

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB.

### THE EASTER MEET.

THE Easter meet of the Club at Dalwhinnie, over the week-end, 21st to 24th March, proved very successful. The weather, it is true, on Sunday was very bad, and snow and rain made climbing impossible, but the magnificent day which was enjoyed on Saturday fully compensated for this, and made the gathering a most enjoyable one. The seven members of the club present were—Mr. Mr. R. J. Dunn, Mr. John Dickson, Huntly; Mr. A. I. M'Connochie, Glasgow; Mr. A. P. Milne, Mr. J. W. Milne, Dr. M'Intyre, and Mr. J. B. Gillies. The majority of the members travelled to Dalwhinnie by train on Friday morning. On Friday afternoon the party climbed Carn na Caim, a hill of 3087 feet, but mist prevented a very extended view.

The weather on Saturday was, however, perfect, and the day was devoted to a magnificent round of the fine mountains lying on the west side of the Pass of Drumochter—Sgairveach Mor (3160 feet), Beag an Laoigh (2739 feet), Beinn Udlaman (3306 feet), Gealcharn (3305 feet), and Marcaonach (3175 feet). The train was taken in the morning to Dalnaspidal. The hill known as the Sow of Atholl was climbed first, and a traverse was then made of the five summits named above. The views south into Perthshire were magnificent. The whole country was covered with white, while to the north, across the deep valley of Loch Ericht, rose the great mass of Ben Alder, magnificent in rock and snow. The day was one of the finest which any of the members of the Club have experienced on the Scottish hills. In addition to the Cairngorm Club, the Scottish Ski Club had its meet at Dalwhinnie and Newtonmore, and from those places numbers of ski runners proceeded to the hills traversed by the Club. At various points the climbers came upon skiers, who were enthusiastic about the magnificent runs

they were having, one member in particular, from Edinburgh, declaring that the running surpassed anything he had ever had in Switzerland or in Norway.

On the Sunday the weather broke down completely, but despite the wind and snow, some members of the Club ascended Chaoruinn, a hill of 3004 feet on the county march. The party returned to Aberdeen on Monday.

On the afternoon of Saturday the 19th April, a party of some eighteen motored out to the Raemoir Road and climbed the Hill of Fare by the Corrichie Burn descending on Midmar Castle. The conditions on the hill were at times Arctic, but the descent was made in a beautiful clear evening light, Midmar Castle and its surroundings looking ideal. After an excellent high tea at Echt the party motored back to Aberdeen which was reached about ten.

The following interesting description of the hill is by Mr. Robert Anderson, one of the party:—

The Hill of Fare is a long lumpish hill, lying—broadly speaking—between the parishes of Midmar and Echt to the north and east, and Banchory-Ternan and Kincardine O'Neil to the south and west, the circumference of its base being computed at 18 miles. It has seven well-defined tops, the highest (un-named on the Ordnance Survey Map) being 1,545 feet, while the Meikle Tap—something of a misnomer—is actually the lowest, 1,179 feet. The others are—Craigrath, 1,429 feet; Blackyduds, 1,422 feet; Craigour, 1,332 feet; Tornamean, 1,302 feet; and Greymore, 1,291 feet. The hill, for the most part, is covered with deep heather, there are no paths to speak of, and the “going” is consequently heavy, especially in wet weather. A central ravine, in which the burn of Corrichie rises, and through which it flows, is the site of the battle of Corrichie, 1562—a battle between the Earls of Moray and Huntly, which resulted in the defeat and death of the once all-powerful fourth Earl of Huntly, the head of the Roman Catholic party in the north, and the overthrow of the family and its influence. Queen Mary, whose forces Moray led, is said to have either witnessed the battle or viewed the scene of the battlefield subsequently from a rock still known as the “Queen’s Chair,” though both versions of the traditional story may be doubted; and a Well situated between the “Chair” and the battlefield is called “Queen Mary’s Well.” The battle is celebrated in a well-known ballad—

Murn ye heighlands, and murn ye leighlands,  
I trow ye hae meikle need ;  
For the bonnie burn o' Corrichie  
Has run this day wi' bleid.  
The hopefu' laird o' Finlater,  
Erle Huntley's gallant son,  
For the love he bare our beauteous queene,  
Has gar'd fair Scotland moan.

This bloody fecht was fiercely fought  
October's aught-and-twenty day,  
Christ's fifteen hunder, three score year,  
And twa, will mark the deidlie fray.  
But now the day maist waefu' cam',  
That day the queene did greet her fill ;  
For Huntley's gallant stalwart son  
Was headed on the headin' hill.

