

## JAMES DOWNIE, GUIDE.

BY JOHN MACPHERSON, J.P.

JAMES DOWNIE, mountain guide, died suddenly on March, 1929. Born in April, 1850, he was the youngest son of the late John Downie and his wife, Catherine Grant. From the beginning of the 19th century, Braemar has been a great resort for mountaineers, but, with the advent of the Royal Family at Balmoral, a fresh impetus was given to the tourist traffic, and guides, with sure-footed ponies for hill-climbing, were in great request. At that period the principal guides in the district were the late George McHardy, Croftmuicken and the late Charles Stewart, Comely Bank. When the former was getting over in years, about 1860, the late John Downie took up the business, and when he in turn began to get frail, about 1870, he gave over the work to his son James, he himself devoting his time to canvassing in the village for orders for his son. Though born too late to have the privilege of guiding Queen Victoria in her mountain excursions during the fifties of last century, James became an expert guide, and no one knew better than he the way to the higher mountains and through the various mountain passes leading north, west and south from Upper Deeside. There are few noble families in Scotland or England some of whose members he has not guided through the Cairngorms during his lifetime, and many stirring episodes he was able to relate in his latter years of his experiences in his many expeditions to the mountains. As lately as last Summer, though in his 79th year, he guided a party to the top of Lochnagar. He never married, though he greatly enjoyed the society of ladies.



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DOWNIE, AT HIS COTTAGE, TOMINTOUL, BRAEMAR.