

Dr Paterson's Reminiscences

When the late Dr Paterson went first to the Bridge-of-Allan, Perthshire it was a small place, composed principally of white washed cottages with thatched roofs. The largest houses were in Union Street and Allen Vale. The Royal Hotel was just built, and there were besides, Bell's (near the Queens) Hotel an Inn at the end of the bridge. There were three houses on the hill, and no church, except Lecroft and Logie. The first church that was built was the Free Church in Drummond Place, near Drummond Cottage.

Coming as he did to the 'Spa' in its early day Dr Paterson was rich in reminiscences regarding its past residents visitors and affairs, but space forbids our dwelling upon any of these. When asked regarding the making of the Caledonian Railways he said he had about navvies under his care for two years. An incident connected therewith almost lost to Bridge-of-Allen its "Grand Old Man"! Dan O'Connell, the great Irish Leader, died about this time, and the Irish were praying for his safe passing of his soul through purgatory. A good old lady in Stirling sent to Dr Paterson tracts showing the absurdity of this, and asked him to distribute them during his rounds. This he did innocently and unthinkingly, and later on during the day he was surprised at the looks with which the Irish met him. Late that evening he was called to see a patient at Lecroft Schoolhouse. When he reached the end of Allan Bridge he was met by two strange, wild-looking Irishmen, bearing cudgels. On their looking menacingly at him the Dr walked quicker, and then broke into a run, which became a race for his life. Happily the schoolmaster was awaiting him at the gate and thus the Dr. was saved, though, when being escorted home, the two men were lurking about the corner of the the bridge, but hastily retarded. The matter having been reported the men were dismissed, but the Dr - interceded on their behalf and they were again engaged.

By two other professional incidents the station-brae was memorable to him. The one was when he rode to Keir on a thorough bred pony called "Satan" belonging to the grandfather of the present laird, also called Archibald. The Pony took him to the stable instead of the house. The other time when he was driven like lightning" to Keir in a dogcart, at the "dead of night" by the late Sir William Sterling Maxwell to attend to Lady Ann, who had been fatally burned.

Dr Paterson had many illustrious patients, and some fine stories he told of them. One of these was of a little Indian Princess, who occasionally resided at Blawlowan. The Queen took an almost motherly interest in her and often had her at Windsor to play with the other Royal children. One day the Dr. asked her which of the two Royal children she liked best, Her answer was the Princess, because " the Prince (of Wales) thrashes me sometimes".

Another patient was Signor Gavazzi, the compatriot and friend of Garibaldi, "the savior of Italy". Gavazzi once came into the Doctors study, and pointing to autograph portraits of Garibaldi and Queen Victoria, he said - "That is my big brother who is now in heaven. That is Queen Victoria. My Garibaldi once said to me, 'Gavazzi, you know I don't like Emperors or Empresses, Kings or Queens, but I love Queen Victoria because she is a good woman! '.

When asked if he remembered much about the coronation, he said he did, and that he possessed a copy of the 'London Sun' printed in gold describing it. Of Her Majesty's first visit to Scotland he had many happy recollections, being then a student, and almost about to take unto himself the 'Queen of his Heart'.

One of the Doctors 'Royal' stories we might recount as told to him by his friend, Sheriff Gordon of Edinburgh, who occasionally dined with the Queen when she came to Holyrood. It seems that his son and the Duke of Edinburgh were middies on board the same vessel and that one day they had a quarrel which ended in young Gordon beating the Prince. Sometime

after this the Sheriff was invited to Holyrood, and went with fear and trembling - after-dinner the Queen said "Your Son and mine had a fight!" 'Please your Majesty, I was very sorry about it! "Don't be in the least bit sorry", she answered, "I enquired into the case and found my son the aggressor, and he deserved the good thrashing your son gave him".

On a visitor leaving the orchid house, the Doctors tortoises, as they were moving around, caused him to remark that a Highland patient of his, on seeing them, exclaimed, "Bless me! Doctor, that is the first walking snuffbox I have ever seen!"

