

Literature, &c.

The British Magazines.

From Hogg's Instructor.
THE CATARACT.

BY R. K. DOUGLAS.

Among the objects of curiosity to which the attention of the traveller through the west part of Porthshire is directed, is a fall, or rather series of falls, formed by the little river Devon—the clear-winding Devon of Burns—the loftiest of which is termed the 'Caldron Linn,' and a bridge that stretches its 'wearisome but needful length' over the same stream, and which, from the noise and turmoil of the waters, that tear and bellow like a chafed lion, some forty feet below it, is called the 'Rumbling Bridge.' The Rumbling Bridge no longer exists, or rather, I should say, it is no longer accessible; and the manner in which this has been brought about is not a little indicative of the calculating genius of the people of the 'north country.' Some fifteen or sixteen years ago, the road, a wild and rugged and neglected mountain path, after toiling up the precipitous bank, dived down again almost perpendicularly, until it reached the bridge; and, that once passed, a similar ascent and descent awaited the traveller before he could reach what was, comparatively speaking, level ground. The bridge itself was, or is (I shall explain this ambiguity by and by) one.

'Where two wheelbarrows tremble when they meet.'

The height of the time-worn and tottering parapet never exceeded eighteen inches; and when a wayfarer, whether on horseback or in a carriage, halted on the crown of the sharply-turned arch and beheld, within a foot on each side, the fence that mocked his fears with the semblance of protection, and looked to the wild and tangled banks and dark dripping masses of rock beetling over, and almost shutting out the light, and listening to the stream that roared beneath him in all but utter darkness, and this apparatus of terror accompanied, as it at all times was, by a strong blast of wind, sweeping down the narrow and tortuous funnel through which the water poured, he must have possessed an imagination of the dullest, and a head of the hardest materials, if he did not feel the grandeur and giddiness of the scene.

When the present secure and convenient fabric, which joins the highway from Grief to Stirling with the hill-road to Cleish and Dunfermline, was erected, the thrifty engineer, instead of hunting about for a more suitable point of projection, wisely considered that it would save expence to build the new bridge above the old—the abutments of the latter serving as a foundation for those of the former; and the old was used as a *point d'appui* for the framework of its successor. The new bridge, in consequence, struts, in all the pride of upstart greatness, above the humble and hidden friend to whom it owes its support; and it is only by clambering down the bank for a considerable way, that a glimpse can be caught of the *real* Rumbling Bridge hanging in unapproached obscurity some twenty feet below the structure that now usurps its name. Down these falls a stray cow or sheep is now and then accidentally hurried; and in no case has it happened that the animal has not been found at the foot of the hill, broken, and bleeding, and lifeless, from dashing against the sides of the fearful rift, in its descent. Human beings have also stumbled into the stream, and with one singular and providential exception their fate has been similar.

One fine summer day, Mr. H. was wandering along the rugged banks below the Rumbling Bridge, along with an older and more staid companion. Mr. H. was then a very young man, full of the vigour, activity, and joyousness of his years; and possessing all the fearlessness and dexterity of a mountaineer: in person somewhat about the middle size, and slightly but compactly formed. The stream had been swollen by a recent 'spate,' and the roaring of the cataract was like a continuous peal of thunder. Both parties were anxious to obtain a full view of the fall, but the nature of the ground rendered it a matter of considerable difficulty. They were creeping cautiously along the giddy and overhanging bank, when Mr. H. perceived, at some distance below the spot where he hung half suspended by the roots and branches of the brushwood, a flat projecting piece of rock, within a few yards of the verge of the Linn; and pointing it out to his companion; and beckoning him to follow, he began to move downward in that direction. His more considerate friend endeavoured, by his gestures, to make him desist—to communicate by any other means was impossible—rather from a general apprehension of danger, than from any anticipation of what was to follow. The admonition, however, as admonitions addressed to youth usually are, was received with a laugh of ridicule at the timidity in which it was supposed to originate, and only served to confirm the climber's purpose. In a few seconds he reached a spot immediately above the point he aimed at, and dropped lightly down; but no sooner had his foot pressed the stone, than, to the unspeakable horror of his companion, whose eye followed his progress with mingled terror and admiration, it trembled, loosened, and fell from beneath him! The unhappy young man grasped convulsively at the root of a bush immediately over his head, and had it been sufficiently strong, he would still have escaped; but root, and bush, and turf, gave way together under his weight, and he fell into the water a very few feet above