Five noble Gordons wi' him hang it were,  
Upon the samen fatal plaine ;  
Cruel Murray gar'd the waefu' queene look out,  
And see her lover and lieges slain.  
I wish our queene had better friends,  
I wish our country better peace ;  
I wish our lords wad na discord,  
I wish our wars at hame may cease.

The Hill of Fare was visited by the Club on the May holiday of 1893 (See *C.C.J.*, I., 46-7). On the occasion, the members of the party first paid a visit to the Barmekin of Echt. "Barmekin" is supposed to be a corruption of "barbican," or otherwise to be derived from Teutonic terms meaning a diminutive mound or rampart. The Barmekin was then referred to as "a densely-wooded hill, a conspicuous feature in the landscape of the district," but since then the trees have been blown down and the picturesque aspect of the hill has completely vanished. On the summit there is a well-defined area of circular form, prominently marked out by five entrenchments and rampart walls. Various surmises as to the origin and purpose of these constructions have been indulged in, and it has been generally assumed that they denote an ancient camp or fortification, probably Caledonian. A destructive critic, however—Mr. John Milne, LL.D., in an article in the *Free Press* (17th September, 1902), swept aside all such conjectures and maintained that the so-called "fortifications" were designed to be

a night fold for the sheep and cattle of the district when on hill pasture in summer, and a place where they could be defended against armed bands of Highland thieves.

The 1893 excursion was concluded by "a hurried inspection" of Midmar Castle. This Castle was described recently (*Country Life*, 23rd November, 1912) as "an interesting example of northern Scottish defensive mansions." It dates in the main from the sixteenth century, and was built on the keep plan, consisting originally of three towers set diagonally in a row, that on the south-east being round and the other two square. There is a bedroom which tradition says Queen Mary occupied on the night before the battle of Corrichie. Of the first building of the Castle there is no record, but according to tradition part of it was erected by Sir William Wallace, when Guardian of Scotland, in the early part of the fourteenth century, as a hunting-seat for his friend; Sir Thomas Longueville. In 1368, the lands of Midmar—so-called from being mid-way in the Mar, or black forest, between Don and Dee—belonged to the Brounes, and George Broune, Bishop of Dunkeld in 1484, was grandson of a laird of Midmar. Since then lands and castle have changed hands often. The estate, in the seventeenth century was in the possession of a family named Forbes, who called it Ballogie. In 1727 it was acquired by Alexander Grant, who was Sheriff of Aberdeenshire during the '45 and made a grievous complaint to the Lord Justice Clerk that his house—Grantsfield Castle he called it—had been surrounded by a company of soldiers who searched it for rebels; there was reasonable ground, however, for suspecting that the Sheriff was a Jacobite at heart. In 1767, the lands of Grantsfield were sold to James Davidson, merchant in Aberdeen; and, after various changes of ownership, were purchased in 1843 by Colonel Gordon of Cluny, who, passing over the names of Ballogie and Grantsfield, adopted the more ancient name of Midmar. The present proprietor is Lady Cathcart of Cluny.

Reference should not be omitted to the interesting account of a walk across the Hill of Fare in 1833 which was reproduced from the *Aberdeen Observer* in *C.C.J.*, III., 155-170.

#### GEALLAIG HILL.

The Geallaig Hill (2439), between the Dee and the Gairn was ascended on the Spring Holiday. Those present were:—Mr. and Mrs. Robert Anderson, Mr. James A. Hadden, Mr. H. S. Lumsden, Mr. A. P. Milne and Master Milne, Mr. George McIntyre, Mr. Alexander

Nicol, and Mr. Nicol, Junior, Mr. James Rennie, Mr. A. Emslie Smith, Junior, Mr. John Wallace and Miss Wallace.

The party left Aberdeen by the morning train at 8.45 and set out to ascend the hill about 10.30. The weather was pleasant and the trip delightful, but haze spoiled the magnificent view which in clear weather repays the climber.

The day the Club climbed, Morven was the only height clearly visible. However, a very pleasant and easy day was spent on the hill, and after an excellent dinner at the Invercauld Arms Hotel, the party returned to Aberdeen by the 6.45 in the evening.

The following description of the view from the farmhouse at Torgalter, by the Rev. John G. Michie in his "Deeside Tales," might almost serve as a description of the view from the summit of Geallaig—had the view been obtainable.

