

SOME ROCK-CLIMBS ON LOCHNAGAR.

BY G. ROY SYMMERS.

My object in writing this article is, in the first place, to bring up to date and classify the climbs which have been worked out on the cliffs of Lochnagar ; secondly, to point out possibilities in the way of new climbs ; and finally, to express a hope that it may encourage members to embark on one of the most captivating branches of our sport.

Some will say on picking up this *Journal*, "What ! another long article on Lochnagar : I'm 'fed up' of hearing and reading descriptions of the place." To such, who have no doubt at some time lost all idea of time, height, beauty and, in many cases, wind on the monotonous grind up the "Ladder," I can only say : " I am sorry ; let me take you over the col and down to the loch-side, down into a wilderness of scree, where the never-ending sound of falling waters and the turbulent wind provide a fitting background for the mind in its conception of the majesty and grandeur of Lochnagar."

Before entering on a description of the climbs, I should like to set down a few words of warning. Anyone who is not familiar with granite, no matter to what class of climber he belongs, ought, in my opinion, to try himself out on a moderately easy course before leading up any of the more difficult climbs. Such a preparation should afford the individual with ample opportunity to test and judge the possibilities and limitations of Lochnagar rock. Unlike the conditions generally prevalent in Skye and the English Lake District, the rock is of a most unreliable nature and, in this respect, following from the fact that a gully is formed by the action of weather on a weakness in the rock face, the gullies are without exception particularly bad. Every caution should be exercised by the leader both for his own sake and for those to whom he is responsible. The writer has had one or two nasty experiences both as leader and as second, the outcome of which is that he would like to emphasize the need for extreme caution. In late spring,



May, 1926.

LOCHNAGAR.

G. R. Symmers.



THE MAJOR CLIMBS ON LOCHNAGAR.

(For explanation see page 206.)

By courtesy of J. B. Whyte & Son, Dundee.

particularly when the cliffs are shrouded in mist, it should be remembered that avalanches both of snow and rock are not of infrequent occurrence. When traces of this menace are discovered preparatory to a climb it is wisdom, not cowardice, to turn back and give up all thought of the sport, even a new route. The difficult climbs on Lochnagar are without exception also dangerous climbs.

In what follows the climbs are arranged as they are encountered by anyone crossing into the corrie by the col between the Cuidhe Crom and the Meikle Pap and then circling the loch in a clockwise direction.

THE RED SPOUT.

This gully is situated in the extreme south corner of the corrie and consists of a gravel shoot some two hundred feet in height. A little practice in a gravel quarry would be a fitting preliminary to its ascent under summer conditions. In the winter, when it is seldom corniced, it provides a short and fairly steep snow climb.

The rocks on both sides of the Red Spout are of an equally indifferent nature, and, on the whole, appear treacherously rotten. Several climbs might be worked out on the three small buttresses immediately to the right, but the greatest value which can be attached to this division of the cirque, between the Red Spout and the Central Buttress, is undoubtedly in the fine snow rakes, which provide glorious sport in the winter. Innumerable routes might be worked out on the southern face of the Central Buttress—snow-climbs which are second to none in the North-East Corrie.

