

EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

Two articles, titled "Speyside Revisited," appeared in the *Free Press* of July 29 and August 1, the first dealing with the Glenfeshie route, and the second with forestry prospects. The following is taken

FOOTBRIDGE from the first article—"Two of the purposes of the visit
ACROSS were, first, to examine the crossing of the Eidart, which, in
THE EIDART. the current number of the *Cairngorm Club Journal*, was reported by a visitor to be without a bridge; and, second, to ascertain, so far as one without knowledge of engineering could, the possibilities and the difficulties of a road through Glenfeshie from Braemar to Kingussie. On the first point there was immediate reassurance. A footbridge has been erected, evidently recently, across the Eidart about 100 yards from its junction with the Feshie. It consists of two pairs of light trees laid end to end and spliced in the centre, where they are supported by similar but stronger pairs, which act as a pier and are secured by a considerable pile of stones. The footway has battens at intervals and a strong wire on the upper side to serve as a parapet. The bridge will be of immense service to mountaineers and tourists, and it is to be hoped that it will stand the stress of the winter floods. It is, presumably, due to the good offices of Sir George Cooper, the tenant of Glenfeshie shootings, who has otherwise done much to improve the routes." As to making a road through Glenfeshie, the writer says it seems quite feasible but would not be without its difficulties, but the difficulties, "to an unskilled eye at any rate," do not appear insuperable, though they would probably entail additional expense for bridges crossing and recrossing the stream, embankment, and, possibly, some kind of viaduct.

THERE has been talk recently of a project—or the revival of a project—for constructing a railway to the top of Ben Nevis, and so bringing the summit of the highest mountain in the British Isles within comparatively easy reach of the general public. Not much pretence of disseminating a taste for mountain scenery is avowed, however. The promoters of the project are plainly "on the make," to adopt a slang phrase, for the chief recommendation put forward is that shareholders would earn a probable 6 per cent. dividend. What is aimed at, apparently, is to make the Ben a "popular resort," and to inaugurate a series of special excursions from the large cities of Scotland and the north of England; and as a necessary preliminary, the building on the summit which several years ago served as the meteorological observatory has been transformed into a hotel. The invasion of Ben Nevis by a daily horde of "cheap trippers" would be a lamentable desecration, and mountaineers can only contemplate its possible realisation as a calamity. Fortunately, there is just the possibility of this outrage to our "monarch of mountains" being averted. Ben Nevis

is owned jointly by the Abinger trustees and Mrs. Cameron Lucy of Callart, and the late Lord Abinger in his will directed his trustees to oppose any scheme for the construction of a railway line to the top of the mountain.

THAT Ben Nevis presents a peculiar fascination for record-breakers is demonstrated by the frequent exploits of mountaineers on its rugged slopes.

On Sunday, 21st September, a six horse-power motor cycle, with side car, was successfully piloted to the summit by Mr. D. Bell, Great Western Road, Glasgow. The machine is one which gained a gold medal in the English six days' trials, and, in fact, it climbed the mountain with the seals affixed by the A.C.U. officials attached.

The narrowness and somewhat rough nature of the bridle path were responsible for the usual difficulties experienced by the motorists who essay this ascent, and, as was almost inevitable, tyres were punctured and damage done to footboards. Negotiations in connection with the ascent had been in progress since Thursday, and when darkness fell the machine was abandoned for the night at the side of the track. The actual time occupied in climbing was ten hours, but the descent was accomplished in 2½ hours, there being on occasions as many as three passengers on the machine. On the upper reaches of the mountain, mist interfered with progress, and militated against successful photographs.—*Scotsman*, September 23.

