

THREE STRATHS—TUMMEL, DEE,
AND SPEY.

BY THE LATE PETER ANDERSON.

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[MR. P. J. ANDERSON, of the University Library, Aberdeen, has kindly placed at our disposal MS. Notes "taken on an excursion from Inverness to Tobermory, Oban, Inverary, Glasgow, Loch Lomond, Killin, Kenmore, Kinloch Rannoch, Blair Atholl, Braemar, Grantown, and Fochabers, from 27 August to 22 Sept. 1827," by his father, the late Mr. Peter Anderson, accountant, Inverness. "My father," writes Mr. P. J. Anderson, "finished his Law curriculum in the University of Edinburgh in 1826. He seems to have at once begun, together with his elder brother, George, the series of pedestrian tours through the Highlands which led to the publication, in 1834, of the well-known 'Guide to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.'"]

The Notes, representing as they do the observations of a most intelligent pedestrian on a Highland tour made nearly a century ago, are of very great interest; but they cover a wide field, and we are obliged to content ourselves with reproducing the last section, which deals with areas more particularly within "the sphere of influence" of the Cairngorm Club. Names, heights, etc., are reproduced as in the original MS.—
EDITOR.]

LOCHS RANNOCH AND TUMMEL.

Loch Rannoch is 11 or 12 miles long, and nearly 2 of general breadth, a straight sheet of water bordered on the north by a long low hill of very gentle slope and level outline. The hills on the south are higher and steeper. They stand apart from one another and in the centre are somewhat removed from the water. Con-

siderable quantities of natural birch and fir occupy both sides. A tolerable road goes round the loch. At Kinloch Rannoch a bridge of 4 arches crosses the Tummel. This village consists of half a dozen of huts and an inn at the south end of the bridge, and about a score more huts and another inn, a church and manse on the opposite side of the river. Closely adjoining is a neat house let as shooting quarters. For 3 miles below Kinloch Rannoch the bottom of the valley is quite flat and upwards of a mile wide, meadow and cultivated land. The advancing skirts of Schihallion and a broad terrace or eminence on the north side then fill up the valley, leaving for about 2 miles room only for the passage of the river, the banks of which are wooded with birch, larch, and fir.

The bottom of the glen again becomes level and continues widening till we reach Loch Tummel, 10 miles distant from Loch Rannoch. Tummel Bridge, where the road from Crieff to Dalnacardoch crosses, is 7 miles from the latter loch. Loch Tummel is 3 miles long and at the west end about two-thirds of a mile in width. It contracts towards the opposite extremity. Several obtuse little promontories fringed with ash project into the water. The hills and along the upper portion of the Strath are of gentle inclination and moderate heights. Those on the north preserve nearly an unbroken level outline. The southerly ones exhibit low detached summits but rising from a common continuous chain. In the slight depression of the hill-face a good deal of land has been brought into cultivation, and the greater part of the north side of Loch Tummel is arable. Birch is scattered here and there, but heath and grey stones occupy much the largest portion of the ground. As it approaches Loch Tummel the tortuous river is skirted with ash trees. The space of 4 miles from Loch Tummel to the Garry is a very deep confined pass. The north side rises steeply from the water, and swells out above into a continued succession of rounded cliffs with intermediate

receding acclivities ; the whole clothed with birch, and some fir and larch. The opposite side is of much the same but less marked character. A few hundred yards from where it joins the Garry the Tummel forms a small fall. It is divided into two streams by a small rock on each side of which it pours for a few feet perpendicularly. Rushing furiously forward they reunite and dash headlong and in obliquely contracted volume. The whole height does not exceed 20 feet. The pedestrian ought to cross to the south side at the east end of Loch Tummel, by which means the pass will be seen to much more advantage, and he can be ferried across to the Dunkeld and Blair road at Portnacraig opposite Pitlochrie and 3 miles below the Fall, or 2 miles further down the river at Moulinearn.

The portion of Strath Tummel watered by the united rivers of Garry and Tummel is connected with Atholl, the lower part of the valley through which the former river holds its course, by the Pass of Killiecrankie, which forms an obtuse angle with either. For about a mile the hills on each side rise in a very steep acclivity. On the west a wall of rock lines the river. A narrow pathway is left along the opposite side. The western bank, which may be from 500 to 600 feet high is enveloped with waving birch trees, and rising behind it are seen a range of bare perpendicular rocks. The opposite side formed by the lofty Ben Vracky is similarly wooded to a corresponding height, but the ascending acclivity is continued with equal abruptness as far again in unadorned nakedness.

THE ATHOLL VALLEY.