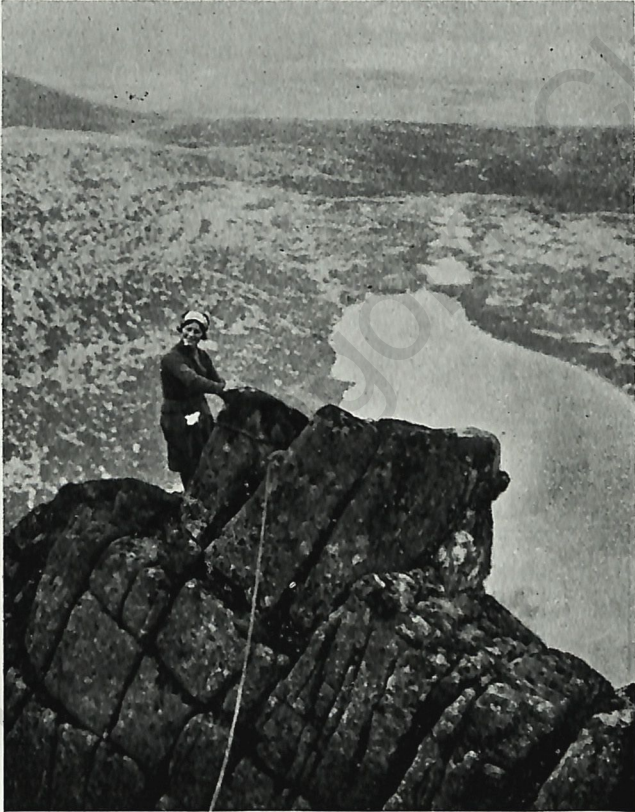
THE CENTRAL BUTTRESS.

This is the largest buttress in the corrie and rises with one or two breaks almost from the lochside to the summit plateau. As a summer climb it presents but little difficulty. Its first recorded ascent was made by Miss N. Bruce and the writer on the 26th of August, 1928. The lower rocks where they occur between wide platforms of fairly level ground may be discounted as avoidable. The six hundred feet

of actual climbing commences near the top of a wide gully which slopes up to the ridge from the north side. The west or cliff side of this approach is excessively steep, and to avoid this face the route lies up the south side of the buttress until it is possible to cross over, actually on to the nose, above the steep wall of rock. After this traverse, which is somewhat unsatisfactory on account of vegetation, the ridge provides about a hundred and fifty feet of moderate climbing. The granite is good, and continues so up to two small pinnacles or teeth which mark the end of all serious work. Beyond the teeth, which are situated on a sharp, level arête, the slope eases off and a pleasant scramble brings the climber to the summit. The worst feature of the buttress is its breadth and lack of definition, so that an infinite number of variations can be worked out to the left of the nose. On the 24th of August, 1930, E. Bothwell and L. Hay had a climb somewhere on this face which they declare to be of no great difficulty. It would appear, then, that the best route is found by getting on to the nose of the buttress as quickly as possible. (See *C.C.J.*, Vol. XII, p. 12, and illustration, p. 8.)

THE SHALLOW GULLY.

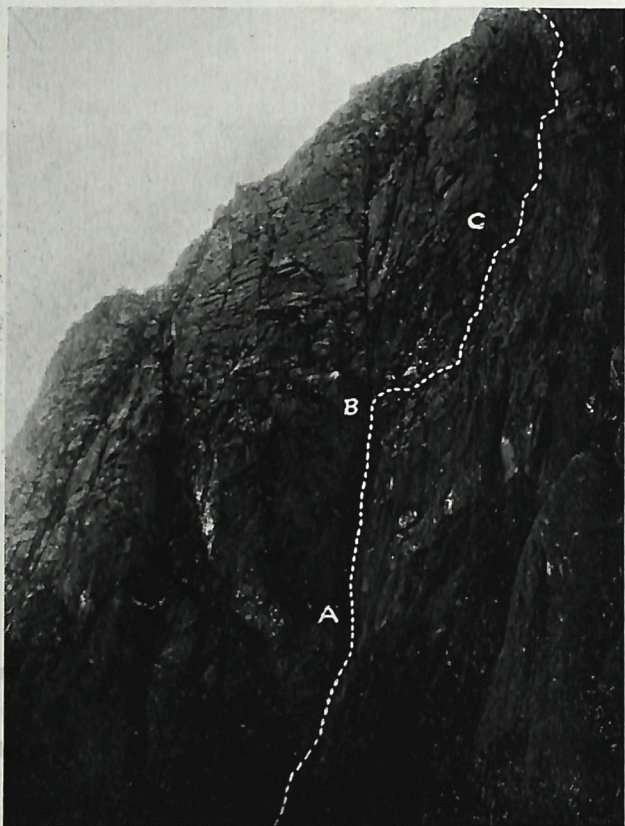
This gully was attempted by Miss Bruce and the writer on the same date as the Central Buttress. (*C.C.J.*, Vol. XII, p. 10.) The route commences some distance to the right of the foot of the broad gully mentioned in the Central Buttress climb. A wide but shallow groove runs up the face on the north side of the Central Buttress and appears to give out on the latter somewhere in the vicinity of the teeth. The climb had to be abandoned after an ascent of almost two hundred feet. The first pitch needs about forty feet of rope and consists of a slanting climb from the screes on the right over rounded slabs into the bed of the gully, and thence to a stance immediately below a very steep chimney. This second pitch was climbed by back-and-knee work almost to the top, with the exception of a slight digression to the right about half-way up, where a much-needed rest was enjoyed. A vegetated choke-stone forms the final section of this



