

THE CLUB ON THE CAIRNGORMS.

BY ALEX. COPLAND.

ON Saturday morning, 10th July, 1897, the members of the Club, dutifully bent upon observing the Summer Holiday Excursion, started for Mar Forest and its mountains. The weather was all that could be desired. The train and coach services were up to date, and the company in highest good humour and brimful of fun. At Inver Inn the vanguard of the expedition was descried, consisting of some members of the cycle corps, who had preceded the coach on a foraging raid. We were indifferent about their success, as our Quartermaster-General had made arrangements for refreshment at Braemar on our arrival there. He had also provided a transport carriage for the commissariat through the Doire Bhraghad and Glen Lui, and the journey was agreeably and satisfactorily completed.

We found Braemar *en fête* on our arrival—perhaps it is so on every Saturday afternoon in the month of July. On a large field between the river and a birch wood, west of the Roman Catholic Chapel, the youth and beauty and athletæ of the district were gathered, and, to the enlivening strains of the bagpipe and drum, were demonstrating that the world is not a bit older, not more miserable than ever it was, to lads and lasses of sweet nineteen when they meet together for a dance or flirtation. We were obliged to tear ourselves too soon away from the blissful scene, as the flies were tormenting the horses in our wagonette owing to their tails having been docked shorter than they should have been during the fly season. He was a knowing chap who charged for grazing horses during the fly season according to the length of their tails.

Much impressed by the wild beauty of the forest trees, and the fine, grassy expanse of Glen Lui, with its mur-

muring and meandering stream, and its groups of feeding red deer, we omitted to notice whether the cycle corps formed our vanguard or our rearguard during the journey, although we have an impression that they came on behind. However, we assembled ultimately on the verdant sward under the patriarchal pines overshadowing the forester's house in Glen Luibeg. There, beside the remains of the sun-dial scientifically planted by the Ordnance Surveyors of 1847, we had the satisfaction of learning our precise latitude and longitude, and those of the party who forgot the oscillation of the magnetic pole were puzzled by the vagaries of their pocket compasses. A comparison of the needle with true north as shewn upon the dial-plate of the sun-dial was destructive of confidence for a time. In this sylvan retreat, far from the din and dust of towns, a meeting of the Club was constituted, the father of the party being appointed Chairman for the occasion. Two new members were proposed and elected, but these two gentlemen not being present, and their proxies having protested and declared that they had no authority nor inclination to undergo the initiatory rite on their behalf, the ceremony of initiation was deferred until the two new members can be personally apprehended on a suitable occasion.

Business ended, the assembly retreated from the persecution of the mosquitoes to the largest room in the forester's house, and it being Saturday evening, and a time for enjoyment and relaxation, it was resolved that whisky and hot and cold water should be placed upon the table; that reporters should be excluded; that the Clach an Doichal and also a painted board bearing the words "Strictly Private" should be planted at the door; and that we should make an evening of it. Let it not be supposed, however, that we were Bacchanalians. By no means. We were all temperance men, although not teetotallers. We drank Her Majesty's health, and that of His Grace the Duke, by whose kind favour we were so comfortably housed and cared for, and the feast of reason and the flow of soul characterised our proceedings.

Holding as sound philosophy that

“Care to our coffin adds a nail, no doubt,
While every burst of laughter draws one out”,

we drew so many nails during the festivity that the deuce of the semblance of a coffin was to be seen. And in triumph we finished the evening's entertainment by such a display of fireworks as was never before witnessed by biped or quadruped in Glen Derry.

The following day—Sunday—was, of course, a day of rest—available, however, to the extent of the statutory journey, during which three members of the party visited Corrie Etchachan. While resting there they had the rare good fortune of witnessing, during half an hour, the courtship, flirtation, or what you like to call it, of a pair of golden eagles in the sky above Beinn Mheadhoin. The birds, high up in the blue, seemed to take their pleasures in ceremonious, solemn dignity. They sailed round and round in a wide circle in the sky with, so far as we could discern, unmoving pinions, except when they occasionally broke the circle, caressed each other, and then resumed their circle sailing. At length, like young Lochinvar and his fair Ellen, they circle-sailed out of our sight. They were certainly not hunting while in our view. These noble birds, now comparatively rare, although to some extent protected by owners of deer forests, were about two centuries ago so numerous and troublesome to the sheep farmer in this and the Strathspey districts as to be accounted a pest, and were, along with foxes, proscribed. For example, the Court Books of the Regality of Grant contain (according to Dr. Cramond, of Cullen) such entries as the following :

“2nd June, 1714.—*Foxes and Eagles.*—Payment to be made for ilk fox killed, 40s. Sc. ; ilk young fox, 20s. ; every eagle, 20s. Ilk 1-18th part of land to pay 13s. 4d., and ilk mellander 6s. 8d. as a fund”.

