

## I.

TRADITIONS OF GLENURCHAY: BLIND HARRY'S NARRATIVE OF SIR WILLIAM WALLACE'S EXPEDITION INTO ARGYLLSHIRE, ELUCIDATED BY THE HELP OF LOCAL TOPOGRAPHY AND TRADITION; ALSO A SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE ON THE OSSIANIC TALES OF THE BRAES OF LORN. By ARCHIBALD SMITH, M.D.<sup>1</sup> (MAP, PLATE XLIII.)

I need not here remind Scottish antiquaries, and the readers of the "Wallace Papers," printed for the Maitland Club, that the poem called "The Wallace," by Blind Harry, has been too harshly served by hostile criticism; and that, far from being beneath the notice of the historian, in many important particulars recently brought to light, it is found highly deserving of historical consideration.

In perusing the episode of Wallace's adventure in the defile of the Awe and Brander in Argyllshire, I observe that a perfect accordance exists between the minstrel's narrative, and the more ample local traditions of the parish of Glenurchay and Innishail on the same interesting subject, with which I was familiar sixty years ago, and which have come transmitted to us from one generation after another as the long-cherished reminiscences of local history among a community who were allied to their chiefs, and interested, as members of one family, in the achievements of their ancestors. How a man blind from his birth could compass the exact topographical knowledge of a proverbially inaccessible district—the ancient stronghold of the Campbells of Argyll and Braedalbane, whose war-cry it was—"It is a far cry to Lochow"—it is not easy to conceive; but through whatever channel he may have had his information, nothing can be more certain than that the minstrel's details are all consistent the one with the other, and in perfect keeping with the particular character of the hills, rocks, lakes, and intricate windings and passes of Wallace's line of march, from the highlands of Perthshire to the reputed scene of his victorious exploit in Lorn.<sup>2</sup> So marked a

<sup>1</sup> See note at the end of this Communication respecting the decease of the Author.

<sup>2</sup> In the tract entitled "Commentarius in Relationes Arnaldi Blair," edited among other Wallace Papers, and included in a volume entitled "De Gestis illustr. Herois Gulielmi Vallae, &c., Collectaneæ," by Andreas Symson (Edinburgh, 1705), I find it

concurrence between the unchangeable features of nature, the story as given by the minstrel, and the treasured memories of independent ancient tradition, cannot be reasonably disposed of as accidental coincidences; and, surely, no one will be so credulous as to ascribe such agreement as this, among three distinct sources of testimony, to the mere idle invention of a blind poet. Allowing that Blind Harry's poem of "The Wallace" is dated so late as 1470, or 165 years after the death of Wallace, the interval was not too great to prevent the existence of fresh traditions of his achievements. At a distance of 150 years the affair of Sheriff Muir in 1715 is fresh in the memory of the Highlanders to this day, and even the outrages of Montrose at Inverary are not yet forgot.

The second decade of the present century witnessed the dispersion of the native gentry of the braes of Lorn, as no longer necessary to support the ancient chieftainship and patriarchal dignity of the noble proprietor of the land. Wide tracts of hill and strath changed occupants, and were stocked successively by sheep and deer. New connections, new associations, and the rapid influx of entire strangers, or outlying adventurers from Breadalbane, supplied the exodus of the old Celtic population of this beautiful parish, and so altered its social aspect that its ancient tales and traditions have almost disappeared. (See p. 237.) The last reciter of what is known as Ossianic poetry was an old and illiterate woman, named Christy M'Nicol, of the Arivean tribe, who died in 1864.

recorded:— "*That while Wallace was busied in the Highlands of Lennox, Argyll, and Lorn,*" the Lord William Douglas took by stratagem from the English the castle of Sanquhar, in the county of Dumfries, and dispatched a messenger to Wallace, then in Lennox, asking him to come to his assistance with an armed force; which Wallace promptly did, and drove the enemy over the Borders. This event is said to have occurred in the year 1298; but I shall have occasion to observe in another note, that the Lochow expedition of Wallace must have been as early as 1297, and that his presence in Lennox, just before his enterprise in raising the siege of Sanquhar, was after his return from Lorn, appears at least very probable. Wallace having defeated M'Fadyen, and destroyed his Irish followers at the Pass of Awe, would naturally recruit his own adherents from those Scotsmen whose lives he had caused to be spared in that conflict; so that, by this accession of armed men, he would be in a fit condition to undertake such an exploit as was required for the relief of Sanquhar. From the head of Lochow it would be easy in a few hours to reach the Lennox, at the head of Lochlomond, by the Caoran-mor foot-path across the boundary-hills and moor that separate Glenurchay from Glenfalloch.

In addition to these preliminary notices, let me now point out some salient points of topography, which I shall have occasion to touch upon in following up the thread of Blind Harry's narrative.

*Local Topography.*

Beinn-Cruachan consists, as its name imports, of an aggregate of "Cruachs," or hill-stacks, each of which has its own distinguishing name. Thus Cruachan proper, with its three culminating peaks, rises in the background from the shores of Loch Etive (1 of diagram).



Lochawe and Cruachan from the heights above Cladich.

