

## RAMBLING IN THE PENTLANDS.

ROBERT SMITH.

To most readers of this *Journal*, the Pentland Hills may seem very small fry, but in these days of restricted transport facilities, one has just got to be content with the hills in the immediate vicinity. I have been fortunate enough to be within easy reach of the Pentlands for the past two years, and I have spent many happy days rambling among them.

The Pentlands can be divided roughly into three parts, of which the best known is that consisting of Caerketton, Allermuir, and Capelaw Hills. These are clearly visible from Edinburgh, and the climbs from Hillend Park over Caerketton and Allermuir, or through the village of Swanston to Allermuir, are both favourites with those few citizens of Edinburgh who enjoy the hills. Strange as it may seem, I have met dozens of local people who have never been on the Pentlands ; in fact a great many have never even climbed Arthur's Seat, although it is right in the city itself. From the tram terminus at Fairmilehead to the summit of Allermuir is a nice steady climb of 1,100 feet, with a splendid view from the top to reward those who are energetic enough to make the ascent. On a clear day I have seen hills as far distant as the Sidlaws, and the hills to the west of Loch Lomond, from the top of Allermuir. The first time I climbed this hill, on a spring evening, I realised the reason for Edinburgh's nickname of "Auld Reekie," as there was a pall of smoke hanging over the whole city. Since then I have often seen the same thick cloud, pierced only by Arthur's Seat, the Castle, and Granton gasometer ! This gasometer ranks as one of the main landmarks of Edinburgh, standing out sharply against the waters of the Forth. It is a pleasant scramble from Allermuir, down through Bonaly Park to Colinton, provided one steers clear of the neatly fenced path, which is almost invariably muddy,



irrespective of weather conditions. The walk from Fairmile-head to Colinton is one of my favourites, of an evening, either in summer or winter, for, after being cooped up all day in the city, I feel that such a walk is enjoyable even in the teeth of a biting wind.

The main ridge of the Pentlands, which runs south-west, consists of Castlelaw, Turnhouse, Carnethy, Scald Law, and the two Kips; of these Castlelaw is separated from the rest by the end of Glencorse reservoir. My favourite starting-point for this ridge is Flotterston, near the site of the battle between the Covenanters and Charles II's men. The north-east slope of Turnhouse is probably the steepest part of the whole range, but it is nothing to worry anyone who is accustomed to the hills. Nevertheless, a number of the people I have persuaded to accompany me found it very hard going, but they all managed to make the top. Viewed from the slopes of Turnhouse, Glencorse reservoir looks like a Highland loch, complete with its wooded islet, and it is hard to credit that it is a purely artificial reservoir. Actually Crane Loch, which is only a few hundred yards across, is the only natural loch in the Pentlands, but the various reservoirs all bear a strong resemblance to natural sheets of water, especially when viewed from a distance. From Turnhouse along the ridge to Carnethy is an easy walk, up the winding pathway to the immense cairn at the top. I have not been able to discover the origin of this cairn, which must contain at least two hundred tons of stones, but they appear to have been placed there by human hands, as the rock is different from that of the hill. Carnethy is the most imposing of the Pentlands, and affords a very good viewpoint in all directions. In the north-west, across Loganlee reservoir and the Black Hill, the spans of the Forth Bridge look like some toy erection in the background; in the opposite direction the Moorfoots and the Lammermuirs stretch away to the horizon, with the rest of the Pentlands to the south and south-west.

From the top of Carnethy I run down the steep slope to the path across to Loganlee, then up the equally steep slope, through very coarse heather, to the highest peak of the Pentlands, Scald Law. Like so many of the Southern Up-



lands, Scald Law has no clearly defined summit, but I presume that the Ordnance Survey cairn marks the highest point, 1,898 feet above sea level. Viewed from a certain angle, East Kip, which is my next hill, looks like a perfect cone, but it is an illusion. One side of the hill consists of a narrow ridge, running right up to the summit, where there is scarcely room to sit down. From East Kip to West Kip is only a short walk, and there ends the main ridge of the Pentlands.

The path across the moor from Nine Mile Burn to Balerno divides West Kip from the southern portion of the Pentlands, which stretch away nearly to Carnwath. Towards the southern end, the hills are not so high, and the country is boggy and uninteresting. I usually continue my ramble across Green Law and Spittal Hill to the North Esk reservoir, where I stop for lunch. After three or four hours on the hills, I always find that sandwiches, washed down with good hill water, make a very appetising meal, and yet the same sandwiches would be scorned if served in the city. After my lunch I stretch out on the hillside, smoking and thinking what the city dwellers are missing—the fresh air, sunlight, and restful surroundings. After musing there in the warm afternoon sun, I set off across the moor to Balerno, some nine miles distant. With a few stops on the way, the afternoon soon slips past, and I find myself regretting that I did not go farther afield, to encompass East and West Cairn Hills, even though I have vivid memories of being drenched there in a thunderstorm. At Balerno I reach civilisation once more—on a summer evening the first sign of it on entering the village is the tail-end of a long bus queue, a very familiar sight in these days. As it is only another four miles to the tram terminus, I always stride gaily past the queue, and catch the tram back to the confinement, dirt, and smoke of the city.