

EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

LAST year's summer excursion of the Club was the BEN VORLICH furthest away from the Cairngorms of any yet arranged, AND and, as an experiment, it turned out all that could be STUC A CHROIN. desired. The party left on Monday, 13th July, by the 6.50 A.M. Caledonian train, in a saloon carriage, picking up accessions to its number at Laurencekirk and Perth. The party was still further augmented at Comrie, the railway terminus, where the carriages, which had come up from Crieff, were entered, and a pleasant drive of about eight miles through most delightful scenery brought the Club to St. Fillans, at the foot of Loch Earn, where luncheon had been arranged. Thereafter the drive was resumed and the Earn crossed, and the road on the south side of the loch entered. The richness of the foliage, the glimpses of the loch through the green setting of the trees, and the lovely summer day, added a charm to the drive which will make it remain a pleasant memory for many a day. An eight-mile drive from St. Fillans brought the party to Ardvorlich House, at the entrance to Glen Vorlich, the point from which the mountains were to be ascended, and where the carriages were to wait the descent. From the road at Ardvorlich the cairn of the Ben is clearly visible, and the task of raising oneself from the level of the loch to the top of Ben Vorlich with the thermometer somewhere in the "nineties" looked somewhat formidable. For a time the company kept well together, but it was soon seen that if the programme was to be completed by including Stuc a Chroin a little more progress would have to be made, so those who desired to "do" both points struck out, leaving the others to take matters more leisurely. As will be seen from the map which accompanied Mr. Murray's article in last number, the hill rises in a gradual slope with here and there a steeper part between levels, the path near the top running close to and round a deep precipice forming the north face of the hill. This face has a long tail of scree descending from the top. The actual summit is very narrow, and is bounded on the south side by a precipice if anything even steeper than the northern one. The view, which had been gradually opening up during the ascent, was very good, except to the east, where a heat haze shut out the prospect in that direction. Northwards Ben Lawers, Ben Chonzie, and the more distant Schichallion were seen to great advantage, with the waters of Loch Earn lying at our feet. North-westwards the towering summit of Ben Nevis was clearly visible, and a range of hills lying between brought the eye down to Glen Ogle with its serpentine marking representing the Callander and Oban railway.

South-westward Ben Lomond, with the other mountains in the vicinity, formed a group easily recognisable. South-eastward Stirling Rock, Abbey Craig, and the Ochills appeared through the slighter haze which was spreading from the east. The stay on the top was necessarily brief, yet sufficient to hold a meeting of the Club for the purpose of admitting new members.

Descending to the saddle between Ben Vorlich and Stuc a Chroin, a few minutes were spent at a snack lunch, and the members who had elected to do Stuc a Chroin commenced their climb, which, as Mr. Murray says, consists of a series of wriggles, for nothing short of all-fours sufficed to reach the top of the rock face, lying as it does at an angle varying between 50 and 70 degrees. However, carefully and, of necessity, slowly, the point was gained, and from this second stand of vantage the party looked back on the summit of the Ben and its steep, rocky, southern slope. Making a short detour, the descent was rapidly made, and Ardvorlich reached as the last of the second party were arriving. The time for the round was exactly six hours. The return journey to Crieff was made by St. Fillans, and through the policies of Ochtertyre. The Club dined at the Commercial Hotel under the genial presidency of the chairman, Mr. Robert Anderson. Crieff was left for Aberdeen the following morning at 10:37.—A. M. MUNRO.