the fall. Once, and once only, his eye met that of his friend as he rose above the surface; the next instant he sped over the cataract, like an arrow shot by a vigorous arm, and disappeared amid the clouds of spray, and the roaring billows of the pool below. The companion of the unfortunate young gentleman, although convinced, as he afterwards declared, that he should never again behold him alive, did not for a moment delay to embrace what he conceived to be the only chance of saving him. He climbed, or rather ran, directly up the bank, a feat which nothing but the excitement of the moment would have emboldened him to attempt—indeed he never was able very clearly to state how he accomplished it—and shouted an alarm to the farm house close by. The cry was heard, and he was immediately joined by three or four of the inmates, who, seeing him alone, easily guessed what had happened; and the whole, without question asked or answered, rushed down the steep road that led to the point where the Devon enters the plain. Here, in a little bending, scooped out by the eddy of the stream, was usually landed whatever floating body happened from accident to pass over the falls. As they approached the cove, the first of the party, a strong and active shepherd, perceived a hat floating on the surface, and plunged into the water, from an idea that it was the body of the drowned youth. He was soon undeceived; and wading out with the hat in his hand, in a suppressed tone of voice, said to the rest, who were now at his side, 'He is in some of the Linn-pots—we must seek up the water.' 'He had fallen with the bit whin in his hand, it is like,' said another, pointing to the furze, which, with the sod still in part attached to it, had slowly circled round until it was arrested by the water-worn pebbles that strewed the bottom of the shallow pool.

I must now return to young Mr. H. Before he recovered his recollection, after the plunge into the water, he was hurried, as I have described, over the fall, and found himself, after sinking in what seemed a bottomless abyss, whirling round with a fearful and dizzy rapidity. Luckily he could swim a little, and from an instinctive desire to prolong life, he struck out with his hands and feet, and endeavoured to gain the edge of the whirlpool. To his astonishment, when his breath, and strength, and hope were just departing, he found he had succeeded in reaching a spot where the waters were comparatively still, and where the depth was not above a few feet. The bottom, on which he had found a resting-place, was, however, of the loosest and most yielding nature. It was, indeed, a mere ridge of sand and pebbles that had come down from the fall, and which in that spot, and in it alone, the diminished agitation of the water had allowed to subside. On the crown of the ridge Mr. H. had by accident stopped; and his momentary feeling of joyful surprise was followed by the bitterness of agony, when he found, after remaining for a second, the mound on which he stood gradually slipping away from beneath him. He looked upward, as the blast swept aside the dense cloud of spray and saw afar off the line of the clear blue sky, with the fleecy clouds swiftly sweeping over it, and caught a glimpse of the edge of the bank, with the trees and bushes bending in the breeze and the birds flitting across the chasm, whose black and frowning and slippery sides rose to a height that seemed interminable. Behind, and touching him, was the whirlpool, from which he had with so much difficulty escaped; and beyond it rushed down, like a solid wall, the waters of the Linn, over which he had been tumbled; while in front roared other falls, whose height he knew not, and which nothing but a miracle could enable him to pass and live. He saw all this, and he felt at the same moment that but a few minutes could elapse ere he must see them no more; yet he determined to struggle with his fate to the last. At first he endeavoured, by altering his position, to stay his feet from slipping; but a very few trials convinced him that to shift at all only accelerated his sinking, and that his best chance lay in remaining as stationary as possible. Still, however, he sank to the breast—the shoulders—the neck. A thought now seized him that seemed even more bitter than the death that was trembling over him. Had he sped over the falls his body would at least have been recovered by his friends—it would have been composed by kindly hands—pious tears would have dropped over it—a mother's lips would have pressed his cold cheek—troops of kinsfolk and neighbours would have accompanied him to his last dwelling-place—the blessed sun would have looked down upon his grave, and the wind of his native hills would have swept over it; but now, the bottom of the whirlpool was to be his burial-place, and his bones were to bleach forever in the torrent of the Caldron Linn! His mind began to give way under these dismal fancies. Amidst the roaring of the waters, he heard shrill and unnatural howlings. The superstitious of his childhood came across him, and he thought, while he listened to those terrible voices that he heard the demons of the stream rejoicing over their anticipated victim; and in the fantastic forms of the frowning rocks, as the wreaths of spray passed over them, his imagination pictured the lurid aspect and goggling eyes of the water kelpie glaring upon him, and its rifted jaws open to devour him. His soul was wound up to agony beyond endurance. He struggled to free himself from the gravel in which he had sunk, but his struggles only sank him deeper; the water rose to his lips—he gasped for air and it came not; another second, and his sufferings would have ceased for ever. But the same Power which had guided him over the fall, and watched him from the whirlpool, was still watching over him.

