



Photo by

BEN ALDER.

William Garden.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB.

SUMMER MEET AT DALWHINNIE, 1914.

A SUCCESSFUL holiday requires three things—good weather, good company, and good food; but any deficiency in one of these essentials may be compensated by an extra supply of the other two. Fortunately, compensation of that kind operated in the case of the Summer Meet at Dalwhinnie (17-20 July), the geniality of the company and the excellence of the commissariat helping us to ignore the bad weather of the principal day (Saturday, the 18th). The *locus* of the Meet is certainly a long way from Aberdeen, the railway route being *via* Perth; but the ground was new to most of us, and pleasing anticipations relieved the tedium of the journey.

Dalwhinnie, on the Highland Railway, stands at an altitude of over 1,200 feet—fully 100 feet higher than Braemar—and is within a few miles of Dalnaspical (1,463 feet), to which there is a fine walk through the Pass of Drumochter. Little did any of us think, as we walked and talked together, that we were within a few weeks of the great Continental War which is now taxing the resources of Europe. It is owing to that gigantic struggle that this article emanates from the present writer. In the course of a hurried visit made to Bedford in October to see our Territorial friends, I met the Editor; and while I was sipping a cup of tea at the mess of the 4th Gordon Highlanders, Captain J. B. Gillies bent over my shoulder and quietly remarked—"You write the account of the Summer Meet for the *Cairngorm Club Journal*." It was the command of the centurion—of the professional soldier in his busy season—for has he not a hundred men under him? The command must be obeyed, but I am only too conscious that writing to order varies in quality.

Ben Alder—the real objective of the Meet—has many attractions for the mountaineer. It is probably more interesting in winter than in summer, for an abundance of snow remains on it right up to the month of June, making its appearance quite Alpine. It forms part of a group, there being three peaks, each over 3000 feet in height; the top, Ben Alder, is 3757 feet. Many descriptions of the mountain, with its ridges, corries, paths, &c., have appeared in the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal*, and readers may be referred in particular to the account furnished for the “S.M.C. Guide Book” by the veteran climber, Mr. Æneas Robertson (*S.M.C.J.*, VII., 227-33).*

The Truibank Hotel, Dalwhinnie, was the headquarters of the Club for the occasion; and the Meet was attended by a dozen members and several ladies. The party included—The Chairman and Mrs. Gillies, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Reid, Miss Rhoda Ledingham, Dr. A. R. Galloway, J. R. Leslie Gray, Dr. J. L. McIntyre, Messrs J. W. Milne, James Rennie, A. Emslie Smith, and W. H. Williamson, and the Secretary (Mr. J. B. Gillies).

Half a score of volunteers started on Saturday to “do” Ben Alder. The plan chosen by the Committee was to sail down Loch Ericht on a motor launch as far as Alder Bay—about fifteen miles. The launch was not in working order, however, and another route had to be chosen impromptu. The party drove to Loch Erocht Lodge, on the western side of Loch Ericht, six miles from the Hotel. From here an excellent path can be followed, keeping Loch Pattack on the right, the path leading through the strath of Chaoil Reidhe or Culrea (meaning the narrow strath). The day, unfortunately, was one of the few bad days of a really glorious summer.

* Various ascents of Ben Alder have been chronicled in the *C.C.J.* See in particular “The Club at Ben Alder” (1894), by John Clarke (i., 213); “Ben Alder,” by William Garden, (iii., 261); “Twixt Loch Ericht and Strath Ossian,” by James H. Brown (iii., 359); and “Ben Alder” (Easter Meet, 1910), by H. K. (vi., 259).—EDITOR.

We tramped for two hours in a thick mist, which at first gave signs of clearing, but, before long, settled into a drizzling, soaking rain. We paused for a little to consider whether we should turn to the right, so as to ascend by one of the corries, or take the tedious, winding path to the left, rounding Loch a' Bhealaich Bheithe, going due east to the saddle or water-shed, and then at right angles to the summit. On account of the mist and our ignorance of the corries, we adopted the latter alternative, and in a couple of hours we were resting at the cairn, which, however, we reached more by accident than by skill. We saw nothing, near or far, and we thus missed a great deal, for the view from Ben Alder of the Cairngorms, of the Perthshire and Inverness-shire hills, and of the Coolin, is said to be magnificent.

While enveloped in thick mist on the summit we took counsel as to the best route by which to descend; and here the party divided. At the start, McIntyre had been appointed leader, but we did not then know what a splendid assortment we were. It was full of variety, being composed of thin men and fat men, climbers, rock-scramblers, walkers rapid on the level, and others rapid in ascent. The diversity of gifts showed little result until we attempted a plan of descent from the summit. Some of us followed the chosen leader, and descended by a corrie which landed us at the lower end of the loch we had rounded in the ascent—Loch a' Bhealaich Bheithe; whence we retraced our steps by the bridle path we had traversed on the outward journey earlier in the day. A smaller section descended by another corrie, and joined us on the home journey just below the loch. The remainder of our party—like the Highland clan which claimed to have “a boat o' their ain” at the Flood—sallied forth through the mist in an opposite direction, and landed by good luck at Alder Bay, looking in at McCook's Cottage, whence they had a ten-mile tramp to our meeting-place—Loch Erocht Lodge. Here a conveyance was waiting to convey us to dry

clothes and other comforts at Dalwhinnie. We were then all quite pleased with ourselves, the three sections being joined up after having accomplished what we undertook—the ascent of Ben Alder—though accomplished under very uninviting conditions.