ON 11th July, J. W. Davidson and the writer ascended Ben Ledi (2875) from Callander. There are two or three routes to the summit, but we took the longest, though most picturesque, one—by the Pass of Leny. This route is well detailed in "Baddeley". On quitting the Pass and crossing the Leny, a path is struck which leads gradually up to the main ridge of the mountain at its southern extremity—a somewhat long detour, rendered necessary by the rocky escarpment on the east side of the Ben, overlooking Loch Lubnaig. The path is very "intermittent", however; and, finding eventually that we had strayed from it, we made direct for the ridge up a grassy slope, thus cutting off a large part of the detour, though, most probably, saving nothing in time. The ridge gained, two hills intervene ere the summit is reached—two of the most deceptive hills we have ever encountered, for, though looking very formidable at a distance, they are surmounted with remarkable ease. Ben Ledi is grassy to the very top, and the whole ascent is therefore easy; we accomplished it in three hours from Callander, walking rather leisurely. The summit is crowned by a large cairn, replacing one erected to mark the Queen's Jubilee, which "was laid in ruins by a number of senseless and evil-disposed young scamps". The day was warm, and a thick haze prevailed; so that we had, practically, no view, though we loitered on the summit for an hour, deluded by occasional indications that the atmosphere was likely to clear. For an account of the prospect—on a clear day—readers must be referred to guide-books, local and other; Baddeley describes the view as "fine and more varied

than that from the generality of Scottish summits". During the ascent of the lower slopes, however, we had several glimpses of the remarkably fine view down the Pass of Leny to Callander Bridge, which is said to be "as truly Turneresque a prospect as any in Britain". We descended the western slope of Ben Ledi, by Gleann Casaig, to Glen Finglas, making for Achnahard and Duart, two farms at the confluence of the two glens. From Duart, crossing the Finglas, we ascended a ridge, and then, gaining another ridge behind that, found ourselves above the Trossachs, with an excellent view of Ben Venue, Loch Katrine, and the mountains beyond. We descended on the Trossachs Hotel; afterwards walked to the pier at the foot of Loch Katrine; and then walked to Callander by Lochs Achray and Vennachar—a walk on the beauties of which there is no need, at this time of day, to expatiate. The whole day's round may be set down, moderately, at between 24 and 25 miles; it occupied us, in one way or other (halts included), 12 hours.

ON the following day we walked from Callander to GLEN ARTNEY. Crieff, the Club's head-quarters for the Ben Vorlich and Stuc a Chroin expedition. The route lies mainly through Glen Artney, part of a deer forest of the same name, in which, it appears, the Prince Consort shot his first stag, but much better known, no doubt (and still more famous, one may safely add), from the pursuit of another stag—the pursuit immortalised in the opening canto of "The Lady of the Lake", which, beginning "In lone Glen Artney's hazel shade", ended "In the deep Trosach's wildest nook". (By the way, we saw no hazel shade; it probably existed only in Sir Walter Scott's imagination.) Leaving Callander at the east end of the village, we walked for some distance along an ascending road skirting the Crags of Callander. We diverged a little to view the Bracklinn Falls, one of the "sights" of Callander; and as the Falls are constituted by the Keltie Water—along which our route was to be for some miles—it naturally occurred to us to follow up the stream. This was easily done, by the help of a foot-path, for a little distance; but, the foot-path suddenly ending at the edge of a tangled bit of wood, we ascended to the ridge above and resumed the road. We parted with this road about three miles further on, just after crossing the Keltie by a wooden bridge. Here a little foot-path or track may be discerned, turning abruptly to the right. Like the path up Ben Ledi, however, it is exceedingly "intermittent"; but, pushing up the glen for some distance beyond a somewhat striking cairn (evidently a boundary mark, a large stone at the base bearing on two sides the names "Ancaster" and "Aveland"; both titles of the peer who owns the glen), a regular track will be struck which can be followed without difficulty. The glen is wider and of "softer" aspect than the glens with which we are familiar in the Cairngorm region; long pasture grass is the feature and not heather, and the enclosing hills are green, not brown—grass-

covered to their tops. After crossing a stream by a wooden bridge the track ascends, widens out and improves, and winds round to the left. In a short time the shooting lodge of Auchinner is passed—a “palatial summer residence”, as it is denominated in a Callander guide-book—and below the lodge a friendly direction-post points the road to Comrie, the road, at a little distance on, crossing the Ruchill Water. To Comrie is seven good miles from this point, and Crieff is six miles beyond Comrie; but the roads to both places are excellent walking ones and picturesque as well, the Comrie-Crieff road (south side) especially so, long stretches of it being like an avenue. A fallacious notion seems prevalent at Callander that Comrie is only 12 miles distant; it strikes us as being nearly half as much again. At anyrate we consumed nine hours on the journey from Callander to Crieff, but then we were not bent on “establishing a record”.—ROBERT ANDERSON.