1. The peaks and central corrie of Cruachan. 2. The ravine and waterfall of Easdurchabeann. 3. The run or shelf called Coire-na-ruaig. 4. The entrance to Coire-glas. 5. Creag-an-araidh. 6. The ridge of Creag-an-uni. 7. The ferry of Rudh or Rue. 8. Island of Innishail. 9. Island of Innish-draoidhnic. 10. Froach-ellan.

Beinn-a-bhuiridh (Benvuri) is the wood-skirted hill which faces Loch Awe, to the east of the waterfall, and its ravine called Easdurchabeann (2); and about two-thirds up its side is the shelf-like rut called "Coire-na-ruaig" (3, 3).

Behind Beinn-a-bhuiridh, and between it and Cruachan proper, there

is a deep mountain hollow named Coire-glas (4). It opens at top into the central corrie of Cruachan, above the waterfall and ravine of Easdurchabeann.

Two or three hundred yards to the west of the said ravine, where its water is crossed by a bridge, stands the formidable ladder-rock, known in the district by the name of Creag-an-araidh (5). This name may have originated in a few steps of a ladder being used to cross a broken gap in the roadway, before a cart-road was made across the cliff in later times. A little to the west of the ladder-rock is "Leachd-ant-simir," so called from a broken ledge being there bridged over by a wooden beam to support the pathway in former times. The ladder-rock rises boldly from the very edge of the loch, with a broad base which extends westward for about a quarter of a mile; and opposite to this land-mark, on the other side of the gorge, where Loch Awe narrows into a strait, called Caol-abhraruth,<sup>1</sup> before its water bursts into the rugged channel of the river Awe, on its short but rapid course into Loch Etive, is the "*Crage-unyn*" of Blind Harry.<sup>2</sup>

This great crag is known to the natives of upper Loch Awe by its

<sup>1</sup> This Gaelic name is very appropriate, and means the strait of the rapid current. Thus Braruth, and in the possessive case Bhraruth, is derived from the compound word Bras-shruth, contracted into Bräruth, and Anglified into Brander. This narrow arm or trough of the loch at its outlet forms the rapid and brawling *stream of the river Awe*.

<sup>2</sup> In Dr Jamieson's edition of Blind Harry's "Wallace," for the *Crage-unyn* of the edition of 1714, he adopts the name *Crage-vuyn*; but why he uses this variation, so foreign to the local topography in question, he does not say; it is both gratuitous and erroneous.

Carrick, in his interesting "Life of Wallace," vol. i. p. 213, asserts in a note, that the minstrel calls Creag-an-araidh by the name *Crage-unyn*. But Blind Harry commits no such modern blunder. This mistake is one of Carrick's own fabrication, for he imagines that Creaganaraidh and Creaganaonaidh are but small deviations in the orthography of the same name, which is quite a mistake. These names apply to two separate landmarks, situated on opposite sides of the narrow arm of Loch Awe, as is familiarly known to every native Celt of the district. This mistake vitiates Carrick's description of Sir Neil Campbell's movements at the pass of Brander, for the historian supposes that this gallant chief had crossed from the left to the right side of the strait, in order to reach Creag-an-araidh, on which he supposes there had been a castle, only accessible on one side by a ladder, &c., which is a mere myth, and never once alluded to either by Barbour or Blind Harry.

old Gaelic name of Creag-an-aonaidh (*i. e.*, the one-faced rocky steep, or precipice), and is phonetically written Creag-an-uni (6). It is, in fact, one great and continuous precipice of crumbling crags and stony debris, with here and there patches of green pasture, which rises sheer from the deep dark water of the strait for its whole length of about a mile and a half.

On the lofty ridge of this hilly steep, which overshadows the narrow trough and area of the pass of Brander, it was that Sir Neil Campbell of Lochow took up his position (according to the tradition of the country, and very distinct narrative of Blind Harry), after he had crossed from the right to the left bank of the Brander, broke down the bridge, and thereby cut off the further progress of his pursuers.

From the promontory, or "rudh," on the property now called New Inverawe, but formerly Tirvine, there was, in the days of Sir Neil Campbell, a regular ferry communication (7) with

The island of Innishail (8), on which was a nunnery, chapel, and burying-ground; and also a ferry communication with

The island of Innish-draoidhnic (9) (or the Druid's Isle), close in upon the southern shore, with which it had access by stepping-stones in shallow water.

By looking at the relative map which accompanies this paper, it will be seen how easy it would be for Sir Neil Campbell, on learning of the immediate approach of Wallace by Glendochart, to vacate, under cover of night, his position on Creaganuni,<sup>1</sup> cross over by boat to Innish-draoidhnic, and, by noon of the following day, unite his own forces with those of the great defender of Scotland's liberties.

