

THE HORIZON FROM BEN MUICH DHUI.—No. IV.

BY ALEX. COPLAND.

No. 4! you say; but what has become of No. 3? That requires explanation, and explanation shall be given. We intended to give No. 3 at this festive season, but the "best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley". Three times during the month of July last did we ascend Ben Muich Dhui—once during the night—to complete the outline of No. 3, but the weather conditions baffled us. The heat haze entirely shut out distant views of the horizon. The excursions, however, were not labour lost. They were recreative, health-giving, and were undertaken in hope of success. And did they not afford opportunities for cultivation of patience and perseverance?—gifts or graces of which not many of us possess superabundance. Of course they did. Besides,

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore".

By the month of October, and towards its latter end, the declining sun, by toning down the solar heat and cooling the atmosphere, once more tempted us to make another attempt. By the last week of the month the moon was full, the nights wholesome, and the barometer steadfastly pointed to set fair. With renewed confidence, therefore, on the morning of 27th October we took our place in the train for Ballater. The day was delightful, and the surroundings beautiful. The valley of the Dee, at all times lovely, save in a Scottish mist, looked gorgeous in its autumn dress. The trees were in full leafage, and what a variety of splendid colours! The limes were dressed in delicate lemon, the rowans in scarlet, the pines in sombre green, interspersed with larches, changing to neutral dun tints, the birches in graceful clumps on the low ground, or scattered up the hillsides, figured the russet slopes with yellow

plumes. The river, a broad blue swiftly-flowing stream, wound out and in along the bottom of Strath Dee, responsively reflecting the sky. The distant mountains stretched away, bloomed by the picturesque translucent atmosphere which glorifies our Highland hills. A bright sun in a clear sky illuminated all. If you want to see the valley of the Dee in its greatest glory, go to it in autumn before the leaf falls. The journey by coach from Ballater to Braemar was very enjoyable, and we reached our quarters feeling that our day had been well spent.

The morning of 28th October looked inviting, although light fleecy clouds toyed around the shoulders of the mountains; but we trusted they would move onwards and upwards as the day advanced. And so, making as early a breakfast as daylight would permit, we set out for Corrie Etchachan. The squirrel in dark winter sable was frisking round the tree trunks, but otherwise the forest was tenantless, so far as we saw, though ominous sounds in the distance indicated deer. Coming to the ridge immediately south of the Dam, we beheld groups of stags and hinds feeding in detached parties along the banks of the Derry, and we tried as much as possible to avoid disturbing them. Crossing the footbridge, and walking rapidly along the footpath northwards, we hoped to escape observation, but the deer soon discovered and stood gazing at us. Then, although we gave no indication of hostile intent, some nervous, timorous things among the hinds began to trot, and shortly the whole caravan, to our vexation, kept parallel with us up the glen. We were disgusted with their want of sense, and did not wish their company. Not until we reached the "Fountain of the Mountain Maiden" were we able to slacken speed by having outwalked the mob. All this time the roaring of stags on either hand was incessant. The glen sounded like a cattle market for noise, but there was variety in the roarings. The royals, of course, roared in a royal fashion, and some of the roars, truth to tell, were so near, loud, and defiant as to make us reflect upon our chance of escape if any "monarch of the glen" should feloniously assault us. And we should like to know what all the roar-

ing was about! Besides the roaring a good deal of fighting goes on among the stags at this season. Your swash-bucklers among them show off before the hinds, who probably enjoy a spar between two stags as much as the Roman ladies delighted in gladiatorial combats in the circus. We witnessed a brief passage-at-arms ourselves between two stags—no doubt the outcome of a love affair. They took up positions, and went for each other with a display of thrust and parry and agility in leaping aside to avoid well-aimed blows that would have done credit to any two *maîtres d'armes*. The duel was bloodless on this occasion; honour was satisfied without serious hurt. It is not always so. A forester, some years ago, walking along a forest road one morning, came upon the carcass of a fine stag, lying stark, but warm. Careful examination did not disclose the cause of death, but, on skinning the deer, it was found that two tines of an antler of the adversary had struck just underneath the shoulder to the heart, and the days of his roaring and love-making were ended.

As we entered Corrie Etchachan the sun was shining brightly, and the day was still young, but the light mist clouds, which still crept along the upper edges of Coire an Lochain Uaine of Derry Cairngorm, and the grand rocky escarpment of Beinn Mheadhoin, while they increased the impressiveness of the scenery, boded ill for a distant view from the summit of Ben Muich Dhui. Towards the top of Corrie Etchachan we came upon masses of fresh snow in rocky hollows, the first gatherings of the season, beautiful in purity and whiteness. Loch Etchachan looked desolate and solitary, without sign of life on its bosom or around its snow-streaked rocky shore. The southward ascending footpath was occasionally covered by patches of recently deposited snow, and from among the stones and snow a small flock of ptarmigan took silent flight. By the time we reached the Sput Dearg, at the head of Glen Lui Beg, the mist was rushing up from it as from a huge chimney, and the glen below was filled by a sea of rolling, churning, swirling vapour. Detached masses of mist chased each other northwards over the wide sandy plateau which has to

be traversed to reach the ruins of the Sappers' Kitchen and the Cairn. On reaching the summit beautiful views of the sunlit glens beyond the mountain gorges could be seen, but every mountain top was for brief space clear, then rubbed out by mist in rapid succession. The south-west aspect of the Cairn was cased in ice, and the stones strewing the mountain top were fronted with miniature snow ridges deposited by the wind blowing from that direction. The stunted herbage, barely a couple of inches above ground, frilled the mountain summit with a snowy efflorescence, as though these plain, humble grasses and carices had bloomed a brilliant white. Half an hour's stay at the Cairn, during which the weather conditions became gradually more and more unpropitious, was quite enough, and obliged us to leave for home without putting pencil to paper. Fortunately we had Section 4 in a forward state, and we now offer it with this explanation and apology for its untimely appearance.

