

THE CAVE ON BOD AN DIABHAIL.

Where is this sight?

What is it ye would see?

If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.

Hamlet Act V., Sc. II

IT was on the tenth of October, 1926, that we searched for the cave, and already the winter's snow was down to 2,500 feet, giving the Cairngorms the appearance of ice-topped cakes. We were a party of five, the writer, Piscator, the Lecturer, Auto, and our skipper, whom we will call 300. The latter member of the party had been down in the south of England and we had kept the search back until his return so that he might be one of the first party to be received by his Satanic Majesty in the cave. The cave had been spotted through a (glass) on the third of May by 300 when coming down Glen Geusachan after his descent from Monadh Mor. From the information given by him the cave was apparently situated about the height of 2,900 feet on the Geusachan face, close to Glen Dee. At the White Bridge we left *Phyllis behind, and 300 being a very exact man indeed, noted the time as 10h. 30m. 30s. We went up the path on the west side of the Dee, and there was some excitement and conversation regarding the cave. It had probably never been visited since the days of Fionn, except perhaps by the wild cat or the eagle. It might even

* A motor car.

be haunted, and the thought of meeting the Big Grey Man, or the namesake of the rocky spur, face to face, high up on the cliff gave us some little concern.

Time was passing all too quickly for 300, who is a great walker. He seemed to want to reach some point at a certain time, and he gradually left the others behind. "Lat 'im gang," came the ejaculation from Piscator as he noted the speed of our leader up the river side. We crossed many a sappy hollow in our passage up-stream, and the route was particularly wet between the Allt Garbh and Caochan Riobidh, the latter stream, white-crested, came tumbling down between the rocks of Bhrotain.

We arrived at the Geusachan water at 12h. 30m. (at least 300 did) and we splashed through it. Our feet were extremely cold with the icy water, and we squeezed the water out of our stockings and received great comfort. On the other hand, the temperature of the water did not seem to trouble Piscator, who is accustomed to stand in water practising the "gentle art."

We looked up the screes and saw 300 sitting waiting for us, so we wasted no time in getting up to him. He told us the height was now 2,300 feet, and that it was 1 o'clock, and we would rope up here. The writer was put to lead by 300, not that he had any special qualification for the job, but because he showed signs of possibly first finding the cave, and it was perfectly obvious that the owner of Phyllis wished to reserve this honour for himself. The writer's attention of course would be occupied in finding the route.

Almost immediately we got into the snow, which was soft at first, but soon became frozen, and frost-flowers gathered on our wet boots. Above us rose many jagged towers, and the upward spectacle was very fine.*

* See S.M.C. Guide Book, p. 156.

No particular difficulty was experienced throughout the climb, but the frozen condition of the turf and the exceedingly exposed position made the greatest caution necessary. The climb finished with a snow slope exactly at the cairn, after a 1,000 feet of climbing.

Below us, now in shadow lay Pol Iasg at the junction of the streams, and Clais á Mhadaidh at the foot of Carn á Mhaim. It was now 3 o'clock and very cold as the wind was blowing from a' Bhuidheannaich and the Slicket, so we galloped down Coire Odhar which carried snow to the foot.

On our homeward journey down Glen Dee we saw the footsteps of the evening slowly climbing up the hills, and the afterglow dyed the snow-covered summits of the Cairngorms a brilliant pink which was really magnificent, and the planets Jupiter and Saturn were lamps in the southern sky.

It was dark by the time we returned to the White Bridge, and 300 being there first had Phyllis' headlights turned on to guide the slower members of the search.

"We have not found the cave," the writer remarked to 300, and he quietly but firmly said, "*No!* I think the mouth of it had been probably filled with snow." I can hear you say, dear reader, "I believe you but thousands wouldn't."