

EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

MOST of the members of the Club know Bennachie, or, if they don't, they ought to be heartily ashamed of themselves. In my opinion, no

one should be admitted to membership who has
A WINTER DAY ON not been on the top—in fact, on all the tops—
BENNACHIE. of Bennachie. I admit I have a peculiar liking
for Bennachie, that “King of common hills”.

But to our tale. My friend and I left Aberdeen with the 8.5 a.m. train on New-Year's Day, and in due course arrived at Pitcaple. We spent little time in the vicinity of the station, for there was nothing very attractive—everything appeared to be wrapt in slumber. We were at the Maiden Stane and into the Woods of Pittodrie in a comparatively short time, the morning wind making our ears tingle. But what a refreshing and invigorating effect it had as compared with what we had felt in the city!

We had not gone far up the hill road when snow began to make its appearance, at first in little patches; but very soon we found that the road was practically snowed up, while here and there the snow had been blown into beautiful, fantastic shapes. The surface of the snow was, on the whole, quite hard, but occasionally we found ourselves on a soft bit, where we floundered, sometimes disappearing almost out of sight, until we got on to the hard snow again. On arriving at the Oxen Craig we had a remarkably good view in some directions; the hills to the north were white from top to bottom. Tap o' Noth looked extremely pretty in his mantle of snow; and away among the Cairngorms we could see Ben Avon—huge always—in his winter's garb. The lower Deeside hills were practically free from snow. We could not see a single speck on Clochnaben or Kerloch, but “Morven of snow” was true to his tradition.

We were a little surprised to see great numbers of grouse on Bennachie, for, although we have been there often, we never before came across many; but this we attributed to the fact that the adjacent hills to the north were entirely covered with snow, while Bennachie was almost clear on the slopes. Bidding Oxen Craig farewell, we made our way to the Mither Tap. There was a good deal of snow on the plateau.

On arriving at the peat road on the descent, we were surprised to discover two young men floundering in the snow, making their way to the summit, and, as we thought, not a little disappointed to find we had been up before them. We arrived at Inveramsay in good time for our train, reaching Aberdeen early in the afternoon.—
H. A. B.

THE following account of Balmoral appeared in the *Glasgow Herald*

of 27th August:—It has not before been pointed out that when Queen Victoria purchased her Highland estate she was not the first of her Royal race who owned it. The earliest appearance on record of Balmoral—Bouchmorale it is then called—shows it to have been the property of King James II. of Scotland. This was when Master Richard de Forbes, a canon of Aberdeen, chamberlain of “all and singular the lands pertaining to the lord the King in the Kingdom of Scotland, and specially in that part” (the Earldom of Mar), delivered his accounts at Edinburgh, on 11th July, 1451. These accounts for Mar are subdivided Strathdon, Strathdee, Cromar, and Mukvale, *i.e.*, Glenmuick; and Bouchmorale, a £5 land, like Abergeldy, a £10 land, figures in the second of these. Trouble about this time had fallen out between the King and Thomas, second Lord Erskine, *de jure* 18th Earl of Mar, over the Mar lands. In 1459 the former bestowed the Earldom on his fourth son, Prince John. He died in 1479 unmarried, and the King gave the Earldom to his second son, Alexander, Duke of Albany, three years thereafter. The third James in 1486 bestowed it on his son, Prince John, and in 1562 Mary Queen of Scots gave the Earldom to her brother James, Earl of Moray—all which grants were eventually declared to have been inept. Notwithstanding, Balmoral for considerably over 100 years had belonged to members of the Royal Family, and came again to the Sovereign exactly 50 years ago by purchase from the Duke of Fife’s father. It comprises about 11,000 acres, extends from the Dee to the summit of Lochnagar, the mountain celebrated by Byron, joins the estates of Abergeldie and Birkhall, and the three estates constitute one demesne extending eleven miles along the Dee. Balmoral is a compound Gaelic name, signifying the house by the big cliff or rock.

