

EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

THE peculiar interest in which Gana Hill is held rests on the fact that in it are to be found the sources of the Clyde, the largest river in Scotland. It is situated on the march between the

counties of Lanark and Dumfries, in the parishes of
GANA HILL,
(2190 FEET.) Crawford and Closeburn.

Thornhill is the most convenient point from which to make the ascent, the road being left at Townhead, on the left bank of Cample Water, a tributary of the Nith. From this farm, upwards, Cample is a hill stream, and there are only sheep tracks on the open hill for the climb. The solitude is extreme; probably, as in our case in July last, not a single person, even shepherd or fisherman, will be seen in a long day. The hills are all given over to sheep, and generally are smooth, grassy, rounded and not seldom featureless.

Gana Hill has a flat top, surmounted by an unusually big cairn. At one's feet, looking southward, is the Daer valley, the Clyde in its uppermost reaches being known as the Daer (oak) Water. The valley of the Daer has recently been described as the most inaccessible part of Lanarkshire. When one compares the sources of the Dee and Avon with these of the Clyde, the Lanarkshire river makes a commonplace beginning for such a mighty waterway as the world knows it below Glasgow Bridge. But it must not be imagined that such hills as have been described are wholly without charm. Indeed an exceedingly pleasant day (alas! our view was restricted by haze) awaits the hillman who penetrates to the higher solitudes of the southern uplands. One impression may be mentioned: what with the countless heights and the little cultivated ground to be seen from the northern mountains and the apparently equally numberless hills and as little arable land visible from the Lowland Highlands, one marvels that so much as even a fourth of Scotland is under crops and grass.

The mountain eagle is now a rare visitor in these parts, though of old it nested on Earncraig Hill, the neighbouring height to Gana Hill on the east; the name is suggestive. Grouse, curlews and hoodie crows are numerous; we doubt if ever we saw so many curlews in a single day. The whaup is known as a very wary bird—hence the old saying, "To kill seven curlews the work of a lifetime." We should recommend the attempt to be made about the sources of the Clyde! Blaeberreries and averons will be found on the ascent, and there are even rowan trees. The sheep fences are models—drystone dykes of considerable height and kept in good repair. Border sheep farmers seem to favour circular banks and call them rees. An old couplet may be quoted:

Annan, Tweed, and Clyde
Rise a' oot o' ae hillside.

For once, however, there is no doubt of tradition being wrong, and at

least it rests on a rhymster's licence. The statement has in recent years been described as more poetically than topographically true.—A. I. M.

At present a couple of golden eagles are busily engaged rearing an eaglet in a nest built on the ledge of a high and precipitous rock in one of the lonely corries of Glenfiddich deer forest. With the aid of a glass a good view of the nest can be obtained from the surrounding heights.

The nest consists of a huge structure of sticks and heather, while the skeletons of hares and grouse can be seen round the edge of the nest. No signs of live grouse are to be seen within a mile of the eyrie, the birds, no doubt, being afraid of the eagles.

A remarkable incident was lately observed by one of the keepers. The male eagle was seen to rise with a grouse in its talons, and when it had soared high above the eyrie, it gave a screeching sound as if calling to its mate in the nest below. The female at once left the nest, when the cock bird dropped the grouse, which was caught in mid-air by the female bird, and at once conveyed to the nest.

The Duke of Richmond and Gordon has given instructions for the eagles to be protected.—*Aberdeen Journal*, 26th August, 1912.

