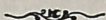


EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.



THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN EVER CLIMBED. AN extremely interesting account of the expedition of Mr. E. A. Fitzgerald, which left England in the autumn of 1896, has appeared in the *Daily Chronicle*. The main object of the expedition, the ascent of Aconcagua in Argentina, a mountain of the Andes range of nearly 24,000 feet elevation, was accomplished by two of the party—Zurbriggen, the Swiss guide, and Mr. Vines. The news of their success was to have been heliographed to a peak twelve miles off and 14,000 feet lower down, but a cloud hid the sun from those on the summit; a thunderstorm washed away the line of the telegraph connected with a temporary station to which the message was flag-signalled on their descent, so the announcement eventually reached London in 30 hours instead of 10 minutes as was fully anticipated. Of the difficulties and adventures encountered, it is impossible in a few words to give much idea. "Not once or twice" members of the party were carried away by icy torrents, though no fatalities occurred; whirlwinds of dust, struggles over crumbling ground, and mountain sickness, were everyday experiences; water for drinking had to be carried up 19,000 feet, and there thawed periodically as required; mountain streams were proved to be poisonous by the severe internal punishment that followed the only occasion of testing them. Mr. Vines was attacked by typhoid; Mr. Fitzgerald suffered likewise, and, after recovering and nursing his friend, underwent a painful surgical operation for an abscess under one eye. All this took place before the ascent proper began. A vivid extract is given from Zurbriggen's journal, describing the ascent of a neighbouring peak:—"Wind like Niagara. Seems north-east. Tent almost blown down every minute. All kept awake for the rest of night. Cold intense. Wind comes right through tent, sleeping-bags and all. We wake at about 6.30 and say nothing. Wind outside tells us it is madness to go higher. No mortal could live in hurricane at zero. Minimum temperature last night, 5 degrees. Aneroid got slept on, and went all wrong". Some shooting also was managed by one or two of the party; Mr. Philip Gosse, grandson of the great naturalist, made noteworthy botanic and other collections, and over 1000 photographs were obtained, one being a panorama, 9 feet long, taken with a new French surveying camera.

A LECTURE on this subject was recently delivered
 MOUNTAINEERING by Mr. E. A. Baker, B.A., at the Midland Railway
 IN BRITAIN. Institute, Derby, before an appreciative audience.

This great recreation of men great in science and letters has, owing to the recent extensive publication of mountaineering literature, come to be better understood by the public at large ; and has ceased to be the exclusive pursuit of the favoured few possessed of deep purses and long vacations. It has in fact been brought within the compass of men of most modest means. Mr. Baker's object was to show that a man need not go to the Alps or the Caucasus in pursuit of this sport, but might get excellent practice, and even occasional adventure, within the limits of our own isles. The lecture fell roughly into four sections, the first of which, "Mountaineering in Derbyshire", might suggest to the uninitiated the famous chapter on "Snakes in Ireland". As a matter of fact, however, the lecturer showed by the aid of some fine photographs, taken expressly for the purpose, that near our doors we have an excellent training ground, where the first principles of the craft may be practised and limbs may be jeopardised to the aspirant's heart's content. From Cratcliffe Tor, Kinderscout, etc., Mr. Baker transferred his audience to Wastdale Head, which he called the English Zermatt. Here he described most of the favourite climbs of that famous centre of English climbers, illustrated by slides mostly from plates taken by those unsurpassed mountaineering photographers, the brothers Abraham. The Cairngorm region, the highest mountain mass in the British Isles, was next dealt with, some of the incidents in a recent excursion there being very entertaining. There was less technical climbing here, but the somewhat arduous tramps and the fine views of crag and forest and glen would appeal all the more to the lay mind, while there was a sufficient spice of adventure to make the record out of the ordinary. Finally, Mr. Baker dealt with that paradise of British climbers, Skye. A land of splintered ridges, deep and glistening lochs, wave-worn cliffs, and uncertain weather, it is an ideal place for the enthusiast ; its sparse population, treacherous climate, and uninviting crags calling forth most of the qualities, save snowcraft, required in much more lofty and extensive regions.

We have received the following letter :—

THE HEATHER
 IN THE
 LARIG GHRU.

DEAR MR. EDITOR,

EDINBURGH, *May*, 1898.

Many times have I bemoaned, as has many a man and woman, the misery of the passage through the long heather of the northern mile of the Larig Ghru. Many times also have I agreed that "something should be done", and that someone ought to do it.

Well, this spring I suffered from influenza, and went to Aviemore to recruit. My lack of strength forbade me to go on the hills, but one day I strolled to the entrance of the Larig track, and for want of

nobler occupation, I began rooting up the obstructive heather. Less than an hour of this work nearly broke my enfeebled back, and sent me weary and aching to my bed. But the next morning I felt that the unwonted exercise had given me the tone and vigour I was in search of, and I returned to the task that day and each of my remaining days of holiday. The net result of my exertions is that for some 600 paces the track is wide enough for two people to walk on, and is quite free from obstruction. If this attack on the long-standing difficulty can be followed up, there is the possibility of an easy access to that delightful pass, and the removal of what has been for years a great drawback to the exploration of a very interesting piece of country.