"Far to the right, the summits of the Braemar Grampians dimly appear as great mounds on the horizon, but become more distinct and bold in their outline as the eye follows them, one by one crag and ridge, till they culminate where "Dark Lochnagar" rears his boldest front into the sky—a Saul among his brethren, head and shoulders over all the rest. Then away to the left, with little variety of feature save Mount Keen's bold peak, like a turret on a rampart, the broad wall stretches till lost in the distance towards the German Ocean. The nearer outposts of this array of mountains, Craignaban, Craiguise, and the Coil Hills, are seen to great advantage, while Craig-gowan to Craigendarroch, with a bird's-eye view of Abergeldie opposite, the entire valley of the Dee is spread out as if on canvas, in all its beautiful variety of field and forest, and the soul of the whole, the silver river, in many a noble sweep and graceful bend, threading its mazy way with ceaseless song to its far-off home in the deep."

## CLOCHNABEN.

On Saturday, 21st June, a party of some dozen members climbed Clochnaben. Amongst those present were:— Messrs. R. Anderson, J. Iverach, A. Jamieson, J. D. McDiarmid, William Porter, A. E. Smith, A. Spark, Mr. and Mrs. Nicol, Dr. McIntyre, and the Secretary.

The early afternoon train was taken to Banchory, whence the party drove up the valley of the now famous Dye to the Blacksmith's Croft where most of the party began the climb. The summit was reached in driving mist *via* the tops of the Greystone Hill and Mount Shade. After a short time spent on the summit a descent was made by the Water of Aven to Whitestones where the party re-united and drove back to Banchory. After an excellent meal at the Burnett Arms the 8.15 train for Aberdeen was caught.

Though the summits of the three hills climbed were involved in thick mist the conditions lower down were delightful, especially at Whitestones, where the golden glory of the broom and the freshness of everything was charming.

Mount Battock and Clochnaben visited by the Club, 26th Sept., 1892. (See *C.C.J.*, I., 138).

Clochnaben (alone) visited again on the Spring Holiday, 5th May, 1902.

"The ascent" (according to the *Free Press* account) "was made from Glendye Lodge, the climbers numbering twenty. From this direction the east side of the hill was taken. The ascent was comparatively easy, though the ground was very wet, and large patches of snow were encountered. Light showers of snow fell now and again during the ascent, but as the summit was reached a regular snowstorm set in, accompanied by a bitterly cold wind. The snowstorm prevailed during the half-hour that the party remained on the summit of the "wart" or protuberance, and during this time the customary formal meeting was held—Mr. William Porter, J.P., being called to the chair in the unavoidable absence of the Chairman of the Club, Mr. Robert Harvey; one of the four plucky ladies who made the ascent, was admitted a member amid cheers. On the termination of the meeting, the party broke into two—two-thirds, under the leadership of Mr.

Robert Anderson, facing the biting blast, and making the descent to the Feughside Inn ; one-third, under the leadership of Mr. Alexander Copland, returning to Glendye Lodge by a different route. The former party had very bad walking till they struck the peat road by the burn of Greendams, the hill on this side being covered with snow, which lay at parts in deep wreaths. The two sections reunited at "Feughside Inn." (See *C.C.J.*, IV., 37).

Mr. Alexander Copland, in a series of articles on "The Cairn o' Mount and Clochnaben" contributed to the *Aberdeen Journal* in September, 1892, thus described the view from the summit of Clochnaben (limited, however, by dark clouds and a south-west gale).

"The summit was reached by crawling up in the teeth of the gale, and holding on. The great bump which makes Clochnaben so conspicuous a landmark from the sea is an immense protruding mass of weathered granite. A very fine and extensive view can be obtained from this huge rocky pinnacle. On this occasion the views had to be obtained from sheltered crevices. South-westward, the Wirren Hills and the Dog Hillock bounded the view ; westward, Mount Keen ; and, close at hand, Mount Battock ; while, over the Peter Hill, Morven, and occasionally, when the scud thinned and lightened, glimpses of Ben Avon and Beinn a Bhuird. Northward, Benrinnies, the Buck of the Cabrach, the Tap o' Noth, the Binn Hill, and Bennachie could be seen ; and along the valley of the Dee, on to Aberdeen, but in the neighbourhood of Aberdeen too much haze and smoke to identify the Salvation Army Barracks, even with the spy-glass. Upon the north-east side of the summit we came upon a large space covered with the cloudberry, the 'avren,' *Rubus Chamæmorus*, with plenty of bright red-coloured drupes standing bolt upright, but not ripe. The leaves were brilliantly bronzed in a variety of tints by John Fröst, R.A. We also found a good many tufts and patches of white heather. Descending the north face of the hill to the burn of Greendams, we were caught by a heavy and protracted shower, which necessitated squatting at a heather-covered bank for protection. Gaining a peat road after the rain had ceased, and the sun blinking out again, we skirted the Water of Aven until we reached the road to Whitestones and the tidy inn at Feughside."