

THE
Cairngorm Club Journal.

Vol. IX.

JANUARY, 1918.

No 50.

Our fiftieth Number.

THIS being No. 50 of the *Cairngorm Club Journal*—the Jubilee Number—we may be pardoned a modest note of self-congratulation. To members of the Club it must be a matter of satisfaction that the *Journal* has been carried on regularly since it was started five-and-twenty years ago, and equally gratifying that it is still vigorous and flourishing. The gratification is heightened when account is taken of the exceptional conditions under which the *Journal* is produced. It deals primarily with the mountain range after which the Club is named—a comparatively small area, it must be remembered; while, at the same time, a Mountaineering Club in the north-east of Scotland can have only a limited membership. It must be borne in mind, too, that the walking faculty is not always accompanied by the writing faculty—it is matter of regret sometimes that men who have accomplished notable feats of walking among the mountains are wholly unable to furnish an account of their wanderings which, from the literary point of view, would be adequate or satisfactory, or such as to arrest attention. In all these circumstances, the editorial task of finding contributors for the Club Journal is occasionally a difficult one. It is all the more satisfactory, therefore, on

IX. D

the production of our fiftieth number, to reflect that material has been obtained for so many past issues, and that there is every prospect that for the future the supply will be found commensurate to the demand.

The first number of the *Cairngorm Club Journal* was issued in July 1893. The Cairngorm Club had been established four years before, in January 1889, antedating by a few months the Scottish Mountaineering Club, which was not started till December of that year; but the Cairngorm Club was much slower in setting up a Journal than was the younger Club. The *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal* was begun in January 1890, and as three numbers a year are issued, its 50th number appeared a considerable time ago. Probably the institution of the *Cairngorm Club Journal* (published half-yearly only) was delayed in conformity with that inborn caution of the Aberdonian which demands some assurance of success before a novel enterprise is ventured upon. Anyhow, it was not until the Annual Meeting held on 28th February 1893, the Committee having then reported in its favour, that the publication of a Club Journal was agreed to; and, as has been mentioned, the first number appeared in the following July. It consisted of 56 pages, but the number of pages has fluctuated considerably, Nos. 4 and 5, for instance, consisting of 84 and 76 pages respectively. By the tenth number the average number of pages had become virtually 64, and this standard was maintained till the completion of Vol. IV. Then, the first flush of enthusiasm having passed away and contributions becoming scantier, the size of the number was gradually curtailed till the average became 48 pages (in Vol. VI). Since then, the number of pages in a single number has sunk occasionally as low as 36, but during the present editorial régime an endeavour has been made to keep it at 48.

The *Journal*, according to the Rules, is one of the agencies employed by the Club for carrying out its chief purposes, namely :—(1) to encourage mountain climbing

in Scotland, with special reference to the Cairngorm group of mountains ; (2) to procure and impart scientific, topographical, and historical information about the Scottish mountains, their superficial physical features, minerals, rocks, plants, animals, meteorology, ancient and modern public routes giving access to and across them, and the meaning of their local place-names, literature, and legendary or folk lore ; (3) to consider the right of access to Scottish mountains, and to adopt such measures in regard thereto as the Club may deem advisable. How far these objects have been attained or aided by the *Journal* is not for us to say, but the occurrence of the jubilee of the *Journal* is an appropriate occasion for taking stock of what we have attempted, and for passing in review the more notable contributions to what may be termed roughly the literature of the Cairngorms which have appeared in our columns.

Of these the most conspicuous, as is only natural perhaps, are those dealing with the topography of the region. First and foremost among them must be placed the detailed and exact descriptive accounts of the Cairngorm Mountains, their prominent features, and the various routes to the several mountain tops, which Mr. Alex. Inkson McConnochie furnished to the first two volumes. They were supplemented, later on, by Mr. Alexander Copland's four articles on "The Horizon from Ben Muich Dhui"—a precise and painstaking enumeration of the hills visible from the summit of the monarch of the range, the value of which was immensely enhanced by the accompanying charts drawn by Mr. Copland himself. (We all hope that the project of transferring these charts to a permanent Indicator on the top of the Ben, as a memorial of their designer and of his many services to the Club, will be duly carried out at no very distant date). Useful in its way, too, was the "Outline View of the Cairngorm Mountains" originally contributed to No. 12 by the recently-deceased Mr. C. G. Cash ; and to Mr. Cash we were greatly indebted also for many articles

descriptive of ascents and observations in the Cairngorms, and particularly for the account of the Rothiemurchus forest fire of 1899—a fire which, for many years after, despoiled Loch-an-Eilein of much of its exquisite charm and beauty. Under the title of “Outlying Nooks of the Cairngorms,” the late Rev. Dr. Forsyth, the minister of Abernethy, furnished many interesting notes descriptive of little-known spots in the mountains, and into these notes he wove on occasion fragments of the legendary lore of the district. To specify other articles, many of them exceedingly useful as “guides” to persons making excursions similar to those described, would occupy too much space; it must suffice to name among numerous and esteemed contributors the late Rev. Dr. Hugh Macmillan (whose article on “The Larig Ghru” may be reckoned the “classic” exposition of the subject), the late Dr. James Macaulay, the late Mr. William C. Smith, advocate; the late Mr. A. M. Munro, City Chamberlain, Aberdeen; Rev. Dr. Thomas Sinton, Dr. Ernest A. Baker, Mr. A. L. Bagley, and Rev. George Williams.

