

## ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ON DEESIDE.

FOLLOWING up recent articles descriptive of Deeside,\* a brief account may be given of some books illustrating the region. The most interesting of these is *THE SCENERY OF THE DEE, WITH PEN AND PENCIL*, illustrated by Andrew Gibb, F.S.A.Scot., and further illustrated by J. Marley Hay, F.S.A.Scot. A handsome quarto volume of 85 pages, beautifully printed, the type enclosed in lines with a liberal margin on each side—few such books are produced now-a-days except select and expensive *editions de luxe*—it was published in 1884.

The volume had a curious history, thirty-four years elapsing between its conception and its publication. As far back as 1850, the idea of the work occurred to the once well-known firm of Messrs. Keith and Gibb, engravers and lithographers in Aberdeen, and the artistic part was undertaken by Mr. Andrew Gibb, one of the partners, than whom (says the preface) "few were so well qualified for, and whose facile pencil delighted in, such work." In this he was assisted by a Mr. Bryson, described as "an able young artist," while Mr. James Cassie, R.S.A., is credited with having contributed "several" sketches (really only two, so far as we have observed—Inchmarlo and Balmoral). The literary part, we are told, fell to Mr. William Jaffray, "a clever young writer, in the office of Messrs. Davidson, Advocates, Aberdeen, who accompanied Mr. Gibb on several leisurely tours to the localities they delineated and described." The work was taken up only when found convenient, and several years elapsed before it was fairly well advanced. Then it was laid aside altogether, and apparently never resumed, lying untouched for many years. Mr. Gibb died in 1881, and Mr. J. Marley Hay, who had become his

\* "Macgillivray's 'Deeside,'" Vol. viii., 113-19.

"Early 'Guides' to the Cairngorms," Vol. viii., 207-14.

"A Dictionary of Deeside," Vol. ix., 104-9 and 154-8.

partner, resolved "to form the fragments into a whole and carry the work to completion"—a highly commendable resolution, which has preserved to us a series of sketches of the scenery of the Dee between 1850 and 1858. These are supplemented by sketches of later date furnished by Mr Hay, who was also responsible for more than half the letterpress, 36 pages only having been printed off when the prosecution of the work was dropped.

The volume is interesting chiefly for its numerous illustrations; there are 29 full-page lithographic plates and 100 minor pictures interspersed in the letterpress. These illustrations delineate Deeside before it was developed, so to speak—before the present Balmoral Castle was built, before the railway was made (the line to Banchory was not opened till 1853 and the extension to Aboyne till 1859), and long before the Deeside villages became the holiday resorts of Aberdeen citizens and "residential villas" came to be in demand in consequence. Among the very first pictures that meet our gaze is one of the old-fashioned four-in-hand mail coach, so reminiscent of "the days that are no more;" and early in the descriptive account we are told how the narrator, from the old Bridge of Dee, "watched a succession of broad rafts, composed of tree trunks from the forests far up the river"—a sight no longer to be seen. Gone, too, are several of the old inns here mentioned—one opposite Drum Castle, the "Drum Arms" at Park, and "a small wayside inn, called Cammas-o'-May, standing in a clump of birch trees." The modest proportions of the "Fife Arms" and the "Invercauld" at Braemar as here depicted will astonish those familiar only with the huge "caravanserais" they have become; and there is difficulty in identifying the "Monaltrie Arms," Ballater, with the present "Invercauld Arms"—the entrance portico then faced the west instead of, as now, the north; besides which, the house itself has been largely reconstructed. One of the quaintest things in the book, by the way, is the account

of "the evening promenade" at Ballater, with its accompanying illustration—so far removed are the assemblages that seem then to have gathered nightly from anything that occurs to-day. We have preserved for us here a picture of "the miserable 'sheep cot' on the moor" which did duty as the first Free Church at Ballater; and on the opposite page is an illustration of a vanished hamlet, "The Micras"—a higgledy-piggledy collection of wretched-looking hovels. Among other things that have vanished—the semblances of which are retained here, fortunately—are the old gateway facade at Blackhall, Banchory, with its goat a-top and the motto that puzzled passers-by, *Che Sara Sara* ("What will be will be"); the cradle-bridge at Abergeldie, the two mansion-houses known respectively as New and Old Mar Lodge, and the wooden bridge across the Linn of Dee which preceded the existing Gothic arch.

