

EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.



was revisited by the Club on 7th May. The party left Aberdeen at 8.5 a.m. by train to Aboyne, where conveyances were in waiting for the drive to Coirebhruach. Glen Tanner was in beautiful form, and its Water, owing to recent rains and snow-melting, was swollen to the dimensions of a river. A short halt was made in the Forest on the way up, and the company were hospitably received by Sir William C. Brooks. Coirebhruach was reached at noon; and here the ancient right-of-way, the Fir Mounth, was taken. Corrach, in addition to a fine cornice, had several patches of snow, and when the cone was tackled snow-fields were numerous. Mist had possession of the mountain-tops all morning, and as the summit of Mount Keen was neared, it became very dense, and rain fell. The cairn, so familiar to the Club, was duly found without having recourse to the compass; there was, of course, no view to be had. After luncheon the usual meeting was held, and a candidate admitted to membership with time-honoured ceremonial. The descent to the Tanner was made under better conditions, though the mist was gradually creeping lower. Another halt was made in the Forest, when, after partaking of the hospitality of the house, Sir William conducted the party through the public rooms so that a few of the treasures might be inspected. There is much to admire in Sir William's Highland home, but perhaps Peter Graham's "Highland Spate"—which, it may be mentioned, the generous owner intended to bequeath to the city of Manchester—received the most attention. On departure, the Chairman of the Club, Mr. William Porter, J.P., thanked Sir William Brooks for the facilities afforded to the excursion, and the kindly reception he had again personally given to the Club, which was proud to have him as an honorary member.

THE LATE SIR WILLIAM C. BROOKS. THE cordiality of the reception of the members of the Club at Glen Tanner, on the day of the May excursion to Mount Keen, and the heartiness of the welcome personally extended by Sir William Cunliffe Brooks, give an almost personal tinge of sadness to the announcement of the death of the genial baronet, which took place on 9th June. The Club had been twice previously (1890 and 1894) obliged to Sir William, and on the latter of these two occasions he was elected an honorary member. His personal worth and his great merits as an improving tenant and landlord have

been duly—and very properly—extolled in the daily press. One of the biographical sketches managed, in an ingenious “aside”, to remind its readers that there exists a right of way up Glen Tana despite the deceased baronet’s attempt to close it, but all the notices have omitted to mention that Glen Tana—or, to give it its proper name, Glentanner—was the place meant in William Forsyth’s pathetic dirge, “The Pibroch o’ Kinreen”. Glentanner has a history of its own in connection with deer-forestry and depopulation. It came under the scrutiny of a special Commissioner of the *Free Press* in a series of articles on “Game and the Game Laws” published in January, 1873, and Sir W. Cunliffe Brooks had even been obliged, some time before, to defend his position, his chief self-justification being that he had increased the population of the glen by 17 per cent.

MR. BRYCE’S Access to Mountains Bill came on for second reading in the House of Commons on 16th May, but was talked out by Mr. C. B. Renshaw. The bill, ACCESS TO MOUNTAINS BILL. so far as its size is concerned, may truly be called a little one, but the scope of its provisions, few as they are, is very considerable. Proceeding on the preamble that “it is desirable to secure to the public the right of free access to uncultivated mountains and moorlands, subject to proper provisions for preventing any abuse of such right”, the principal clause enacts that, subject to certain specified exceptions, “No owner or occupier of uncultivated mountain or moor lands in Scotland shall be entitled to exclude any person from walking or being on such lands for the purposes of recreation or scientific or artistic study, or to molest him in so walking or being”. This freedom is only restricted in cases of the pursuit of game, the disturbing of sheep or cattle, and the going on land with any malicious intent or to the disturbance or annoyance of “any person engaged on such land in any lawful occupation”. The history of the Access to Mountains Bill is a curious one. The measure has been before the country for at least fifteen years, and one edition (if not the very first) was put down for second reading on 16th June, 1885—the very day that Mr. Bryce was adopted as Liberal candidate for South Aberdeen—but Parliament was not sitting on account of a Ministerial crisis. On 17th April, 1888, the second reading was actually agreed to *nem. con.*; but this was the result of a little dodge, Mr. Bryce and his friends abstaining from making speeches, and so anticipating an eventual count-out. Four years later, on 4th March, 1892, Mr. Bryce had recourse to an abstract resolution, and moved—“That legislation is needed for the purpose of securing the right of the public to enjoy free access to uncultivated mountains and moorlands, especially in Scotland, subject to proper provisions for preventing abuse of such rights”. The speech he then delivered is probably the best exposition of the subject that Mr. Bryce has made. Dr. Farquharson seconded the resolution, which was virtually accepted on behalf of the Conservative Government of the day by the present Lord