THE precise meaning of "Lochnagar" has been long a subject of controversy, and various interpretations of the Gaelic name of the mountain—more properly, of the loch at its base—are current. (See THE MEANING A. I. McConnochie's "Lochnagar," 1891). The Hon. OF Ruaidhri Erskine furnished a translation in an article on "LOCHNAGAR." "Some Loch-na-Gearra Place Names," which appeared in the *Aberdeen Daily Journal* on September 4. He maintains that the name in Gaelic is really "Loch-na-gearra," and says it means the loch of the hare (doubtless the mountain hare). This interpretation is by no means new, but even "authorities" on Gaelic are at variance. The late Mr. James Macdonald, for instance, in his "Place Names of West Aberdeenshire," was "disposed to think the most plausible suggestion yet offered is that the root may be 'gair' or 'gaoir,' 'wailing, moaning, shouting, confused noise,' applying to the wild howling of the wind on the face of the crags"; and Mr. F. C. Diaek (*Free Press*, 13 May, 1911), leant to the same conclusion, giving the Gaelic name (belonging properly to the loch), as "Lochan a' ghair," "gair" meaning "noise, tumult," hence "the noisy lochan." Dr. John Milne, however, in his recently-published "Celtic Place-Names in Aberdeenshire," will have it that "Lochnagar" is a corruption of "Lochan Gearr," short lochan—"lochan" meaning a small loch, and "gearr," short. Where doctors differ, who shall judge? Mr. Erskine, in the course of the article referred to, corrected several of the mistakes in Gaelic made by the Ordnance surveyors—and we believe they are numerous, elsewhere than in the Lochnagar region. Cairn Taggart, for example, should be either Carn Sagairt, "Priests' Cairn," or Carn an Sagairt, the Cairn of the Priest. Cuidhe Crom is probably a mistake for Cuithe Chrom, the bent snow wreath. Cairn Bannach should doubtless be Carn Bonnaich—better Carn a' Bhonnaich—the Cairn of the Cake, or

bannock. Students of Gaelic will be interested in these philological controversies, but they appeal none the less to disciples of the mountain as well.

OF the many Alpine fatalities of the past year—and they were more numerous than usual—the most lamentable was that which occurred on

August 15 on the Aiguille Rouge de Peteret, a peak of 12,282 feet, situated to the south-east of and overtopped by Mont Blanc. Mr. Humphrey Owen Jones, F.R.S., and his newly-married wife (they were on their honeymoon), accompanied by a guide, were ascending the Aiguille, the three roped together. The guide, it is supposed, placed his hand on a rock which gave way, and he fell down about 1,000 feet to the Glacier de Fresnay below, carrying the others with him, all the bodies being fearfully mutilated. Mr. Jones was a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, and Lecturer in Chemistry and Physics, and he was also Demonstrator to Sir James Dewar, the Jacksonian Professor of Experimental Philosophy. He was reputed one of the most brilliant of the younger Alpinists. His shocking death recalls that of his namesake, Mr. Owen Glynne Jones, another noted mountaineer, who met with a fatal accident in making the ascent of the Dent Blanche in August, 1899. (See *C. C. J.*, III., 125).

A MEMBER of the Club, incited by the Rousseau Centenary on June 28 last to renew his acquaintance with the life and works of "Jean Jacques," calls

attention to some notable remarks on walking in the ROUSSEAU "Confessions." "Never," says Rousseau, "did I think ON so much, exist so much, be myself so much, as in the WALKING. journeyings that I have made alone and on foot. Walking has something about it which animates and enlivens my ideas. I can hardly think while I am still; my body must be in motion to move my mind. The sight of the country, the succession of agreeable views, open air, good appetite, the freedom of the alehouse, the absence of everything that could make me feel dependence, or recall me to my situation—all this sets my soul free, gives me a greater boldness of thought. I dispose of all nature as its sovereign lord; my heart, wandering from object to object, mingles and is one with the things that soothe it, wraps itself up in charming images, and is intoxicated by delicious sentiment. Ideas come as they please, not as I please; they do not come at all, or they come in a crowd, overwhelming me with their number and their force. When I came to a place I only thought of eating, and when I left it I only thought of walking. I felt that a new paradise awaited me at the door, and I thought of nothing but of hastening in search of it." (Morley's "Rousseau," Eversley edition, I., 64-65).

