

THE BEN MACDHUI GIANT SPECTRE.

AT the last annual dinner of the Club, of which an account appears elsewhere in this number, Professor J. Norman Collie, F.R.S., the Honorary President, related an experience which befell him when climbing alone on Ben Macdhui over thirty-five years ago. He was returning from the cairn in a mist when he began to think he heard some other thing than merely the noise of his own footsteps in the snow. For every few steps he took he heard a big crunch, and then another crunch, as if someone was walking after him, but taking steps three or four times the length of his own. He said to himself, "This is all nonsense." He listened and heard it again, but could see nothing in the mist. As he walked on and the eerie "crunch, crunch" sounded behind him, he was seized with the most tremendous terror. Why, he did not know, for he did not mind being alone on the hills. But the uncanny something which he sensed caused fear to seize him by the throat. He took to his heels and ran, staggering blindly among the boulders, for four or five miles, nearly down to Rothiemurchus Forest. That was an experience which made him feel that on no account would he ever venture back to the top of Ben Macdhui alone.

About twelve years later he told this story to the late Dr. Kellas, and found that he had had a weird experience at the top of the same mountain about midnight one month of June. Dr. Kellas saw a man come up out of the Larig and wander round the cairn, nearby which Dr. Kellas's brother was sitting. What surprised him was that the man was practically the same height as the cairn, which was at least ten feet high, and that it was not an ordinary thing for people to wander alone on the top of Ben Macdhui at midnight. The man descended into the Larig. When Dr. Kellas asked his brother, "What on earth was that man doing walking round the cairn?" the brother replied, "I never saw any man at all."

A good many years after that Mr. Colin Phillip met an old man, living at the edge of Rothiemurchus Forest, who knew the Cairngorms very well. When Mr. Phillip told this man Dr. Kellas's story, he was not the least bit surprised, but simply replied, "Oh, aye, that would have been the Ferla Mhor (the Big Grey Man)

he would have been seeing." "That is the end of the story," said Professor Collie. "Whatever you may make out of it I do not know, but there is something very queer about the top of Ben Macdhui, and I will not go back there again by myself, I know."

The publication of this story in the press led to a flood of interviews and correspondence which continued for some weeks, the heading "Ben Macdhui Ghost," or "Ben Macdhui Spectre," becoming a familiar one in the newspapers. Some writers scouted the suggestion as absurd and ascribed Professor Collie's experience to a fit of nerves; others recounted weird feelings which had come to them in the mist or recalled tales of ghostly armies heard or seen on the Barmekin at Echt and the Brimmond Hill; and others again described mysterious music which they had heard on the Cairngorms and which proved to be due to the sound of the wind rising and falling in gullies. No further light, however, was thrown upon Professor Collie's adventure and the matter is chronicled here and left to the judgment of the individual reader. There are two other legends of this character connected with the Cairngorms. One relates to the spectre with a bloody red hand who haunts Glen More, and the other to a ghost who haunted Bynack and who was shot with an arrow, after which he disappeared.

RECORD-BREAKING MOUNTAINEERING.

IN the last issue of the *Cairngorm Club Journal*, some account was given of the rival parties of English peak-baggers who came up to Scotland by motor and climbed all the four-thousanders in one day, that is, Ben Nevis and its two eastern outliers, Carn Mor Dearg and Aonach Beag, and the four central Cairngorms, viz. Cairngorm, Ben Macdhui, Cairntoul and Braeriach, all within 24 hours, including the time taken in motoring from Fort William to Loch Morlich. At Whitsuntide this year another freak record of this kind was established, when a party led by Dr. Hadfield of Cavendish Street, London, ascended the three highest mountains in Wales, England and Scotland in one day. They began with Snowdon, went on to Scafell, and finished with Ben Nevis, all within 22 hours 10 minutes. They were motored from Wales to Scotland by Mr. H. P. Cain, president of the Rock and Fell Climbing Club.