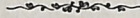


## EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.



DURING last week-end (wrote "W. A. R.," in an article in the *Free Press* of 29th January), four hill-lovers, members of the Cairngorm Club, resolved to have a walk over Lochnagar—one of them a gallant

LOCHNAGAR soldier, who had got a few days off to say good-bye to his  
IN friends before going oversea to drive the Germans out of  
SNOW. France and Belgium. It was a beautiful clear morning

with sunshine on the surrounding hills, and we found that we were in luck, for there was a white mantle for many, many miles all over, and the snow was in perfect condition. The Allnagiubhsaich path was filled with snow, and the snow all over was nice and crisp, and, with the continuous crunching under foot, made exceedingly pleasant walking, while the temperature, probably about freezing point, was not uncomfortable. The view of Ben A'an on the ascent was very striking. The path was completely lost before we got to the turn towards the west, and, of course, the Fox's Well was nowhere to be seen. Ascending the shoulder by the Devil's Ladder, which, by the way, was not visible, we had to face a good deal of ice as well as frozen snow, and on some of the slopes we felt much more comfortable in having an ice axe to cut steps here and there. On the plateau it was very fine, but there was very little inducement to remain on the top on account of the cold and a slight drifting of snow. We had to pause, however, to have a look at the great giants in the west, made more striking by reason of many snow clouds playing about their tops. There is certainly nothing finer to be got in Switzerland than was our five hours on snow—and we unwillingly retraced our steps, returning by the Glassalt Shiel and taking a couple of very good glissades on the way. Over Loch Muick was a beautiful herd of deer on the horizon, feeling themselves quite immune from danger, and our semi-friendly mountain friends, the ptarmigan, seemed to be numerous, and gave us a few croaks as we passed along. It took us two hours and a half to get to the top, and we dawdled down to the Glassalt Shiel so as to get to Ballater before dark.

WINTRY weather prevailed in the Scottish Highlands in the last week of February, and the Deeside hills were well covered with snow. In the last

days of the month, a party of four, one of them a young

BALLATER lady, went from Ballater to Mount Keen upon ski. The  
TO whole distance from Braikley to the summit of Mount

MOUNT KEEN and back to Pannnich was covered on ski. The  
ON SKI. snow was rather icy on the surface, and this interfered

with the running and made it dangerous in places. The

lady carried a rucksack with 8 lbs. weight in it for the whole distance, this being one of the conditions laid down by the Scottish Ski Club for an excursion qualifying for the touring test. The view from the summit of



Mount Keen was exceptionally clear to the east. The sea horizon was seen from Buchanness right down to Fife—not a hazy, indistinct sea horizon, as is often observed from the Deeside hills, but a clear cut definite line.

MANY members of the Club, we were glad to see, were present at Mr. Harold Raeburn's lecture on "The Russian Alps—Travels and New Ascents in the Caucasus Mountains," delivered in Aberdeen, MR. H. RÆBURN under the auspices of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, on 8th February. Their attendance was a very proper compliment paid to an expert and eminent mountaineer, who has made numerous "first ascents" and greatly extended our knowledge of high altitudes. In addition to many notable feats, Mr. Raeburn has carried out a very special work in the Caucasus, hitherto little explored, not merely by climbing mountains never before ascended, but by accurate observations of the orographical features of the region. He headed an expedition to these "Russian Alps" in 1913, and another last year, seven unclimbed mountains being ascended by the first party and other four by the second, these mountains ranging from 13,500 to nearly 15,000 feet in height. The lecture embraced graphic descriptions of the passes and ranges traversed, the glaciers and ice-fields encountered, and the new peaks "bagged," along with a pleasing and occasionally humorous narrative of the adventures that befel the hardy explorers. Unfortunately, Mr. Raeburn has yet to acquire a good deal of the art of the successful lecturer, and many passages of his interesting and delightful story were lost by persons seated at a distance from the platform. There was ample compensation, however, in the large number of beautiful pictures thrown on the screen, which conveyed excellent impressions of the prominent features of "the frosty Caucasus," and revealed wonders little imagined to exist in this remote and comparatively unknown tableland.

ALL hillmen are familiar with the hoarse croaking cry of the male ptarmigan as he circles round to settle on some neighbouring rock. The summer and the autumn plumage of both male and female are also well known, and are admirably suited to the barren hill-tops and watersheds where these birds find a home among the scattered boulders. The winter and early spring feathers of this Arctic grouse, however, are probably not so often observed.