THE question of who "discovered" Scottish scenery—discovered it, that is, in the sense of making its beauties known and so attracting other people to behold them—was practically revived in an interesting

article on "Wordsworth in Scotland" contributed by Mr. J. Logie Robertson to the *Scotsman* of September 13. Mr. Robertson asked what brought the Wordsworths (the poet and his sister) to the Trossachs in 1803, full seven years before Scott's revelation of that region, and gave as answer that the Trossachs had been discovered to the world beyond Perthshire by an article or contribution from Rev. James Robertson, minister of Callander, to Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland (1791-9). This was published separately and the pamphlet was well known to the Wordsworths. "I," said the worthy minister of Callander to a rival claimant for the honour—"I was the person who first made the Trossachs known, and I may say it without presumption, for before 1790, except to the natives and a few individuals in the neighbourhood, this remarkable place had never been heard of." But the Wordsworths had also in their possession the MS. of "Tours to the British Mountains" by their Quaker friend, Thomas Wilkinson, and had carefully read the section devoted to "The Perthshire Paradise." Wilkinson's Trossachs tour was made in 1787, though his work did not appear till 1824.

"A WORLD TRAVELLER RETURNED," writing on "The Finest Sights in the World" in the *Daily Mail* (July 11), said—"Among mountains I had long thought the Matterhorn to be the peak which grips you most; and I have seen something of the Himalayas and many other mountain ranges. So much depends upon the way you see a place, however. You must

abandon the railway in the Rhone Valley and go amid the mountains on foot until at that last turn in the road you see the lonely

SUPREMACY OF THE MATTERHORN. peak far above you, piercing the clouds, wreathed in whirling snow, Nature's mightiest expression of the thoughts which led men to build cathedral spires.

The mountains which are graven deepest in the memory are always those which have a certain isolation." This letter produced the customary controversy as to what really is the finest sight in the world. As regards mountain views, one correspondent declared for the superiority of "The view of the Jungfrau as seen on a fine evening in the afterglow from Wengen, when the vast expanse of snow and ice fades through every colour on the scale from rose pink to lilac and slate," adding—"Famous though the view from Muerren is, and justly celebrated by the late J. A. Symonds, it does not, to my mind, equal the sweep of mountains from Wengen."

THE most free and ideal of all holidays is the walking tour. It is the most recuperative to mind and body, the most full of happy adventure, the most devoid of a shadow of care. Walking tours are the

A PRACTICAL WALKING TOUR. enjoyment of a wise few; they would be the delight of many more if it were not for a misconception that the motor has spoilt walking. But the motor is tied to the

roads, and the pedestrian need be as little on roads as he wills. There are vast areas in Great Britain alone where you may walk all day and scarce ever tread a road. There are hundreds of miles of Alpine valleys where motor traffic is forbidden by law. Other misconceptions are that the walking tour is fatiguing, the transport of one's baggage is a grievous burden, and blistered feet are an inevitable trouble. A few simple observations will make a walking tour the most delightful experience you can imagine. They resolve themselves into where to walk, what to wear and carry, and how to walk. Make a programme before you start, but then make a resolution that you are the master of your programme and not your programme master of you. Nothing spoils a walking tour like the tyranny of a time-table. Both as regards Switzerland and the United Kingdom it is easy enough to plan tours from Baedeker for the former and Baddeley's splendid guides for the latter. All these books give specimen tours. The walking tours in Baddeley are particularly well worked out. Make up your mind what is the least possible amount of baggage that you can do with, cut it down to half, and then go ruthlessly through the remainder with the stern determination to halve it again. It is surprising how every ounce becomes a pound by the middle of a long day. Leave at home that old-man-of-the-sea of so many tourists' backs, the mackintosh. There are more fine days, when it is a desperate burden, than wet days, when it is a doubtful blessing. It matters not how soaked you may be if you keep moving, change directly on arrival, and have wet clothes properly dried. Many walking tours are spoilt all through by too much zeal at the start. Do nothing at all on your first day but loaf about. Take a mere saunter on the second day, on your third day commence with half what the guide-book gives for a full day, and then go ahead. Walk easily at first, and never hurry. Walk steadily; short rests will only make you tired. Take one

good rest at mid-day, and a light meal out of the rucksack. Drink as little as possible; never drink out of unknown streams and alluring springs. "T. B.," in *Daily Mail*, August 7.

NOT for a number of years have the high lying corries of the Cairngorms carried such extensive snow beds throughout the summer as was the case during the present season, and at the date of writing (October 30) there are a larger number of beds of the old winter's snow still remaining than I ever remember during a somewhat extensive experience of this interesting hill range.

