

THE GLENS OF THE OCHILS.

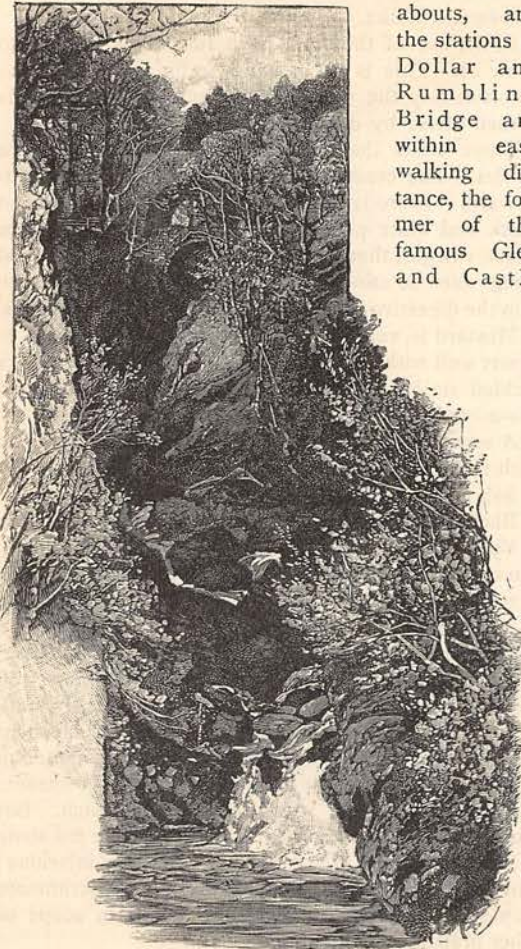


F holiday-makers bound for the Scottish Highlands and Islands will only be persuaded to break their journey at Stirling for a day or two, in order to taste the beauties of the Ochil Hills and the Devon Valley, they will find themselves amply repaid for the trouble.

I would urge them, however, to act upon this advice on their outward, not their homeward flight, for the same reason that it is always wiser and more enjoyable to inspect the water-colour collection before the oil paintings in the Royal Academy, or other gallery where both classes of works of art are exhibited. The gentler and quieter scenery of the Ochils, full of loveliness as it is, would not be properly appreciated after the grander or sterner picturesqueness of the Trossachs or Glencoe, of Skye or Loch Maree.

From Stirling to Kinross, the railway run takes an

hour and a half, or thereabouts, and the stations at Dollar and Rumbling Bridge are within easy walking distance, the former of the famous Glen and Castle