were the objective of the Club's autumn excursion on
 COILLEBHARR Monday, 28th September, the day's programme embracing
 AND ing the ascent—as a criminal indictment would phrase
 LORD ARTHUR'S it—of “one or other, or both of them”; the double
 CAIRN “feat”, it may be added, was quite easy of accomplishment. Exceedingly bad weather prevailed during the
 previous week, which probably accounted for the excursion to the Vale of Alford being participated in by only 27 individuals. It rained in torrents on the Sunday, besides, but the Monday proved a remarkably fine day, and particularly fine for walking, there being just a sufficient touch of autumnal sharpness in the air to prevent over-heating and compel steady “going”. Proceeding by an early train to Alford, the party was joined there by Mr. George Wilken, Waterside of Forbes, and Mr. George F. Barron, Meikle Endovie, and then drove to Littlewood Park. The bulk of the party (who ascended both hills) then proceeded to Coillebharr (or Callievar); the remainder drove on to the farm of Logie, thence ascending Lord Arthur's Cairn. Both parties re-united on the summit of the latter hill, though one or two members drove or walked to Lumsden Village from Littlewood Park by the public road. The two hills are described elsewhere, so that it is only necessary to add that a formal meeting was held on the top of Lord Arthur's Cairn, at which a candidate was admitted a member—with the due performance of the customary “rite”. Thereafter, Mr. Robert Anderson, the chairman of the Club, who presided, conveyed the thanks of those present to Mr. Wilken and Mr. Barron for the assistance they had rendered in piloting the respective parties up the two hills and the valuable topographical and historical information they had supplied. He also made a complimentary allusion to the presence of Captain Pirie, M.P. Walking then to Lumsden Village, the party dined at the “Lumsden Arms”, the Club again enjoying the abundant hospitality of “mine hostess”, Mrs. Smith. A pleasant drive to Gartly in the shades of evening, and a

rapid railway journey to Aberdeen, brought an exceedingly pleasant excursion to a close. It may be noted that the day's programme was regulated by a "time-table" prepared by the chairman, who had previously gone over the ground, and that this "time-table" was faithfully kept without any unnecessary speed being exacted.

ON 28th September last the writer, accompanied by
 DESCENT OF Messrs. Alexander W. Christie and W. A. Henderson,
 BEN MUICH made a novel descent of Ben Muich Dhui. Starting
 DHUI BY THE from Lynwilg, and driving to Auldrue, we made (at
 PRECIPICES. 10 o'clock) for the slope of Creag a' Chalamain, reaching
 the top of Creag na Leacainn at noon. Fresh snow
 was lying on the hills from a height of about 2000 feet, and at a depth
 of several feet where it had been blown into wreaths. From Creag na
 Leacainn we struck for the cairn of Ben Muich Dhui, holding well to
 the crest of the hill, but keeping the deep gorge of the Larig full in
 view the whole way. The weather was excessively cold, and after
 passing the cairn of the Ben, which was crusted over with ice, at 2
 o'clock we took a short rest for lunch at the 'Engineers' hut. Derry
 Cairngorm was the next item in our programme, and to reach it we
 took, in the first instance, a direct line for the rocky top of Coire an
 Sput Dheirg (4095), the highest point in the range of precipices forming
 the south-eastern face of Ben Muich Dhui. To reach Derry Cairngorm
 from this point two ways were open: we could either keep along the
 top of the precipices, round the end of the corrie and so on, keeping
 Coire Etchachan to the left, or we could take the more direct way and
 drop from the top of the precipices, keeping Lochan Uaine on our
 right, into Coire an Sput Dheirg (which really forms the upper end of
 Glen Luibeg), and then make our way from the foot of this corrie to
 the summit of Derry Cairngorm. We chose the latter route, and
 descended the precipices by an interesting rocky gully, then filled at the
 top with soft snow, the ascent of which would afford some rock climb-
 ing of a mild description. The gully leaves the summit a short distance
 to the left of the highest point of the crags; it is quite narrow and
 V-shaped at the top, but forms a perfectly simple means of descent.
 Reaching the burn of the corrie at 3.40, we climbed the rough side of
 Derry Cairngorm in less than half an hour, arriving at the summit at
 4.5. From the top we held along the ridge to Carn Crom, whence we
 dropped into Glen Luibeg on our way to Inverey.—GEORGE DUNCAN.

