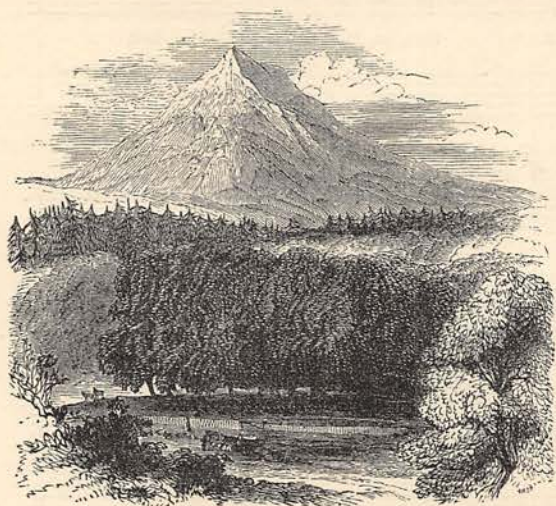


OUR HIGHLAND TOUR.



At last the dog-days had come to an end. The tropical heat of a London July had exhausted the energies of society—fashionable and unfashionable. Under the strain of nine or ten months' anxious toil, the brain of the man of business had become worn and jaded, and a season's wearisome husband-hunting had plucked the roses from the cheek of beauty. The hearts of all who could afford the luxury had begun to yearn for the Highlands—for was not the "Twelfth" near at hand, and were not the unpaid patriots legislating for us at Westminster all thirsting for the blood of winged game? Amongst those who abandoned themselves to the promptings of the prevailing migratory instinct was my comrade, Gartartan—"a Caledonian stern and wild"—at least, such he was supposed to be when his foot trod his native heath. Amongst us idle apprentices of the law he was known as a shrewd, honest, economical Scot; notable only, perhaps, for being a little less idle than the most of us. He could not now of a morning, I observed, look forth from our chambers on the waving trees in King's Bench Walk, without apparently imagining they were a "forest;" and this, I presumed, led him to warble something about "his heart being in the Highlands, chasing the wild deer and following the roe." At this period of my life I was young and ignorant, and fancied that a "deer forest" must be always full of trees—that it was, in fact, a kind of "poor relation" of "the backwoods." Scotland was a *terra incognita* to me; and one morning when Gartartan, unable any longer to control his longing, suggested I should accompany him northwards, the proposal was not disagreeable to me. The Scottish Celt is renowned for his rapacity, and I had always made up my mind never to invade his country unless under the guardianship of somebody who could protect me from swindling hotel-keepers. If the traveller be a person of moderate means, he had better abandon all hope of seeing the Highlands of Scotland unless he can get a Highlander

