1. County and Shire. Origin and Meaning of Perthshire.

The term "shire" is derived from Anglo-Saxon *scir*, an administrative division presided over by the ealdorman and the sheriff (the shire-reeve). The term "county," on the other hand, arose after William I conquered England, when the lands were taken from the English earls and given to William's companions or *comites*. Each district was called a *comitatus* and from this we get the word "county." Like a great many other social institutions this division of our country into shires has been popularly attributed to the wisdom of some of our early rulers, King Alfred in particular being supposed to have taken an important part in the apportioning out of the country. It appears to be tolerably certain, however, that this theory of the origin of the different shires is exactly the reverse of what actually took place, the county not having been formed by the division of the country as a whole but by the aggregation of certain portions so as to form a county. From this point of view the county is simply the representative of a small community that has been merged into the unity of Great Britain. This opinion seems to be fully borne out by a consideration of many

of our most important counties. It can also be shown that the county has been formed in a similar way by the aggregation of parishes. The parish, the manor and the township are traceable to independent tribal settlement. From this it will be seen that our counties have gradually grown up under varying conditions, and the boundaries have probably been shifted many times. In many cases the boundaries have been fixed by such a physical feature as the watershed of the country, this being easily recognised and utilised as a barrier between the adjacent divisions.

The origin of the name Perth is not very clear. Boece thought that it was derived from the Gaelic *Bar tatha*, "height of the Tay," referring to Kinnoull Hill, which rises abruptly from the Tay to the east of the city. On the other hand Stokes, who is probably right, makes it Pictish *perth*, "a thicket," and neither height over the Tay, nor confluence of the Tay, *Aber tatha*, as maintained by those who consider that the town was originally situated at the confluence of the Almond with the Tay.

It ought to be stated at the very outset that the great factor which has determined the present geographical conditions of Perthshire has been the Highland boundary fault or line of demarcation between the highland and lowland portions of the county. In the course of these pages we hope to be able to show that not only are the scenic and physiographical features of the shire directly due to the different geological structure of these two great natural divisions, but also that its soils, climate, natural history, agriculture, population, the distribution of its towns and

villages, its people, their language and their history, have largely been determined by this all important factor.

The shire lies in one compact mass. Formerly it had two small detached portions in the south, on the Forth. One of these was included in the parish of Kippen, which lay wholly across the Forth, while the other embraced the parishes of Culross and Tulliallan now in Fifeshire.

In the neighbourhood of Stirling Logie parish enclosed a detached portion of Fifeshire, and Collace parish near Perth a portion of Forfarshire. Many of these anomalies have recently been done away with. How they originally came to be arranged in this whimsical fashion is not easy of explanation; but it is supposed that when the counties were being formed the landlords put their lands into those districts in which they had the greatest interest. The origin of the parish boundaries is equally difficult of explanation as many of them are very irregular and appear to be of a purely arbitrary character.

2. General Characteristics and Natural Conditions.

The county of Perth is situated in the middle of Scotland and, with the exception of the small tidal tract represented by the alluvial flat that lies between the Sidlaws and the sea, known as the Carse of Gowrie, is wholly an inland county.

Perthshire is bounded on the north-west by Inverness-shire, on the north by Inverness-shire and Aberdeenshire,

Firth of Tay

on the east by Forfarshire, on the south-east by Fifeshire and Kinross-shire, on the south by Clackmannanshire and Stirlingshire, on the south-west by Stirlingshire and Dumbartonshire, and on the west by Argyllshire.

Sir Walter Scott in the *Fair Maid of Perth* says, "Amid all the provinces in Scotland if an intelligent stranger were asked to describe the most varied and the most beautiful it is probable he would name the county of Perth. A native also of any other district of Caledonia though his partialities might lead him to prefer his native county in the first instance would certainly class that of Perth in the second, and thus give its inhabitants a fair right to plead that—prejudice apart—Perthshire forms the fairest portion of the northern kingdom."

Perthshire affords examples of the most romantic and grandest scenery in Scotland, much of which has been rendered classic by important events in Scottish history. Mountains, lakes, rivers, cascades, woods and rocks supply the elements that combine to make up all that is grand and beautiful in every landscape. In the course of a few miles one may pass from a deep ravine or rugged Alpine glen into a rich and open valley which partakes of the cultivated beauty of the lowlands and in the centre of which lie embosomed the waters of a great lake. Or one may follow the wanderings of a great river from its source among the mountains, whence, as a torrent and with a wild mountain cry, it precipitates itself over ledges of rock to become lost on the black moor beneath but after a course of many miles finds itself meandering through a spacious vale or widespread wooded plain.