The valley of Atholl bends to the westward 3 miles above the pass. At the bend is situated Atholl House, where the Duke of Atholl generally spends a couple of months in autumn to enjoy deer shooting in Glen Tilt. It is a long narrow building of 3 stories with a row of servants' apartments at each end, standing on a sloping lawn encircled by broad belts of trees of various kinds,

among which are some fine specimens of larch, to the rearing of which his grace has paid peculiar attention. Great care has been taken to cut off the under branches of all the trees, and the timber on these estates is remarkable for the girth and straightness of the stems. Avenues of lime and other trees lead from the house to different parts of the park. There are two falls in the immediate neighbourhood generally visited by strangers—the Falls of Fender and the York cascade. They are each formed by burns falling into the water of Tilt a little way above and below the old bridge of Tilt. This stream flows between two perpendicular walls of limestone. Birch, ash and other trees cover the tops of the banks, and, springing from the stages of the rocks with a profusion of hazel, the Guelder rose, and other shrubs, completely overshadow the water. The Fender is seen through a narrow recess making a leap of about 30 feet; it then trickles in parted streamlets over 4 successive ledges of rock projecting from the side of the bank of the Tilt, making together about 40 additional feet. The burn forming the York cascade is a detached portion of the Fender. It falls into the Tilt a few hundred feet below the other falls. It is precipitated over the face of the rocky bank in a single descent of about 50 feet.

About a mile up the Fender a second fall is met, well worthy of a visit. The course of the burn is a steep dell wooded with birch. At this second fall the burn, from between pretty high banks, makes a slanting leap of about 40 feet perpendicular but obliquely adown the face of the rock in conforming to a groove channelled in it. It falls into a basin from which it pours sideways over a second height of 12 feet. Unless the water be very low, a portion of it escaping at the top straight down the rock is thrown off by a projecting shelf in a glittering spout.

GLEN TILT.

The water of Tilt, for about 2 miles above the old

Bridge of Tilt, runs between high banks rising from the water's edge. In the vicinity of the Falls of Fender the bare rock is exposed in many places; in general, the sides are very abrupt but covered with birch and ash and a perfect jungle of hazel; the rising sides of the glen immediately above the edge of the bank are wooded with fir and larch, to which cornfields succeed. Above this a narrow strip of flat ground occupies the bottom of the glen for 7 or 8 miles; the wood soon disappears, and the hills rise in steep acclivities covered with herbage and heath. They are unbroken save where an occasional ravine sends down a tributary streamlet and of almost uniform height, say 500 or 600 feet, except where Ben y Gloe raises his more aspiring form on the south. The glen is nearly straight and the inclination remarkably gentle. The Duke of Atholl has two small hunting-lodges; one 4, the other 7 miles from Blair. A bridge crosses the water 2 miles up the glen, another a little above the first lodge. There is also a third intermediate. As far as the second lodge there is a good road. Beyond it a mere footpath conducts along the north side. Four miles above the second lodge the rivulet of Loghaine [An Lochain] enters from a glen on the right. Keeping along the north side of the main stream, a mile further on we come to the Tarff, which, issuing from a confined defile on the left, is precipitated over two falls, the lowest about 10, the upper 25 feet.

Crossing the Tarff, the path continues along the now much diminished stream, for the former supplies the main body of the Tilt water, and the glen is soon found to split into two narrow ascending gullies. A track will be seen ascending the southerly one. This leads to Fallaird, another hunting-lodge of the Duke of Atholl. The pathway to Castleton of Braemar continues along the north side of the other gully leading along the steep face of the glen. Less than two additional miles brings us to the top of the pass, where we find an open hollow in the hills, with a flat mossy bottom, whence another

burn descends towards the Dee in a directly contrary direction to the course of the Tilt. After a run of 2 or 3 miles it falls into the Dee 9 miles above the Castleton. A footpath will be found along the south side of the hollow and burn and of the Dee to the Linn of Dee, 6 miles above the Castleton, whence a good road leads along the south side of the river. If mounted, the traveller should keep the opposite side of the burn. He will hereby fall in with a cart road which, fording the Dee, will give him the benefit of a good road for the 3 miles before coming to the Linn. The Dee inclines to the right hand; to the left are seen lofty precipitous mountains, whence it has its rise. It may be mentioned that, after leaving the Duke's lodge, a shealing will be met in Glen Tilt at the mouth of the Loghaine, another upon the south side of the burn falling into the Dee rather more than a mile from that river, and a farmhouse on the north side further down the burn.

STRATHDEE—THE LINN.

