

ON A VISIT TO THE CAIRNGORM
MOUNTAINS.

Through a deserted but attractive glen
Thy highest peak once more we seek to gain.
Glen Lui left, all trace of man behind;
By Derry's side we nought but silence find;
The only sound its swift and rapid stream
Which scarcely feels through shade the sun's bright
beam.

Far up its glen great trees uprooted lie,
Now prostrate on the ground what once stood high;
A few remain, a melancholy sight,
Of branches bared and bleached to purest white,
Though here and there an old and stately pine
The gale withstands, whose top no storms incline.

The Dhu Lochs passed, we reach the noisy brook
That rapid runs sine it Loch A'an forsook.
Resting above the sea three thousand feet
Lies lone and deep Loch A'an, where wild ducks meet.
There antlered stags come down to drink their fill;
Refreshed and cooled, once more they seek the hill.
The upper shore is fringed with golden sand,
So tells the tale of where they make some stand.
Three giant bens protect it from the storms
That sweep and whirl across the great Cairngorms;
While from their sides rills perpendicular gush,
Fast to the silent loch they leap and rush.

In furious gales the white-winged ptarmigan
Fly o'er the loch as though 'twere but a span;
The eagle, too, lord of both ben and sky,
No stranger is, for ever soaring high.
Imposing skeins of geese pursue their flight,
They pause not here, nor always come in sight;
With many a honk they steadily make way,
Sure of their route, be it by night or day.
Enormous boulders rest near by its head;
What potent force thus fixed them in their bed?

From Ben Muich Dhui's crags when were they rolled,
By powers unseen, ere yet the world was old?
Ten thousand tons split from the mountain's face
To water and to ice they owe their present place.
A sheltering rock here proves the hillman's friend,
If storm o'ertakes or day comes to an end;
A heather couch it offers and a dry
Until next morning ere the sun is high.

Beyond these crags, impassable for man,
We reach the lone and drear Loch Etagan;
Thus Ben Muich Dhui's highest point we gain
To find our prospect bound but by the main;
The tiny Dee, its course yet scarce commenced,
Runs far below, by mountains bound and fenced.
Its numerous rills like silver threads appear
When forth the noon-day sun shines bright and clear.
But see, perhaps, the grandest sight of all,
Cairn Toul's peaked summit and Braeriach's wall;
High on the former's breast there nestling lies
Dark Loch Uaine, a tarn of modest size;
The driven clouds across its bosom pass
And see reflected their moving mass.

I stand on thy proud summit and behold
Hills piled on hills all round in grandeur bold;
Far as the eye can reach these hills surround,
Encircling hills and sea the prospect bound.
Nor bird nor beast is there; even eagle's nest
On thy high summit never yet was placed.
A splendid scene—supremely desolate—
Of man what is there either small or great?
From noise and turmoil of the city far,
How grand, how still, how stern thy beauties are!
A mighty cluster of enormous hills,
The lofty fountains of great streams and rills.

Thou monument of ages long gone past,
Thou monument that will to ages last,
Thou mak'st us all our utter weakness feel,
Such grandeur makes imagination reel.
Your mass immense, from space when were you hurled;
Who saw you take your place when fixed the world?
And who shall see your towering summits low,
Sunk in the valleys or to ashes go?

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