

THE PILGRIMS OF THE HILLS.

BY MARY AGNES SKAKLE.

I.

WE come by Dee or Deveron, by Coylum or Braemar ;
 No Fiery Cross constrains us as the clansmen called to war ;
 With scrip on shoulder, staff in hand, and careless of our ills,
 We seek the mountain glories with the Pilgrims of the Hills.
 On the steep Cairngorms, where we wander all together,
 There's a something you never find below ;
 And it's calling you and me o'er the bracken and the heather,
 Where the eagle and the ptarmigan go.

II.

It calls us in the spring-time when each mountain torrent sings ;
 We hear it in the thunder that the heat of summer brings ;
 It lures us o'er the hillside bright with autumn's purple glow,
 And we follow it in winter by a ladder cut in snow
 Up the steep Cairngorms, there to test our climbing powers,
 Or to muse in the wilderness alone,
 Where we find amidst the elements a mood for each of ours,
 Or a Bethel by the Shelter Stone.

III.

There's a corrie for a temple and a boulder for a shrine ;
 For incense there's the odour of the heather and the pine ;
 For a font of holy water we've the crystal Pools o' Dee,
 Where we track them from the shining Silver City by the Sea
 To the eerie Cairngorms with their ghost on Ben Macdhui,
 And the Spectre on sharp Sgoran Dhu ;
 Where the Devil from his Point hails the kelpies on the Lui,
 And the Angel watches o'er Làrig Ghru.

IV.

There's neither sect nor party in our happy pilgrim band ;
 The only " Reds " are those who burn first on the top to stand ;
 The strongest helps the weakest as we journey o'er the cairns,
 For in the Cairngorm Club we're a' John Tamson's bairns.

On the steep Cairngorms as we wander on together,
 We are brothers united and true ;
 And when storm-clouds overtake our Republic of the Heather,
 Still undaunted we see each other through.

V.

As on the Mount in Palestine the Holiest Mountaineer
 To weary, worldly climbers gave an Indicator clear,
 And showed the lofty heights where all Beatitude may find,
 We have charted the horizon for a mystified mankind.

On the far Cairngorms, like a humble imitator,
 Copland pointed us to peaks seen afar ;
 And to help his climbing brothers Parker set an indicator
 On Macdhuì and on dark Lochnagar.

VI.

When the moon lights up the Larig and the winds are hushed
 and still,
 A troop of silent mountaineers comes stealing o'er the hill,
 As the shades of dead companions return to make once more
 The well beloved traverse from the Dee to Aviemore,
 Through the old Cairngorms, 'neath their summits grim and
 hoary,

With an air ever tranquil and serene ;
 And when comrades yearly gather for the festive song and
 story,
 In our memory they shall live evergreen.

VII.

Now here's to every pioneer who's helped us on the track,
 To Copland, Parker, Anderson, to Garden or Levack ;
 Of them shall men in future tell—what can they better say?—
 They pointed to the mountain tops, and then they led the way

Up the steep Cairngorms by the paths that are the surest,
Though the going be toilsome and hard,
Guiding others to the summits where the airs of Heaven are
purer,
And the climber finds his manifold reward.

VIII.

O Heart o' Bonnie Scotland where the Cairngorms rise,
Around your rugged Bens for us a bit of Heaven lies !
When our spirits seek the ether after climbing days are o'er,
Your crags shall be Earth's outposts from which at last we soar.
Above the steep Cairngorms we'll be face to face for ever
With the something that called us long before ;
We'll have joined the elfin chorus drawing others o'er the
heather,
Just as we were drawn in happy days of yore.