



THE TOWN OF AVOCH, BLACK ISLE.

THE BLACK ISLE.

DESCRIBED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY
HENRY HARBOUR.

THERE are not a few things that ought to be renamed. The Black Isle is one of them, for it is neither black nor an isle. A glance at a map of Scotland will show that the district in question is a peninsula situated a little to the north of Inverness. Unfortunately, the map will not show that the term "black" is as libellous as "isle" is inappropriate. If you could meet with one that presented the Black Isle in its true colours, you would see that in due season it is green with the foliage of many trees, rich herbage, and springing crops; that it is a peaceful, restful, healthful tract; and that, when the summer sun is in the sky, it is an ideal land for the man with a fagged brain or a weary body.

Most visitors make their headquarters at Fortrose or Rosemarkie, two adjacent diminutive towns whose origin is lost in the mists of antiquity, and that can look back on days of greatness and renown. Fortrose is the terminus of a short branch railway which at its other extremity is connected with the main line between Inverness and the north of Scotland.

There was a time in the history of Fortrose

when it was a cathedral city and one of the chief seats of learning in the country. For a cathedral the church was small, but it was a gem. A great part of the once glorious structure was carried off to Inverness, there to be used by the builders of Cromwell's fort. Its style of architecture was the purest and most elaborate "middle pointed," and the marvellous beauty of the mouldings is still apparent in the portion that has hitherto defied Time and other despoilers. The chapter-house is a part of that which has escaped destruction, and is now used as the Town Hall and Council Chamber.

Just a mile from the ruined cathedral is the church of Rosemarkie, a burgh that claims to be older than Fortrose, but now may be taken as a thriving suburb of its sister, for villas are arising to meet the wants of its summer patrons. Both towns are on the coast, but Rosemarkie has by far the better frontage to the sea, its beach being of firm, clean sand and serving as the bathing-ground of the district. Of course, the golfers are in evidence. They exercise their skill on a spit of land that extends like a long finger into the Firth.



FORTROSE CATHEDRAL.

From Rosemarkie you step into the Fairy Glen, the goal of picnic parties, where a tumbling stream and thickly clustering trees and flowers and ferns combine to make the ravine worthy of its name.

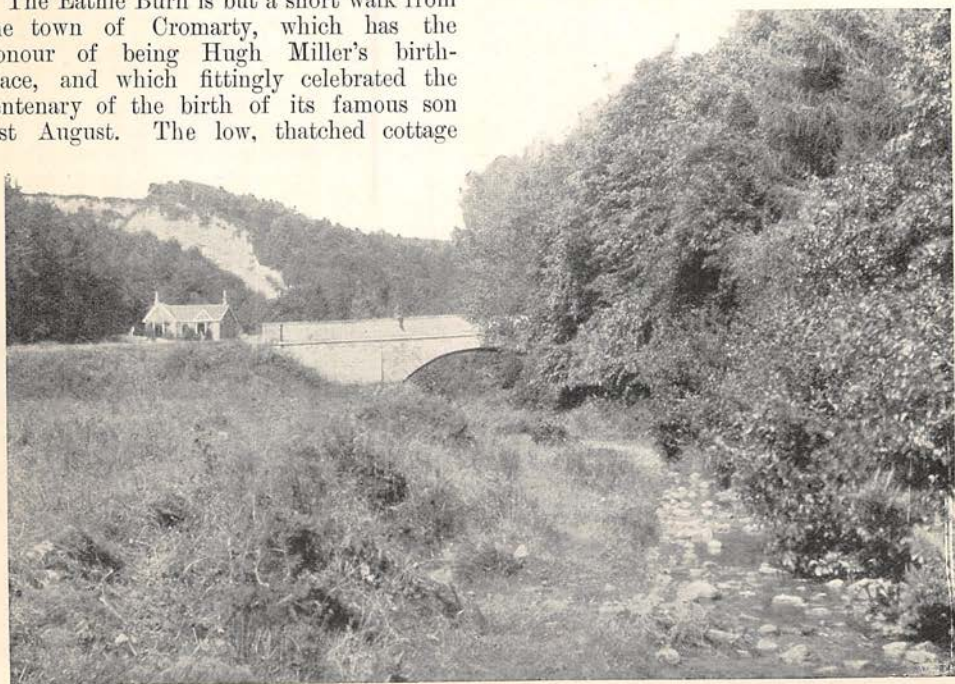
A walk by the coast brings you to the Eathie Burn, that flows through a secluded dell of great beauty, and famed as the scene of Hugh Miller's early discoveries. His "Schools and Schoolmasters" is a book that must not be omitted from the literary provision made for a holiday in the Black Isle.

The Eathie Burn is but a short walk from the town of Cromarty, which has the honour of being Hugh Miller's birthplace, and which fittingly celebrated the centenary of the birth of its famous son last August. The low, thatched cottage

in which he was born is carefully preserved, and is annually visited by hundreds of heroworshippers. In one of the rooms there are exhibited fossils that he collected, some of his manuscripts, and letters that he received from Ruskin, Carlyle, Darwin, and other eminent persons. Adjoining the cottage is a larger house, in which he lived for many years. It was built for his father, but was never inhabited by him, as he was drowned on the voyage that was immediately to precede his removal to the new home. On high ground hard by is a

lofty pillar surmounted by Hugh Miller's effigy.

