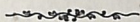


## EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.



THE Club has been so greatly indebted to the late Duke of Fife for numerous privileges in connection with excursions that the *Journal* feels it incumbent, even at this late date, to add its quota to the expressions of

THE LATE regret which followed the announcement of his death (on  
DUKE OF January 29). As the proprietor of Mar Forest, his grace  
FIFE. was the "over-lord" of much of the region which constitutes  
the principal field of the Club's operations. Cairn Toul, the

Devil's Point, and Derry Cairngorm are wholly within the forest; Ben Muich Dhui, Beinn Mheadhoin, and Beinn a'Bhuird are on its boundaries; and the forest is intersected by the Larig Ghru and the Learg an Laoigh, the principal routes from Deeside to the Cairngorm mountains and Strathspey, while other tracks lead to Glen Feshie and Glen Tilt. Though certain rights of way through the forest exist and are regularly utilised, there were many occasions on which the Club, in the excursions it arranged, had to pass beyond the limits of recognised paths and routes, and had to secure, if only as a precautionary measure, freedom of access to territory reckoned private—had to secure, at any rate, immunity from molestation by game-keepers and foresters. The necessary permission to traverse unfrequented parts of the forest was invariably and courteously granted by the Duke; and it is only fitting that public recognition should now be made of his grace's readiness to oblige the Club in this way. Whatever the restrictions on the free movement of individuals in Upper Deeside and Mar Forest imposed by the Duke—restrictions that did not escape criticism and which occasionally evoked resentment—the Club never experienced any difficulty in obtaining the sanction of his grace to any projected "invasion" of his mountain wilds. There is therefore a very special reason for our concurring in the general regret with which the death of the Duke was regarded throughout the country; but, while deploring his loss, the hope may be cherished that the kindly relations he maintained with the Club will be continued by his successor.

So much has been said about the Loch-an-Eilein ospreys in our pages (See in particular two articles by Mr. C. G. Cash—"The Loch-an-Eilein

Ospreys," iv., 125, and "History of the Loch-an-Eilein Ospreys," v., 270; also the illustration of Loch-an-Eilein Castle fronting p. 233 of vol v.) that readers could not fail to have been interested in the article on "The Vanishing Osprey," by "S. G." (initials that may be safely presumed to indicate Mr. Seton Gordon), which appeared in the *Scotsman* of January 23rd. The writer, noting that in olden days a pair of ospreys had their summer home on nearly every Highland loch, expressed the fear that, even from its last mountain strongholds, the bird has been banished. "No more,"

he said, "will the hen bird brood on her nest of sticks on the ruined castle on Loch-an-Eilein, or will her mate, soaring down from dark Cairngorm, swoop like an arrow to the surface of the loch and soar aloft, bearing in his talons a captured fish. Even from Loch Arkaig—one of the last strongholds of the race—the fish hawk has vanished, and we fear it must be owned that one of our most interesting birds of prey has been lost to us as a nesting species."

The writer went on to remark that, in contrast to the disappearance of the osprey, the eagle, its near relative, is more than holding its own in the Highlands, and he attributed this to the fact that the eagle is a resident whereas the osprey is a migrant. He continued—"The migration of the mullet hawk—to use a local name—has always appealed to us as being a subject of some considerable interest. Why the osprey should travel south on the approach of winter, while the golden and white-tailed eagles remain in the north throughout the year, cannot easily be explained. At first sight the solution of the puzzle would appear to rest in the fact that the lochs are frozen over during a considerable part of winter, and thus the osprey is prevented from obtaining a necessary supply of fish. This argument would undoubtedly hold good if the osprey confined its fishing operations to fresh water lochs alone, but, as witnessed by its name, 'mullet hawk,' this is far from being the case, and one would have imagined that the sea lochs of Scotland would have yielded fish in plenty, even during the most severe weather. It would seem to be the case that this southern migration is undertaken not so much on account of considerations of food as to avoid the cold of winter, for Great Britain is near the northern limit of the osprey, and in Greenland and Iceland it is quite unknown." Anyhow, it is undoubtedly to a large extent owing to its migratory habits that the osprey has disappeared, mainly because "on the passage to and from its summer haunts it has to run the gauntlet of many unscrupulous gunners, who are ever on the lookout for a rare bird."

"S. G." noted that a few years ago a pair of ospreys were unfortunately shot in the New Forest. "Whether a coincidence or not, it is a fact that since that time the Loch-an-Eilein eyrie has been deserted, and it is more than likely that the two victims were on their way south from their Highland loch when they were shot." Mr. Cash recorded, however, (*C.C.J.*, v., 278), that only one osprey visited Loch-an-Eilein in 1901 and 1902, and seemed mateless, and he added that since 1902 no osprey has been seen at Rothiemurchus, but in September 1904, one was shot near Guildford, in Surrey.

