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THE STUI BUTTRESS.

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STANDING on the summit rocks of Lochnagar on a clear day, the visitor is impressed by the splendid isolation of the peak. The ground falls steeply away from it on three sides; only to the south-west is the high level maintained for any distance beyond the mountain. In this direction the mass of the White Mounth almost equals in height the summit level of Lochnagar. On its northern side the White Mounth ends abruptly in a magnificent line of cliffs, which sweep grandly round the head of the deep corrie whose waters drain into the Garrawalt burn. These cliffs form the most arresting object in the foreground of the western panorama to be seen from Lochnagar. They curve round from the west side of Lochnagar for about a mile and a half, and have a height of approximately 500 feet. Exactly one mile south-west from Cac Carn Beag it will be noticed that the cliff projects forward into the corrie as a prominent nose or buttress. This is the Stui Buttress. It forms a steep and narrow ridge of rock running down to the floor of the corrie immediately to the west of Lochan nan Eoin.

It had evidently escaped the attention of mountaineers till Easter, 1908, when a party of the Scottish Mountain-

earing Club attempted to climb it under wintry and stormy conditions, but were defeated. Another party succeeded next day in reaching the top of the buttress after a stiff and exciting climb, and since that time many ascents have been made, both under summer and winter conditions.

In summer time, it is a simple scramble, but delightful on account of the change it gives from the everlasting grind of simple hill-walking, which is the ordinary form of mountaineering in the neighbourhood. The buttress can best be approached from Braemar. The simplest way is to drive (or walk) to Callater, and then follow the ordinary path to Lochnagar for nearly two miles to a point on the north side of Cairn Taggart where the path turns sharply south. Leaving the path here, one skirts the northern slope of the mountain at the 2,750 feet level till the western end of the cliffs is reached, rounding which, one gets a full view of the climb less than half a mile away, and the foot of the rocks is soon reached. Another way is to follow the Garrawalt stream, crossing the Dee from the road by the Invercauld Bridge, right up the glen to the Sandy Loch and past it to the Lochan nan Eoin. This is a toilsome trudge and is not to be recommended.

From the Ballater side the distance is greater, but the expedition is a very fine variation of the ordinary ascent of Lochnagar. Following the path from Allnaguibsach as far as the Meikle Pap, the route now lies round the north side of the Pap and into the great Corrie of Lochnagar. The burn is crossed as it issues from the loch, and the climber now goes round the north side of Lochnagar and up over the col between it and Meall Coire na Saobhaidhe. Descending into the corrie west of Lochnagar the Sandy Loch is passed, and the foot of the buttress is soon reached. After climbing it the return journey should be made over the shoulder of Lochnagar, and, if time permits, the summit cairn should be visited before descending by the "ladder" to Allnaguibsach.

At the foot of the buttress the slope begins very gently from the floor of the corrie up over heather-covered rocks. One mounts up easily, and the ground falls steeply on either side of the buttress. About half-way up the rocks become bare and the angle steeper, and at one point (about three quarters of the way up) if one keeps strictly to the true ridge, the rocks become nearly vertical, and the ascent is by no means easy. A way of escape here is, however, easily found by traversing round to the left (east). On this side the face of the buttress is well broken up, and the ascent is found to be simple. But even here, if the climber be of short stature, there is one step where the next hold is just beyond his reach, unless he trusts to grasping the luxuriant heather which clothes the rocks and pulls himself up. This method is, of course, not strictly orthodox, and should not be depended on, as a nasty fall and serious injury might result. It is not necessary to use a rope, but the leader, if he cannot get up by himself, can easily be "shouldered" up, and then he can turn and give a hand to the next man.

The buttress was climbed twice in one week last summer by the writer and his two boys. On the first occasion, we went up from the Invercauld Bridge along the course of the Garrawalt burn, and, on reaching the "nose" of the buttress, we turned it by holding round to the left; but, on the second occasion, we went by Callater and along the foot of the cliffs, and we climbed it direct, the tall member of the party leading straight up the "nose," while the others followed, greatly aided by the support of the rope.

Just above the "nose" a giant slab of rock projects horizontally outward over the west side of the buttress, which is here an almost vertical precipice, and the view looking down from this point into the corrie is most sensational and impressive. Above the "nose" the angle eases off and the climb quickly finishes. On more than one occasion several members of the Club have investigated the steep western face of the buttress, and

there is an inviting-looking cave high up on the face, into which they have, so far, not been able to climb.

Under winter conditions, when the rocks are coated with ice, and plastered with snow, the ascent of the buttress is a very different proposition from that met with in summer. Much step-cutting and clearing of the rocks from the snow and ice covering them requires to be done before a way up can be forced. It is not claimed that the ascent of the buttress under ordinary summer conditions is anything more than a simple rock scramble, but it is a pleasant variation of hill-walking, which I would strongly recommend to members of the Club.