

## EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

ON 12th June, 1905, I spent a most delightful day among the many tops of Ben Cruachan. Beginning at Ben Vourie, at the eastern end of the chain, I gradually worked my way over the intervening summits to Ben Cruachan itself, then on to Stob Dearg, the most westerly peak, returning to lower levels, by way of Meall Cuanail, thus accomplishing the complete traverse of the range.

### THE CRUACHAN GROUP.

Leaving the road just beyond Lochawe station at 11.20 a.m., I immediately "took to the hill," and struck up the slopes of Ben Vourie. The trees were soon left behind, and I emerged on the bare hillside. Then the heat of the sun began to be felt, but I indulged in very frequent halts—a state of things which the ever-increasing panorama behind seemed to demand—and consoled myself in the belief that it would be nice and cool on the ridges.

The slopes were easy, grass covered, and stony, and in a little over an hour's time I arrived at the summit (2936). The other tops—Stob Dearg excepted—were now spread out before me, and I could follow my route, right round the ridge to the main peak, which rose as a pyramid on the other side of the Coire Cruachan.

The northern face of Ben Vourie, steep and rocky, and in some parts precipitous, forms a striking contrast to the long and gradual slopes met with on the other sides. From the west cairn I was able easily to work my way down through the broken rocks to the col. It was then a fine easy walk up a long grassy slope, and over an intervening (nameless) top, to the next peak—Stob Garbh (3091). Continuing in the same direction, twelve minutes more brought me to the cairn of Stob Diamh (3272).

The view to the north now extended as far as Ben Nevis, but the most imposing hill of all was Ben Starav, only eight miles away. Half an hour was spent here for lunch, and then I bundled up and set off for the next point—Drochaid Ghlas. The main ridge here turns sharply to the west—a subsidiary one running east for a quarter of a mile to Sgor an Isean—and after a slight descent, rises over rough and stony ground to Drochaid Ghlas (3312). I only stopped here to take a photograph, and then set off for the main peak. In passing thus from point to point, I simply followed the edge of the precipices, and enjoyed many a fine peep into the depths. The part between Drochaid Ghlas and Ben Cruachan I found the most arduous, as the "going" was very rough, and the slope, particularly on the upper part of Cruachan, fairly steep. It was 3.30 when I arrived at the cairn (3689) and while resting here I was joined by a party of two ladies and a gentleman, who had come up from the Falls of Cruachan.



My next point of attack was Stob Dearg (3611)—the Taynuilt peak—and while crossing from the one to the other, I fell in with a party of keepers and their terriers, out after foxes. The passage between these two peaks is very easy, and I accomplished it in 15 minutes. Stob Dearg commands a fine view of the whole of Loch Etive, as well as a broad expanse of the ocean and isles in the west; but as it was getting rather dull and threatening I did not stay very long. There remained now only one other summit—Meall Cuanail—to be visited, and that I did on the way homeward.

From Stob Dearg, Meall Cuanail lies on the far side of Coire a' Bhachail, so I retraced my steps to the dip, and then traversed the side of Ben Cruachan to the col between that mountain and Meall Cuanail. This traverse is not particularly pleasant, as Cruachan, on this side, presents long, smooth, and at some parts wet slabs of rock, though by crossing at a lower level these may be avoided. There was now a short ascent to the summit of the Meall (3004), and here at 5.15, I sat down behind the cairn and finished the remainder of my lunch. Then when the bag was emptied, I descended to the Falls of Cruachan, and sauntered leisurely along to Lochawe station which was reached at 7.25.—WILLIAM BARCLAY, L. D. S.

Though the Southern Alps are visited each season by an ever-increasing stream of tourists (says the New Zealand correspondent of the "Times"),

STATE MOUN-  
TAINERING IN  
NEW ZEALAND.

it is only occasionally that a properly-equipped party is organised with a view to attempting the ascent of virgin peaks or the ascent of the higher mountains that have already been conquered. In conformity with the general trend of our Socialistic Government, the State

has now taken the Alpine climber as well as the ordinary tourist in hand. It feeds and houses him in a comfortable inn under the shadow of Mount Cook; it provides food and accommodation in huts far up the Great Tasman Glacier at 7s 6d a day; and there are State guides, State porters, and even State horses that can be hired at reasonable rates, according to the length or importance of the expeditions undertaken. The State even goes the length of hiring ice-axes and rope, boots and puttees, at so much a day to would-be climbers who come unprovided.

We were at Aviemore, April 12th—27th. The preceding fortnight had been fine, but during our stay the weather was utterly unreliable, and mostly cold and windy. Snow fell frequently, notably on the

CAIRNGORM  
APRIL SNOW  
NOTES.

17th, when it lay four inches deep at Inverdrue, and on the 21st, when many blinding showers blew across. Frost occurred on several nights, notably 17th, 18th, 22nd, and 23rd.