These severe measures against foxes and eagles not having produced the desired results, in August, 1727, this takes place :

"Sheep destroyed by Foxes and Eagles.—The gentlemen, tennants, and others in the regality of Strathspey represent they sustain continual and daily losses by the foxes and eagles killing their sheep, and entreat the judges to fall on proper methods for preventing said damages by stenting a fund on all the country people, and by offering rewards for those destroyed, therefore in April and May next the gentlemen and tennants in the four parishes of Strathspey shall pay a sufficient year-old wedder or 2s. stg., and each melander [cottar] that hes sheep ane sufficient lamb or 12s. Sc. For a fox or eagle killed, £2 Sc. each to be paid".

Now, as we have said, the owners of deer forests are not hostile to the eagle. Along with the hooded crow, he keeps down the grouse, which to the deer-stalker are a nuisance, for so soon as a Coileach ruadh springs from the heather, with his loud, warning "kuk, kuk, kuk", the game is instantly up and away, and the stalk is irretrievably spoilt.

Monday, 12th July, gave opportunity for a preliminary canter, and part of the Expedition set out for Loch Avon, Cairngorm, and Ben Muich Dhui, *via* Corrie Etchachan. The hot, bright morning sun glowed refulgent on the trunks of the pines in Glen Derry, and tinted with varied green their wide-spreading branches. The dew-drops on the myrtle-shaped leaves of the blaeberry trembled and glittered like diamonds, and bees and butterflies enlivened the sylvan scene. The foot-path was crowded by busy ants gathering provender for storage regardless of trust in Providence. Thousands must have been unintentionally immolated under our feet without complaint, making it hard for us to believe that

". . . the poor beetle that we tread upon,
In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great
As when a giant dies",

although the Bard of Avon said so. Reaching the mound fronting the south end of the flat, grassy, ancient lake-bottom of Glen Derry, where a lake assuredly existed before the river had sawn its present deepened channel

through the rocky gorge below the foot-bridge, we looked upon a scene worthy of the highest skill of the landscape painter. Upon the right hand the pines stretched up a stone-strewn slope, twisted and tempest-torn—some of them picturesque, bleaching skeletons, gradually scattering into stunted stragglers, that in vain strove to maintain existence on the higher ground. In front a grand, Gothic arch-shaped precipice on Beinn Mheadhoin, backed by the rising, barn-crested ridge of that mountain, filled the middle distance. To the left the peaked precipice forming the northern wall of Coire an Lochain Uaine and the sparsely pine-clad slope of Cairngorm of Derry bounded the view; while in the foreground the Derry convoluted along the bottom of the glen, forming a scene of savage grandeur, combined with pastoral quiet and beauty, rarely to be gazed upon.

And as to Corrie Etchachan, towards which we are progressing. Its outlet into Glen Derry is thickly occupied by glacial moraines, formed by the *debris* dropped there from the glacier which filled Corrie Etchachan in prehistoric times. Where the stream from Loch Etchachan and the Derry has cut through these moraines the stuff they are made of can be clearly seen. At the point where the Derry can be crossed by what is marked as a "ford" on the six-inch map, but in reality demands skill in balancing and agility in jumping from huge boulder to boulder in the bed of the stream, the elevation is 2047 feet above sea level. When you reach the top of the ridge at the west end of this corrie, bounding the view in that direction, you will have climbed fully 1000 feet vertical, and your elevation will then be upwards of 3000 feet. So that in ascending this corrie you will have climbed higher vertically than if you had ascended Arthur Seat, near Edinburgh. It does not look like it. No; because everything here is on so gigantic a scale that our usual measure for comparison is at fault. For, could you plant an Arthur Seat at the west end of Corrie Etchachan, you would find that the ridge of the corrie at the east end of the loch would tower 200 feet above it. Remember that

it was Corrie Etchachan that taught the young juicy Englishmen to respect the physical powers of the septuagenarian guide, John Downie, of Tomintoul. At Braemar they looked upon him as an animated mummy. Before they were half up Corrie Etchachan they followed him "pechin'", and they venerated him.

