

THE CLUB AND THE QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE.

THE Club having resolved to manifest its loyalty and attachment to our beloved Sovereign, who for sixty years has by universal assent sustained with graciousness and dignity the high station which she fills, and has performed with marked ability and prudence the duties pertaining to the ruler of the vast empire over which she reigns, deputed to a sub-committee to make the necessary arrangements for joining in the national rejoicings on this auspicious occasion, by illuminating on the night of Tuesday, 22nd June, the summits of three of the more conspicuous mountains which surround her much loved Highland Home. The points selected for irradiation, were Ben Muich Dhui, Cairngorm, and Lochnagar; and the members of the Club honoured with the duty of performing this labour of love were, for the respective summits named, Mr. Copland, first chairman of the Club; the Secretary, Mr. M'Connochie; and Mr. John A. M'Hardy, M.A. The necessary preparations were duly made, but here, as in other instances, "the best laid schemes of men, like those of mice, went a-gley". Most unfortunately the weather, which could not be controlled, turned out very differently from the weather on the night of the Jubilee in 1887, when the originators of the Club illuminated at midnight the summit of Ben Muich Dhui, to the astonishment of spectators on the summit of Lochnagar and elsewhere, as described in the interesting narrative by the Rev. Mr. Lippe, in the Club's Journal, July, 1893.

The following programme, drawn up by Mr. Copland, will be of general interest in the circumstances of such a unique celebration:—

CAIRNGORM CLUB.

PROGRAMME FOR FIREWORKS—22ND JUNE, 1897.

Rockets.—The rockets will be fired from stakes driven into the ground so as to stand steady. The stakes to be about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches square, and 6 feet long, and pointed at one end for driving into the ground. Two stakes for each station planted about six yards apart. The stakes

will stand about five feet above ground, and have two staples each, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet apart, into which the stick of the rocket will be placed for firing. These staples must admit of free movement of the rocket stick upwards. The rocket sticks will be attached to the rockets by the arrangement provided on the side of the rocket, and will be tied tight by a bit of twine, so as to fasten the stick securely to the rocket. The rockets are fired by lighting the point of the blue match-paper of the lower end of the rocket, which, when in position, points downwards—the conical end of the rocket pointing upwards.

Coloured Fires.—These are in 1 lb. tins. The contents of a tin or half a tin, as may be found suitable, will be strewn about a quarter or half an inch thick in a broad line or otherwise on a wooden board or flat stone, and then fired by igniting it. Match-paper will be provided for this purpose, as well as for lighting the rockets.

Order of Firing.—Rockets will be in position before 10:30 p.m., and precisely at that hour a rocket will be fired from each station. Immediately thereafter coloured red fire will be shown, then green fire, and at 10:35 rockets from each station, then coloured fire and rockets alternately so long as the fireworks permit, so as to exhaust the supply by 11 p.m.

The following are the reports of the several sections:—

I.—BEN MUICH DHUI.

This section left Aberdeen by the 10:10 a.m. train on Monday, 21st June, for Braemar, conveying the ammunition, and left at Ballater, under proper custody, the illuminants for Lochnagar. The day was fine and promising, although a strong wind blowing from westwards made heavy work for cyclists on the road to Braemar, and several times blew the head-gear from passengers on the coach. Noted the bonfires erected within sight on the route from Ballater to Braemar. Nothing else remarkable except that opposite to the "Lion's Face" the passengers had to dismount from the coach and clear the way by breaking off the upper branches of a birch tree which had been blown down by the gale, and lay across the road, barring the passage of the coach. Found, on arrival at Braemar, that a variety of functions had been arranged within a few days to celebrate the Jubilee there—namely, the inauguration of a fine granite memorial fountain, procession and fêtes to children, fireworks provided by the liberality of Lords Cairns and Vane Tempest, the exhibition for the first time of the electric

light at the Castletown, and not one, but two balls!—which were, according to all human experience, morally certain to attract the youth and the beauty of the district of both sexes, and to diminish our promised array of torch bearers to the summit of Ben Muich Dhui. We had written to the foresters at Glen Derry, directing the provision of two hill ponies to carry the ammunition, some firewood, and a kettle for toddy-making, up the mountain to the Sappers' House; but they, relying upon promises made before the balls, &c., were projected, suggested that the army of volunteers which they relied upon would traverse the snows of Ben Muich Dhui after the fashion of General Skobolieff when he scaled the Balkans and bivouacked among the snows on their summits, thereby rendering the provision of the ponies unnecessary. Fortunately for Skobolieff, no balls interfered with his arrangements, and consequently he suffered not from desertion. Our expedition, therefore, had its work cut out for it, but, weather permitting, we resolved to accomplish its purpose. This resolution was fortified by the unexpected arrival of two stalwart volunteers, who had crossed the Clova mountains, camping at night among the heather—the Messrs. Orr from Brechin, who evidently had not heard of the balls. We kept that information from them. Tuesday morning broke bright, clear, and beautiful—exceptionally so. At four a.m. the sky was a cerulean dome, clear of clouds, and continued so till about six o'clock. The pines on Sgor Dubh waved effulgent in the morning sunlight, and contributed to the promise of a glorious day, with a serene close.

