

THE CABRACH

BY

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THE CABRACH.

You have to-day come through only a small portion of the Cabrach, and that not really "The" Cabrach at all, but the Lower Cabrach, which up till two hundred and fifty years ago was known as Strathdeveron. It is necessary first to understand that there are two distinct districts, the Upper and the Lower Cabrach, which though united in one parish, are still separate in many ways. The whole parish is in the county of Banff, but is only since 1891 that this has been so, the Upper Cabrach being till then in Aberdeenshire, and even yet the Parliamentary voters resident there vote in West Aberdeenshire. The two districts are divided by the beautiful pass of Deldorach, a mile in length, each has its own postal arrangements, and there is no direct communication between them, so that if we wish to send a letter to the nearest house in the Upper Cabrach, less than three miles away, it has to go by way of Aberdeen, and takes thirty hours to do the journey. Each district has its own school and social gatherings, and there is a friendly rivalry on almost all subjects. The people, too, are of a different character, and the Lower Cabrach poet about the middle of last century described our neighbours thus:-

 "They're very kind if you please their mind,
 But that's gey ill to do,
 A stiff-necked and a stubborn race,
 And a very clannish crew."

Their answer to that is, of course, that a poem about the Lower Cabrach people has not yet appeared.

The Lower Cabrach, formerly called Strathdeveron, belonged to the parish of Mortlach, and was joined to the parish of Cabrach in

1665 for church purposes. It extends from the Linnburn, which flows under the first of the three bridges which you crossed in the last two miles of your journey this morning, up to the Glacks of the Balloch, through which you will pass on your way to Dufftown, a distance of about six miles; the Upper Cabrach lies to the S.E. of this house (Milton of Lesmurdie) and is reached through the pass already mentioned. The distance from the first house to the boundary on the main road is about four miles.

The Upper Cabrach has a greater average elevation than the Lower district, and is generally believed to be a most bleak and barren place. Here is an extract from an unknown writer's description of the popular idea-The Cabrach is

“A place abounding in nothing but precipitous hills, yawning passes, and endless marshy mosses, through which stranger and foreigner may never hope to pass. A spot isolated from all known regions of civilisation, and destitute even of the ordinary privilege of accommodation roads, by which its wilds may be explored and its desolation seen. A land on which barrenness is so terribly written that corn grows but to frost and die ere its ear be full, leaving the inhabitants entirely dependent on the fertility of other districts for their means of support. A place where the summer sun scorns to exert his influence, and where the rains of spring and the frosts and snows of winter linger with tenacious hold among its barren heights, like the robber caterans of old, long after they have been driven from the homes of civilisation, and scared from the genial face of the plains. A place so wildly desolate and inhospitably barren, that nothing but the firmest nerve, urged on by dire necessity, could ever induce a human being to traverse it.”

So much for the place. Now listen to Dr Michie's first impressions of the Cabrach, and you will gain some notion of the inhabitants-

“The doctor by nature was a very stout built man, he was a great pedestrian in walking. On his first approach to Cabrach he preferred walking across the hills from Rhyne; on reaching the summit of the hill and looking down on the valley below, he observed a river winding its serpentine course along its midst. This river had the appearance to emerge out from below a mountain to the west, and to disappear below a mountain to the east; there was no appearance of an ingress or egress, its banks were decked in greensward where black cattle grazed in abundance, and its heath-clad braes covered with fleecy flocks; after surveying the scenery below he cast his eyes westwards, and he could behold mountain after mountain, I said to myself, ‘I have travelled mony a weary foot through this warl’, but noo I have reached the backside of it, I wager this colony escaped the researches of Dr Johnson. When he reached the Hebrides he said they were the outside or the riddlings of creation. I began to contemplate in my mind what sort of a race its inhabitants might be. It brought to my recollection the incidents related by a pedestrian something like myself who had travelled largely through the world; on his return home he related that he found a colony whose inhabitants had but one leg, they had a very large round foot like a girdle, they hopped when they walked and were called “Girdle Hoppers.” Well, I presume this to be that colony, I have made a wonderful discovery and perhaps a profitable one too, I may catch a pair of these creatures and have them exhibited, or at least I might do the public a service and send one of them to the Zoological Gardens at London.”