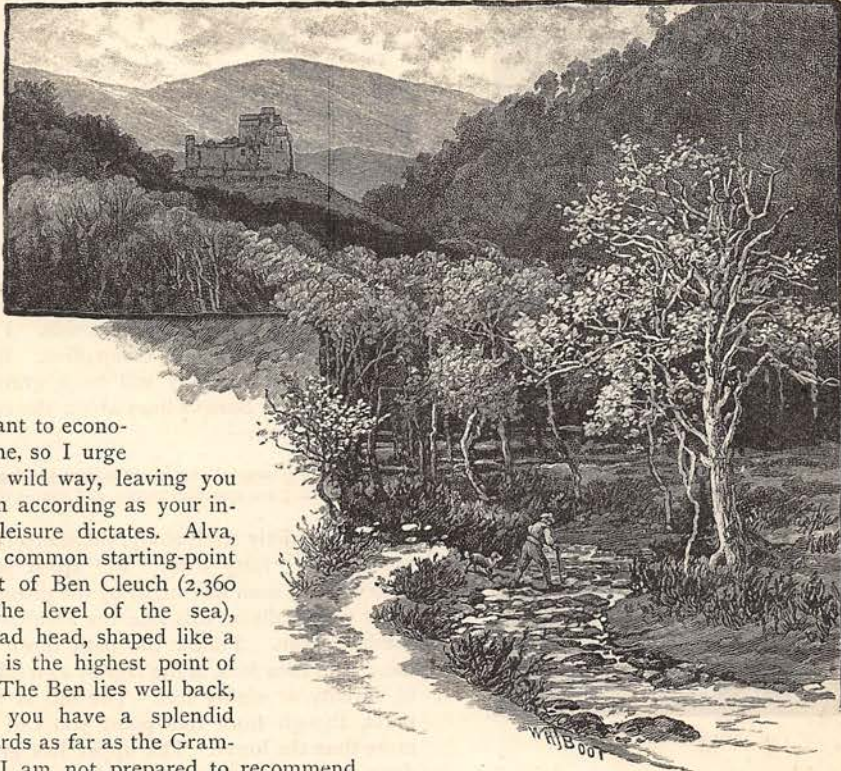
THE RUMBLING BRIDGE

Campbell, the latter of the Devil's Mill and the Falls of Caldron Linn. For those who prefer "Shanks's pony," there is a capital road, bordered nearly the whole way by the Ochils. The bracing mountain air invites you to foot it briskly, while hotels providing food for man and beast at moderate prices will be found at convenient intervals. Another consideration ought also to be mentioned. You will have the district (excepting, of course, the "hill-foot" towns) almost entirely to yourself, unless I shall succeed in my avowed aim of sending the health-and-rest seekers along with you in large numbers. Surely, an interesting locality, not yet overrun by tourists, ought to possess charms for a good many folk!

About a mile and a half from Stirling, travelling eastward, rises the Abbey Craig, a well-wooded spur of the Ochils, that forms an appropriate base for the monument which was raised some years ago to the "Wallace wight," and which is a conspicuous landmark for many miles. Climb the tower by all means if you can spare the time, and "view the landscape o'er." The links of the Forth will be traceable, and the venerable ruin of Cambuskenneth Abbey is easily visible between you and the river. Passing onwards through pretty Logie, you will soon arrive at the little village of Menstrie. Here lies the first large glen of the Ochils. It is, however, hardly worth while to explore its recesses, for an effort should certainly be made to ascend the hill of Demyat. Though not the highest peak (1,300 feet) of the range, this has the advantage of lying right in front, and the ascent can be effected even by ladies. The shoulder of the hill is a trifle stiffish, but this having been conquered, a gentle slope will carry you round gradually to the foot of the peak proper.

A personal experience may here be usefully related for the benefit of those who care to travel somewhat leisurely. If the company will take the trouble to pack up a parcel of sandwiches beforehand, and also carry with them a small kettle, some cups, a little tea, milk, sugar, and a few bits of firewood, let them partake of an *al fresco* lunch at this spot. There will be no difficulty in finding a spring of delicious water, and the meal can be despatched well within an hour. No banquet in the world will be more enjoyable, and the bare head of Demyat will be carried with the spirit and gallantry of an attacking force that knows no fear. The view from the peak is considered to be one of the finest in the kingdom. The serpentine windings of the Forth lie below you, clearly delineated as on a map, while the making-out of the leading features in the landscape will furnish agreeable amusement, and prevent your well-earned rest from becoming monotonous.

Returning to the high road, you will soon touch at the thriving manufacturing town of Alva. The two glens here—Alva and the Silver Glen—are worth a



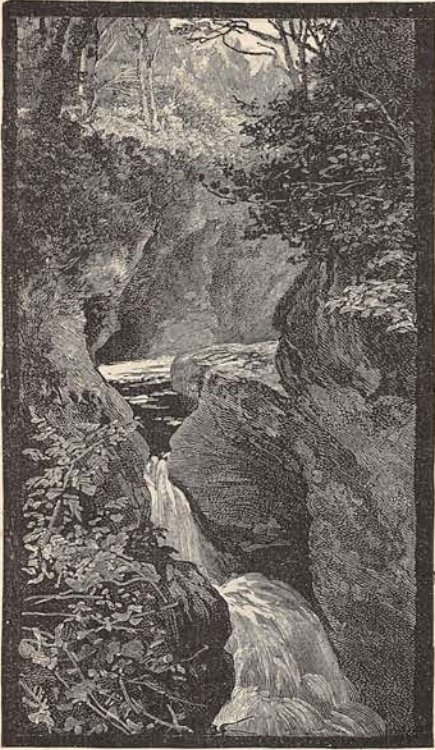
CASTLE CAMPBELL AND DOLLAR GLEN.

