

THE CLUB ON CAIRN-MON-EARN.

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WE live on the bright spots of our past existence, and forget as best we may the sadder incidents. Times of elation and pleasure are memories; those of depression sink down to a subconscious region from which we never voluntarily recall them. Why should we? Man was not made to mourn, but to enjoy himself—to rejoice in his youth and in his age too. The afternoon of the 16th of April is a keepsake among the days of 1904, and that for many reasons. The weather made a bright break to mark it out; the company formed a happy combination of all ages and both sexes animated with one desire—to enjoy the outing. Spring was breaking out. The dry earth-wall was fringed with a white coronet of erophila, and among wiry heather roots the scarlet fructifications of the lichens lit up the hillside with a fairy illumination. The crowberry was already in flower, and the early migrants piped along the fallows. Up and up we went, through the young belt of Scots pine about the mountain's base, the home already of many a timid roe and reinstated capercailzie; through the rank ling and over denuded boulders, where some took to slower steps and to looking downward to the valley and upward to the Cairn, where youth and beauty clustered round the flagstaff. Here, too, as in every highway and byway of life, the ladies are coming up shoulder to shoulder with their brothers, some of them, like senior wranglers and double firsts, shooting ahead of the duller, lazier sex.

At length, across the screes the slowest were clambering on the great stones about the pole, turning eyes and binoculars to every point of the compass. The variety of sights presented was considerable, and, the light being good, some time was spent in singling them out. Many looked into the wise east, where the North Sea and the wood at

Muchalls appeared ; others picked out their villas below Culter, while a few took note of groups of rustics in the foreground gazing up and wondering what men and women, many of whom were past their first love, could seek upon the Cairn. In spite of the Press, neither the first notion of science nor any comprehension of the amusements of the more leisured classes has entered some minds as yet. If you are a geologist or an antiquary, you must be on the outlook for gold ; if you are a botanist, pot herbs or simples are your quest ; but, if you are a mountaineer, you must be a mild maniac.

Going up Cairn-mon-earn is not a climbing feat. Its ascent is tolerably easy, and its altitude is only 1245 feet, but it has its own distinction as supplying an educative landscape and scene of rural peace and beauty that might inspire a new Dyer to write a new "Grongar Hill." Far to the west the giant Cairngorms lose themselves among the clouds, while nearer rise the fabled Stane o' Clochnaben, Cairn o' Mount "sae bleak an' bare," Kerloch, Mount Battock, and Mount Keen. It was for the juniors to listen to the masters of the craft whose feet had trod the sod of every summit. Not a visible peak but was distinguished, discussed, dissected ! The man who spoke of making the boundless universe his university must have been a mountain-climber. Such an idea might occur only to him who often sees a wide prospect spread out below, with its multitude of details all combined in one magnificent whole, and all his own as truly as if he held the title-deeds in his breastpocket. My Lords of the Education Department, who have sent down so many enlightened circulars, might well issue another requiring every pupil, before leaving school, to ascend such a height as Cairn-mon-earn and get its geographical notions corrected and stereotyped. This would be an object lesson worth a hundred—to view the great sea, with fishing boat and trading steamer making their silent way upon the watery waste, in the distance the vast mountain ranges, the larger and lesser river valleys, tributary and confluence, field and forest, lake and moor, town and village, and all in

their natural combinations and repose. Add to this the heightening of feeling and widening of the mental outlook, and we make bold to say no day of all the school year would compare with that one in the classroom of the hilltop.

There is a tale connected with the mountain that will embody the foregoing. Thirty years ago an LL.D., of Aberdeen, a famous mountaineer, reached the hillfoot, and left his overcoat with three lads hoeing turnips. When he returned, his enthusiasm kindled the boys' desire to see "how great the world was." They are now occupying three pulpits in the Church of Scotland, and one of them has at least a local fame as a scholar, while another is widely known as a poet. They trace the first awakening of their intellects to the climbing of Cairn-mon-earn.

There is little further to record. The hill was once like so many others—a commonity. Not so long ago the people of Auchinblae had a right to pasture cattle on it. It is sixty years since a great lawsuit between two proprietors raged round its possession, in which dozens of farmers and others were cited in evidence. The Cairn is the point of most interest to some. An account of its erection, with the reason therefor, would bring fame to that member of the Cairngorm Club who can relate it.