On topping the ridge at the west end of Corrie Etchachan the glorious sight of the sparkling blue Loch, precipice-engirdled, at once arrests attention. Its surface mirrors the passing clouds and its rocky environments, and smiles in solitary self-complacency about 3050 feet above sea level, and about 670 feet above the surface of Loch Avon, at present hid in the grand gorge to the north of us. Loch Etchachan is said to contain excellent trout of good size, although how they manage to tide over the winter there, with the water frozen several feet deep, is hid from the ordinary human mind. That flock of heavy-bodied wild ducks disturbed by our presence had better look out for the eagles before they go too far from water of diving depth, where eagles cannot follow.

The path to the summit of Ben Muich Dhui strikes southwards from the east end of Loch Etchachan at 3094 feet, and here our party divided to meet again at the summit of the mighty Ben. We keep the path, which in summer cannot be mistaken. At length, at a height of 3753 feet, a small, sandy-bottomed tarn, at the foot of a large snow-slope, offers on its grassy shore a tempting lunching-place. We are not the only biped enamoured of this solitary spot, for the Royal Guide, Charles Stuart, stripped to his shirt sleeves, and accompanied by two English gentlemen, comes suddenly into view, and the din they make disturbs a hen-ptarmigan, who silently leaves her nest, and cunningly dodges round a small hillock before they can detect her. We prudently remain mum as to this addition to our knowledge, and, after exchanging salutations and drinking of the ice-cold Apolinaris plentifully flowing from underneath the snow, Charles and his party make tracks for the summit. We leisurely follow after finishing our lunch, believing that meat and mass

never hindered honest work. The heat of the day spoilt the distant view by raising an obscuring haze, so that hills four or five miles distant could not be distinguished! The sight of the glens and corries of the Dee and the Garchary and their precipices, however, gave ample compensation to the strangers. While waiting at the Cairn for the Loch Avon and Cairngorm Expedition we were surprised and pleased to find that quite a levee is occasionally held on Ben Muich Dhui. For example, on this occasion 27 visitors from various quarters came to the Cairn during the time we were there, the greater portion of whom ascended from Speyside. That is accounted for by the fact that the railway communication to Aviemore and Boat of Garten gives much readier access to the Cairngorms than rail to Ballater, the tedious and expensive journey therefrom to Braemar by coach, and after that the long tramp from Castletown to and from the mountain. There were three parties from Braemar, numbering 11 persons, including two guides, and four parties from Speyside, numbering 16 persons, with no guides. One party had walked from Boat of Garten, *via* Cairngorm, and intended to return walking all the way, *via* Aviemore; and a handsome, white-haired matron, with her daughter, from near Loch an Eilein, had ascended by the Larig, and climbed by the March Burn. They afterwards set out for the summit of Cairngorm on their way home, without shewing token of fatigue. After that who could refuse political rights to the fair sex! During the levee a solitary golden eagle soaring above Ben Muich Dhui looked down upon the party at that time at the Cairn, and no doubt wondered what was up. Our Expedition from the birthplace of the Club at Loch Avon and Cairngorm having joined, we returned by the Glen Lui-beg route, having greatly enjoyed the excursions.

Some time ago a journalist in a jocular mood suggested that the facilities afforded by the Highland and Deeside Railways would afford special opportunities for honeymooning couples. It was urged that they could select solitary spooning spots on the summits of the Cairngorms, where none could disturb or make them afraid. What we

have mentioned should dispel that delusion; besides, the terrible power of the modern binocular in the hands of peeping Toms must be taken into account. It appears, however, that honeymooning couples do resort to the wilderness and the solitary places among these mountains, only they go there during the night. While we were encamped in Mar Forest on a Saturday night we learned that a newly-married couple cycled from Braemar to Glen Derry, and through the night ascended Ben Muich Dhui, to see the sun rise next morning. No doubt seeing the sun rise from such a stand-point is a rare experience, but it has been suggested that human nature has greatly changed if it be not a rarer thing for Romeo and Juliet to forsake the nuptial couch on a Saturday night for such an object.