ON 8th November last, a party consisting of Mr. Wm.
 BEN NEVIS Brown, Mr. Raeburn, and the writer made the ascent
 IN NOVEMBER. from Fort-William, the intention on starting being to
 climb the Carn Dearg Buttress, the second of the four
 great rocky ridges on the north-east face of the mountain which con-
 front the climber as he walks up the Allt a' Mhuilinn. Leaving Fort-
 William a little after 7 o'clock A.M., we held up Glen Nevis, and joined
 the Observatory path, having in front fine views of Stob Ban (3274)

and Sgor a' Mhaim (3601), the peaks that guard the top of the glen. We followed the path till we came in sight of Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe, where, at an altitude of about 2000 feet the first snow was encountered. The lochan itself was almost frozen over, and it was bitterly cold as we walked round the base of Carn Dearg (3961), the western spur of the Ben, into the glen of the Allt a' Mhullinn. We kept well up the side of the glen, and in a short time had the precipitous rocks of the Castle Ridge above us, with, in front, our proposed point of attack, and further off we could distinguish the outline of the remaining two great ridges, the sharp "Tower" Ridge, and the more massive North-East Buttress. On reaching the foot of the Carn Dearg Buttress we began to prospect for the ascent, only to find—as, indeed, we had for some time suspected might be the case—that owing to the condition of the rocks the ascent of the mountain by any of its north-east ridges was quite impracticable. A slight rain on the day before, followed by a sharp frost, had glazed the whole surface of the rocks with a thin, but extremely slippery, coating of ice to such an extent that absolutely no hand-holds, not to speak of foot-holds, could be got. We accordingly had to give up all idea of a rock climb, and resolved instead to reach the top by one of the gullies. Ultimately we chose gully No. 4 (*S.M.C. Journal*, Vol. III., p. 318), one of several gullies which lead to the summit from Coire na Ciste, the corrie lying between the Tower Ridge and the Carn Dearg Buttress. Shortly after passing the lochan of this corrie we found the snow begin to harden, and the angle of ascent to increase to such a degree that the rope became essential for safety, and for a considerable distance we had to use our ice axes with an assiduity that soon drove away all sensations of cold. At one point in particular, within 150 feet of the top of the gully, when the angle was about 70° , and the snow, or rather ice, was, to use the words of our hard-working leader, "as hard as adamant", the ascent required a good deal of caution.

We reached the summit about one o'clock, and paid a visit to the Observatory, where we were hospitably received by the observers. The average depth of snow on the top was, they told us, 17 inches, but in some places it was blown to a much greater depth than this. Our stay on the top was prolonged by a careful observation of the "Observatory" gully, with its branch, the "Gardez l'Eau". The latter is manifestly impossible, and the ascent by the former was pronounced by Brown, after we had let him down about 60 feet, to be also impracticable. We made a leisurely descent by the western slopes, joining the path a little above the pay-box, and reaching Fort-William about six o'clock.—GEORGE DUNCAN.

THE three newspaper paragraphs which follow, will be read with varying feelings :

EAGLE.

On Saturday last, Mr. Farquhar Macrae, game-keeper, Kinlochewe, scaled one of the precipices of

Slioch, and found an eagle's nest with two eggs in it, which he took away with him.

A Galashiels tradesman has had an extraordinary adventure with an eagle on the hills between Steele Road Station and Riccarton Junction. It happened between twelve and one o'clock, when the sun was shining in a cloudless sky. He was startled by an unaccountable shadow, and almost on the instant he was struck on the head, and his hat knocked off. On looking up he saw a large eagle hovering over him, and poising for another swoop. Fortunately, he had an umbrella in his hand, and with it he managed to defend himself. The eagle swooped upon him nine or ten times, but he always succeeded in driving it off. The express train from the north passed along about this time, and the eagle flew off.

