

EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.



ON 3rd June, a party of considerably over a score, leaving the dust and smoke of the city behind, boarded the 1.20 p.m. north train on the fourth of the Saturday afternoon excursions. Occupied as most of

THE CLUB AT us were in recalling former outings and admiring the CAIRN WILLIAM. verdant scenery around us, the journey to Kintore seemed very short. At the station we packed ourselves into a big brake, which with a little persuasion was induced to hold us all. The secretary and three other dauntless spirits faced the wind on the box, the former drawing our attention to anything we passed of interest. Hall-forest Castle, a ruined old keep; pretty little Kennay, famous for its laird and its quarries; Monymusk with its ancient church-tower; and above all the green fields and hedges and scurrying pheasants of the fine pastoral country through which we passed, made the drive an interesting one.

Arrived at our destination, Arneedly, we found our guide, philosopher and friend for the day awaiting us, the genial baronet of Monymusk, with his obliging land-steward. We immediately began the ascent of Cairn William, 1,469 feet above sea-level, such an easy climb that most of us managed it without a pause and in very good time. One young lady, used to hill-climbing, led the van most of the way and reached the top first. Here we appreciated to the full the advantage of having Sir Arthur Grant with us, to point out the outstanding features of the magnificent view displayed before us—Lochnagar, Morven, Ben Rinnes, Beinn a' Bhuid, Ben Avon, and on a lower level Bennachie. Tap o' Noth, Hill of Fare, Brimmond, etc., dominated the horizon, and set the old hands recounting former mountaineering exploits, to which we juniors listened with respectful credulity. Away in the S.E. hung the smoke of Aberdeen, but on our mountain height an exuberantly fresh wind was playing havoc with the ladies' hair and everybody's headgear, and the city haze seemed a very dim and distant thing.

Beneath us, embowered in greenery, Cluny Castle and Monymusk House reared their stately piles. Sir Arthur, in answer to an intelligent query of the veteran of the party as to why our hill had a respectable English name, while most of those around were Gaelic and unpronounceable, informed us that it *was* originally a Gaelic word, of which the present cognomen is a corruption. At his suggestion most of us walked to another crest, about a mile further on, from which we had another view, even finer if possible, of the smiling Vale of Alford. The village, nestling snugly in the middle distance amidst its green fields and woods, the Don winding like another serpentine and disappearing here and there from our

view, and in the foreground the house and grounds of Castle Forbes made a charming picture of peaceful beauty that I think none of us is likely to forget. Feeling well repaid for our walk, we tramped back to the cairn across the granite boulders and the heather, through which the early summer flowers were peeping prettily. Here an interesting sight awaited us, a grouse's nest among the heather, with ten white and brown flecked eggs, a precious find guarded from danger by the land-steward, who looked anxiously at the pedal extremities of some of our gentlemen, and breathed a sigh of relief when all were safely on the downward grade.

We descended by another track, a pause being made at an early stage to enable the photographer of the party to do his best with us, blown about as we were. The pretty, Boer-marked, Basuto pony ridden at intervals by Sir Arthur, seemed to resent the proceedings, but of course was included in spite of protest. Down we went, to the farm-house of Pitfichie, where an ample tea was provided by our host. The cup that cheers was rapturously welcomed by the ladies, and if the gentlemen were less outspoken they made up for that by the heartiness with which they partook of the good things provided. When at last all were satisfied, the chairman, Mr. John McGregor, proposed a vote of thanks to Sir Arthur for the many kindnesses shown the club that day. This, needless to say, was heartily accorded. The laird of Monymusk was then enrolled as an honorary member, and acknowledged the honour done him, and expressed the pleasure he had had in being of service to the club.

After exploring the adjoining castle ruins, we wended our way to Paradise, where under stately aisles of forest giants, with fresh vistas of greenery ever opening before us, we wandered on—and might have been wandering yet—when “Right about turn!” commanded the secretary, whose time seemed to be fully occupied keeping other people in order, and we meekly turned. Our brake was waiting for us, and, after a grateful farewell to Sir Arthur and McWilliam, a short drive took us to Monymusk station, where the time of waiting was variously spent in “tittivating” and getting weighed gratis, a chance not to be missed. For most of us there now remained a short journey to “The Third City” or its suburbs; for one veteran enthusiast, a walk home from a neighbouring station of over 24 miles!