visit, but I want to economise your time, so I urge you on your wild way, leaving you to "do" them according as your inclination or leisure dictates. Alva, however, is a common starting-point for the ascent of Ben Cleuch (2,360 feet above the level of the sea), whose turf-clad head, shaped like a whale's back, is the highest point of the Ochils. The Ben lies well back, and, though you have a splendid view northwards as far as the Gramscian range, I am not prepared to recommend the ascent to those who are pushed for time. I will add that the descent can be managed much more speedily by coming right down from the hill, and emerging by Tillicoultry Glen. This route is avoided in the climb, as it is steeper and more arduous than the roundabout track from Alva. Tillicoultry, another hive of industry, is the home of William Gibson, the chronicler of the district, whose genial book of reminiscences abounds with interesting historical notes of the "hill-foot" towns and the mansions of "the gentry." A little to the east of Tillicoultry lies Harvieston Castle, with its associations of Robert Burns and Archbishop Tait.

Not far from Tillicoultry is situated the pleasant town of Dollar. This *must* be one of your stopping-places. The Glen and Castle Campbell once seen will hardly be forgotten. Scarcely have you entered the former than you are surrounded by trees and bushes, ferns and foxgloves, while far down, and often invisible, brawls the stream that is cutting the gorge still deeper. Pursuing the easy and safe pathway, you will, in due course, reach the foot-bridge that carries you over the stream, and brings you within sight of a gruesome gully called Kemp's Score. This is a long, narrow, almost perpendicular rent in the rock, like a huge natural ladder without rungs, and dark as midnight, but for the glimpse of blue sky at the other end. Mr. Gibson says that in his young days it used to be considered a great feat among the boys to climb the Score. He did it himself once, and his chum on the occasion stuck fast when he was half-way up. Here the lad

yelled out instructions for his supper to be let down to him, but this was probably a little bit of bounce, just to keep up his spirits. At any rate, despair lending him more power and pluck, he buckled to the task, and achieved the ascent safely. It was a harum-scarum exploit, full of danger, and to be severely condemned.

Crossing the bridge, and pursuing a somewhat upward path, you will soon get glimpses of grey old Castle Campbell, and will speedily find yourself within the precincts of this fine ruin. Standing in solitary grandeur on a high rocky cliff above the junction of two burns, named Care and Sorrow, and surrounded by beautifully-wooded gorges, this venerable pile—once, no doubt, the scene of bloody frays and other lawless doings—possesses quite a singular charm for the lover of the peaceful and the picturesque. Fully four hundred years ago this stronghold seems to have passed into the hands of the Campbells, who retained possession of it till the beginning of this century, when the Duke of Argyll sold it to Mr. Tait, of Harvieston. Its ancient name appears to have been Glaume, or Gloom, and this circumstance may have originated the fanciful etymology which derives Dollar from Dolour (grief), and gives the aforesaid burns their titles of Care and Sorrow. The tenants of the castle evince great interest in visitors, and, for a consideration, will dispose of a tumbler of new milk and a scone, or a photograph or other memento. As you



THE DEVIL'S MILL.

climb the tower, you will be struck with the substantial character of the rooms on the different floors, the outer walls being some seven or eight feet thick. The view from the tower-top is of surpassing loveliness. On either side the gently-rising Ochils, below the bonny Glen, beyond Dollar village and the farms of the strath, with the spires and tall chimneys of Alloa's churches and mills in the distant background—these all combine to compose a scene for which the only proper epithet is "picturesque" in the landscape painter's sense of the term. Having "done" the Castle, you may, if, like Sairey Gamp, you feel "so disposed," continue your stroll a little farther up the hill and see the Sochie Falls. Then you will retrace your steps to Dollar Station or to the high road, and wend your way to Rumbling Bridge.