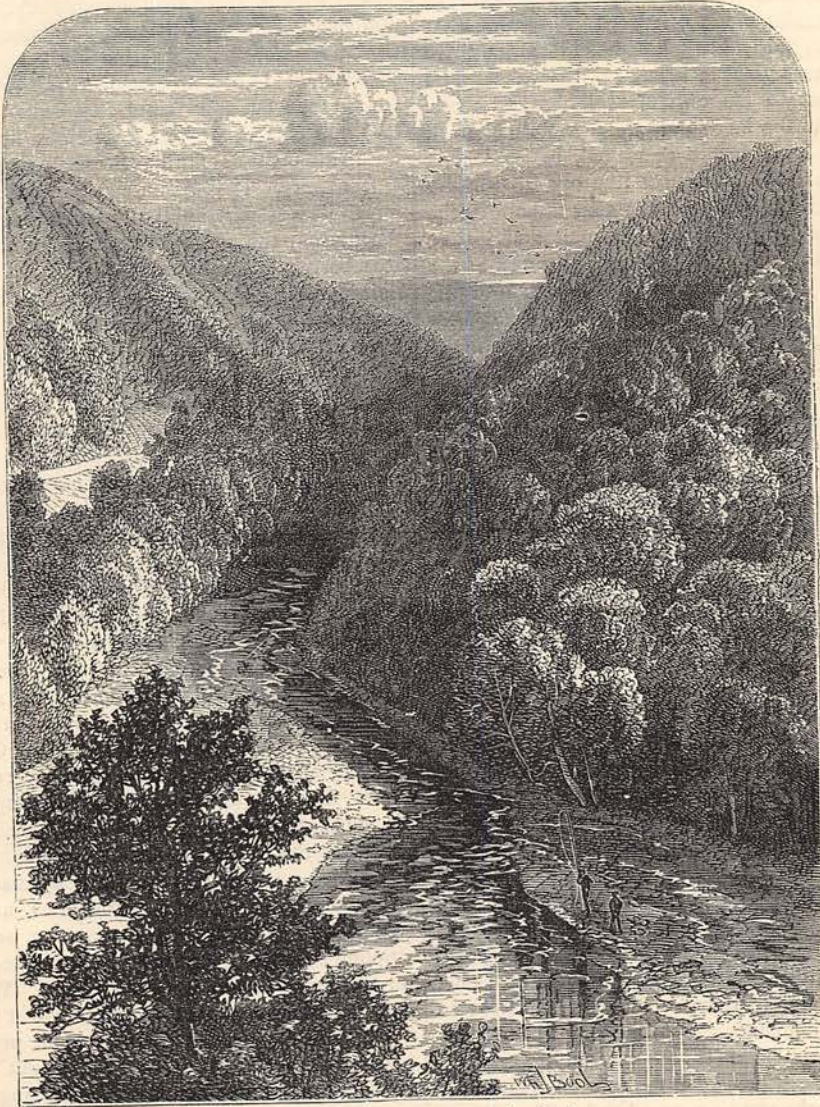
to make the journey with him. As they say in the North, "corbies dinna pyke oot corbies' een."

When the great work of laying down the line of campaign had to be undertaken, I was puzzled not a little as to the route we ought to select. Gartartan did not mind where we went so long as we went to "the Highlands." But then "the Highlands" is a wide geographical expression. "Draw a line," said my friend, "on the map of Scotland from Greenock to Aberdeen, and another from the 'Granite City' to Inverness, and then the region to the north and north-east of that is what you have to explore." This did not make choice easy. Should we "do the Trossachs," and follow the tracks of the "Lady of the Lake?" Might it not be better to intrude on the privacy of royalty in the Aberdeenshire mountains? Could we venture to pilot our way amongst the Orkney and Zetland Isles? What objection was there to our keeping to the great Highland road from Perth to Inverness, or approaching the Celtic capital *via* Glasgow and the Caledonian Canal? Had we pluck enough to strike westwards and tumble aimlessly about the "storm-tossed Hebrides?" At that time it was a difficult business to select a Highland route. Had we to do it now it might have been easier. Last season Her Majesty popularised a new tour through the Loch Maree district, and if she had only done it then we might have hung on to the skirts of the snobocracy and gone thither with "the rush." Who knows that we would not? Neither Gartartan nor I claim to be exempt from human weakness. As it was, we selected a very simple, old-fashioned line of march—the great Highland road that runs from Perth to Inverness. The next question was—how were we to travel? Was it to be by land or water? Like most Londoners I first of all thought that the right way to journey northwards was by rail. My friend, however, ridiculed the idea; and though I did not think so at the moment, in this as in most things his sagacity was conspicuous. "We must," said he, "make for Edinburgh to begin with. The only other great Scottish cities, Aberdeen and Glasgow, can be 'done' on the way back; and then Edinburgh is, next to Athens, the finest city ever built by the hand of man." I do not think that the "grey metropolis of the North" quite deserves all my friend's eulogies; but I can never regret being swayed by his advice, for assuredly the sun shines on no lovelier city in Europe than the Scottish capital—at least, everybody who has not seen Pesth says so. "To Edinburgh we must," said Gartartan, "go by sea." Weak-stomached, rickety creatures, who understand not the art of making the most of a holiday, prefer to travel by rail. But your old campaigner, so Gartartan assured me, who properly appreciates the restorative efficacy of ozone, never dreams of going to Scotland save by steamer. Thus it was that one bright morning we embarked at the Temple-stairs, where a little tender conveniently picked up passengers for the

Scottish steamboat lying at St. Katherine's Wharf. We had scarcely gained the open sea when we found a new life coursing through our veins. The company was mainly one of holiday-makers, and it was merry enough. The fare was plentiful and of good quality, and our whetted appetites did ample justice to it.

and I had rather not reproduce it. The first sniff of its odoriferous quay determines the tourist's next move—which is to make for the nearest vehicle that appears likely to take him somewhere else, and to drive there as fast as possible.

