

CLACH-A-BHOINEIDE—THE BONNET STONE:
A LEGEND OF THE MONADH-LIATH.

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THE somewhat tragical incident that gave rise to the following legend dates probably from the middle of the seventeenth century. It gave the name of the Bonnet Stone to a large boulder on the northern slope of the hill immediately behind Craigellachie and forming the summit of the ridge between the Dulnan and the Spey. The particulars of the event, which tradition has handed down, are in substance as here described.

The affair originated in a quarrel between two neighbours in the parish of Duthil over the carcase of a deer, which one of them had killed. The two men were both experienced huntsmen, who spent a good deal of their time in hunting deer and other wild game to supply the needs of their household, as food of other kinds was by no means too plentiful in those days, especially amongst people isolated in mountain glens far distant from town. On this occasion both went together in quest of game, as was often the case; and in a short time one of them succeeded in killing a stag on the hill above referred to. He at once set about skinning the animal, and, having suitably trimmed the carcase, laid it aside in a secure corner, as he imagined, till he should get it conveyed home. His companion meanwhile continued his search for game in hopes of being rewarded with like success; but on seeing his more fortunate neighbour hurrying homewards, apparently with a view to procure help to carry his venison home, a new idea took hold of his mind, which promised him a good supply of food without much further trouble. His plan was to take possession of the slain deer himself and conceal it in a safe spot till he should find a suitable opportunity of secretly conveying it home, believing no doubt that somebody else would be blamed for the theft. But not content with

stealing his neighbour's property, he resolved to play a disgusting and cruel practical joke on him as well, and carried out his purpose in the following manner. A young colt or foal which had died the day before was lying not very far from the spot, in a narrow recess along the same hill-side. He forthwith flayed the carcase of the colt and transferred it to the spot where his neighbour had left the deer he had killed and dressed; in its place his treacherous companion put the carcase of the colt as a substitute for the venison which he carried home for his own use. Shortly afterwards the owner of the stag arrived at the place to carry home his spoil, quite unaware, as it was now dusk, that it was the carcase of a colt he was carrying home, and not the venison that he had killed. After arriving home, he lost no great time in cutting off and cooking a part of the animal, little suspecting that all his toil had ended in carrying to his house a dead colt and not venison. But instead of enjoying savoury venison for his supper, what he had prepared had quite a different flavour from what venison should have, and he found himself unable to partake of it, as it was utterly unpalatable. He soon began to suspect that a mean and cowardly trick had been played upon him, and a more close inspection of the carcase he had brought home with him convinced him of the deceit which had been practised against him.

His suspicion at once fell on his neighbour, who alone knew of the whereabouts in which the dead stag lay hidden, and he determined to be revenged. On the day following he took a walk in the direction of the hill on which he had killed his venison, and met his companion by the side of a spring of water in close proximity to the scene of his exploit. After a few words of greeting, his friend mockingly asked him how he enjoyed the venison he had killed the day before. The question asked convinced him that his suspicion was well founded, and he at once charged him with the theft of his venison. This induced an immediate quarrel, and in a fit of anger and wild passion he attacked the thief, who lost his life in the struggle. Not satisfied with killing the culprit by the side of this mountain spring, in a fit of mad

resentment he cut off his head, placing it with the cap or bonnet belonging to it on the stone where it was afterwards found; and this it was that gave to that boulder ever afterwards the name of *Clach-a-Bhoineide*, or the Bonnet Stone. The spring where his victim was killed obtained also the name of *Fuaran a Bhoineide*, although at first it was called *Fuaran Phol*, or Paul's Spring, after the name of the murdered man. In the neighbourhood of both the spring and the stone is a marshy hollow or recess, where the dead colt or foal was found, which from that circumstance came to be known as *Sluganan t-Searraich*, or the foal's marsh.

Tradition does not say whether the man who thus killed his neighbour suffered for his crime. The particulars of the case were not fully brought to light till a considerable time after the deed was committed. The age was rude and lawless, and one in which bloody deeds were of frequent occurrence; and probably the guilty man left the district soon after, and escaped punishment for the deed done.