The early morning of Tuesday, 13th July, broke fair, calm, and serenely clear. We each had a preliminary dip in the Lui by way of creating an appetite for breakfast, in which we were more successful than the Buchan laird who managed to put six young kittywakes under his belt before dinner without feeling hungry thereafter. At the council meeting to determine our route we had difficulty in recognising our familiar friend, MacHamish, who had denuded himself of his cycling knickerbockers, and in borrowed plumes appeared in the presentment of a Highland chieftain. To our intense envy he looked confoundedly handsome in the kilt, with otter-head sporran waggling in front of him, as he proudly strode about, as arrogant-looking as a Turcoman. But we had our revenge. The first time he sat down to rest on a damp spot he made a sudden, spasmodic movement as if the seat of his trousers had incontinently dropped out, and, of course, we roared in glee. We had further occasion for merriment ere the day was done, of which more hereafter. The too ardent penetrability of the sun's rays, even under the umbrageous pines in the bottom of the glen, began to awaken an unquenchable longing for bitter beer or some liquid capable of assuaging a thirst which would have done credit to a breakfast on stock fish or salted herring. A young friend, with all the rash impulsiveness of youth, imagined that he

had found a specific in the succulent stalks of the Rheum from the banks of the Wolga, which spread its leaves in the forester's kitchen garden to the dimensions of ordinary outspread umbrellas. Believing in this "perfect cure", the Expedition loaded itself with rhubarb sufficient to stock the stall of a thriving green-grocer. Alas! alas! the "perfect cure" was a delusion and a snare. The acidulated juice expressed from the stalk while chewing gave a sensation of coolness in the mouth, but went no further, and persistent indulgence raised a protest from the outraged stomach in the form of violent heartburn. Then the blood-sucking "gleds", of which there were several species, reminded us even in this paradise that we were mortal. One specially venomous blood-thirsty chururgeon, with prominent green eyes, whom we named "the monster", was our special dread. He would suck the vital fluid, if permitted, till he fell off your hand a bloated "bleedie puddin'", but left a token of remembrance in a hard, irritable, itching pimple, which the more you scratched the more it itched. Glad were we when we topped in single file the rocky summit of Creag an t-Seabhaig (which, being interpreted, means "the rock of the hawk"), and felt the soothing breeze cool our perspiring brows. We sat down upon the Creag for a rest. MacHamish, forgetting to double the kilt below him, instantly received a reminder from the rugosities of the imperturbable Creag, at which we smiled. We greatly admired the view from this point of the landscape spread out below, in front, and on either hand. Creag an t-Seabhaig forms the south-east limb or knee of Carn Crom, and, seated on its rocky pinnacle, the whole extent of Glen Lui is spread out in front before you. On the right hand Glen Luibeg and Glen Geusachan extend westwards; and Glen Derry on the left hand trends northwards, grandly diversified with wood and water, and shut in by lofty mountain ranges. The magnificent scenery was ample excuse for an extended halt and breathing space. Continuing our ascent of the hill range by the deer-stalkers' pony track, we traversed Coire na Craoibh Ora, shogged round the eastern shoulder of Carn Crom, at

an elevation of about 2500 feet, until we got well above the rocky ground to the south of Coire na Cloiche, which faces Glen Derry. We then opened up an extensive grassy basin (a favourite resort of deer), sloping upwards on the broad bosom of Cairngorm of Derry. In the hollow north of Carn Crom the burn named Caochan na Spald flows westwards, and by a deep descent falls into the Luibeg betwixt the Sron Riach and the Derry Cairngorm. Passing near the ridge above Coire na Saobhaidh ("Corrie of Fox's Den"), fronting Glen Derry, opposite to the foot-bridge, we halted on the slope at a well of living water, where the Expedition drank deeply. A herd of deer, about 30 in number, gazed at us from the western edge of the basin, and no doubt wondered who the dickens we were, and what we wanted there. They reconnoitred us from various positions, and we sat watching with interest and delight the military-looking evolutions of the graceful creatures. They formed into column, broke into companies, or deployed into line or single file, as if by word of command, without the slightest confusion. At length they disappeared by the west shoulder of Carn Crom, in the direction of Glen Luibeg. There was no trace in their silent, precise movements of mobbing or confusion, as in a lowing drove of bullocks, or the hesitancy of bleating sheep. They knew their ground, and, with an air of freedom and confidence, traversed it. Still gradually ascending the long ridge forming the east shoulder of Cairngorm of Derry, and looking down upon Glen Derry, we passed on our right Coire na Clach, or the "Stony Corrie". As there are more stones than anything else hereabouts, it is difficult to understand how this corrie is specially distinguished as "na Clach". Further on, below the eastern side of the Corrie of Cairngorm of Derry, we lighted upon a grassy slope, from whence belled out a copious spring, which irresistibly compelled us to halt there and lunch. Before starting again the Expedition were immortalised by the camera, and we may be permitted to say that a finer set of hail-fellows-well-met can't be picked up on a hill-side every day. The younger sparks of the Ex-