Edinburgh, although a mountainous city, is not



PASS OF KILLIECRANKIE (p. 619).

It would take me too long to describe the varied delights of this short passage ; but it may be enough to say that never, except when time is an object, will I travel to Scotland in any other way. In due course we landed at Leith. My imagination was not equal to the effort of seeing in it that resemblance to the picturesque Flemish seaports which my friend declared anybody with half an eye for architectural beauty could detect.

Leith gave me my earliest impression of Scotland,

exactly the Highlands ; so I need not dilate upon our stay there. Towards the end of it, and after a great deal of disputation, I agreed to what I believed to be a monstrous suggestion on the part of Gartartan—namely, that we should proceed northwards on foot. Neither of us, he argued, was fat, and both were young and strong. We had plenty of time on our hands. Why, then, should we let ourselves be shot like a thunderbolt through romantic scenery that can only be properly enjoyed by

the leisurely wayfarer? The truth is that some of the choicest beauty-spots in Scotland lie off the track of railways, and are hard of access even to one journeying on horseback. Then the keen, invigorating air of the north renders the toil of the pedestrian far less fatiguing than most people imagine; and as the country is thoroughly intersected by railways, there is no difficulty, when walking becomes wearisome, in taking to an easier mode of travel. Assuming that the tourist is in fairly good health and spirits, there is, according to my experience, no reason why he should not trust to his own stout limbs and make his pilgrimage to the Highlands on foot. But he will do well, as I have before remarked, to go in the company of an old campaigner like my friend; for to the inexperienced a walking tour amongst the Scottish mountains may be made a matter of torture rather than enjoyment. Gartartan laid it down as the first rule that baggage should be cut down to the "irreducible minimum." What we could not conveniently carry, we found we could, without much trouble, send on in advance by rail to the town we selected as the "objective" point of our journey. My friend insisted on saying that a good pedestrian could travel all over Scotland with no more luggage than this: a tweed suit, a good waterproof coat, a pair of leggings, a towel, a couple of woollen shirts, three or four pairs of woollen socks—this being the only article of apparel which it is pardonable to carry in quantity—a stout walking umbrella, a pair of slippers, a map, a compass, a pocket spirit-flask, a big tin box of wax-matches, a bottle of tincture of arnica, a note or sketch book, and a good field-glass. Possibly I might have found my tour a painful and laborious business, had I not been under shrewd guidance. In no other way could I have avoided those little mistakes that make walking tours miserable. Gartartan, in the matter of food, had catholic tastes. His rule, which I had to follow, was to take "whatever was going," but to restrict himself to two good "square meals" a day—breakfast and supper. Hunger on the march can be appeased by a biscuit, or a bit of oatmeal bannock, and a "waucht" of milk, which one can generally purchase at a wayside hamlet on the road. In fact, milk or milk-and-water is the best and safest drink the Highland tourist can indulge in. Next to it sherry-and-water and claret-and-water have their partisans. But one liquor is so universally reprobated by knowing pedestrians, that to be seen quaffing it on the tramp marks you as a raw hand. That liquor is whisky. On the march, to drink whisky in nine cases out of ten simply entails a humiliating breakdown. No man who is bent on pleasure should walk beyond his natural strength; and, unless he wants to over-exert himself, he has no need of stimulants whatever. City men usually dread a walking tour because they get foot-sore. The best way to remedy this, we found, was to apply tincture of arnica to our feet at nights, and put on clean socks each morning. It is not difficult to make one's socks last well if just before going to bed the pair that has gone through the day's work be but rinsed and wrung

out of cold water, and hung up to dry during the night.

