

## SEVEN DAYS' TRAMPING IN THE HIGHLANDS.

BY THOMAS STELL.

I ARRIVED at Fort William from Keighley on the Saturday morning of Whit week of 1909. Fort William makes a capital centre for seeing some of the finest scenery that we have in all our island. For an easy saunter there is the walk down the side of Loch Linnhe, which was the way I took after lunch, leaving till evening the old Inverlochy Castle, when the bats are flitting about. I then returned again to the pier to enjoy the view across the Loch, or sit on the crags watching the sunset and after-glow.

Sunday was kept for a rest day, only taking one or two short walks. One, a particularly pretty one, was by the side of the River Spean, where the broom along the banks made a wonderful show of colour.

Monday morning opened dull, with every appearance of rain. I had planned to go to Shiel Hotel on Loch Shiel, a distance of about 35 miles, so I made use of the motor bus down Loch Linnhe side as far as Corran Ferry, which I crossed just in time to catch the mail cart to Strontian on Loch Sunart, a drive of some fifteen miles—eight or nine of which were by the side of Loch Linnhe. The scenery was very fine and varied, but the rain that had been threatening now came on in earnest. We reached Strontian Hotel about 3.30 p.m., where I had a very good lunch, enjoying at the same time a fine view across Loch Sunart, including a waterfall on the south side of the Loch. By 6 o'clock the rain ceased, so I set out on foot. There were thirteen miles yet to walk, but I was in excellent form. The first ten were along Loch Sunart, nearly all through trees and over headlands, with ever changing views. There was one particularly choice spot with one or two gipsy tents and an old woman on guard smoking. Salen was the next stage, the road for Loch Shiel now holding northwards. I saw a grand sunset through the trees about 9.30, and arrived at the hotel at 10 o'clock. I

turned into bed by 11, after arranging to have breakfast ready by 4 o'clock. I had found that the next stage was twenty miles, six of them on a road, the rest on a bridle track ending at Kinlochailort Station in the middle of Prince Charlie's country, the train leaving there soon after 2 p.m., thus giving about nine hours for the walking—none too many.

On Friday, after four hour's sleep, I was looking out of the window, up Loch Shiel—and what a glorious morning! The waters danced in the sunshine, while the mists crept and curled up the sides of the hills. I had the whole country to myself; here and there were a few crofters' cottages, some of them with peat reek curling up into the sweet morning air. The cairns by the road side were numerous, a group of three being quite out of the ordinary—they were very large and well built. Directly after passing them I reached Kinloch-Moidart, a small hamlet planted in a most charming spot at the head of Loch Moidart. Here the road proper comes to an end, and the bridle track begins, winding rather steeply up through trees and over rocks and crags, now dipping down to the sea, now rising up again. With nothing but the sea and oneself it was a continued succession of grand and lovely views all the way to Kinlochailort. I call this walk the finest I have ever had; the day was perfect. The train landed me back at Fort William about half past-three. The evening was spent across the Loch in Ardgour with three or four friends. It was nearly 11 o'clock when we returned, a splendid moonlight night showing up Ben Nevis to perfection.

Wednesday came with more fine weather. It seems to be always fine up there about Whitsuntide, for we have been up for our holidays for ten or eleven years in succession without being troubled with rain, to any extent at least.

I left Fort William on Thursday about 9 a.m., taking the road over the Black Mount to Kinlochmore, and then on to King's House. A very quiet walk it was, with just the hills for company and an occasional shieling or two

with little crofts. About four miles short of Kinlochmore and the new works of the Aluminium Co., up the side of the hill, there are the Seven Springs, supposed to be the best water in all Scotland—at least a man who was cutting peat told me so! In about another three miles there is the view over the head of Loch Leven and over the mountains of Glencoe, and for comparison the wonderful pipe track in which they have bottled the waterfalls. There are still nine miles of moor and mountains to King's House, not without some fine views, especially one of the summit and observatory of Ben Nevis. When the top of the Devil's Staircase is reached there is another capital view over the Moor of Rannoch, the entrance to Glen Etive, and down Glencoe. In four miles the tourist finds himself at King's House.

Out into another new day, Friday, full of contentment; over the bridge and across the moor. Following the small mountain stream, one rises higher all the time, crossing the shoulders of mountains, passing by a shooting lodge about three or four miles from King's House where the moorland track starts. Winding in and out and around, one has a glorious time for about six miles; then a short rest and lunch by a choice spring ere starting on the last stage, another six miles, to Rannoch Station. It can hardly be called a walk, for it has to be taken in jumps about every six yards, being all moorland and very wet and swampy. The track is intermittent; one picks it up occasionally, with Loch Lydoch for company for several miles on the right and mountains on the left.

In these holidays you have six months' looking forward in anticipation, and other six in pleasant memories, with a solid hope that you have laid in another stock of good health.