As the party that were searching, not for their companion, but for his body (for not one of them supposed it possible that he should ever be seen alive again), the same young man who had plunged into the stream, as he sprung from rock to rock along the dizzy brink of the chasm, with the sharpened eye which a shepherd's life never fails to bestow, his vision rendered doubly acute by the excited state of his feelings, perceived a dark stationary speck in the water, which a moment's inspection convinced him to be the head and shoulders of a human being. 'Ropes, ropes!' he shouted to his companions: 'he is alive; I see him standing at the foot of the Linn.' The binding ropes from a couple of hay-waggons were knotted and handed to him, and the upper extremity being firmly secured to the trunk of one of the twisted birches at the top of the bank, the adventurous shepherd slid down with the other in his hand, until the overhanging rock forbade farther descent; those at the top, hallooing in the meantime to attract the attention of their half-drowned friend, with what effect I have already stated.

No noise, indeed, that they could make would have been sufficient; but, luckily, the wet and dripping hat, which the shepherd had fished up from the cove, was still grasped in his hand; he dropped it into the water, and the wind at that moment lulling, and the spray clearing away, it fell immediately before the object whose attention it was designed to attract. Roused by the sudden splash, he turned his despairing eyes upwards, and beholding the rope his friend was endeavouring to steady, he raised his arms, and by a vigorous spring contrived to catch hold of it. There was still, however, much between him and safety. From the surface of the water to where the shepherd had propped himself was fully twenty feet; the rock jutted over the stream, so that while drawn up, young H. had to hang suspended by the hands, the power of which was nearly lost, from the time he had been immersed in the river. He was swung backwards and forwards at a fearful rate by the wind, and not unfrequently struck with violence against the points of the rock. The rope also rubbed against the sharp edge of the precipice, and ran a momentary risk of being cut through. By great care, and greater good fortune, he at length approached the top of the rock; and his humble friend, whose encouraging voice had nerved him in his dangerous ascent, stooping down, caught the wrist of the youth firmly in his grasp, and placed him at his side. In another instant they were both in the midst of the group at the top.

Young H. sickened and fainted as soon as he was placed once more on the grassy bank. He was conveyed to the farmhouse, where he was put to bed; whence he arose, after a few hours of heavy sleep, without any other symptom of suffering than extreme weakness, from which youth and healthful constitution, in the course of a few days, completely relieved him. For many years after, however, his sleep was occasionally disturbed with dreams of rocks and rushing waters; and even in his waking moments a convulsive shudder would not unfrequently pass over him, when he thought of the Caldron Linn.

From the Christian Treasury.

EDOM.

A WITNESS FOR THE TRUTH OF THE BIBLE.

From "A Journey over the Region of Fulfilled Prophecy," by the Rev. J. A. Wylie, of Dollar.

We strike into the great wilderness that lies on the east of Egypt. We are now treading on the path of the mighty host which God, with an outstretched arm, led out of Egypt. We have gone round the head of the Red Sea, and are journeying south, over a tract alternately sandy and stony. On our right is a chain of naked heights, and on our right are the blue waters of the Gulf on the shores of which the Israelites halted and sang their magnificent triumphal ode, over the destruction of Pharaoh and his army. Our path is not all desert; we alight, at long stages, in some quiet valley, with its springs and palm trees, and its rich verdure, so refreshing to the eyes after the glare of the sands of the wilderness. Even here we meet with *mementos* of scenes, which, though long past, are never to be forgotten. Here is Hovara, the bitter fountain where the Israelites murmured, encompassed with its sand mounds and its date trees; and here, a little further to the south, is Wady Charendel—the Valley of Elim—where the people encamped, still verdant with waters and palm trees.

We go forward, and now, at a great distance, just peering above the sands of the desert, is a little point of rock. It grows taller and bigger at every step, till at length, what but a little before was only a small dark protuberance on the bosom of the plain, towers before us a stupendous mountain of granite. The mass before us, whose surface is of naked rock or bare sands, forms a cluster of peaks or mountains, which rise to a great height above the level of the plain. These are the mountains of Horeb and Sinai. We begin to tread reverently, for the desert around these illustrious piles his profound calm, and we persuade ourselves something also of the holiness, of a magnificent temple. The poor monks have set down their convent on the back of one of these mountains, with a little hollow beneath, in which there is scarce standing-room for a few hundred persons. On this summit, they tell us, was the law given, and in the little ravine at its bottom stood the hosts of Israel. It is refreshing to turn from man's narrow conceptions to the free majesty of nature. Of the cluster

of summits which here tower with such sublimity into the serene firmament over them, we know that Sinai and Horeb are of the number, though we cannot tell to which of these eminences that distinction belongs. But it is something to know that we are now gazing on the scenery of Sinai—on the summits and the valleys which then lay veiled in the darkness, or glowed beneath the lightnings, which attended that awful event—on the plains which rung to the trumpet which waxed louder and louder, and quaked beneath the still more awful Voice which proclaimed the law.

