**FIFTH REPORT of the BOULDER COMMITTEE**

**ROYAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH. 1879.**

**Notes by "William Jolly, Esq., Inverness, on the Transportation of Rocks found on the South Shores of the Moray Firth.**

{Sent to Boulder Committee, October 1878.)

V.—THE GNEISS OF STRATHERRICK AND THE MONAGHLEA MOUNTAINS.

Parallel to the line of conglomerate blocks scattered between Loch Ness and Lossiemouth, often intermingled with it and the granite of Stratherrick, but occurring much more abundantly to the east of it, is found a broad band of boulders of grey gneiss. These are of all sizes, frequently large enough to have claimed popular notice and to have received local names, and are often placed in remarkable and elevated positions. The character of the rock may be well seen on the side of the road between Inverness and Farr, in the dyke near the Free Church of Farr, and in the fine group of boulders in the centre of the valley, which forms so striking and interesting a geological feature there. They occur in astonishing numbers round *Loch-na-Clachan*, or the Loch of the Stones, into which the stream from Loch Duntelchaig flows, near the old parish church of Dunlichity. There they form grand and picturesque groups of all sizes and forms, on the east side of the loch and up to the elevated summits of the hills, above 1400 feet high, and where they may often be seen, right on their crests, standing in a serrated line against the sky. Altogether, this is one of the most remarkable aggregations of blocks that I know, and it has already been referred to by Dr Milne Home, in his valuable paper on Glen Roy. Farther up the Nairn, near Farr House, stretches a long flat plateau of gravel and other debris, which stretches right across the valley, and through which the river has had to cleave its way in the narrow gorge below Flichity Castle. On this plateau is found another striking and numerous assemblage of huge blocks, well worth a visit, often of large size and peculiar forms, scattered singly and in groups, some of them standing erect like great pillars. Frequently these gneiss blocks have been left in remarkable places. On Craig-a-Chlachan, which overlooks the church of Dunlichity, on the west shore of Loch-na-Chlachan, near its top, on the edge of a steep precipice, is poised a block of gneiss 14 feet long, 10 feet in height, which catches the eye of the traveller from all points, and is known as *Clach-na-Fhreiceadan* or *Faire*, or the Stone of the Watch, on account of its elevated station (1120 feet), standing, as it does, like a sentinel, to guard the surrounding region.

To the east of the Free Church of Farr, right on the peaked top of the highest hill seen from that part of the valley, may be observed what seems a shepherd's cairn marking its summit. This provoked my curiosity for years, and this season I ascended the mountain and found that it consisted of a great block of gneiss split in two, and known, from this circumstance, as the *Clach Sgiolte*, or Split Rock. It has been originally a cube of stone, 9 feet square and 5 feet high, now split at two-thirds of its breadth, the larger part having remained in its original position and the smaller having fallen over. It stands nearly 1000 feet above the valley below, and nearly 1600 feet above the sea. Another *Clach Sgiolte*, on or very near the top of the great mountain, overlooking the narrow gorge of Conaglen, near Dunmaglass, at the very head waters of the Nairn, called Ben Dhu Choire, at a height of 2260 feet. This block I have not yet ascended to.\*

Another striking example of these gneiss blocks is found beyond the inn of Flichity above Farr, on the north slope of the finely crested ridge that lies between the valley of the Nairn and Loch Ruthven. It is called *Clach-a-Bhonat*, or the Stone of the Bonnet. This is a very large block, worth a visit. In this part of the valley of the Nairn, numerous other blocks occur singly and in groups in the bottom of the valley, and high on its sides up to the crests of the enclosing hills, on which they may be seen standing against the sky line.

Farther down the valley, below Daviot and not far from the mansion of Nairnside, a very fine boulder is perched on the top of a steep rock overlooking the river, on its eastern bank. It is 21 feet X 12 feet x 15 feet in height, and forms a fine object as seen from below, from the peculiarity of its position and great size. It is called *Clach-an-ullaidh*, or the Stone of the Treasure-Trove, from the prevalent idea that treasures lie concealed under such remarkable rocks; for there are numerous blocks with the same name and tradition, in various parts of the Highlands.

On the same side, of the Nairn, and not far from the block just mentioned, another is found, high up on the hill bounding the valley, and seen against the sky from below, very distinctly so from the Cumberland Stone, and from the road to the far-famed Clava, with its cairns and standing-stones. It is called *Clach-a-nid*, differently interpreted to be the Stone of the Nest, an unlikely meaning, and more probably the Stone of the Whistle, as the point to which the herd ascended to whistle and call on the cattle scattered over the hill slopes there, when he went to drive them home for the night. It is a very fine block, measuring 21 feet x 21 feet x 20 feet high, and has a commanding position (950 feet), with a splendid prospect, over the pastoral Nairn, away to the distant N. W. Highlands.

There are numerous other blocks of the same gneiss worthy of mention, but the foregoing will suffice as examples. They are found extending to the eastwards like the rocks already mentioned.

\* There is another *Clach Sgiolte*, about 1 mile from the source of the Findhorn, called the Eskin, some 2070 feet above the sea.