August 26, 1928.

G. R. Symmers.

THE CHARM OF THE CENTRAL BUTTRESS.



August 17, 1930.

G. R. Symmers.

THE GIANT'S HEAD CHIMNEY.

- A. Position of first four pitches.
- B. Overhang, necessitating traverse to right.
- C. Position of the Giant's Head.

awkward thirty-foot pitch. Above the chimney a good platform is available, and it should be noticed that on the floor there is a small, rounded knob of rock which just provides sufficient belay for the rope if doubling-down is necessary. The character of the gully now changes, it widens considerably, and the gradient becomes less severe; unfortunately, this is amply compensated for by the difference in the quality of the rock, which gets rapidly worse. The route followed in the first attempt was to the left, where several mossy ledges were successively utilized, and progress made in two stages up to a pointed belay. Beyond this, a traverse upwards and into the centre of the gully round a spur of rotten rock brings the climber to a steep slab blocking the entire gully. The ledges below this obstacle all have an outward dip, and covered as they are with moss, provide distinctly unpleasant and treacherous foothold. If the slab can be climbed, and it probably will be overcome by the assistance of rubbers, the next part of the gully, although composed of poor rock, should be feasible. From above, the exit on to the Central Buttress also appears practicable.

SHADOW BUTTRESS A.

To the immediate right of the Shallow Gully rises a very steep and well-marked ridge which, on account of this part of the cliff remaining for the greater part of the day in deep shade, has come to be known as the Shadow Buttress. The A Buttress may be recognized by a crescent-shaped grassy terrace running obliquely up and round it from left to right. If the buttress can be climbed, it is thought that this spiral terrace will provide a suitable start.

THE GIANT'S HEAD CHIMNEY.

Skirting the base of Shadow Buttress A by the scree slopes which lead up to the Douglas Gully, one notices a couloir on the left into which converge three distinct gullies. This section of the cliff is rather off the "beaten track" to the Black Spout, so that it is not surprising to find that it has been almost entirely neglected by climbers in the past.

On the 10th of August, 1930, W. Ewen and the writer

made a successful attack on the centre chimney. The cleft is very narrow, rotten, and steep for some two hundred feet, at which point an overhanging wall blocks progress, and a traverse to the right has to be made. As seen from below, the continuation of the chimney above the overhang takes the form of a very narrow crack, flanked on either side by steep, smooth slabs, and appears to offer little encouragement to the climber, although a traverse might be made to the left above the overhang, below the slabs, and so on to the ridge of Shadow Buttress A.

