

EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

QUEEN VICTORIA
AND
LOCHNAGAR.

THE death of Queen Victoria is now too remote an event—it took place on 22nd January—to call for special reference; and there is all the less need for indulging in any retrospect as Her Majesty's relations to the Club and her position as a Deeside landed proprietor have already been fully alluded to in our pages. (See *C.C.J.*, II., 396.) It may perhaps be well to point out, however, that a great deal that found its way into print at the time of the Queen's death in the shape of "incidents" of Her Majesty's life at Balmoral was purely fictitious. In particular, prominence was given to a "well-faked-up" story which will not bear a moment's examination. It was solemnly stated that "There is a tradition which avers that when snow appears on a certain part of Lochnagar the laird of Balmoral dies", and that "No snow has been seen on this part of the mountain since the late Queen became land-lord until the present year". This is the sort of legend to be at once accepted by the credulous, more especially as it has a family resemblance to well-known instances of the summer's drought being gauged by the decrease or disappearance of snow in certain mountain corries. We have made some inquiry, however, and can find no trace of such a tradition as that alleged, nor any evidence of the professed natural phenomenon—which, to those of us who know Lochnagar, would be something like a miracle. There can be no part of Lochnagar that would not be covered with snow in a snowstorm of ordinary severity and duration. A correspondent we consulted settles the matter plainly and decisively—"I have seen Lochnagar spotlessly white—yes, even painfully so—hundreds of times, and I do not think that any disposition of such snowstorms as we have at Balmoral would allow of any part of the mountain not being covered with snow, unless perhaps the under sides of overhanging precipices. There are corries on Lochnagar which I believe retain snow all the year round—at any rate, I always find snow in them—but for a certain spot never to have been covered with snow till now is an impossibility". Our correspondent proceeds to call for the continuous observations which have determined the existence of the un-snow-covered portion of Lochnagar; but, obviously, that is asking for too much. Suffice it to have slain the legend. Returning to the Queen, let us quote a sentence from an article on "Lochnagar in March" in the *Aberdeen Free Press*, 20th March:—"Among the many good deeds of Queen Victoria, it must not be forgotten that the Lochnagar track was made at the orders and the expense of Her Majesty".

THE QUEEN'S LOSS TO DEESIDE. SPECULATION has been rife—and will probably remain rife for some time—as to the probable influence on Deeside generally of the death of the Queen and the consequent disappearance of one of the attractions to the average tourist, for it is undoubted that the rush to Balmoral was to see “Her Majesty’s Highland Home”. The quid-nuncs will have it that one of the immediate results will be the extension of the railway from Ballater to Braemar; but if Edward VII.—or the Duke of Cornwall and York, who, it is said, is to make Balmoral a summer residence—prove more favourable to this project than Queen Victoria we shall be surprised. These be mundane things, however; let us have a sample of the sentimental. Among the many elegies on Queen Victoria written at the time of her death was one in Doric by Mr. William Allan, M.P. for Gateshead, of which the following stanzas may be quoted—

“Ye streams an’ rills—oh, quat your glee!
Join in the dirge o’ dool sae hie
That rises frae the silvery Dee—
Oor Queen will come nae mair.

“Ye win’s that roon’ Balmoral sweep
Ower ilka turret, tower, an’ keep,
Moan nicht an’ day wi’ sorrow deep—
Oor Queen will come nae mair.

“Frae Aberdeen to Lochnagar,
Frae glens an’ corries roon’ Braemar,
This cry o’ grief is heard afar—
‘Oor Queen will come nae mair’.”