THE summer number of *Punch* (July 17) had some remarkably good verses, titled "Mine Eyes to the Hills." The dweller in London, stifled with the heat, imagines old David "PUNCH" in the Psalmist, when "the wine ceased to gladden, ON the hills. the harps had lost tune," looking up to the hills of the Philistines and recalling old days, when he encountered and vanquished Goliath of Gath—

And his eye lighted up as he looked at his hills,
 The hills of old triumphs, and high-riding stars,
 When he watched by the rush of the snow-watered rills
 Where the wild asses drank and lay down on the scars,
 In the days when he'd hunted and followed his flocks
 Where the little grey conies ran over the rocks !

And his spirit was caught in the magical calm
 Of far rugged faces, of scarps and of screes,
 For a day on a hill-side will lend you a balm
 That begins with bell-heather and murmur of bees,
 And ends with the mantle of silence that drops
 'Twi'x man and his troubles on reaching the Tops !

Similarly, the "town-sickened heart" turns its thoughts

To Teviot and Tayside, Balquhidder and Spey,
 To loch and to river, to corrie and strath,

and has dreams of conflicts with trout, salmon or stag, conflicts in the past
 and conflicts to come—

Then we fashion—for Fancy plays wonderful freaks—
 The sough of a pine-wood, the scent of a brae,
 With, massed far above us, crags, saddles and peaks,
 Where great caller winds blow the cobwebs away,
 And roar in the gulleys, and whoop down the cuts,
 And bring the wild grouse-packs like smoke to the butts !

By leagues of red heather and murderous midge,
 By crisp Autumn duskings a-bellow with deer,
 By straight driven coveys, by rigging and ridge—
 It's mountains for us now that August is near ;
 For London's got every sublunary ill,
 And our hearts—like old David's—are fain for "the hill" !

A DEESIDE landmark disappeared on the night of 5th November, the
 Obelisk on the summit of Mortlich Hill, near Aboyne, collapsing. Mortlich,

1248 feet high, is one of the Coull hills, and the Obelisk
 COLLAPSE was a very conspicuous feature in the surrounding land-
 OF THE scape. It was (or at least appeared to be) a substantial
 MORTLICH enough structure, 60 feet high, built of hammer-blocked
 HILL MONU- squares of granite ; but the conjecture is that the prolonged
 -MENT. spell of wet weather in the autumn affected its stability and

so caused its downfall. The Obelisk was erected in 1867
 to the memory of the late (the tenth) Marquis of Huntly. It stood on the
 north-east boundary of the Aboyne estates. We understand it may be rebuilt
 by public subscription.

THE Swiss correspondent of the *Morning Post*, in an article in the issue of November 5, estimates the number of fatalities from accidents on the Alps during the past season (October 1911 to October 1912)

ALPINE ACCIDENTS. at 133, including 4 guides and 5 women. Besides those killed, more than 50 persons were injured, their injuries in the great majority of cases having been, if not dangerous, at any rate serious, and often such as to leave lameness or some other permanent disablement. Of these accidents, an exceptionally large number were caused by avalanches, a party either having carelessly walked over cornices or other insecure snow, or an avalanche having suddenly and without warning descended. On the other hand, there were fewer accidents than usual to seekers after edelweiss and other inaccessible and much-prized mountain flowers. The largest number of any one nationality killed in the mountains last year seem to have been Swiss—41 in all, according to his calculations. This number includes two guides and one woman. Then come the Germans with 38 killed, and the Austrians with 35, the Italians with nine, the English with five, the French with four, and the Belgians with one.

The twenty-fourth annual meeting of the Club was held in the Treasurer's Office, 181 Union Street, Aberdeen, on 20th December. Mr.

ANNUAL MEETING. John Clarke, M.A., Chairman of the Club, presided. His Excellency the Right Hon. James Bryce, D.C.L., D.L., was re-elected President, and Mr. Robert Anderson was re-elected Vice-President; Mr. John Clarke, whose term of the Chair ended this year, being elected a Vice-President in place of the late Mr. Alexander Copland.

