

GLENMORE: A NATIONAL FOREST.

THE purchase of the estate of Glenmore from the Duke of Richmond and Gordon by the Forestry Commission is an event of outstanding importance, not only from the point of view of national silviculture, for the estate is one of the most famous timber glens in Scotland, but also from the mountaineering point of view, for Glenmore extends to the summit of Cairngorm and the State therefore now owns a 4,000 ft. mountain. It is perhaps an augury of the future when the nation will acquire the whole of the Cairngorms and make this region, the loftiest and, in some respects, the grandest in Scotland into a reserve like the noble national parks which have been established in the United States and Canada and South Africa.

The estate of Glenmore has been in possession of the Gordon family for many generations. Mr. A. I. McConnochie in his book "The Deer and Deer Forests of Scotland" quotes a letter from the Duke of Gordon dated Gordon Castle, 12th August, 1728, addressed to the forester in Glenmore, "James Stewart, upon sight hereof you will go to the fforest and kill a stag and immediately convey the same to Culnakie for Colonel Thorpe, for doing whereof this shall be your warrand—Gordon. Ffor James Stewart, fforester of Glenmore." Sheep were removed from the glen in 1859 and since then it has been a deer forest only. Apart from some fields round the lodge there is no cultivation in the glen. Mr. McConnochie states that William Macdonald, the keeper in Glenmore, who died in 1850, was the original of the leading figure in Landseer's well-known picture "Bringing Home the Deer." He has been credited with

being the last of our sun-worshippers; he resorted every morning to a grassy hillock, bowing towards the sun and saying his prayers and gave as his reason for this that his father had done the same. For many years in the last century the Earl of Stamford rented Glenmore along with Abernethy on the east and Rothiemurchus on the west, a big stretch of country.

Glenmore takes in a large part but not the whole of Loch Morlich, that noble water beloved by mountaineers for the beautiful foreground which it makes to the snowy corries of Cairngorm. Enough of the old pines still stand at the lochside to enrich the scene, though the woods have been greatly cut in recent years. Of this more later. From the loch going north the estate takes in the Slugan, the picturesque gap which runs through the hills to the church of Kincardine on the Spey. It turns eastward along the crest of Craiggowrie and Meall a' Bhuchaille to the pass of Rebhoan in which lies the little Green Loch. This pass through to Nethy Forest is one of the most distinctive spots in the whole of the Cairngorms. From this point the march runs up the north ridge of Cairngorm, a distance of some five miles from the Pass of Rebhoan to the summit, 4084 ft. Hence it runs along the plateau westwards by the top of the corries but it does not go as far as the Larig Ghru, descending on the nearer ridge to Loch Morlich. The acreage is 12,653. Though not extensive as some estates are, Glenmore is unique in its combination of loch, forest and mountain. There are finer sheets of water than Loch Morlich; there are nobler pine woods than in Glenmore; there are loftier and wilder mountains than Cairngorm; but nowhere are the three elements of Highland landscape, water, wood and mountain, presented in grander unison.

The timber in Glenmore is not primeval as in Ballochbuie: it has twice been felled—at the end of the eighteenth century and again, a hundred years later, at the beginning of the twentieth century. There is preserved at Gordon Castle a great plank of Scots fir, 5ft. 8in.

broad at the lower end, bearing a brass plate with the inscription given below. The plank has been exhibited in the forestry section at Wembley this summer :—

In the year 1783, William Osbourne, Esq., merchant, of Hull, purchased of the Duke of Gordon the forest of Glenmore, the whole of which he cut down in the space of twenty-two years, and built during that time, at the mouth of the River Spey, where never vessel was built before, 47 sail of ships of upwards of 19,000 tons burthen, the largest of them of 1050 tons, and three others, but little inferior in size and now in the service of his Majesty and the Honble. East India Company. This undertaking was completed at the expense of labour only of about £70,000. To his Grace the Duke of Gordon this plank is offered as a specimen of the growth of one of the trees in the above forest by his Grace's most obedient servant.

