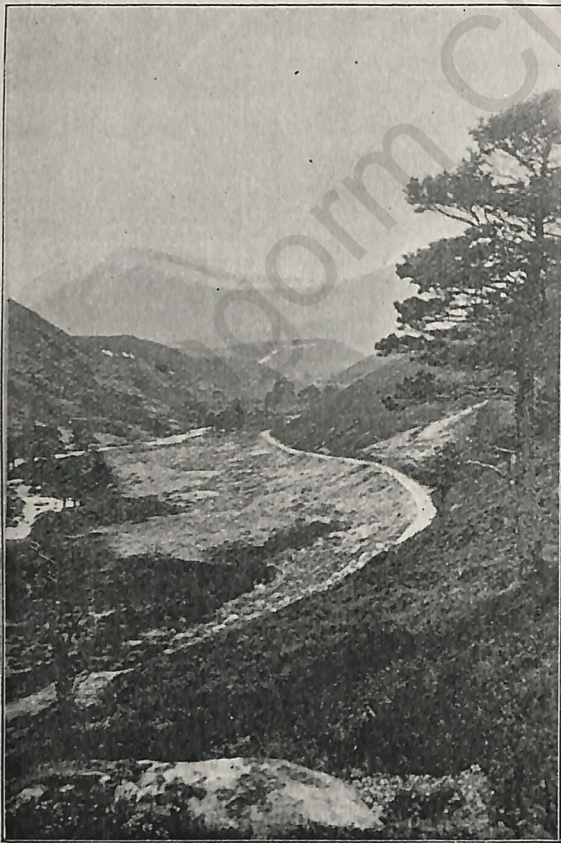


SGORAN DUBH AND ITS SPECTRE.

A STEADY, gentle rain, combined with a low-lying mist, threatened to make a *dies non* for the hills as we walked up Glen Eunach from Coylum. Bridge. By the time Cross



IN GLEN EUNACH.

Roads was reached the rain had left off, and there was hope that the mist would rise, so we held on to Loch Eunach. The mist, however, clung to Braeriach and Sgoran Dubh,

and a climb seemed out of the question. We turned our backs on the former mountain with no little disappointment, and proceeded to take a stroll round the loch. It was beautifully still, reflecting both hills and mist on its surface. The recent rough weather had considerably added to the great bank of gravel at the north end, and a herd of deer had evidently just left the shore. Proceeding along the pony-path, we halted for lunch opposite the mouth of the Coire Dhondail Burn. The mist was only about 500 feet above us, and the weather indications were still unfavourable for mountaineers.

Then came an inspiration—we resolved to explore some of the gullies of Sgoran Dubh, and, possibly, make the ascent to Sgor Ghaoith. The height to be surmounted from the loch (1650) is 2008 feet, an angle of 35° making an incline of about 2 in 3—the base line from loch to Sgor being only 2850 feet.

The first 200-300 feet was heather-clad, but had a steepness which made every step tell. Rock reached, we found ourselves on a narrow ridge, with gullies to right and left—the whole face of the hill is scarred with gullies, each generally with its trickling streamlet. The rock, much broken up, lies in vertical ribs, with a rather serrated appearance. They are generally exceedingly narrow, the divisions between the gullies being frequently reduced almost to vanishing point. As we got higher the rocks became steeper, and occasionally presented an impassable face, rendering divergences, not to say retreats, necessary. The difficulty of the ascent was often increased by the nature of the granite, which in many places was rotten, yielding to both hands and feet. Again, trouble was experienced with smooth, water-worn rock which afforded no hold whatever. At one stage a descent seemed almost imperative, when, fortunately, a crevice was detected just wide enough to admit the fingers, and the dreaded retreat was avoided. More than once we found ourselves on shelves where a deer had evidently spent a day or two in very confined quarters, but probably afraid to change its position.

“The terrors of the unseen” added to our troubles.

