copying from the papers of Timothy Pont—and some maps drawn by these same three men.

I present here a few paragraphs relating to the districts near Cairngorm. Extracts 1 and 2 are from a quarto volume, press-mark 33.5.15, written mostly in an excellent script, evidently copied by an amanuensis from original documents; there is no indication of the authorship of these passages. Extracts 3, 4, and 5 are from a folio volume, press-mark 34.2.8, containing a large number of original papers in various hands, as well as some transcripts; the passages here presented are taken from papers entitled, "Noats and observations of dyvers parts of ye Hielands and Iles of Scotland"; the papers are in the handwriting of James Gordon, the parson of Rothiemay; the information in them

may have been taken from the papers of Timothy Pont, though this is not stated in regard to these descriptions as it is in regard to others.

These descriptions must rank among the earliest extant, and show that the general arrangement of the topography was quite well known, though distances are often curiously inaccurate. Thus Loch Gamhna is not a mile long, nor is it a mile from Loch an Eilein; on the other hand the Bennie is certainly more than two miles long, and so is the Luineag. In the last quoted passage "Balerongan" seems to be an old name for the cluster of houses that once evidently stood near Achnahatnich.

ROTHIEMURCHUS.—Upon the south side of the River [Spey] opposite to Craig-Ilachie lyeth the Parish of Rothemurcus, wt contains six Dauchs of Land, each Dauch being four Ploughs. This Parish is in a Creek, & a Pendicle of the Parsonage of Duthell. It holds of ye Regality of Spynie, it belongs to Patrick Grant a Cadet of Grant's Family; but formerly it did belong to the Schaws, who yet possess the Parish, Alexander Schaw of Dell being the Head of the Tribe. The Schaws are able fighting men, and acknowledge Makintosh to be their Cheiftain, and go under his Banner. The Schaws killed the Cumins that dwelt here, who built a Castle in the midst of a great Loch called Loch-Iland. This Castle is usefull to the Countrey in time of troubles or wars: for the people put in their goods & children here, and it is easily defended being environed with steep Hills and Craigs on each side, except towards the East. There is in the body of this Parish a great Firr-Wood of two miles of length, but very broad, in respect it runneth up into many Burnes. Here is a Saw-Mill, a great Forest with Deer & Roe, which marcheth with ye Forrest of Marr to the South.

GLEN-MORE.—Above this Parish [Kincharden] lyeth the Glen More, where is a great Firr-Wood with much Birch. Here is a great Loch, out of which runneth a Water, wt runneth through Rothemurcus, called Druie & runneth into the Spey. They use to bring down their timber on this Water. Here is ye famous Hill called Kairne Gorum, wt is four miles high. Here it is said there are Minerals: for Gold hath been found here. This Hill aboundeth with excellent Crystall. Much Deer & Roe here. The people of this Parish much neglect labouring being

addicted to the Wood, which leaves them poor. There is much talking of a Spirit called Ly-Erg, that frequents the Glen-More. He appears with a red hand in ye habit of a Souldier, & challenges men to fight with him, as lately in 69 he fought with three Brothers one after another, who immediatly dyed thereafter.

THE SPEY.—This river of Spey is accounted ye longest river in Scotland, for following ye draught yrof, not accounting smal crooks and windings it wil be no les yen thrie scoir myles long, in it cours it is swift above yem all, running throw hills, and running from a hie country. it is most myld and calme in ye course as it runneth through Badenoch, afterward lowe down a great deal more furious. yea at ye entrie into ye sea, it abateth nothing of ye wonted swiftnes, and suffreth ye sea within it, be tyds verie litle not above a myle. it is exceeding clear water, so yt a man looking into it wold judge it shallow in many places and foordable, but it is far uthirways, and a great deal more deape yen it doth show. it hath manie rivers and great burns fall in it, al very clear streamis, but Avin river, which cumeth out of Strathavin on ye south syd, above yem all, yea more clear and pure yen anie river in Scotland whatsoever. this swiftnes and furious cours of Spey, suffreth no mills, dams, cruvis, years upon it. wherby great plentie of salmond ar yrin far beyond anie river in ye kingdome, even from ye springs to ye fall yrof. ye greatest plentie whrof ar fished at ye mouth be thrie corbils onlie. whrof every one hath a number of men to attend ye service of yem. far by ye use of uthir rivers, becaus of ye great strenth of ye streame and all this great and gaynefull fishing is done in less space of ye river then a quartr myl, or litle more.

THE FESHIE.—A myle from Farletie is Balnespick, a myl from it is Inner-Ishie, upon the west syd of Fishie river at ye mouth yrof. Item upon a half yland in Loch-Inche is Tome-Inche, a seat and kirk, a quarter myle be west Inner-Ishie. Twa myle above Inner-Ishie up ye said River of Fishie upon ye west syd yrof is Contelait, 1 myl upp on yt same syd of yt river is Cory-Arnisdail beg, 2 myle thence Cory-arnisdail moir, Aught myle above yt ar the mountayns of Scairsoch, wher out of floweth ye hiest brache of Fishie, no dwellings above Cory-arnisdail moir. A myle from Coryarnisdail moir upon ye east syd of Fishie is Innermarky wt alt-Marky, cuming out of Glen-Marky. half a

myle thence Croft Innermarky, a quartr myl from Innermarky, entereth in Alt-Roy falling out of a uglie corie cald Cory-Roy, wt a mightie steep craggie hill cald Craig-Megevie, wt manie deer above, and fair firr wood below. 2 myle thence fornent Innerishie is Dalnavert. a myl thence hard upon Spey is Kinrara-na-Caille, wt good firr wood.

ROTHIEMURCHUS.—Nixt Kinrara is Rothymurcus. Half a myle southeast from Kinrara is loch-na-gawin a myle long wt firr woods about it. a myl be east this loch is Rothymureus loch a myle long wt a burne joyning ye said twa lochs, in yis last loch is a tour in ane inch. A myl from Kinrara hard upon Spey is Kean-na-pool. heir is a great hie hill called Torbain just ovir aganis Craig-Alvie which is on ye north syd, and betuix Rothymurkus and Spey. Half a myl be east Kean-na-pool is Bale more, wt ye kirk of Rothymurkus, upon ye west syd of Avon Rothymureus as it falleth in Spey. A myle above Bale more is Tullich-row, upon ye east of loch Rothymureus, wt great and large firr woode. Item avon Trowy entereth in Avon Rothymureus, a myl befor it fall in Spey. This avon Trowy hath a glen on ye west of it called Glen-Ennich, wt loch Ennich, thrie myl long cuming out of Cory-Ennich. Item upon ye southeast of Trowy is a burn cuming out of Loch-Moirlich, a myl long in glen-moir. it is twa myl befor Ennich fal in Trowy from ye head yrof, and 2 myl befor Moirlich entereth in Trowy from ye head yrof also. Half a myle from Tulloch-Row upon ye west is Innetrowy. Upon ye east syd of Trowy hard by the former is Inner-dale. Item upon ye east beneth Loch Moirlich twa myle is Balerongan half a myle yfra Gewsalich, it is a myl above Dale.