In its lower reaches the Giant's Head Chimney commences with four pitches in rapid succession. The first pitch is submerged in green moss and has a very excellent cold water supply laid on. It may be climbed first on the left and finished on the right, excavation being necessary. The second pitch is of the same type as the first, and neither are of any great degree of difficulty. A different proposition is met with in the third obstacle, which consists of a central rib of firm rock, above which is piled a mass of huge boulders. The chimney at this point is just too wide for backing up, and the solution to the problem is found, not as might be expected in the rib, but in several good holds on the left wall. A small foothold on the rib higher up gives access to the chaotic boulders above, and so on into a small cave below an overhanging choke-stone. At the back of this cave, the first hitch in the climb can be obtained and should not be neglected, as the ascent round the overhang is difficult and exposed. Combined tactics are likely to be necessary. In our climb, the pitch was overcome by the leader standing with his left foot on the second's shoulder and pushing his left arm into a hole between the choke-stone and the right wall; balance being thus maintained, the right foot was purchased as high up as possible against a crack on the right wall and pressure effected in this way against the choke-stone by his body; the left foot was then brought against the crack and a slight upward movement made, freeing the left arm of its duty, and allowing of a hand-hold being found above the choke-stone. The pitch is finished in a sitting position, with the body facing outwards. Beyond this

difficulty, the chimney continues unimpeded for about fifty feet up to the overhanging wall, which blocks all further progress in a vertical direction. Several mossy ledges on the right give on to a fair-sized shelving platform below an overhang of lightish-coloured mottled rock. From this position (devoid of any belay) a very exposed and hazardous traverse might be made across the chimney to the left. A safer route, however, can be discovered round a corner at the extreme right of the platform, in a wide depression which runs up to the sky-line. About eighty feet of rope was run out by the leader before a suitable stance became available. The rock on this section is most unreliable, and a good deal of excavation may be necessary. A very perfect profile of a man's head can be noticed on the rib of rock which forms the left wall of the gully near this point, and it is on account of this feature that the climb gets its name. As advance is made upwards, the right side being adhered to as far as possible to avoid slabs, the gully becomes more simple and several routes are open for selection. The exit from the climb is on the main ridge of the Central Buttress, close to a small *gendarme* about thirty feet below the summit plateau.

With regard to the other gullies, one of which goes up on either side of the Giant's Head Chimney, it may safely be said that both are difficult, the one on the extreme left being probably the more severe. A preliminary survey from the top might be advisable before actually attempting a first ascent.

SHADOW BUTTRESS B.

Between the couloir and the Douglas Gully rises a steep and well-defined ridge, known as Shadow Buttress B. On the 19th of October, 1902, Raeburn, accompanied by Mackay and Goggs, attempted to scale this buttress. (*S.M.C.J.*, Vol. VII, p. 185.) They reached a point some two hundred and fifty feet above the screes, where an overhang of considerable extent stopped further progress. As in the case of most of the other buttresses it would appear from their description that moss and rotten rock were not entirely absent.

THE DOUGLAS GULLY.

It is surprising that this opening, one of the largest in the corrie, should have defied so many parties. Till well into the summer it takes the form of a long finger of snow running high up into the precipice and terminates about one hundred feet below the summit in a dark wall of rock. Under such conditions it might well be supposed to yield a good snow climb. This snare must certainly have been responsible for the first attempt by Douglas and Gibson on the 11th of March, 1893 (*S.M.C.J.*, Vol. II, p. 246). No difficulty was encountered by this party up to the wall of rock mentioned, which, under the glazed conditions, proved insurmountable. The gully was again tried by Brown and Duncan in the February of 1897 without success.

These failures attracted the attention of Harold Raeburn who, along with Crombie, Duncan, and Garden, made an unsuccessful attempt in April, 1901. No advance was made beyond the point gained by the first party. Convinced that the gully was impracticable under winter conditions, we find (*S.M.C.J.*, Vol. VI, p. 231) Raeburn back at the assault on the 14th of July, 1901, again with Duncan and Garden. Stripped of its winter robe of white, the climb proved to be an entirely different problem. The double-choke-stone-pitch which forms the entrance to the gully survived a direct frontal attack. The pitch was turned by a traverse on the left wall from the cave beneath the choke-stones, where a route upwards was found till it became possible to return to the gully. Beyond the first pitch, the gully consisted of water-worn slabs, singularly devoid of good holds, and in many places very rotten in character. The possibility of getting out of the gully to the right (a proposal made by a former party) was abandoned as hopeless, and attention was focussed on the left wall. The last section up to the barrier was climbed to the right of the centre line of the gully. Raeburn then crossed the steep, wet slabs in the bed of the gully with some difficulty and took out about sixty feet of rope in ascending the left wall to a small platform, where a serviceable belay was discovered. Bringing up

Number 2, he then made a traverse to the left and inspected an exit-chimney, which was pronounced doubtful. "The traverse was reported to be neither good nor particularly safe, and the possibilities of the chimney were not apparent." This expedition, including the time taken in descent, occupied eight hours.