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Following Blind Harry's narrative, we learn that Duncan M'Dougall, brother of Alexander M'Dougall, then of Argyll and Lorn, was hard pressed by M'Fadyen, the leader of a motley army, chiefly Irish, in the service of Edward I., who at the time held John of Lorn, heir to the

<sup>1</sup>It may here be noticed that as the old knights of Lochow resided in their castle in the island of Innishonaill, they must have had boats of some kind on Lochow at a very remote period of their history; and we know that the castle of Froach-eilan, near the head of Lochow, and in the vicinity of Innishail, was built by King Alexander III., in the year 1267; so that boats must have been used there thirty years before the expedition of Wallace.

titles and estates of his father, Alexander of Argyll, a state-prisoner in England. Finding it necessary to retreat before the invaders of the lands of Lorn, Duncan M'Dougall fell back on the protection of his powerful neighbour, Sir Neil Campbell of Lochow. The minstrel thus relates the fact :—

“Duncan of Lorn yeit for the landis straiff,  
 Quhill MacFadyan ourset him with the laiff;  
 Put him off force to gud Cambell the Knyht,  
 Quhilk in to war was royss, worthi, and wicht.”

In a case involving common danger, this able chief readily came to the aid of M'Dougall, although the hereditary foe of his house.<sup>1</sup> The minstrel sums up Sir Neil Campbell's prompt movements in rapid outline :—

“The Knycht Cambell maid gud defens for thi;  
 Till Craige-unyn with three hundir he yeid,  
 That strength he held, for all his cruell deid;  
 Syne brak the bryg, quhar thai mycht nocht out pass;  
 But through a furd, quhar narrow passage was.”

See B. 7, line 645, &c.

Duncan of Lorn, when driven by the invaders from the environs of Dunolly and Dunstaffnage,—the stronghold of his chief and clan,—would no doubt direct his steps towards Innis-chonaill Castle, the seat of Sir Neil Campbell, on Nether-Lochow, from which the lands of M'Dougall were separated by a ridge of hills called the “Boundary String.” Innis-chonaill is an island with a castle thereon, near the furthest extremity of Lochow.

There was only one course of action open to the Knight of Lochow, who disdained to abandon by flight the shores of his own lake to the enemy. He at once resolved to lead his followers up the south side of Lochow,—from which the island Innis-chonaill is only separated by a deep and narrow channel of about thirty yards across,—and

<sup>1</sup> Sir Neil's father, the renowned Cailean-mor, from whom the noble family of Argyll derive their Highland patronymic “M'Cailean,” was slain on the string of hills, between Lochscammadale and Lochavich, in a skirmish with the M'Dougalls, headed by Iain Bachach (or, the lame John) of Lorn, in the year 1294. Near the spot where this great man fell, is still pointed out his mouldering *cairn*; but his body was interred in the ancient chapel or church of Kilichrenan.

rapidly marching to the east end of this noble sheet of water, he crossed the river Urchay, and descended along the south side of Beinn-cruachan, into the narrow pass of the Awe, at Brander, closely pursued by M'Fadyen. Here Sir Neil Campbell crossed from the right side of the deep and rapid river Awe, with all his followers, to the left side, and then broke down the bridge by which they had just crossed; and at once ascending the clifly ridge of Creag-an-aonaidh (phonetically, *Creag-an-uni*), he was in a position to look down with triumph on his foes, now caught in a trap from which they were never to extricate themselves. The minstrel forcibly depicts the difficulty of M'Fadyen's situation at this juncture :—

“Abandounly Cambell againe thaim baid,  
Fast upon Avis that was bathe depe and braid,  
MacFadyen was upon the tother syd,  
And on force behuft it him for to byd;  
For at the furde he durst nocht entir out,  
For gud Cambell mycht set him than in dout.”

B. 7, l. 655.

There is nothing now to show where the bridge here mentioned was situated, or of what it was constructed. But that there was a bridge Barbour attests, and says that, in following up the retreat of the men of Lorn, the king's adherents

“Held the brig haile, quhill the king  
With all the folk off his leding  
Passyt the brig all at thair ese.”

*The Bruce*, B. 7, l. 390.

It would then appear that, in the interval of about eleven years which elapsed between the military expedition of Bruce and that of Wallace into the pass of Awe, the bridge broken down, as related by Blind Harry, was reconstructed.<sup>1</sup>

Having placed the river between himself and M'Fadyen, Sir Neil Campbell could, with a handful of men, defend the ford from the multitude on

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed, in his “Chronicles of Scotland,” relates that in the year 1308 King Robert Bruce subdued Argyll, and took Alexander Lord of Argyll out of a strong castle; this fixes the date of Bruce's expedition two years after his own defeat at Dalrigh, or Dalree, by M'Dougall of Lorn.

the other side ; and urged by the emergency of the case, Duncan of Lorn, attended by his scout, Gylymychael, proceeded by the nearest footpaths across the hills to ask aid from Sir William Wallace, then in the neighbourhood of Stirling. The journey could be performed by an active pedestrian in a long summer day. From the minstrel we learn that the generous patriot entered warmly into the proposed enterprise, and having promptly assembled a band of faithful followers at Stirling bridge,

“Toward Argyll he bownyt him to ryd,  
Duncan of Lorn was thair trew sekyr gid.”

B. 7, l. 743.

But in these movements it was necessary to ascertain how the enemy was situated, and to act in concert with Sir Neil Campbell, and, therefore, the old scout Gylymychael was despatched to this valiant chief, still stationed on Creag-an-uni. And it is of importance to bear in mind that, on the shortest notice, he could move his men from this strategical position to the Rue of Tirvine, where a ferry was kept from time immemorial by a family of the name of M'Tavish ;<sup>1</sup> and from this point open communication existed across the boundary hills of the parish of Glenorchay with the head of Lochfine, the head of Lochlomond, and the head of Lochdochart—all of them within an easy day's march of the head of Lochow. (See the relative map of this paper.)