One other bit of advice I thoroughly approve of. Gartartan said we must begin gently with easy stages, so as to let the body harden and set under the gradually increasing strain of exercise. Hence the first day we set out we determined to go no further on our road to Perth than Queensferry. I cannot say that the first stages of the route conveyed any cheering impressions of what was likely to be before me. Possibly, if I had to go over the ground again, I would seek out a steamer that sails from the port of Leith at strange and capricious hours, and runs up the Forth as far as Stirling, and go by it to Queensferry. It is a flat, straight, uninteresting road for the most part, so that when towards the end of the journey the waving woods of Dalmeny and Lord Roseberry's park are reached one feels one's spirits rising; and then, finally, when South Queensferry comes in sight, nestling by the sparkling waters of the Frith of Forth, one is apt to exaggerate the beauty of the peaceful lowland landscape that unfolds itself to the view. When we crossed to the opposite shore, we found we could either put up at a comfortable hostelry in North Queensferry or push on to Inverkeithing; but after some consideration we decided we had done enough for that day, and so we stopped where we were, and "loafed" about the sea-shore. Next day, however, in the bright early morning, we made a start for Inverkeithing, from which we made a *détour* so as to reach Dunfermline. I was anxious to see the old historic town in which "the king sat drinking the blude-red wine," when he sent for Sir Patrick Spars and ordered him to sail "away, away to Norroway," and bring home his royal bride. The old palace—where, by the way, the ill-fated Charles I. first saw the light—is now a crumbling ruin; but the abbey, though maimed by some "improving" Vandal, we found still showing signs of antique magnificence, as befits the sepulchre that enshrines the bones of the prince. Bearing eastwards a by-road enabled us to strike the highway at Crossgates, and from this we walked straight ahead, crossing several bright rippling streams by the way, till we halted at Kinross, on the lovely shores of Loch Leven. We spent one day—and we might have spent many—at this Arcadian spot. The peerless silver-grey trout peculiar to the lake, and notable for their rich, bright red, luscious flesh, afforded us some sport. Boating and fishing are the favourite pastimes of the place; and, amongst other things, we rowed to one of the islets in the loch, where "naked stand the melancholy walls" of the crumbling keep which three centuries ago was Mary Stuart's dungeon. Next day's march opened up to us the valley of Glenfarg, embosomed in the wooded heights of the Ochils; and after a pleasant walk through many smiling wayside hamlets, we crossed the Bridge of Earn—scaled the Hill of Moncreiffe, from whose broad shoulder we had unrolled before our eyes a grand panorama. There was the rich Carse of Gowrie—"the glory of Scotland," famed in song and story. The slanting sunbeams

struck the gleaming waters of the Tay. Those grey spires and towers and those rich emerald meadows tell where the fair city of Perth stands; and then, away to the north, the straining eye gets a glimpse of the mist-veiled screen of the Grampians.

We determined not to "loiter;" so I have no very clear impressions of Perth beyond this—that it seemed a quiet, prosaic county-town, blessed with comfortable but by no means inexpensive hotels. Next day we again made the march a short one, and in a leisurely way strolled on to Dunkeld—a picturesque old cathedral town, girdled by waving woods. We had even time to get a peep at the "Rumbling Bridge," of which the Dunkeldians are inordinately proud. It spans a rocky chasm through which the brawling Braan pours a foaming torrent. Gartartan now alleged that we ought to "buckle to" our work in more serious fashion. We ought by this time to be sufficiently hardened to undertake a big tramp of twenty-one miles and "a bittock." For my part I did not mind the miles so much as the "bittock" in these northern wilds. We made an early start, however, and soon broke into one of the weirdest and most desolate mountain-roads in Scotland—a road every foot of which, almost, was historic ground—haunted by melancholy memories of Viscount Dundee and the partisans of the House of Stuart, and their last desperate struggle for power. We determined to reach Blair Athole by bed-time at least, and so we followed the Tay for a few miles, resting for a little at Moulicam Inn; passed "the Tummel and banks of the Garry," and the dark gorge of Killiecrankie; crossed the Bridge of Tilt; and toiled on doggedly till we reached the old village and inn of Blair. We made sad havoc amongst the ham and eggs that night, and caught ourselves dozing afterwards in the most vacuous manner possible. The next day was Sunday, and although we "gaed to the kirk," we were but "half-day hearers"—in fact, we "loafed" and rested as much as possible. We went early to bed, and were called early next morning, when we started for a still longer tramp of three-and-twenty miles to Dalwhinnie. Wild, stern, and terribly desolate was the Alpine tract through which we plodded, till our road wound through the savage pass of Drumwuchter, and took us over the boundary of Inverness-shire. Seldom have I ever seen a happier or more sudden contrast than the change from this fierce mountain wilderness to the pretty, peaceful, wooded grove in which Dalwhinnie lies embowered. Here we found out from two young gentlemen, medical students from the Edinburgh University engaged on a botanical tour, with whom we had "forgathered" on the road, that a cross-road—or rather the remains of an old military road—branched off westwards, and struck the Caledonian Canal at Fort Augustus. They meant to follow it up, but not being so experienced a mountaineer, I resolutely held out against joining their party, and at last even Gartartan admitted that it was not altogether a safe thing to get lost in Coryyaraick, or go tumbling about its misty precipices. What became of our friends I know not, for they