On the 18th of October, 1902, Raeburn had himself lowered by Mackay and Goggs for about one hundred feet into the Douglas Gully from the top. He reported having descended to within thirty feet of the highest point previously reached from below, and stated that he saw his way up these thirty feet. (*S.M.C.J.*, Vol. VII, p. 185.)

The writer has examined this proposed exit, from the top of the Eagle's Buttress on the opposite flank of the Douglas Gully, and is inclined to the belief that Raeburn was an optimist. At all events, anyone meditating an attack on this famous unclimbed gully would do well to study, excavate, and explore its finish from above before entertaining any idea of a direct attack from below.

THE EAGLE'S BUTTRESS.

This magnificent and imposing ridge forms the right containing wall of the Douglas Gully. To the date of this article no attempt at its conquest has been recorded. As a result of examination both from above and from below it appears probable that it would yield a very fine climb. The greatest difficulties, which may or may not prove insuperable, are likely to occur about half-way up and continue almost to the summit. In any case, the upper portion of the climb will be extremely steep and exposed.

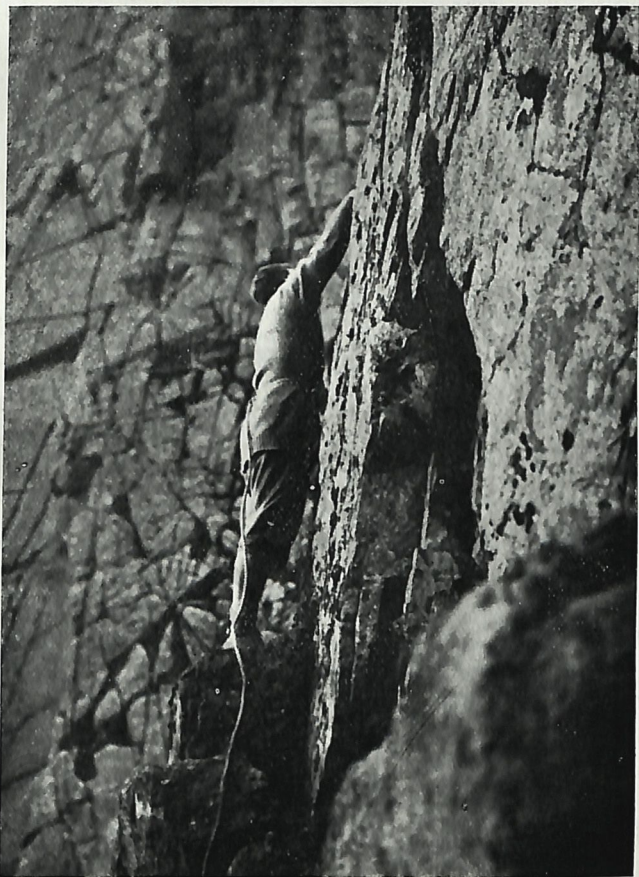
THE PARALLEL GULLIES A AND B.

On the great face, bounded by the Douglas Gully on the left and Raeburn's Gully on the right, rise two smaller gullies running absolutely parallel and fairly close together; these are the Parallel Gullies.