pedition, in quest of adventure, scrambled to the summit of the stony cone of Cairngorm of Derry, but the seasoned and sedate Cairngormers kept along the flank of the cone, picking their way on grassy and sandy patches as much as possible, so as to avoid rude interference with the digestive organs after a full meal. With deliberation they traversed the wide waste of elevated plateau, consisting of sand, scattered stone blocks, and scanty herbage, which extends above Glen Derry and Corrie Etchachan, and joins Cairngorm of Derry to Ben Muich Dhui by the neck of ground at the head of Glen Luibeg. The prolonged non-appearance of the cone-climbers, indicative of difficult ground, compelled the veterans to halt, and while they waited they studied the movements of three hinds dispersed among the deep hollows and ravines gouged out of the plateau as it slopes towards the summit of the craigs forming the south wall of Corrie Etchachan. Sahara-looking as the desert appeared on a cursory glance, upon closer inspection among the stones and in the hollows, there were patches and tufts and carpets of succulent herbage, particularly of *Sibaldia procumbens*, toothsome to the hinds, which they could eat in peace far from their and our enemies, the flies. At length the forms of the cone-climbers appeared upon the descending grade, picking their footsteps with caution among the vast outspread of stones. One of the party at a critical moment, we understand, was overheard repeating in an undertone the lines:

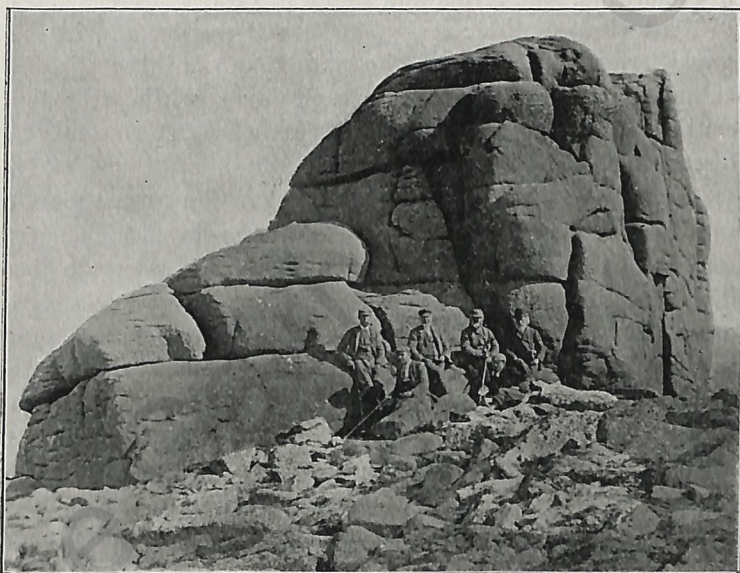
“Oh, little did my mither ken,
The time she cradled me,
What mountains I would traivel o’er,
And what death I micht dee”.

Having seen them in comparative safety, the vanguard of the Expedition reached Ben Muich Dhui by a grassy hollow with a small tarn in its bosom, and descended therefrom to the east end of Loch Etchachan, to wait the junction of the rearguard before assaulting Beinn Mheadhoin.

