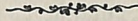


EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.



By the death at Inverey, on the 20th March, of Mrs. Gruer of Craigview, there has passed away one whose kindness and hospitality will long be

remembered by more than one generation of Aberdeen mountaineers. Mrs. Gruer lived in her native glen all her life, and amid the hills and woods she knew and loved so well she kindly helped many a sorefoot traveller. Her husband, James Gruer, farmer and sheep dealer, died some dozen years ago. After his death she kept up the croft for some years, but with increasing age and infirmity she found herself unable to attend to the land, and the once prosperous steading has of late years borne a rather desolate appearance. Mrs. Gruer is survived by three daughters; one of them is in London, but the two at home have cheered her in her widowhood. Many a traveller, tired after a weary tramp from Rothiemurchus or Atholl, will long retain happy memories of her never-failing kindness. It seems singularly appropriate that she should have been laid to rest under the shadow of Morrone, when it was white with the long winter's snow, as her clear eyes were wont to scan the snowy lines of the hills with more affection even than when, in summer, they were purple with heather.

THE older members of the club will much regret to hear of the death of Mr. Macdonald on 9th May. He had an intimate knowledge of the

Western Cairngorms and was much in sympathy with the club's objects. By his death there has been removed one of the few that remain of the genuine old Highland caste. Born seventy-three years ago on Deeside, where his father, a native of the parish of Laggan, served for many years as an eminent deer-stalker in Mar, Mr. Macdonald came to Badenoch when quite a young man. On retiring from forest duties, Mr. Macdonald's father settled on the farm of Balchroick, where he died about fifty years ago, when Donald, being the eldest of the family of three sons and eight daughters, took up the management of the farm. His mother lived with him for thirty-five years after his father's death, after which two of his sisters took charge of the household. His brothers, as well as four of his sisters, predeceased him some years ago. As a neighbour and friend, Mr. Macdonald could hardly be excelled, the outcast and the stranger being invariably welcomed and sheltered at Balchroick. Of his hospitality poor wanderers took ample advantage, often going to Balchroick to the number of two or three at a time. An extensive reader of sound literature, and possessed of a retentive memory and sociable disposition, his company was always

instructive and interesting. As clerk of the School Board of Insh, as well as in other public capacities, Mr. Macdonald was held in great respect by all with whom he came in contact. He was always willing to help at social entertainments, and his masterly exposition of Highland violin music will not soon be forgotten by those who were privileged to hear him play.

A FRIEND and I left Aviemore about 8 p.m. on 4th July last, for Braeriach *via* Glen Eunach. The cairn was reached but not left before it was dark. With a little difficulty the route for the top of

FOUR
CAIRNGORMS
BY NIGHT.

Cairn Toul was followed over the Angel's Peak. The descent was made by Lochan Uaine; the echo at the top of the corrie could scarcely be better. It is at the dip between Cairn Toul and the Angel's Peak, as one stands a little over the crest and facing Cairn Toul. By the time the loch was reached it was broad daylight. We chose a bad line for the lower descent to the Dee. Then up Ben Muich Dhui over grass at first, but soon on boulders. The cairn was reached in mist shortly after 5 o'clock, as we had taken it leisurely. We were not the first that morning, for a party of four had been there at 3 o'clock, as was carefully recorded on over a dozen cards that had been left for the next comers to post, to prove that the quartette had been on the summit of the Ben.

On leaving the cairn of Ben Muich Dhui our troubles began, all arising from not implicitly following, in the thick mist, the map and compass. After a good deal of wandering we descended by the east slopes over much snow—I had never seen so much in July in Scotland before. Then turning to the left (north) we found ourselves above the rocks at the west end of Loch Avon. We descended nearly to the loch by a stone shoot; then up to Cairngorm, taking four hours between the tops of Ben Muich Dhui and Cairngorm.

The descent was made by Loch Morlich and Glen More. By this time everything was bathed in sunshine, and the scene, particularly at the loch, was a dream of beauty. We reached Aviemore platform in time for the forenoon train, though it was in the station before us. This of course is nothing to boast of as to either time or extent, seeing that six Cairngorm tops are now the recognised minimum, but we managed to enjoy ourselves thoroughly.—J. B.

SURELY there is no more lonely occupation than that of a deer watcher in a great forest, his season sometimes extending for a third of the year. The deer watcher is absolutely alone; unlike the shepherd DEER WATCHERS. he has not even a dog, unlike the lighthouse keeper he has nobody to relieve him. Should his bothy be in a glen where there is a right-of-way he may be favoured with the sight of an occasional passing tourist, but it is no part of his business to be unnecessarily seen by outsiders. Where his hut is on the march between two forests, or in a retired glen where mountain climbers trouble not, he is certainly secluded enough, and it may be that only his telescope reveals a human being for a whole week. Some watchers are allowed Sunday off, but even with this concession they are pretty much left to themselves.