The scientific aspects of the Cairngorms have not received in the *Journal* anything like the extensive treatment that has been accorded to the topographical, but they have not been altogether neglected. Perhaps the most important article of a scientific nature that has appeared in our pages is one on the botany of the Cairngorms by Professor Trail, comprising a detailed list of the flowering plants to be found in the Cairngorm area. The geology of the region has hardly been touched upon—certainly by no means fully or adequately—although the subject has been handled by the late Dr. Thomas F. Jamieson and the late Dr. John Milne; the many geological articles furnished by the former dealt with Highland districts outside the Cairngorms. Natural history, however, has received some attention, several of Mr. Seton P. Gordon’s studies of bird and animal life in the Highlands having appeared originally in the *Cairngorm Club Journal*. The philology of place-names, we regret to say, has been ignored almost wholly, save for

an all-too-brief article by Professor Watson in the last volume, and a list of place-names in Kirkmichael, Banffshire, compiled by Dr. John Milne. Two articles possess a historical interest—in relation to the Club at least—namely, Dr. Lippe's account of the inception of the Club given in the first number, and the survey of "Twenty-one Years of Our Club" which Mr. James Gray Kyd contributed to the issue for January 1910; and mention should not be omitted of a highly valuable contribution on "Ordnance Survey Maps of the Cairngorms," by the late Colonel Sir John Farquharson of Corrachree, ex-Director-General of the Ordnance Survey. Nor must we forget the two addresses to the Club delivered by the President, Mr. (now Viscount) Bryce, and subsequently published in the *Journal*—"The Preservation of Natural Scenery" and "Types of Mountain Scenery."

Although primarily concerned with the Cairngorms, as previously stated, the *Journal*, like the Club itself, does not restrict itself to that area, but publishes articles relating to mountains and mountaineering elsewhere. In this way it has dealt with the more prominent hills in Aberdeenshire and Banffshire, and also with many of the topographical features of the portion of Inverness-shire adjacent to the Cairngorms. As time went on, the area thus treated became more extensive; and the inclusion of Skye and the Cuillins in the excursions of individual members of the Club led to contributions dealing with rock climbing and climbing in snow, some of these latter recounting adventures in the Alps. The range of contributions was still further widened when Mr. William Garden furnished a description of an ascent of Mount Assiniboine, in North America; and since then we have had articles descriptive of Camping in Canada and of visits paid to the Rocky Mountains, the Yosemite Valley, the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River, etc.

While thus indicating the general nature of the contents of the *Journal* during the past quarter of a century, we are far from imagining, or desiring it to be imagined, that the subject of the Cairngorm Mountains has become

exhausted, so to speak—that the various features of these mountains have been delineated so frequently that nothing remains to be written about them. The very opposite is our conviction, for a study of the objects of the Club and a survey of the eight volumes of the *Journal* will show how much, how very much, yet remains to be done. We have already indirectly suggested lines on which further research might profitably be pursued; and doubtless to a new generation of mountaineers the Cairngorms will present different aspects demanding separate treatment. Some of the later articles in the *C. C. J.*, indeed, reveal that the point of view is already changing. There is apparent a disposition to conduct mountain climbing on less conventional and more independent lines, by evolving new routes and investigating places hitherto neglected. This is all to the good; and we are confident that descriptive accounts of the departures thus made will always be welcome to the pages of the *C. C. J.*

A word—and a brief one—as to the editorship. It has been the practice for the Secretary of the Club to act as Editor, and the arrangement has worked quite satisfactorily. As a result, there have been only four editors—really only three regularly appointed. The first, Mr. A. I. McConnochie, held the post down to the end of 1910—for the long period, that is, of eighteen years—and he has at his credit the first half-dozen volumes. We feel warranted, on this jubilee occasion, in quoting the commendation of his editorial services which was contained in the resolution adopted by the Club on his retirement from the Secretaryship (on leaving Aberdeen for Glasgow):—"As Editor of the Club's *Journal*, Mr. McConnochie also laid the Club under deep obligation: the standard of interest, variety, and range has throughout been well maintained—a task of no little difficulty in such a comparatively restricted sphere." Mr. McConnochie was succeeded by Mr. James Gray Kyd, but Mr. Kyd was soon called to London: he brought

out only two numbers (those for 1911). To him succeeded Mr. J. B. Gillies, who, however, had temporarily to relinquish the editorship on the outbreak of the war in August 1914, he having up to that date edited six numbers (1912-13-14). The present conductor of the *Journal* took over the editorial duties by way of friendly arrangement in a temporary emergency, and nominally as Acting Editor, but by the lamented death of Major Gillies, who was killed at the front in November 1916, the full editorship then devolved upon him.

A final word as to the present number. As befits the occasion, it has been largely increased in size, and it is a "special" number in this respect—that we have been favoured with articles by all the contributors of articles to the first number who now survive. They are three only—Viscount Bryce, Sir Hugh T. Munro, Bart., of Lindertis, Forfarshire; and Mr. James Rose, Aberdeen.* The number also contains articles by all the surviving editors—gratifying evidence of editorial amity; and among the other contents we may particularise the first part of an elaborate and interesting paper by Mr. John Clarke, one of our original members, who has made many valuable contributions to our pages.

* Of the contributors of Notes to No. 1, there are only four survivors—Mr. William Douglas, Edinburgh; Mr. William Cruickshank, now in Kirkcaldy; Mr. McConnochie, and the present Editor.