On this excursion we were all enthusiasts, and no wonder. Showers were prophesied, but the clerk of the weather was much better than his word, and shone on us all the time. So with good weather, good escorts, good company and good victuals we spent a very enjoyable afternoon, and have inscribed Cairn William indelibly in “our book of memories.”—G. S. ADAM.

DEAR MR. EDITOR,—Some time ago I made the acquaintance of Mr. H—, whom I have learned greatly to respect on account of his straightforward character and for the singular ability he possesses of thinking for himself, and of giving lucid and forcible expression to his convictions. In the course of a recent visit to him I was struck by a framed photograph of large dimensions, which shows Mr. H— seated on a rock and environed by crags. On

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enquiry I learned the history attaching to this picture, a story which, I think, is a record worthy of being made known to your readers. In August, 1899, when Mr. H— had entered on his 76th year, he found opportunity for the first time of making the ascent of Lochnagar. He left home at 6 a.m. and walked to the nearest railway station, a distance of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Arriving in Aberdeen at 9 o'clock, he was engaged at business till 5 p.m. ; then took train to Ballater, and on arrival there paid a hurried visit to Bridge of Gairn, returning to Ballater. At 10 o'clock the same night he started off *via* Glen Muick with four companions on the mountaineering expedition proper. The ascent was somewhat difficult owing to the darkness, but in spite of this the summit was reached before sunrise. Then their toil was amply rewarded by the glory of the sunrise, and later on by the clearness of the view, though for some time after the coming of day mist filled up the hollows. On the summit the amateur photographer paid homage to the veteran of the company by taking his picture singly in an environment altogether novel to him. This is the picture which in an enlarged form now adorns the home. Two or three hours were spent on the top, the descent being made *via* the Falls of Garbh Allt and Bridge of Dee. Inver Inn was reached about 2 o'clock. The distance thus covered by our veteran and his companions from the time of their starting from Ballater may be reckoned at 26 miles. Mr. H— was prepared to walk back to the starting point, but better counsels prevailed, and the excursionists posted for the distance that remained. "I was none the worse," said Mr. H—, "not even tired." He is justly proud of his achievement, which he professes himself able (even in his 81st year) to repeat, and any one who views his hale and vigorous person is readily disposed to take him at his word.—Yours faithfully, W. C.

MR. WILLIAM CARNIE, in his "Reporting Reminiscences" (Vol. I., p. 69) reproduces the following lines :—

THE LOVE OF I hae some auld acquaintances I aye was blithe to see,
 THE HILLS. I wonder how they're lookin' now they're far awa' frae me ;
 Oh, weel I ken my Native hills, I hae them in my e'e,
 They're Cairnmonearn, and Clochnaben, and bonnie Bennachie.
 My Native hills, my Highland hills, wi' summits bonnie blue,
 My noble auld acquaintances ! still warms my heart to you !
 And when it's cauld, may ithers rise to gaze wi' joyfu' e'e,
 On Cairnmonearn, and Clochnaben, and distant Bennachie.

"These leal-hearted lines" (adds Mr. Carnie) "are quoted from some delightfully simple verses that, headed with the old adage as motto—

Clochnaben and Bennachie
 Are twa landmarks in the sea,

appeared in the *Scotsman*, early in 1854, above the initial 'A.' I wonder who he was. Some exile with Sir Walter's longing in his heart—"It's hame, and it's hame that I wad be!"

ON 31st December A. B. Duncan and I climbed Broad Cairn by the long gully mentioned in the *S.M.C.J.*, Vol. VIII., p. 56. It was interesting

BROAD CAIRN AND LOCHNAGAR. enough under the intensely frosty conditions, but presented no difficulty. We returned to Inchnabobbart by the fine walk above the south edge of Loch Muick. There was comparatively little snow on the hills in the neighbourhood. On New Year's day a terrific blizzard put serious work out of the question. We struggled up Lochnagar by the ordinary route. The view of the great corrie enjoyed from the top of Meikle Pap for intervals of seconds in the face of the hail and wind was superb.—H. STEWART.

