

GLASGOW TO BRAEMAR.

BY THE LATE GEORGE BUCHANAN SMITH, M.A., LL.B.

Courage, faint heart, press forward to the hill !
The ridge looms dark ? It only hides the day.
Wait for the dawn to come ? O forward still,
And meet the sun half-way !

[Mr. George Buchanan Smith, M.A., LL.B., the eldest son of Sir George Adam Smith, the Principal of Aberdeen University, was a second lieutenant in the Gordon Highlanders, and (as chronicled in the *C. C. J.*, Vol. viii., p. 174) fell while leading his platoon in the first charge of the memorable advance on Loos on 25th September, 1915. He was a member of the Cairngorm Club and an ardent mountaineer, and in the brief span of his life of twenty-five years he had made many long and arduous "tramps," by night as well as by day, in all kinds of weather, sometimes in company, often alone. He had ranged over the greater part of Scotland, but more especially in the regions round Glasgow, in Western Inverness, Arran, Argyleshire, Skye and the Islands; and he had also walked in the English Lakes and in the Pyrenees. Many records of his climbing and his long walks were found in his papers, and these are appended to an exceedingly interesting Memoir of "G. B.," as he was styled by his friends, written by his father, but printed for private circulation only. Though in the main these records are merely brief indications of the routes taken and the heights attained, they are vivaciously written and instinct with humour, and they exhibit as well quick observation and a keen appreciation of natural features and of scenic beauties. "His long tramps," says his father, "started him to write verse"; and nearly all his verses—of which his family were ignorant till after he was gone—were "about his roads, his hills, and his lonely bivouacs in the heather."

One specimen is furnished in the lines quoted above, and a fuller example is given elsewhere in this issue. We have the special permission of Sir George Adam Smith—our readers will doubtless share our gratitude—to reproduce the following vivid account of a six days' walk from Glasgow to Braemar which young Smith made in the spring of 1911.]

BEN LOMOND.

First day, 25th March. (Previous "Il Trovatore" and packing, not to bed till 3.) No breakfast, left Bowmont Gardens [?] a.m. Canal Road, Canniesburn Toll, Bearsden (good folk going to business), Drymen—royal feast off dry oatcakes bought here. The day was cold, but bright and clear. Beautiful woods and hedges in Buchanan country between Drymen and Balmaha. But what a long and weary way from Balmaha to Rowardennan!—late afternoon. Great tea there soon bucked me up, and I started up Ben Lomond. Long grind. Tarbet looked beautiful. Clear air gave fine view towards south. Absolute quiet. In fancy distinctly heard University chime. Top (3192) all snow-covered. Sun nearly set. Glorious over Western hills. Down N. slope, big corrie looked fine, and the Trossachs. Setting sun made magnificent patches of colour in the rocky stream-beds. Bounded downwards. Reached loch-side a little after dark, and then a weary tramp to Inversnaid, on a path—but what a path! Ferryman at Inversnaid drunk, so no Ardlui that night. Arrived Inversnaid about 8.30. Feet very bad near Glasgow, but now getting into form. Waterfall beautiful by night.

BEN-A-CLEE, ETC.

Second day, 26th March. Left Inversnaid and ferried across loch. A perfect day, light wind and bright sun. The loch was a beautiful deep blue, and Ben Lomond glittered in its dazzling white. The shape of the mountain here was splendid. The whole thing was massive and fairy at once. Legged it along the railway sleepers