Now, I think by the time you reach home, you will be in a position to judge of the truth or otherwise of these picturesque descriptions. So I shall not waste time in contradicting them; but just let me say a word about our climate, of which an opinion can not be formed in one day. There is a saying

that the Cabrach is “a cauld, cauld place, where it dings on delaverly, for sax ‘ooks, on ither’s en’, neither upplin’ nor devallin’.” Never was there such a libel. The winters here are almost as warm, and certainly far more sunny than in many places in the south recommended as winter resorts; we have been able to sit in our sunny garden and read of the Folkestone mail-van being buried in a snowdrift the previous day, while as for rain, we can’t get enough to bring up the salmon. True, it snows sometimes, and before the big cairn at the Balloch was removed, the snow has been known to drift to a depth of fifty feet, while no wheeled vehicle could come from Dufftown for fourteen weeks, and in a Cabrach farmer’s diary for the year 1838 there is the following entry — ‘June 22nd.—This being the longest day there is a spot of snow- upon Groumack above Tomnaven, that wreath at Whitsunday was one mile in length. The people in the Blackwater daugh and in the hills of Shenval were stopt from casting peats about this time by the frost.’” But things seem to have improved of late years, and however bad the weather may be, it is always worse somewhere else.

One great drawback in the parish is the lack of trees, and as the generally accepted meaning of the name is ‘the place of trees,’ it seems a little curious. Apparently, there have been trees all over the hills, for not only is this the local tradition, but plenty of evidence is found while cutting peats of their former presence. They are said to have been burned down by the orders of the Queen of Alexander III., in a fit of jealousy. During the King’s absence while fighting the Danes, whom he routed at the battle of Largs, a son was born to him, and naturally the Queen thought he would be rather pleased. But Alexander was a forester first and a father afterwards, and he was very concerned about his trees, for the tremendous storm which had helped him to win the battle had doubtless played havoc with them, so his first care on arriving

home was to learn how they had fared. The Queen was indignant, she took a lasting vengeance, and there are now only a few birches by the riverside and some trees recently planted to bear out the name.

The whole of the Upper Cabrach and the greater part of the Lower Cabrach belong to the Duke of Richmond and Gordon. From various charters it appears that in the year 1374 the King gave the lands of Cabrach to William, Earl of Douglas, David Brown of Glandriston having resigned them; in 1397 they were included in a donation of lands by Sir James Sandilands, nephew and legal heir of the Earl of Douglas, to George, Earl of Angus, the natural son of the Earl of Douglas. Apparently there was some difficulty about his taking possession, and the Cabrach remained the property of his half-sister, Isabel, Countess of Mar, during her lifetime. She left them to her second husband, Sir Alexander Stewart, son of the Wolf of Badenoch, leader of the victorious forces at Harlaw, in life-rent, with remainder to her own heirs. When Sir Alexander, who had become Earl of Mar on his marriage, died, his wife's nearest heir was Robert, Lord Erskine, who established his claim to the Earldom in 1438, but did not gain possession of the estates. In 1435 there is an indenture between Lord Erskine and Sir Alexander Forbes, in which Forbes promises to help the Erskines to regain their rights, he to receive as a reward, if successful certain lands, including Cabrach. However, the claim did not succeed, and the Cabrach remained the property of the Crown for half a century, twice between that period being given to younger members of the Royal family. In 1508 the final donation was made, when the King gave the lands and forest of Cabrach to Alexander, third Earl of Huntly, in return for great services. The same year the Earl sold it to his kinsman, James Gordon of Auchmyll, and in the charter of this sale, the boundaries of the Cabrach are defined, In 1539 Huntly exchanged some other

lands for the Cabrach, and it has remained in the undisputed possessions of the Huntly Gordons ever since.

In the Lower Cabrach, the Duke owns the forest of Blackwater, Invercharrach, now a farm, but at one time part of the barony of Lesmurdie, with a castle, and having lordship over some eight of the adjacent farms, and the land on the right bank of Deveron known as the Daugh of Corinacy.

Invercharrach, with its dependencies, was divided into three parts. One part was sold by John Craigmyll of Craigmyll to Sir Jas. Ogilvie of Deskford in 1488, and thereafter came into the possession of the Gordons through Sir Adam Gordon, who received it in 1663 under a decree of arbitration after the historic quarrels between the Ogilvies and the Gordons, which culminated in the battle of Corrichie. In a MS. history of the family, written about 1731, it appears that in 1594 George, first Marquis of Huntly, bought Invercharrach (that is a second third) and Blackwater. The remaining third part was bought in 1473 from Lawrence Nudry of Oviestead by George de Strathauchin, laird of Lesmurdie; it had become the property of the Gordons by 1750, but there is no record of the sale to be found; possibly it perished in the fire which destroyed the Lesmurdie family papers.