Strath Dee, when first met with, has a pretty wide flat central space. Below the Linn of Dee this increases to rather more than half a mile in breadth. This is meadowland with a few arable patches. In the portion between the Linn and the Castleton large quantities of birch are spread over their central flat. The hills are of moderate height and roundish or flattened outline. Various shelving glens intersect them on either hand. A mile above the Linn the great pine forest of the Dee commences. It here continues to clothe the sides of the southern (? northern) hills for 5 miles, down the river. The trees are generally very fine, but the great body of them are considered young in comparison with some of the veteran sticks among them, which measure 13 and 14 feet 6 feet from the ground, and are about 60 feet high. The whole of this pine forest will in all probability be felled in the course of a few years, as the axe is now busy at work.

The Linn of Dee is a spot where the river has cut a

long narrow passage, between 30 and 40 feet deep, through opposing rock, and forms four small falls, the central ones about 10 and 13 feet, the others not above half that height. Below the falls the water has scooped out a series of basins where it sleeps deep, dark, and motionless. When the water is low some of the connecting channels are not above a yard wide, but it is subject to floods which sometimes fill the chasm to the brim.

The wood on the hills on the south side of the valley is nearly all birch. Two miles below the Linn, on the north side of the river, in the bottom of the valley is seen Mar Lodge, a commodious hunting-seat of the Earl of Fife. Its long low wings give it a length of front which makes it a very conspicuous object. The Strath is here straight for several miles, and presents a very peculiar appearance in its hanging pine forest on one side, and birch woods on the other, and in the wide level space between.

The distance from Blair Atholl to the Castleton of Braemar may be called 36 miles, taking 11 hours' moderate walking.

BRAEMAR.

Castleton of Braemar consists of a few neat cottages and two or three slated houses on the side of the Cluny, a mountain stream, where it is crossed by the military road, about half a mile from where it falls into the Dee. Upon the opposite side—the west—there is a collection of scattered huts called Auchindryne. There is a good inn on either side. The castle of Braemar stands at the point of the eastern side of the glen through which the Cluny flows, on a slight elevation on the plain. It is a tall structure of four stories and attics of the shape of two buildings at right angles, with a turnpike staircase in the interior angle. At each corner is a long hanging turret. The area on which it stands measures 65 paces. It is surrounded at a distance of 15 feet by

a four-sided wall with an angle protruding from the centre of each side. Government has lately placed a strong party of military in it—72 soldiers and 3 officers—to aid the Excise in the suppression of smuggling.

From Castleton to the Spittal of Glenshee is 15 miles, thence to Blairgowrie 19, and to Dunkeld 12.

The road crosses the Dee 3 miles below the Castleton, and the north road leaves Strathdee 6 miles further down. In this space of 9 miles the Strath makes two long sweeps. The hills may be said to form the extremities of ranges obliquely cut through by Strathdee, and separated by wide glens or receding hollows. Generally speaking, the diverging hills may be said to present abrupt rocky faces to a person looking up the Strath. From Castleton extensive fir forests extend for about 4 miles down on both sides of the valley. These woods are generally young. Birch is mixed with the fir in large quantities both in distinct masses and more intimate union, and, as already noticed, mingles with the corn fields and pasture in the centre of the valley. The first sweep of the valley below the Castleton is lined on both sides with woods, and the view from the Bridge of Dee both up and down the river is singularly grand, especially of each greater bend, where above the woods which clothe the circling gentle slopes, and the heathy acclivities which succeed them, an amphitheatre of lofty Alps rise in frowning majesty. A mile below the castle on the opposite side of the river, is the house of Invercauld.

GLENGAIRN TO TOMANTOUL.

Ascending the side of Strathdee, the north road crosses a broad bleak hill, and descends into Glengairn, a narrow stripe of arable and meadow ground bordered by heathy chains. At the bottom of the first stage, Runloan, 13 miles from Castleton, is reached. Hence the road reascends, and $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles more over heathy hills bring us to the Don, along which we ascend for 2 miles

to Corgarff. From about half way from Runloan the road becomes almost impassable for carriages; a good road leads down Strathdon. The Don is here a small burn lined by a narrow strip of meadow and arable ground, and winding among sloping heath-clad hills. At Corgarff there is a tolerable thatched public-house beside a neat shooting-box. On the face of the south side of the Strath stands Corgarff Castle, an oblong building of 4 stories measuring 12 paces by 9, with a small wing at each end and encircled by a wall similar to that round Braemar Castle. A party of military—46 men, 2 sergeants and 2 officers—are also stationed here.