Looking down from the dome of Ben Muich Dhui upon the western slope and summit of Beinn Mheadhoin, the climb seems an easy one from Loch Etchachan. We did not find

it so. The morning breeze by this time had risen to something like a gale, and we found it necessary to climb in shelter as much as possible. We began the ascent from the Loch by a grassy hollow or trench, which wound round the western flank of the hill trending upwards. In a short time we reached the northern slope facing Cairngorm and Loch Avon, and as we gradually climbed upwards the grand surroundings of Loch Avon unfolded. The slope was steep, stony, and waterless, and glad we were when we surmounted it, although we had to dodge the wind. By three afternoon we had reached the western "barn"—a huge, protruding mass of weathered granite—from whence we had a grand prospect of the surroundings of Loch Avon, the southern expanse and corries of Cairngorm, and the vast dome of Ben Muich Dhui, with its cairn projected against the sky-line. Three figures were seen moving about the Cairn, and other two pilgrims—mere black dots—on the edge of the swelling ridge on Ben Muich Dhui to the south of the Feith Buidhe. Except for their movements they would not have been seen. Leaving this retreat, we slanted along the mountain summit north-eastwards, the walking being among loose, rough gravel and stones, wind-swept and bare of verdure, except patches of carices, or rough deer grass, in the shelter of the granitic bannocks strewn upon the broad back of the mountain. Midway between the west "barns" and the culminating rocks farther eastwards we turned aside to examine masses of protruding reddish granite singularly split and piled by the action of water and frost. In one place there were five or six lintel-shaped blocks, 6 to 8 feet long by about 12 inches thick, piled above each other, as if quarried by man, and stacked for removal; but hand of man never held jumper or struck hammer upon them. The culminating "barns"—admirably photographed by Mr. McGregor, and reproduced here—give a clear idea of the other "barns", as they all have a family likeness. The mass photographed occupies the summit of Beinn Mheadhoin, and rests at an elevation of 3883 feet above sea level. There is a small cairn built upon the broad table-top of the principal rock-mass

not seen in the picture. On the side presented to the view the height from the ground is about 20 feet. On the southern side a greater height of rock is shewn, as the ground falls in that direction. If the reader will look closely at the rock-summit above the figure seated on the right, he may be able to trace a rude, ferocious feline outline, with staring, stony eye, calculated to deter a timid tourist from climbing in that direction. Several of the Expedition, notwithstanding the howling of the gale, could not be prevented from tempting Providence by scrambling



BEINN MHEADHOIN—THE SUMMIT.

aloft to the cairn. Among the rest MacHamish, but when he turned to crawl back Boreas had his opportunity. With a louder howl than ordinary the mischievous wind-god blew the kilt in the air over our friend's head, and covered him with confusion. Luckily he held on, and got down in safety, but he should have retreated with his face to the foe, as any true Highlander would assuredly do.

The view from Beinn Mheadhoin is interrupted a good

deal by the higher mountains surrounding it. Cairngorm and Ben Muich Dhui dominate it in the north, west, and southwards to some extent, while Beinn a' Bhuid and Ben Avon confine the view eastwards and south-eastwards. Still, through gaps and over saddles, there is much to interest the observer in the horizon. Northwards Grantown and Nethy Bridge, the shores of the Moray Firth, the Firth itself, and the Sutherland and Caithness mountains; north-eastwards Ben Bynac, Ben Rinnes, the Bin of Cullen, etc.; eastwards the Tap o' Noth, the Buck of the Cabrach, Bennachie, Cairn William, and Corrennie. Beinn a' Chaoruinn, Ben Avon, and Beinn a' Bhuid present magnificent views of their rocky stacks and corries, and in the gaps formed by Glen Derry and Glen Lui the distant summits of the Blair Athole mountains, while over the south-east ridge of Beinn Bhrotain Ben Lawers is discernible.

At half-past four afternoon we began the return march southwards, keeping to the west of the spring which flows into the Coire nan Saibhlean, where the snow-wreath lies deep and lingers long. We reached the Learg an Laoigh after a long and difficult descent among huge stones, long heather, and a variety of Alpine verdure, thankful that we had reversed the programme, and had not ascended Beinn Mheadhoin by this route. During our climb down we viewed the Learg stretching south and north until the path disappeared over the eastern shoulder of Ben Bynac into Strath Nethy. This route 40 or 50 years ago was the post route in summer between Speyside and Braemar before the iron horse took up the running. The post-runner crossed each alternate day. This is the Queen-Empress's account of the Pass when she went to Loch Avon in September, 1861:

“Here [at Derry Lodge] we mounted our ponies, and proceeded the usual way up Glen Derry, as far as where the path turns up to Loch Etchan. [“Etchachan”, your Majesty. This word “Etchachan” is easily pronounced after taking a pinch of cayenne pepper.] Instead of going that way, we proceeded straight on—a dreadfully rough, stony road [contributed by Bens

Chaoruinn and Mheadhoin in their playful moods, when engaged at a game of bowls], though not steep, but rougher than anything we ever rode upon before, and terrible for the poor horses' feet".