Gylymychael's nearest route from Stirling was by Callander, Balquhinder, and the old footpath between Glenfalloch and Glenurchay, through the moor of Caoron ; and that no time was lost in delivering his message is evident from the minstrel's statement, that the indefatigable scout, together with Sir Neil Campbell, and his 300 followers,

“That cruell was and keyne,”

joined Wallace's advanced column of 700 men, with himself at their head, in Glendochart.

<sup>1</sup> The M'Tavishes counted themselves older than the Clan-Donachie family of Inverawe, who were descended of Duncan Campbell, brother to Sir Neil Campbell of Lochow, the last of whom, in the direct male line, father and son, gallantly fell at Ticonderoga, in America, 1755. By a strange anachronism Carrick, in his “Life of Wallace,” vol. i. p. 211, confounds the founder of the Inveraw Campbells with Donnachadh dubh nau Caisteal (Black Duncan of the Castles), who lived 300 years later, and was the seventh Laird of Glenurchay, who died 1631.

"Dunkan off Loꝛne Gilmychall fra thaim send,  
 A spy to be, for he the contré kend.  
 Be our party was passit Straithfulan,  
 The small fute folk began to irk ilkane;  
 And horss, off fors, behuffyt for to fail.  
 Than Wallace thocht that company to waill,  
 'Gud men,' he said, 'this is nocht meit for us;  
 In brokeyn ray and we eum on thaim thus,  
 We may tak skaith, and harme our fayis bot small;  
 To thaim in lik we may nocht semble all.  
 Tarry we lang, a playne feild thai will get;  
 Apon thaim sone sa weill we may nocht set.  
 Part we mon leiff ws folowand for to be;  
 With me sall pass our power into thre.'  
 A hundyr fyrst till himself he has tayne,  
 Off Westland men, was worthi knawin ilk ane,  
 To Schyr John Grayme als mony ordand he,  
 And five hundreth to Richard off Lundy.<sup>1</sup>  
 Thus Wallace host began to tak the hicht;  
 Our a montayne sone passit off thar sicht,  
 In Glendowchar thair spy met them again,  
 With Lord Cambell."

B. 7, l. 761.

It is quite manifest, I think, from this quotation, that Wallace had entered the Highlands by the old road between Ardoch and Comrie, as his most direct way to St Fillan, which Blind Harry calls "Straith Furlan." It may, perhaps, have been so designated in the days of Wallace.<sup>2</sup> At any rate, whether the blind minstrel or his transcriber was right or was wrong

<sup>1</sup> According to the History of Walter de Hemmingford, Richard of Lundy was one of the Scottish "magnates" who at the treaty of Irvine (on 9th July 1297) surrendered to St de Percy in the name of the King of England; and we may therefore conclude that it was not later than some weeks at least before this date that Wallace's expedition into Argyleshire was undertaken; for if Richard of Lundy took a leading part in this adventure, it must have occurred before his defection from the cause of the great guardian of the liberties of Scotland. In our Scottish chronicles it sometimes happens that names, and it often happens that dates are wrong, where there is no doubt about the events related, and this especially is the case when these are handed down by oral tradition.

<sup>2</sup> King Robert the Bruce, in the tenth year of his reign, granted the church of Killin, at the foot of Glendochart, to the Abbey of Inchaffray, on condition that one of the canons should officiate in the kirk of Strathfillan, near Tyndrum. See Parish of Killin in the Old Statistical Account of Scotland.

as to the name, there can be no doubt from the context that he really meant the place we now call St Fillan. At this stage of his journey we read that he became impatient of delay, and choosing such men as were best able to bear the fatigue of a Highland district and a rapid march, he hurried over the mountains that separate Lochearnhead from Glendochart. If he advanced by the south side of Loch Earn from St Fillan, the most direct mountain path lay between the valley of Edinchip and Ardchyle, less than a mile below the present Inn of Luib; but if he followed the road on the north side of Loch Earn, then, as now, the way through Glenogle would be the easiest, especially for equestrians. There is a bridle path between Balquhidder and the head of Lochdochart by the Glen of Beinn-mor; but Wallace must have entered Glendochart lower down the foot of Beinn-mor, for the minstrel says that, after the Highland and Lowland forces had joined under their respective leaders in Glendochart, that on their march westward,

“ Be Louchdouchyr full sodeynly thaim drew.”

B. 7, l. 792.

But considering that the manœuvres of Sir Neil Campbell might have been watched, and his footsteps traced by the enemy's spies previous to his union with Wallace, the latter general took the wise precaution of sending the indefatigable Gylimychoel before them to reconnoitre the mountain pass, between the head-streams of the river Dochart and the valley of the Urchay, which latter place he anxiously pressed forward to reach unobserved by M'Fadyen. Gylimychoel was not long before he met a spy on the heath, and after procuring from this unlucky wight the information he wanted, slew him to prevent any further trouble.