Advocate (Mr. Graham Murray), then Scottish Solicitor-General, who delivered his maiden speech on the occasion. At any rate, the resolution was agreed to without a vote. Dr. Farquharson subsequently became sponsor of the measure while Mr. Bryce was a Cabinet Minister. Now, in Opposition, Mr. Bryce himself resumes charge of it—only it would seem, to find legalised access to mountains about as far off as ever.

TOWARDS the end of January, a great snowslip or "AVALANCHE" IN avalanche occurred on Creag Mhigeachaidh, in the Western Cairngorms (see *C.C.J.*, II., 39, 63).

THE CAIRNGORMS. This mountain, which fronts the Feshie valley and is almost opposite Kincaig station, attains an elevation of 2429 feet, and for about 1500 feet from its base is almost vertical. At the top of the sheer acclivity, in one of the scaurs formed by water torrents and snowslips, are precipitous rocks, from which other seams branch off before the slope recedes to the summit. At this point an immense mass of snow was drifted in by south-westerly gales during a storm, and the base having become insecure in consequence of a strong thaw, the prodigious pile was projected over the precipices. Acquiring terrific momentum downwards, it carried everything to the bottom of the hill—fir trees, rocks, and huge boulders; some of these latter, believed to be nearly a ton weight, being propelled as much as 200 yards beyond the bottom of the hill, destroying in their progress some 40 yards of a deer fence running at right angles. The carcasses of two deer were discovered in the mass of wreckage. Large herds of deer were to be observed daily on the summit of the hill during the storm, and as a favourite pass with the animals is contiguous to the edge of the precipices, it is probable that their movements gave the impulse to the avalanche. About four years ago, an avalanche came down the same seam of the mountain face, carrying hundreds of pine trees before it; its track is still visible.

VISITORS to Upper Speyside—Kingussie and thereabouts—will be more or less familiar with the story of the overwhelming of Captain John Macpherson of Ballachroan and four attendants, in a hut in the forest of Gaick, by an avalanche of snow, in the first week of January, 1800—or the Christmas of 1799 (old style), "the last Christmas of the century". A proposal is on foot to erect an appropriate Highland Cairn in memory of the captain and his attendants; and in aid of the fund, and in connection with the hundredth anniversary of the catastrophe, Mr. Alexander Macpherson, F.S.A.(Scot.), Kingussie, has published a little pamphlet of 18 pages, giving an account of Captain Macpherson and the disaster, and demolishing the fables regarding both that have been in circulation. The greater portion of the pamphlet is a reprint from Mr. Macpherson's "Glimpses of Church and Social Life in the Highlands in Olden Times".

THE first complete ascent of Mount St. Elias, an ice-clad mountain in Alaska, rising from the sea to an accurately-determined height of 18,120 feet, was accomplished on 31st July, 1897, by a party of eight, headed by Prince Luigi Amadeo, Duke of the Abruzzi, a nephew of the King of Italy; and a narrative of the ascent by Dr. Filippi has just been published. Mr. Edward Whymper characterises this splendid volume as "a worthy record of a journey carried out with remarkable success—success hardly earned and well deserved. The first ascent of Mount St. Elias was a unique performance, and it is very likely that a long time will elapse before anything corresponding to it will be done again". Dr. Filippi records that, at an altitude of over 16,500 feet, the temperature being 16° to 17° Fahr., almost all the members of the party suffered more or less from the rarefaction of the air, some being attacked by headache and others by serious difficulty of breathing and general exhaustion. Later on—that is, higher up—three of them had to fight against the drowsiness that came over them at every halt, and two of the guides had slight symptoms of mountain-sickness.

