

Transactions

OF THE

BANFFSHIRE FIELD CLUB.



The support of The Strathmartine Trust toward
this publication is gratefully acknowledged.

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The Weather of Banff.

There was read a paper by Mr A. J. Leigh, B.Sc., on meteorological observations taken at Duff House during part of 1914 and the whole of 1915, the latter forming, of course, a complete meteorological year, and although it was noted that the period was not long enough to admit of general conclusions being drawn, there were presented some features of local meteorological interest. In speaking of the weather of that part of 1914 over which the observations ranged, it was noted that the sunshine at Banff in June, July, and August was 37 per cent. of the possible, that being the highest figure for Scotland, Carnoustie coming second with 36 per cent. The mean temperature of September and October was 51.3 degs.—not three degs. below that of Bournemouth. The sunshine for these two months was again the highest in Scotland—34 per cent. of the possible, St Andrews coming next with 33½ per cent.

The writer, in dealing with the weather

conditions of Banff in 1915, analysed the meteorological figures month by month, and made the general remark that the district was favoured with better weather than was England. There was rather less sunshine, but a lower rainfall. June was the calmest month, September the most windy, and after quoting figures for Banff and other districts, it was remarked that Banff could not be considered an exceptionally windy place.

The mean temperature of the year at Banff was 45.7 degs., that figure including of course the night as well as the day temperature. The highest temperature of the year was 74 degs. on May 24 and September 8, and the lowest was 16 degs. on December 5. As showing that Banff is not subject to extremes, it was mentioned that the mercury passed the 70 deg. mark on only six days of the year, and on only one day did the thermometer fail to rise above the freezing point, that being on December 4. A comparison of temperatures throughout the country led to the remark that generally speaking the temperature of Banff is only 3 or 4 degs. below places 600 miles farther south.

In 1915 there were 1306 hours of bright sunshine at Banff, the feature of the sunshine record being the week 11-17th June. In these seven days there was an average daily period of sunshine of 13 hours 48 minutes, the maximum being 15 hours 18 minutes on the 15th. In the matter of the year's sunshine Banff held a middle place in the Scottish list.

The rainfall at Banff in 1915 was 31.55 in., being 10½ per cent. above the average, which is 28.5 in. A measurable quantity of rain was registered on 222 days, while one-half of the year's rainfall (15.77 in.) was accounted for on 31 days. Snow was observed to fall at Banff on 23 days, a surprisingly low figure, it was said, considering the latitude.

In summarising his figures, Mr Leigh mentioned as the most striking feature the similarity of the general climatic conditions to

those of the health resorts on the South Coast of England. "It comes as a great surprise to many who, unfamiliar with the Moray Firth coast, imagine its climate to be that generally but unjustly associated with 'Scotland'—a land of snow and bitter cold, to learn that the temperature of a district 550 miles north of London differs by less than 4 degs. from that of London itself, and is only two or three degrees below that of many of the English health resorts." Nor, it was added, was their surprise lessened on learning that often the annual rainfall at Banff was less than at many health resorts in England, and gales are infrequent, snow and severe frost uncommon, fogs exceptional, and thunderstorms rare, while for sunshine it was frequently a formidable rival to southern towns. The air at Banff was described as bracing, but not "strong," and it was said in conclusion that "the feeling of lassitude that is experienced at some places is almost unknown. The days are never oppressive and enervating as they frequently are during a sultry summer in the south."

The Chairman said they had listened with much appreciation, he was sure, to a very interesting paper. It was a paper also of no small scientific value and, what was of importance to the Club, it was of local scientific value. For the most part it covered the weather conditions of only one complete meteorological year, and in respect of that fact no hard and fast principles, no rule of averages, could of course be laid down from it, but as the basis of future work on these lines it gave form and shape in a scientific and exhaustive way to work that might yet be overtaken. (Hear, hear.) For regard had to be had to this fact that meteorology was one of the most difficult and involved of the sciences in view of the complexity of the phenomena that enter into its study, so that the only procedure to be followed to ensure its real usefulness was the faithful recording

of facts by long and efficient observation. In the paper they had heard they had an admirable beginning for the district of the Club. (Hear, hear.)

It seemed to him that the science of meteorology was one of the most important of all that made appeal to man's activities and well-being. Why were the polar regions destitute of industry and of population? Because of meteorological conditions. Why could not the white race from childhood upward live in India or in tropical climates? The answer was the same. The vast mining industries of the world had their birth, among other things, in meteorological conditions that had been experienced in times long distant. How was it that the man of the temperate regions of the world was as a rule the most active, the most persevering, the most tireless? It was not because of individual temperament; it was largely because of his environment, because of the natural conditions he had to meet and surmount. In the same way how was it that the agriculture of the temperate zone, the agriculture of Scotland, England, Denmark, and France, was among the most successful in the world? It was not because there prevailed here such a condition of the Tropics as was implied when they said that "you tickle the earth and a bountiful crop appears." It was largely because meteorological conditions were of a kind that invited to such a study of soil conditions and treatment as made inevitably for success and supremacy. The soil had to be humoured, as they might call it, and in that sense of humouring, continued through successive generations, there existed a wealth of experience that had put farming in the temperate belt of Europe in the foremost rank. The great cotton areas of the world, the rubber plantations of the world, tea, coffee, and so on, were all regulated so far as concerned their sphere of growth by climate, and climate, they knew, was practically determined

by the temperature and by the moisture of the air, these in their turn being dependent on the prevailing winds which were charged with the temperature and moisture of the regions they had traversed. The study of meteorology had brought to mankind knowledge of the prevailing winds over the different parts of the earth during the different seasons of the year, the regions of storms and calms, and so navigation had owed very much to the science. In this division of the Kingdom the matter had been left very much to private enterprise, for the Government of this wealthy country had decreed a few years ago that they could not spare a few hundreds a year to maintain such a true high-level observatory as that which used to be on the summit of Ben Nevis.

And as regards ourselves who lived in these Islands, this had to be said that the climate of the British Isles was excelled nowhere in the world. (Hear, hear.) An American might tell us that we had no climate, that we had got only samples. (Laughter.) Rather should we say with the Stuart King who declared that the English climate, akin, as Mr Leigh had shown, with that of the district of Banff, was of a nature that invited men out of doors on more days of the year than the climate of any other part of the world. (Applause.) We who faced the ozone-laden breezes from the Moray Firth, or, mounting a slight eminence, looked of a fair summer evening on the blood-red sun as it dipped into and made all glorious the ocean in the West, might well congratulate ourselves that in the matter of climate, take year in year out, we lived in a favoured corner of the land. (Applause.)

In the course of a short conversation that followed, ex-Provost Alexander spoke of the wide range of the paper and the facts, highly favourable to Banff and district, that it brought out.

Dr Mahood referred to the amount of work

and labour that had to be expended in the collection of so many statistics, and said his experience had been that there was a quality in the northern air that was eluded even by figures of the temperature. He suggested that useful work might be done by regularly taking the sea temperature.

Dr Manson Fergusson spoke of one feature of which he had had experience, that the night temperature in the Banff district went seldom to an extreme and appeared to be not so low as in many parts.

Mr C. S. M'Pherson noted how the paper laid down clear lines for future work of the kind, while Mr Weir said he had been struck with this fact that whereas rain in many parts had a dirty, sooty appearance, that at Banff was as clear as distilled water.

The thanks of the Club were conveyed to the author of the paper and to Dr Pickering for reading it in Mr Leigh's absence.