KING LEWANIKA, of Barotseland, South Africa, one of the Coronation guests, paid a visit to Deeside in the end of July. One incident of his visit is noticeable as containing an exquisitely natural touch. It was thus chronicled by the *Free Press*:—“King Lewanika was charmed with the scenery between Aboyne and Ballater, and as the train entered the moor of Dinnet his enthusiasm was unbounded. Rising from his seat and stepping to the window of the saloon as the train dashed over the moor, with the heather in rich bloom, King Lewanika lifted his arms in admiration, and exclaimed, ‘Oh! Africa, Africa! The Matoka Hills!’ It may be explained that the scenery at this particular part does recall to those who have been in the neighbourhood of the Zambesi the rugged scenery of that region, and the view which suddenly opened out to the South African must have seemed to him like a glimpse of home”. A party of Fijians (native armed Constabulary) journeyed to Balmoral two days later; and we were informed that they also discovered a likeness between Deeside scenery and the scenery of Fiji, particularly where the Girnock joins the Dee.

THE Barmekin has been visited by the Club (*C.C.J.*, I., 46), and has been described in the *Journal* (III., 169). Mention, therefore, may be made of an article in the *Free Press* (17th September), in which the author, "J. M." [Mr. John Milne, LL.D.], advances the following theory to account for the dykes and dry ditches which have occasionally been reckoned a Roman or a Danish camp:—"All the circumstances to be seen about the Barmekin point to its having been a common fold for the tenants of an estate to which their cattle were driven at night when at hill pasture in summer. The dykes and ditches served the double purpose of keeping in the cattle—not an easy matter sometimes—and of enabling the watchers to defend them against a large company of Highland thieves, with whom the only choice lay between stealing in summer and starving in winter. The great ditch between the stone dykes had also afforded some shelter to the watchers against the inclemency of the weather". Another of the author's conclusions is that the Barmekin was constructed very long ago, "perhaps before the time of Christ", and ceased to be used three hundred years ago.

DURING the past summer, a cairn was erected in the forest of Gaick, about 14 miles from Kingussie, to mark the spot where Captain John Macpherson of Ballachroan and four attendants were overwhelmed by an avalanche of snow on the Christmas of 1799 (old style). (See *C.C.J.*, III., 192, 260).

AN attempt was made (*C.C.J.*, II., 186) to enumerate the bonfires lighted on hill-tops in Aberdeenshire and the North on the night of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, 22nd June, 1897.

CORONATION It was not very successful; and much less success must attend any attempt to chronicle the bonfires in commemoration of the Coronation of Edward VII. The bad weather that prevailed throughout the spring and far into summer had the effect of discouraging intending bonfire-makers; for instance, the proposal of the Committee of the Club to discharge fireworks from the summit of Ben Muich Dhui had to be abandoned, owing to receipt of advices that the path from Glen Derry was inaccessible, being blocked with snow. The postponement of the Coronation from the date originally fixed (26th June), owing to the King's illness, also had its effect, and many projected bonfires were given up. A few were lighted several days later—generally on Monday, the 30th. Notes we took at the time mention principally hill-tops in Kincardineshire and Forfarshire. The Aberdeenshire bonfires seem to have been limited to the following:—Hill of Dunnydeer, Inch, June 30; Fraserburgh Links, June 30; Hill of Belnagoak, Methlick, July 1; Allanshill, Tyrie, July 8; Cairnhill, Rosehearty, July 10. The Coronation took place on Saturday, August 9th; and the following bonfires were chronicled:—On Deeside—Durriss; Learney Hill, Torphins; Tillyching Hill, Lumphanan; Hill of the Tom, Logie-Coldstone; Pittendarroch, Tarland; one of the

Glen Tanner hills overlooking Dinnet; Craggan House, Morven; Craighendarroch, Ballater; Glenmuick; Coyles of Muick; Craig-na-Ban and Craig-Gowan, Balmoral; Craig Choinnich, Braemar; and Carr Hill, Mar Forest. Central Aberdeenshire—Brimmond, Ben-nachie, Oldmeldrum, Old Rain, Hill of Johnstone (Leslie), Quarry Hill (Rhynie), Rothern Norman, Hill of Bridgend (Auchterless), Upper Cotburn and Birchen Hill, Craigston (Turriff), Old Tryst Hill, Cuminestown; Broom Hill and Hill of Cranloch, Ythan Wells; Hill of Lessendrum; and Clashmach, Huntly. Donside—Muir of Syllavethy, Tullynessle; Hill of Corse and Hill of Wark, Leochel-Cushnie; and Kildrummy. Buchan—Aikey Brae, Pitfour, Market Hill and Auchtydore, Longside; and New Deer. Banffshire—Balloch Hill, Keith; Troup Hill, Gardenstown; Davidston Hill and Knowe of Newton, Cairnie; Hill of Boghead, Inverkeithney; Buckie (several places); and Knockolochy, Tomintoul. A huge bonfire that had been built on the top of Cromdale Hill was lighted on the Friday night (August 8); and there were also bonfires at Daugh of Cromdale, on the Braes of Castle Grant, and near Nethy Bridge. A bonfire on Ben Nevis was lighted on Coronation Day—"amidst snow and sleet", the report said.