In an interesting article in the "Science and Nature" column of the *Scotsman* of March 26th, the same writer treated of ancient mountain woodlands in Scotland. During his wanderings on the Upper Deeside mountains, and especially on the Cairngorm range, wrote "S. G.," he had constantly met with remains of ancient woodlands, comprised almost entirely of Scots fir, extending to a height far greater than that to which our present-day conifers penetrate. In early times, the great Caledonian forest spread over vast areas, and, as far as can be judged now, reached to a

ANCIENT  
WOODLANDS  
ON THE  
CAIRNGORMS.

height of close on 3000 feet above sea-level; but though undoubtedly large tracts of the forest were destroyed by fire, "S. G." rather inclines to the theory that the true cause of the disappearance of tree growth from elevations where it was formerly abundant is that the climate of our country is gradually becoming more arctic. As to the existing level of the woodlands on mountains, he said—"Nowadays the extreme limits of growth of the Scots fir may be put at 2000 feet above sea-level, and there is but one glen of our acquaintance—Glen Quoich, lying just south of Beinn a' Bhuird, in West Aberdeenshire—where well-grown trees are found above that level. That the famous Larig Pass was in olden days wooded almost up to the watershed between the valleys of the Spey and Dee is a fact obvious to every hillman, though it may not be equally well known that the remains of these ancient trees extend far up the Garbhchoire. It was in this corrie that we discovered, a few years ago, a small specimen of the Scots fir growing at a height of some 2700 feet above the level of the sea. This, of course, was an isolated specimen, but was of considerable interest as showing that in certain sheltered glens conifers might be planted to a height of over 2000 feet above sea level. The tree mentioned had reached a height of only a few feet, and it is not improbable that its height had been limited by the depth of snow obtaining during the winter months. Not far from the corrie is a small specimen of the larch, growing at a height of well on to 3000 feet, and on a rocky hillside. We have found a sapling of the rowan or mountain ash growing above Loch Avon, some 2600 feet above sea level, but in this instance the seed had probably been brought to the wild locality by some passing bird. In a certain corrie branching off Glen Derry we were interested in finding a few rowans and birches in a little glen lying south-west, and so—one would imagine—considerably exposed to the sou'-westerly gales which are so prevalent in the district. The highest of these trees we made out to be growing just upon the 2200 feet line, and was in quite a vigorous condition."

IN support of the contention that the lowering of the timber line in the Highlands is attributable to a gradual change in climatic conditions, "S. G." instanced the existence of moss plants

SNOWFIELD

ON

BRAERIACH.

under a snowfield on Braeriach. "In one of the eastern corries of Braeriach," he said, "there lies at a height of approximately 3600 feet above sea level, a snow-bed which has not been known to disappear, within living memory at all events, even during the hottest summer. During the winter of 1908-9, the prevailing winds were from a somewhat unusual quarter, with the result that the corrie held less snow than usual at the beginning of summer. We visited the snowfield during early October, when it is at its minimum, and found from unmistakable signs that the drift had dwindled more than had been the case for a considerable number of years. We were thus interested to find that moss plants extended right up to where the snow had melted only a day or two before, and even penetrated to under the snow cap itself. Where the moss had been uncovered for a number of days, we saw shoots of tenderest green being put forth, and every transitional stage was met with, from well-grown plants of a month old, to specimens on the edge of the snow-bed which as yet showed

no signs of vitality, but which we had every reason to believe, from the behaviour of the plants a few feet farther from the snow, were still capable of growth. The presence of moss plants extending right into a snow bed which now remains unmelted from year to year seems to us to be strong evidence in favour of the argument that our summers are now less warm than was the case in former times. One would certainly have imagined that the snowfield would have disappeared during the remarkable summer of 1911, especially as the preceding winter was, on the low grounds at all events, a remarkably mild one, but as a matter of fact the field at the end of summer was considerably greater in extent than after the cool summer of 1909."