When the Diamond Jubilee tree was planted in Cleopatra Place, on the 22nd June last by Rovast Philp, Dr Paterson exhibited in a bottle a bit of Queen Victoria's wedding cake, and said - "Ladies and Gentlemen - I venture to say there never was a better wife in the world, there never was a better mother in the world, there never was a better Queen in the world, and there never was a better Christian."

Extract From the 'EVENING TIMES'

22nd August, 1890.

DR PATERSON'S TREASURES

Doctor Paterson of Bridge-of-Allan has just published a tasteful little catalogue of that wonderful collection of treasures of his. There seems to be no bound on his antiquarian zeal, and the "Bridge" and country in general ultimately hope to build a museum to hold his collection.

Otherwise the Doctor will soon be crowded out of his own home. I was his guest for an hour on Saturday and positively, there were so many chairs in it that there was no room to sit down.

Extract from "OCCASIONAL NOTES"

from the STIRLING SENTINEL April 27, 1898.

By the lamented death of Dr Paterson, Bridge-of-Allan has lost its best friend and warmest champion. Long before the Burgh Commissioners ever thought of advertising the Bridge, the Doctor took the business in hand, and by a well-timed letter to a newspaper, a communication to a scientific magazine, or a report to a medical journal, he would bring the advantages of the place under the notice of those in search of a health resort. With Dr. Paterson as I once remarked to himself, it was Bridge-of-Allan in season and out of season. He also greatly helped to popularize the Spa by keeping an open door to visitors and he was never too busy to attend to them and give any information they wanted. With much geniality and 'Bonne comeredie', the Doctor had a considerable amount of national pawkiness, and he could see through the humbug of many things to which convention band him to show outward respect. There was one quality he possessed for which I admired him very much. The misfortunes of a friend did not affect his friendship. I could mention several instances in which he stood up for people who had lost public favour and, he was ever ready to help in a quiet unostentatious way, quite regardless of the abstract question whether help was deserved or not. His visits to Stirling friends and acquaintances, never without some curiosity to show them and always ending with a hearty invitation to give him a call, agreeably relieved the monotony of the daily round or weekly task. His own trials, which were neither few nor small, deepened and widened his sympathy with others, and there were many who benefited by a visit to him though they got no medical prescription. He had his failings, as we all have, but it can be truthfully said that these leaned to the virtues side. Bridge-of-Allan without the cheery, good-hearted Doctor will be a changed place to hundreds of visitors, who will miss his cordial welcome and his enjoyable conversation.

EXTRACT FROM 'THE VISITOR' April 27 1898.
THE LATE DR PATERSON - BRIDGE-OF-ALLAN

The death took place at Bridge-of-Allan on Friday morning of Dr Paterson (Alexander), the well-known horticulturist and antiquary, after an illness extending over several months. The deceased gentleman was a native of Dundee, and was born in 1822. In his sixteenth year he entered medical classes in Edinburgh University and obtained his degree of M.D. in 1843. Just previously he married the only daughter of the late Mr William Dalrymple, W.S., Edinburgh. He began the practice of his profession in Edinburgh, but his health giving way he was recommended to visit Bridge-of-Allan. He derived so much benefit from the change that he settled down in this village as medical practitioner, and during his long life he never lost an opportunity to bring the merits of Bridge-of-Allan as a health resort before the world by correspondence to the press and otherwise owing in great measure to his efforts the place became a popular 'Spa', and the Doctors services to the community were acknowledged by a public presentation in 1885. He held the office of medical officer for the Burgh, and was Justice of Peace for the county of Stirling. Dr Paterson was a good botanist, and took great delight in horticulture, devoting special attention to the culture of orchids. For a number of years past he was in the habit of sending a basket of his choicest orchid blooms to her Majesty on the occasion of her birthday. He had also a great fondness for collecting curios and antiques, and his numerous friends and old patients always kept him in mind when they came across anything they thought would interest him. By means of such gifts and private purchases he formed a museum of great interest and variety, which eventually became a great attraction to visitors to Bridge-of-Allan, who were always welcomed by the genial and hospitable owner. Not only in the district in which he resided, but all over the country, Dr Paterson's death will be deeply regretted. He leaves a widow and grown-up-family.