The reports, as a rule, were all dreadfully prosaic; only two that we saw attempted anything in the nature of picturesque description. Somebody wrote to the *Banffshire Journal*—"A most magnificent view of bonfires and fireworks was seen on Coronation night from the Hill of Gourdas, Fyvie, the calm, clear air showing with distinction every article of fire above the horizon from Pennan to Aberdeen, and from Peterhead to Huntly. Such a panorama will not be easy to forget". And a correspondent of the *Free Press*, writing of the bonfires on Deeside Hills, as seen from the bonfire at Durriss, said—"The sight from the hill was such as to give the lie to Macaulay's words in 'The Armada' that

"Such night in England ne'er had been, nor e'er again shall be',
for

"That time of slumber was as bright and busy as the day'.

Like the time of yore, ten or a dozen large fires blazed on as many hill-tops up and down the Dee valley, while fireworks rose from many places—from Aberdeen in the east to Aboyne in the west. The displays at Aberdeen were continuous, while beautiful rockets rose from Crathes, Banchory, and further west—apparently about Torphins—and from Skene in the north. The fire was well burned out ere the rain came on and drove the unwilling rejoicers home".

THERE is an unwritten law of the mountains—a code which regulates the use of private property by mountaineers. It prevails particularly in the Alps and in the mountains of the Northern States and Canada, and was recently described by the *New York MOUNTAIN LAW. Nation* (11th September) in these terms:—"The mountain hut and the forest camp, although absolutely unpoliced and practically beyond the jurisdiction of statute law, are

protected by a sentiment which amounts to law and yet has no recourse against breaches of the custom of the region. You may leave your valuables on a trail in the North-West secure of finding them again, and you may, under well-understood restrictions, use any camp in the woods of Maine or Canada. Similarly the mountain shelters of the Appalachian or Alpine Clubs, or those erected at private expense, are free to all who traverse the mountains. And the rules for their use by the casual occupant are so explicit as to have the value of law, and as binding as if a thousand penalties and precedents enforced each article. . . . Under this code most of the meannesses and crimes that are incident to civilisation vanish. It is as if the vast solitariness of the forest and the mountain reproduced itself in a kind of largeness of soul in the woodsman and mountaineer. He feels more vividly than the man in the multitude the solemnity of any act that concerns another individual. In town you cannot safely leave an overcoat on the rack with the door ajar; in the North Woods you may leave in an open shack the best gun that the forges of England, Belgium, or America can produce, and passers-by, who perfectly know its value, will hardly give it a second look".

THE proposal to utilise the Avon as a water supply for Aberdeen still remains "in the air", and the municipal authorities appear disposed to continue using the Dee. Mr. Charles Hawksley,

THE DEE AS A C.E., London, has furnished a report (published in WATER SUPPLY. the Aberdeen papers, 15th September), which partly dissipates the fears entertained regarding the pollution of the river by sewage. Owing to the wide bed and shallow depth of the Dee, and the frequent breaking up of the stream by rocks and pebbles, the water flowing along it (he says) "is kept thoroughly aerated, so that organic impurities reaching the river in its course are quickly removed by oxidation". Mr. Hawksley's own proposal is to remove the intake from Cairnton, Banchory to a point above Ballater, below the confluence of the Gairn and the Dee.

It was duly recorded, as a very singular incident, that all the Cairngorm mountains above 2000 feet in height
 "SUMMER" WEATHER were thickly coated with snow on the morning
 ON THE of Thursday, 24th July. "The oldest in-
 CAIRNGORMS. habitant", it was said, could not recall a
 similar occurrence at this time of year, the
 snowfall being no mere shower, but a heavy coating which remained
 on the hills throughout the day.