But our present destination is not yet reached. We leave the bottom of these mountains, and as their venerable peaks sink behind us, an interminable ocean of sand spreads out in our front. Our course lies to the north-east; and after traversing many a league of wilderness, we hail with joy the rugged peaks of Mount Seir, which now begin to be seen above the desert. Seir, to which we are now approaching, is a chain of mountains, terminating in a crest of romantic peaks, which runs in a straight line across the desert, from a point a little south of the Dead Sea to the head of the Gulf of Akaba, the eastern arm of the Red Sea. This magnificent chain—for though stripped of its ancient fertility, Mount Seir retains to this day a desolate grandeur which well entitles it to be regarded as magnificent—comprises the ancient realm of Edom. His devotion to the chase often led Esau thither in his youth, and there did he ultimately settle; his posterity, in course of time, expelling the Horites—the first inhabitants of these mountains. The Edomites greatly enlarged their domain in after ages; but the mountainous region before us, which is about thirty-six miles in breadth, with part of the eastern plain immediately adjoining, must be viewed as forming strictly their patrimonial inheritance. In ancient times, the climate of these hills was most salubrious. Their dews were abundant; the mountains, up to their spiky pinnacles, were clothed with the olive and the vine; the valleys and the rocky clefts, were covered with the richest mould; the mountain-torrents were numerous; and the sun being warm, the produce of these hills was very great. "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above." Such were the words in which Isaac, by the Spirit of Prophecy, described the future inheritance of Esau and his posterity. The mingled grandeur, beauty, and fertility, which the region of Seir exhibited, while occupied by the Edomites, amply verified the words of Isaac.

Established in this mountainous region—a fit home for a hardy, brave, and industrious people—the posterity of Esau rapidly outstripped in their progress to distinction, their brethren, the descendants of Jacob. While the Israelites, enthralled in Egypt, had neither a country nor a national existence, the Edomites, under the sway of their own princes, and enjoying in their mountain fastnesses the sweets of freedom and peace, were busily engaged in laying the foundations of that greatness as a nation to which they were destined to attain. Their father Esau had been distinguished as a 'cunning hunter;' but his posterity were not slow in acquiring the knowledge of other pursuits than those in which their ancestor had excelled. They rapidly achieved no mean eminence in arts and in arms, in science and in commerce, and in the wealth, refinement, luxury, and wickedness, which extensive and prosperous commerce brings along with it. It was at this era of their nation that numerous and magnificent cities began to rise amid those mountains on whose sides, in early times, their simple progenitor had chased the prey. Of these cities, the most distinguished was Petra, the capital of the nation. This city was the centre of a commerce that ramified as far as India on the east, and Spain on the west; and the importance and splendour of this city were such as befitted the gigantic traffic of which it was the emporium. Its romantic position, and the singular character and beauty of its buildings, excited the admiration, and received the praise, both of Greek and Roman writers. It stood in a little hollow in the very heart of the mountains. To it there was only one way of approach—a frightful chasm of some two miles long, narrow, and overhung by gloomy precipices. Traversing this defile, the visitor emerged on a plain of about two miles in circuit, occupied by dwellings, temples, triumphal arches, a theatre, and numerous tombs. These last added not a little to the beauty of the scene. They were hewn in the mountains which enclosed Petra, they were ornamented with elegant fountains, and resembled, though on a much smaller scale, those princely halls which the kings of Egypt prepared for the reception of their bodies. The city, moreover, being much exposed to the reflection of the sun's rays from the mountains that encompassed it, was cooled by artificial fountains and beautified by gardens. Such was Petra—it was the abode of royalty—the home of wisdom—the mart of the world—to replenish which all the climes of the earth sent their treasures; India her gems; Arabia, her frankincense; Kedar, her lambs; Persia, her robes; Armenia, her horses; Lebanon, her cedars; Tyre, her purple; and Judea, her balm and honey. Against this region, occupied then by a warlike and enterprising people, and covered with towns—for though we have specified only Petra, almost every valley had its city, which shared in the importance and wealth of the capital—against this flourishing region did the prophets pronounce the doom of utter desolation; and we are now to see whether that doom has been inflicted.

We cannot tarry long here, therefore let us select a good point of view, and have the whole country under the eye at once. Here, in the middle of the chain, is a summit which over-