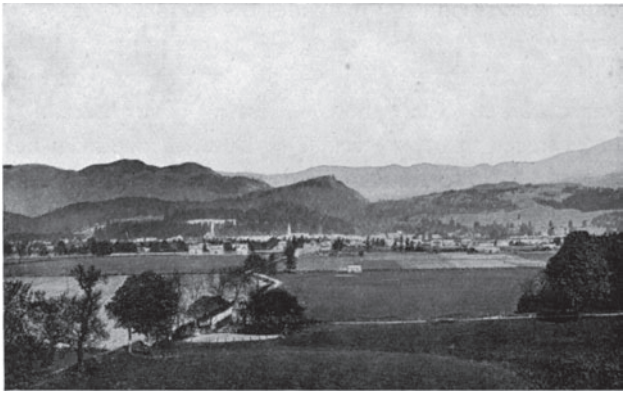
Falls on the Dochart

Geographically the mainland of Scotland can be divided into three parts, the Highlands, the Southern Uplands, and the Midland Valley, each characterised by a particular set of rocks and by a scenic aspect which is intimately connected with its geological structure. The dividing line between the Highlands and the Midland Valley, known as the great Highland boundary fault, crosses Scotland from shore to shore with a north-east and south-west trend. Geographically it divides the Highlands from the Lowlands and geologically the crystalline schists from the Old Red Sandstone. The position of this great line of demarcation has been more or less accurately fixed. It can be traced through Arran and Bute, thence from near Toward Castle to Innellan and across the eastern point of Rosneath Peninsula, and by Helensburgh across Loch Lomond to Balmaha. It enters Perthshire at Aberfoyle, passing through Callander, Comrie, Crieff, Birnam, Blairgowrie to the Bridge of Cally and Alyth, where it leaves the county, striking north-eastwards to the sea at Stonehaven.

Situated as it is upon this great divisional line, Perthshire is divided into two distinct regions—the Highlands and the Lowlands. The greater part of the Highland region is open moorland; large tracts of it, however, have been planted with larch and Scots fir. The Lowland region on the other hand is noted for its fertility, notably the valley of Strathmore and the Carse of Gowrie. The greater part of the county, however, is wholly unfit for the raising of grain or green crops, only about one-fifth of the entire area being cultivated.

With only a few exceptions the rivers and streams flow in a south-easterly direction, and reach the ocean by the way of the Firth of Tay or the Firth of Forth. As a rule they issue from large elongated lochs situated in the main valleys.

Its position in the very heart of Scotland has made Perthshire the scene of some of the most important and



Comrie

stirring events in Scottish history, and almost every part of the shire is connected in some way with the past history of the country.

The great divisional line just referred to was that which originally separated the Celtic natives from the invading hordes from across the North Sea; and to this day it serves to mark off the areas occupied by the Gaelic-speaking and the English-speaking people. In the Lowland

region we hear only English spoken, often with a strong northern accent. Scattered here and there over the great plain of Strathmore are numerous villages and towns, the houses of which are usually well built of solid stone and lime, and roofed with flagstones, slates, or thatch. The common fuel is coal brought by land or sea from the south. Immediately we pass to the north of the great boundary line, we meet with a totally different condition of things. The Gaelic language is now the characteristic tongue. Villages are few, and the houses are built simply of unhewn boulders taken from the surrounding fields, the binding materials being merely clay or earth. The interiors are of the simplest character and peat is largely used as fuel. That these features have been modified to some extent by the recent development of railways in the Highlands must be admitted, but the general contrast is still quite sufficient to mark off the one region from the other.

In the Highlands the principal villages are situated either at the ends of the lochs or at some favourable point in the main valleys, while along the margin of the Highlands the villages have usually been built where the valleys open to the plain, as at Crieff and Callander.

It is worthy of note that at the beginning of the nineteenth century Perthshire was the second most populous county in Scotland, Lanark having then only 22,000 more inhabitants than Perth, whereas now Lanark has 1,216,000 more inhabitants than Perth, and Perth stands ninth in point of population. The reason why Perth has made no progress is not far to seek, and is simply due to the

fact that Perthshire is entirely outside the bounds of the Carboniferous Formation, whose mineral wealth has been the great factor in the rapid rise and development of other counties during the last hundred years.

3. Size. Shape. Boundaries.

The county of Perth lies between 56° 7′ and 56° 57′ N. latitude and between 3° 4′ and 4° 50′ west longitude. In size it is the fourth largest county in Scotland. From east to west, its greatest length is about 70 miles, and its greatest breadth from north to south about 56 miles. Its total area is something like 2500 square miles.

At some parts the boundaries are natural and well defined, while at others they are purely artificial and not so easy of definition. Beginning near Perth, the boundary line can be traced along the north bank of the Tay as far as Invergowrie, where it bends sharply northward and then westward. It then follows a somewhat arbitrary course, successively passing through or near Coupar-Angus, Alyth and Airlie: thence it proceeds along the western watershed of Glen Isla. From that point it crosses a number of summits and saddle points including the Cairnwell Pass, over which the road to Braemar passes. This is probably the highest driving road regularly used in Great Britain. The boundary line can now be traced westward by the head of Glen Tilt, where it meets the junction of Aberdeen and Inverness at an altitude of 3267 feet and overlooks the headwaters of the infant Dee. Continuing