OUR CORRESPONDENT WRITES:-

The death of the venerable Dr Paterson severed a link with the past and with the rise and progress of Bridge-of-Allan. The Doctor was until his last illness a striking and picturesque figure on the village street, with his flowing locks and cheery greeting to stranger and friend alike. The writer has had many a pleasant talk with the old Doctor seated in his green house of a morning, among his friends, the orchids, his tree and his equally venerable tortoise. The Doctor's museum of curiosities was also a fruitful subject of conversation and interest to anyone with an antiquarian turn of mind. Nothing delighted the Doctor more than to find by a sudden question addressed to him when among his relics that the visitor was a bit of a collector himself. Immediately the hand of brotherhood was extended and the band of friendship complete. In his character there was narrow or bigoted. The Doctor indeed had a word of sympathy for all sorts and conditions of men, and found sermons in stones, books in the running brooks and good in everything. In politics he was a staunch Unionist, and in church matters he was an elder in the established church. The Doctor is survived by four daughters and two sons who are abroad. The funeral took place on Tuesday from Fernfield to Logie Churchyard. There was a large turnout of the general public. The Burgh Commissioners attended in their official capacity, and, preceded by the Captain of the Fire Brigade and the Clerk of Works marched in procession before the funeral 'cortege' to the Burgh boundary. A great many beautiful wreaths were sent by old friends.

The following interview with Dr Paterson, by one of the editors of the 'Spa Magazine' appeared in the quarterly Sept Last:- A visit to Fernfield, with its curios and orchid houses, is now considered one of the many attractions of the Bridge-of-Allan, but however interesting this may be to the lover of the antique and the historic, undoubtedly the charm of such a visit lies around the venerable figure and unique personality of the 'Doctor' himself.

Dr Paterson is a tall man with flowing, silvery locks. a ruddy complexion, while he is also

wonderfully robust and agile. With his long black frock coat and button-hole of some favorite flower, he is a well-known and venerated figure on our streets. He is the late Prof. Stuart Blackie's 'deppel-ganger' or 'Eijdouble', and the one was often taken for the other.

Born in Dundee on the 16th of June 1822, he was apprenticed at the age of 15, in his sixteenth year he entered the Medical School of Edinburgh University, and graduated there-at on the last of August in his 21st year, when he obtained his M.D. degree. He had long cherished the ambition to be an Edinburgh doctor, and so on the 2nd of August he put up his plate in that classical city. But his health was beginning to break down, and he was told by Sir Robert Christison that he could not stand the climate of Edinburgh and must either go to the South of England or to France. The Rev. D. Patrick Clason, who was his wife's minister and married them, and whose father was parish minister of Logie, hearing of this, recommended him to visit Bridge-of-Allan first. In the month of February, when not yet 22 years old, he left the Port of Leith in a steamboat, there being no railway at the time, and landed at Cembuskenneth. With his bag in his hand, he walked from there to the "Bridge" . It was dark ere he arrived at Caneyhill, and going slightly off his way he fell headlong down the hill. This was his first impression of the place of his future. He put up at the Royal Hotel, where he was well received by Mr and Mrs Philp. When he awoke next morning and saw Stirling Castle in the distance, he could scarcely convince himself that it was not Edinburgh. Before breakfast he walked up the hill to see the wells. The water was drawn up by a horse and then boiled in an old kettle, and it was served in an old shanty. He returned to the Hotel via Westerton and the bridge and said to Mr Philp:- "This is the most beautiful place I have ever seen. Bring a railway here, and this will become a great place in a short time. I am going to come and live and die here". That prophecy, has, in a great part, been fulfilled. Bridge-of-Allan has won for itself a great reputation as a health resort, to its claims which Dr Paterson can himself testify. He came to it practically an invalid. Some of the people said he could not live more than three to six months. However, in his own words, "Here I am hale and hearty, I have 'outlived them all!" The Doctor is as active as ever, hard-working night and day, and to him the Bridge owes no small part of its prosperity.