IN the course of the water controversy a good deal has been said—by people who know nothing of the hills in winter—about the Avon being frozen solid and there being in consequence no water for Aberdeen. Streams like the Avon or the Dee never freeze solid, but go on running beneath a covering of snow with as large a volume as in summer. It may be of

interest to state that on Sunday last, three Aberdeen climbers visited Loch Avon from Nethy Bridge. They ascended Ben Bynac, the hill which lies to the east of Cairngorm and overlooks Glen Avon, and descended from it to the valley of the Avon. Just below the loch the river was flowing in full volume in the open. It then passed under a snow bridge, and at the spot where the Larig and Laoigh path crosses Glen Avon from Glen Derry, the stream was snowed over. It could be heard, however, running beneath the snow and ice, and a short distance to the east of the path it came out again and appeared to flow in the open as far eastward down Glen Avon as could be seen. The river, therefore, was not frozen solid, and it was not even frozen, but was flowing very much as it does in summer. And this was within a few days of the most severe frost that has been experienced for sixteen years. On Monday of last week the temperature fell at Braemar to 7 degrees below zero, that is there were 39 degrees of frost. Yet the river Avon was not frozen over, but was running as usual when seen on Sunday.—*Aberdeen Free Press*, February 15.

WHILE climbing Ben More, Perthshire, recently, Mr. Alastair C. McLaren came to a small chasm, which was almost imperceptible.

MOUNTAIN Pushing his way in, he saw a funnel-like opening, and by  
CAVE IN strenuous endeavours he got to the top, where he found a  
PERTSHIRE. large cave, which he thinks has never been explored before.

He then saw a ray of light, and succeeded in reaching the opening, he emerged on the side of the hill, about one-eighth of a mile from where he had entered.—*Evening Gazette* (Aberdeen), 10th February, 1912.

DR. A. M. KELLAS, an Aberdeen man (brother of Mr. Henry Kellas, a member of the Cairngorm Club), in a paper read to the

AN ABERDEEN Royal Geographical Society in London on 1st April,  
CLIMBER stated that he had made three journeys to the mountains of  
IN THE Northern Sikkim and Garwhal in 1907, 1909, and 1911.

HIMALAYAS. In last year's journey he ascended a peak 23,180 feet high—Mount Pawhurni. Dr. Kellas's paper dealt at considerable length with climbing capacity at great altitudes and with

mountain sickness, or what is more correctly designated mountain lassitude. Summing up the results of his experience on all three expeditions, Dr. Kellas (who was accompanied by two coolies) said that at any height up to 15,000—17,000 feet he could hold his own with the unloaded coolie and run away from the loaded man. Above 17,000 feet, however, their superiority was marked, an unloaded coolie climbing much quicker than he did, and even a moderately loaded coolie going up as fast as he cared to go up to elevations of 21,000 feet and 22,000 feet. Above that elevation a moderately loaded coolie could run away from him, and with an unloaded coolie he had not the slightest chance. None of Dr. Kellas's party was in the slightest degree sick at high altitudes, and the climbing powers of the strongest coolies seemed to be only slightly affected even at 23,000 feet. When the coolies were paid off at Darjeeling last year, after about three months of climbing at high altitudes, they were all in the best of health and spirits, and had all volunteered to stay on another month if they were wanted.

THE Alps have been the givers of peace, joy, health, and length of years to many climbers. You go full of cobwebs, worried by the world's rush and scurry for wealth, a physical and mental wreck, and come back full of vitality and strength. Amongst the mountains the climber seems as free as Nature itself. The rush of the mountain torrent into the glass-like lake, in its calm repose between the mountains; the pure snowfields and blue majestic glaciers which have crawled from the mysterious summits of the mountains; the ever-changing picture between the morning tint and evening glow and after-glow which form the most beautiful sky study; the impressions of the storm while one is conquering some great mountain; the fascination of difficulties overcome amidst such almost everlasting beauties, are things lovely enough to attract the most indifferent and unpoetical of men. The triumph over Nature, the training of man's faculties of endurance, judgment, skill, resource, patience, and many other qualities, enable a man to appreciate life, the world, and its beautiful wild and remote parts, so that life becomes fuller and more interesting, while the ever-changing scenes are stored up in the mind as picture galleries, which become a part of the climber's nature.—“My Climbing Adventures in Four Continents,” by Samuel Turner.

BEINN DOIREANN has not been neglected in the *C. C. J.*, but it is doubtful if many of its readers fully appreciate the peculiar attractions of this Argyle-shire mountain apart from its associations with Duncan

BEINN Ban Macintyre. The first tourist, or traveller, who DOIREANN. makes particular mention of it is Iettice (“Tour in Scotland”), who in 1792 passed along its base and “admired” the Ben—and those were not the days of Englishmen “admiring” mountains. Ten years later Duncan Ban paid his last visit to his favourite mountain from Edinburgh. “A change had struck the very hill”; “sheep were all that I could see . . . there was not left one antlered stag.” He is said to have composed some of his finest verses in a

natural cave in the great east-facing corrie of the Ben. How the poet's spirit must rejoice at the recent re-introduction of deer in these parts!

