

LAMMERMOOR GLENS.

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OUR hills have none of the wild magnificence of the Cairngorms and other northern heights. Though they possess a quiet beauty and pastoral fascination all their own, he who visits them must not look for rugged grandeur or any of those mountain aspects that appeal to the sublime. From the valley of the Leader they rise into rounded summits of no great height, with those characteristic moors, reaching for miles beyond them, from which the system takes its name. The botanist will find none of the Alpine treasures of higher hills—the flora altogether is meagre—nor the climber spots to whet his appetite for adventure. Yet he who is a student of the relics of a forgotten past, the hillfort, the barrow, the stone-circle, the cairn, even the underground dwelling, will find them of absorbing interest. Nor will the nature lover ever weary among them. Withal they are easy of access from their gentle slopes, and the narrow winding glens that lead everywhere into the heart of them.

Late in April we took a walk that embraced two of these glens, combining pleasure with duty, in the form of a visit to the shepherds' houses. The day was one of these delightful ones that come like a benediction amid the ever changing weather of the early season. We drove four miles, then left our trap and walked three more up one of two glens that unite before they open to the larger dale. Each of them is guarded by a hillfort, one with ramparts of great height. In the valley is a terraced barrow, and many traces have been found around of prehistoric occupation. A little way past these, and the modern homestead pleasantly situated at the foot of the hill, we were away from everyone. The stillness of the glen gathered about us like a mantle. We felt it before we became conscious of the many sounds that penetrated it—the cheery

notes of the newly returned sandpiper, a ring-ousel's wild melody, the plaintive piping of golden plovers. Red grouse were abundant enough; we could never get away from their incessant go-back! go-back! back! back! Many of the hen-birds had begun to nest among the heather. The deep baa of the old blackfaced sheep was answered by the shrill bleat of young sportive lambs. Beside us all the way, a clear, glancing stream smiled and babbled to the bright sunshine. Once or twice we saw wild duck rise from it; they, too, would nest in the heather. The glen itself curved and doubled, limiting the vision and increasing that feeling of mystery that was part of its charm. Wheatears were in great abundance with the ring-ousel, sandpiper, and dipper; next to red grouse, curlew and plover on the uplands were the most common of the glen birds. Hares chased one another along the slopes above us, leaping and dancing for joy of life. Both the brown and the Alpine kinds were noticed, though the latter are not nearly so plentiful as on higher hills.

Brown hill extended beyond brown hill on either side of us, yet there was no monotony of colouring. Round their summits the blue of the sky grew intense, and they rose from a narrow meadow of living green. In places the stream had washed away the covering of turf and soil from the groundwork of Silurian rock. On the higher slopes were patches of bluish scree that might have been thousands of cartloads of stone emptied here and there on the hill side. A lone windswept group of fir trees crowning a height on the left was the only trace of wood we could see. Once the glens and uplands of the Lammermoors must have been well wooded. White birch is found in the mosses, with oak, willow and abundance of hazel nuts. In hollows of the hills and at rare intervals along the streams, clumps of old birch and other trees with an undergrowth of hazel and juniper remain to show the nature of this ancient wood. The people speak of these as parts of the Caledonian forest. But they are scanty enough, and afford little cover for even the roedeer which, with the larger red-deer, is quite unknown. Black game frequent

the glens and moorland, though in no great numbers; the capercailzie has never received sufficient encouragement to wander so far south.

Before we seemed to have walked any distance, the narrow glen opened to show a field of meadow grass with the shepherd's house in a sheltering fold of the hills. Never had miles passed so quickly. It was no great disappointment to find a closed door, with the prospect of such another walk along the turf road with the prattling stream for companionship. That day we breasted the incline to the right, following the peat road, to leave it again for the burnt heather of the moor. A short walk through the nesting places of curlew, plover, and muir-fowl with bright red wattles, brought us to another glen.

Seldom was place-name better justified. From every side came the sound of rushing water. The pleasant murmur of mountain brooks reached its loudest near the shepherd's house of Glenburnie. A happy spot surely, if there be one on earth, with the soothing note like a soft hand stroking the brow and charming care from the heart. It was a kindly, hospitable home, in any case, and possessed on that side a very substantial element of happiness. From the shepherd we learned a great many facts about the hills, which a year or two among them has amply confirmed. One or two cleughs in the glen are an occasional haunt of the fox, and a lucky find of cubs, for which there is a ready market in the south, is one of the shepherd's perquisites. He sees the big hawk sometimes—all the larger kinds of Falconidæ are included under this generic term. Buzzards and peregrine falcons visit the moors, year by year, too often never to leave them. A kite was trapped twenty years ago near the mouth of these glens. Occasionally the shepherd kills an adder. There are more here than in the glen we walked up, and in another further eastward still, the shepherds never find them. This is the key to their distribution along this side of the Lammermoors, though what determines it is more difficult to explain. In the glens to the west they go on increasing, the most westerly of all being infested

by them, and sheep are occasionally lost from their poisonous bite. A sheep dog in Glenburnie was bitten, but soon recovered from the effects. Dotterel still come, every autumn, to the upper moors, and occasionally in the later spring, but only for a few days. So he talked freely until one side of the glen was in shadow, the other bathed in softening light. We had almost two miles still to walk to the point where the two glens meet to enter the lower dale. Before we reached it the purpling lights of evening had clothed hollow and height with indescribable beauty. The very air around us glowed with it, and we walked as through an enchanted world.