Corinacy was formerly part of the barony of Echt-Forbes, and one of the farms is still called Hillock of Echt. There is some confusion about the ownership of this part of the Cabrach. A Forbes was served heir to his father in the lands of Corenacie in 1616, and in 1681 Thos. Forbes of Echt succeeded his uncle, the lands of Correnasie being then expressly mentioned as belonging to the barony of Echt-Forbes. But in 1664 the laird of Gight appears on the roll of freeholders of Banffshire "for his lands of Corronassie." In 1713 there is a sasine granted to a Forbes; it has been suggested that this was merely security for money advanced, and lastly there is a renunciation, dated 1796, by Benjamin

Gordon of Balbithan to the Duke of Gordon of the lands of Corenacie and the mill and mill-lands of Corenacie. I have not yet been able to reconcile and arrange all these statements; perhaps someone may be able to clear them up. The only certain thing is that Corinacy now belongs to the Gordons.

The Lesmurdie estate is next in importance. It extends along the left banks of the Deveron and the Charach burn from Forteach, rather more than a mile down stream from here, to the Glacks of the Balloch, and includes about a dozen farms and crofts. It was sold by Lawrence Nudry to George de Strathauchin in 1473, and we know nothing of it previously. In 1664 the estate became the property of James Stewart of the family in Auchorachan, Glenlivet, by his marriage to Elisabeth, one of the co-heiresses of the last male Strathauchin. The Stewarts continued in possession till the death of Captain Stewart, without issue, in 1874. Lesmurdie then passed to Colonel Leslie of Kininvie, whose mother had been Captain Stewart's cousin. Colonel Leslie died in 1913, leaving the estate to his second son, Archibald.

Soccoth, with Greenloan and Belcherrie, both belong to Mr Grant of Beldorney, in Glass. They have at different times been in the possession of Alexander Duff of Keithmore, founder of the fortunes of the Fife family and of the Gordons. In 1776 Charles Edward Gordon, 11th and last laird of Beldorney, sold the lands and castle of Beldorney, with Belcherrie and Sokach, to Thos. Buchan of Auchmacoy, who in 1792 sold them to Sir William Grant, Master of the Rolls, whose descendant is now the laird.

There yet remains Milltown where you now are. It has been tenanted by Taylors since before Culloden, and part of it was purchased twelve years ago. A small portion was on the Daugh of Corinacy, and was exchanged for a part of Lesmurdie on account of the change in the course of the river after the great spate of '29; the remainder, on Les-

murdie, has been included in that estate certainly since 1549, and probably from a still earlier time.

We have a few indications of an early settlement of the Cabrach, but these do not differ generally from those common in the North-East of Scotland. In various places on the hillside there are marks of dwellings, notably on the Kelman Hill, where there appears to have been quite a large village. The remains consist of circular house foundations, each about eleven paces in diameter, formed of more or less flat stones placed a few inches apart, and having an entrance facing towards the South-East, a few similar circles of a larger size, which might have been public buildings of some kind, altars beside which heaps of charred grain have been found, and a cemetery. This last has been much destroyed by landslips, but several graves have been found, the last discovery being made in 1911. They have been examined by experts and have formed the subject of two papers contributed to the Proceedings of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries, the first by Alex. Robertson, P.G.S., in 1851, and the second by the Rev. John Christie, Kildrummy in 1862. Several stone cists were found, some empty, others containing bones and urns; a very full account of them is given in the above-mentioned papers, but time does not permit of more than passing reference here. With regard to the period to which they belong, I cannot do better than quote Mr Robertson-- "As to the absolute, or even the comparative date of the mode of sepulture referred to, little can be said; but its era must at all events be advanced from the so-called Stone Period to the so-called Iron Period Whether it was practised during the earlier or the more advanced ages of the latter is also quite un certain. It seems, however, very unlikely, from the elaborate character of the work expended on the cists, and the infinite variety of the ornaments sculptured on the urns, that such a custom could either have been invented, or carried into execution, by a very rude or un-

cultivated people. My own impression is, that the antiquity of these sepulchres has been very much over-estimated.”