A PARTY of three Clubmen made two attempts on the Black Spout in February, but were unsuccessful on both occasions. A start was made from Insh-nabobart on 3rd February at 9.20 a.m., but, owing to the depth and softness of the snow it was 2 o'clock ere the saddle between Cuidhe Crom and Meikle Pap was reached—that is to say, fully twice the ordinary time was required. The corrie was in its grandest winter costume, all the gullies being full of snow, and the loch frozen. As there was not sufficient time left for the Black Spout, a return was made to Glen Muick *via* the top of Meikle Pap. The weather was favourable for excellent near views, but the limit was somewhat circumscribed, as not even the summits of Ben Avon could be made out. An earlier start (7.45) was made the following morning, but the weather was now unpropitious. Our foot-tracks of the previous day, on which we had reckoned both as guides and labour-savers, were for the most part invisible, and so we had again a weary plod up Clashrathen. The top of Glen Gelder passed, mist came down on us, and Meikle Pap was not seen during the remainder of the day. Indeed, so bewildering was the mist, that we held too far to the left (south), and so were by and by faced by the steepest part of Cuidhe Crom. We found the slope covered by frozen snow with a thin covering of recently-fallen snow, and it was only by the use of the ice-axe that we reached the top. Thence we made for the edge of the corrie, but it was again too late to attempt the Black Spout, even had the weather been less stormy. Prudence suggested a descent by the Glas Allt, but even that was not accomplished without a false start, and till the compass had been appealed to. Once fairly on the down grade, we wallowed in the deep but dry, powdery snow, though for some time we had literally to feel our way as we could not see two yards ahead. The burn was invisible.

till the Falls were neared; they were rather picturesque in their setting of snow and ice. The sun suddenly burst out when we had descended to an altitude of about 2500 feet, though not strong enough to dispel the mist on the mountain-tops. Another attempt was made on the first of April, and, notwithstanding the inauspicious associations of the day, the venture was entirely successful. Inshabobart was again the base of operations, and the hour of departure was seven o'clock a.m. The morning was fine and frosty, and the snow crunched delightfully crisp under foot. It lay heavy, however, on the Glenmuick road. We had driven up on the previous evening through newly-cut snow wreaths five or six feet deep, and, to avoid some rough walking, we left the road and took a short cut into Clashrathen over the shoulder of Conachraig. The country was perhaps not so uniformly white as on our previous visit; the winds of March had left traces. There were great wreaths and furrows, and here and there patches of dark moorland and outcrops of black rock tamed the glaring white of the snowfields. And how different was the snow! Then it was soft and powdery, and we went plunging over the knee; now it was hard and firm, ringing at every step, and gleaming and glancing in the morning sun. Walking was a pleasure, and we reached the saddle between Cuidhe Crom and Meikle Pap easily by nine o'clock. Here a halt was made for photography, for which the weather conditions were perfect. Our route then wound round the head of the corrie. The sky was now brilliantly blue, and formed a strong foil to the black and white of the cliffs, the plastered snow on which was weathered fantastically in places into the form of ostrich plumes. The Loch was, as before, quite invisible. Another halt was made some distance from the foot of the Black Spout for more photography, and a second breakfast, and it was past ten o'clock before we girt our loins for the ascent. The climb up the Spout was remarkably easy, and proved a striking contrast to some previous winter experiences in that gully. Except in some places near the top, we could make sufficient steps without the aid of our axes, and the rope was nowhere necessary. There was no cornice to speak of, and the velocity of the wind, which seems always to blow down the Spout as through a funnel, was wonderfully moderate. We reached Cac Carn Beag by eleven o'clock. The distant view thence was disappointing. Haze clouded over the Cairngorm giants as well as the nearer forms of Mount Keen and Morven on the one hand, and the Clova Hills on the other. But the near views repaid us, and we lay long in a sheltered nook surveying the depths of the Corrie, and the white wilderness around us. Our descent was simple. A leisurely walk round the top of the cliffs soon brought us to the top of Cuidhe Crom. Here the steep slopes down to Clashrathen proved to be in excellent form for glissading, and we descended with a rapidity which sometimes surprised us. A pleasant stroll to the Hut completed one of the most delightful as well as one of the easiest days we had ever spent on Lochnagar.

