

"COME TO SCOTLAND," WINTER SPORTS, AND HOSTELS.

UNDER this omnibus heading it may be interesting to put together some notes upon recent developments, the purpose of which is to bring people to the Scottish Highlands or make it easier for them to visit the Highlands.

The "Come to Scotland" movement was launched at a meeting held in Edinburgh about a year ago. The meeting was called by the then Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, Mr. Tom Johnston, and, as a result of the favourable response given by a large gathering representing all parts of Scotland and varied interests throughout Scotland, a body named the Scottish Travel Association was formed on the lines of the Travel Association of Great Britain and Ireland, for the purpose of stimulating "the tourist industry" in Scotland. Very possibly the whole idea will be distasteful to some readers of *The Cairngorm Club Journal*, who would prefer to see the hills kept for the elect and not opened to the many, but into this difficult question of when a mountaineer is a tourist or when a tourist is a mountaineer, I shall not enter. Suffice it to acknowledge the undoubted fact that the tourist industry is a very valuable source of revenue to France and Switzerland and other countries, and also the equally plain fact that in these hard times we in Scotland cannot afford to ignore anything that will bring revenue to our borders. A great deal could be done to popularise the Highlands by new roads and new hotels without vulgarising the country or destroying the inner fortresses of the glens and hills.

The subject has unexpectedly entered upon a fresh phase because of the fall in the value of sterling, and the appeal which has been made to the public to stay at home and not go abroad for holidays. "Scotland for Winter Sports" has become the slogan, and at various places, and notably Braemar, an effort is being made to develop a winter season. There is no one who does not wish this project success. In

recent years a good deal of ski-ing has been done on the higher hills on Deeside and Speyside, and frequently the conditions are equal to anything to be enjoyed in Switzerland. Skating and curling can also be got, sometimes for weeks on end. Unfortunately in Scotland the weather is more variable than in the Alps, and it is to be hoped that the visitors who are coming to Braemar this winter have been duly warned not to expect absolutely Swiss conditions. This does not mean that they will not have a very good time. Even if the frost does jump suddenly and skating become impossible, the scenery and the air are still there, and visitors can have an exhilarating holiday. There is always snow on the higher slopes for those who are willing to carry their ski for some distance, while in the corries the mountaineer can get snow and ice work that will test his fullest powers. The hotels at Braemar have put themselves to very considerable trouble to cater for winter sports holiday-makers this season, and everyone will hope that their enterprise will be rewarded.

The hostels movement is particularly interesting, as it reflects the growing popularity of walking and hiking. Every member of the Cairngorm Club is a lover of the open air, and will be delighted to see that the younger generation of to-day is not wholly given over to mechanical means of transport and is still able to use its legs. The Scottish Youth Hostels Association has been formed for the purpose of establishing hostels or club huts for walkers on the lines of the hostels provided so successfully in Germany, and more recently in England. In Germany there are over 2,000 such hostels, and the number of walkers who use them runs into hundreds of thousands every year. The Scottish Association, though only a year or two old, has already founded ten hostels, five of which are in the Borders, and the others at various points in the Highlands. The Border hostels form a chain, the maximum distance between any two being 15 miles, and the hope is entertained that ultimately the chain will be extended all over Scotland.

The hostels are open to members of the Association, the annual subscription to which is 2/6 for persons under

25 and 5/- for persons over that age. At each hostel members are supplied, for 1/- per night, with bed, three blankets, cooking utensils and fuel. They must supply themselves with their own food, eating utensils, soap, and towel. On arrival the member must present his membership card to the warden, and it will not be returned to him if there is any complaint about his conduct. On the membership card is the following declaration :—

I hereby promise

To leave no litter.

To leave the Hostels tidy.

To respect and preserve the amenities
of the countryside.

To obey the Association's rules.

It will be seen, therefore, that the aim of the movement is not only to make rambling and hiking easy, but also to educate and mobilise young opinion in defence of the countryside.

A branch of the Association has been started in Aberdeen, with Lord Forbes as President and Professor Alexander Gray as Chairman, and it is hoped to establish this year hostels on Deeside and Donside which will fit in with similar hostels in Angus and on Speyside. As will have been gathered from the preceding details, the hostels are not luxury establishments. They will make no appeal to the loafer: they are intended for the real walker. Many an older member of the Cairngorm Club will wish that there had been such hostels in his young days, and the younger members will welcome them. And all, whether old or young, can help the movement by joining the Association, the local secretary of which is Mr. D. J. Moir, 92 Queen Street, Peterhead, and the treasurer, Mr. J. Barclay Watt, C.A., 4 Bon-Accord Crescent, Aberdeen.

H. A.