

SUNRISE ON THE MOUNTAINS:
CAIRNGORM AND BEN RINNES.

CAIRNGORM.

A PARTY from the Dell of Rothiemurchus ascended Cairngorm on the evening of 19th July last with the intention of seeing the sun rise. The night was dark, with driving scuds of mist and a cold wind, and the company found the climb slower than by day. At last the cairn was reached, intermittent showers and driving fog having been escaped as though by calculation, and the climbers stood huddled together to keep each other warm.

Before them lay a sea of mist, grey and cold, piled in gigantic and ever-shifting waves over the great shoulders of the hills around, while the summits stood above its invading sheet like islands in a moving sea. The height on the opposite side of the valley stood wrapped in a purple grey mantle, like a watch tower presiding over the fates of its fellows. Above hung the darker pall of cloud-veiled sky, and away at the horizon a line of blue-grey, darker than the mist and lighter than the cloud-pall, bore the promise of day.

Now and again the wind lifted the foam from the waves of the sea, and flung it, an intangible veil, before the group; now and again it detached small masses from the dark pall above, and drifted them across the band of promise, like ghostly messengers on a ghostly errand. Gradually the light grew, and the sea whitened under it, and the messengers, illuminated, became golden forerunners of the glory to come. The crests of the slowly-moving waves grew whiter still, and their depths a deeper blue, as the golden shafts of morning shot across the wakening world. The vision of the glory of life was in the sky as though some gigantic city of the East were there portrayed without the

soil of human life; and the mist, for one short moment, became a sea of palest gold, whose shadows were of pearl and whose depths were amethyst.

For a moment the vision stayed, a revelation of heaven, and then the glorious sun rose above the mist, and all shone cold and white and glistening—only to fade into the commonplace of life, as the radiant orb entered the heavy pall above, and the daylight, that is, a mixture of the light to come and of the primeval night, held its sway. The group then turned and looked in each other's faces to see the return of material wants in each other's features. The glory was not to be theirs yet, save in the memory of a vision, a vision that abides.

E. ROBERTSON.

BEN RINNES.

A PARTY of eight left Aberlour on a July evening at eleven o'clock for Ben Rinnes. At 12.30 an altitude of 1500 feet was reached, in the softest moonlight, when all eyes were directed to a suspicious mist which began to take definite form on the slopes of Ben Aigan. However, above, below, everywhere else reigned perfect clearness, and not the faintest zephyr broke the stillness of the night. The upward march resumed, we were soon at the base of the steep ascent to the Scurran, sometimes named, from their laminated appearance, the "Pancake Rocks". Just before this point was reached attention had been called to the first indication (with the exception of the brightening sky in the north) of the appearance of the sun. This was Venus, which rose with apparently great rapidity, owing to our now steep ascent. The summit of the mountain, the Scurran of Lochterlandich (2755), was reached about three o'clock. It was then daylight, although the sun had not risen; but down in the valley, between the Ben and the Convals, darkness still reigned supreme, and not a breath of wind stirred.

Eager faces were now turned to the clearing north. A band of dark red light, seemingly about twice the ordinary diameter of the sun, suddenly appeared. The central

portion of this belt rose from the rest, the red meanwhile becoming less deep, until most of the disc was above the horizon. The shape was now almost identically that of a top, only broader in proportion at the widest part, and less tapering towards the base. This appearance remained for a few minutes, and then the pointed top and bottom took softer curves, until at last the sun shone out clear and round. Our eyes were not dazzled, and it was only after the lapse of some twenty minutes that the steadily-increasing brightness compelled us to turn away. Now the atmosphere began to grow uncomfortably warm as the summit was bathed in sunlight. A glance downward into the still, gloomy Glen Rinnes revealed the white road winding, serpent-like, along the valley. Raising our eyes we could see in the distance the stately Buck, and further to the right the summit of Corryhabbie, both rosy in the rays of the early sun. Far to the south a glimpse was got of the Cairngorms, still heavily patched with snow.

Our steps were now directed northward, and our eyes turned to the narrow glen through which winds the Burn of Aberlour. Here another surprise was in store; the whole valley was filled with a bank of cloud. The surface was a mass of cloudy mounds, all apparently of uniform shape and size, with seemingly no movement. These clouds extended up the hills to the height of about 1500 feet, so that the Convals raised their heads like islands, while Ben Aigan was almost below the surface. The valley of the Spey, so clear two hours before, was hidden from view; but west, and beyond, summit after summit, culminating in Carn Ruigh an Uain (1784), raised their dark heads (nine were counted)—a veritable archipelago in a sea of cloud. To the south-west an almost similar appearance was formed by the hills of Cromdale, with this exception, that the former group was nearly semicircular, with one or two peaks in the foreground, while those to the south-west were almost in line. When the sun's rays began to reach the cloudy mounds below, the dull grey changed to light rose with darker shadows.

Our next experience was unpleasant—an extremely

dense, wet mist. Those who had waterproofs quickly donned them; those who hadn't—got soaked. This state of matters considerably damped our previously exuberant spirits, and when Aberlour was reached at six o'clock—still in mist—our appearance was rather bedraggled. The wet mist, however, revealed another of Nature's beauties. Near Ben-rinnes distillery the track winds through a plantation of young larches. From branch to branch of these—from clump to clump of heather—stretched thousands of spider webs, each glistening with its coating of wet, not a thread broken in the perfect calm of that delightful morning.

ALLAN CAMERON.



COROUR BOTHY, DEVIL'S POINT.