

## THE CLUB ON CARMAFERG.

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THE Club held its Thirteenth Saturday Afternoon Excursion on 11th May last, under the presidency of Mr. John Clarke, to Carmaferg (1724 feet), some three or four miles south of Aboyne. The route lay near the Aulddinnie Burn for the greater part of the way, with an easy climb of about half a mile from the burn to the top. The afternoon was very fine, the heat being tempered by a haze, which, however, limited the view, especially to the west. Morven and Mount Keen could be seen faintly outlined in part, all beyond being hidden.

Soon after crossing the Dee a fine herd of deer was passed near Craigendinnie, feeding on the low ground. By the wayside through the wood, in the Glen of the Fungle, the blue flowers of the common bugle (*Ajuga reptans*) formed bright patches; on the west slopes here and there the insect-catching butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) and round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) grew in some quantity, but bore few captives on their leaves; and the white starry blossoms of the *Trientalis europæ* showed themselves on the grassy spots under the trees. A sawfly, (*Trichosma lucoun*) over three-quarters of an inch in length, somewhat like a large hive-bee, was noticed among birches, on the leaves of which its larva may be found—a clumsy green caterpillar coiled into a ring. When the larva is full grown it forms a brown oval cocoon, nearly an inch long, which is closely fixed to a birch twig.

By the burn, some distance up the glen, lay the skeleton of a young stag, the ill-formed antlers on the skull indicating that it had been weakly, and had probably been unfit to survive the severities of winter. A large part of one antler had disappeared, apparently gnawed off by deer.

Hanging from heather was found a perfectly formed nest of a wasp (*Vespa sylvestris*). The nest was about the

shape and size of a large lemon, and was entered by a round hole below. The grey papery wall was protected over its upper-third by a bowl-shaped covering of the same material. Among the heather also were numerous nests of large spiders (*Epeira cornuta*), consisting of pale silk balloons an inch or so in diameter, among a loose web of threads. In each was the spider watching over the safety of her ball of eggs, while ready to emerge through a hole in the lower part of the balloon to capture her insect prey. Other smaller dark brown hunting spiders were plentiful on the ground, spinning no web, but capturing insects by speed of foot. Many of the females carried circular flattened pale-brown bags full of eggs. They are devoted mothers, and will risk any danger on behalf of their eggs. If the bag is taken from one she appears quite careless of her own safety; but if the bag is placed beside her she at once seizes it, and takes refuge in flight. After the eggs are hatched the young spiders cluster on the body and limbs of the mother, giving her a strange ill-defined form as she runs actively about.

On the sandy parts of the rough track darting green forms might be seen, occasionally rising in flying leaps of a few feet, and again scurrying away rapidly. One or two were captured, and found to be tiger-beetles (*Cicindela campestris*), gracefully formed, about half an inch in length, dark green with metallic coppery or golden reflections, and from three to six dull yellowish spots or lines on each wing case. The popular name refers to the fierce nature of the beetle, which seizes, and devours small animals. Its larvæ live in burrows dug in the sandy soil frequented by the beetles, in burrows just wide enough for them to move up and down in by the aid of their hooked claws and of bristles and two hooks on a hump on the back of the eighth ring. When in want of food they wriggle to the opening of the burrow and lie in wait, ready to grasp with their strong jaws any passing insect.

The moors swarmed with the common "heath-moths," (*Ematurga atomaria*); but few other moths were on the

wing. The "Wood-tiger moth" was represented by a caterpillar and a cocoon.

The slope of the hill was covered with a monotonous growth of heather, among which the bright yellow flowers of the petty whin (*Gevista anglica*) made a pretty contrast. Near the top fir-clubmoss (*Lycopodium Selago*) was not uncommon.

The descent was made by most of the party by nearly the same route, and on the way a curlew's nest containing four eggs was found, and an adder about 18 inches long was killed. Its last meal was disgorged—a nearly perfect frog. In the descent of the other (east) side of the hill the small marsh marigold (*Caltha radicans*) was observed in marshy spots, among a profusion of delicately coloured mosses; and among the heather grew lesser tway-blade (*Listera cordata*) and winter green (*Pyrola media*); while the grassy heaths were gay with red, white, and blue varieties of milkworts (*Polygala serpyllacea*), tormentil, and other flowers.

A stroll by the Dee near Aboyne in the evening was rewarded by the highland micken (*Meum Athamanticum*) the little Teesdalia (*T. nudicaulis*) alpine lady's-mantle, (*Alchemilla alpina*), and other local plants; and the shingles showed abundance of the large blue lupine (*Lupinus nootkatensis*), first noticed as a seemingly wild plant in Scotland on rocks by the Dee at Aboyne in 1857. It is a native of Nootka Sound, on the north-west coast of North America. There is reason to believe that it owes its presence on Deeside to its introduction into the gardens of Balnoral soon after the purchase of the estate by Prince Albert. It has established itself all up and down the valley, and has altered the course of the Dee and the nature of the native vegetation in many places on its banks.

The excursion was greatly enjoyed by all fortunate enough to take part in it.