IN view of the popularity of the ascent of this hill, the rocks forming the Mither Tap have been strangely neglected. Among various scrambles two are deserving of notice, (i) the ascent by the long crack

BENNACHIE. running up the central bastion to the top. This is difficult at the foot, and at the middle, where a traverse, not particularly easy, may be thought desirable owing to steep and slippery grass; (ii) the ascent by the business side of the aiguille known as the Nether Maiden. Thence cross the path and gain the top by an interesting route up the N.E. end of the eastern division of the crag.

These scrambles are too short to repay adequately a long journey made with the express object of climbing. But the pleasure of a visit is very much enhanced by the interesting sport which they offer.—H. STEWART.

A FRIEND and I climbed Morven on the last day of 1904. There was no snow on the low grounds, but the hill was white after about 1000 feet, and at the top there was about three inches of snow. The

MORVEN. fence running over the top had about an inch of snow on each of the wires, standing out at right angles to the posts. There was a slight mist on the summit, but still we had a fairly good view. The Buck of the Cabrach was heavily coated with snow, and also all the Cairngorms. Lochnagar was white, but Mount Keen had but little snow. Although fine and frosty on Morven it looked very dark towards Aberdeen, and we learned afterwards that it had rained almost the whole day there. During the climb we saw numbers of mountain hares and grouse, but no ptarmigan. The descent was somewhat prolonged owing to one of the party losing the path, in consequence of which a search party had to be organised, but at length the foot was reached in safety.—S. P. G.

A DISTRESSING and somewhat peculiar accident occurred on Ben Nevis on 6th April last, by which Rev. A. E. Robertson, Edinburgh, the well-known mountaineer, was severely injured. Notwithstanding

ACCIDENTS ON BEN NEVIS. that the day was a most unsuitable one for climbing, there being an almost continuous fall of snow, accompanied by thunder and lightning, Mr. Robertson set out alone to make the ascent of Ben Nevis. He succeeded in reaching the summit, and on his downward journey the severity of the blizzard which prevailed made him rather keep further to the south than the line of the bridle path in order to avoid the cliffs, but owing to the mist and driving snow he had unconsciously deviated further than had been his intention. He distinctly

recollects that the thunder and lightning seemed very near, and that the steel of his ice-axe hissed with electric sparks, doubtless St. Elmo's fire. It is Mr. Robertson's belief that a flash of lightning struck either his ice-axe or the ground near where he was, thus rendering him unconscious. On falling he must have been hurled with terrific force down a thousand feet over the frozen boulders strewn upon the hillside, but of what actually took place he has not the faintest recollection. He can recall nothing until he found himself making for the path from the direction of Glen Nevis, and at an altitude considerably over a thousand feet lower than the point where he calculates he was rendered unconscious. He had lost his cap and ice-axe, his clothes were torn, and blood was oozing freely from his wounds, but, as already stated, he managed by a supreme effort to walk unaided to Fort William, which was distant nearly three miles. Mr. Robertson, has, we are glad to say, now quite recovered, but bears more than one mark of his terrible accident.

Another serious accident occurred on Ben Nevis on 9th June last. One of the marines on H.M.S. Highflyer, then lying in Loch Linnhe, off Fort-William, made the ascent, and must have fallen over a declivity, as he sustained a severe fracture to the skull and other injuries. How he managed to reach Fort-William is a mystery, as he was found unconscious on the public pier there between five and six a.m. He was at once taken on board his vessel, where he underwent an operation and the wound in his scalp was stitched.

WE went to Loch an Eilein on April 14th, and remained there till 27th. The hills were all in mist till the 17th, but it was sufficiently evident that there was no continuous deep snow on them below

APRIL SNOW the plateau, though every corrie was well wreathed, and those of Braeriach carried much snow. On the 18th,

NOTES. 21st, and 23rd there were snow showers at the Loch level, and as these, in alternation with brilliant sunshine, travelled across the country with a N.E. wind, they afforded spectacles of great beauty as seen from such elevations as Ord Bain or the Cats' Den. The snow did not lie on the low ground at all, but several times the hills were powdered to about the 1,500 ft. level. On the 25th somewhat milder conditions supervened, bringing rain, and all snow below 3,000 ft. was in evident thaw. I did not go to the high ground, but there was no appearance of thaw as far as I could judge from below.—C. G. C.