Great opportunities are thus afforded for the study of red deer and their movements, and one can in a measure understand the often confident way in which stalkers express themselves as to coming on deer during the stalking season. Your deerstalker must be caught young and pass through various grades before he is considered competent to have a beat under his care, and to be sent out with the charge of a sportsman. Many watchers are expert fishers, and so the rod is often taken along and trout relieve the terrible monotony of their daily meals—not that fresh trout are always as much esteemed in the country as in town. The deer watcher is sensible enough to adapt himself to his calling, which after all has a charm of its own, and so soon begins to enjoy his solitary work.

His hours are early, but he can never be up before the deer, and like them he too can indulge in a siesta on the heather. Most watchers have had some peculiar experiences at night, though ghostly visitants are a thing of the past, even in the Highlands! Our first meeting with a deer watcher was much to our own relief. Our party had got benighted on the hills and having lost all sense of direction were beginning to feel rather uncomfortable. Suddenly one of us spied a faint glimmer; it was at once made for, though that entailed the fording of a river, but as we had been drenched earlier in the day that was a matter of small concern. In the circumstances we received a hearty welcome, and as our knapsacks were not altogether empty and there was much firewood and peat, we did not lack for comfort despite the absence of spring mattresses. Our host used an old bag as blind; on this occasion a corner had slipped down and to that we were indebted for the friendly beacon.

The talk was naturally of midnight adventures, but Donald was slow to speak much of such things, but after some punch he was more communicative. He had had his night terrors early in his career, but after the explanation of the first he became little inclined to trouble much about such matters. For several nights he had heard queer noises outside, most unaccountable they seemed. At last he summoned courage to venture forth, and there was a hind with her fawn, who it appeared frequented the immediate neighbourhood of his bothy at nights for the excellent pasture which surrounded it!

A less welcome visitor knocked him up at one in the morning—an escaped prisoner who took a hill route to put the police off his track. He spent the night in the bothy, and after breakfast went on his way—let us hope rejoicing, at all events he was grateful to his host. Another caller was a climber who had made a miscalculation as to the position of a more pretentious bothy, and so was glad of Donald's hospitality—and this was the beginning of a long friendship.

Donald's most peculiar experience, however, was a call one dark night in October from two men with two ponies. The men were gillies from a neighbouring forest who had lost their way so thoroughly that they were going south when they imagined they were walking in a contrary direction. That professional hillmen should lose themselves so close to their own glen created a bad impression on Donald, but they were of course entertained as well as circumstances permitted, resuming their search for venison early next morning. The story as Donald told it did not correspond with the

somewhat mysterious manner in which it was narrated, and it was only after some pressing that the denouement was given. It seemed he did not like their general appearance, though why he could not say, so when daylight came he was glad to get quit of them. And then he felt he had not heard the last of them—that came several years after, when first the one and then the other committed suicide in the same glen.

THE Spring Excursion was held on 3rd May to the Cromdale Hills, but full opportunity was taken of the week-end by several members. The

party took train to Cromdale, thence ascending to the CLUB "Jubilee Cairn," Creagan a' Chaise (2367 feet), the EXCURSIONS. highest point of the range. This summit is just within the basin of the Avon, though close to the meeting point of three counties—Banff, Elgin and Inverness. The horizon was not quite clear, but an excellent prospect was obtained, particularly of the snow-clad Cairngorms and of Morven of Caithness. The Rev. John M'Cowen, the minister of Cromdale, whose sudden death a few weeks thereafter has been so generally deplored, shewed the clubmen no small kindness, and under his guidance visits were paid to several interesting places in the parish. The Club dined at Nethy Bridge Hotel, the Chairman (Mr. James A. Hadden) presiding. The battle of the Haughs of Cromdale was fought over again, and reference made to the information in a certain volume that the prospect obtained from Creagan a' Chais is "the best view in Britain."

Ben Rinnes was again tackled as a Saturday Afternoon Excursion (the Eleventh), when Aberlour was the Club's base of operations on 5th June. The party drove to the foot of the hill and found the climb most interesting. Snow still lay in the corries and gullies, and the higher mountains had much white. The Club dined in the Aberlour Hotel, Mr. John McGregor in the chair, in the unavoidable absence of Mr. James A. Hadden.

Cairngorm was arranged for the celebration of the Club's coming of age on 26th June, Nethy Bridge being the headquarters. As, however, the Journal goes to press a few days before that date, an account of the proceedings cannot be given till next NEW MEMBERS. Number.

THE following gentlemen have been admitted members of the Club :—Mr. Alfred A. Longden, Art Gallery, Aberdeen ; Mr. Fred R. Coles, National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh ; and Mr. John Dickson, Solicitor, Huntly.