“ Apon the moss a scourrou sone fand he,  
To scour the land Mak-fadyane had him send,  
Out of Crag-mor that day he thocht to wend.”

B. 7, l. 795.

Wallace was thus happily apprised of the position and intentions of the Irish general, who was about to wend his way that very day from before the great precipitous rock of Creag-an-uni. During his eagerness to overtake Sir Neil, M'Fadyen appears to have left behind him on the north side of Nether Lochow a quantity of cattle and commissariat supplies of

different kinds, which he was desirous to get back to, had time permitted ; but Duncan of Lorn's promptitude in bringing Wallace to the aid of Sir Neil Campbell frustrated his plans, and he had already lost too much time before Creag-an-uni in the hope of being able to assail the position of Sir Neil.

“MacFadyane socht and a small passage fand,  
Had he lasar, thai mycht pass off that land,  
Between a rock and the great water sid,  
But four in front, na ma mycht gang nor rid.”

B. 7, l. 658.

The rock here referred to could be no other than the ladder-rock “Creag-an-araidh,” though not specified by that name.<sup>1</sup> Were M'Fadyen only able to reach the open ground at the foot of the river Urchay before the arrival of Wallace, his vastly superior number of followers might have been all available at once, and given him some decided advantage, or at least secured for him a safe escape into Nether Lochow.

“In till Louchow was bestis gret plenti ;  
A quhill he thoct ther with his host to be,  
And other stuff that thai had with thaim brocht,  
But all his craft availyeit him rycht nocht.  
Dunkene of Lorn has seyne the sodeyne cace ;  
Fra gud Cambell he went to seik Wallace,  
Sum help to get off thair turment & tey'ne.”

But this was not to be. Wallace having arrived in the immediate vicinity of the place, now well known as the famous field of Dalree,

<sup>1</sup> Barbour, in his “Bruce,” describes this barrier rock of the Pass of Awe, and tells us that it was here John of Lorn (now returned from being a prisoner of Edward I, in England) had laid ambush for King Robert the Bruce, who approached this pass by the low road near the loch, while Douglas, with his light-armed archers, went round Beinn-a-bhuiridh by Coire-glas, and descending by the Corrie of Cruachan, took the men of Lorn in rear and flank, and completely discomfited them. In describing this position Barbour says,—

“The nethyr half was peralous,  
For a schor-crag, hey and hidwouss,  
Raucht to the se, down fra the pass.”

It is plain that if Sir Neil had led M'Fadyen at first through the pass of the ladder rock into the narrow area of the Brander, there would be no occasion of his again searching for it ; it is therefore certain that Sir Neil must have led the enemy in pursuit along the more circuitous path above the wood.

struck off to the left towards the foot of Beinn-looigh (Benloi). At this stage of their journey horses became an encumbrance, and dismounting on the moor, Wallace placed himself at the head of his followers on foot, and said encouragingly—

“Quha gangs best lat se,  
Through out the moss delyuerly thai yeid,  
Syne tak the hals, quhar off thai had most dreid.”

The hawse, or hals, here mentioned, is the pass called Bealach-choninish, for the word “hals” cannot apply to Glenlochay, and much less to the circuitous moor of *Caoran*, between Benloi and Glenfalloch. This defile is secluded, and in the present day only frequented by sheep and shepherds; but it is situated on the north side of the stately Benloi, and was straight-way in Wallace’s most direct line of march. After his party had passed through the hals, and descended into Glenlochay at Eas-morraig (four and a-half miles above Dalmally Inn), they crossed, according to tradition, the river Urchay, near to the foot of the water of Lochay, and thence continued their march on open ground (but which contracts into a narrow defile just opposite the parish kirk of Clachan Disart), between the river and the hills of Craig<sup>1</sup> and Edindomen.

“Endlong the schoir ay four in front thai past;  
Quhill thai within assemblit at the last.”

Having now gained possession of the eastern and north-eastern entrances of Beinn-cruachan, Sir Neil Campbell exults in the sure persuasion that M’Fadyen’s opportunity to “pass off that land” was lost, and says triumphantly,

“We haiff chewyss this hauld;  
I trow to God thair wakynning sall be cauld.  
Her is na gait to flee yon peple can,  
But roches heich, and water depe & wan.”

B. 7, l. 805.

The words “thair wakynning sall be cauld,” show that the Knight of Lochow

<sup>1</sup> Here “Craig” is the name of a farm, which is so called from Creag-mor (or, a *chreag-mhor*), on the face of a hill, and is a conspicuous object in the Strath of Glenurchay. But this is not the Crag-mor, or Big Crag, alluded to by Blind Harry (B. vii. line 797), as the context clearly shows he there meant the great craggy precipices of Creag-an-uni.