After several defeats (owing mostly to weather) one day—23rd May—came, and was one of a thousand. To those who consider the Ladder of Lochnagar steep the slope of Ben Doran from the south or the south-west will be startling—1 in 1.76 an angle of 29°. The prospect from the cairn, under the best atmospheric conditions, is marvellous; to us the spectral-like Paps of Jura were the most impressive. There was comparatively little snow left on the highest mountains; the distant Cairngorms seemed to have more than their share. The ascent was made from Tyndrum the descent to Bridge of Orchy. The same day there were climbers on Beinn Dubh-chraige (3204 feet) and Beinn Laoigh (3708 feet). A. I. M.

IN view of Mr. Cooper's article in this number on "Map Reading," it may be of interest to record an excellent piece of practical map and compass work by Mr. J. A. Parker I had the privilege of witnessing this spring. We had gone to Braemar on the last ON BEINN A week-end of March with the intention of doing Braeriach, BHUIRD. but on the morning of the day on which we had intended to do the climb found the lower hills powdered with fresh snow, and every sign of snow falling higher up. Mr. Parker decided that Beinn a Bhuid would be sufficient for our energies in the conditions apparently prevailing aloft, and having found Mr. Rattray at the ferry near the village on the alert, we were soon on our way up the Slugan Glen. When we reached the top of the glen we found snow showers sweeping down from the hill over the flat upper valley of the Quoich. We made for Cairn Eas with the intention of climbing it, and then making along the top of the ridge to the Sneck. As snow was falling thickly when we reached Cairn Eas we decided not to waste time on it, but to make direct for the Sneck, round its base. On reaching the Sneck we found the lowest part of the dip clear, but snow drifting heavily a short distance up each side. The precipices to the north were particularly fine, their dark rocks looming through the drift at intervals, and the picture was complete when an eagle came intermittently into view, drifting calmly and magnificently round the edge of the hill through the driving snow. Probably this was the mate of the bird which was sitting on eggs at the time, and to enable us to find whose nest we had received detailed directions from the keeper.

Having donned our snow spectacles and all the garments we had with us, we tackled a long snow slope up to the North Top. We soon got into the drift and had at once to use map and compass, as we literally could not see twenty yards, and could not have seen at all without spectacles. The short bit to the North Top was simply a case of observing from the map the direction in which it lay from where we were—just above the Sneck—and checking the direction every thirty or fifty yards. We had the additional assurance that we were more or less right as long as we were ascending, and that there was no mistaking the Top when we did reach it.

The next part of the journey was not quite so simple. We wished to reach the South Top of the hill, some four miles away, taking the inspection of the sitting eagle on our way home. On our left, for nearly the whole way,



*Photo by*

*Dr. J. R. Levack.*

EARLY MORNING AT THE "SNECK" BEINN A' BHUIRD.

was a sheer drop into the corrie round the Dubh Loch; on our right, miles of flat hill upon which to stray, while covering everything and rendering it impossible to see more than, at the outside, fifty yards, was what is aptly called "blin' drift." Readers who know the hill will know that what we had to do was a mile and a half in a direction a little west of south, and then some two and a half miles in a direction almost south. The whole of that distance was done in fifty to eighty yard stretches, checking direction after each, and the whole distance was paced in order to know when to change direction after the first mile and a half, and when to expect to find the South Top after the other two miles and a half. The compass direction was taken over an ice axe stuck upright a yard or two in front, the compass-holder moving about behind the axe till he had it in the line in which he wished to go. Then a projecting boulder as distant as possible or some such thing was looked for in alignment with the ice axe, and when the stone or snow was reached the whole process was repeated, unless before reaching the stone or patch another stone or patch further on could be aligned on the original one. This happened once or twice, but usually we had to have recourse to the compass every fifty yards or so.

A mile and a half was silently counted off in this manner in a south-westerly direction, and then, in the middle of a featureless wilderness of drifting snow, and after a little conversation and the adjustment of head-gear to meet the new direction of the wind, we turned south, and two miles and a half in that direction were duly counted off. At the end of the count we found ourselves within some twenty yards of the South Top. We only once saw the cornice on the precipices to our left, though we must have been within a stone throw of it during the greater part of the four miles.

The descent from the South Top was uneventful. So hard were we plastered with snow that it was not till we reached the keeper's hut on the banks of the Dee and got the loan of a table-knife from his wife that we were able to get the frozen crust off our persons.

J. B. G.