

MOUNTAINEERING PARAPHERNALIA.

BY LUI BEG.

CIRCUMSTANCES frequently impel one to write absurdly. "The air we breathe", the speed at which we live, are both inconsistent factors to this end. Our much-vaunted "nation of shopkeepers" contains a high percentage of fools. Some men are born fools, while others have foolishness thrust upon them. Among present-day writers, for example, there are those who write "with a purpose", and others who think they have a "mission", but most people commit their thoughts to paper in total ignorance of the subjects they profess to know. Parenthetically, I may explain that I invariably use a fountain pen! The ignorant class of litterateurs have the good fortune to be the more successful, because, perhaps, they are in a majority. My sympathies, up to the present, have been with minorities, but that is no sufficient or prudent reason why I should not, once in a while, throw in my lot with the greater number. A brief, but thoughtful, consideration of these "circumstances" compels me to disfigure several sheets of paper now. My qualifications may be equally briefly and thoughtfully stated. I am not a mountaineer, in the Club's accepted form. True, I have "done" Lochnagar, Ben-nachie, and the Blue Hill, but climbing these mountains is in the eyes of Cairngormers, I am told, looked upon as mere child's play. Yet, although literally I have not been "over hills and over mountains", I "read" all the proof sheets of that excellent guide, counsellor, and friend, "Ben Muich Dhui and His Neighbours". Need I adduce further "proofs" of my ability to discuss "Mountaineering Paraphernalia"?

Let others rave about the "excessive lonesomeness and the aspect of desolation on every hand"; be it mine to tell of the equipment, necessary and unnecessary, for hill-

climbing peregrinations. Thus will I cater for the comfort of novices—like myself. Thus will I increase the Club's membership; and, for the third and last time, thus will I encourage the faint-hearted, and make the stout of heart quail!

Mountaineering is not without its dangers; it has also one or two compensating advantages. The lion has not yet lain down with the lamb, or if it has, the lamb has in every case been provided with an *inside* berth. But that by the way, and to rank as an aside. In planning out a hill excursion, very many things have to be considered, the chief being the "trappings" needful. In this connection it may be well to warn the unsophisticated climber against taking ladies with him when he to the hills does lift his eyes. Ladies are, in the abstract, estimable enough companions, but for mountaineering purposes they are *de trop*. Besides, "strait-laced" people are safer at home, and home is woman's grandest, noblest sphere! Imagine a procession of serving maids carrying endless loads of japanned tin travelling cases for the safe custody of feathered hats, ribboned bonnets, and frilled dresses up to the only hotel—the Shelter Stone—on the higher Grampian range! And then, look at the limited accommodation. There is not even a bathroom. The single bedroom has to do duty as kitchen, sitting-room, parlour, and drawing-room. What reasonable lady could ever put up with such accommodation? It will thus be seen that ladies are an impossibility, or at least impeditive, on the hills. And now, having disposed of the fair sex, it may be a bit brusquely perhaps, but, it must be conceded, with a due regard for their safety and well-being, as well as the general fitness of things, let us turn once more to the subject on hand.

One of the first requisites for a well-regulated topographical expedition is a compass. Now, there are compasses and compasses, but there are two special kinds which I recommend without fear or favour. These are spring, or divider compasses, and the beam compass. The old-time mariner's compass is now entirely obsolete, and more people have been led astray in trying to "box" that article than the