Along the face of the Kelman Hill, and passing near the village, there runs the old Caledonian road from Forres to the Mearns. It appears as a fairly well defined hollow, and is quite easy to trace from its entrance to the Cabrach at the Glacks of the Balloch to this point, whence it descends to cross the river, and then continues south over the hills by Tap o' Noth. It is locally known as “The Wormy Howe,” and is supposed to be the track of a huge worm, or serpent, which set out to meet a rival worm, having its lodging near Benachie. Our worm, in gathering itself together for the start, near the Balloch, threw up by the contortions of its body, those mounds now called Jean's Hillocks, then piercing the bill with one blow of its powerful head, made the Pass of the Glacks, and hurried on towards Benachie.

Coming to a later period, there is the castle of Invercharroch, to which reference has already been made. No part whatever is left, a great pity, for there is a dignity and interest conferred on a place by noble old ruins, which can be gained in no other way. There is thus nothing to tell a casual observer that a castle once stood on the mound in the centre of the Lower Cabrach, now occupied by the farm of Invercharroch. The position is an excellent one, at the converging point of the valleys of the Deveron, the Blackwater, and the Charach burn commanding all possible ways by which an enemy might advance. Very little is known of the castle and I have not been able to find out by whom or when it was built, but it is probable that it was erected after the close of the thirteenth century, and it is said to have been standing in 1725, and to have fallen into ruin soon afterwards.

Overlooking the valley of the Blackwater there was another castle, that of Shenval, supposed to have been built by Malcolm Canmore, and to have formed a link in the chain of forts which extended from Burghead and

Duffus to Cairn-na-Mounth. Not a single trace of the fort remains, and the farm buildings occupy its site. If Invercharroch castle was not built before 1296, then Edward I. probably lodged at the Shenval, while his army en-camped on the Haughs of Delmore at Invercharroch—the King's Haugh farther upstream is so named in memory of his visit. Not far off, in the face of the hill rising from the river bank, there are some curious hollows called the Slochs of the Shenval. They are marked on the Ordnance map as remains of a Roman camp, but I have not been able to gather any evidence in support of this theory, and the appearance of the hollows, together with a tradition of lead having been found in the Cabrach, leads one to suppose that these may be old workings.

The Cabrach has little direct historical interest. It seems merely to have been brushed by the fringe of the great events in Scotland. Being the highway from Speyside to Deeside and Aberdeen, it has witnessed the passage of many famous men, and can claim to be the King's highway in a special sense. Edward I. came by on his triumphal march in 1296, the journalist of his day recording that they stayed on Monday at Interherachte, where there were no more than three houses in a valley between two mountains. The Bruce is also said to have been here, and in our own time, the late King Edward, and King George always came through the Cabrach when going to Balmoral from Tulchan Lodge.

In 1592 the Cabrach was the scene of a tribal battle of more importance, as part of a serious feud between two great Houses, than the constant cattle raids and skirmishes so common in the Highlands. The Earl of Huntly, in pursuit of his quarrel with the Earl of Moray, made an expedition into Pettie, which the clan Chattan held as a fief from Moray, wasting the country and killing many of the fighting men. On his way home he learned that Willie Macintosh, son of the chief of the clan, with 800 men, was endeavouring to serve him in the same way in the lands of Auchindoun and

Cabrach. Leaving the main body of his men, he, with a small following, pushed on and overtook the Macintoshes at the hill now called the Cook's Cairn, in memory of the Earl of Huntly's cook, who lost his life there on this occasion. After a sharp encounter, the Gordons were forced to retreat, and making their way towards Huntly, stopped at the farm of Bogincloach for rest and refreshment. As the goodwife waited on them she heard what had happened, and in a surprised and indignant tone exclaimed to the Earl, 'Oh! fie, man, your father wadna hae turned his back on them.' Stung by the reproach, Huntly called on his men to mount and return, and meeting with his reinforcements, he again joined battle with the Macintoshes, this time at the Steplegait hill, and almost demolished them. Not so very long ago the auld wives of the Cabrach would sing to the whirr of their spinning wheels, as they swayed back and forth over them—

Bonny Willie Macintosh,
Where left ye your men?
I left them in the Stepler,
Sleepin' in their sheen,
Bonny Willie Macintosh,
Where is now your men?
They're in the granes o' the Gauch,
Feedin' the Cabrach swine.

