



“DEESIDE IN SPRING”: PAINTED BY T. A. MACKINTOSH.

This picture, in which Lochnagar is the prominent feature, was shown at the recent Exhibition of the Aberdeen Artists' Society and is reproduced here by permission of the artist, whose local landscapes have for a number of years been among the appreciated amateur studies at the Exhibition.

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THE CROWNING OF LOCHNAGAR.

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IT was a royal day for the royal mountain, and she knew it (I have always thought of Lochnagar as *She*, the Queen of Scottish Mountains)—she knew it, and arrayed herself in a coronation robe of filmy haze that clung about her shoulders till the sportive breeze, that played tricks with the garb of her attendant courtiers, stripped it away and left her unveiled, as the ancient ritual prescribes that sovereigns on such an occasion should be, for the crowning ceremony.

Never had monarch so devoted a company of loyal subjects as those who came from far and near to be present at the historic scene. City and village, town and country, sent their representatives—the motherland and the lands beyond the sea; “bright youth and snow-crowned age” were there, “strong men and maidens meek”; those who reached the summit for the first time, and those who will never reach it again. A happy company, and reverent withal, as those who awaited the performance of a solemn rite in Nature’s Abbey, venerable and vast. No “storied windows richly dight,” of course, but colour was not wanting—over there a streak of silver from the river, and there a patch of orange-yellow from the sawdust heaps at Keiloch, and there again the red of

Crathie Church roof, and green of every shade from field and forest, and here and there the purple of some precocious bit of bell heather ; all just subdued a little by the haze, as if nature would produce a " dim religious light " befitting the event.

The coronation of kings is regulated to the finest detail by statutes of great antiquity ; not so the crowning of a mountain. It has a procedure of its own. The proclamation had set forth that She would wear her crown, suitably veiled, during seven long nights and days, during which her lieges were warned to beware of trespassing on her solemn vigil. This ended, the veils had been removed, doubtless with becoming ceremony, and the crown enshrouded in the folds of the Scottish Standard, girt about with a ribbon of Royal Stuart tartan. There is no precedent for this ; " precedents ! " said a statesman once, " *we* make precedents." The Cairngorm Club was prescribing ritual, not following it . . . The hour approached ; the chief ministrants in the solemn office took their places ; the right things were said in the right way ; the ceremonial scissors deftly severed the silken ribbon ; the covering flag was withdrawn, and the crown unveiled. Away deep down in the heart of her (for if mountains have heads and feet and sides, and breasts and backs, and even necks and noses, be assured they have hearts) one can imagine how she thrilled as the cheer went up that acclaimed her a crowned Queen !

Some crowns are epitomes of history ; their jewels are the spoils of empires : they bear memories

" Of old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago."

The crown of Lochnagar is an epitome of geography ; each ray fixes some point, distant or near, and in each direction the imagination is launched to wing its flight " o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent " ; southward to the rolling Cheviots, northward to Ben Armine, westward to Ben Nevis, and eastward to the sea, " wi' mony a hill

between." Can anyone challenge the coronation of a queen who thus commands the length and breadth of the land?

"I am monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute."

It was in no spirit of disloyalty to the gracious occupant of the throne of these realms that on territory doubly his we had crowned the mountain Queen; and she would not grudge "a health unto His Majesty." Perhaps someone ought to have raised "I to the hills" or "Dark Lochnagar"; but "God Save the King" was "our bounden duty," and we sang it lustily in an appropriately, if somewhat perilously, high key, and surmounted the top note with an energy undiminished by the toils of the Ladder or the strenuous passage of the Black Spout.

"Well, this is the end of a perfect day!"—said or sang more than one as the goodly company, in twos and threes, sought again "the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes." And so everybody thought. But the end was not yet; no coronation could be complete without its grand review. Nature had made her own preparations for that. Up from the southeast came sailing the stormclouds, giant battleships of the sky, "like leviathans afloat." Far off, behind the darkened hills, the first signal flashed; and then all along the line crashed forth the salvos of heaven's artillery. Great guns that had been silent for twenty years, so said the experts, were charged and discharged with deafening rapidity; flash succeeded flash in such swift succession that it became impossible to say to which of them each crash corresponded; and woe betide any luckless stragglers who were overtaken by the merciless musketry of the rain! "A heavy storm!" said some; "A dreadful night!" said others. Prosaic souls! dull wits! how little did they know!

"Lofty designs must close in like effects."

It was Nature's seal upon man's work, the tribute of the elements at the crowning of Lochnagar.