parted company with us here, leaving us to go on to Kingussie—a long tramp taking us over the Truim and the foaming Spey.

There is little to detain the tourist at Kingussie, so next morning we again took the road. One of the first things that struck us was Belleville, interesting to me as the place where the translator of Ossian dwelt in feudal retirement, and after we lost sight of it we pushed on through a curious combination of natural and artificial scenery, past the waving birch-woods of Kinrara, the gloomy pine-forest of Rothiemurcus, and over and along the majestic curves of the ever-present Spey. Airemore Inn, an hostelry at which even Shennstone would have loved to take his ease, we found a welcome haven of rest from the blinding rain that fell on us as we reached our weary journey's end. Contrary to expectation, we found there was a good deal to be done at Airemore. For one thing, it is wise to rest a day here before attempting the next long march to Inverness, and if the tourist object to "waste" a day in rest, he can, by the expenditure of a half-sovereign, and by liberal promises of "drams," get a pony and a guide to take him up the Cairngorm mountains, from whence, by the way, he can get to Deeside and finally to Aberdeen. Having rested thoroughly for a day, we started for Inverness. Birch-plumed Craigel-lachie, the rocky war-tryst or rendezvous of the Clan Grant, we saw from the wood soon after we left the inn. When we crossed the Dulnain, we found the sombre pass of Slochmuicht partially repaid exploration. The gloomy country of the Macintoshes, pine-fringed Loch May, bleak Strathnairn, all had a depressing effect on us, so that when I reached Inverness—"dead-beat," I think—I vowed I would never tramp in the Highlands again. Gartartan cheerily remarked we need walk no more now, except to take short strolls through and round about Inverness—a romantic town begirt with environs teeming with sylvan beauty, rich with storied memories of Duncan, Macbeth, Cromwell, and Prince Charlie—a town that seems to belong not to earth but to fairyland, lying as it does, nestling in a vale of dreamy grandeur. From Inverness our route was clear and easy. Our marching days were over. We spent a few days in the town, collected our baggage, and took a passage on one of the steamers that ply through the Caledonian Canal to the West Highlands and Glasgow.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the keen sense of enjoyment with which this homeward-bound journey filled us. To have no exertion to make, or nothing to do but lie on deck basking in the sunshine, as the boat wafts you through shining stretches of mountain-girdled lakes and "fiords," is possibly the most blissful mode of enjoying life I know of. Time would fail me to tell of the wonders of Loch Ness, and the purple hills of dark ragged woods, where, as Burns says, "the foaming Foyers pours his mossy floods" into a chasm of stupendous grandeur; of birch-clad Loch Oich, with the ruined stronghold of Glengarry keeping watch and ward over a depopulated domain; of Loch Eil, the home of the Camerons, with the sublime Alpine scenery of Ben Nevis, a rocky mountain