had gained the desired advantage under cover of night, and by stationing his men near the site of the old farm-house of Corries, at a point still well known as Creagan-Neill, or Neil's Rock,<sup>1</sup> he made himself master of the pass of Coireglas, and also of the pass of Larig-noe, which communicates with the north side of Cruachan, and leads to the side of Lochetive. Under cover of the morning mist, Sir Neil, with his party, climbed the shoulder of Beinna-bhuiridh, and turning southward, came in sight of Lochow and M'Fadyen's advanced post above the wood of "Leitir," on the slope of the hill. Tradition preserves the memory of the surprise here received by the Irish general, which I cannot better express than in the school-boy saying with which I was familiar sixty years ago, *i.e.*, "Creag-na-circe, air an do bhruch MacFadain a chearc nach dhfeith e ri itheadh;" which literally means, "The hen's rock, on which M'Fadyen boiled the hen he did not wait to eat."<sup>2</sup> This rock is situated near the eastern extremity of the grooved rut or shelf marked on the face of Beinna-bhuiridh, under the name Coire-na-ruaig, or the corrie of flight, in commemoration of M'Fadyen's hurried retreat along this mountain tract, which has all the appearance of having been of glacial origin. He was hotly chased towards the central great corrie of Cruachan, and down the pass of Brander, where he rallied his men and offered a desperate hand-to-hand fight. Sir William Wallace, acting in concert with the hill party, pressed forward by the lower road near the loch, and over the perilous pass of the ladder rock, and while engaged in the deadly fray, gave orders to spare the misguided Scotsmen that were mixed up in the Irish ranks. Tradition relates that the Irish showed great personal bravery, though ultimately defeated, or altogether destroyed; and that when pressed to the last extremity, their leader leaped into the river Awe, at the Brander, and whilst supporting himself against a stone in mid-current, managed to cast off some of his heavy armour. Having gained the left bank, he ran up for some way the slope of Creag-an-uni, until in the crevices of that great and craggy precipice he met with a cave, in which he tried to con-

<sup>1</sup> This rock used to be the sun-dial of the *peat makers* in Tullish and Stronnulichan; the shadow falling upon it in May indicating to them the dinner hour.

<sup>2</sup> This hen's rock on the hill is on a line with the *goose's rock* (Creag-a-gheaidh) at the foot of the river Mutray; and used to have a tree, at the root of which there was a "*carn*," much frequented by the "*taghan*," or marten cat.

ceal himself until night might enable him to escape to a place of safety. But he was followed by Duncan of Lorne, who soon brought back the fugitive's head, which was "steiled on a stayne," on the rocky pinnacle of Creag-an-uni.<sup>1</sup>

M'Fadyen's pinnacle and M'Fadyen's cave are still pointed out to the tourist; but M'Fadyen's stone—Clach-mhic-Phadain—of which the minstrel takes no notice, stood in mid-channel above the rock of Brander until the year 1817, when the late Duncan Campbell, Esq., factor to the Marquess of Breadalbane, employed the Glenurchay crofters in clearing away a great accumulation of stones and rubbish from the mouth of the river, in order to give a freer outlet to the water of the lake, and prevent inundations at the foot of the Urchay in time of autumnal floods. One notable result of the clearance of the bed of the river at the Brander was, that a celebrated salmon-pool called "Linne-mhic-Ewen" was obliterated, and its place occupied by smooth water, which almost looks like a continuation of the lake before it bursts out into the brawling and rapid river Awe. M'Fadyen's stone stood firmly imbedded in the shallow of this pool, until at length it was in bad taste removed by gunpowder; and the man who blasted it, by orders of the overseer of the work, is named Peter M'Varquish, who still resides in Glenurchay. The interest attached to the obliteration of the salmon-pool gave rise to a lawsuit between the neighbouring proprietors concerned in the matter, and it came out in evidence that in former times there was here a deep ford used for transporting cattle. This may be viewed as a confirmation of the accuracy of Blind Harry's statement, that when Sir Neil Campbell had crossed to the Creag-an-uni side of the strait of Brander, and broke down the bridge, he became inaccessible to the enemy,

"But through a furd, quhar narrow passage was."

The ford appears to have been confined to a bed of sand and gravel, which

<sup>1</sup> In the New Statistical Account, by misprint "Creag-an-aonidh" is written "Craig-an-davuaidh;" and M'Fadyen's cave is mistakenly said to be still pointed out in the face of Creag-an-araidh. The writer, however, meant "Creag-an-uni," for he says that, to reach the cave, M'Fadyen had to cross the river Awe at the *Brander*. No one knows the relative positions of these rocks better than the reverend author of this able report; but he assures me he never saw it in proof, which accounts for these errors in print.

formed a sort of bar at the foot of the salmon pool; and from my own recollection of *Clach-mhic-Phadain*, I should say it was a large boulder, which stood well up above the surface of the water; and I also think it not improbable that the bridge, which had been broken down according to Blind Harry, may have been supported by this very stone as its centre pillar. That some such support must have been used is obvious, for even at the rock of Brander (which is situated on the left, or *Creag-an-uni* side of the mouth of the river Awe), where the channel is the narrowest, it appears to be about 26 yards or 80 feet wide; and on the right bank there is no corresponding rock or bulwark on which the timbers of a bridge could have rested; but it would have been easy enough to have raised a cairn of stones on either side of the river a little above this narrowest point, on which the timbers of the bridge could safely rest. In fact, triangular cairns are used in the present day, on various parts of the river, for the accommodation of anglers; and though these project several yards from the north bank into the rapid river, it is surprising to find how well they resist the current, which here runs at the rate of six miles per hour.