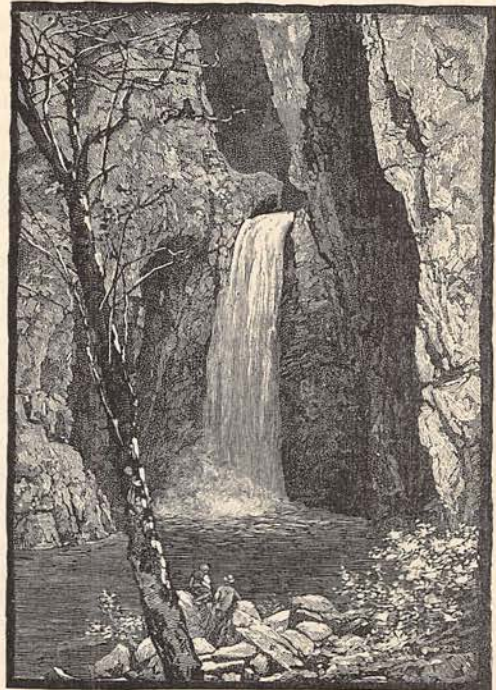
At this spot, within a very short compass, you will find a group of scenic "bits," which will show you what Dame Nature can do in the way of variety, without in the least suggesting what is artificial. Passing through the grounds of the hotel, you will direct your steps, first of all, to the Devil's Mill. Rowland Hill complainingly remarked that he didn't see why the devil should have all the fine tunes. Perhaps a humble but too late protest may be entered against the custom which our forefathers adopted of naming most of the beautiful eccentricities—if I may say so—of natural scenery after this fashion. The Devil's Mill is formed by the rush of the Devon through a narrow precipitous gorge, from which the river emerges over a small fall into a large basin, where it looks like

a mass of seething water. Listen, and you will hear, ever and anon, the *clack-clack* which accounts for the "mill" part of the title.

Following the river in its flow amid banks prettily timbered with the rowan and other trees, you will soon arrive at the "two brigs." The older bridge, now moss-covered and, fortunately, inaccessible, lies several feet, but in the same vertical line, below the newer one, which conveys the high road over the Devon. This sight you will admit to be unique. The two bridges, with their picturesque surroundings, will be "made a note of" in the traveller's sketch-book. Returning for a moment to the public way, you will cross the bridge and rejoin the river on the other side. For some distance it will be your only companion. But the scene of placid sylvan beauty will be a grateful foil, and you will accept Burns's lines about the crystal stream in lieu of better:—

"How pleasant the banks of the clear winding Devon,
With green spreading bushes, and flowers blooming fair!"

As you quietly stroll along, the sharp darting movement of a "lusty trout" will arrest your eye, and your ear will soon be caught by the distant roar of the finest water-falls on this side the Ochils—namely, the Caldron Linn. Follow the path down the steepish bank, and then look at the Devon as it takes its header of seventy or eighty feet. The fall is really in two parts, though from this point you can see scarcely more than the lower. The upper has gradually worn down through the rock, and formed round pots, or *caldrons* (connected right across the stream), and through these the water boils and surges; hence the



THE CALDRON LINN.

name. *This* fall can be viewed well only from the north side of the river, on the Blairhill estate, which used to be open to visitors, but, alas! is now forbidden ground. The middle pool, in which the Devon gathers breath, as it were, for its second plunge, is very deep, and the bottom pool, into which it leaps, was of considerable dimensions until largely filled up with an immense quantity of rock which "slipped" a few years ago. The attraction of these falls is their grace. When the river is in spate, the volume of water is of course much larger; but it may be claimed for the Caldron Linn over, perhaps, even more celebrated falls, which depend almost entirely upon mass of water for their effect, that it is always graceful, elegant, and pleasing. You may rest and be thankful here, for your journey with me ends at this spot. The walk back to the station will, of course, consist in simply retracing your steps.