THE BUCK. I ASCENDED The Buck of the Cabrach on 19th May from the Cabrach or north-west side, walking up from the farm of Powneed alongside a wire fence known locally as “Powis’s fence”. This slope of the hill is further west than that ascended by the Club in the September 1895 excursion, the start on that occasion being made from the farm of Silverford, on the Rhynie road. The ascent is easy; and from a spot between two cottar houses which may be taken as the base of the hill I reached the summit—without any undue exertion—in 40 minutes. Possibly a sharp northerly wind kept me going steadily. The day was a little dull, but there was a fairly good view from the top, Lochnagar and Ben Avon being particularly fine in their coatings of snow, and all the lesser hills, ranging from Mount Keen to the Binn Hill of Cullen, being perfectly discernible. The afternoon became brilliant, the clouds disappearing and being succeeded by bright and warm sunshine; but by that time I was off the hill and making a number of calls in the Upper Cabrach. I walked up from Huntly through Glass on the previous day; and I returned to Aberdeen the day after from Duftown, walking thither by the Braes o’ Balloch and Fiddichside—the veritable Braes o’ Balloch of the song of “Roy’s Wife”, for is not Aldivalloch a farm in the Cabrach, visible from The Buck? The Richmond Arms Hotel at Ardwell, Lower Cabrach—once known as

the Grouse Inn, but now enlarged—is a convenient hostelry for one spending such a week-end as this.—ROBERT ANDERSON.

LOCH ERICHT is a large Highland loch situated partly in Perthshire and partly in Inverness-shire.

It is one of the wildest and most magnificent lochs in Scotland, presenting all along its shores scenes of lonely grandeur and sublimity, the mountains rising from the water's edge to great altitudes, their sides scarred by mountain torrents. The surface when measured by the Ordnance Survey officers in 1872 was found to be 1153.4 feet above the level of the sea; it is thus one of the most elevated of the larger Scottish lochs. It is known to anglers as the home of large *Salmo ferox*, as well as of trout said to be equal in quality to those of Loch Leven. It trends in a north-east and south-west direction, and is broadest near the southern end, narrowing gradually towards the northern end. It is over 14½ miles in length, and over one mile in maximum breadth; the mean breadth is about half a mile, being 3½ per cent. of the length. Its waters cover an area of over 4600 acres, or nearly 7¼ square miles. The deepest part of the loch is in the southern broader portion, where, about 3½ miles from the foot of the loch there is a small central depression, about one-third of a mile in length, and covering about 58 acres, in which the depths exceed 500 feet, the maximum being 512 feet.—*Scottish Geographical Magazine.*

THE author of a recently-published work, "Kings of Rod, Rifle, and Gun", thinks the following EXTRAORDINARY WALKING FEAT. feat, "for its grotesque combination of madness, endurance, and pluck", stands unsurpassed in the annals of sport:—"One night, while a large party of sportsmen were assembled at Blackhall, in Kincardineshire, then the seat of Mr. Farquharson, Sir Andrew Leith Hay bet Lord Kennedy £2500 that he would get to Inverness on foot before him. Off they started at nine o'clock at night in their evening costume, thin shoes and silk stockings. Sir Andrew Leith Hay went by the coach road *via* Huntly and Elgin. Lord Kennedy, with Captain Ross as umpire, struck straight across the Grampians. Amid pouring rain they walked all night, next day, and the next night, reaching Inverness at 6 a.m. on the third day. Sir Andrew Leith Hay, who had chosen the longer, but far more comfortable, route, did not arrive till four hours later".

IT seems to be reckoned a grievance in some quarters that, despite its proximity to the "Aberdeenshire Highlands", Aberdeen itself cannot be classified as Highland. Why anybody except members of the Aberdeen Highland Association should desire such a classification is past finding out. To talk of the "Highland blood" of Aberdonians, for instance, is simply preposterous. The whole history of Aberdeen has been anti-Highland; its associations and leanings have been essentially Lowland. The idea of identifying the city with the land of the Gael must be attributed solely to the

modern craze that is called the "Celtic revival"—and perhaps in reality it would be found more due to the latter-day adoption of the Highland dress than to the revival of Gaelic language and literature. The idea of Lord Aberdeen, whose Whig ancestry is irreproachable, posturing as "Chief" of the Highland Association is well-nigh ludicrous; but his lordship had the sense, at any rate, to abandon the pretension that Aberdeen is in any degree Highland. This was done very ingeniously, Sir Walter Scott being cited as an authority, from the passage in "Waverley" in which Callum Beg repudiates the insinuation that Waverley and he had come from the Highlands—"Ye're a Highlandman by your tongue?" "Na; I am but just Aberdeen-a-way". By way of enforcing the conclusion of Sir Walter Scott, a correspondent of the *Evening Gazette* (28th March) cited the old "Highland line" marked on a map of Scotland divided into clans, in the 16th century, by T. B. Johnston. The boundary thus delineated touched the line of longitude 3° W. in the north-west corner of Forfarshire, "and followed that line due north across the Dee, just west of Craigendarroch, through Ballater, and along the water-shed which separates Dee and Don; and then turned N.N.W. and W.N.W., south of Elgin and Findhorn, till it terminated on the Moray Firth, near Nairn. North and west of this line was all regarded as Highlands, with the exception of Caithness. Anyone who cares to follow this on a map may satisfy himself that Aberdeen is fully 35 miles, as the crow flies, outside the Highland line".