By turning to the accompanying map (Plate XLII.), there will be seen a small and detached sketch of the pass of Brander, which is intended to illustrate the situation of the field on the farm of Fahns, where the M'Dougalls made their last desperate stand against their pursuers under Bruce, who crossed the bridge just above the rock of Brander, and at the lower extremity of *Creag-an-uni*; and thence along the south side of the river Awe for about half a mile, until they came upon the open ground marked "battle-field of Fahns." This field of classic memory is about three-fourths of a mile long by one-fourth of a mile broad. Cairns and tumuli to the number, it is estimated, of about 150 or more, are scattered over this area; and some of these are much larger than others, and are placed away apart from the rest. The larger tumuli are of an oval form, about 15 feet long, 6 feet broad, and 3 or 4 feet high; they lie east and west, and are supposed to be the burying-places of distinguished leaders and chiefs who fell on both sides.

The field of Crunachay also has its cairns; and it is probable that such as attempted to make their escape on the Cruachan, or north side of the river, had rallied and fought there at the same time as their comrades who

had crossed the bridge, as related by Barbour, were engaged on the opposite side.

In the invasion of Wallace, the bridge had been cut down by Sir Neil Campbell the moment after he and his followers crossed it to the Creag-an-uni side of the strait at Brander ; and being thus penned in the defile, between the narrow outlet of Loch Awe and the steep and craggy base of Cruachan, M'Fadyen's men, when attacked on the south flank of Beann-cruachan, and hurried back into the pass of Brander and the strath of Crunachy, appear to have been all slaughtered or drowned, with the exception of those Scotsmen whom Sir William Wallace ordered to be saved on that fatal day : and who again, probably, stood him in good service, as already mentioned, when from Loch Awe he speedily retired across the mountains towards Lochlomond and the Lennox.

#### A SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE ON THE OSSIANIC TALES OF THE BRAES OF LORN.

About sixty years ago, ancient prosaic tales, such as J. F. Campbell, Esq. has recently published, under the title, "Tales of the Western Highlands," were a familiar source of evening entertainment among the peasantry and cottars of Glenurchay, where the ancient usages and customs were longer preserved than in many other parts of the country, from the circumstance of its isolated situation, surrounded by mountain barriers, and the comparatively late date of the dispersion of its old race of inhabitants. The Fletchers, M'Nabs, M'Nicols, and M'Intyres, all of whom cultivated Ossianic poetry, are now almost without a representative in the district. Of the great abundance of this memorial poetic literature, about one hundred years ago, in that favourite retreat of the Celtic muse (the birthplace of Duncan (Ban) M'Intyre, whose immortal lays, and purity of Gaelic, are monuments to his fame more enduring than the granite column raised to his memory on Creagan-na-caorach), we have an interesting account (see Report of Highland Society) in a letter to Dr Blair from Mr Alexander M'Aulay, dated 25th January 1764. In this letter is included one from Lieut. Duncan M'Nicol, then residing under the ancient paternal roof at Sococh, in Glenurchay, which is conclusive as to the great amount of Ossianic poetry then currently transmitted, by oral

tradition, among the old people of the community around him. This gentleman was brother to the Rev. Donald M'Nicol, minister of Lismore, so well known as the author of "Remarks on Dr Samuel Johnson's Journey to the Hebrides," first published in the year 1779; and both these brothers were nephews to that courteous and gallant chieftain, Alexander Stewart of Innernahyle, of whom Sir Walter Scott writes with sentiments of profound admiration, and with the warmest recollections of gratitude as the friend of his childhood, who first introduced him "to the Highlands, their traditions, and their manners."<sup>1</sup>

It appears from the *affidavit* of Archibald Fletcher (Report of Highland Society, App. p. 270), that James M'Pherson had paid a visit to the M'Nichols of Arivean, in the parish of Glenurchay; but no one knows what contributions of Ossianic poems he may have collected from their oral recitation. At a later period, Dr Smith of Campbelton endeavoured to save from oblivion some floating remains of this native poetry. In the summer of 1798, the venerable Dr Joseph M'Intyre, the popular minister of the united parish of Glenurchay and Inishail, wrote to Dr Garnett, when on a "Tour to the Highlands and some of the Western Islands" (published 1800), as follows:—"My son is anxious to procure some unpublished Celtic tales; but the truth is, that Dr Smith of Campbelton, who is a native of this parish, and who has been indefatigable in his research for these tales, has picked up everything of value of the kind in the country, and published them, with translations. Indeed, the time is past, or almost past, when a search after these amusements 'of the times of old' would be of avail." The collections here alluded to as published by Dr Smith, with translations into English, are the ancient Gaelic poems by Ossian, Oran, and Ullin, called "Sean Dana." Dr Smith, in his "Gaelic Antiquities," tells us he began his collection by at least twenty or thirty years too late, to have insured a ripe harvest from the old reciters, who had left no successors, and a great part of whose memorial treasures died with themselves. These poems, like the Rigveda hymns of India, or the Yararies of the Incas of Peru, were transmitted from one generation to another by oral tradition alone.