Her Majesty then mentions that her party passed by two little lakes, which she phonetically names the "Dhoolochans"; and she employs phonetic Gaelic twice in referring to the "Dhoolochans"—no doubt because that language is as difficult and rough to handle as the stony road of the Learg an Laoigh. We saw these little lakes during our climb down, and were told that they were the Dubh Lochans, or little black lochs, but we prefer to retain the funny name "Dhoolochans", if only to lighten up the recollection of the solitary, rough gorge in which they are placed. Crossing the march between the counties of Banff and Aberdeen, we entered Glen Derry, and passing the entrance to Corrie Etchachan, reached the long expanse of meadow-land which stretches from that corrie to the foot-bridge across the Derry, about a couple of miles further. The shadow of evening was now cooling the grassy bottom of Glen Derry, and was slowly following the retreating glory of sunlight as it silently ascended the slope of Craig Derry of Beinn Bhreac. A large herd of deer was feeding high up on the shoulder of the mountain—so far above us that our movements, though observed, caused them no anxiety. We lay down in a grassy hollow for a rest, and through the foresters' telescopes followed the movements of the stags, and picked out the "royals" among them, easily counting the points of their antlers. These telescopes are splendid instruments, giving a clear field and distinct definition at marvellous distances. Resuming our march through the thick, grassy, carpeted meadow-land, we reached the famous well called Maighdean Monadh—*i.e.*, "Mountain Maiden"—which bursts from the western side of Coire Bhoghadaire of Beinn Bhreac, clear as crystal, pure and cool as virgin snow, and copious as a gift from the gods. The late chief forester, hale and hearty Alastair Macdonald, half a century ago, and all through his life-time, never passed this well without drinking of its delicious

bounty, and he gratefully extolled it as being "the best water in Britain" or "in the world", if occasion required. He died full of age and honours, without spending a half-penny on pancreatic pills or supersoothing syrup.

The setting sun was gilding the brown and grey stony ridges and tops of the surrounding mountains, and lavishly colouring in burnished gold, purple, and violet the evening cloud-curtains spreading out far up in the blue sky. The mavis and lon-dubh were trilling their evening love songs in gushing melody from among the pines or seated on their topmost runners. The soothing, croodling coo of the cushat from the spruces suggested comfortable happing up of their young broods from the night dews. The black kine of the forester, with well-filled udders, wended homewards lowing, feeling that milking time was at hand; and "Derry", cutting joyous capers, with honest bark, heralded the return of the Expedition. Thus ended a well-spent and long-to-be-remembered day. Through the gracious favour and courtesy of His Grace the Duke of Fife an opportunity had been afforded to the Club for traversing and seeing at will the grandest mountain scenery of the Cairngorms. For various reasons the turn-out of members of the Club was not so numerous as such a rare chance invited. If those who could have come, and did not come, shall now "Count themselves accurst they went not with us", they deserve their punishment.

As for the foresters, Donald Fraser and John M'Intosh, their attention, counsel, and agreeable conversation and company demand our most grateful acknowledgments. Of each of them the members of the Club can heartily say, "We loo him jist like ony brither" without the necessity of adding anything about convivial enjoyments which, in moderation, of necessity obtains when you cross the Highland line. Nor is it possible for us to be silent of the kind, couthy attentions of the foresters' wives, Mrs. M'Intosh and Mrs. Fraser, who attended to us as though we had been their ain bairns. What would the foresters in Mar Forest be without their wives? The thought of a single

life there, especially in the cauld nights of winter, is appalling, for

“It’s not beneath the bergamot, it’s not beneath the crown ;
It’s not on couch of velvet, nor yet on bed of down ;
But it is beneath the drooping birch, in a glen without a name,
Wi’ a bonnie, bonnie lassie when the kye comes hame”.

Long and healthy and happy lives to them and their olive
branches! Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!



DUGLEN BOTHY, BEINN A' BHUIRD.