W. OSBOURNE.

Hull, Sept. 26, 1806.

The timber cut in Glenmore was floated down the Spey. At the foot of Loch Morlich were sluice gates, the remains of which are still standing, and, in order to carry the logs down the Luineag to the Spey, the gates were opened and artificial floods were let down the stream, exactly as is done in the Canadian timber lands to-day. In the stream above Glenmore Lodge on the way to the Green Loch similar dams are to be seen.

When Mr. Osbourne of Hull ceased cutting 118 years ago, Glenmore was left to itself. The forest grew again by natural regeneration and in a century's time rich woods once more clothed the slopes round Loch Morlich and made dark the Slugan and the Pass of Rebhoan. The Great War brought a demand for timber, and the forest in Glenmore, now ripe for felling, was sold to the Government. The Canadian Forestry Corps was sent to fell the wood. The Slugan was first cleared, a camp and saw-mill being established at the south end of the pass not far from Loch Morlich. There was no floating of the logs down the streams as in olden times. A little railway two and a half miles long was laid from the saw-mill up the Slugan glen and upon this the trees

were brought down to the mill and, in order to carry the sawn timber to the railway at Aviemore, a line, five miles long, was built from the mill to Aviemore. This line had to be floated over a boggy stretch on slabs and brushwood and it was carried across the Drurie by a trestle bridge 60 feet long. The Spey was crossed by the public bridge. It was in November, 1916, that the Canadians arrived at the Slugan and by autumn 1917 they had completed the cut, some 50,000 trees altogether being felled. They then went on to Nethy Forest to cut there but, before they left, another company of Canadians had already arrived at Glenmore to cut the timber on the south side of Loch Morlich and up to the Green Loch. A camp and saw-mill, similar to the Slugan one, were erected at the upper end of the loch on the south side of the stream, just opposite the Lodge, and close to the stalkers' path that goes up Cairngorm. Here over 200 men were engaged all through 1918. Railways to haul the logs were built in various directions out from the sawmill, and the Aviemore line was extended from the Slugan round the top of the loch in order to take out the sawn timber. The camp, lit with electric light and with its busy steam mill, was a curious note in the centre of the forest, but not more strange than the assemblage of Canadians cursing the rain and mist of Scotland and the motley gang of Russians, Greeks and other foreigners known collectively as "Finns" for no very clear reason. The number of trees cut at the Loch Morlich camp was 76,000. The railway to Aviemore remained in use for a year or two after the war until all the timber was removed, and summer visitors used to ride up in the wagons to the loch and come down with the loads of wood. The rails have now been lifted.

The Duke of Richmond and Gordon stipulated when the timber was sold to the Government for cutting during the war, that scattered trees should be left standing in order to secure natural seeding and regeneration of the forest. This was done and the precaution had the additional

advantage of preserving, to some extent at least, the amenity of the scene. The glen was not reduced to absolute bareness. The estate, not merely the standing timber but the land itself, now passes to the State and it will be interesting to see on what lines the Forestry Commission develops its new possession. Probably the Lodge and the shootings will be let but deer will be subordinate to sylviculture. A planting programme will be prepared, with a view to putting the glen under a rotation of cropping as in the State forests of Germany and France. There is to be planting of the ordinary kind, that is, putting in young plants, and it is understood that seeding is also to be tried, the only preparation that the ground gets in this case being a breaking of the surface so that the seed, blown from the trees, may more easily find lodgement. The railways laid by the Canadians, though dismantled of rails, will easily be restored and may prove useful in the permanent scheme of the forest. The whole experiment will be watched with intense interest and sympathy by mountain lovers. This is not the only land acquired by the Forestry Commission. It has already made many purchases in various parts of the country. But none are so rich in interest or so full of promise as the purchase of Glenmore.