Dr Smith's work was published at an unfortunate stage of the Ossianic controversy, when M'Pherson's latter publications, "Fingal" and "Te-

<sup>1</sup> Introd. Chron. of the Canongate, &c.

mora," raised doubts of their authenticity, and threw distrust on all kindred topics of Highland literature. From page 126 to page 130 of "Gaelic Antiquities," Dr Smith frankly tells the public the method he had pursued in editing the "Sean Dana," from multifarious versions of the same poems, clothed in various shapes of verbal expression, in different parts, lines, or single words, more or less obsolete. In eliminating what was adulterated or spurious, and carefully collating and arranging the materials for the Gaelic version, from which he made his English translation, he had to exercise his own independent judgment, and make a selection; for no one could reasonably expect that on his small salary, as assistant to the invalid minister of the poor parish of Kilbrandon, he would offer to incur the expense of publishing every fragment and version of these poems just as he had received them, through different hands, or had taken them down from oral recitation. But he gives the names of many of the principal contributors; and when he uses any unusual liberty with his originals, in piecing together disjointed fragments, he tells us of it in his notes, and is always guided by the prosaic tales, which usually precede the oral recitations, and are subsidiary to the subject of the poem. By such a mode of proceeding he acted fairly and conscientiously, as became a man of his unblemished moral and Christian character, that even in these minor matters of editorial duty he never pretended or hinted that he himself was able, if he liked, to compose such poetry. He never attempted original poetry, that his surviving family know of; but his beautiful translations of the English Paraphrases into Gaelic, which he did at the request and with the approbation of the Synod of Argyll, show him to have been an able translator.

Dr Smith's matured views of the merits of the Ossianic controversy, he sums up very briefly in one of his letters to Mr Henry M'Kenzie, which is dated, Campbelton, 21st June 1802 (see Report of Highland Society):—"That the poems of Ossian extended their fame for ages over Britain and Ireland, is also clear from Barbour, Camden, Colgan, and many other old writers of the three kingdoms. That at least the stamina, the bones, sinews, and strength, of a great part of these poems now ascribed to him are ancient, may, I think, be maintained on good grounds. But that something modern may have been superinduced will, if not admitted, be at least believed on grounds of much probability." The Ossianic poetry, by

whomsoever it originated, is unquestionably of much greater antiquity than the Dean M'Gregor of Lismore's Miscellaneous Collection of Gaelic Poems.<sup>1</sup> These, as distinctly recorded in the Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, on the authenticity of the Poems of Ossian, contain some short pieces ascribed to Ossian, that are literally translated by Donald Smith, M.D., one of the ablest scholars of his day, and published in the Report.<sup>2</sup>

The poetic tales of the Feine, from time immemorial down to the last Highland rebellion, and its consequent social changes, of 1745, were intimately interwoven with the manners, customs, traditions, and proverbial sayings of the Highlanders; and they embody the oldest national traditions of the people, among whom these poems were cherished, in their belief, as historical records of their heroic fellow-countrymen of olden times; not as myths, but as relating to real persons and places.<sup>3</sup> For many centuries the oral recitation of such tales must have tended to preserve a special standard of the language of the Scottish Gael, side by side with the more cultivated ecclesiastical and written Gaelic of the religious teachers of Iona. This popular idiom of native growth, familiar in the songs of the bards, the venerable translators of the first edition of the Scottish Gaelic Scriptures (natives of Glenurchay and Glendochart) availed themselves of; and the Gaelic Bible, thus rendered on the best models of vernacular speech, is now the acknowledged standard of our Scoto-Irish dialect of the Celtic language, and the basis of the excellent Scoto-Celtic Dictionary of the Highland Society of Scotland.

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to know that the transcript of the Dean of Lismore's MS. collection, made for the use of Lord Bannatyne, is safe in the possession of the Rev. Dr M'Intyre, Kilmanivaig. This copy, which appears to be a repetition of the original one drawn up by the same learned author, the late Mr Ewen M'Lachlan of Aberdeen, for the Highland Society of Scotland, had been for some time in possession of the late Mr Donald Gregory. The editors of the Dean of Lismore's book, it appears, had also the benefit of its perusal.

<sup>2</sup> This excellent man was brother to Dr John Smith of Campbelton.—See the tribute paid to his memory by Mr Henry M'Kenzie, in Report of Highland Society.

<sup>3</sup> See the Poems of Darthula; Death of Cuthullin; and Temora; and the Old Statistical Report of Campbelton. See also Skene's "Highlanders of Scotland," vol. i. pp. 207-213.

[We regret much to record the death of Dr Archibald Smith, which took place at Edinburgh, on the 28th August 1868, before this paper could be corrected for press. Dr Smith was long a leading medical practitioner in Lima, Peru, from which he retired some years ago. He published various contributions to the Medical and Scientific history of Peru, and contributed to our Proceedings "Observations on the Inca and Yunga Nations, their Early Remains; and on Ancient Peruvian Skulls," vol. v. p. 34; and presented to our Museum, "A Collection of Remains from the Ancient Tombs of the Inca and Yunga Nations in Peru, &c." vol. v. p. 61. Dr Smith also read a paper, on the 2d May 1868, entitled "Argyllshire Invaded but not Subdued, by Ungus, King of the Picts, in A.D. 736 and A.D. 741." This will appear in the next volume of the Proceedings.—Eds.]

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