When we arrived and when we left, the crooked wreath of Cairngorm was well defined, but several times the whole of the hills down to Ord Ban were whitened, and during most of our stay the Netti Hills carried much snow. Apparently deep continuous snow lay only on the actual plateau, but as to this I could get no accurate account, as the only four visits I knew



of to these heights were made during snow showers that quite prevented any view.

Altogether I think the weather conditions were the unkindest I have experienced.—C. G. C.

The Club made another ascent of Mount Keen on 7th May last. Corrach was fringed with snow and patches were also to be found on other parts of the hill. Haze prevented a good distant prospect, but

MOUNT KEEN nevertheless the view was good. The Cairngorms REVISITED. had large fields of snow and Lochnagar and Morven were also well coated. A lizard was seen on the

Mounth and an adder (22 in. long) captured near Coire-bhruach. Four new members were initiated at the cairn—Mr. James Smith presiding—a record being made on the occasion as two of them were father and son. The drive through Glen Tanner was very enjoyable. The party dined at the Huntly Arms Hotel, Aboyne, Mr. Alexander Copland in the chair.

The following gentlemen have been admitted members of the Club:—

NEW MEMBERS. Mr. Ian Malcolm McLaren,  
Mr. Alexander Spark, and  
Mr. Alexander Nicol.

The "Times" of 17th April had an interesting account, from its New Zealand correspondent, of the first complete ascent and crossing of Mount

THE FIRST ALPS OF NEW ZEALAND. This feat was accomplished by the CROSSING OF correspondent (name not given), in company with two other MOUNT COOK. New Zealanders (Messrs. T. C. Fyfe and P. Graham), and an English climber (Mr. S. Turner). Having spent a night

and a day at the bivouac 6,000 ft. above sea level, they started on the ascent of the mountain at 11.15 on the night of Tuesday, January 9th, gaining the summit in 13 hours and 45 minutes. The views from between 10,000 ft. and 12,600 ft. were magnificently grand, including Tasman, the second highest mountain in New Zealand, and the great Tasman Glacier. "Across the valley the rugged mass of Malte Brun towered grandly above all the other rocky peaks of the range, and still further away, towards the north-east, was the finest view of all, range succeeding range and mountain succeeding mountain for more than a hundred miles, or as far as the eye could reach. In the distance, to the north of the main range, we looked down on a sea of clouds upon which the sun was shining, the higher peaks piercing the billows of mist and looking like pointed islands."

After photographing and studying the "marvellous panorama" observable from the summit—they could see the South Island from shore to shore—the party commenced the descent on the other side from which they had ascended. They encountered unexpected difficulties, and made two sensational descents, each man being lowered down singly, the last man coming down with the rope doubled and hitched over a slightly projecting knob of rock. The time occupied, "from start to finish," was thirty-six hours, the last twelve devoted



to a ten or eleven miles' walk down the Hooker glacier and the valley at its termination.

A correspondent, writing to the "Aberdeen Daily Journal" some time ago, under the rather absurd heading, "The Terrors of Cairngorming," says—

Members of the Cairngorm Club may be interested in  
 FORMER DANGERS an incident which was reported in the "Aberdeen  
 OF THE Journal" of February 18, 1765, which had occurred on  
 CAIRN O' MONTH. the previous Friday se'n night. John Gordon a labour-  
 ing man, on his way from the parish of Rothiemay, where  
 he resided, to Edinburgh, was waylaid after sunset in the Cairn o' Month by  
 two men whom he saw come from the water of Dee, and get into the road  
 before him. As the snow was deep and new fallen, Gordon was glad he had  
 got company to cross the cairn; but when they came to the place called the  
 Thief's Bush, about the middle of the hill, one of them took hold of him and  
 drew a side pistol from below his big coat, and threatened to blow out  
 Gordon's brains if he did not deliver his money. The other fellow discovered  
 a pistol under his great coat, searched Gordon's pockets (who had no arms  
 and was unable to resist) and robbed him of nine shillings, which was all the  
 money he had. They then desired him to proceed on his journey; and be  
 thankful he met with no more mischief. The two fellows seemed to be  
 young and sturdy men, dressed with coarse big coats, with large blue bonnets  
 in the habit of countrymen, and spoke a little in the Erse accent.

Rev. Thomas Sinton, minister of Dores, Inverness-shire, has just collected  
 the verses associated with the Valley of Spey, and published them in a  
 handsome volume, entitled "The Poetry of Badenoch."

