



THE TROSSACHS.

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BY JOHN JAMIESON, F.E.I.S.

THE four-in-hand coach for the Trossachs leaves the Callander Railway Station, and at a distance of about a mile from the town the driver at the old toll-house takes the road to the left, and after crossing the Leny, begins to ascend a slight incline on the south-eastern side of Ben Ledi. This is Bochastle Heath, and looking round we have a beautiful panoramic view of Callander and the surrounding district. On our right we are attracted by a curious boulder, apparently nicely balanced on the side of Ben Ledi (the Hill of God.) This is known as Samson's stone, from a tradition that it was thrown by Samson from the top of Ben Lawers to the top of Ben Ledi, and rolled to its present position. The next hill is Doun Mohr, where there are earth-works believed to be the remains of a fort of Roman origin. Soon Loch Vennacher is seen. Before reaching the Loch we come to Coilantogle Ford, where the combat took place between Fitz-James and Rhoderick Dhu.

“And here his course the chieftain stayed,  
Threw down his target and his plaid,  
And to the Lowland warrior said—  
‘Bold Saxon! To his promise just,  
Vich-Alpine has discharged his trust.  
This murderous chief, this ruthless man,  
This head of a rebellious clan,  
Hath led thee safe, through watch and ward,  
Far past Clan Alpine's outmost guard.  
Now, man to man, and steel to steel,  
A chieftain's vengeance thou shalt feel.  
See, here, all vantageless I stand,  
Armed, like thyself, with single brand;  
For this is Coilantogle Ford,  
And thou must keep thee with thy sword.’”

After driving along the shores of Loch Vennacher we come to Lanrick Mead—

“The muster place is Lanrick Mead,  
Speed forth the signal, Clansmen, speed!”  
“The band arrived on Lanrick height,  
Where mustered, in the vale below,  
Clan Alpine's men in martial show.”

After proceeding for some distance among the hills clothed in Scottish heath, we reach the Brig of Turk, which consists of a number of white-washed cottages.

“For twice that day from shore to shore  
The gallant stag swam stoutly o'er,  
Few were the stragglers following far  
That reached the Lake of Vennachar.  
And when the Brig of Turk was won  
The headmost horseman rode alone.”

Now we enter a richly-wooded part of the road, and our coach runs by the side of Loch Achray.

“So swept the tumult and affray  
 Along the margin of Achray;  
 Alas! thou lonely lake that e'er  
 Thy banks should echo sounds of fear.”

In a short time the coach stops at the Trossachs Hotel. On the site of this hotel, not so very long ago, stood a little farm house, thatched with bracken. When in 1810 the “Lady of the Lake” was published, many came to view the scenes so graphically pictured, and the farmer had to accommodate many visitors to the now famous district as best he could in his humble dwelling. The farmhouse was transformed into an inn, and now we have the handsome building known as the Trossachs Hotel. In the hotel there is a post and telegraph office. Visitors on stopping here can obtain an excellent luncheon before resuming their journey. The land rises in terraces behind the hotel, and terminates in the mighty Ben Aan, 1149 feet high. Many prefer to walk from the Trossachs Hotel, in order to enjoy with leisure what may be called the Trossachs proper. The road now leads through a dark and wooded gorge, overshadowed by Ben Venue and Ben Aan. It was from this particular part that the Trossachs, which signifies “Bristled Land,” took its name. Formerly the gorge had to be entered by “a sort of ladder composed of the branches and roots of trees,” but now a good road has been constructed. Nature lavishes on it all her beauties in rich profusion.

“Here eglantines embalmed the air,  
 Hawthorn and hazel mingled there;  
 The primrose pale, and violet flower,  
 Found in each cliff a narrow bower.  
 Fox-glove and night-shade, side by side,  
 Emblems of punishment and pride,  
 Grouped their dark hues with every stain,  
 The weather beaten crags retain.  
 With boughs that quaked at every breath,  
 Grey birch and aspen wept beneath;  
 Aloft the ash and warrior oak  
 Cast anchor in the rifted rock;  
 And higher yet the pine tree hung.”

It was in this gorge that the exhausted steed of Fitz-James lay down to die—

“Woe worth the chase, woe worth the day,  
 That cost thy life, my gallant grey.”

Soon we reach Loch Katrine, where the steamboat “Rob Roy” will perhaps be seen ready to take passengers to Stronachlacher, a distance of about eight miles. Now we behold the “Silver Strand,” with which all are enchanted, while on the bosom of the loch is seen the lovely Ellen’s Isle.