

## LOCH KINNORD.

IN Loch Kinnord, a sheet of water at the west end of the Moor of Dinnet, below the eastern base of Culblean, Aberdeenshire possesses a rare archaeological treasure. The place is richly endowed with natural beauties which were long—and to a considerable extent are still—hidden from public view. The railway traveller on Deeside passes close to the scene without being allowed to catch even a glimpse of its attractions. The two solitary elevations on the wide Moor of Dinnet, the Meikle Ord and the Little Ord, stand as sentinels over the loch, the former on its southerly and the latter on its northerly shore. The railway passes on the south side of the Meikle Ord, which thus effectually screens the loch and its picturesque immediate surroundings. Formerly the turnpike road also was on the south of the Meikle Ord, but it has now been carried over the north base of the hill, and in the neighbourhood of the 36th milestone from Aberdeen the new highway affords a delightful view of the loch, though not so commanding as that obtainable from the eastern slopes of Culblean, by which the Moor of Dinnet is bounded on the west, and whence there is a charming prospect of the creeks and peninsulas that compose the eastern shores of the lake. These are richly fringed by groves of natural birth, and, with the Little Ord similarly clad, constitute a piece of scenery hardly to be surpassed in its way. Loch Kinnord, and its sister, Loch Davan, are survivals of a great lake that had once filled the level country that includes the Moor of Dinnet, from Morven and Culblean on the west to the Mullach range on the east, extending north towards the Braes of Cromar and south to the hills that separate Glentanar from the valley of the Dee, which, in process of time, wore down the south end of the Mullach range, and so made for itself the channel in which it now lies. The great lake thus drained left in a north-eastern corner of its

ancient bed an extensive deposit of "kieselghur," for the utilisation of which, as a basis of dynamite, the necessary premises and appliances are at work a short distance from the north-west foot of Mullach Hill. A bed of the same substance has been found on the western shore of Loch Kinnord, and has also been worked.

Loch Kinnord and its kindred Loch Davan may have been scooped out of the bed of the ancient lake by the glacier stream which came down from Culblean, (practically the south-east shoulder of Morven) with a force of which it has left record in the rugged depth of the channel by which the "Burn of the Vat" finds its way into Kinnord. The deep part of that channel terminates above the present shore of the loch; and the end of the excavation may be taken as the ancient shore. In the later stages of the glacier period when it was giving way before the rising temperature of the climate, icebergs had broken off from the Morven and Culblean glacier, and gone adrift in the lake. Many of them had grounded on the two islands of those days; the Meikle and Little Ords, especially the latter, which is flatter, and was more in the line of the mountain current. This accounts for the great size and variety of the surface boulders with which the Little Ord is covered. These loose stones furnished ready and suitable material for the stone forts and earth-houses with which the Ords were furnished by the ancient Caledonian natives. The surrounding summits of their wide valley were also equipped with stone forts, under shelter of which their habitations were constructed. Some of them have been used as ample quarries for modern building purposes, and the more prominent of them have been upturned, rummaged, and reduced to shapeless heaps in hope of discovering hidden treasure under them; as in the case of the cairn on Mullach Hill, the bluff that dominates the Moor of Dinnet on its eastern boundary. In the vicinity of that great heap to the northward, is another which has been opened, revealing a slab coffin, specially exposed to the inspection of visitors. The shape and dimensions of

the probably Pictish cist show that the body had been interred, as was not unusual, in a sitting posture, with the knees up towards the chin, as if ready to rise at the sound of the last trumpet.

The ultimate refuge of the aborigines, when sore pressed, had been the islands in Loch Kinnord. The larger of the two, still known as the Castle Island, is now clad with close grass turf, and used as pasture for sheep, which are ferried to and from it in a boat. The smaller island is, at least as regards its size and shape, artificial. Its construction has been so sound and thorough that, after having been tested by the storms and ice of perhaps some two thousand years, it is to all appearance as stable as when first constructed. While this crannog, known in tradition as the "Prison Island" or "Tolbooth" of the ancient Caledonian capital, obviously owes its form to artificial construction by means of piles, the remains of which are still visible, there may be reason to doubt whether it is so entirely artificial as has been assumed. There are in the loch several rocks which rise so little above the surface of the water that its occasionally storm-driven waves keep them clear of vegetation; and the probability would seem to be that the crannog was originally founded on one of these rocks as its basis, piles being driven into the bed of the loch all round it, most thickly on its more exposed western and southern sides, and at the top fastened together by morticed beams. Not only was the space between the piles filled with stones, but an apron of stones was laid against them on the outside, with the result that, though the bulk of the piling has now disappeared, the structure effectively holds its own as a stone cairn, on its natural foundation, strengthened by the roots of the dwarf trees by which it has come to be clad. The Pictish engineer appears to have been apprehensive of the waves thrown against the island by south-westerly winds, sweeping through between the Meikle Ord and Culblean, for, in addition to the encircling row of piles he had, on the south side, constructed a kind of breakwater of oak beams, both

upright and horizontal. The Castle Island had also been fortified with a row of piles and rampart of stone. These island refuges continued to be in favour far into the historic period.