Until the 17th of August, 1930, when W. Ewen and the writer made the ascent of Parallel Gully A, neither of these features had been visited except by Tough and Brown, who

crossed both of them at a low elevation in order to reach the buttress on the left side of Raeburn's Gully. Both gullies are similar in that they have exceptionally difficult, or what is more likely, impossible starts. Parallel Gully B begins as a narrow, holdless crack fully one hundred feet in height and this commencement is quite evidently hopeless. The lower rocks, stretching from Raeburn's Gully for some distance beyond the foot of Parallel Gully A, are without doubt impossible, although there may be a faint possibility of the first pitch in the latter gully being climbed. The obvious start to all climbs on this face is at a point almost midway between the foot of the Douglas Gully and Parallel Gully A.

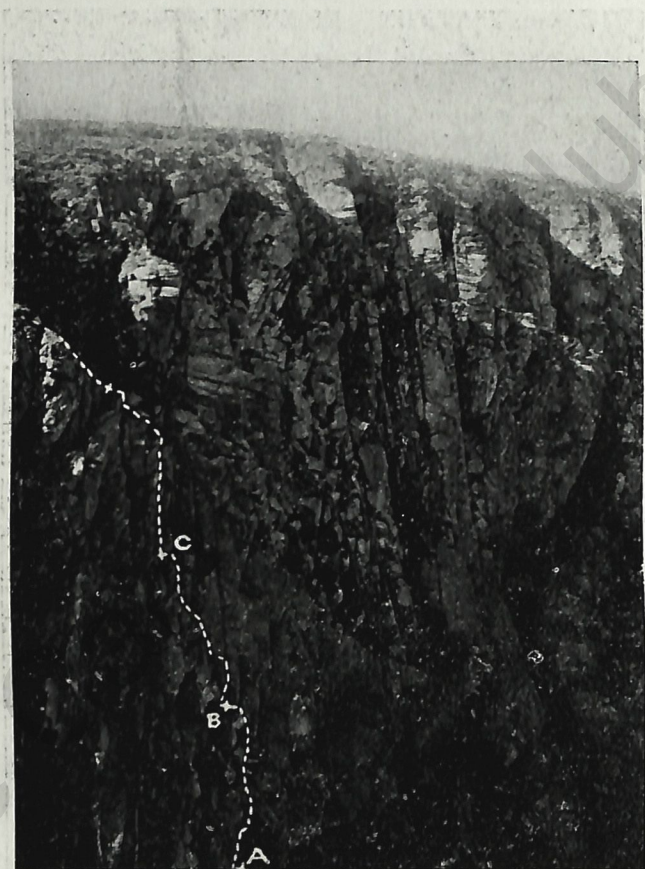
From this position an upward traverse to the right, over easy rock and vegetation, lands the climber in the bed of Gully A about one hundred feet above the screes. Slightly higher, the gradient increases where an indefinite sort of pitch extends across the total width. Little difficulty should be encountered if a route over the moss-covered boulders and slabs on the left-hand side is chosen. For some considerable distance beyond this second pitch (the first being avoided by introductory traverse) little of interest is encountered. The right side should be adhered to, thus making a short cut across a bend in the gully where it turns to the right immediately below the third pitch. This latter consists of some twelve feet of boulders almost submerged in wet, green moss, and forming a barrier blocking the gully from side to side. Rotten rock is well to the fore, and care should be exercised by the leader in making a route up the centre of the pitch, slightly to the right of a miniature waterfall. Above this the gully divides, and the quality of the formation rapidly goes from bad to worse. We tackled the left-hand branch, and continued upwards for approximately forty feet, at which point the bed narrowed to a steep gutter composed of absolutely "foul" granite, and had to be abandoned in favour of the ridge between the branches. It was hoped that the right branch would "go," but, on topping the ridge, the finish of the gully looked quite hopeless. The route now lies straight up the dividing



August 17, 1930.

W. Ewen.

LONG STRIDE CORNER : PARALLEL GUILY A.



August 17, 1930.

G. R. Symmers.

THE EXIT FROM PARALLEL GULLY A.