Mr. T. R. Gillies, who intimated his resignation of the Treasurership, was elected Chairman of the Club, and the Secretary was appointed Treasurer in addition to his other duties. The following Committee was appointed—Messrs. William Garden, J. A. Hadden, John R. Levack, John McGregor, R. W. Mackie, George M'Intyre, W. M. M'Pherson, A. P. Milne, William Porter, and Alexander Simpson.

Mr. Clarke before leaving the chair made suitable reference to the loss the Club had sustained by the death of Mr. Copland.

The new chairman on behalf of the club presented Mr. J. A. Parker with a handsome travelling clock in recognition of the great services he had rendered the Club in superintending the construction of the All-n-Bienne Bridge. A representation of the Bridge is to be engraved on the clock. Mr. Parker in returning thanks said that the work in connection with the Bridge had been particularly pleasant in that it was one of the few occasions on which his work and his favourite relaxation went hand in hand.

The members agreed to the following excursions for the ensuing session :—Spring holiday—Geallaig Hill; Summer holiday—Beinn-a-Bhuird and Ben Avon; an Easter Meet at Fortingal, if a sufficient number of members express a desire to join; a Saturday afternoon excursion, in April, to Hill of Fare, and another to Clochnaben, in June.

The following members have been admitted to the Club since last Annual Meeting :—

- E. W. Watt, 33 Carlton Place, Aberdeen.
 G. A. Smith, Solicitor, Aberdeen.
 James Ellis, Rubislaw Den South, Aberdeen.
 Dr. J. Crombie, 4 Golden Square, Aberdeen.
 J. W. Henderson, 55 Westburn Road, Aberdeen.
 Miss Tarbet, Dalhousie Terrace, Perth Road, Dundee.
 Dr. J. L. M'Intyre, Abbotsville, Cults, Aberdeen.
 J. C. Duffus, 11 Queen's Gardens, Aberdeen.
 Charles Diack, County Buildings, Aberdeen.
 Macgregor Skene, Avondow, Milltimber, Aberdeen.
 Dr. A. W. Gibb, 1 Belvidere Street, Aberdeen.
 Dr. Ian Struthers Stewart, 13 Castle Terrace, Edinburgh.
 J. M'Coss, 127 Union Street, Aberdeen.

REVIEWS.

THE CHARM OF THE HILLS. By Seton Gordon, F.Z.S., M.B.O.U. (London: Cassell & Company, Ltd.—10/6 net.)—Mr. Seton Gordon's personal knowledge of Scottish mountains, particularly those of the Cairngorm range, and his faculty for writing about them attractively, have been demonstrated in the columns of the *C.C.J.*, as well as elsewhere; and the pleasure of welcoming this creditable addition to mountaineering literature is enhanced by the fact that it emanates from an esteemed contributor. The work, in one sense, can hardly be deemed new, for it consists of a selection from the many articles which Mr. Gordon has contributed to various papers and magazines during the past few years. But it serves to bring into view, more effectively than the separate articles possibly could do, Mr. Gordon's qualities as a mountaineer and observer, and the large amount of good, solid, and valuable work he has accomplished. For Mr. Gordon is no climber of mountains merely in response to the "charm of the hills" which he himself feels so intensely, or for the sole purpose of penning graphic descriptions of the views obtainable from their summits. He is a student of the wild life of the mountains—of the haunts and habits of the eagle and the osprey, the ptarmigan and the snow bunting, the deer and the grouse; and many of his charming nature studies are incorporated in his new volume. These studies were made at all hours and amid all the vicissitudes of Cairngorm climate: Mr. Gordon has traversed the Larig at the dead of night and photographed the snow bunting before six o'clock in the morning; he has been overtaken by blizzards and "scomficed" with heat. The result of his indefatigable labours is that we have a series of sketches of birds and animals (birds particularly) of an almost unique kind, obtained close at hand. Mr. Gordon has penetrated to several eyries of the golden