Leaving Corgarff, the road for the first 5 miles ascends one heathy ravine and descends another lined with snow posts, when it reaches a small burn called the Conglass. Following its course for 4 miles we reach Tomantoul, a small village built on a spot of tabular ground overlooking the Avon. It consists of about a hundred houses of one story with three or four exceptions, partly slated, partly thatched with heather. They are arranged in a straight street with a square in the centre. A church and neat humble manse lately built are the only features Tomantoul can boast of. Glen Avon is here a narrow winding glen flanked by steep banks partially cultivated with oak coppice, above which the undulating slopes exhibit at intervals considerable (comparatively speaking) cultivated spaces. Crossing the glen, the road reascends and descending into a small contiguous one proceeds up the side of it, presenting to the view, as heretofore, a vast expanse of heath-covered hills, of easy inclination and smooth regular surface. Presently a long reach of Strathspey opens sideways to the sight at some distance with its pine-filled flats and cultivated slopes. But for an obstructing hill a larger portion would be seen, but turning to the right another section of it is presented, where the white houses of Grantown and the high walls of Castle Grant rise amid long tracts of ascending pine

forest and birch woods and cornfields. Within 8 or 9 miles of Grantown the road becomes again very good.

From Tomantoul to Grantown is 14 miles, and from each of those places to Dalnashauch, at Inveraven, 13 miles.

STRATHSPEY—CASTLE GRANT.

At Grantown, Strathspey is of great width. For 5 or 6 miles downwards from the Bridge of Spey, a broad tract of flat ground occupies the centre of the Strath. The hills on the north side retreat far backwards from either extremity of this portion of the Strath, while the river makes a wide sweep for about 4 miles in the opposite direction. Above the central space on the north side rises a wide terrace, succeeded by a second commencing a little farther down in the bend of the receding hills. The central space with the exception of a few cultivated fields at either end, the face and front of either terrace, and the elongated summits of the hills are covered with extensive pine forests, while waving cornfields occupy the wide intervening tracts. The village of Grantown is built near the upper end of the lower terrace, behind the foremost wood, while Castle Grant stands about the centre and in the front of the second one, rather more than a mile to the east. Grantown is a remarkably neat village composed of about 120 houses, one-third of them two stories. The rest are of one story, partly thatched and partly slated. Several of these last are very neatly built of granite, and have much the advantage in point of appearance over the larger houses, which, tho' whitewashed, are comparatively comfortless-looking, probably from the want of lintels and window soles and the quantity of dead wall. The village is arranged in a long street, towards the east end of which the houses receding backwards on each side enclose a large oblong space, through the centre of which the road connects the opposite ends of the village, leaving a compartment covered with sward on either hand. This oblong area is lined with the two-storied houses. Near the centre of

one side is a handsome plain building surmounted by a clock—a sort of foundling hospital.

Castle Grant is an old building of 4 stories, projecting backwards at each end, with a row of lower buildings in continuation, thus enclosing on 3 sides a court approached from the remaining side by a flight of steps. A large collection of family and clan portraits and a few good paintings—among the rest, a large historical piece, *The Death of Patroclus*, by Gavin Hamilton—are the only objects of interest in the interior; but the view from the battlements of the tower—one of the abutting portions of the main building above-noticed—is incomparably fine. The position of the Castle has been already perhaps sufficiently indicated. Immediately around it are groves of sycamore lime trees and other hardwood trees. Undulating parks stretch upwards towards the hill-tops behind, and circle round the adjoining hardwood on either hand. Looking across the valley, beyond the double masses of pine which extend to right and left, are seen the long ascending russet slopes of the opposite hills, with the summits of Cairngorm and the adjoining Grampians towering in the background.

Beyond the long section of the valley in which Grantown and Castle Grant are situated, the hills which bound Strathspey continue for about 14 miles far asunder, but a great alluvial deposit on the south of varying surface and inclination fills up the greater part of the intermediate space, confining the flat ground which skirts the river to a very narrow bound. The river makes a few bold sweeps, but generally bends gradually from side to side. The hills on the north are continuous, and of flattened outline; those opposite consist of several chains differing not very materially in their line of bearing. They are also higher and of more marked character than the other range, of a smooth and softened configuration. The wide deposit already noticed is covered with heathy pasture, patched with cultivated ground. The strip of land along the

river is cultivated, but as the road is for the most part at some distance from the water, the ride is, as far as Aberlour, sufficiently uninteresting.

CRAIGELLACHIE.

Here we reach the river, which the road crosses about a mile below at Craigellachie Bridge, a very handsome metal arch with a round embattled tower at each corner. A little below it the Strath bends suddenly to the north, and widens considerably at the bottom. The hills on the south advance close to the river, the wide deposit disappearing; large fir woods mixed with larch, birch, and hardwood cover both sides with sloping cultivated spaces intermixed. Broad fields occupy the bottom; the reach of the Strath for 4 miles below Craigellachie being thus eminently beautiful. After two other strong bends, the Strath continues in one long straight line to its termination. The east side of this terminal portion is of a level outline to Fochabers, beyond which it gradually subsides towards the sea, which is 4 miles distant. The opposite side, several miles above Fochabers, deflects to the westward, a wide low tableland rising above the bottom of the Strath. This part of the Strath is nearly as uninteresting as above.