WE went to Aviemore on April 4th. Snow was
SNOW NOTES, lying on the railway track at the summit level. At
APRIL, 1901. Aviemore all the high ground was covered with a
continuous coat down to the upper edge of the
forests, *i.e.*, about 1500 feet. Twice snow showers covered all the
low ground, but the snow melted off in a few hours. During the
eighteen days of our stay we saw a notable and almost continuous
diminution of the snow covering of the high ground, and in many
parts, particularly on exposed ridges, the dark earth showed through
the snow. On April 9th I went by Glen Eunach to the Argyll Stone.
There was no snow lying in the hollow of the glen as far as I ascended
it. When I had quitted the track, near the Allt Ruigh na Sroine, I
did not come on to snow till I reached about 2000 feet. Above this
it lay in large, discontinuous patches, but the ridge itself was clear.
I left the ridge at its north end by the Coire Buidh that overlooks
Loch an Eilein. All along the lip of this corrie was a heavy snow-
wreath, the surface of which was very steep. All the snow was in
good condition for walking, and only in parts of the wreath did I find
it at all soft. On the 17th I went up the Larig Ghru as far as the
watershed. Here I reached snow at the 1750 contour, and found it
much greater in quantity than I have previously seen it. After the
first half-mile I found it unbroken, except for a narrow strip along
the edge of the ridge usually occupied by the intermittent track.
The snow was in capital walking condition, but seemingly I was the
first person to go far up the pass. At the watershed the depth of the

snow must have been great, for a notable ridge of rocks crossing the pass just at the watershed was buried, and the large cairns in its neighbourhood were invisible. Indeed I barely found enough exposed rock to serve as a dry seat, while I took a rest, a lunch, and a look at the Deeside view. The three upper Pools of Dee were quite invisible. The lowest one, the big one, was visible, but I could not determine whether its surface was water or ice. The day was brilliantly fine; the sun, especially with its reflection from the snow, would have been overpoweringly bright if I had not worn darkened glasses; the overhead sky was absolutely clear; and while I sat the wind was at rest, and I enjoyed the most delightful silence, broken only by the ticking of my watch, the faint rumble of a train at Aviemore, some eight miles away, and the tinkle of fragments of snow falling down the steeps.—C. G. C.

THE FIFE LOMONDS were visited by the Club on 6th May last. The party left Aberdeen at 6.20 A.M., and, after a halt at Dundee for breakfast, reached Falkland Road station at 10.2 A.M.

The walk to the top of the East Lomond was then commenced; on the summit a meeting of the Club was held, and several members admitted. The Chairman, Mr. William Porter, J.P., then read a paper giving a quaint description of Falkland in olden times. Thereafter the West top was climbed, the members being met there by a contingent from Kirkcaldy. The weather was unfavourable for an extended prospect, a persistent haze (which developed into rain on the descent) limiting the view. The Club dined at Liquorstone Hotel, Falkland, Aberdeen being reached about 10.5 p.m. The following brief description of the Lomonds was issued to the members previous to the excursion:—The Lomonds Hills of Fife form an isolated ridge on the borders of Kinross-shire and Fifeshire. The west and north fronts are steep and rocky, the east and south smooth and gently sloping; the ridge forms an undulating plateau at an average height of 1250 feet. The principal summits, which are about three miles apart, are West Lomond (1713 feet) and East Lomond (1471 feet). They are conspicuous landmarks and command extensive and beautiful views. About a mile south-west from West Lomond are the remains of a hill-fort; the East Lomond is surmounted by similar remains. East Lomond formed one of the stations in the great Trigonometrical Survey. Carlyle thus describes a visit he, along with Edward Irving, paid to it:—“Another time military tents were noticed on the Lomond Hills (on the eastern of the two). ‘Trigonometrical Survey’, said we, ‘Ramsden’s theodolite and what not; let us go’. And on Saturday we went. Beautiful the airy prospect from the eastern Lomond far and wide. Five or six tents stood on the top; one a black stained cooking one with a heap of coals close by—the rest all closed and occupants gone, except one other, partly open at the eaves, through which you could look in and see a big circular mahogany box (which we took to be the theodolite) and a saucy-looking, cold, official gentleman diligently walking for exercise,

