

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE SGARSOCH MARKET.

TO THE EDITOR, "CAIRNGORM CLUB JOURNAL."

SIR,—I was much interested in finding that, after many days, Mr. W. M. Alexander had revived this subject in our *Journal*. As you have been good enough to ask me for any remarks that strike me, I have much pleasure in responding.

My first excursion was made to Sgarsoch nearly a quarter of a century ago in company with the late Mr. William Brown. An account of it will be found in the first number of the *Journal*; I rather think I wrote it myself. The reference to the market may be quoted—"At one time a cattle market was held on Sgarsoch, and a right-of-way exists from the Falls of Tarf direct to Glen Feshie by the east shoulder of Sgarsoch." The following extract is from my "Deeside," the statement as to Sgarsoch not having been lightly made—"An Sgarsoch is a flat-topped hill, with grassy slopes, where formerly a cattle market was held. This 'Tryst' was the successor to a market previously held in Glen Feshie; latterly it was removed still farther south, till it ultimately become stationary at Falkirk."

My second climb of Sgarsoch was made with Mr. W. M. McPherson, of the Club, under the disadvantage of several feet of snow. Nevertheless the following extract from an account of the climb in the *Scotsman* (23rd November, 1909), has some bearing on the subject:—

Near the summit there are not a few cairns, which, according to some authorities, mark the site of a cattle market long before the birth of the Falkirk Trysts. There are similar puzzling cairns on the Knock of Braemoray. The north face of An Sgarsoch has two corries which may be mentioned. One is Coire Dhonnachaidh Taillear, but, unfortunately, the

tailor who gave it its name is himself forgotten ; the other is Coire an Tobair, the corrie of the well. This well shows signs of man's attention, and so should be remembered when the "market" idea is being considered. It must not be forgotten that the "market" was in the line of an old drove road between north and south. Knox's map of the Basin of the Tay (1836) indicates the ancient right-of way, though the Ordnance Survey is silent on the subject. Nevertheless, we have had talk with an old man who has seen sheep driven along it about 40 years ago.

I may add that when in company with McPherson I could (as I fancied), despite the snow, pick out indications of the site of the market.

It must now be over two score of years since, in my early Cairngorm wanderings, I first heard of the tradition, which latterly I found to be "very strong in Braemar" and in Glen Feshie as well. Many members of the Club will remember the late Mr. Donald McDonald, Ballochroick, Glen Feshie, who was a particularly well-informed Highlander. With him I have had many interesting conversations on local topographical and other subjects ; he regarded the Sgarsoch market not as a tradition but as a well-assured fact. In later years I have had the benefit of intercourse with Mr. James McHardy, now resident in Hamilton, but a native of Braemar, born at the Linn and partly brought up at the Bynack, which was originally known as Croclach. His father (Sandy) was at the Bynack upwards of thirty years and accordingly knew Sgarsoch well, more especially as he was gamekeeper to the Earl of Fife. James and I have often discussed the market tradition as well as numberless other Braemar tropics, but the sum of the particular matter in hand may be given in an extract from a letter which he wrote me last month—"My father believed in a market having been held on the top of Sgarsoch. All the stones are collected together on both sides of the Drove road, and the guide marks are to be seen to this day. . . . You can easily see the marks of the old road yet. The top [of Sgarsoch] is three-quarters of a mile long where the stones are gathered off."—I am, etc.,

ALEX. INKSON McCONNOCHE.

THE STRENGTH OF THE HILLS.

Afar in the west the great hills rose,
 Silent and steadfast and gloomy and gray :
I thought they were giants, and doomed to keep
Their watch while the world should wake or sleep,
 Till the trumpet should sound on the judgment day.

I used to wonder of what they dreamed
 As they brooded there in their silent might,
While March winds smote them, or June rains fell,
Or snows of winter their ghostly spell
 Wrought in the long and lonesome night.

They remembered a younger world than ours,
 Before the trees on their top were born,
When the old brown house was itself a tree,
And waste were the fields where now you see
 The winds astir in the tasselled corn.

But calm in the distance the great hills rose,
 Deaf unto rapture and dumb unto pain,
Since they knew that Joy is the mother of Grief,
And remembered a butterfly's life is brief,
 And the sun sets only to rise again.

They will brood and dream and be silent as now,
 When the youngest children alive to-day
Have grown to be women and men—grown old,
And gone from the world like a tale that is told,
 And even whose echo forgets to stay.

LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON.

—“*In the Garden of Dreams.*”