There are two important factors in determining the amount of snow which is to remain unmelted during the summer and autumn months. The first is, obviously, the nature and severity of the winter snowfalls, and the amount of wind which accompanies these storms, for it is entirely due to the wind that we have any eternal snow in this country, the heaviest snowfalls which are experienced on the hills being quite insufficient to remain beyond the month of June were it not for the fact that most of the snow is drifted clear of the summits and exposed parts of the hills, to be deposited in immense drifts in the more sheltered corries. The second factor in connection with the diminution of the snow fields, and one perhaps not generally realised, is the direction and strength of the winds which blow from May till October. A day of even the most tropical sun heat will have a less marked effect on a bed of snow than a night of storm and rain, with a southerly or sou'westerly gale sweeping the hillsides. The present season bears out in a striking manner this interesting point. From early June right on till October 13th there was a marked absence of winds of any force—the September equinox passed with nothing more than a fresh breeze—and what wind there was blew from an easterly point almost continuously. It may be set down as a general rule that the snow beds do not diminish appreciably after the first week in October, but this year we have experienced exceptional weather right up to the date of writing. With the exception of three days—October 21st, 22nd, and 23rd—when the temperature was below the freezing point and a certain amount of snow fell on the high grounds, the month has been marked by a quite unusual prevalence of southerly and south-westerly winds with a high temperature, and even now the snow beds are decreasing in size daily, though in an average season the high hills would already be covered by the fresh winter's snow.—SETON GORDON in the *Scotsman*, November 8.

THIS winter, under the auspices of the Aberdeen Grammar School F.P. Club, Mr. Seton Gordon, F.Z.S., etc., gave an interesting lecture, in the Lounge of the Palace Hotel, on the birds of the hill country. He showed some seventy slides, all very interesting; and some of great beauty. He dealt chiefly with wild birds in the county of Aberdeen, of which he has made a special study during the last five or six years. On many occasions he had been out all night for photographs of the golden eagle or ptarmigan. In connection with a slide of a golden eagles' eyrie in the Braemar district

he related the unfortunate history of the pair of eagles which had come to that eyrie for many years. Last year they built a new nest which was knocked down by a heavy gale of wind. This year they built in rocks not far away and the eyrie and eggs were burned out in a heather fire. He had photographs of the interior of the eyrie, showing the construction of the nest built with fir branches. Eagles always use living branches, never dead branches with the result that one fir he knew, which was the only one in a district of 4 or 5 miles, was practically denuded of branches. The next picture showed the same eyrie containing two young golden eagles only a week old. It was taken on a very cold day and the birds could be seen huddled up together for warmth. The eagle lays and hatches very early with result that the hen is often sitting while the ground is covered with snow. Then the birds were shown at the age of a month: the feathers began to grow quickly at that age. Both these birds fell out of their nest, and only one survived the fall of some 50 feet. The young bird was shown at the age of seven weeks. A sort of second eyrie had been constructed round it where it fell, in order, Mr. Gordon imagined, to show any stray fox that it was not alone. The photograph also showed the whole feathers grown save those on the neck, these being the last to come in.

Mr. Gordon then showed pictures taken at another eyrie in the Cairnwell district, which was, he said, visible from the main road from Braemar to Blairgowrie. It was pretty high up, about 2,700 feet above sea level. Interesting pictures were shown of an adult golden eagle in flight. The lecturer said he had several times tried to get these photographs without success, because the bird always saw or heard him coming. He ultimately got within 300 yards of the nest before the bird flew away, he hid himself, and to his surprise within two minutes, after circling high above him, the eagle returned to its nest and went to sleep. A young bird about ten weeks old was shown in flight. This was interesting, as showing the difference between the strong flight of the old bird and the timid uncertain flight of the young.

Young golden eagles on their first flights sometimes get into difficulties in long heather and are quite unable to rise into the air again. They cannot get their feet down to the ground. On one occasion, Mr. Gordon was rather surprised to see a young one jump into a pool of water about four feet deep and using its wings as oars to propel itself across. He had never heard of a bird deliberately throwing itself into water far out of its depth before. Continuing, the lecturer said that the female was always larger than the male. Two eggs were invariably laid, one hatching into a cock and the other into a hen.