LOOKING to the prospective closing of Ben Nevis Observatory, and to the fact that no authentic record for women climbers had been established on that mountain, Mr. William Swan,
 "RECORD" CLIMB Fort-William, himself a well-known hill-climber,
 OF signified his intention of presenting a gold medal
 BEN NEVIS. to the lady competitor who, during the past
 season, made the ascent of Ben Nevis in the
 shortest time. The first competitor in this somewhat novel race

started from the Post Office, Fort-William, on Saturday morning, 19th July, at 7.59 a.m., but as only a few knew of the exploit, no crowd assembled to see her off. Her name is Miss Elizabeth Tait, and she follows the occupation of postwoman, traversing the somewhat remote glens between Corrou, in Perthshire, and Luibult, in Lochaber. She had thus excellent opportunities of training for her mountaineering feat, and her performance fully justified the confidence placed in her. Arrangements had been made for telegraphing the time of her arrival at the summit, and a considerable number were not a little surprised to learn on receipt of the telegram that the plucky postwoman had accomplished the task in 1 hour 59½ minutes—half a minute under two hours—reaching the Observatory a minute and a half before ten. The distance from the Post-Office at Fort-William to the Observatory is seven miles, and when the steep gradients on the mountain are taken into consideration it will not be surprising to learn that the average climber takes four hours in the ascent. The second competitor was Miss Louisa Cameron (aged about 22), Glenmallie, Achnacarry, who first made the ascent on 18th September in 2 hours 17 minutes, in unfavourable weather conditions, and then, on 30th September, reduced her time by 14 minutes, making the ascent in 2 hours 3 minutes—3½ minutes more than Miss Tait.

THIS delicate little bird is not one which may be expected to be found nesting at any great height above sea-level. Last summer (1902) there was a colony of about 30 nests in the sand and gravel bank of the Lui Water, about one mile and a half below Derry Lodge, at an altitude of over 1300 feet above sea-level. This is the highest point at which I have seen this bird nesting, although doubtless it may do so at still higher places, given a similar situation and suitable shelter.—H. B. W.

THE walk from Ballater to Loch Lee affords excellent "sport"—there is the charm of crossing the watershed between two great counties; there are hills to be climbed and ridges to be dodged; plateaus to be endured and steep crags to be admired. Two deer forests are in the way, and, therefore, this excursion should be made so as not to interfere with the rights of others. The real start has to be taken from a point near the Linn of Muick. A little to the east of the Linn is a rocky, tree-clad height with no name (but a 1500 contour) on the one-inch map; this is Auchnacraig Hill, a prominent point as ones goes up the Muick side. It is necessary to get on the south side of the crag; once there, the traveller will be astonished at the great extent of pasture with larachs (Auchnacraig, Clashmuick, etc.) indicating its former cultivation. Allt na Wheillie is now the guiding mark, the west side of which should be kept till the upper forking, where the county march should be made for in a bee-line, or as nearly so as one can. The Burn of Fasheilach should now be

struck about half-a-mile above its mouth, and so the Water of Mark is reached. The Mark, already a considerable stream, flows in a very narrow glen, and should be followed southwards, and upwards, for about half-a-mile. The Mark crossed, a direct course has to be made for the Water of Lee at the Lee stable—a new building a little to the east of “n” in “Glen” on the O.S. map—where an excellent driving road will be found of service. This road keeps by the left bank of the Lee and along the north side of the loch. The Lee stable passed, the monotony of flat, grassy hills is exchanged for picturesque rocky heights. Monawee (2276), on the north side of the glen, is interesting to botanists, as the broom on its southern slope was produced over half-a-century ago from seeds carried by sheep from the low country. The Water of Unich and the Lee meet a long mile west of the loch; the former stream is the larger, and has falls which are well seen from the road.

The backward views are the best as one goes up alongside Allt na Wheillie; Ben Avon, and, by and by, other Cairngorms, tower above the horizon, and Lochnagar also is well seen, with Broad Cairn and Cairn Bannoch.