Perhaps no members of the group of hairy-footed heath cocks are so interesting, on account of their peculiarly amusing antics at the nesting season, and the seasonal changes of plumage they undergo in order that they may assimilate themselves to the colour of their surroundings, and be thus protected from their numerous enemies. Ptarmigan are essentially high-ground birds, and are to be found in the most stormy weather on snow and ice-covered rocks, without any apparent sign of plant-life for miles around, and one is at a loss to understand what they get to eat. During this period both sexes of the common species become pure white, with the exception of their outer tail feathers, which are black, the male being distinguished by the presence of a small black patch in front of the eye.



It is noteworthy that the changes in colour are due, to a considerable extent, not to moulting, but to a rearrangement of the pigment in the feathers themselves. I have noticed, however, that absolutely pure white plumage on the back is not often met with, even on the higher Cairngorms, except in unusually severe winters, there generally being a few of the greyish autumn feathers left in the plumage on the upper parts. On the other hand, I believe that in the case of ptarmigan, which inhabit colder climates such as the north of Scandinavia and Spitzbergen, the male at least rarely dons the full summer and autumn plumage; a number of white winter feathers being retained throughout the summer, and in some instances, only the head and chest change colour, the rest of the plumage remaining white. It would thus seem that, in those countries where the summer is of short duration, sufficient time is not allowed for the full summer and autumn changes to be effected before the winter sets in. The armour of Nature is indeed wonderful, and it is possible that this parti-coloured plumage affords even better protection in such localities than if a complete change to the darker feathers took place.—J. McCoss.

THE story of the famous block of pine from the forest of Glenmore, at the base of Cairngorm, is told once more by Sir Herbert Maxwell in an elaborate and well-illustrated book on "Trees" recently

published. This is his account— "In 1783 Alexander, fourth Duke of Gordon, sold a great breadth of the pine forest of Glenmore to an English merchant, who took twenty-two years to fell it. The logs were floated down the Spey, and built at Speymouth into forty-seven ships of an aggregate burthen of 19,000 tons. When Mr. Osborne, the purchaser of the timber, finished his work in 1806, he sent a memorial plank to the Duke, which now stands in the entrance hall of Gordon Castle. It measures 5 feet 5 inches in width at the butt end, and 4 feet 4 inches at the top, and is of a rich dark brown colour. The top of this magnificent tree lies where it was cut off more than one hundred years ago, on the hill above Glenmore Lodge, 1,400 feet above the sea, and is still hard and sound, 3 feet in diameter where it was cut off. Now, had that been part of a tree, say, fifty years old, frost and wet would have rotted it to the core in ten years or less; but the snows and rains of a century have made little impression on the bones of the giant. Mr. Elwes was shown a tree in the King's Forest of Ballochbuie, on Deeside, which had been cut up after lying for seventy years where it fell, yet the timber was quite sound."

SIR HERBERT MAXWELL comments on the strangeness of "the Scots pine" being so designated, having regard to its enormous geographical range, and

to the insignificant area it occupies in Scotland as compared with the vast forests in Russia, Scandinavia, and other countries. It has received its name, he explains, because, although at one time it was spread as a native over all parts of the British Isles, it is now only to be found in a truly wild state in the fragments of old forest remaining in Strathspey, Deeside, and here and there in the counties of Inverness and Perth. He adds that, despite all the scores of exotic conifers introduced to furnish



British woodlands with profitable timber, the Scots pine, in his judgment, need fear no rival in beauty after reaching maturity. He has apparently no patience with the common objection that a pine forest creates a tiresome monotony, and he declares emphatically that the most beautiful tract of Scots pine forest he has ever seen is that which clothes the slopes of the Wishart Burn, near Gordon Castle, and was planted about 180 to 190 years ago. In a section of the book devoted to the birch, Sir Herbert Maxwell refers briefly to the beauty of the birch woods of Strathspey, specially eulogising those on both sides of the railway near "Lochinsch Station"—Kincaig is doubtless meant.

AMONG mountaineering books recently published is "The Conquest of Mount Cook and Other Climbs," by Freda Du Faur—an account of four seasons' mountaineering on the Southern Alps of

A LADY New Zealand. The *Times Literary Supplement* of 8 MOUNTAINEER. April, in a notice of the book, said Miss Du Faur must be accorded a high place among climbers, and gave the following summary of her feats:—"Few people of any sex can record four years of achievement more noteworthy than that described in this book—two ascents of Mount Cook (one including the traverse of the whole summit ridge), the first traverse of Mount Sefton, ascents of Mount Seely, Mount Malte Brun, the Minarets, Mount de la Bèche, Mount Tasman, Mount Dampier, and Mount Lendenfeld, together with several virgin peaks and numerous failures, each almost as honourable as any success. This is a splendid and crowded tale, for many of these expeditions required one or two bivouacs, and almost all were, though not wholly new, sufficiently unusual to impart that touch of uncertainty which keeps the climber on stretch throughout the day and gives the alternation of agony and delight."