An interesting picture was shown of the head and shoulders of a young cock eagle. When Mr. Gordon took that photo the camera was on the edge of the eyrie only about a foot or a foot and a half away from the bird. The curious third eyelid of the bird was very distinct.

Although two eggs are laid by eagles he found it the exception rather than the rule for both to come to maturity. Various reasons had been advanced to account for that, but apparently it was because there was an insufficiency of food and the weaker bird succumbed.

On the day before his lecture he had been watching a golden eagle driving a hill for grouse. The grouse flying down-wind to escape seemed to fly quicker than any birds he ever saw. He thought they must have been going about ninety miles an hour. The wind was blowing about forty-five miles an hour and grouse being able to fly at sixty, their speed with the wind would probably be nearly a hundred miles an hour. The same week in Glen Lui seven miles north-west of Braemar, he saw a young golden eagle being mobbed by about eight hoodie crows. The eagle alighted on a tree and one after another the hoodies came down almost touching him, but he took no notice of them and one after another they flew off.

The next photograph was of a golden eagle's eyrie in a birch tree not very far from Inch Rorie. Close to the nest there was a right-of-way through which people passed almost daily so that it was rather surprising that the bird succeeded in hatching out its young. It was the only instance of an eyrie in a birch tree that he knew of.

Mr. Gordon next dealt with the peregrine falcon and said that in a certain locality he had known of a nest since 1907 and he did not think that on a single occasion the birds had hatched out their eggs. There was a place on the upper Dee, near Braemar, where the peregrine falcon occasionally tried to nest, but he thought they were usually shot. This bird had a very hard time in Aberdeenshire. It was generally believed that it lived on grouse, but he might say that he had never come across the remains of grouse at a peregrine falcon's nest, which, he thought, showed quite clearly that at any rate it did not live entirely on grouse as keepers seemed to imagine.

Mr. Gordon then showed several photographs of tree stumps on the Cairngorms, evidence that perhaps 500 or 1,000 years ago the timber line was much higher up than now. The tree stumps had been laid bare in digging for peat, and it was interesting that these stumps made much better fuel than the present day wood.

In connection with ptarmigan, the lecturer said that it was an extraordinary fact that those birds seemed to prefer to roost in the snow. He showed a picture of the Pools of Dee at the top of Larig Pass, 2,700 feet above sea level with roosting hollows clearly visible on the snow. Mr. Seton Gordon referred to the protective colouring of the red grouse and the ptarmigan. Their respective eggs were very much alike, but the ptarmigan was very rarely found below 2,500 feet and the grouse very rarely above. At the time of laying eggs the ptarmigan moulted, which accounted for white feathers found in the nest. On one occasion when he found a sitting ptarmigan which he wished to photograph, he fixed up his camera, but a strong gust of wind blew it right over close to the bird which, however, never moved.

Fifteen minutes after hatching, young grouse and ptarmigan were quite able to run about. Sometimes they were to be seen running about with pieces of eggshell still adhering to them. Birds nesting on the ground were able to run about much sooner than those in trees where they were more secure. Ptarmigan's nests were very rarely found on the hill slopes facing north but generally on the south or east to get the sun. That also held true

with regard to grouse. Mr. Gordon said that he had brought ptarmigan as close as six feet by imitating the call of the young bird in distress.

Near Glen Feshie the black-headed gull, dotterel and snow bunting could be found. The dotterel was an absolutely tame bird and the Gaelic name for it meant "fool of the moss." It was rather like a golden plover but had a white stripe running down from the back of its head. In connection with a photograph of a couple of young dotterel rather an amusing incident occurred. He was out with an experienced old stalker and they saw from the movements of the old birds that there must be a brood of dotterel in the vicinity so lay down and waited. They noticed two get up and run away and knew that there ought to be a third but it did not rise. When eventually they got tired waiting and rose up the old stalker found to his astonishment that he had been lying on the third bird and it was squashed absolutely flat.