THE Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Club was held on 23rd December, 1902—the Chairman, Mr. Robert Harvey, presiding. The

following were appointed Office-bearers and
OUR FOURTEENTH Members of Committee:—President, The Right
ANNUAL MEETING. Hon. James Bryce, D.C.L., LL.D., M.P.; Vice-
Presidents, Alexander Copland and Robert
Anderson; Chairman, Robert Harvey; Secretary, A. I. M'Connochie,
C.A., 115 Union Street, Aberdeen; Treasurer, T. R. Gillies, advocate,
181A Union Street, Aberdeen; Committee—James Connor, John
Croll, George Duncan, James A. Hadden, John M'Gregor, William
Porter, James A. Ross, Rev. Robert Semple, James Smith, and John
Wallace.

It was remitted to the Committee to fix the excursions for the current year. It was reported that the Summer Excursion of 1902 had been a failure—the only such instance in the Club's experience. Continuous and heavy rain and dense mist compelled a halt at Loch-builg Cottage; and in the return drive the tributaries of the Gairn were forded with considerable difficulty.

The following new members have been admitted:—George Watt, M.D., John Ledingham, and John A. Nicol. Rev. Robert Lippe, LL.D., has been elected an Honorary Member.

REVIEWS.

SIR MARTIN CONWAY, the well-known mountaineer (See *C.C.J.*, III., 126, 195), has just published "Aconcagua and Tierra del Fuego: A Book of Climbing, Travel, and Exploration". It deals mainly with an ascent of Aconcagua, in Argentina, believed to be the highest peak in the two Americas, one authority making it 22,867 feet and another 23,100 feet above sea level. This peak was first scaled on 14th January, 1897, by Mathias Zurbriggen, a Swiss guide attached to an expedition formed by Mr. E. A. Fitz Gerald; and, a few weeks later, the ascent was accomplished by another member of Mr. Fitz Gerald's party, Mr. Stuart Vines (See *C.C.J.*, II., 315, and III., 132). Sir Martin Conway achieved the third ascent on 5th December, 1898. He was accompanied by two Swiss guides (only one of whom reached the summit), by a porter, and by an invaluable Andean guide named Aniceto Olavarria—a born mountain climber. One night was spent near the foot of the mountain, a second about 16,000 feet above sea level, and a third at 18,500 feet. Aconcagua, in spite of its immense height, is "entirely devoid of all ordinary dangers; indeed, from bottom to top there is not a step of any difficulty whatever upon it. Nowhere need the rope be attached; there is not a single step that a child could not take. The ascent is a mere question of strength and endurance, physical and constitutional". But such endurance! The strain was terrible. The temperature was often 25 or 27 degrees below freezing-point, and one of the guides almost lost his legs, if not his life, by frostbite; whilst the rarefaction of the air at the enormous altitude reached made breathing an intolerable effort, and partially stupefied both the leader and his faithful Swiss Maquignaz:—"As the stones gave way beneath our feet we often fell violently to the ground, and lay panting like wounded men unable to rise. Our breathing became louder and louder. It was a relief now and again to empty the lungs with a groan and refill them with a more than ordinary volume of the thin air. Arms had to be kept well away from the sides, to leave the lungs more free for expansion. . . . We seldom spoke, unless to exchange a word of sympathy". At last they reached the almost level summit, but could not venture to linger on it, for the weather was rapidly changing for the worse, so, without going on to the absolutely highest point—about a hundred yards away, and a few feet above their position—they hurried back as fast as possible. The view from the summit is thus described by Sir Martin Conway—"To the south was Tupungato, a majestic pile of snow, over which even more majestic clouds were presently to mount aloft. To the north was the still grander Mercedario, beheld round the flank of the final rocks. In the west were the hills dropping lower and lower to the Chilean shore, and then the purple ocean. To the north-east, like another ocean, lay the flat surface of the Argentine pampas. Elsewhere the Cordillera, in long parallel ridges running roughly