AN ardent hill-climber met his death on the hills in a somewhat tragic manner in the beginning of April. Mr. H. A. R. Chancellor, of Newton and Birkcleugh, Elvanfoot, Lanarkshire, left Edinburgh one day for Wanlockhead, intending to ascend Green DEATH ON THE HILLS. Lowther. Two days later, his body was accidentally found by a shepherd lad in a lonely spot on the Stake Moss, near the Enterkin Pass. It is surmised that the climb had been too much for Mr. Chancellor—he was seventy-three years of age—and that he succumbed to an attack of heart disease, dying all alone in this remote place among the hills.

"CONFOUND the fellow that invented barbed wire!" The all too mild imprecation will be heartily endorsed by every mountaineer. It came, however, not from a hill-climber, but from an officer at the front (Captain Robert Miles) who fell two days after writing the letter (subsequently published) in which the phrase appeared. Barbed wire entanglements are a conspicuous feature of the defence of the trenches—"a horrid-looking sort of exaggerated crinoline of barbed wire," Captain Miles described a German arrangement he had an opportunity of inspecting. "Charging that little lot under heavy fire," he wrote sardonically, "will be a very pleasant business. At the best one will tear one's only pair of trousers, and at the



worst one will get hung up in it while they shoot you in the more tender portions of one's anatomy." Fortunately, damage to clothes is the most that results from an encounter with barbed wire in our "operations," but it generally provokes a volley of language which, like that of Truthful James's friend, is "frequent and painful and free."

A sense of personal loss must have been experienced by not a few members of the Club on the announcement of the death of Mr. William C. Smith,

K.C., LL.B., advocate, Edinburgh, which took place

THE LATE (after an operation) on 11 May. Mr. Smith was a keen

MR. WILLIAM mountaineer, and a past President of the Scottish

C. SMITH. Mountaineering Club; and some of us have met him and

"tramped" with him in the region of the Cairngorms.

He had a very warm heart to the Cairngorm Club, and doubtless pleasant memories still survive of the genial and interesting lecture on "The High Hills" which he delivered to the Club in March, 1910. Mr. Smith was an occasional contributor to the *C.C.J.*; to him we owed the articles on "The Cairngorms" (July, 1899) and "The Attraction of the Hills," (July, 1911). He also contributed to the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal*.

We lost another occasional contributor in the person of Mr. John Milne, LL.D., the well-known historical and antiquarian writer, formerly school-

master of King-Edward, who died at Aberdeen on 15

OBITUARY. January, aged 83. His most important article was "A

Geologist on Cairngorm," in our issue for January 1909,

but he also wrote on "The Coyles of Muick" (July 1906), and on "Kirkmichael (Banffshire) Place Names" (January 1904).—A warm friend

of the Club, well-known to the older members, was the late Mr. John M'Donald, Deebank, Braemar, formerly in Bragarrie (Corriemulzie).—

Mention may also be made of Donald Scott, for long a well-known figure at the Linn of Dee, where he latterly resided, and where he died on 24

April. He had been employed on the Mar estates for the last thirty years, and was at one time stationed at the Corrour bothy, and afterwards at Derry Lodge, and so was known to many mountaineers.

THE number of members of the Club engaged in military service in one form or another, as a consequence of the demands

THE CLUB AND occasioned by the war, is now twenty-six. The

MILITARY SERVICE. following have to be added to the list given in our last issue :—

Captain E. W. H. Brander, 4th Gordon Highlanders.

Lieut. R. J. A. Dunn, 2nd/4th " "

2nd Lieut. W. B. Meff, 1st/7th " "

Captain J. B. Miller, Abd. Fortress Coy., R.E.

" John Murray, 2nd No. 1 Coy., N. Scott. R.G.A.

A. I. M'Connochie, A.S.C. Office (Transport work), Glasgow Barracks.

Captain Dickson, Lieut. W. L. Cook, Lieut. A. M. Johnston, and

Lieut. A. M. Wilson have been wounded.