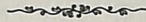


EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.



THE following letter from Mr. W. F. Porter-Fausset, Barrister-at-Law, appeared in *The Daily News* of 19th November last :— In the beginning of August last, I went with two friends to Ross and Inverness in Scotland to climb some of the splendid mountains in that neighbourhood. We travelled by train to Invergarry, where we found a comfortable hotel. There we left the railway and walked over Ben Qu to Tomdoun, our luggage following us by the mail coach.

Communication with the rest of the world ends here, but the landlord informed us that we could get a bed at a small inn at Clunie, which is within reach of the mountains. We accordingly sent our luggage on by private car, and walked there ourselves over the hills. The inn proved to be nearly full, but the mistress of the house eventually agreed to put us up for a week. In the morning, however, after he heard that we were pedestrians, the landlord told us that there had been a mistake. He was expecting some motorists, and there was no room for us. This was very galling, as there was apparently no other accommodation in the place or in the district. The inn at Shiel, which was fourteen miles distant, had, we were informed, been closed by the action of the landlords, and our only course appeared to be to return to Tomdoun, which is too far from the mountains to be of any use for climbers.

We were loath to do this, however, and after spending the morning in vain attempts to get accommodation at the few cottages near at hand, we decided to go down the pass to Alltbeath, which is at the foot of Mam Soul, the highest mountain in the district. We trusted to getting accommodation at Alltbeath, where we knew there was a cottage. We started after lunch down the pass, and as it was very rough travelling and there was a river to cross, we did not reach Alltbeath until after four o'clock.

We saw the cottage where we hoped to spend the night, and avoiding some ugly-looking dogs which belonged there, we started up the mountain. At 6.30 p.m. we had been walking hard, and were still some way from the top. The weather was now becoming worse, and there was a mist over the top of the mountain. One of my companions and myself, therefore, decided to make our way back to the cottage and secure a bed before it was too late. Our friend, who is indefatigable, was determined to make the top and join us later.

I was very leg-weary, and we went slowly back to the cottage, which we reached shortly before eight o'clock. It was then getting dark and raining. A woman opened the door to us, and we asked if she could give us a shake-down for the night, explaining our position and saying we should be glad to pay her well for any trouble. She refused point-blank on the grounds that "the gentlemen who took the shooting would not like it, and that if she were to take us in, her husband would lose his job as under-gamekeeper.

We pointed out that we should have to sleep on the hillside in the wet, and might take serious harm. "Surely the gentlemen would not like that." "Indeed," said she "what would they care"! The nearest accommodation was some twenty miles away, at Glen Affric, and as a last resort I asked to see her husband. He, seeing our position, agreed to give us a shelter on condition that we left at daybreak and went straight back to Clunie, leaving the mountains alone. We had perforce to accept these conditions, and the woman then took us in and did her best for us. Our friend arrived later and was also taken in.

In the morning we were smuggled out like convicts and returned to Clunie. We arrived there for lunch and found that our beds were still empty, but the landlord explained that the motorists (!) were expected at any moment. We then chartered a trap and returned sadly to Tomdoun.

These mountains of which I am speaking form a vast deer forest of which the present tenant is the Earl of Durham. There is no question here of crowds of tourists from the towns desecrating private grounds. It is patent that even before the shooting commences one of the finest districts in Scotland is a closed book to climbers and pedestrians. Inn-keepers are afraid to let their rooms to any but fishermen lest they should lose their licence, and cottagers are forbidden to do so. For ourselves, we returned to Spean Bridge, where we had very good climbing in the Ben Nevis range. I have been on walking expeditions in Scotland, Ireland, and Switzerland in company with the same friends every year for the last ten years. We usually go at that period of the year, because it is the only time at which we can take our holiday together, and it is only fair to say that we have never met with a similar experience.

As far as our frightening the deer is concerned, we have seen plenty of deer on the Scottish mountains, and the only effect which we produce is that they wander to the next ridge, survey us for a few moments with curiosity, and then go on browsing.

