

## SGÒRAN DUBH AND THE WESTERN CAIRNGORMS.

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ON 13th April last, in glorious weather, I explored the whole of that portion of the Cairngorms which lies to the west of Loch Eunach and culminates in Sgòran Dubh. Leaving Lynwilg Inn at 7 a.m., the railway line was followed S.W. to the foot-bridge over the Spey. Geal Charn (3019) (the white cairn) was then climbed. A third of a mile beyond, a small 3000 feet contour on the one-inch map indicates a doubtful top, and a half-mile farther we rise to a height of 3185 feet (6-inch map) with the local name of Meall Buidhe (the yellow hill). Between this and the north summit of Sgòran Dubh is another doubtful top. Sgòran Dubh *Mhòr* (3635), as it is locally called, is 23 feet lower than the southern summit, known locally as Sgòran Dubh *Bheag* (3658), from which it is three-quarters of a mile distant. The north top, which appears the higher, has a large cairn on it; the southern, which has none, is grandly situated at the top of the splintered cliffs above the west of Loch Eunach, 2000 feet below, from which it could easily be climbed. Some splendid snow gullies descended right to the loch in the most perfect order for glissading.

The view is, of course, very similar to that from Braeriach, though less extensive. Due east, across Loch Eunach, Braeriach itself rises in fine broken cliffs which, with those on which we stand, form a grand amphitheatre. Beyond it and across the Learg Ghruamach are Creag na Leacainn and the other summits leading up to Cairngorm, which looks high but uninteresting. Over its left shoulder Corryhabbie is seen, and Ben Rinnes thirty miles to the N.E. Sgòr an Lochan Uaine (better known locally as the "Angel's Peak") and Cairn Toul are hidden by the big plateau of Braeriach. To the right of this plateau Cairn na Glasha is seen, both Lochnagar and Glas Maol being hidden. Near at hand, to the S.E., are the round uplands of Monadh Mòr and Beinn Bhrotain, which hide most of the Cairnwell hills.

Càrn an Rìgh, however, is in sight. A little to the E. of S. all four tops of the Beinn a' Ghlo range are seen over An Sgarsoch and Càrn an Fhidleir. Just to the left of the Athole Beinn Dearg, but double the distance off, one gets a peep of Farragon. Schichallion does not look well showing his broadside; the Ben Lawers range behind; and beyond and to the right a mass of hills scarcely distinguishable in the haze—for the southern view was not very clear—among them the Glen Lyon hills and probably Cruachan. Ben Alder was very conspicuous, the depression between it and the group immediately to the north being very marked. Among the latter Sgòr Iutharna's lancet edge stands out well. Much closer—18 miles W.S.W.—Meall na Cuaich, near Dalwhinnie, rises above his fellows. The Creag Meaghaidh range, 30 miles off, looks massive and well, with some fine crags and a curiously sharp-cut cleft to the north of its main peak, whose blunt cone shows more snow than anything else in sight, being as white as a wedding cake. In the depression between this range and the Ben Alder group, the Ben Nevis range stands out, with just to the right of it, a great distance off, a hill which is either one of the Ardgor mountains or Frosbheinn (Rosven) in Moidart. West, across the monotonous uplands of the Monadhliaths, is a noble diorama of Western Inverness-shire and Ross-shire mountains, in variety of outline far eclipsing all else in sight. Sgòr na Ciche at the head of Loch Nevis, upwards of 60 miles away, Carn Eige, Mam Sodhail, Sgùrr na Làpaich, the whole range of the Fannich Hills showing very clear, the Ross-shire Beinn Dearg 65 miles away, and then the long ridge of Ben Wyvis N.W., with some lower hills away to the north-east of it. In the foreground the eye wanders to the south over the uninteresting moorland I was next to explore, but to the west and north there is a charming view of Strathspey.

My next point was Càrn Bàn (3443) (the white cairn), one and a quarter miles S.S.W. It is a mere excrescence on the moor—a "top", though certainly not a separate mountain. Meall Dubh-achaidh (3268) (the hill of the black meadow or haugh) is more worthy so to be reckoned, both on account

of its being another mile and a quarter S.S.W., or upwards of two and a half miles from Sgòran Dubh, and because on the south it is cut off by the fine corrie of the Allt Garbhlach. Rounding the head of this corrie Meall Tionail (3338) (the hill of the gathering) was reached at 3.10. A half-hour was then wasted visiting Druim nam Bo (3005) (the ridge of the ox). It is a mere shoulder to the S.W. of Meall Tionail, unmarked by any cairn, and not worthy to be considered a "top". Diollaid Coire Eindard (the saddle of corrie Eindard) was my next object. It is the point marked 3184 on the one-inch map. Although unmarked by any cairn, its distance from Meall Tionail—one and a quarter miles E.—as well as its nearly equal height, entitles it to be considered a "top". Near its summit I found a small nest, unfortunately without eggs, but from the large number of snow buntings about, it is not impossible that it belonged to one. From here it took me an hour to reach the top, which lies a third of a mile S. by E. of the little Lochan nan Cnapan. It is a flat-topped swelling on the moor without a cairn. Its height is 3009 feet, having a small 3000 feet contour on the one-inch map. Another hour's walk brought me to the big cairn on the south plateau of Braeriach (4149) at 6.45. The 4061 and 4036 tops were next crossed; the former has a large cairn, the latter none. Then a rapid descent down a snow gully in grand condition for glissading, and the road was reached a mile below Loch Eunach at 7.45, and Lynwilg at 11.10. These times must not be depended on, as the day had been very hot, and many halts made to identify and enjoy the beautiful views.