north and south, stretched its great length along, crowding together into an inextricable tangle the distant peaks, partly hidden by the two near summits which alone interrupted the completeness of the panorama". Dawn, as witnessed on the mountain slope at a height of 21,000 feet, seems to have been a much more brilliant spectacle—"The coming of dawn was hidden from us by the interposing mountain, so we lost all sight of the rich unfolding glories of the East. But from the moment the sun peeped above the invisible horizon we were magnificently recompensed, for it poured forth upon the world beneath us a flood of fiery radiance, save where interposing mountains flung out their long shadows. Its effulgence visibly permeated the air over the Pacific. Standing as we did on the shaded side of Aconcagua, and at no very great distance from the summit, we saw its great cone of purple shade reach out at the moment of sunrise to the remotest horizon, more than two hundred miles distant—not, be it observed, a mere carpet of shadow on the ground, but a solid prism of purple immersed in the glimmering flood of the crystalline sky, its outer surface enriched with layers of rainbow-tinted colour. We could see upon the ground the shadows of other mountains; but Aconcagua's shadow, in which we stood, alone revealed itself as substantial—not a plane, but a thing of three dimensions. With the rising of the sun the remotest point of the shadow slowly dropped upon the ocean and travelled towards us, till it reached the Chilean shore, hurried over the low hills, dipped into the Horcones Valley, climbed the slope up which we had come, and finally reached our feet. Then, as we raised our eyes to the crags aloft, lo! the blinding fires of the Sun God himself burning upon the crest and bringing to us the fulness of day!" Sir Martin Conway returned home by the Straits of Magellan, and made an excursion to Mount Sarmiento (7000 feet) in Tierra del Fuego, but made only a partial ascent of the mountain. We learn with regret—from a statement in the preface—that this book is the last record of his own mountain explorations that Sir Martin Conway will write.

THAT very striking romance, "The History of Sir Richard Calmady", by "Lucas Malet"—a very striking study of mental pathology, it might be termed—contains a number of fine descriptions

OF THE MOUNTAINS. tions of natural scenery, particularly woodland scenery, and an exceedingly novel presentment of the "utility" or value of mountains from the intellectual or spiritual standpoint. The heroine has

been contending that land should not be allowed to lie idle—that it should "work". "What about such trifles as the few hundred square miles of desert or mountain range?" asks the hero. "Oh, I've no quarrel with them—with deserts and so on", is the reply. "They're uncommonly useful things for mankind to knock its head against—invincible, unnegotiable, splendidly competent to teach humanity its place. You see we've grown not a little conceited—so at least it seems to me—on our evolutionary journey up from the primordial cell. We're too much inclined to forget we've developed soul quite

comparatively recently, and therefore that there is probably just as long a journey ahead of us—before we reach the ultimate of intellectual and spiritual development—as there is behind us physically from, say, the parent ascidian, to you and me. And somehow those big open spaces remind one of all that. They drive one's ineffectualness home on one. They remind one that environment, that mechanical civilisation, all the short cuts of applied science, after all count for little and inevitably come to the place called *stop*. And that braces one. It makes one the more eager after that which lies behind the material aspects of things, and to which these merely act as a veil”.

A LITTLE volume of verse, mostly humorous and satirical, published in the autumn by Messrs. Methuen & Co.—“Second Strings”, by A. D. Godley, an Oxford University Don—

POETRY IN PRAISE OF PEDESTRIANISM. contains some amusing lines on the superiority of “Shanks His Mare” to horse-riding, cycling, and motor-car-driving. We quote a verse, which, though relating to scenery in the neighbourhood of Oxford, has quite a general application—

“O yet there's many a grassy path and many a lonely way
By woodland green and silent stream and hamlets old and gray—
In Cotswold hills and Chiltern woods is many a still retreat
Which no one knows but only those who walk upon their feet.
With addled wits the student sits, confusing of his brain,
And some they ride and some they row (and some they go by train),
But give to me mine ancient boots, and far from here we'll fare,
Across the lonely country-side, on Shanks His Mare!”

The author includes mountaineering among his recreations, and one of his poems is titled “Switzerland”. The “mountain feeling” is well expressed in these lines—

“Place me somewhere in the Valais, 'mid the mountains west of Binn,
West of Binn and east of Savoy, in a decent kind of inn,
With a peak or two for climbing, and a glacier to explore—
Any mountains will content me, though they've all been climbed before.

Though the hand of Time be heavy: though your ancient comrades fail:
Though the mountains you ascended be accessible by rail:
Though your nerve begin to weaken, and you're gouty grown and fat,
And prefer to walk in places which are reasonably flat—

Yet I hope that till you die
You will annually sigh

For a vision of the Valais with the coming of July,
For the Oberland or Valais and the higher, purer air,
And the true delight of living, as you taste it only there!”