The eternal hills remain, however, and we have full-page plates of Lochnagar, Ben-a-Bourd, and Ben Muich Dhui, and smaller illustrations of Glen Lui, Glen Derry, Loch Avon, the Shelter Stone, etc. The treatment of some of these mountain scenes is rather fantastic, undue emphasis being laid on certain features; the "realistic" mountaineer, at all events, will be inclined to regard the pictures as overdrawn, and to wonder where the point of view is from which they were presumably taken. A somewhat similar criticism may be made of the descriptive letterpress. It is in the rhetorical style common in the treatment of scenery half a century ago; most of it is exaggerated, not a little of it turgid, and trifling incidents like the scaring of deer are detailed in meticulous fashion.

THE ROYAL DEE—"A Description of the River from the Wells to the Sea. Written by Alex. Inkson McConnochie. Illustrated by J. G. Murray, A.R.E."—may be regarded as the modern complement of "The Scenery of the Dee." It depicts Deeside as we of the present day know it, for though a new generation has

grown up since it was published (1898), Mr. Murray's sketches of places like Braemar, Ballater, and Aboyne, drawn more for artistic effect than with absolute fidelity to detail, are still true in the main; the impression they convey is not weakened by any substantial discrepancy between the picture and the actual scene as it is to-day. Anyhow, these sketches provide an entertaining contrast to many of the pictures in Messrs. Gibb and Hay's volume, and illustrate such new and prominent features of Deeside as Crathie Church, Glenmuick House, Glentanar, Blackhall Castle, etc. Particularly noticeable are Mr. Murray's charming landscapes, such as the Dee valley at Mar Lodge and the river views at Pannanich, Kincardine O'Neil, Culter, etc. These are mostly full-page pictures, but many of the minor drawings introduced in the letterpress are exquisite; two of them may be mentioned as specially so—Meikle Inverey and the Cairngorms from above Inverey.

The descriptive letterpress is far superior to that in the earlier volume. It is more direct and to the purpose, and has no mawkish sentimentality about it, no tawdry attempt at "fine writing," so-called. If the narrative errs at all, it is in rushing to the opposite extreme—in being somewhat "pedestrian," too prosaic an account of quite exceptional scenery. Yet there is no lack of recognition of the picturesqueness continuously encountered in the journey down the Dee from the Wells to Aberdeen harbour, and the topographical details are plentifully interspersed with legend and tradition, historical and personal allusions, story and anecdote. The first four chapters in particular, descriptive of Deeside from Braeriach to Balmoral, are exceedingly well done. Mr. McConnochie is enthusiastic in his laudation of Deeside, and at one point makes a sort of apology for the lavishness of his eulogies—only to immediately withdraw it! "Our progress along the banks of the Dee," he says, "may be regarded by some as accompanied by an indiscriminate pæan," immediately adding—"There is, however, nothing to retract." On

the whole, we think not, though we may hesitate to endorse the opinion that the Dee, between Braemar Castle and Invercauld Bridge, "transcends the Trossachs."

QUEEN VICTORIA'S HIGHLAND HOME AND VICINITY was a "Diamond Jubilee" production, published in 1897. It consists of 36 illustrations, reproductions (with four exceptions) of photographs by Messrs. G. and W. Morgan; and for each picture Mr. McConnochie furnished a descriptive sketch of a uniform length of 29 lines of type. Compression within this space and with such precision is something of the nature of a feat, only to be accomplished by one thoroughly conversant with his subject. Several of the mountain views—Braeriach, Cairn Toul, etc.—are excellent. The author will be found in the picture of Clach Bhan, seated on the top of the tor.

DEESIDE—Painted by William Smith, Jun. Described by Robert Anderson—was one of the series of "Beautiful Books" issued by Messrs. A. and C. Black; it was published in 1911. It has been previously noticed in the *C.C.J.* (Vol. vii., pp. 129-30), and it will suffice, therefore, to say that its principal feature is a series of illustrations in colour by Mr. William Smith, Jun., the well-known Aberdeen artist—one and all of them admirable pictures; Braeriach and Lochnagar majestic and sublime, the Dee in its lower reaches placid and sweet.