SIR MARTIN CONWAY recently delivered an address, under the auspices of the Alpine Club, on "Climbs on the Andes in 1898", in the presence of a large audience, in the Lecture Theatre of the London University. Mr. Bryce, M.P., presided. Sir Martin Conway said he proposed to describe certain ascents made in the latter half of the year 1898 in the Central Andes. The Cordillera Real, which was the backbone of Bolivia, was a long straight range almost continuously snowclad, culminating at its northern end in Mount Sorata, and in the south in Illimani. Half-way between the two rose a very fine peak named Cacaaca. La Paz, the capital town of Bolivia, was their natural starting-point. They reached it from the sea by landing at Mollendo and ascending over the out Cordillera by a remarkable railway, which at its highest point attained an altitude of 14,666 feet. The two mountains which he decided to attempt were naturally Illimani and Sorata. He took Illimani first, being strongly attracted to it by its extraordinary beauty. The route was down a wonderful valley, for the most part desert, and the further they went down the hotter was the atmosphere. After passing through a gorge of great magnificence and tropical temperature, they commenced ascending the mountain from the side opposite La Paz. They chose this route because, though he thought it might be possible to make a successful ascent from the north side, there was little doubt that way would be difficult, for the glaciers were long, steep, and very crevassed, whilst the upper slopes appeared to be frequently swept by avalanches. Their first steps carried them through a beautiful valley, whose sides were decked with canes and vines and fruit trees. Further up came orchards of peach trees, and beyond them an agricultural country. The sight of the snowy summit of Illimani, beheld through the blossoming peach trees, was one which he would never forget. They engaged the unwilling services of some Indians, who, like almost all uncivilised mountain folk, regarded the mountain region above the level of cultivation as uncanny. Two or three days were spent in reconnoitring the mountain from different points of view. From one side it was clearly impossible; all the way round, from the summit to a lower peak, there fell a precipitous cliff of rock. No line of ascent that could safely be followed was to be found anywhere upon this wall. It was necessary, therefore, to go round to the back of the lower peak, where there was a broad, steep gully, which led high towards the summit. Their mules carried them to near the base of the gully; from that point they had to climb. They found it impossible to advance more than 2000 feet a day, so that in two days they had hardly gained 4000 feet. This brought them to the base of a fine wall of rock, up which a route was discovered. The ascent of the wall was by no means easy. The Indians deserted them. They slowly advanced until two-thirds of the wall had been climbed, then there came a vertical gully filled with ice, in which steps had to be cut. They pitched their camp on the snow-field, and they were then close to the right bank of a glacier which descended from the watershed a little further south.

They set forth after a good night's sleep to try issues with the final ascent. On one side was the snow slope they had come up; on the other a cliff furrowed by snowy *couloirs* dropped 10,000 feet, with that look of sheer abruptness which every mountaineer would understand. The crest that divided these very different regions stretched up on their left hand towards Pico del Indio. They determined to ascend that. For two hours they were upon the face of the snow slope. It soon turned to ice. Step-cutting here, at an altitude of 20,000 feet above the sea, was a very arduous process. They were able to tread steps up to the ridge that bounded the mountain on the other side. Now for the first time the final cone of Illimani came into view. This great mountain had a coronet of summits, which surrounded a high plateau of snow, and differed from one another in altitude to a very slight extent. The peak lay right over against them, separated from them by an undulating snowfield, towards which a gentle slope led down from their feet. At the far side another gentle incline sloped up to a saddle at the foot of the final cone, giving access to it by what was evidently an easy snow *arête*. It only remained to cross this snowfield, reach the saddle, and climb the ridge, nor was there a single difficulty in the way, save only that permanent impediment which diminished atmospheric pressure provided for all climbers at altitudes over twenty thousand feet above the sea. The snow happened to be in splendid condition. They descended merrily enough to the flat part of the plateau. Thence the long, slow ascent began. When they were almost despairing of success, the distance intervening between them and the column seemed suddenly to vanish, and, before they knew they were upon it, the slope on the La Paz side was dropping away at their feet. A halt of five minutes, a little food, and they were off once more, climbing the easy round snow ridge which alone intervened between them and the top. Of that ascent he had hardly any recollection. It seemed endless, though it was short. In somewhat less than an hour he was, as it were, awakened by one of his companions inviting him to take the lead, and be the first at the summit. For the moment they had no sense of joy; none of that delirious satisfaction which used to overwhelm the Alpine climber in the days of the Alpine conquest. All they knew was that their great toil was at an end, and they could sit down, take breath, and regain the control of their functions. But in five minutes the pain was past, and they felt little otherwise than as if they had been on the sea level. The view, of course, was magnificent. The lecturer then described the descent, and later the ascent of Mount Sorata, which was attended with great difficulty owing to the falls of fresh snow, and still later the attempted ascent of Mount Sarmiento, the highest mountain on Terra del Fuego.