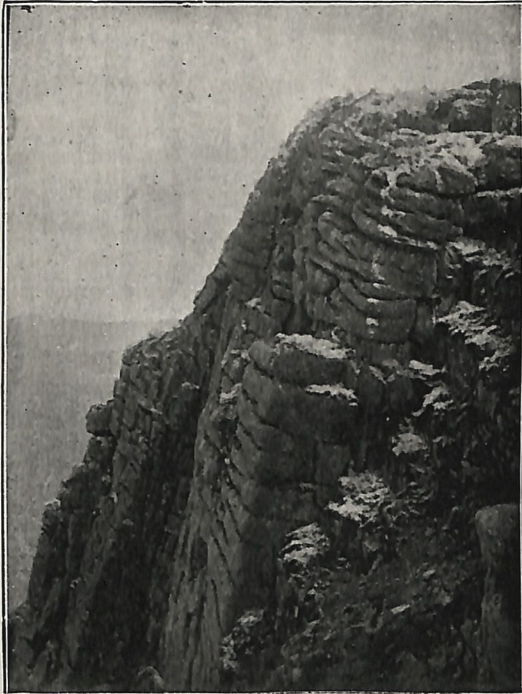
The mist clung pertinaciously to the slopes of Braeriach and the Sgoran, rising masses being apparently replaced by accessions from below. Generally, however, there was a middle space clear; above the cloudy layer which rested over the loch there was clear atmosphere for from 300-500 feet, over which dense mist reigned supreme. Frequently the two layers of mist threw out "skirmishers" which crept and crawled towards each other—now and then threatening a general engagement. It was difficult to account for the motions of the mist, as no wind could be felt. But amidst all the changes the summit of Braeriach remained covered, and even its western face was never wholly in view. Coire Dhondail, especially, was a playground for the mist, and presented quite a lively appearance as its snow patches appeared and disappeared, and its torrents shone like silver threads. At times breaches would appear in the mist, and Braeriach seemed to burst out, looming as a Mont Blanc at least. Quite close to us the mist amused itself with the rocks, coiling round their "teeth". The resemblance of the pinnacle "A Challich" to an old woman was striking as the mist suddenly unfolded and left the human-like figure outstanding.

The noise of the burns on their way to the loch had a peculiar effect in the general stillness. The stream from Lochan nan Cnapan was particularly noisy, but its tones varied with our position on the rocks and the density of the mist. The tiny burns in the gullies made a noise quite disproportionate to their size, as they took flying leaps in their downward flight. The stags added to the music, as, hundreds of feet below and, of course, invisible to us, they called for the hinds.

The 2008 feet of ascent seemed interminable, progress was so slow, but at last, three-and-a-half hours after leaving the loch, we found ourselves on the ridge, about 220 paces to the north of Sgor Ghaoith. We found the ridge (3600) scalloped with snow, whereas the snow line on Braeriach was about 3000 feet—the steepness of Sgoran Dubh accounting for the difference.

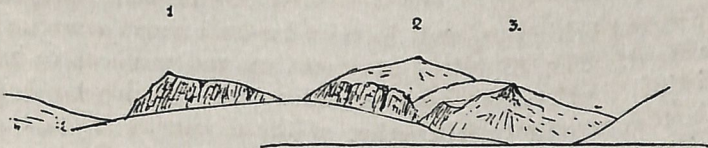
There was, of course, no prospect from Sgor Ghaoith;

we were quite satisfied with the rock climb. The summit of the Sgor is cairn-less, but readily recognisable: the illustrations (from photographs by Mr. W. E. Carnegie Dickson, B.Sc.) render description unnecessary. The peaks



SGOR GHAOITH.

of Sgoran Dubh have long been a bother to hillmen; even the Club map is defective; but this sketch, by another contributor, Mr. C. G. Cash, F.R.S.G.S., will enable members to correct their copies.



THE SUMMITS OF SGORAN DUBH, AS SEEN FROM LARIG GHRU,
NEAR CREAG A' CHALAMAIN.

1. Sgor Ghaoith (3658 feet).
2. Sgoran Dubh Mhor (3635 feet).
3. Sgoran Dubh Bheag (3443 feet).

The walk along the flattish summit was enjoyable; the upright position was a relief after our long crawl, and we could congratulate ourselves on having opened up a new (though by no means popular) route. But the event of the day (29th October last) was just about to happen.



CAIRN ON SGORAN DUBH MHOR.

As we walked towards Sgoran Dubh Mhor we observed that the old semaphore was still standing, but the little wooden hut for the "watcher" had been blown to pieces. Of course we made a halt

at Sgoran Dubh Mhor, and as we sat at the cairn, looking towards the Lurcher's Rock, we were again attracted by the action of the mist. It seemed to have ceased its lively gambols, and settled down to more dignified movements, taking its course down the glen, which it seemed to fill completely. Suddenly brilliant colours were projected on the mist, and the cry was, "Look! a rainbow". But the words had scarcely been spoken when the "bow", after a momentary horse-shoe appearance, assumed a circular shape, and each saw his figure in the centre, enlarged (apparently) to titanic proportions—the "Spectre of the Brocken" was before us. The display was, needless to say, extremely interesting, and we were favoured with several appearances of the phenomenon. The hour was 4 p.m.; the sun had just burst out behind us, and the mist kept moving downwards in front. The "Spectre" at times fluttered and became indistinct, but re-formed again and again—possibly we had about four minutes altogether of the display. Then the mist supply failed, the glen cleared, and only the shadow of Sgoran Dubh Mhor was visible on the skirt of Braeriach.

G. S.