

EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

WE went to Aviemore on April 13th and left on April 29th, 1904. The journey thither was made on a cold, wet day: rain fell nearly all

the time, and at the summit level the clouds rested on the carriage tops, and the outlook was limited to the immediately surrounding dreariness of dripping fence and dense, driving mist. We had no sight of the surrounding hills, and could form no estimate of their snow condition. The air cleared towards evening, and we saw some of the tops, including that of Cairngorm itself, clear of clouds. On all the northern face of the Cairngorms the snow lay in detached masses: there was no continuous coating below the great plateau. Each corrie had its wreath, and the usual big wreath of Coire Cas was well marked, but all the ridges showed much dark earth.

On the 15th I went through the Larig as far as the watershed. There was practically no snow below the ford, and but discontinuous snow between it and the Lochan nan Uilleam Ghow. From here to the summit I walked on snow all the way, though in places the earth and rocks showed through. The snow was in capital condition for walking, and only once did the crust let my foot through. I saw very few ptarmigan. All the hollows of the Pools of Dee were snowpiled.

During our first week there was very much hot sunshine, and the diminution of the snow was noticeable. But on the 20th there was a fall of fresh snow that coated all the ground above 2350 feet; a renewal of sunshine on the next day, and succeeding rain showers, removed all this fresh snow and continued the lessening of the old. Early on the 25th there was again a fresh coating, reaching even to Tullochgrue (1000), but this vanished during the day. On the 26th the Nettin Hills had a thin coat, though there was none fresh on the Cairngorms. On the 27th the Nettin Hills had rather more, and the Cairngorms were freshly sprinkled as far down as the tops of Creag Dhu (2766), though Carn Elrick had none, being some 300 feet lower. Rain on the 28th and sunshine on the 29th cleared away all this fresh snow, and I could see that the ascent of Cairngorm would have involved not more than 300 yards of snow walking. As far as I could judge from below, only the highest portions of the great plateau had then continuous snow. This year's (1904) record is a decided contrast with that of 1903.

THESE two gullies lie to the west and east respectively of the Shelter Stone Crag, Loch Avon. They are both of pretty much

PINNACLE GULLY

AND

CASTLE GATES GULLY.

Carn Etchachan than has hitherto been employed, and are a pleasant variation of the ordinary route to Ben Muich Dhui. In both the rock scenery is extremely fine; and, near the top of Pinnacle Gully, there is the unclimbed Forefinger Pinnacle, distinctly worthy of attention. Various climbs, moreover, seem possible on the west and east faces of the Shelter Stone Crag, but the slabs towards Loch Avon seem, if not impossible, at any rate most forbidding. An idea of the gullies' appearance from above may be obtained from the illustration opposite p. 332 in Vol. I. A rather fanciful representation of Castle Gates Gully is to be seen in the frontispiece to Burton's "Cairngorms"; it is easily recognised, however, in Wilson's series of photos., Loch Avon and the Cairngorms No. 1, with a long streak of snow. At the beginning of September, 1904, some difficulty was caused in ascending it by such a streak of steep and hard last winter's snow. A word to boulder climbers, who may be staying a night under the Shelter Stone, and have an hour to spend in the evening. There are in the neighbourhood many opportunities for displaying skill in this art. The Shelter Stone itself offers a nice little problem, and it has no lack of giant neighbours. — HUGH STEWART.

THIS excursion took place on 2nd July last, to the Sow of Atholl. The party journeyed by rail to Dalnaspidal, and, as this is at an elevation of over 1,400 feet, about half of

MOUNTAIN EXCURSION

OF THE

PERTSHIRE SOCIETY

OF

NATURAL SCIENCE.

the climb was accomplished in this easy fashion. The rest of the way was by no means difficult, but then the object of the Society is not hill-climbing; it is the pursuit of natural history. With the exception that a shower or two fell, the day was fine.

There were more patches of snow to be seen on the hills around than is usually the case at this season of the year. The principal object of search was, of course, the rare plant, found in Britain only on this hill, *Bryanthus taxifolius*, better known, perhaps, by its former name, *Menziesia coerulea*. The plant was found, but only in small quantity, and care was taken that the quantity was not made less, an example which, it is hoped, will be followed by all other visitors. The other plants found were mostly those that love to grow on peat, a thick coating of which covers the greater part of the hill. The mountain cornel, *Cornus suecica*, was especially abundant and fine. Other plants worth mentioning were—*Azalea procumbens*, *Tofieldia palustris*, *Juncus triglumis*, *Potentilla Sibbaldi*, and there were also several of the

commoner Alpines. A meeting of the Perthshire Mountain Club was held on the summit, at which the Cairnmaster, assisted by the Quaichbearer, initiated a new member with the usual mysterious rites. The Bard, Mr. Kennedy, schoolmaster, Ballinluig, recited a poem in Gaelic, specially written for the occasion, and followed it up by giving a translation in English prose, which was much more edifying to those present than the poem itself. A section of the party climbed the neighbouring and higher peak, Sgairneach Mor (3,160), from the summit of which they enjoyed a fine and extensive view.—WILLIAM BARCLAY, Sen.