The other day an example of the golden eagle was trapped in the neighbourhood of Achinduich, in Sutherlandshire, where the species still nestles, and where lingering examples of the wild cat are now and again found. The trap grasped one of the legs of the bird immediately above the tibial joint, the bone and the softer parts, with exception of the tendon, being entirely separated by the jaws of the trap. Having been three days a prisoner, and consequently three days without food, the stomach on dissection was found to contain only a small portion of rabbit fur. The bird, a male, nevertheless weighed 7 lb. 5½ oz., being considerably over the average weight of the male, which in this species is considerably smaller than the female. The bird measured 33¼ inches from the tip of the bill to the tip of the tail, and 76 inches from tip to tip of the extended wings. Not the least interesting feature of the Sutherlandshire bird is the plumage, the tail being in the last stage of the immature state. Had the bird survived the autumn moult, the tail, which at present is white at the base, bordered with brownish black at the extremity, would have been of a uniform clouded brown. The tail is 14 inches long; extended it is fan-shape, the brown border repeating the circular line. On the central feather the black extends 4¾ inches along the shaft, while on the side feathers it advances 6½ inches; that is to say, the coloured band is longest on the side feathers, which are the shortest in the tail, and narrowest on the central feather, which is the longest. In this state the plumage is most prized by collectors. Except a few small feathers sprouting on the back of the head, and which are much darker than those which are full grown, the bird shows no signs of moult. The plumage attains its perfection in December—if a bird that is always in moult can ever be said to be in perfect plumage.

NEW
MEMBERS.

THE following members have been admitted since June last :—Messrs. Andrew D. Ruxton, Oswald H. M'Lean, Alexander Moncrieff, Robert H. Urquhart, William Garden, Robert Murray, and William M'Ewan.

was held on 16th December, 1896—the Chairman, Mr. Robert Anderson, presiding. The Office-bearers and Committee were re-elected.

OUR EIGHTH ANNUAL MEETING The excursions for the current year were fixed as follows :—Spring Holiday—Ben Aigan ; Summer Holiday—Beinn Mheadhoin and Derry Cairngorm ; Autumn Holiday—Morven. For the purposes of a Club Meet, on the occasion of the Summer Holiday, the headquarters of the Club will be at Inverey from Friday to Wednesday.

The question of celebrating the 60th year of Her Majesty's reign by a display of fireworks on Ben Muich Dhui and Lochnagar was referred to the Committee.

The meeting unanimously and cordially resolved to present the Secretary, on the occasion of his approaching marriage, with a cheque for ten guineas out of the funds of the Club, accompanying the present with their best wishes.

REVIEWS.

THE "CONTOUR" ROAD BOOK. THE main idea of this book—to present a series of "elevation" plans of the roads throughout Scotland, mileage being indicated as well as height—is commendable. Primarily, the book is meant for cyclists, but pedestrians may occasionally find it serviceable, though, of course, no contour is indicated beyond (for example) the Linn of Dee or Cock Bridge. One of the most striking contours in the book is that of the road from Edzell to Banchory, which goes over the Cairn o' Mount.

THE VALE OF ALFORD, PAST AND PRESENT. is referred to in the article on "Two Donside Hills". Compiled as "A Souvenir of the Montgarrie Bridge Bazaar", held last summer, it gives a brief account of "The Vale", historical, topographical, and geological, with, of course, some notice of the hills by which the valley is enclosed. This notice, however, is about the briefest and baldest conceivable; the author of the article mentioned must have gone elsewhere for the facts he has collected. The modesty of the compilation, it should be acknowledged, is commendable in these days when the inordinate "puffing" of localities is all the vogue. The Vale of Alford, we are assured, has never been the birthplace of poets, warriors, or statesmen of renown, "yet in its own humble sphere it has done its best". Good old Alford!