Alas! alas! the sou' wester which the day before blew down birch trees from Craigs Cluny and Chonnich, blocking the coach road and promising to clear the air for Tuesday's illuminations, had overdone its work. The gale, too strong and long continued, brought from the Atlantic legions of rain-bearing and turgid mist-clouds, the advance guard of which, by eight a.m., were rolling in from Glen Geusachan, creeping along the bosoms of Carn a' Mhaim and Carn Crom, and sprawling over the ridge beyond Beinn Bhreac. This caused anxiety, but the sun, being still strong, gave hope

that, as the day advanced, the vapour would be drawn upwards. After breakfast, the Messrs. Orr, who were desirous to spend the day on Ben Muich Dhui, in order to see as much of it as possible, went off, carrying the ammunition for Cairngorm. They were instructed to leave it at the Sappers' House, protected from the weather, so that it could be got there at eight o'clock, by which time it was arranged the Cairngorm contingent would join the Ben Muich Dhui section. The Messrs. Orr performed their duty faithfully and well. They were at the Sappers' House by six o'clock, and remained until after ten o'clock, sheltering themselves as well as they could from the rain and mist on the lee side of one of the walls of the ruined building, but during the whole time they were there they neither saw human face nor heard sound of human voice. They reported dense mist and rain during the whole time of their stay, and the summit of the mountain never clear. About 9 a.m. two English gentlemen (Messrs. Waters and Handcock), who had cycled from Braemar to Glen Luibeg, and were resolved to ascend the mountain at all hazards, to sing the National Anthem on its top, got directions for their route, by Glen Luibeg and the Sron Riach of Ben Muich Dhui. They returned 'twixt five and six o'clock in the evening, drenched, yet hearty, and delighted with the performance of their duty. Their audience was invisible, but we believe not unappreciative. These gentlemen reported having entered the mist before they were half up the mountain, and they continued the ascent feeling their way, but never seeing ten yards before them. They got down again—a more difficult feat—by retracing the footsteps they had made in the snow during the ascent.

The Ben Muich Dhui section had arranged to start for the summit at one o'clock, but at that time the aspect of the weather made it prudent to defer. Hour after hour hope told a flattering tale by an occasional rift in the rolling mist-clouds which kept pouring into Glen Luibeg from Beinn Bhrotain and Carn Mor, upon the bosoms of Carn a' Mhaim and Carn Crom, where they twined and wreathed and rolled, hugging these mountains, as if loth to leave

them in their drifting course north-eastwards. The deer had come trooping down the hill-sides in the early forenoon to the low grounds—a bad weather sign—and not until well through the afternoon did we again get a glimpse of Carn Mor's fields of snow—only a glimpse, blotted out again by massive rolling cloud columns and the swish of rain. As the evening advanced, the sky lightened in the north-east beyond Beinn Bhreac, suggesting clearer weather in that direction, as well as eastwards, where a break in the clouds showed the much desired blue for a time. Away south-east also the sky above Morrone, and the high hill range between Glen Cluny and Glen Ey, lightened, suggesting that the Lochnagar section were under favourable conditions for their bonfire and firework display. As for us, the mist clouds continued to roll in over Beinn Bhrotain and Carn Mor, and we had, perforce, to resign ourselves to the inevitable. At 10:30 p.m., however, we sent up a rocket from Glen Luibeg, and burnt some coloured fires in testimony that, although defeated and frustrated in our purpose by the abominably disloyal weather, we continued unsubdued. The Messrs. Orr, who went to the summit of Ben Muich Dhui by the Loch Etchachan route, as already mentioned, returned with their unexhausted ammunition about two o'clock in the morning. They intended to make some sketches during the day, but the mist and rain prevented the production of paper, and the mist was so continuous and close that they never got sight of the party from Cairngorm.

