

**THE  
FRINGES OF FIFE**

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The Fringes of Fife by John Geddie & Arthur Wall & Louis Weirter

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**JOHN GEDDIE & ARTHUR WALL & LOUIS WEIRTER**

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NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION

BY

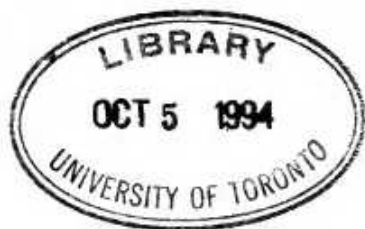
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TO  
GEORGE A. WATERS  
of the 'Scotsman'  
MY GOOD COLLEAGUE  
DURING A QUARTER  
OF A CENTURY

## FOREWORD

'I'll to Fife.'—*Macbeth*.

MUCH has happened since, in light mood and in light marching order, these walks along the sea-margin of Fife were first taken, some three-and-thirty years ago. The coasts of 'the Kingdom' present a surface hardened and compacted by time and weather—a kind of chequer-board of the ancient and the modern—of the work of nature and of man; and it yields slowly to the hand of change. But here also old pieces have fallen out of the pattern and have been replaced by new pieces. Fife is not in all respects the Fife it was when, more than three decades ago, and with the towers of St Andrews beckoning us forward, we turned our backs upon it with a promise, implied if not expressed, and until now unfulfilled, to return and complete what had been begun.

In the interval, the ways and methods of locomotion have been revolutionised, and with them men's ideas and practice concerning travel and its objects. Pedestrianism is far on the way to go out of fashion. In 1894 the 'push-bike' was a comparatively new invention; it was not even known by the name; it had ceased to be a velocipede, but was still a bicycle. Now, along with the foot-passenger, it is being pushed off the road by the more hustling and



speedy, but mechanical, motor-bike, and still more by the ubiquitous motor-car and motor-bus; and with these there have been twisted into the main threads of human life and experience the telephone, the gramophone, the 'wireless,' and, most portentous of all man's recent inventions, the aeroplane.

The world has changed, and with it the Fringe of Fife; although, fortunately, there are still long stretches of it in which you can walk and imagine that you are in the end of the nineteenth, or for that matter, of the sixteenth, century.

The wrinkles and the pencillings of art and utility which the last three or four decades have marked on the forefront of Fife are too many and ubiquitous for cataloguing in detail. Some scars, however, are more than skin-deep; they penetrate, not indeed to the 'soul of things Fife,' but to the quick, and will take time to heal. For a few samples:

The railway has drawn its score between the old causeys and biggings of Culross and the sea; and it has similarly treated Low Valleyfield and its adjuncts—a convenience doubtless, but, at many points, a sad break in historical continuity and in pictorial harmony of effect. At Crombie Point and Ironmill Bay there are grievances, for the wayfarer, of an opposite kind. For while great buildings have risen on the shore and a pier stretches halfway across the Firth towards Boness, the Admiralty have flung an iron arm bristling with spikes around this part of the shore of Fife, shielding it from the foot and eye of the unauthorised intruder.

It is a relic of the Great War; but nothing, in elaboration and extent, to that which meets us a little way east of the old churchyard of Rosyth. A 'Naval Base,' with its immense and costly appurtenances of docks, wharves, derricks, and storehouses, occupies all the space to Inverkeithing, and stretches far out into the Firth. It has set its signal-poles and flagstuffs on the adjoining hills; planted a new town between the coast and Dunfermline, and appropriated Rosyth Castle as an Officers' Club. The future fate of the former headquarters of the High Seas Fleet, whence it sallied forth to keep the enemy within his ports, or to drive him back, and finally to bring into these guarded waters the surrendered navy of Germany, still hangs suspended. Never will it be forgotten that to Fife men were committed the supreme charge of the defence of the realm, by land and by sea, at the most critical hour of its history—to Earl Haig, as Generalissimo of its Armies, and to Admiral Lord Wester Wemyss, as First Sea Lord.

Meanwhile Rosyth is promised preservation, as a base of reserve destroyers. By its annexation Dunfermline has been brought down to the sea. The Palace, the Abbey and the other antiquities of that Seat of Kings, the burial place of Canmore and the Bruce, along with its unequalled modern amenities, that to do them justice would require a volume to themselves, have become incorporated in the sea-fringe of Fife.

Inverkeithing, except for its core, has been transformed by the same agencies; an aerodrome has settled

down on the lands of Donibristle; St Fillan's Church, at Aberdour, has been roofed and restored; Inchcolm, its rocks still cumbered by naval works, but its ancient Abbey made more intelligible by excavation, has become a regular tourist resort, to which a steamer plies from South Queensferry; aluminium works have taken possession of the precincts of Old Burntisland and of the inlet resorted to by the Roman galleys; and Rossend Castle is turned into a boarding-house and tea-rooms. Change has been scarcely less busy farther east, about Kinghorn and Kirkcaldy, at Ravensheugh and in Dysart; the old shore path by Barnraig and Macduff's Castle is almost deserted, the roof of the Glass Cave has fallen in, and the adventurous little golf-links, set among rocks and caverns, is abandoned to the sea-maws. Methil, become one of the most 'populous places' in Fife, has annexed Buckhaven and Innerleven, and has connected itself with Kirkcaldy and other neighbours with busy tram-lines and motor-routes.

Changes have come also to Leven and Lundin and Largo; to Elie and Earlsferry; to St Monans and Pittenweem; to the Ansters and Cellardyke; even to Crail and to the East Neuk. Some are to be regretted; more, perhaps, are in the form of improvement. They are signs of growing popular favour as watering-places and golf resorts, more seldom of growing industries. They but mark the way of the world, and need not be enumerated. The borders of Fife are not the less worth passing survey, or intensive study in these days when 'the way of the world'