

## Ghosts of Ellwyn Glen.

In Ellwyn Glen there were three castles. This sounds like the beginning of a fairy-tale, but where in all Scotland is there any district so full of fairies and goblins as the Borders, and the glen has its share. Have we not proof of the existence of the "little folk" in the Fairy Stones? The Fairy Dean is near the foot of the glen, where the Ellwyn twists and turns so much that seven bridges span it within the last half mile before it joins the Tweed. Just before the burn enters this lovely wooded hollow, there is a deep red scaur in its banks, and it is here that the Fairy Stones are found. Not everyone is lucky enough to find them, but when they do, they marvel at their wonderful shapes. Some are like cottage loaves, others like cradles, caps and even old coins. Sir Walter himself, takes them as evidence of the actual operations of the fairy people.

The road through the glen lies to the west of the Fairy Dean. You climb the steep Beechy Braes, and at the Heights there is a marvellous panorama. To the south a goodly stretch of the Tweed valley lies below, dominated by the Eildon Hills - one of the many places where King Arthur and his knights sleep. In the distance the Cheviots are purple against the skyline. Across the Tweed is the

wooded Rhymer's Glen, where True Thomas used to wander. To the north the Ellwyn valley widens. The soft rounded hills, green to the top, are as restful as the cattle and sheep grazing on them. It is at this wide part that the three castles are, all in ruins now-a-days, but once the homes of noble Scottish families.

The first of these is Hillslap, or to give it its better known name of Glendearg. It stands on a knowe above Ellwyn, and is a tall narrow tower with crow-stepped gables. What ghosts might be seen here? Nicholas Cairncross who built the Tower, and whose initials along with those of his wife and the date 1585 are carved above the door, might well come and haunt his old home, or perhaps Halbert Glendinning and Mary Avenel, immortalised by Sir Walter Scott in his novel "The Monastery" still climb the tall spiral staircase as in days of old. What revelries will be held in the good-sized room where Dame Glendinning entertained the Sacristan, and where the miller's Mysie ogled Sir Piercy Shafton! When the setting sun casts a ~~glamorous~~ glow over the countryside, it is not difficult to imagine one sees the rieviers galloping down the hillside after an raid over the Borders. Nearby is the reputed site of the White Lady well, for did she not say,

"Wither bush and perish well

Fall'n is lofty Avenel".

So truly did Sir Walter make his characters live, that a Canadian lady recently paid a special visit to Glendearg to visit <sup>the</sup> home of her ancestors, the Glendinnings! //

From the windows of Glendearg, a square tower can be seen. This is Colmslie, and it has its ghosts too. Perhaps one ~~would be~~ <sup>is</sup> St. Cuthbert who built and dedicated a Chapel to his master St. Columba in the field nearby, ~~but~~ of which nothing now remains but the name. There used to be a graveyard round the Chapel, and when it was ploughed up, the ploughman died within three days. This sacrilege and its swift punishment were inevitably connected in the minds of the people. Maybe the Covenanters, who according to legend, were imprisoned in its dungeons and starved to death, still wail, "Woe unto the bloody house of Colmslie".

To the east lies Langshaw. This is the largest of the ruins. It is an L shaped house, with a stair turret at the bend. Ghosts here too! If, as we are told, King James V used it as a hunting lodge when hunting the deer among the adjoining hills, ~~what~~ revelries would be held here while the Court was in residence. The grey lichen-covered walls shining in the bright moonlight give it an unreal look, and little imagination is needed to see the Royal ghost and his retinue. The building went through many vicissitudes, and latterly part of it was used for a school. A scholar of those times scratched a problem of Euclid on the wall.

Had he been "kept in" and did he work his problem on the wall for mischief or for a task, and so keep it for all times, if not in his mind, at least on the wall?

Nearby is the shooting lodge built in 1820 by Mr Baillie of Jerviswood. It is a small Unpretentious cottage, but a very famous ghost visits it, no less than the "Wizard himself! Who knows but that he wove his tale when he took his "morning ride" to visit his friend Mr Baillie. In his introduction to "The Monastery" he says, "Langshaw has nothing about it more remarkable than the inscription of the present proprietor over his shooting lodge.

" Utinam hanc etiam viris impleam amicis". "

This a mis-quotation, the actual wording being,

" Utinam hanc veris amicis impleam".

a fuller meaning than Sir Walter gives.

Between the ruins and the shooting lodge there used to be a fine old gean tree with a very twisted trunk. In Spring it was white with blossom, and in Autumn the birds made feast of the ripening fruit. For years it braved the storms, its gnarled trunk propped up, but one "Januar' blast" it fell and only the stump remains. So another landmark has gone.

The glen narrows above the towers. Perhaps in this part the ghost of the Savage Brown Man of the Moors

wanders. He, according to Sir Walter, was "a genuine descendant of the Northern dwarfs". Be this as it may, there is no ruin without its ghosts, no stone without its "bogle" in all Ellwyn Glen.