The reporter desires to place upon record his grateful acknowledgment of the assistance given by Mr. M'Intosh, forester at Glen Luibeg, in the untoward circumstances in which he unexpectedly found himself on reaching Glen Derry, and without whose willing aid, and that of the Messrs. Orr, it would not have been possible for him to accomplish the programme of the Club, even had the weather become favourable for doing so.

ALEX. COPLAND.

II.—CAIRNGORM.

This party had a lively time, with varied experiences. At first Cairngorm was threatened with a crowd of Clubmen, but as the day drew near apology followed apology, till on the 21st only two supporters appeared at Aviemore to assist the Secretary in carrying out the official programme. At one time difficulty was anticipated in housing the celebrants in Rothiemurchus, but with such a reduction in the party the question of quarters was easily solved. Mr. and Mrs. R. A. Robertson, at the Dell, showed no small hospitality to the Club.

The 22nd opened well—too well! At one o'clock Cairngorm was a beautiful sight; at seven its three great corries were quite clear of mist, and dazzlingly white with snow patches. On Braeriach, however, the clouds—and beautiful clouds they were—possessed the summit, to which, indeed, they pertinaciously clung the whole day. Ben Muich Dhui was not quite clear, but at least inspired hope, and as the little party of three started from Coylum Bridge at eight o'clock the prospect was more than fair.

The Marquis of Zetland had facilitated matters for the Club, and his foresters, under Mr. Hector M'Kenzie, promptly carried out all instructions. Re-inforced by a party of four from Glenmore Lodge, the first considerable halt was made at the upper bridge of Allt Mor, where the rocket stakes were prepared. These were taken from the bridge itself; but it is proper to mention that the necessary material for a new structure was in position, and probably "the Queen's Bridge", as we then and there named it, already spans the brattling mountain burn. The day being so pleasant, and there being several hours to spare, the party sauntered rather than climbed to the top. Looking backwards, the telescope revealed a party of three ladies and a gentleman; later, these were passed by four gentlemen, who had no idea of taking things leisurely. The latter, indeed, took a mean advantage of the "official" climbers, getting ahead of them as they made a halt for the first lunch, which was partaken

of at a pleasant spring considerably to the left of the usual line of ascent.

As the last stage of the climb was being tackled, a suggestion was made that the Marquis's Well should first be visited. The divergence was accordingly made, but there was no Well to be seen; nothing but a great field of snow. Mr. M'Kenzie was not long, however, in ascertaining its precise position in spite of the five feet of snow which covered the familiar landmarks. Hitherto the hillmen were in excellent spirits—now waterproofs came into requisition, and Ben Bynac retired from view. The ladies' party was in possession of the cairn; the other had made the descent even more hurriedly than they had performed the ascent. The stakes fixed, we drank to Her Majesty's health, and sang "God save the Queen"; thereafter we entertained the ladies with a Gaelic song of the usual number of verses. As they said adieu, we took note of their mountain equipment, especially boots; some of our lady members will find it to their advantage to write us for particulars.

A solemn council was now held. Ben Muich Dhui was only occasionally in view, and the chances of the veteran venturing its ascent under such circumstances were considered to be extremely small—indeed, the weather on the Braemar side appeared to be stormy in the extreme, so much so that Mr. M'Kenzie strongly urged the party to abandon the idea. We determined, however, to keep our appointment, the more especially as the two "supporters" were anxious to visit the Shelter Stone, and cross over to the Ben under what they were pleased to call "such excellent auspices". A plunge was accordingly made into Coire Raibert, the upper part of which was covered with snow, while the lower was soaked with water—a description applicable to most of the corries visited later in the day. The Shelter Stone was first made for, and one of the grandest sights of the day was the view of Loch Avon looming below—a picture which left a good deal to the imagination. Considerable difficulty was experienced in crossing Garbh Uisge, which, with so much snow, was in

great flood. The mighty torrents and gigantic waterfalls that dashed over the crags at the upper end of the Dairy-maid's Field were most impressive; the force with which they sprang and leaped is easier imagined than described. The ascent, after another lunch at the Shelter Stone, was made by the right bank of the "Rough Water", so as to afford the best view of that torrent, as well as to avoid the necessity of crossing. A heavy drizzle was now experienced; the wind became a hurricane; the mist played hide and seek—but always contrived to conceal more than it revealed. The burn was followed all the way to its sources—enormous fields of unbroken snow—and the cairn of Ben Muich Dhui reached at 7:30. At that hour the weather conditions were somewhat improved, but the improvement was only temporary. A meeting of the Club, according to time-immemorial custom, was now held, the Secretary, on the motion of Mr. Alexander Esslemont, presiding. There could be no doubt of the qualifications of Mr. James Boyne, and he was accordingly admitted unanimously. The Club was literally not "strong" enough to vigorously carry out a certain little ceremony, so the newly-admitted member escaped easily. Two gentlemen, Messrs. Handcock and Waters, had evidently made the ascent earlier in the day and had left a record of their feat, in which only evil was spoken of the weather. We marvelled that they had brought no message for us, but never thought on visiting the Sappers' House, which was only occasionally in view.