- A. Rectangular Block Stance.
- B. The Mossy Cup Stance.
- C. The Last Stance.

ridge. A narrow ledge running from right to left is made use of in overcoming a steep wall. At the extreme end of this shelf, a very long stride round a corner has to be made before any further upward progress can be effected. Excellent hand-holds then provide a route up very steep rock to a small platform, on which stands a little hexagonal- or octagonal-shaped belay. This pitch requires a run out of about sixty feet of rope, but the risk incurred is minimised by the presence of small projections round which the rope can be hitched on the way up. From this stance neither of the branch exits looks feasible—on account of rotten rock in the case of the left branch, and unscalable slab at the top of the right branch. The climber is, therefore, compelled to stick closely to the ridge, and it looks exceedingly steep and sensational. A large semi-detached flake of rock, with a crack running down behind it, allows the belay-platform to be vacated. By standing on this it is possible to make a short traverse to the right and so, with fifty feet of lead, a fairly easy ascent can be made to a stance below an overhang. At this point a good belay is available and a change into rubbers advisable. The overhang consists of a wall fifteen feet high, against which a large rectangular block is supported with a steep, V-shaped chimney on the right. The rock mass does not appear too stable, but its ascent on the left, mainly by arm-work, with the crack behind it providing hand-lodgment, was justified. Standing on this block, the leader is then in a position to overcome the rest of the wall to the right and above the chimney. Care has then to be taken in surmounting several slack boulders which pave the way up to a little mossy cup snuggling below a further overhang. The most critical situation in the climb is now reached, and the next twenty feet, which bars the way to freedom and the upper easy rocks, provide a thrilling tussle with Nature. To the right of the stance, and about five feet above it, a steep, sloping slab has to be climbed. The leader will probably need assistance in getting on to this slab, and should be steadied as far up as possible. Rubbers on this section were a great comfort, and even then the slab had to be abandoned half-way up. To the immediate left

is a perpendicular rib fully four feet above the level of the slab, and this has to be crossed into a small grassy groove by getting the left leg across the rib and hooking the knee into a small notch. About twenty feet above this a large pointed belay is encountered, and this marks the end of all serious difficulty. From the ledge on the rib between the two branches up to the belay just mentioned the climbing is difficult and very exposed; it constitutes in all a prolonged pitch almost two hundred feet high.

THE PARALLEL BUTTRESS.

This narrow buttress, which starts as a slabby face, gradually changes its character towards the summit, where it forms quite a sharp ridge. It makes a distinct division between the two Parallel Gullies. No ascent has yet been recorded. Its lower section appears to be hopeless.

THE TOUGH-BROWN RIDGE.

To the right of Parallel Gully B rises a most impressive buttress which, as early as 1st August, 1896, led Tough and Brown to the assault. (*S.M.C.J.*, Vol. IV, p. 35; *C.C.J.*, Vol. I, p. 395.) The ridge starts with magnificent slabs set at an exceedingly steep angle, which have so far defied conquest. Nor could the first party find a way of gaining the upper parts of the ridge but by undertaking a protracted traverse across the face from a point to the left of Parallel Gully A. From what the writer has seen of the climb, no very great difficulty should be encountered until a point after crossing Parallel Gully B has been reached. One can gather from a study of the articles mentioned above that much trouble was experienced in gaining the ridge from this position. The face seems to be a maze of treacherous, grassy ledges, most of which disappoint by leading on to vertical slabs. Combined tactics may have to be resorted to, but a climb where the leader has to be jerked upwards by the second man in a bad position so that he may reach a hold, is, in my opinion, scarcely justifiable. The writer is equally certain that a comparatively simple route exists on the upper part of the Tough-Brown Ridge, in any case

not one requiring the acrobatic feats performed by the pioneer party.

On the 19th of October, 1902, Raeburn attempted to climb directly up this ridge from the start, but the difficulties which had baulked Tough and Brown again defied the party. An examination of this commencement, combined with the knowledge of the defeat of two such expert parties, has led the writer to consider it as impossible.

RAEBURN'S GULLY.