no observations being possible, though the day was so bright. No admittance, however. Plenty of fine country people had come up to whom the official had been coldly monosyllabic, as to us also he was. Polite, with a shape of contempt; and unwilling to let himself into speech. Irving had great skill in these cases. He remarked—and led us into remarking—courteously this and that about the famous Ramsden and his instrument, about the famous Trigonometrical Survey, and so forth, till the official in a few minutes had to melt; invited us exceptionally in for an actual inspection of his theodolite, which we reverently enjoyed, and saw through it the signal column—a great broad plank, he told us, on the top of Ben Lomond, sixty miles off—waving and shivering like a bit of loose tape, so that no observations could be had. We descended the hill *re facta*". The following are the officially recorded observations from the East Lomond in the "great Trig":—Allarmuir Hill, Carnethy Hill, Tinto, Bencleuch (22 miles), Ben Lomond (55), Ben Lawers (44), Glas Maol (44), Mount Battock (52), Craigowl, Kerloch, Red Head, Kellie Law (17), Largo Law, Lumsden (46), Says Law (35), Calton Hill (20), and Dun Rig (46). (See *C.C.J.*, Vol. I., p. 168.) From the West Lomond a good view will be obtained of Loch Leven and its famous castle, where Mary Queen of Scots was kept for some time in captivity.

THE Deputy Coroner for Carnarvonshire held an inquest on 9th April last, at Capel Curig, touching the death of Mr. Percy Octavius Weightman, of Liverpool. The principal witness was Mr. Milton, of College Avenue, Crosby, who stated that he and deceased and others, making a party of five, came down to Capel Curig on Thursday evening for the purpose of mountain-climbing. Witness and deceased were expert climbers. On Sunday they left Cobden's Hotel at eleven o'clock and drove to Gwerngoch Ucha, at the bottom of Moel Tryfan, near Ogwen Lake. They successfully climbed the gully they had selected, and had lunch on the top, which was reached about half-past three. After lunch they intended to descend the *arête* to Ogwen. The weather was then misty with sleet. After a while they came to the conclusion that they had missed the main ridge, and waited awhile to discuss the situation and to allow the fog to lift. During this wait deceased said he would go round the ridge and look about a bit. Taking his ice-axe with him, he went round about thirty feet below the party, and they never saw him alive again. About half an hour after deceased had left them witness went to look for him. He traced his footsteps in the snow, and came to a ledge, where he saw marks indicating that deceased had slipped over the edge. The remainder of the party then roped themselves together and went down the gully. Witness did not tell the others that he had seen marks which led him to think that deceased had slipped over the ledge for fear of agitating them. In about an hour's time they found the deceased. Witness unroped himself and went close to the body, which he found head downwards, jammed between some rocks, about 700 feet from where

the marks indicating the slipping off the ledge were found. A doctor who examined the body said that deceased must have been killed instantly. His skull was fractured, and he must have struck the rocks many times in the course of his appalling descent. It was about half-past five when the party reached the body. They found it impossible with the means at hand to remove it, and returned to the Royal Oak to get assistance, but it was decided, in view of the stormy state of the weather, that nothing could be done that night, and at four o'clock on Monday morning they returned to the spot and recovered the body, which was removed to Cobden's Hotel. The jury returned a verdict of death by misadventure, and expressed their sympathy with deceased's relatives.

THE following new members have been admitted :
NEW MEMBERS. —John Ritchie, James Gray Kyd, R. Gordon Nicol, C.E., and John Coutts.