I am, &c.,

A YOUNGER BROTHER.

THE YORK BUILDINGS COMPANY. THIS company is so often referred to in writings about the Cairngorms and the Cairngorm region (see, for example, *C.C.J.*, Vol. I., p. 367) that we may reproduce from the *Inverness Courier* the following summary of an address on "The Work of the York Buildings Company in Abernethy in the Eighteenth Century", delivered by Dr. Asher Forsyth to the Inverness Field Club:—"The Company was originally founded in 1679 for the purpose of raising the Thames water for the supply of London, but it extended its schemes, and between 1719 and 1730 it had expended over £300,000 in the purchase of forfeited estates in Scotland. In 1728 the directors purchased from Grant of Grant a large part of the best and choicest fir woods in Abernethy for £7000. They made a brave start with their operations under the direction of a Colonel Horsey and Aaron Hill, the poet. The timber was made into rafts and floated down the Spey. It was expected that the trees would be suitable for mainmasts for first-raters, but it turned out that they were not adapted for this purpose. There was plenty of good building timber, however, and it was thought this would still pay, but the directors turned their energies in a different direction, that of ironworks, the wood being employed for charcoal. The iron ore was found about four miles from Tomintoul, and transported to Abernethy. The enterprise, however, did not pay, and had ultimately to be abandoned. The material left behind, which could not be removed, was appropriated by the residents, and little trace now remains of what must have once been a mine of industry in the Highlands". The history of the Company, it may be added, is recounted in a pamphlet by Dr. David Murray, published in Glasgow in 1883.

LANDSCAPE AND LITERATURE. SIR ARCHIBALD GEIKIE, the Director-General of the Geological Survey, and author of a most interesting and useful work on "The Scenery of Scotland", delivered the Romanes Lecture (of 1897) at Oxford. He took as his subject "Types of Scenery and their Influence on Literature", his purpose being to inquire how far it might be possible

to trace from each of the leading types of scenery that distinguished the British Isles an influence upon the growth of English literature. Shakespeare's plays, for instance, presented not a few reminiscences of the Warwickshire woodlands, and the placid rural quiet of the Colne Valley inspired some of Milton's lyrics. Similarly, Cowper, Thomson, Burns, and Wordsworth reflected in their poetry the scenes with which they were familiar. One passage may be quoted entire—"The scenery of the Western Highlands of Scotland was first brought prominently before the world by the publication of the so-called poems of Ossian, in studying the landscape of which they soon learnt that it belonged unmistakably to Western Argyleshire. The grandeur and gloom of the Highland mountains, the spectral mists that swept round the crags, the roar of the torrents, the gleams of sunlight on moor and lake, the wail of the breeze among the cairns of the dead, the unspeakable sadness that seemed to brood over the landscape whether the sky be clear or clouded—those features of West Highland scenery were first revealed by Macpherson to the modern world. That revelation quickened the change of feeling already begun in regard to the prevailing horror of mountain scenery. It brought before men's eyes some of the fascination of the mountain world, more especially in regard to the atmospheric effects that played so large a part in its landscape. It showed the titanic forces of storm and tempest in full activity and yet there ran through all the poems a vein of infinite melancholy. The pathos of life manifested itself everywhere, now in the tenderness of unavailing devotion, now in the courage of hopeless despair".

THE following new members have been admitted :—

NEW MEMBERS. Messrs. John S. Begg, M.A., William G. Melvin, Frederick J. Hambly, F.I.C., George M. Thomson, and A. C. Waters.

OUR post town, while on Corryhabbie, was Huntly ; and one or other of the men was sent there for letters and bread, when they could be spared for the purpose. THE WORK OF THE ORDNANCE SURVEYORS. The distance in a right line was eighteen miles, which Captain Colby considered to be equivalent to twenty-four.

Wednesday, 21st of July, 1819.—Captain Colby and Robe returned to camp, having explored all the country along the eastern side of the counties of Inverness, Ross, and Caithness, as well as the mainland of Orkney, and having walked 513 miles in twenty-two days.

Friday, 23rd of July.—Captain Colby took me and a fresh party of the soldiers on a station-hunt, to explore the country to the westward and northward of west. Our first halting-place was to be Grantown, at a distance of twenty-four miles ; and Captain Colby having, according to his usual practice, ascertained the general direction by means of a pocket compass and map, the whole party set off as on a steeple-chase, running down the mountain side at full speed, over Cromdale, a

mountain about the same height as Corryhabbie, crossing several beautiful glens, wading the streams which flowed through them, and regardless of all difficulties that were not absolutely insurmountable on foot. Sometimes a beaten road would fall in our course, offering the temptation of its superior facilities to the exhausted energies of the weary members of our party; and in such cases freedom of choice was always allowed them. Captain Colby would even encourage such a division of his party and the spirit of rivalry which it induced, and took pleasure in the result of the race which ensued. Arriving at Grantown in about five hours and a half, we dined there, and proceeded afterwards along the valley of the Spey, by the high road, to the Aviemore Inn to sleep. The distance travelled by us that day was calculated at thirty-nine miles.