The scope of our task, however, was necessarily much restricted, for we lost the glorious views of mountain and moor obtained in clear weather from this outstanding Inverness-shire peak. We also lost the opportunity of exploring either of the two great ridges or the corries rising some 600 feet to the splendid ridge plateau. Round about Ben Alder, too, are Prince Charlie's cave and Cluny's "Cage" (see R. L. Stevenson's "Kidnapped," *passim*), which we had no heart to explore. Photography, of course, was out of the question. It is evident that the charm of the hills exists only in clear weather, when so many avenues of delight are open to pedestrians in addition to those noted above, such as the beauty of the flowers, the flight and habits of birds and beasts, the formation of the rocks, ice effects, &c., &c.

The keeper at the lodge, Mr. John Clark, seems to be a hereditary holder of the post, for before his spell of thirty years' service, his father held sway for forty-two years. Mr. Clark gave us shelter and tea—at all events, the advance party, who faithfully followed the leader, got tea. In discussing with Mr. Clark the best route to the top, he said he preferred the ascent by one of the corries through the path without going to Loch a' Bhealach Bheithe. There is a deer track almost to the top, he said, which the gillies generally use, and it is much easier than the roundabout road by the Loch. The gillies, he added, had tried a route by the ridges, but had found in one of them a *mauvais pas*. Mr. Clark had "chained" the path from the lodge to the Loch, and found it to be about eight miles long. We lost, as I have said, a great deal by the bad day, and Ben Alder, it is evident, still offers an abundant field of exploration to members of the Club.

On Sunday morning—for even regular church-goers

are entitled to "a Sunday off" on those glorious hills, whither the Psalmist was wont to "lift his eyes"—some of the party started, though a little late in the day, and in a drizzle, to "do" some neighbouring mountain tops. It was only possible, however, to overtake three "Munros" (a "Munro," in S.M.C. language, is a hill not under 3,000 feet high.) These were Gealcharn, Beinnudlamann, and Marcaonach; and we landed at the railway near the county march, between the Atholl Sow and the Boar of Badenoch. The Sow and the Boar face each other, recalling the keen rivalry of the clans in days of old. It was a short but interesting day, during which we covered twenty miles or so of ground, largely on high ridges of soft carpeting.

PROPOSED MEMORIAL OF MR. ALEXANDER COPLAND.

A meeting of the Club was constituted on the Saturday evening, the Chairman presiding, when the question was revived of how best to commemorate the efforts of the late Mr. Alexander Copland, who had done so much for the Club and for mountaineers in the north. The discussion ended with the adoption of the following resolution:—

"We, members of the Cairngorm Club, present at a meeting held in the Truimbank Hotel on the evening of July 18th, unanimously agree that some means be taken of permanently recognising the work of the late Mr. Copland on behalf of Hill-lovers in general, and of the Cairngorm Club in particular. Further, we suggest that the memorial take the shape of a bronze circular replica of Mr. Copland's Panorama of the View from Ben Muich, Dhui, to be placed on the summit of the mountain; or some other suitable tribute to his memory.

It will be a pleasant duty for the Club to carry out this resolution, thereby honouring the Club, and at the same time honouring the name of one who did so much for the cult of the mountains.

A fortunate circumstance in the Ben Alder Meet was that the shooting tenant, Sir Robert Jardine, happens

to be one of the good old type of sportsman—a considerate gentleman who welcomes both the pedestrian and the angler, both of whom have the good sense to keep far away during the short season reserved for “gunners.”

WALTER A. REID.

EXCURSION TO BENRINNES.

A Saturday Afternoon Excursion of the Club to Benrinnes was made on 27th June. There were present—Messrs. James Conner, A. M. Craig, James A. Hadden, Alexander Nicol, John A. Nicol, James Rennie, and William Skinner. Mr. J. B. Gillies, the secretary, was unavoidably absent. The party journeyed to Aberlour station by the Speyside Excursion train, and drove to the distillery, from which point the ascent was made. An excellent view of all the nearer hills was obtained, and the Cairngorms were seen in all their glory. The more distant hills, however, were somewhat indistinct, and a considerable haze lay over the Moray Firth, preventing any view of the Rosshire Hills being got. Although it was midsummer, the cold was intense, and there was no inducement to a prolonged stay on the top. The party drove back to the Aberlour Hotel, where they dined, under the chairmanship of Mr. Hadden. Afterwards, until train time, an interesting hour was spent in imbibing such local history as was obtainable from an examination of the monuments in the ancient churchyard. The excursion was in every way a success, and can be recommended to individual members of the Club as an ideal Saturday afternoon outing. The drive can easily be dispensed with, as there is ample time to cover the whole distance from and to Aberlour on foot, between the arrival and departure of the excursion train.

J. A. H.