THE POETRY "Speyside," he says in his introduction, "would seem,  
 OF time out of mind, to have been a favourite haunt of  
 BADENOCH. the Muses. Very many of the place-names have been  
 interwoven into song by gentle souls who pondered  
 fondly over the well-loved localities where their lives had been spent. No event of  
 any consequence was allowed to pass without being 'set to music' appropriate  
 to its nature, in the ready verses of some neighbouring bard. There was  
 always plenty of hero-worship, which found voice in song. Vocal tributes  
 were constantly offered to members of leading families. No occurrence  
 affecting any of them was left without such distinction." Most of the poems  
 (all in Gaelic, of course) relate to Upper Speyside and Badenoch, but a few  
 refer to the Rothiemurchus region. The translations are presumably literal,  
 and therefore make poor poetry; but we may reproduce two. The first,  
 supplied by Dr. Forsyth, Abernethy, is said to consist of "very pretty lines"  
 —in the vernacular, doubtless—

Arise ere the sun doth rise,  
 Travel fast ere comes the heat,  
 Reach the top of Cairngorm,  
 Where you'll see both near and far.  
 I see the cauldron of Glenmore—  
 I see the Mossy Bow and Little Glen—  
 I see the Bountiful Glen of deer,  
 Where the cattle will be at milking-time.



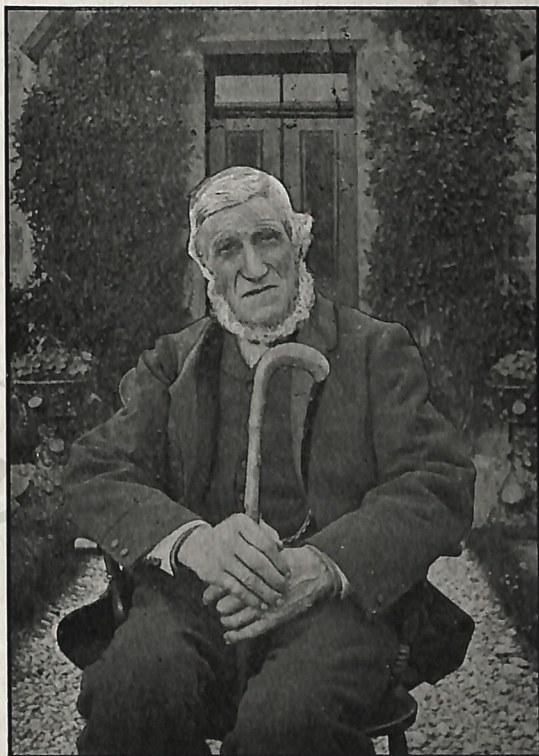
And many of us will appreciate the underlying sentiment of these lines at least, if we do not quite perceive their poetical flavour—

One day to me on English pavement,  
Watching the action of the grey-ribbed horses—  
Better to be on the top of Elrick,  
Above the wood of Rothiemurchus.

On Sunday, May 27th, at Inverdrurie, Aviemore, died William Gordon, joiner, aged 79. He was one of the last of the old folk of Rothiemurchus,

DEATH OF  
WILLIAM GORDON,  
ROTHIEMURCHUS.

and was well known to frequenters, clubmen and others, of that district as a repository of its history, story, and tradition. Vividly would he tell tales of his experiences of second sight, in which he was a firm believer, though he denied the existence of fairies. He must be numbered among the early mountaineers, for several times had he



MR. WILLIAM GORDON.

crossed the Cairngorms, by pass and by plateau, and he spoke with graphic emphasis of his sweating terror when, lost in mist, he found himself all but



stepping off the precipice into the depths of what must have been the Coire an Lochan of Cairngorm.

The appearance of "The Washer" on the first page of this number recalls a statement made to a clubman by his now deceased friend. It is thus entered in his notebook: "I was sent with a mate to do some work at Gaick Lodge in preparation for the shooting season. Two women were at work in the inside cleaning the house. At mid-day, when we men knocked off for dinner, we were sitting having a smoke, when we saw a woman busy washing clothes at the bend of the burn above the Lodge. As I thought both the women were busy inside the house, I was somewhat surprised, and took occasion to pass the window and saw them both there. I went back again and saw the stranger woman still at the clothes washing. I then spoke to the older woman at the house about what I had seen; but she took it as a matter well-known to her, and simply remarked, 'Aye! is she washing there the day?'"

The Club held its seventh Saturday afternoon excursion on 2nd June last to Strathfinella Hill, near Auchinblae, train being taken to Fordoun. The name Strathfinella Hill really belongs to a ridge in the parish of Fordoun, about three miles long, the highest point of which has an altitude of 1358 feet.

It is a prominent feature in the landscape, particularly between Drumlithie and Laurencekirk. The smooth, rounded appearance clearly indicates that ice has had a great deal to do with its formation. On the north side, is the picturesque Glen of Drumtochty, now a popular holiday resort, through which flows Luther Water, which joins the North Esk near Marykirk. The Howe of the Mearns is on the south side, that slope being covered with characteristic heath while the opposite side is richly tree-clad.

