

BEAUTIFUL SCOTLAND

The chief object of all visitors to Scotland is to see the Highlands, and, for the information of visitors from N.Z. it cannot be too emphatically stated that the only railway to the Highlands and in the Highlands is the Highland Railway which starts at Perth and ends at Wick, it is the only railway that crosses the great Grampian Mountains, or indeed, goes anywhere near them; it is the only railway from which the Grampians can be seen, except from the very far distance. Inverness is the capital and centre of the Highlands, and the fastest Highland Railway train does the journey from Perth to Inverness in 3 1/2 hours, while the fastest train by any other route occupies over 6 hours in completing the journey.

There being, then, only one railway in the Highlands, it is appropriately named the Highland Railway, and the country which it serves is unsurpassed, if indeed, it can be equalled, anywhere in the British Islands, alike for the beauty of its scenery and the romantic and historic interest which attaches to almost every mile of its course from Perth to Kyle of Lochalsh in the west, and Thurso and Wick in the far north. What more fitting introduction to such a land can the traveller find than the view he obtains, at the very outset of his journey, of the Palace of Scorne nestling amid the dark fir-woods to the eastward, famous as the abbey in which the coronation of the kings of Scotland took place in the days of old, and especially as the place where King Robert the Bruce was crowned, in 1306, eight years before he led his countrymen to victory at Bannockburn; while away to the westward the eye rests upon

tunnel, and the passenger finds himself in darkness. Perhaps this most dramatic contrast may, however, enable him to even more greatly appreciate the beauty of the scene thus ruthlessly cut off by Nature and the inartistic though practical mind of the railway engineer. Here, in July, 1689, 2,000 of Viscount Dundee's wild, impetuous Highlanders, forefathers of the famous Highland regiments of to-day, charging down the rocky hills,

Let fragrant birks, in woodbine drest,
My craggy cliffs adorn,
And for the little songster's nest,
The close embowering thorn.

It may safely be said that the vast majority of tourists regard Aberdeen as the most northerly town in Scotland, and seldom correct the error by visiting the northern Highlands, without an acquaintance with which no one can have a thorough knowledge of the scenic beauties of the—

Land of brown heath and shaggy wood.—
Land of the mountain and the flood.

This indifference with regard to some of the wildest and most picturesque scenery in all Scotland is, in all probability, due to the fact that Balmoral and

the Dee-side, associated as they are with Queen Victoria, have absorbed more than their due share of public interest, and have led to the popular error that the natural beauties of the country do not extend north of Ballater and Braemar. How utterly erroneous this opinion is is forcibly proved to all who travel by the Highland Railway Company to spend a week inhaling the refreshing winds of the keen mountain passes, or re-invigorating heart and brain in contemplating loch and tarn, mountain-side or moor, or in steeping the senses in loveliness such as is to be found in scenes where—

The long light cakes across the lakes
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.

Inverness has much beauty of situation and all the charms of historic associa-



INVERCAR HOTEL, INVERSHIN.



VIEW OF RIVER SHIN, SHOWING FALLS.

the distant hills of Drumochty, made famous in these latter days by the pen of Ian Maclaren.

The main line of the Highland Railway passes along the valley of the Tunnel, in which is situated Pitlochry, the chief of the great summer resorts on the southern part of the line. Tourists will find the best of hotels and hydropathies here, and many beautiful excursions, both driving and on foot, may be enjoyed from Pitlochry as a centre.

The difficulty of deciding on the most beautiful scene in the Highlands is no small one; but certainly the Pass of Killiecrankie has good claims to first place, and it is doubtful if there is a stretch of railway line three miles in length in any part of the British Islands that can hold its own with the three miles between Pitlochry and the tunnel at Killiecrankie. To see the pass as it ought to be seen, one should walk through it; but a magnificent view of it may be obtained by sitting with one's back to the engine as the train runs north, and looking out towards the river. Unfortunately, immediately after reaching the spot where the most beautiful views is obtained, the train runs into a

routed twice the number of General Mackay's trained soldiers, and sent them flying down the glen; but Dundee, better known, perhaps, as Graham of Claverhouse, was slain, and the victory did little or nothing to help the Jacobite cause.

At Blair-Atholl visitors will find excellent hotel accommodation, and those who are interested in Highland history will be delighted with a visit to Blair Castle, the seat of the Duke of Atholl, to which they are admitted between the hours of 9 a.m. and 6 p.m., on signing their names in a book and on payment of one shilling each to a guide who will accompany them and explain the various points of interest as they proceed. An interesting drive or walk may be enjoyed from Blair-Atholl to the Falls of Bruar (3 miles), and to the banks of that river which owe their beautiful woods to the Pettion addressed in 1787 to the then Duke of Atholl by Robert Burns during his travels in the Highlands:

Let lofty firs and ashes cool,
My lowly banks o'erspread,
And view, deep-bending in the pool,
Their shadow's watery bed;

King Bruce may, indeed, be but a shadow of shadows, but the halo of romance will always hover over the brow of Bonnie Prince Charlie, whose story has captured for all time the popular imagination, and with that story Inverness is indissolubly connected. Of the natural beauties of the district, perhaps the most attractive are those of the islands amongst which the waters of the loch make their escape, and from whence one can enjoy the pungent scents of the shore and the broad-blown breaths of the sea.

From Dornoch a short railway journey lands the traveller at Brora, where every comfort may be obtained at the Station Hotel. Situated between Brora and Dornoch is the residence of the Duke of Sutherland, Durnobin Castle, to which by the kindness of the Duke a visit may be paid. This castle is the oldest inhabited house in the Kingdom, and was founded shortly after the Norman Conquest of England. The larger part of the present castle is modern, having been built about 1845. The view from the terrace seawards is very fine, and the gardens lying between the castles and sea are themselves well worthy of a long journey.

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