world wots of. Maps—those of the Ordnance Survey, because of their “confusion worse confounded” propensities—are also considered a desideratum. These are now mostly used, however, by hill-climbers who wilfully desire to lose themselves. Applied in conjunction with a pair of the compasses before referred to, the map at times gives an indication of the distances traversed. Maps are also highly prized on account of the pleasant discussions which they originate when the leader of a party “don’t know w’ere ’e are”. No healthy-minded mountaineer’s kit is complete without a copy of the “Club Journal”—No. 1 being preferable in consequence of the difficulty of procuring it. [This gives us the opportunity of a free ad.—“No. 1 is out of print”—ED.] Bicycles are indispensable. If the party is large, nothing looks more picturesque than a hastily constructed fence of “bikes”—at the foot of a hill. The uncanny things help to ward off game. Hill-climbers have been known to carry their machines from Derry Lodge to Nethy Bridge, the tracks, in many places, not having yet been cinder-laid. Cameras are also now looked upon as part of the equipment. Not more than twelve plates, or films, out of every dozen have ever been known to be spoiled through under- or over-exposure. Field glasses are a *sine qua non*, though ninety-nine times out of every hundred, in consequence of mists and rain, they are never used. For ornamental purposes an Alpine-stock, or shepherd’s crook, is carried in the hand. Frequently, however, on coming to a “stiff part”, these have to be thrown away. One cannot crawl on all fours in anything like a dignified fashion hampered with a stick. A supply of light refreshments, liquid and solid, consisting of cold Birss tea, tinned meat, and a chunk of stale bread, is by some considered needful. A cunningly-devised domestic utensil, aptly named a “pocket pistol”, does duty as liquor holder, at the beginning of the journey. At the foot of the hill—on the other side, you know—there is rarely a single shot left in the locker! The “tea”, it should be stated, must be taken in medicinal proportions, and for that purpose an ordinary, common tea spoon will be found useful. Solids are invari-

ably rolled up in bits of old newspapers, and stowed in botanical cases. "Men are not always what they seem", neither are botanical cases; and it is not wise to judge a man by his botanical case. A ragged coat may cover a large and warm heart, and an old-fashioned hat frequently indicates a loving nature and a life-long friendship; so, I repeat, never judge a man by his b.c. Knapsacks are perhaps strongly reminiscent of John Brown of "No. 99" fame, but they are very fashionable, and no up-to-date mountaineer would ever think of setting out minus his knapsack. In addition to their "usefulness", knapsacks give a picturesqueness to the wearer, and they may, therefore, be classed under the heading of "ornamental as well as useless". The fool-hardy pedestrian of the mountains invariably carries an ice axe, with which to hew his way through the enormous icebergs to be found on the Upper Deeside hills. With his "battle" axe he improvises ornamental staircases, which he ascends and descends with precision and dexterity. Another necessary adjunct is the geological hammer, which should be artistically placed in a side pocket, with the handle delicately arranged, so as to be obtrusively observable to all and sundry. The hammer is rarely if ever required for other than purely decorative purposes, but it gives to the owner a business-like appearance, and greatly furthers a study of the science of geology! Odd bits of string and some pins should be carried in the mountaineer's pockets. One never knows when an accident may occur, and these "first aids to the wounded" come in handy.

And now, if you please, a word or two as to the necessary costume. Knickerbocker or kilt suits only are permissible. Long "trews" do not show off the human form divine, and, indeed, are decidedly bad form. "Tacketty" boots are worn by many, but those who desire wet feet are counselled to wear thin shoes, hand-sewn, and without either iron or brass sprigs. Delicate people generally take thin waterproof coats or capes with them, but the case-hardened mountaineer braves the elements without any covering of the kind. Indeed, he has been known to take off his coat or jacket and

carry it over his arm. A last word of advice to the uninitiated previous to his ascent. The inexperienced one is counselled to set out "with a light foot and a jaunty step". If he can whistle, he should strike up a lively air, without fear of giving offence to a stray gamekeeper, even should he be climbing on a Sunday! It is not necessary to give explicit directions when to "turn off" the jaunty step or to cease whistling. A stiffness in the mechanism of his pedal extremities, and an unaccountably sudden stoppage of his "breathing requisites", are fairly sure indications when he should "settle down to work". Smoking may be substituted for whistling; and a good old seasoned pipe is most recommended. Cigars are on no account to be used, as the smell of burning cabbage disturbs and distracts the game.

Although it is outwith the province of this paper, I may be allowed a sentence or two as to weather conditions. I have come to the conclusion, notwithstanding expert opinion, that the weather has nothing whatever to do with a practical study of the topography of the country. If you essay the attempt in summer, you are sure to accomplish the "climb" either under a broiling sun, or in pouring rain. If in winter, it invariably snows; so that the "conditions" are of no account whatever. In all weathers the amateur or professional mountaineer must put "a stout heart to a stey brae", "keep his powder dry", and not forget any part of his Mountaineering Paraphernalia.