



G. R. Symmers

THE NORTH-EAST CORRIE, LOCHNAGAR

A—A. Route as followed on 21st August, 1927

B—B. Route as followed on 29th September, 1927

TWO CLIMBS ON LOCHNAGAR.

BY G. ROY SYMMERS.

ON 21st August, 1927, Mr. J. S. Silver and I set off from Alltnaguibhsaich with the intention of making an attack on Raeburn's Gully. The day was perfect, with scarcely a breath of wind and a hot sun baking down from an almost cloudless sky. The corrie proved too warm for comfort, and great was our relief when we arrived in the cool shade of the cliffs at the bottom of Raeburn's Gully.

After a short rest, eyes were turned upwards and plans for the ascent discussed. From previous experience in the gully, when free from snow, it was decided to take to the right wall at the outset and thus avoid a very loose traverse with slanting footholds, which had to be made on a former occasion in order to surmount the slabs at the commencement of the gully. When masked with snow, these slabs present no difficulty.

The start of the climb is marked by a white quartz intrusion, which is clearly visible on the right wall. The finger holds on this section are none too large, but the rock is magnificently firm and it did not take minutes to arrive at the top of a grass-covered mound. To those who do not like this commencement, it may be mentioned that an easier route to the mound lies up a steep little gully, which starts from the main screes some little distance to the right of Raeburn's Gully. From this elevation, a very fine view is obtained

of the great 80 ft. pitch, which blocks Raeburn's Gully from side to side about half-way up. It was our intention to traverse downwards, back into the gully from this point, but the appearance of a crack slanting upwards at an angle of about 60° excited our curiosity, and accordingly a start for it was made. Grass-covered ledges led up to the bottom of the crack, which proved to be more difficult than its appearance from below would lead one to expect. A boulder loosely wedged in the crack a little way up had to be treated with care. At the top, the crack terminated in a fine cave-pitch with steep, slimy, holdless walls. These did not invite attention and another means of egress upwards had to be found. A traverse to the left was made, when it was found possible to force a way up an earth-filled depression, until lodgement was to be obtained in a crack some distance to the right. The climbing on this section is not pleasant, support being mainly obtained by digging one's hands into the soil and distributing one's weight on as many holds as possible. In the crack firm anchorage was obtained and on the safe arrival of No. 2, the crack was climbed by wedging one's body in the interior and wriggling upwards. A fine hold for the right hand at the top facilitated the exit. This accomplished, a step across a narrow chimney landed us on more vegetation. On the occasion of our visit, we spent a very pleasant fifteen minutes lying basking in the hot sunshine, admiring the wonderful rock scenery which unfolds itself to the eye in every direction from this out-of-the-way little niche. *Mulgidium Alpinium* grows in profusion in this beautiful gully. We were loth to leave our charming resting-place, but the darkening shadows in the depths of Raeburn's Gully beneath, warned us to move on, since we were not yet at the top. After a somewhat uninteresting grind up a steep mossy slope, a fine cave-pitch with a through-route was entered. It is a pity that the direct ascent of this can be avoided without difficulty on either side. Above the pitch, a continuation of the slope below leads

up to the col between the summit plateau and the pinnacle. From here the ascent of the pinnacle is easy. At least two routes may be followed, but since these are familiar to most climbers who have visited Lochnagar, I need not describe them. We took two and a half hours to complete the climb, which was done under the best conditions and free from snow throughout.

The course described above may be classed as moderate. It is far inferior to the direct ascent of Raeburn's Gully. The abundance of vegetation, especially in the upper reaches, detracts from the sustained interest of the climb. Nevertheless, the first 300 feet or so of the route makes it well worth a visit. It can be thoroughly recommended, and the numerous belays, which are distributed at frequent intervals, add to the safety of a roped party.

CLIMB ON THE RIGHT WALL OF THE BLACK SPOUT.

On 29th September, 1927, W. Ewen and I ascended from the extreme foot of the Black Spout, by a rib which forms the right wall of the Spout, to the summit plateau.

The start is made up moss-covered slopes, which increase in steepness until a narrow chimney calls for more attention. This feature cannot be missed, and may be recognized by the fact that four or five feet to the right, another chimney of an overhanging nature runs parallel to it. Exhilarating climbing using the back and knee follows a start with the right foot, but since the chimney is only some 15 feet in height this does not last long. No more rock is encountered until a noticeable saddle in the ridge is reached at about half the height of the buttress. This *arête* might be arrived at either by way of the Black Spout, from which it is plainly visible almost opposite the left hand branch; or by a small gully which runs up to it on the other side. For a good height above this point the rock, which forms a very distinct ridge, is much

broken up and the climbing is simple. This continues until a wall, about 15 feet in height, has to be scaled. Although steep, the going here is magnificent. Another wall beyond this had to be avoided by making a descent into a small gully on the right, below a choke-stone pitch, which was climbed on the right. This section, although loose, is simple and the climber soon emerges on the summit plateau in full sight of the top with the Cairngorms in the background.

The ridge was followed throughout, with the exception of the last fifty feet and provided, leaving out the 300 feet of somewhat uninteresting climbing up to the saddle, about 300 feet of moderate rock work.

RAEBURN'S GULLY—AN EARLY VISIT.

As a sequel to the foregoing accounts, the following notes by Dr. M. G. de L'Isle Sturm on an earlier climb will be read with interest:—

On Thursday, 14th July, G. R. Symmers and the writer visited the north-east Corrie of Lochnagar to inspect Raeburn's Gully. At the commencement of the gully there was a patch of hard snow about 150 ft. high ending in a considerable bergschrund which had to be avoided. (After a later climb with King, Symmers reports that underneath the snow this portion of the gully is very slabby and difficult. I can hardly imagine slabs in the Lochnagar gullies, but perhaps he meant "shabby"—his writing is about as bad as mine!) Steps had to be cut here. From here to the first pitch the gully was steep, narrow, and rotten, the rock being of a clayey consistence in places. A waterfall rendered conditions unpleasant. The first pitch was not excessively difficult, but it was not improved by a deluge of icy water. Combined tactics were necessary, the last man being pulled upon the rope. The second pitch destroyed our hopes. It consists (or it may have changed since that time) of a number of huge moss-strewn boulders, forming a sort of vertical cave. There may at one time

have been a "through route" via this cave, but if there were it is now blocked. The pitch would not "go" at all. No way was found of rounding it from the wall of the gully, and the nature of the place made combined tactics impracticable, for two climbers at any rate. There was nothing for it but to traverse on to the left wall of the gully, to a shallow chimney leading up to a ridge. The chimney is composed of smooth, loosely anchored fragments of stone covered with moss, and care has to be taken. The traverse out and the chimney were not very difficult but unsatisfactory, since there was no place for anchorage, and a slip would have meant serious trouble. Once on the ridge difficulties were over, and an easy scramble brought us to the top of the cliff. A party of three would be more suitable for the gully. The second pitch might be passed by the third man obtaining close anchorage in the cave, while the leader and the middle man attacked the pitch with combined tactics. For the left hand branch about 200 feet of rope would be ideal, not by any means because the climb is difficult, but to allow the third man firmly to fix the rope until the leader reaches the first suitable anchorage.