THE Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Club was held on 16th December, 1904—the chairman, Mr. John M'Gregor, presiding.

Office-bearers and Committee were elected as OUR SIXTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING. on page IX. The Excursions for the current year were fixed as follows:—Spring Holiday, Lochnagar; Summer Holiday, Ben Lawers; Saturday Afternoon Excursions—Kerloch, Cairn William or Corrennie, Carmaferg or Hill of Fare, as may be arranged by the Committee.

REVIEWS.

To a new and illustrated edition of "The Lady of the Lake" just published by Messrs. Adam & Charles Black, has been appended an interesting article on the topography of the poem, by BEN MUICH the late Sir George B. Airy, the Astronomer-Royal.

DHUI. In a foot-note to a reference to Ben A'an (the Ben A'an on Loch Katrine side), Sir George Airy says—"One of the hollows, under a steep rock, is called 'Sgiath nam mucan dubha' ('Shelter of the black hogs'). The name of the second mountain in Scotland is 'Ben Muich Dhui' ('Hill of the black hog'). It seems not improbable that the wild boar may have inhabited these localities. It is conjectured that the names 'Grisdale' and 'Grassmoor', in Cumberland, have been derived from the same circumstances". It is noticeable, however, that Sir Archibald Geikie ("The Scenery of Scotland") derives the name from Beinn na muich dhu ("The hill of dark gloom").

MESSRS. CASSELL & COMPANY are at present issuing, in fortnightly parts, a somewhat elaborate account of the scenic features of the United Kingdom, under the title "The British Mistakes About Isles Depicted by Pen and Camera". The chapter DEESIDE. on "Deeside", however, is marred by several blunders. The river—reversing the ordinary method—is followed from its mouth to its source, mention almost at the outset being made of Archibald Forbes' grave in Allenvale

Cemetery (of which an illustration is furnished)—a somewhat new “feature” of Deeside scenery. The writer has muddled up his Culter—the paper works are at Peterculter, not Maryculter; and he hardly seems to be aware that the “old” Roman Catholic College of Blairs has been virtually supplanted by a spick-and-span new building, a very distinctive object in the landscape. The author of “Deeside Tales” has now, unfortunately, to be referred to as the “late” minister of Dinnet; and we suspect the writer of the article has made a mistake in his allusion to “Birse tea”—it should be a “Birse cup”, a mixture of tea and whisky. Due mention is made of a mountaineering club having been started to explore the “rugged sources” of the Dee, but clearly, the writer is not a member. If he were, he would not have committed himself to the statement that the ascent of Lochnagar “is by no means easy”. Of course, it isn’t easy if you attempt to scramble up the rock faces of the corrie, but you can gain the summit by a regular path in a couple of hours without undue stress. Then we are told that Ben Muich Duih is “temptingly dangerous”. If the writer had said “exceedingly toilsome”, he might have been excused, for the walk to the top is a long one, and to many often a weary one, but there is nothing whatever dangerous about it—unless one goes out of his way to create danger. And even “the average traveller”, despite the “fearsome” consequences conjectured by the writer, may reach a destination “beyond the Linn o’ Dee” without having to sleep out in the open. Blair Atholl, Kingussie, Aviemore, Nethy Bridge can each easily be reached in a day’s walk. All depends, however, on the definition of “average traveller”!

THE January No., 1904, of the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal* contains an instalment of the “S.M.C. Guide Book” devoted to

“The Lochnagar Group”. It is furnished by “G.D.” —initials which, to members of the Mountaineering CLUB and the Cairngorm Club, sufficiently disclose the personality of the writer—and is exceedingly accurate as well as detailed. Even many pretending to be familiar with Lochnagar will probably be surprised to find that there are seven separate ways of ascending the mountain, not to mention half a dozen “climbs” up the precipices from the shores of the loch, though some of these latter routes have not yet been fully conquered. Then Lochnagar can boast of eleven distinct tops, while the neighbouring Broad Cairn ridge has no fewer than eight. “Twenty of our Scottish mountains”, we are told, “exceed Lochnagar in height, but very few of them have finer features than the lone Dubh Loch or the ‘steep frowning glories’ of the great north-east corrie. None, it may be safely said, has a greater wealth of interesting associations”. Mention is also made of the interesting and rather striking fact that, though Lochnagar is wholly situated in the Royal deer-forest of Balmoral, it is, nevertheless, a mountain to which access is always open.