Dealing with the snow bunting, the lecturer said that a pair of snow bunting came and nested near Cairntoul, but an English collector took the eggs and shot the birds, which he thought was greatly to be regretted as these birds nested very early. Of course, owing to the nature of the country, they could not be protected by law, but he thought they ought to be protected by the collectors themselves. Mr. Seton Gordon, in conclusion, showed several photos illustrating the severity of snowstorms in the higher altitudes. A particularly interesting picture was that of the snow bridge at the Garrachory on Braeriach which is 30 yards across and which in the memory of man has never been known to disappear.

OWING to the large number of accidents occurring every year to mountain climbers and tourists in the Alps, several Swiss insurance companies have established an accident policy for the benefit of persons MOUNTAINEER- undertaking these mountain excursions. For a premium ING POLICIES. of sixpence a season, certain Alpine clubs offer insurance to their members to the amount of about £4 10s., with medical care, &c., included. The amount of the premium is less where groups of five or ten persons are insured together. There is also an insurance policy issued for the winter season against ski and bobsleigh accidents in the Alps.

"THE night passed over without anything worth mention but we had occasion to observe in the morning an instance of the curious evaporation that is noticeable in the High Alps. On the previous night we AN ALPINE had hung up on a knob of rock our mackintosh bag containing Rodier's bad wine. In the morning, although the stopper appeared to have been in all night, about four-fifths had evaporated. It was strange; my friends had not taken any, neither had I, and the guides each declared that they had not seen anyone touch it. In fact it was clear that there was no explanation of the phenomenon, but in the dryness of the air. Still it is remarkable that the dryness of the air (or the evaporation of wine) is always greatest when a stranger is in one's party—the dryness caused by presence of even a single Chamounix porter is sometimes so great that not four-fifths but the entire quantity disappears." —*Edward Whymper, "The Ascent of the Matterhorn."*

“WHILE engaged in these operations the mist that enveloped the glacier and surrounding peaks was becoming thinner; little bits of blue sky appeared here and there until suddenly when we were looking
 DESCRIPTIVE towards the head of the glacier far, far above us at an
 WRITING. almost inconceivable height in a tiny patch of blue
 appeared a wonderful rocky pinnacle bathed in the beams
 of the fast sinking sun. We were so electrified by the glory of the sight that it was some seconds before we realised what we saw and understood that that astounding point, removed apparently miles from the earth, was one of the highest summits of Les Ecrins. The mists rose and fell presenting us with a series of dissolving views of ravishing grandeur and finally died away leaving the glacier and its mighty bounding precipices under an exquisite pale blue sky free from a single speck of cloud.”—*Edward Whymper, “The Ascent of the Matterhorn.”*

REVIEWS.

THE most interesting article of a general character in the October number of the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal* is one on “Argyll’s Bowling Green and Glen Croe,” by Mr. F. S. Goggs, the editor.
 ARGYLL’S The name of “Argyll’s Bowling Green” is in common use
 BOWLING to designate the triangular tract of country enclosed by Loch
 GREEN. Long, Loch Goil, and Glen Croe, in Argyleshire; but as this peninsula embraces eight hill tops over 1200 feet high, and as, to quote Mr. Goggs, “a rougher piece of country in a similar area it would be hard to find in Scotland,” it has been generally assumed that the name was given facetiously. One writer has supposed that it was meant either ironically or as a delicate compliment to some Duke of Argyll. “All Western Scotsmen,” he says, “have a high opinion of the greatness of Macallum More, and it may be that those who first applied the name meant to intimate by it that so powerful is the Duke, that what to ordinary mortals are stupendous hills, are to him a mere ‘bowling green’.” On making a little research, however, Mr. Goggs discovered that in the 6-inch Ordnance Survey map, the playful epithet was employed—not to denote the whole peninsula, but only a small plot of ground between Mark, on Loch Long side, and The Saddle, this being a flat and grassy spot, very like a bowling green. This was confirmed on reference to the Director-General of the Ordnance Survey, who said the name had been ascertained to apply to a small spot of ground near an old bridle path leading from Portincaple Ferry to Lochgoilhead, being the route traversed by the Dukes of Argyll in journeying to and from their seat at Inveraray and the south, prior to the formation of the present road through Glen Croe; and who added that it was in connection with their traversing this route that the name was derived. Mr. Goggs accordingly considers it a reasonable