

## THE CLUB AT EASTER.

THE first official Easter Meet was held at Ballater, where the headquarters were the Invercauld Arms Hotel. Lochnagar was climbed on the 26th March, and Broad Cairn the following day. The Meet was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended, and probably such excursions will be more popular hereafter. The Club members wandered over a wide district of the Highlands at Easter, many small parties having been arranged for the occasion.

### LOCHNAGAR AND BROAD CAIRN.

ON Saturday morning we left the hotel at 8.10, with the Black Spout of Lochnagar as our objective. Driving by the King's Way, we found our first snow at Inchnabobart, and arrived at Alltnaguibhsaich at 9.30. When we left our conveyance and started our walk, in spite of a very cold wind blowing from the hills and a slight haze, the morning was fairly good, and kept on improving, the sun even attempting to come out. At Clashrathan we touched our first snow proper, and at this point startled a doe, while one of our members took a snapshot of what had once been an eagle's eyrie.

We made a short halt at the head of Glen Gelder to admire the Meikle Pap and get a glimpse of Lochnagar. So much snow lay about, that we elected to go round by the path rather than risk a short cut. We climbed the Meikle Pap, but were quickly driven off by the fierce gale raging on the summit. By glissading down, the loch was soon reached. It was frozen over, but much fissured, the ice being sunk a little, so we did not risk crossing it.

At this point, with the frozen loch in front, and scenery of the wildest description all round, we had a magnificent panorama, the corries being in full view, set off by the heavy massed clouds tumbled about by the gale above. Glasses were turned eagerly towards the Black Spout, and it was ultimately decided that the cornice seemed feasible;

the Spout itself looked innocent enough in its snow covering, and we advanced to the attack. One ice axe for the party gave those of us who were novices at snow work unlimited confidence, but we received a rude shock at the offset. We had to surmount a huge boulder, covered with ice, smooth as glass, and hard as steel, with ugly edges and an iron-bound loch as a landing-place, in case of a slip. We soon discovered that although our expert ice-axe pioneer did his best for us, we still required the ability of a limpet to follow him. By the time the base of the Spout was reached, we were considerably subdued, and a consultation was held to consider whether our former resolution should be confirmed or cancelled. As fate would have it, the snow within the Spout was not altogether ice, and so we decided to proceed.

Oh, that grand climb! that long wild climb! No sooner had we got beyond the reach of return, than our milky way turned to ice, then very soft again, and so on. Every step we took now increased the risk in the event of a slip, but we struggled on.

I have heard that "we once had a boat of our own," but if only on this occasion I had had an ice axe of my own our leader would gladly have paid me to exchange places with him. Hours passed thus, till, when nearing the top, I was seized with severe cramp in one of my legs. I said nothing to alarm my friends, but I grew very anxious; I changed my position, and squirmed and kicked, in the hope of throwing the cramp off, but nothing I could do moved it. Some other greater fright must have driven it away, for I do not remember its leaving me.

At last we reached the top, "all but the heel;" a ten-foot cornice had to be surmounted. Our guide, to protect us from his ice chippings, sent us under the cornice, where we passed the time, estimating how near it was to the point of falling upon us. In due course we were called to enter the breach; my stick, embedded in the wall, formed a four-foot step, from which the first member was pushed to safety. Number two was then half-pulled, half-pushed to the same desirable position. I followed, and of course my



*Photos by*

THE BLACK SPOUT, LOCHNAGAR, 26<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 1910.

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stick, the foot-step, followed me ; then the fun began, and for the second time that day we sorely missed a rope. Our guide, who at this stage had inverted the order of procedure, now came last, and endeavoured to get out. After struggling for a short time to pull himself up, I was horrified to see him suddenly disappear from view—his foot-hold had given way. After several unsuccessful attempts to get him once more into our set, we were compelled to wait another good half-hour, till he cut a royal road for himself.

In a very short time we reached the cairn (3.45 p.m.). It was very hazy ; we saw nothing. It was also intensely cold, so we hurried down by the Glas Allt, and were charmed by the change of temperature. Following deer tracks on the ice, we crossed the burn in safety. When nearing the Falls we had an excellent view of about a dozen deer feeding in the gorge. At 8.40 we arrived at our hotel, after a glorious absence of twelve-and-a-half hours.

The next morning we again drove to Alltnaguibhsaich arriving at 9.30, thence walking by Glasallt Shiel. Several deer were seen and we had an interesting sight of an eagle as we set out to Broad Cairn. Following the path to the Dubh Loch we passed the Stullan Falls, which legend assigns as the place where the Marquis of Lorne proposed to his wife. Tramping on, we ultimately came upon the loch lying at the foot of our hill. The scene was a wild one ; the loch was frozen over, there was much snow, and the mist hung heavy on the tops. We tackled Broad Cairn, however, and had an exhilarating, though fairly heavy, climb through the steep snow. I had the glory of leading on this occasion—with the ice-axe—and was not long in learning that it was no joke to work the axe properly, even on this soft job. In the dense mist we were able to reach the cairn only by the aid of the "stone-men." Nothing could be seen, so we meandered east till Loch Muick came into view. Some fun was got when descending watching a dog chasing a white hare.

By the time we reached the bridge over the Dubh Loch Burn the mist was on us. At Glasallt Shiel we left three

companions who had joined us for the day, and stepped out briskly for our conveyance at Alltnaguibhsaich, and were once more driven to Ballater, all delighted with our first Easter Meet.—W. M. MCPHERSON.

#### FROM STRATH TUMMEL TO GLEN MUICK.

WE found ourselves in Atholl on the first day of our Easter Meet at Ballater. On looking at Bartholomew's "Braemar and Blair Atholl" sheet, we perceived that to join our clubmen we had to traverse this map almost from corner to corner, and some ingenuity had to be exercised to plan our route from Strath Tummel to Glen Muick. It was Good Friday, but the day was like the opening of Spring, bright as an Easter morn. As we climbed up the steep path through the budding trees from Killiecrankie station, the whole country-side seemed to have awakened from its winter sleep. The birds were singing rapturously, the lambs were playing in the meadows, and higher up the curlew and the grouse were breaking the silence of the long winter. Our route lay over the summit of Ben Vrackie, and as we climbed this fine little mountain we looked westward to Loch Tummel, and onward to where Loch Rannoch seemed to lose itself in the "wide and wasted desert" of the moor.

The Perthshire hills were carrying much snow, and Ben Lawers looked specially alpine. As we reached the summit of Ben Vrackie, the huge Beinn a' Ghlo blocked out the northern prospect; yet with such a foreground we were content to lose the sight of our parent mountain range, which is hidden by the "Mountain of the Mist." What a different scene met us when we looked away down the Tay valley past the busy little town of Pitlochry, into the green meadows and rich land of the Great Strath. We held on our course, dipping down into Glen Brerachan, and soon got on to the main Pitlochry-Kirkmichael turnpike. We tramped along this road to Straloch, where we came to a humble-looking house of entertainment, in the shape of a cottage with