It has been my object to briefly portray scenes of undoubted charm and beauty which are well deserving a visit, but which only a very small number of tourists have hitherto found it possible to see. The question of breaking new ground on the annual holiday (always an important matter) may be partially solved by following my advice. By taking the scenery of the Ochils

and the Devon Valley in a leisurely fashion, a week could be easily and profitably disposed of. You would "do" Stirling, the Abbey Craig, and Cambuskenneth Abbey to start with, and you would gradually work your way eastward to Kinross and Lochleven, with its memories of the hapless Mary. Those, however, who would not care to run the risk of spending so much time in this locality, could without the smallest trouble visit Dollar Glen, Castle Campbell, and the Rumbling Bridge, with its curious group of natural features—the Devil's Mill, the "twa brigs," the river-side, and Caldron Linn Falls—in a day.

As my wish has been to be practical throughout, I will finish, as I began, with some business-like details. Look out the railway times in your time-tables, then start from Stirling by the first train; stop at Dollar for the Glen, Castle Campbell, and a *snack*. Join the train again for Rumbling Bridge. Visit the scenes described, and return to Stirling. In mapping out the day's work, I have erred rather than otherwise on the side of "taking things easily," for there would be time to run on from Rumbling Bridge, and get a glimpse of Kinross and Lochleven, and then return by the last train to Stirling. Next morning your journey northward would be resumed.

J. A. M.

NED.

A STORY IN RHYME.

NED?
Ned's dead!
Mid winter snow,
A year ago
This very day,
Ned passed away!
And better so.

Why should he die?
Why better so?
You want to know?
I'll tell you why.

You knew poor Ned?
Knew that his life
Was just a strife
For daily bread?
Three years ago,
Thinking that what
He knew was not
Enough for one
Might do for two—
As men *will* do,
In bat-blind way—
Ned took a wife,
And all his life
Was glad that day!
And for awhile
Beamed Fortune's smile;
Plenty of work,
Plenty to spend;
Then, all too soon,
Came the sad end!
Trade was depressed,
And work was scant;
And to the nest
Came care and want,
And with them, too,

Ned's first-born child.
A blessing? True,
Had Fortune smiled—
A blessing rare!
But now, alas!
It brought new care,
New pangs!—well, there,
It came to pass
(The tale's soon told)
That one by one
Ned's sticks were sold!
Work there was none!

Then, in despair,
Ned gambled, lost
The few poor coins
Earned at high cost
Throughout the day!
Threw them away
Night after night:
Then, wan and white,
Eyes haggard, wild,
Went home to see
His wife and child
In misery,
Starving and cold!
Yet such a hold
Had gambling got—
So bright the cup,
That give it up
Poor Ned could not,
But dreamt that still
Some chance would fill
His hands with gold.

So, day by day,
From child, and wife,

And man, the life
Ebb'd fast away.

At last one night
Luck took a turn!
Ned's hopes came right:
Fate, cold and stern,
Passed by or slept!
At one swift bound
Ned's shilling leapt
Into a pound,
The pound to ten!

And then,
Life bright with joy,
Which seemed *so* black,
He hurried back
To wife and boy,
To find them—*dead*!

Poor Ned!
That awful night
His brain gave way,
The doctors said:
And well it might!
And then to-day,
A year ago,
When winter snow
Hid all the way,
Ned thought, they say,
That wife and child
From heaven above
Looked down and smiled
With eyes of love!
And with a cry
Of joy, too deep
For words to tell,
Ned fell asleep!

GEORGE WEATHERLY.