There are, it will be seen, records of Kinnord older than history. The district indeed is full of them, beginning with the Little Ord on its northern shore, which is covered with the typical foundations of prehistoric habitations, commodious enough to have sheltered the flocks and herds of the natives as well as their families. Some of these dwellings had subterranean chambers, constructed mainly of the ice-deposited stones by which the ground had been so extensively covered. In the immediate vicinity of Kinnord the unlimited supply of boulders left the constructors of these refuges pretty much independent of masonic skill. An earth house disinterred at Kinnord had each of its walls constructed of a single row of stones, except where irregularity in the height of a boulder made it necessary to add an eke in order to keep the roof level. In general, these underground houses become gradually wider towards their inner end; but where the constructors had to work solely with glacier-borne granite boulders, few of which were at once long and flat, they occasionally resorted to the expedient of dividing the earth house at its inner extremity into separate compartments, narrow enough to be roofed over by stones of about three feet in width.

Remains of hill forts, with their dependant townships, are to be found on the slopes of Culblean and Morven on the West of the Central district, round by the braes of Cromar to the mid-North, on the Mullach range to the East, the Glentanar hills to the South, and in more distinct Northerly directions far beyond the limits of this panorama.

Loch Davan, as it has come to be named, is a smaller and shallower loch adjoining Kinnord, from which it is separated by a ridge of peat and gravel, some two hundred yards across. Dr. Skene states that the Tæxali,

as the Romans designated them, occupied a territory extending from the Grampian range to the Moray Firth, and adds that "their town Devana is placed by Ptolemy in the strath of the Dee, near the Pass of Ballater, and close to Loch Davan, where the remains of a native town are still to be seen, and in which the name of Devana seems yet to be preserved." The Romans probably advanced under Severus into the country of the Tæxali by the same track across the Fir Mounth that was afterwards used in the English invasion under Edward, and, in his dashing campaigns, by Montrose. It leads, by the Ford of Dinnet, across the Dee straight into the ancient Devana, where the Tæxali were found in strength enough to try conclusions with the Roman legions. Of course they were defeated, and no doubt disastrously, but they were not entirely subdued. Roman relics have been fished up from the bottom of Kinnord, and found elsewhere in the district, but it is suggestive that these relics, though unmistakable in their character, are few and far between. The Romans had not found it expedient to remain long in the neighbourhood of the Caledonian capital. The native tribes continued to hover around them by day and night like thunderclouds. It was, however, a deadly blow that the ancient Devana had received, and one from the effects of which it does not appear ever to have recovered. The grim consolation of the Tæxali was that the loss had not been all on their side. Of the 50,000 soldiers whom Severus lost on his way to and from the Moray Firth, the Tæxali doubtless accounted for their proportion. They were a race of inured warriors. One set of belligerent invaders had conquered and succeeded another at Devana for many generations, and the native army which encountered the Romans was thus the outcome of a protracted and sanguinary illustration of the law which decrees survival of the fittest. But the defences on which they had been accustomed to rely were of little ultimate avail against the Roman gladius; and they could only sell their lives dearly—so dearly that the Roman historians prefer

to skip lightly over the details of the expedition.

All round there are memorials reaching back to times when the loch, with its environs, was in possession of a primitive race, which subsisted by the chase and by fishing. Their rude stone drinking cups, and the sharp stones that served them as knives, are in evidence, and successive advances in the direction of civilisation can be traced. Tacitus describes the Caledonians with whom the Romans came into collision, from the Forth northwards, as a robust people of large limb and ruddy hair, that suggested German origin. The proud Roman was unwilling to admit that his countrymen had been so effectively checked by mere barbarian islanders. He had to offer some apologetic explanation of the fact that a Roman Emperor, after sacrificing so many legions in an attempt to subjugate the Caledonians, had to make a treaty of peace with them, in terms of which he evacuated their territory.

A subsequent, more beneficent, invasion was that of the indefatigable Culdees, who found their way to Kinnord during the sixth century, and erected on the site of the ancient Druidical Al, at the west end of the Little Ord, a large stone on which is carved a cross of their characteristic interlaced work. It was removed for safety, in the beginning of the present century, to Aboyne Castle policies, and so has escaped the reckless attentions of the modern tripper.

There may or may not be ground for the tradition according to which Macbeth or Malcolm Canmore had a fortress on the Castle Island of Kinnord; but it was certainly visited by Edward I., during his invasions of Scotland, at the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries. It is recorded that in 1335 Comyn gave the island Castle to Sir Robert Menzies, one of his partisans; and after the battle of Culblean Sir Robert found refuge in the Castle. It afterwards became the property of the first Earl of Huntly, who had it repaired and refitted as a hunting lodge. In October, 1504, James IV. set out on one of his romantic expeditions to the North

of Scotland, with only two companions, and passed a night in the Castle of Kinnord. His destination was the shrine of St. Duthac in Tain, and on his return he again passed a night on the Peel of Kinnord, with the accommodation of which he appears to have been satisfied. The ambitious fourth Earl of Huntly refortified and garrisoned the Castle, and is believed to have constructed piers and a drawbridge, of which relics remain. His designs, whatever they may have been, came to an end with his death on the field of Corrichie, and his successor allowed the island Castle to fall out of repair. It was restored in 1647, and garrisoned by the then Marquis of Huntly, but was captured by General David Leslie, and by order of the Scottish Parliament demolished.

Loch Kinnord contains pike and perch, and on two bare rocks that just reach the surface, near the western shore, sea-birds have found a breeding place. It is also frequented by the usual fresh water fowl. Both Loch Kinnord and Loch Davan have fine beds of the white water-lily (*Nymphaea Alba*), and Kinnord has also, in one of its eastern creeks, a bed of the less common yellow water-lily (*Nuphar Lutea*).

A. G.