past Ardlui to the Dubh Eas, which runs to the west right into the moors. They seemed never-ending, but at last I caught the ridge of Ben-a-Clee. The E. side of the Falloch was grand with its waterfalls. A stiff pull up Ben-a-Clee and a biting cold wind at top (3008). Stayed but a little and pushed on for Ben Lui, wind freezing. New vigour with the hope returned, and I was blown up Ben Lui like a feather (3708). Glorious prospect; darkness gathering, heavy with clouds in the East and sweeping slowly over the mountains one by one. Ben Lomond still dominated the S., but seemed leagues away. The hills of the N. were all white and indistinct, but in the W. the sun setting over Cruachan flamed a gorgeous red. Ben More of Mull and Jura lay calm and shapely as ever. Cruachan seemed a vast restless wilderness of wild peaks, less snow here than elsewhere. The Atlantic glittered. An apple on the top—the white corrie was splendid—and then with great leaps to the saddle. Just here the sun set. Shadow universal. Pushed on for Beinn Oss (3374), mist coming up; from its top saw my road clear to Beinn Dubh Chraige, and marked some wicked cliffs of the descent. Dusk changed to dark as I climbed Dubh Chraige (3204). Mist settled on top just as I left it. Slowly and cautiously crept down into Allt Gleann Achrioch, wandered a great way among woods, elusive light vanished, lay down to sleep, but felt a cut stone—railway viaduct—and so to Tyndrum Hotel at 11.30. Hospitable hostess. Great day—two or three together, in fact!

BEINN ODHAR AND GLEN LOCHAY.

Third day, 27th March. Slept long and started late. A most perfect day. Little wind, bright sun, blue sky. Restocked knapsack in Tyndrum. From Bridge of Orchy road [?] straight up Beinn Odhar (2948). Fine view, especially towards Loch Awe. Ben Doineann was glorious. The Northern hills lost themselves in range after range of snow. Dropped down to a saddle (about 1300), and then up Beinn Chaorach (2655), snow

here deep and very soft. Ptarmigan and hares. Along the ridge to Carn Chreag (2887), very soft going. Beinn Chaluim to the S. recalled a fine winter's day in 1910. Splendid gullies run down from here into the head of Glen Lochay. Another drop of about 400 feet to the saddle, and then a long pull up Creag Mhor (3305). Loch Lyon seemed wild and beautiful to the N. Killin seemed farther and farther away. A ripping series of glissades from Creag Mhor to the col at 2250, splendid snow, some ice patches and some bad rocks. Whizzed down like lightning. Now a long pull up the ridge of Beinn Heasgarnich. Heavy black clouds were rolling up from N. and E. Sun set by Ben Douran. Glen Lochay and road seemed nearer, mist settled over Beinn Heasgarnich, kept on, and reached top (3530). Then a wild dash over the high snowfields through the dusk and bounded down side of Glen Lochay, and found a track at dark. It seemed to cross the Lochay, so I forded, and then found I had to cross back again by tottering single-cable suspension bridge. Long tramp through night along the road, with the Lochay roaring on my right. The S. hills stood up grandly against the stars. Woods, fields, farms, and so into Killin at midnight, where I found Wordie sleeping in his bed at the hotel.

BEN LAWERS.

Fourth day, March 28. Good sleep and filling breakfast, then owing to scantiness of resources evaded tip-seeking waiters, and followed road on N. side of Tay past Milton Morenish, and then took hill road. Hot beneath, we soon got into cold winds. Much snow on Beinn Ghlas, and near the top mist, which never rose again till we dropped into Glen Lyon. From top of Beinn Ghlas (3085) had a little difficulty in getting on to Ben Lawers ridge in the mist. Found it and were forced to go slow and use our axes most way to top (3984). Cold winds and sleet. Cairn all but 6 or 7 feet beneath surface of snow. Mist was getting thicker—we could not go quickly, so decided reluctantly not to go on to

Meall Garbh and Meall Gruaidh. We made almost N. for the glen that runs into Glen Lyon—very wet we were, and it was still very cold, but we put on a great pace (so it seemed, for we were tired) down Glen Lyon, majestic and dark, and ran about last mile to Fortingall Post Office, reached at 8 exactly, and sent off a telegram summoning Beppo. Then more leisurely, night very cold, along road, swindled for a lemonade . . . past a dark forest on the right, and then to the rarest and homeliest and plainest and jolliest little inn at Coshieville. Large company gathered to speed gamekeeper going to Canada. We dined off cold mutton (certainly braxy, but very good), eggs, scones and tea; above us the sounds of song and dance. We too tired to move; later huge, tall Highlanders came and drank solemn gallons neat. To bed.

SCHIEHALLION.

