

BEINN DOIREANN AND SOME NEIGHBOURS.

BY WILLIAM BARCLAY.

ON 19th May, a friend and the writer journeyed by the early morning train from Edinburgh to Bridge of Orchy, which was reached at 8:35. From the station we made direct for the summit of Beinn Doireann, which rose above us in one steep, unbroken slope of nearly 8000 feet. The lower part of this slope was grassy and moist, the middle scree-covered, while the upper had a heavy coating of snow. It was warm work toiling up this steep, under a blazing sun, but we had ample excuse for frequent halts—the ever-increasing vision of snow-capped peaks. In the foreground, and most impressive of all, Stob Ghabhar and the Clachlet, with Loch Tulla at their base, formed a suitable picture on which to expend plate number one. As we neared the summit, we were welcomed by a covey of ptarmigan, just changing into summer garb. The cairn (3523) was reached at 10:10, and here we remained for nearly an hour, admiring the vast array of snow-covered hills which rose in every direction. To the south, and just across the Chonoghlaish glen, Beinn a' Chaisteil and Beinn Odhar had some snow lingering on their summits. A little farther off, Beinn Chaluim showed its twin peaks very nicely, and in the extreme distance Ben Lomond towered above the loch at its base. Then the Beinn Laoigh group, only eight miles away, was very fine, carrying a heavy mantle of snow. In the gap between Beinn Os and Beinn Dubh Chraige, the summit of Ben Ime was seen. Almost due west the great mass of Ben Cruachan, with its many tops, occupied a position between the waters of Loch Awe and Loch Etive. Just a glimpse of the latter was got through Glen Kinglass, but to the north of this glen we had Ben Starav and the many other fine peaks leading round to the splendid mass of Stob Ghabhar and the Clachlet. Over the northern

slope of this last, just the summit of Sgor a' Mhaim could be seen. Further round from these again, we had the well-known form of Ben Nevis, the finely-shaped Binnan More, Stob Coire an Easain, Stob Coire an Easain Mhoir above Loch Treig, and a whole host of others, which we had not time to identify. Most of these hills, be it remembered, were clothed in spotless white. Over Beinn an Dothaidh stood Cnoc Dearg, and just to the right of that, but far away, we recognised Creag Meaghaidh. Then the Ben Alder group occupied our limit of distinctness in this direction; the next part of the circle only showed great masses of white indistinctly through a haze. It was not till we came to Schichallion that we could recognize friends, but what a tame appearance that mountain has from this point! Carn Maing was not worth looking at, simply a great undulating plateau. Both these hills were almost devoid of snow. In the immediate foreground Beinn an Dothaidh, Beinn Achallader, Beinn Creachan, Beinn a' Chuirn, and Ben Vannoch encircled Loch Lyon on the west, and Beinn Heasgarnich and Creag Mor overlooked it on the south. Meall Ghaordie peeped over the slope of Heasgarnich, and more distinct were the tops of Ben Lawers. Ben Vorlich and Stùc a Chroin, although barely visible, were easily recognised; and who could mistake Ben More, Am Binnein, or Cruach Ardran? No matter in what direction we were engaged, the eye always seemed to turn instinctively to the north-west, and no wonder! for in that direction lay the cream of Scotland's hills, all in Alpine condition.

We now left the summit, and traversed northwards, descending over immense and almost unbroken snow-fields to the col (2050) between this hill and Beinn an Dothaidh. There was comparatively little snow on the southern slopes of the latter, but the north face was heavily corniced. Some time was spent in photographing, and then we made for Beinn a' Chuirn. This necessitated a dip of 1600 feet, followed by a fairly steep ascent to the summit (3020, cairnless), which was passed over, and the walk continued to the cairn (3125) on Ben Vannoch at

2.10. Only a small dip separates these tops, so slight that the traverse was done in twenty minutes. From Ben Vannoch one obtains a fine view of Beinn Creachan just to the north, and, by descending a little to the south, an equally good view of Loch Lyon and the upper part of Glen Lyon is also got. On the other side of the loch Beinn Heasgarnich rises to a height of 3530 feet, and yet is a much forsaken mountain.

Beinn Doireann, Beinn an Dòthaidh, Beinn a' Chuirn, and Ben Vannoch are all grass-covered, and under sheep, although we did see a herd of deer on Beinn Doireann. Our time was now rather limited, so we did not stay long on Vannoch, but descended to the "road" in Glen Chonogh-lais, and followed it—our own road—down to the railway track. The O.S. map indicates that the stream should be crossed three times: thirteen would be nearer the mark. We crossed it a few times but soon got tired of that game, and just continued down the left bank of the stream. It took us an hour and a quarter to do these four miles, and, as we had yet another four to cover, and a train to catch, we did not waste any time, but continued down the line towards Tyndrum. Sleeper-walking does not come in well after hill-walking; the stride is altogether out. However, we stuck to it, and had three minutes to spare before our train came.