TABULAR LIST No. IV.,

Of Mountains and Hills within the radius of 270° (East) and 360° (South), most of which may be seen from the Cairn on the summit of Ben Muich Dhui.

Compass Direction	MOUNTAIN.	COUNTY.	LOCALITY.	Height, in Feet.	Distance, in Miles.
270	Beinn a' Bhuird - - - -	Aberdeen	Braemar - - - -	3860	6
277	Kerloch - - - - -	Kincardine	Glen Dye - - - -	1747	44
278	Peter Hill - - - - -	Aberdeen	Forest of Birse - - - -	2023	40
280	Clochmaben - - - - -	Kincardine	Glen Dye - - - -	1900	40
281	Cock Cairn - - - - -	Forfar-Abd	Forest of Birse - - - -	2387	30
282	Hill of Cat - - - - -	"	" " - - - -	2435	32
283	Beinn Bhreac - - - - -	Aberdeen	Mar Forest - - - -	3051	4
283	Mount Battock - - - - -	Kin.-Forfar	Glen Dye—Glen Esk - - - -	2555	36
284	Braid Cairn - - - - -	Forfar-Abd	Glen Tanner - - - -	2907	28
285	Mount Keen - - - - -	"	Glen Mark—Glen Tanner - - - -	3077	27
288	Cairngorm of Derry - - - - -	Aberdeen	Mar Forest - - - -	3788	2
289	Caru na Drochaide - - - - -	"	Braemar - - - -	2681	9
290	Fasheillach - - - - -	"	Glen Muick - - - -	2362	24
291	Conachraig Hill - - - - -	"	Balmoral Forest - - - -	2827	20
293	Meall Coire na Saobhaidhe - - - - -	"	" " - - - -	3191	17
294	Meikle Pap - - - - -	"	" " - - - -	3211	19
295	Cac Carn Beag - - - - -	"	" " - - - -	3786	18
298	Cairn of Corbreach - - - - -	"	" " - - - -	3571	17
301	Carn an t-Sagairt Mor - - - - -	"	Glen Callater - - - -	3430	16
302	Broad Cairn - - - - -	Forfar-Abd	Glen Muick - - - -	3268	19
303	Cairn Bannoch - - - - -	"	" " - - - -	3314	18
304	Mor Shron - - - - -	Aberdeen	Braemar - - - -	2819	11
304	Fafernie - - - - -	Forfar-Abd	Glen Callater - - - -	3274	16
305	Knaps of Fafernie - - - - -	"	" " - - - -	3059	17
309	Tolmount - - - - -	"	" " - - - -	3145	18
310	Tom Buidhe - - - - -	Forfar	Glen of the Doll - - - -	3140	19
312	Driesh - - - - -	"	Glen Clova - - - -	3105	24
314	Mayar - - - - -	"	" " - - - -	3043	22
315	Carn an Tuirc - - - - -	Aberdeen	Glen Callater—Glen Clunie - - - -	3340	16
316	Cairn na Glasha - - - - -	Forfar-Abd	Glen Clunie - - - -	3484	17
320	Carn Crom - - - - -	Aberdeen	Mar Forest - - - -	2847	3
320	Glas Maol - - - - -	Forfar	Canlochan Glen - - - -	3502	18
324	Creag Leacach - - - - -	F'rfar-P'rth	Glen Brighty—Gleann Beag - - - -	3238	18
324	The Cairnwell - - - - -	Abd.-Perth	Glen Clunie—Gleann Beag - - - -	3559	16
328	Socach Mor - - - - -	Aberdeen	Glen Ey - - - -	3073	13
330	Carn Geoidh - - - - -	Abd.-Perth	Glen Thalnich - - - -	3194	16
332	An Socach - - - - -	Aberdeen	Glen Ey - - - -	3059	13
334	Carn Bhinnein - - - - -	Perth	Glen Thalnich - - - -	3003	15
334	Sidlaw Hills - - - - -	F'rfar-P'rth	" " - - - -	—	45
354	Largo Law - - - - -	Fife	Largo - - - -	943	65
355	Meikle Says Law - - - - -	Hadd.-Ber.	Lammermuirs - - - -	1750	93
338	Carn Bhac - - - - -	Abd.-Perth	Glen Ey - - - -	3098	10
338	Beinn Iutharn Bheag - - - - -	"	" " - - - -	3011	13
339	Carn Liath - - - - -	Aberdeen	" " - - - -	2676	8
343	Beinn Iutharn Mhor - - - - -	Abd.-Perth	" " - - - -	3424	12
344	Glas Thulachan - - - - -	Perth	Glen Lochy - - - -	3445	15
345	West Lomond - - - - -	Fife	Strathmiglo - - - -	1713	60
346	Sgor Mor - - - - -	Aberdeen	Mar Forest - - - -	2666	5
346	Carn a' Mhaim - - - - -	"	" " - - - -	3329	2
349	Carn an Righ - - - - -	Perth	Gleann Mor—Gleann Beag - - - -	3377	13
350	Carnethy Hill - - - - -	Edinburgh	Pentland Hills - - - -	1890	90
353	Carn nan Slonnach - - - - -	Perth	Glen Fernach - - - -	2750	15
356	Carn Geldie - - - - -	Aberdeen	Glen Dee - - - -	2039	8
357	Ben Vuroch - - - - -	Perth	Glen Fernach - - - -	2961	18
360	Ochil Hills - - - - -	Perth, &c.	— - - - -	—	60

NOTE.—Allowance must be made for magnetic deviation when using compass ; see page 311.