THE Aberdeen Touring Club held its third annual dinner in the County Hotel, Aberdeen, on the 3rd December. Mr. James Cran Hendry,

THE ABERDEEN TOURING CLUB. solicitor, presided over a very large turnout of members and friends, and the proceedings were both interesting and instructive. After dinner, the Chair-

man stated he wished to extend a very hearty welcome to all present that evening. He cordially invited all who studied their health to join the Club, and get the benefits of good companionship. Pedestrianism was a fine and exhilarating pastime, and inexpensive; and what was better than a fine tramp in the open country away from the bustle of town life! Thereafter the health of the King was enthusiastically pledged. The toast of the territorial forces was responded to by Sergeant Ross who stated that the manœuvres and training he received had been very beneficial, and life in the open in the camping season had done him a great deal of good, for it put him in mind of the objects of the Club. The toast of the friends of the Club was replied to by Mr. Willock, who in an enthusiastic speech remarked that the citizens of Aberdeen had reason to be proud of the Granite City, because they had easy access and facilities to roam the country, scale its mountains and inhale fine fresh air as compared with less

fortunate towns. Thereafter a pleasant evening was spent in song and story, the Chairman having specially contributed racy reminiscences of climbs and excursions in various parts of Scotland.—ROBERT MURDOCH-LAWRANCE, 71 Bon-Accord Street, Aberdeen.

THE following interesting extracts are taken from a speech delivered, on 11th December last, at the annual general meeting of the Aberdeen Branch of the Royal Scottish Arboricultural Society

AFFORESTATION. by our fellow member, Sir John Fleming, LL.D. :—

In taking a perfectly detached view of the case, and making a large and generous allowance for improvement in quality consequent upon a better selection of suitable seeds and greater attention to massed growths with proper shelter, I can come to no other conclusion than that for Scotland the trees to grow are the larch and the fir, and the products very much as at present in staves and sleepers and pitwood and boxwood, with the addition as time proceeds of roofing and light joisting in dimensions from 4 inches by 2 inches up to 7 inches by 2½ inches. I have not mentioned spruce, unless for scenic effect or for protection, the Scottish whitewood, so far as my experience goes, is an inferior wood, only less inferior than its sister, the silver fir. An improvement may be effected in the manner of its growth, but at present it is much too knotty. I am afraid my strictures upon the spruce may cause some controversy : were it possible to grow such wood as is grown in the Baltic the case would be entirely different. The Government authorities quite evidently do not share my views, for I observed that the other night Sir Samuel Scott drew from Mr. Hobhouse in the House of Commons the answer that there had been ordered for direct planting on the hillside at Loch Awe 80,000 Scots, 150,000 larch, 35,000 Douglas, 45,000 silver, 240,000 spruce, and 40,000 Sitka spruces.

The counsel to grow common varieties of firs and look for what may be regarded as mean markets may seem unpatriotic, but there the most profitable markets will be found. There was a rude truth in the advice I once heard a veteran dealer in mahogany give to a beginner, "If you want to make money buy trash." What was meant was that you made about the same profit off the foot of a low priced log as you did off a high priced one, and only half, or perhaps less than half, the money was needed for the purchase. The reasons I put forward for this line of policy are these. You will always have an abundant demand, you will have easily handled dimensions. The foreigner will be less able to compete with you in cheap wood than in dear, as his freight and handling charges will be as high per cubic foot in the one case as in the other. I know strong arguments will be used to you that you should try Douglas fir, let us say, instead of the *Sylvestris*. All honour to the Durris lairds for their heroic experiments, but as far as they have gone they have failed to establish that, whatever the tree may be in its native haunts in British Columbia, it has in this country proved a commercial success. If it could ever be supposed to produce here in Scotland the same quality of wood as it does in the west coast of America, then it would be a brilliant success. These remarks may suffice as to what to grow ; as to distribution and mixture of varieties I can give no advice.

I should think that up to 1500 feet altitude might suit either the fir or the larch. The only remark I would make before leaving this part of the subject would be, try and make your planting fairly continuous and not patchy.