In 1594 the battle of Altachoilachan, or Glenlivet, as it is more often called, was fought between Argyll on the one side, and Huntly and Errol on the other. The latter mustered their forces in the Cabrach and Auchindoun, and though they could not command more than 2000 men at the most, Tytler says, "The greater part were resolute and gallant gentlemen, all mounted and fully armed, besides six pieces of ordnance, under the charge of some officers of great experience who had served in the Low Country wars." Is it possible that a stone cannon ball found at Broomknowes can have been from one of those six pieces of ordnance?

After this the Cabrach retires into oblivion until the latter part of the 17th century. During the long struggle of the Jacobites to keep the Stuarts on the throne, and later,

to restore them to it, the Cabrach, lying on the direct route from Speyside to Deeside, was often traversed by the troops of both parties, and its castle of Invercharach made a convenient resting place. Claverhouse was there several times, and the castle has sometimes been called Claver Castle in memory of him. His adversary, Mackay, who, though a Highlander and the head of a Highland family, was in command of the Lowland troops, also passed through the Cabrach more than once on his strategical marches between Kildrummy and Auchindoun, and Major-General Cannan, who took Dundee's place when the latter was killed at the moment of victory at Killiecrankie, also rested at Invercharach.

So far, the Cabrach had merely looked on, but in the memorable year of the '45 a number of the somewhat stolid and unromantic farmers joined Prince Charlie's standard, and a certain Roy of Invercharach became Lieutenant of Scottish Royals in the Prince's army. But there were at least two King's men in the Cabrach and though they may not have gained a place in history, local tradition has preserved their names. They were Taylor of Milltown and Gordon of Dalriach. When the Duke of Cumberland was quartered at Huntly, he sent out an order for all loyal subjects to bring in provisions for his troops, and accordingly these two farmers rode into town, dressed in their best, each with a sack of corn across his saddle. After delivering the corn, they were strolling about and came to a place where the mud was so deep that a line of stepping stones had had to be laid down. As they were picking a careful way across, mindful of their best hose and buckled shoes, a party of soldiers started from the opposite end and met them in the middle. The causeway was too narrow for them to pass, and as neither would give way, both the worthy farmers were jostled into the mud. Standing there, knee deep, Gordon shook his fist at the offender, saying, "Gin I had you as near the Buck as you are the Kirk of Huntly, there's nae twa' o' ye would put me in the puddle."

He soon had an opportunity of making his threat good. After Culloden, parties of Royalist soldiers scoured the country in pursuit of fugitives, and some of them came to Cabrach, where they expected to meet with assistance from the loyal farmers. As they were crossing the Deveron by the stepping stones opposite Dalriach, Gordon came out to meet them. To his joy he saw that the foremost was the very man who had put him in the mud at Huntly, so he made haste, met them in the middle of the stream, and, pushing the leader into the water, triumphantly exclaimed, "Now my man, I have ye near the Buck."

Among the fugitives from Culloden were Lieutenant Roy, who had fled to his own house at Invercharach, and two others. Roy's servant girl warned him of the soldiers' approach, and he managed to escape, but the girl was killed by a volley fired through the door, as she was in the act of barring it. The other two took to the hills, and one escaped, while the other was shot near Bogincloach. When the country finally settled down we hear no more of warlike deeds by Cabrach men, for they decided, in the true Aberdonian spirit, that there was more "siller" to be gained by industry at home than by fighting abroad, and the only skirmishes were these with the excisemen.

During the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, smuggling and illicit distilling were carried on to a very large extent, and it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that every house in the Cabrach had its private still. In one year the names of eighty people are recorded as having been discovered to be engaged in illicit distilling in the Upper Cabrach alone, among them, we grieve to say, that of an ancestor of our friend Mr Yeats. The gauger had a busy time, and if he did not give timely warning of his approach like that other classic gauger, with his "Ower the hills and far away," other means were found to spread the news, A white sheet stretched on a peat-stack, or displayed on a knoll, signalled danger from one point to another and the

signal passed on warned all the Cabrach, so that by the time he arrived, all the potties and other paraphernalia were well out of the way, hidden in a convenient moss hag it might be, or literally “ower the hills and far away,” for often one of the distillers would seize the “pottie” and run with it, an essential condition being that he must run naked, why, no one seems to know. There is still living an Upper Cabrach man who carried on his still long after every one else had stopped. Once in a sudden panic he hid his pottie in a hole at the burnside, and has never since been able to find it, though there has been many a search for it.