Cromarty is one of the many towns that have seen better days. Centuries ago it was a royal burgh, but when times got bad the privileges conferred by the position did not compensate for the financial burdens that came with the honour; and so in 1672 it petitioned to be struck off the list, and its prayer was granted. Once a flourishing port, it is now a quiet, sleepy little place, in which the arrival and departure of the mail-



FAIRY GLEN, NEAR ROSEMARKIE.



ROSEHAUGH.

car that runs to and from Fortrose, the coming and going of the tiny steam-launch that maintains communication with the railway at Invergordon on the opposite side of the bay, and, still more, the movements of the larger steamers that regularly call, are events of prime importance.

From the windows of its chief hotel, a model of cleanliness and of sweet reasonableness in its charges, you look straight down into the superb inlet that bears the name of the town, and across the western shore until your vision is bounded by the huge bulk of Ben Wyvis, some twenty miles away. The inlet is the pride of Cromarty and the delight of its boat-loving visitors. It is deep enough to float great battleships, large enough to hold a navy, and as safe as a haven can be. The narrow entrance is

guarded by two lofty headlands called the Sutors, and said to be the petrified remains of a couple of gigantic shoemakers who had but one last, which they were wont to throw to each other across the strait.

The hill on the south, or Cromarty side, is one of the points to which visitors to Cromarty make their way, for the sake of the exquisite view that the summit affords.



HUGH MILLER'S BIRTHPLACE, CROMARTY.
(The thatched cottage on the left.)

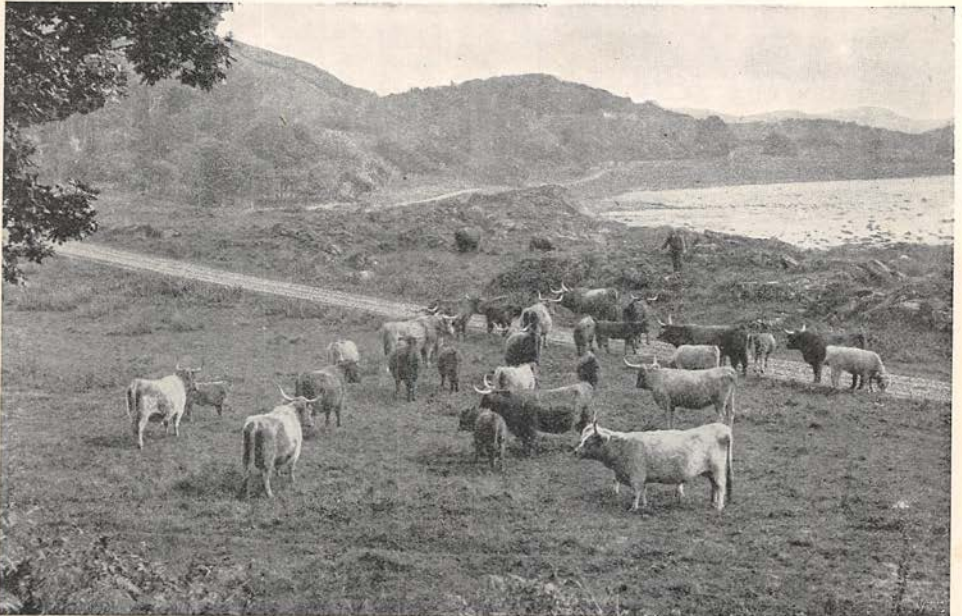
Leading to the top are paths made by Mr. George Ross, "the Scotch agent," referred to by Junius as the worthy confidant of Lord Mansfield. Ross bought the estate, and set himself to develop it and to render Cromarty "worth while for a Londoner to visit." The town is that; but its attractions are those with which Nature has endowed it, and the associations that centre in a certain small thatched cottage.

But all that is of interest in the Black Isle is not found in Fortrose or the country to the east of it. One of the most picturesque bits in the peninsula extends along the coast westward to the little town of Avoch. And Avoch itself is not attractive only for the beauty of the scenery in its vicinity. It appeals to those with antiquarian tastes as the site of the Castle of Ormond that "gave styles to sundry earls, and last to the princes of Scotland." And then within view of Avoch is the large and ornate mansion of Rosehaugh, upon which fabulous sums of money have been spent. On high ground

it stands, backed by noble pine woods and fronted by broad acres where browse the famous herds and studs of the home farm.

Then, again, away in the west are Tarradale House, in which Sir Roderick Murchison, the great geologist, was born, and Kilcoy Castle and Red Castle, the last-named being of interest as one of the oldest inhabited mansions in the north, and also from its historical associations. It is said to have been built in 1179 by William the Lion; Queen Mary is said to have graced it by her presence; and in the troublous days of the Commonwealth it was set on fire by Cromwell's men. It is now one of the seats of Mr. J. E. B. Baillie, of Dochfour, and has been greatly improved by him.

Before the opening of its railway in 1894, the Black Isle suffered from its comparative inaccessibility, as well as from the prejudice aroused by its name. It has now only the latter to contend against, and that will slowly but surely vanish.



"HIGHLANDERS."

A photographic study by Charles Reid, Wishaw.