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THE SIX CAIRNGORMS IN A DAY.

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THERE was quite a gathering of hillmen in the 4.35 p.m. train for Ballater on 20th June last. One large party was going up Lochnagar next day, and another was to camp out in Glen Derry, while we ourselves, five in number, were to attempt to conquer the six highest Cairngorms in one day. It sounded a big undertaking, and our friends did not anticipate that we should succeed, but at any rate we set forth firmly resolved to accomplish our task, if nothing unforeseen occurred. I may say that most of us were in excellent training, and had carefully prepared for the venture.

We left Ballater about 7.30 p.m., and drove up to Loch Builg *via* Crathie. It was a glorious evening, and everything pointed to the weather continuing good. Leaving Loch Builg punctually at midnight we set forth on our long and lonely journey. It was quite chilly, though there was still a distinct glow in the northern sky. We followed the track up Glen Gairn, although it is two miles longer than the route by the county boundary, because it was easier going in the dim light. Before long we struck up to the right in the shadow of Carn Eas, and at 2.23 a.m. we reached the summit of Ben Avon. We did not remain long there as it was very cold indeed. The moon had risen by this time, and away to the east there

were signs that soon we should have the sun to cheer us. There was a little mist hanging about Beinn a' Bhuid, but it had quite disappeared before we reached the first cairn.

Pushing on again, we reached the foot of the Sneek exactly at 3 a.m., and at the same moment the sun rose out of the clouds. At 3.50 a.m. we were on the North Top of Beinn a' Bhuid, and after this commenced the most monotonous part of our day. It is a very long and very tedious five miles to Loch Avon, the long heather with hidden holes and loose stones making us proceed very cautiously, and it was 6 a.m. before we lay down on the shores of the loch, and, after a most refreshing dip, had our first proper meal. It was glorious basking in the sunshine and looking along the loch to the snow-crested crags at the far-end—the one drawback being the number of midges and other insects. There were plenty of trout rising at the flies all over the loch.

After an hour's rest we made a bee line for Cairngorm, and reached the top a few minutes after 8 a.m. The view was superb—there being as yet no heat haze. We recognised almost every well-known Scottish mountain, and viewed Ben Nevis with especial pleasure, as we had been on the top of the abandoned observatory at 3 a.m. exactly a week before. All the hills to the north of the Moray Firth stood out quite clearly, and we were very glad to be able to pick out without hesitation an old friend, Ben More in Assynt. Ben Alder seemed quite close at hand in the clear morning sunshine. Certainly 8 a.m. is an excellent time for a good view.

Unfortunately we had no time to spare, so once more set forth. Ben Muich Dhui was reached at 10.34 a.m., about two and a half hours ahead of the time we had allowed ourselves. After this we made our first mistake—we took too direct a route for Glen Dee, and found the descent over the huge boulders very tiring indeed. By the time we reached the Dee we were only too ready to have another hour's rest, and enjoy lunch. We started off again at 1 p.m., and ascended Cairn Toul by the ridge to the left of Lochan Uaine. It was hot work, as the

sun was very strong, and the gradient very stiff. However 3.16 p.m. found us at the cairn. Although there was a fair breeze in the valley, there was not a breath of wind at the summit—in fact the first thing that caught my eye was a common tortoiseshell butterfly (*Vanessa urtica*) flitting about the cairn. I may say here that we saw very little wild life during the day. Some gulls near Loch Builg, a few deer at the head of Glen Gairn, several grouse, numerous ptarmigan, a snow-bunting on Beinn a' Bhuid, and a lizard on Cairngorm were about all we noticed. We found two ptarmigan's nests near the Feith Buidhe, and almost trampled on some chicks on Braeriach. We were also surprised at the small amount of snow, in comparison with what we saw at the same date the previous year. In 1907 the large plateau on Braeriach was one vast snow-field—this year there were merely a few scattered wreaths.

We left Cairn Toul at 3.30 p.m., and, crossing to the south of the Angel's Peak, reached the Wells of Dee at 5 p.m., and the cairn of Braeriach at 5.30 p.m. Here our photographs were taken, and we congratulated ourselves, as our day's work was practically completed. The scramble down to the lower bothy in Glen Eunach was easily accomplished, we arriving there about 7 p.m., just as our waggonette was driving up. We had arranged that it should wait for us from 7 to 9 p.m., and so we actually finished up in accordance with our timetable. The bath and dinner that were waiting for us at Aviemore were very much appreciated.

We had been nineteen hours on foot, with about three and a half hours of rests *en route*. As far as we can make out the distance covered was about thirty-eight miles, and the height climbed nearly eleven thousand feet. Of course we had two great points in our favour—long daylight, and perfect weather with no mist or wind. Then again the hills were all quite familiar to us, and we were in excellent training. It was a day that we shall remember all our lives with the pleasantest of memories.