Fifth day, March 29th. By the preprandial morning sun we saw to what a little corner of Paradise we had come in the night. Paying a very modest bill, we took the N. road up a very beautiful Perthshire glen—sun was bright, and though winds cold, yet everything cheery—birds a-hollerin'. After two miles got to the path, made towards Schiehallion. Followed this—it's a good path, and saves a lot—until about 2000 contour, when the mist that had been covering the hill higher up and all the hills to the S. descended. Up and up, with fierce winds and snow driving—great snow wreaths and snow crystals. Then the slope eased off, and we seemed to walk for miles along a flat ridge (it is not far really), at last the ridge climbed again, and we reached the top (3547), nor waited long—much rain and cold. Descended almost straight down N.E.—one short, good glissade—to the Allt Strath Fronan, and—O joy!—sunshine and a little warmth. Crossed the road and went down Allt Kynachan—my tendon Achilles squealing, so I took off my boots and limped barefoot till we crossed the road again. Then decency. Down past Kynachan to where

"ferry" is marked on map. But ferry, we were told, was none, instructions to shout, wild thoughts of wading—swimming! Instead we shouted—Wordie and I, we did shout. At length, a brawny, hairy man, tending bees on a hill on N. side of Tummel about a mile away, descended; and at that moment we—blind fools—saw a boat on *our* side, hidden under willows. He took his boat on the opposite side—the obvious one—rightly very surly. "No, he was not a ferryman, and this was not a ferry!" Up through woods, now really *hot*, to Grennich [?], and over the moor path, stumbling and running, to Struan, well after dark, where we found Beppo in a queer, rambling hostel, with a canary and no air.

CAIRN EELAR AND INVEREY.

Sixth day, March 30th. Three of us. Could the weather have threatened worse for the long day we had before us? Left Struan about 10. Rain falling and mist down the valleys. Met the Oldest Inhabitant. "Try not the pass," the old man said. Said we: "Don't talk through the back of your head, you're a bore. Excelsior!" We took the track by Calvine (the Glen Bruar Lodge road), about three miles, and then it joins Glen Bruar. Rain ceased. Left the track below the Lodge—what a fine, spacious glen of happiness is this!—and toiled very painfully up Beinn Dearg, very stiff after yesterday. Soon got on to snow, which we never got off till sunset (except for isolated boulders). Lunched by cairn at top of Beinn Dearg (3304). Northward lay our path through a naked waste of snow, plain and mound. The sun had appeared, and was beating down on us. We started off; snow everywhere soft and deep, often above, usually below the knee. Very tiring trudging, even with our goal, Carn an Fidhleir (Cairn Eelar) in front. Glad it wasn't mist! Now believed old man's story of shepherd wandered here to death. Plunged up and down the ridges and in and out the mounds, and at last got to shoulder, and, after a rest, to

summit of Carn an Fidhleir (3276). Had to give up idea of An Sgarsoch. Noble view to N. and W. (through the intervals of cloud) of the great, heavy snow Cairngorms and the long, twisting, deep glens, the Feshie. What a wilderness we were in the midst of—never in Scotland have I felt it so—and it was very cold by now. We went straight down—good glissading—to the Geldie, and off the snow; sunset, wet, heavy bogs and mosses, at last the Geldie, and by more moss and bog to road on N. side opposite Geldie Lodge. Then long tramp through the night. What a road! Abominable! Joined Gen Tilt road, then over the Dee—loud cheers!—then Linn of Dee, then horrible sinking of heart—had we passed Inverey?—lights ahead, all very tired. Beppo sacrificed as courier, knocked at light, conducted by old wife to dark cottage: bang, bang, bang! At last the good woman, most kind, and supper of eggs, cold mutton. Catholic, lithographs of popes and saints—all to bed gloriously tired.

Friday, March 31st. All slept in, and had breakfast about noon; then sudden realization of when the motor bus left Braemar. Walked and ran, ending with breathless spurt through Braemar; just caught bus, so to Ballater, and tea with Mr. Stanley Turner, and so by train home.

It was a glorious seven days' tramp. Easter's the time!