The cairn was left in a reflective mood. There an enthusiastic band of mountaineers had celebrated the 1887 Jubilee, under Mr. Copland's leadership; death has removed one of us, William Anderson, a man whom to know was to love. But while the past claimed more than a passing thought, the present demanded most careful consideration, for thick mist made the return journey to Cairngorm no easy matter. Let us be truthful—we actually lost ourselves for a little, a circumstance for which the leader was solely responsible; but without much loss of time we descended by the route we had reached the summit. We turned our backs on the cairn—and also on the Sappers'

House, which was then in view—at 8.15, running along the long snow slope of the Garbh Uisge. Garbh Uisge Beag was leaped a short distance above its confluence with the larger stream; next the Feith Buidhe Burn was crossed, not without difficulty; and Coire Domhain was as artfully negotiated as possible. The name (“the deep corrie”) is particularly appropriate, but on this occasion the youngest member of the Club voiced the feelings of his companions when he expressed a wish that it had been made less inconveniently deep.

Cairngorm now began to show its cone, much to our chagrin in the circumstances. At 10.30 it was quite clear, and had a well-defined outline, for at least fifteen minutes, to the valley of the Spey. There was nothing to be done but to count the bonfires visible; they were forty all told, not including a brilliant display of fireworks in the direction of the Moray Firth. There was apparently a rivalry to be first ablaze; one or two anticipated the hour by ten minutes. But while the mountain top was clear, the strath was in many parts covered with long banks of mist; the neighbourhood of Kingussie seemed practically a blank. The finest bonfire effect was observed where the light struggled for visibility under thick cloud-mantles of mist.

The descent to Glenmore Lodge was made as rapidly as possible; had not Mrs. M'Kenzie very thoughtfully invited us to supper? Then came the tramp to Coylum in the early hours of the morning.

ALEX. INKSON M'CONNOCHIE.

III.—LOCHNAGAR.

The official party (numbering eleven) left Ballater at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, arriving at Alltnagiubhsaich Lodge at 7.30. Another section, under the leadership of Mr. William Brown, had already arrived there, and another contingent afterwards found their way up the Glen on bicycles, so that altogether about twenty members of the Club were on Lochnagar to take part in the celebrations. The weather was dull, but half-way up the hill there was promise of

a beautiful evening, and that the mist would clear away. It did so for a time, but ultimately the promise was not fulfilled, for the mist closed down, and never lifted again.

The summit was reached at ten o'clock, and there the Clubmen found their number augmented by a considerable gathering of people from the surrounding district—including Mr. Campbell, Glasallt Shiel; Mr. Cameron, Alltnagiubhsaich Lodge; and Mr. M'Intosh, Garmaddie, the foresters, who had, by order of Her Majesty, placed a bonfire in readiness for the party's arrival.

Everything was put in order without loss of time for the Club's display, and punctually at 10:30 the first rocket gave the signal for the illuminations to commence. This was answered by the reports of two cannon placed some distance down the mountain-side by Mr. Cameron. The bonfire was then fired, and soon the whole cairn was a blaze of light, a picturesque effect being added to the scene by the coloured lights placed at various points by the members. Three cheers were then given for Her Majesty, and the whole company joined heartily in singing "God save the Queen". It was stated by the foresters present that such a splendid "show" had never been seen on the top of Lochnagar. It was unfortunate, however, that the view was circumscribed by the mist, the only other light to be seen being in Glen Callater.

At midnight a meeting of the Club was held, under the presidency of Mr. John A. M'Hardy, when the following gentlemen were admitted members with the usual ceremony:—Mr. Arthur Brown, Mr. Robert Cumming, Mr. John Duff, Mr. James A. Hadden, Mr. James Henderson, Mr. Lachlan Mackinnon, Yost, Mr. Alex. L. Miller, Mr. George A. Simpson, and Mr. Donald Sinclair.

It may be here mentioned that two ladies, the Misses Campbell from Glasallt Shiel, were present during the whole proceedings.

The descent was begun at 12:30 a.m., Ballater being reached at 3:30. The members thoroughly enjoyed their midnight outing.

JOHN A. M'HARDY, M.A.