wilderness, lifeless and desolate as the grave; of Loch Linnhe, with the savage crags of Appin and the blue hills of Morven for its background; of the sacred island of Lismore, long the seat of the Bishops of Argyre; of wooded Loch Eitive, and the ruins of Dunstaffnage Castle, where once the Scone Coronation Stone, now in Westminster Abbey, was kept; of the noble sweep of Oban Bay, with the ivy-clad keep of Dunolly, the lonely stronghold of the old Lords of Lom, guarding its bluff northern cliffs. Merely to catalogue the names of these places is to suggest a moving panorama of enchanting beauty. Nor is the rest of the journey less interesting or picturesque. Our steamer leaving Oban has had to wind its way through a rugged archipelago, ere it glided into the Crinan Canal, which cuts the peninsula of Cantyre; down the sparkling waters of Loch Fyne, which the phosphorescent herring-shoals at night

turn into molten silver; past the sombre peaks of Arran; through the wooded strait called the Kyles of Bute to Rothesay Bay, from whence looking over the glassy waters on the further shore, a mountain barrier, pierced by great fiords or sea-lochs, is seen rearing itself in stately grandeur. The route is one that haunts the memory with visions of beauty that only fade with life itself. But for us the vision, at the time at least, vanished like a day-dream. A few hours steaming brought us to Glasgow—to the busy, pushing, work-a-day world of reality and fact—to scenes and sounds before which the romance of a Highland tour melted away like a cloud, into whose fleecy heart the Sun-god has shot one of his gleaming arrows. We bade good-bye to Dreamland, saying, "We *have* been there, and would go again." So, we venture to predict, will everybody say who this year follows our northward track.

CORRESPONDING WITH GOVERNMENT.

BY A GOVERNMENT CLERK.



GOVERNMENT" is something very impersonal, as all of us know; some of us, perhaps—inventors, more notably—think they know it to their cost. But few, however, are aware of the machinery by which the thread of continuity is maintained unbroken between "Government" and those who correspond with it by letter.

Of course, it is well understood that if the Vicar of Wakefield thinks proper to address the Prime Minister upon the claims of John the Ploughman to money due in respect of his great-grandfather killed on board the *Victory* at the battle of Trafalgar, the letter is sent on to the Admiralty; if the reverend gentleman feels that John's mother stands in need of out-door relief, instead of the "house," to whomsoever he may address himself, his letter will find its way to the Local Government Board. So far, then, from a general point of view, once a letter to "Government" is in the post-box it is sure to go right—with more or less delay.

But take the case of the man who, having over and over again vainly urged the Government any time during the last twenty years to construct torpedoes, declares that it is his very idea which the country is gladly adopting now. How is all the applicant's correspondence on the subject brought together and thus shown as a whole, no matter over how long a period it has extended?

To illustrate the plan actually followed it will be convenient to take some one particular large Department of Government—for every Department at present secures the same end by a different system. We will take the War Office, for that is certainly a large Department, and probably on that account well ad-

ministered as regards correspondence with the outside public.

It is Monday morning, and what with some foreign mails (all the heavier from the disturbed condition of the States in the Malay Peninsula, or the disembarkation of the Native Indian troops at Cyprus) some 3,000 letters have come in. At nine o'clock arrives at the War Office to meet them a staid, experienced, old-fashioned Government clerk. He may notice that the mail is unusually heavy to-day, but he is not to be flustered and hurried. His functions are very humble, he knows, but if his duties are not performed carefully delay and difficulties follow. First of all, protecting his hands by some leather finger-stalls, he proceeds to open the envelope and look at—rather than read—each of these 3,000 letters. More tents wanted at the Cape—and straight this goes into a tray labelled "Mr. Jones;" proposals for purchase of War Department land—"Jones" again; the Colonial Office thinks a battery of artillery necessary at Graham's Town—still "Jones's" tray; wrong rate of forage allowance issued to Colonel Busby—"Brown's" tray; anonymous letter, accusing a contractor of bribing officials—"Robinson's" tray. And so it goes on all through the 3,000 letters; each finds its way into one of these three trays, which from time to time are carried off to the desks of the three gentlemen named.

Now Brown, Jones, and Robinson are first-rate men, capable of seeing everything from a broad point of view, as well as maintaining the details of a complicated system. Each of these men really reads—more or less attentively—every one of the letters thus coming before him, and marks them with a number, according to the subject. The tents for the Cape may be 57-Cape; the purchase of land, 10.190; the artillery question, 20 a; the wrong forage allowance, 83-3; the bribery by the contractor, 0072; and so on. These letters are distributed from time to time,