I referred to the want of a cheap form of transit from the wood to the sawmill, from the sawmill to the seats of commerce ; in these facilities this old country is notoriously deficient. These, of course, will not be severely missed for many years to come, but still they ought to come up for early consideration. Splendid waterways for defloation of logs are an almost universal appanage of all the great wood-exporting countries, both of the old world and the new. The Tay, the Spey, and our own Dee have in olden days been so used, and it is hoped they may be so used again, and I see nothing to prevent it if the fish do not prove more powerful than the tree. The Caledonian Canal and many of the western arms of the sea might also be requisitioned in the same way, but these would only tap a very small area of the lands we hope may some day be covered with forest. Light railway lines up the side valleys, more suitable railway trucks, cheaper railway rates for what will be a welcome new traffic to all Scottish railways, these are all essential, but I doubt if they will ever be obtained without a nationalising of the railways. In all these arrangements the use of the handy man will come in ; steel cable ways, for instance, a speciality of a well-known Aberdeen firm of engineers, would in all probability be found indispensable. At the present time timber can be brought from Russia, 1500 miles away, to Aberdeen at 7s. to 7s. 6d. per ton ; from Ballater to Aberdeen, 44 miles, the rate is practically the same . . . The larch has qualities that are unsurpassed. There is no fir that can hold a nail like the Scots fir, and if it could only be grown a little cleaner and with less sap, it also would be a wood hard to beat. I have left to others the decision as to when and where to plant, and all matters of fencing and distribution, and touched only on what I happen to know a little about. In conclusion I have no hesitation in saying that with care and circumspection, aided by the country's common purse, a healthy peasantry will arise, the fair face of our beautiful country will become still fairer, new industries will be created, and all surely to the nation's profit " when afforestation comes."

THE twenty-first Annual Meeting of the Club was held on 22nd December, 1909, the Chairman, Mr. James A. Hadden, presiding over a large and representative attendance of members. The Treasurer's Accounts, of which the usual abstract was in the hands of the members, were passed. It was resolved
 OUR TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL MEETING. that all compositions of annual subscriptions should be added to the investments of the Club, the interest of the investments being treated as revenue.

His Excellency the Right Hon. James Bryce was re-elected President, and Messrs Alexander Copland and Robert Anderson were re-elected Vice-Presidents. Mr. John Clarke, M.A., was, on the motion of Mr. James A. Hadden, elected Chairman, and thereupon took the chair. Mr. Hadden was cordially thanked for his services to the Club during the three years he had held the chair.

The following Committee was constituted for the current year —

James Conner.	James A. Hadden.
James G. Kyd.	John R. Levaack.
John McGregor.	R. W. Mackie.
George McIntyre.	W. M. McPherson.
William Porter.	Alexander Simpson.

A new departure was made in fixing the Excursions for the ensuing season, Meets being arranged as follows:—Easter week-end, Ballater; Spring Holiday week-end, Dufftown; and Summer Holiday week-end, Aviemore. Two Saturday afternoon Excursions were also agreed to. Details were left in the hands of the Committee. It was suggested that in addition to official climbs, should such be arranged by the Committee, members attending the various Meets might to some extent make their own selection both of days and of mountains to be climbed. The Easter week-end Meet was fixed with a view to give members an opportunity of snow-work, say on Lochnagar, Broad Cairn or Morven. In connection with the Aviemore Meet, Braeriach, Cairn Toul and Sgoran Dubh seemed most favoured.

The Committee, having rendered the remit made to them at the previous annual meeting, with a view to widening the scope and increasing the usefulness of the Club, recommended that the entry money should be reduced from 10/6 to 5/-, and that new members' compositions should be reduced accordingly from £5 5s. to £5. Rule VIII. was therefore altered to read as on page 3 of cover.

Rule X. was also dealt with so as to include Minor Members, the following addition being made:—"The Committee shall also have power to elect qualified Minor Members, belonging to the household of ordinary members. Minor Members shall pay an annual subscription of 2/6, but shall have no voice in the management of the Club, nor be entitled to receive copies of the Club's publications."

The Committee was empowered to arrange in the course of 1910 for a Lecture and an At Home. The foregoing remit to the Committee was continued for the ensuing year.

On the motion of Mr. McPherson, the Secretary and the Treasurer were thanked for their services to the Club; and the Chairman, on the motion of Mr. Anderson, was thanked for presiding.

New Members—Mr. Reginald Collie, Stoneshiel Hall, Reston; and Mr. Robert T. Sellar, 56 Bedford Place, Aberdeen.