But though smuggling flourished so long as the fines to be inflicted were settled by the buyers of the whisky, about 1820 a new order came in. As much as £20 was exacted for infringing the law, and soldiers were quartered in the district, so that shortly it quite died out. For some time there were two bona fide distilleries in Lower Cabrach, one at Mains of Lesmurdie, and the other at Tomnaven, but the cost of importing barley, together with the difficulty of transit put a stop to the industry.

The shortest account of the Cabrach would be incomplete without some reference to its churches, for the parish holds an unique position in this respect. It was here that dissent first appeared In Banffshire, and associated with this was an early experiment in aviation.

Christianity was introduced in the Cabrach by St Wallach, of Wallakirk fame, either in the fifth or the eighth century, probably the latter; the bishopric of Mortlach included five churches, with the dependent monastery of Cloveth. Cloveth is obviously Cabrach, but whether the church near the present parish church is meant, or a small chapel on the estate of Lesmurdie, is a point yet to be cleared up, and if any one can help us we shall be very grateful. The church in Cabrach was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the land belonging to it, in extent about a

half davach, was usually leased by the Bishop to one or more tenants, who gave the customary undertaking to defend the rights and liberties of the Church, and to resist heretics and enemies of the orthodox faith. In 1549 Robert Lumisdane had a 19 years' lease, the annual rental being £9 6s. 8d., with one mart, twelve kids, four geese, and 3s. 4d. for bondages, with the accustomed services. The revenues for a time went to help to maintain the lights of the great altar in the Cathedral at Aberdeen, and later on were joined with those of a neighbouring parish to make a respectable income for the vicar. There is little to be found regarding this church, but it is probable that it continued to be used till some years after the Reformation.

Besides the church, there were three chapels, one with a burying ground, opposite the mill of Corinacy, a few hundred yards down the river from here, a small one at Badchier, at the western end of the district, and an important one at Shenval, high above the Blackwater. About the foundation of this last there seems a great deal of uncertainty, but it is possible that it was erected soon after the Reformation, for the accommodation of Catholics turned out of their own church in Upper Cabrach. As the Catholics were subjected to a great deal of persecution throughout the country, they would naturally choose as well protected a site as possible, and the Shenval fulfilled this condition, while its bleak and rigorous aspect would offer little temptation to the sometimes covetous, rather than zealous, hands of the reformers. Indeed, so exposed was the site, that young priests looked upon it as a place of penance, and nicknamed it Siberia. In 1731, the priest of Shenval, Mr Brockie, whose grave is to be seen at Wallakirk, had under his charge 700 Catholics, not all from the Cabrach, however, for he also served Glass, Mortlach and Aberlour. After Culloden the chapel and priest's house were burned by the Duke of Cumberland's soldiers, and for 34 years after, mass was said in a barn. In 1780, Abbé Macpherson, whose name

is well known in the north, persuaded the people to build a new chapel. At this time there were 127 Catholics in Cabrach. Shenval was visited by Bishop Hay on one of his walking tours, and he was so favourably impressed by the priest in charge, Father Andrew Dawson, that when, a short time after, the head master of Scalán was found to be incompetent, Mr Dawson was transferred there, while the dismissed master was sent to Shenval. The last priest of Shenval left it in 1831, and the number of Catholics within reach having much diminished, the chapel was allowed to fall into ruin, only the grass-covered foundations remaining, while a solitary tree marks the priest's garden, and the sole relic preserved is the key of the chapel door.

The Established Church in Upper Cabrach was probably first built about 1580, the present building being erected in 1786. There was no minister at first, but the church had two Readers. Thos. Christiesoun from 1567 to 1580, and Jas. Warrock from 1588 to 1599. After them there followed three ministers, the third being Mr Jas. Ross, who at first conducted service at Invercharach for the people in Strathdeveron. In 1665 the Commissioner of Teinds united Strathdeveron to Cabrach, it being thenceforth called Lower Cabrach, and Mr Ross obtained the joint living, with the church lands of Strathdeveron, and removed to the Upper district, After this the church history is much the same as in other country churches in the north. One minister followed another at greater or less intervals, some good some indifferent. A few got into trouble, notably Mr Irving, whose quarrels with congregation and presbytery fill pages of the Alford presbytery minutes, Mr Strong, one of the most popular, died in gaol, where he had been confined for celebrating irregular marriages, and the Rev, Theodore Gordon was unspeakably wicked, for he was forced to express his regret to the presbytery for having gone to witness a rope-dancing at Old Aberdeen. In spite of this frivolity of character, however, he was a scholar and a historian, and wrote