Saturday, 24th of July.—Started at nine o'clock. I was dreadfully stiff and tired from the previous day's scramble, and with difficulty reached Pitmain (thirteen miles) to dinner. The country helped me considerably, for it was beautiful—Rothiemurchus, on our left, being one of the loveliest places that I had seen. A good deal of brynnny mountain ground, richly clothed with wood and plantation, rises immediately at the back of the house; to the right are green rocky hills, and not a tree to be seen.

Garviemore Inn, distant eighteen miles by the road, was to be our next stage, and I really thought it was more than I could possibly accomplish that day, but Captain Colby said it was not. It was his intention, however, to leave the beaten road immediately, and, crossing a rough boggy tract of country to the northward, to gain the summit of Cairn Dearg, a mountain of about 3500 feet high, and about ten miles distant, and having built a large pile of stones upon it, to proceed thence again across the country to Garviemore, making the distance, of course, considerably greater and the journey much more laborious, as I thought, than by the road. I petitioned strongly, therefore, to be excused from accompanying him, and to be allowed to proceed quietly along the road with the sergeant and another man, who, being equally tired, had also blistered their feet, and to whom it was on that account allowed; but Captain Colby would not excuse me, and I had no alternative but to make the attempt, feeling sure that I should eventually be left upon the ground or carried home upon the men's shoulders. Captain Colby judged, however, from accurate observation and long experience, and he was right. I kept pace with him throughout the remainder of the day, and arrived at the inn at half-past eleven at night, much more fresh than at the end of our first stage the day before. The second day on such a journey is generally the worst, but the first had broken me in. I could have proceeded further if it had been necessary, and never experienced anything like fatigue throughout the remainder of the excursion. The distance travelled that day was forty miles.—From "Memoir of Life of Major-General Colby", by Lieutenant-Colonel J. E. Portlack.

REVIEWS.

DR. CRAMOND, Cullen, has published a little "Guide to GUIDE TO Grantown and District" (30 pp.)—of more use, however, to the average holiday loungeur in the region than GRANTOWN. to the ardent and active mountaineer. The Cairngorms, indeed, are thus summarily dismissed—"Cairngorm, Ben Muich Dhui, Braeriach, and other summits of the Grampian range are visible from Grantown, and the ascent can be performed in one day"—the ascent of each it is to be presumed; yet Dr. Cramond is a schoolmaster!—"but travellers inexperienced in mountaineering usually take a local guide". It's a bit Dryasdust-ish, this guide; full of details, details—one searches it in vain for an attempt even at a description of the many beauties of the section of Speyside with which it professes to deal.

IN the August number of *Chambers's Journal* was an DEER-FOREST article under this title—virtually a notice of Mr. ROMANCE. Grimble's work on the "Deer Forests of Scotland", published by Messrs. Kegan Paul & Co. Some things mentioned in the article are interesting and noteworthy. "There seems no reason to doubt that thirty-three stone, weighed quite clean, is the highest authentic weight recorded of any slain deer; and the credit of the record is Lord Greville's, the scene the forest of Glenmore, and the date 1877". Beinn a' Ghlo was once tenanted or haunted by a witch, the last year in which she "is known to have held converse with men" being 1773. In the course of a feud between Cumyn of Badenoch and the M'Intoshes of Tirinie in Glen Tilt, the castle of the latter was attacked, and the whole household butchered save an infant asleep in its cradle. This "young M'Intosh" grows up, of course, to wreak vengeance. "In due course he attacked Cumyn's stronghold with success, and chased the murderer to Rannoch, and thence to Glen Tilt, where he despatched him with a well-directed shaft beside a small loch near the foot of Beinn a' Ghlo. A cairn called Cumyn's is believed to commemorate the event". This same M'Intosh, it is said, was in the habit of holding his court enthroned upon a boulder in the middle of the Tilt. "This chair, however, was luckily seldom uncovered by the water, for whenever the chief held a court he ganged a man".

OUR indebtedness to *Chambers's Journal* was great last BRAERIACH. year. The November issue contained an article on Braeriach by Rev. Dr. Macmillan, who is also a contributor to our own pages. The article is partly descriptive of the scenery in and around "the third highest mountain in Great Britain", and partly descriptive of an ascent of Braeriach by the author, who was holidaying in the Rothiemurchus region last autumn. It is deserving of special commendation for the specification of the flora on the summit of Braeriach and on some other Cairngorm tops.