The Lomonds of Fife can be seen from the top. Dr. Cramond in his excellent little work on the hill states that the Lammermuirs can also be observed, but the Club party was not so fortunate. However the Sidlaws were very distinctly seen and many other well-known hills, among which may be mentioned Mount Keen, Mount Battock and Clochnaben. A very fair view of the coast, despite a heat haze, was also obtained, the church spire of Montrose being a prominent object.

The descent was made to the glen in the neighbourhood of Drumtochty Castle, and the walk continued to Auchinblae, where the party dined, Mr. William Porter, J.P., in the chair, at the Kintore Arms Hotel.—SYDNEY C. COUPER.

Wednesday, 8 p.m. A grand day! Should have left Dingwall at 11.10, but the train was 40 minutes late. Just as it started a young couple were put into my compartment with heaps of luggage.

A LETTER FROM SHIEL INN. I gathered that they had been honeymooning; looking over their hotel bill appeared to give them intense pleasure. Seemed at times inclined to eat each other. They came off at Auchnasheen for Loch Maree.



Then came Strome Ferry, and our Coolins, and our loch. All was beautiful, though cold and brown. Reached Strome at 2.3, and off at once, the old familiar road. How few people I met in two hours' walk!—a woman, two small boys (who touched their caps), and a dog. The road was in perfect condition and so was I.

Those Coolins! and then the Five Sisters of Kintail! As the sun set they turned purple—at least I thought so for a time—I looked again and they seemed violet. Then the moon rose and a planet.

Reached Airdferry Inn at 4.20, but my knapsack lunch sufficed, so walked on to the Ferry (4.25). Waited there ten minutes for the boatman. The light was now failing, and the sea rising, and the tide was flowing. I was the only passenger: the voyage took ten minutes, and a sixpence. To tell the truth, I was glad when I set foot at Totaig, as the loch was decidedly choppy, and wanted into the boat, for there was no escaping "the trough of the sea."

Thus at 4.45 I started on the last stage, and got here at 6.40 in good form and hungry. On the way met a man with a loaded wheel-barrow, then a lost sheep—that was all. The wind blew cold, and the loch made a continuous noise—not a moan, something like *rush-sh-sh*, and ending with the water lap, lapping against the shore, just touching the road. And all the stars came out for me alone. Why, I was a King with a Wagner Opera of my very own.

Now to creature comforts. I am alone here, and the front door is just now a negligible quantity, so I had no small difficulty in making myself heard. Dinner? Oh, no, but a high tea would soon be forthcoming. A fire was laid in the little dining-room you know, but it took time and coaxing, though at last it could have roasted a pig. The banquet came up to, nay exceeded, specifications—four small but very good chops, a boiled egg, half a fowl, and a piece of corned beef. I confined myself to three chops and the egg, and three cups of tea. The jam and the bread I also left alone, the oatcakes and toast sufficing. A terrier found me out, also my chop bones.

Breakfast at Shiel Inn was of course another success, but details may be omitted. The half-fowl again making its appearance I had it nicely packed and dropped into my knapsack for lunch on the hills.

FOLLOWED BY ONE FROM LOCH HURN-HEAD. The sky was very red as I started up Glen Shiel, which was unusually crowded. I met a cyclist and when I had turned to my right and up the hill a bit, I saw two "machines" tearing past the battlefield.

Seems the hills here are now under deer, and so I had the benefit of a path not in the map. Away to the right was The Saddle—such a name for a peaked hill—and other mountains which gave me much joy. Then, looking back, there were the Sisters. I am afraid I made another record on this occasion—I simply loafed about, content merely to cross the water-parting without climbing any particular peak, just devouring the grand view, of which more at another time. It was after 3 p.m. before I reached Kinlochourn, though I did run down some of the steep zig-zag paths to the lodge, and here I remain for a time.



## AN OPEN-AIR HYMN.

Not for rich gifts of gold or gems,  
Not for the gauds but few afford,  
But for Thy sunshine, pure and free,  
I thank Thee, Lord.

For those deep draughts of air I quaff  
When, shoulders squared and blood aglow,  
I swing along the country road  
Where daisies blow :

And in the sultry noonday heat,  
For wayside rest, lulled by the breeze,  
As, shaded by the sheltering oak,  
I take my ease.

For every winding forest-path,  
For every stretch of sedge and sea,  
For every pebbly brook that rills  
Its song of glee.

For that glad radiance when the sun  
His crimson cloud of glory spills,  
For every violet mist that veils  
The distant hills.

For every bloom the summer brings,  
For every sheaf the harvest binds,  
For spring's first bud, for winter's snow,  
And bracing winds,

For these Thy gifts—for earth and sky  
Mingling their moods in sweet accord,  
For health, and for the seeing eye,  
I thank Thee, Lord.

BEATRICE HANSCOM.

(From *Scribner's Magazine*, July, 1904.)