a genealogy of the name of Gordon- In 1849 Mr Smart, a native of Lower Cabrach, was appointed minister by the Duke of Richmond, this being the last occasion of the exercise of patronage. He did a great deal for the parish, and it is chiefly owing to him that we have a public school in Lower Cabrach. He died in 1882. Mr Macmillan was chosen by the congregation to fill his place, and soon after Mr Macmillan's sudden death in 1911, the present minister was ordained. The United Free church and manse occupy a fine situation on the southern slope of the Kelman Hill; the buildings were erected in 1874, an addition being made in 1908. Previously, the church was on the other side of the river, about a mile downstream, This was the first Secession congregation in Banffshire, and owed its foundation to Thomas Christie, a Lower Cabrach weaver. Thomas was a great reader of the Bible, and knowing nothing of the Higher Criticism, put a very literal interpretation on what he found there. Believing that with sufficient faith he could move mountains, it seemed a small thing to support him self in the air by the same agency, so ardently longing for wings, that he might fly away and be at rest, he one morning mounted to the roof of his house, and spreading out two shumacks from his loom to serve for wings, flung himself into the air, confidently expecting to soar up wards and alight at the gate of Paradise. Well! he wasn't hurt, for he landed softly in the midden, but it was a great blow to his religious zeal, and he was in danger of going to the other extreme when he fell in with the Rev. Mr Troup, Secession minister of Elgin. Mr Troup's sermons soon brought him to a saner view, and he was so charmed with them that he used to walk to Elgin on Sundays on purpose to attend the Secession church. By and-by, finding the walk of twenty-eight miles each way rather long, he settled in Elgin, but after a year was back again in Cabrach. He then invited Mr Troup to hold a service on Deveronside, and advertised it so well that seventeen parishes were represented at it, and

no fewer than seven parish churches had to be closed that day, the congregations having departed *en masse* to the Cabrach. This service was the first held in Banffshire by a dissenting minister. Soon after, in 1772, a small church was built near to where the service had been held. In 1780 the first regular minister was ordained, and in 1787 a new church was built, the congregation having much increased. During the ministry of Mr Waddell, which lasted from 1786 to 1801, the brothers Haldane, pioneers of the Congregational Church in Scotland, were in the north, and they held a service at Glass. Several members and office-bearers from Lower Cabrach attended this service, and the circumstance led to a series of quarrels, with the ultimate result that Mr Waddell resigned and the congregation split in two, one part adhering to the Secession church, and the other becoming Congregational. For the next sixty years there was no settled minister, but only occasional visits from representatives of both bodies. In 1847 the United Presbyterian Church was formed by the union of the Secession and Relief Churches, and when, in 1852, a U.P. Presbytery was established at Banff, the congregation at Cabrach claimed its attention. In 1853 the communion was dispensed after an interval of two generations, but little progress was made for the next twenty years. By 1874 the different sections of the congregation were once more united, and as a preliminary to calling a minister, the members set about building a house for him to live in on a site granted by Captain Stewart of Lesmurdie. Taking advantage of the interest thus awakened, they went on to build a church beside the manse, which was opened in June 1875. The Rev. Alex. Wither was the first minister of the new church, and under him the U.P. church became firmly established as a part of the life of the Cabrach. He was succeeded in 1894 by the Rev. George Tulloch, during whose ministry the congregation became, like all other U.P. congregations, United Free. Mr Tulloch resigned in 1907, and

the Rev. Thomas Anderson of Edinburgh became minister in 1908.

Now, I am afraid I have already taken up more time than I am allowed, and I cannot touch on more points, though there still remains much of interest to the local historian. I can only mention such things as the “seven ill years,” with the house that “reekit its lane,” the famous Roy’s wife of Aldivalloch, whose hearthstone is built into a dyke near her old house in Upper Cabrach, the construction of roads by Highlanders as a Government relief work during a great famine, education, where the Lower Cabrach is distinguished as having one of the first rural circulating libraries north of the Tweed, sport, by which the Cabrach moors and the Deveron are known far and wide, botany, geology and agriculture.

I must close with these lines from a short poem written by one of our visitors, which we sincerely hope you will all be able truth fully to echo—

Green vale of Cabrach where the lambent
waters flow,
A glistening mirror to the golden broom,
Think not that I forget thee when I go,
Or fail to carry happy memories home.