

GLAS THULACHAN.

GLAS THULACHAN (Grey Hillocks) (3445) as every hill-walking schoolboy knows, is one of the highest summits in the Eastern Grampians, and is situated about mid-way between Glen Tilt and the Blairgowrie-Braemar Road. It is a very prominent hill as seen from the south, and I had long desired to climb it. As the Spital of Glenshee is probably the best point from which to approach it, I made my way to that comfortable biggin' and on a warm morning at the end of May, 1903, I set out for the hill. It was the most prominent object in the western landscape as I stood before the Invercauld Arms, though the summit is not completely seen from that point. There is nothing slender or elegant about Glas Thulachan. A great mass of a hill, it fills up an extensive triangular space, bounded by Gleann Lochaidh on the south, by Gleann Mor (separating it from Carn an Rìgh and Ben Uarn) on the west, and on the east by the deep cut of Glen Ghailneiche, which parts it from Carn Bhinnein and Beinn Gulabin.

I did not make any inquiry as to the best course to take for the ascent, but crossing the bridge to the north of the hotel I walked along the road which skirts the foot of Beinn Gulabin. Following this road towards Socach, I forded the Allt Ghlinn Ghailneiche—to find that a few hundred yards further up than the ford there is a bridge of which I might have made use. I then began climbing up the grassy slopes on the east side of the mountain. The excessive heat made even the nearer hills show very indistinctly, and as I toiled up the easy ascent at the back of Creag a Chaise I did not feel that my trouble was likely to be rewarded by much of a view from the summit. On reaching the top of the first ridge, I kept on by the side of a wire fence, and made my way in a northerly direction to round the head of a little valley running southward.

Several large patches of snow lay on the opposite side of this hollow, and on one of these a solitary deer wandered backward and forward, evidently enjoying the coolness. I heartily wished I could join it, but walking at a leisurely pace I reached the prominent point which marks the head of the valley referred to, in an hour and a half from the foot of the hill. From this point the summit of the mountain showed at what still seemed a great distance to the north-west, but it proved not to be so far away as it appeared. It is much more striking as seen from the east than from the west. As with most of the other mountains in this part of the Grampians, the summit is rounded, but a great precipitous corrie on the eastern side gives it a special character and distinction of its own. The walk towards the summit was very easy and pleasant going over short heather; indeed there is a great absence of rocks and stones on this hill. I soon joined again the friendly, companionable fence which leads right to the summit, and in about an hour I was at the insignificant little heap of stones which marks the top. Glas Thulachan is worthy of a better cairn than this, even though the corrie had to be quarried to get stones for it. This corrie was an impressive object on the right hand as one approached the summit, the black rocks being barred with great strips of snow. At the bottom a herd of deer lay stretched out on an extensive expanse of snow. From their air of quiet contentment the temperature seemed to suit them.

A great improvement had now taken place in the day. There was no very distant view to be had, but a cool breeze was blowing, and the nearer hills stood out clearly in the sunshine. I lay down on the heather and spent a happy hour in gazing on many old friends. The noble mass of Carn nan Gabhar stood out on the south-west; then came Carn Chlambain on the west side of Glen Tilt, Carn an Righ close at hand, with An Sgarsoch seen just over it, Cairn Toul and Ben Muich Dhui through the opening between Carn an Righ and Ben Uarn Mhor, Ben Uarn Bheag with Beinn a'

Bhuird and Ben Avon seen to the north of it, and Loch nan Eun, beloved of fishers, nestling at its feet; to the east rose the fine little peak of Carn Bhinnein and the round shoulder of Carn Geoidh, with, on its southern side, the patch of snow that clings to it so tenaciously till late in the summer. Beinn Gulabin, Beinn Earb, Meall a Choire Bhuidhe, and Ben Vuroch filled in the picture towards the south. There was no distant view southward, which was a disappointment, and even to the northward the Cairngorm summits were not very clearly seen through a slight haze.

I should have liked to cross to Carn Geoidh and the Cairnwell, but the thought of the dip of 2000 feet to the intervening valley and of the scorching heat when I got there destroyed the good resolutions of the morning. Carn an Righ looked very tempting across Gleann Mor and could easily have been reached in about an hour, as the dip is not great. However, in a discreet fashion, I struck southward along the ridge to the east of Clais Mhor, and reached Glenloch Lodge (a shepherd's dwelling) in about an hour and a quarter from the top. A further walk of about an hour and a quarter brought me once more to the Spital of Glenshee, which was reached soon after four o'clock. The sun shone with quite unreasonable ferocity as I trudged down Gleann Lochaidh, and springs were scarce. There is a good one, however, in the roadway a little before the burn is crossed at some stepping-stones. Let no thirsty traveller pass it without a loud "gaudeamus".

Probably a better course to take for the ascent of the mountain is to go up by the line I took in descending, *i.e.*, to walk up Gleann Lochaidh to the Lodge or a little past it, and then ascend by one of the long, easy ridges which the mountain throws out towards the south. This would probably prove less circuitous than the route I took.