The first large opening to the left of the Black Spout was climbed on the 12th of November, 1898, by Raeburn, Rannie, and Lawson, under semi-winter conditions. (*S.M.C.J.*, Vol. V, p. 176.) The gully has since been climbed by Miss Bruce and the writer on the 5th of August, 1928. (*C.C.J.*, Vol. XI, p. 315), and by Ewen and Paterson later in the same year.

A tongue of scree runs a short distance up into the gully till it abuts on steep slabs which provide difficult climbing. A better way, which avoids these initial troubles, is to tackle the right wall at the very outset and climb by way of a quartz intrusion on to "the mound" immediately above "the dell." (See photograph, p. 187). From this point a traverse may be made across rather unreliable rock back into the bed of the gully above the difficult slabs. Progress is then rapid up to the first series of pitches, which commence some two hundred and fifty feet from the start of the course. The route follows the bed of the gully, which is carved in solid rock, and the climbing is fairly easy, but is made disagreeable by the water which is always present. Looking upwards from the bend in the gully, the climber sees it completely blocked by a number of huge choke-stones, wedged one above the other in the wildest confusion. The whole forms a gigantic pitch apparently at least seventy feet high. On closer investigation, however, it resolves itself into three distinct steps. The first of the series is climbed to the left by using what footholds are to be obtained on the wall and by gripping the various choke-stones

on the way up with the hands. Before reaching the platform between pitches No. 1 and No. 2, rather a difficult movement has to be made in overcoming the final smooth boulder. A small ledge to the right provides good foothold and permits of the body being swung into a doubled posture over the edge, from which position, by a long reach of the right arm, a hand-hold may be obtained in a vertical crack on the right wall. By pushing with the left hand on the upper surface of the choke-stone and pulling with the right, the body can be raised with comparative ease. The second pitch can be simply avoided by a short traverse to the left on small but sound ledges. At this point a double-cave-pitch is encountered. The route into the upper cave, which is small as compared with that beneath it, is made by climbing the left wall some twelve feet from the cave and then traversing along a shelf into it. A doubled rope is likely to be necessary at this stage to enable the leader to attack the overhang from the shelving footholds beneath it. Above this "bad-step" the gully is filled with a mass of huge boulders, which present pleasant scrambling; then a long stretch of scree up to the fourth and fifth pitches, which follow in quick succession. They are of a similar nature, consisting of several masses of rock wedged in a narrow part of the upper gully. Slimy, green moss and rotten rock are encountered, but, if an attack is carried out on the left, neither of the pitches should offer much resistance. On surmounting these, it will be seen that the gully divides, leaving three possible finishes. Straight ahead, the gully is blocked by the final or sixth pitch, which can be climbed on the left by using very small hand-holds above and behind the choke-stone. Of the two branches, that on the left, although composed of very rotten rock, looks climbable, whereas the right branch looks quite impossible. The through-route written about by the first party has entirely vanished. It would appear to have been in the upper reaches of the gully, but nothing even faintly resembling such a feature was encountered by the writer on his visit to the climb.

RAEBURN'S GULLY VARIATION.

On the 14th of July, 1927, M. Sturm and the writer climbed up to the platform below the double-cave pitch. At this point a traverse out on the left wall was made to a steep little chimney which gave access to the easy rocks below the upper portion of the Tough-Brown Ridge. (*C.C.J.*, Vol. XI, p. 316.) The chimney, which is of uncertain structure, can be avoided by going still further out on the left wall and then upwards over the moss and grass-covered ledges of a minor buttress which flanks the chimney. In making the traverse out from Raeburn's Gully and in the negotiation of the chimney or buttress extreme care should be exercised by the leader because of his exposed position and the unreliable nature of the ground.

THE BLACK SPOUT PINNACLE.

Unfortunately Lochnagar is very badly supplied with rock towers of any sort, and is thus almost devoid of a charm which undoubtedly appeals to a large number of climbers. In the Black Spout Pinnacle we have a worthy exception, and it should interest quite a few who are in the search for new routes to learn that so far there has been only one direct ascent, and this a most roundabout and unsatisfactory one. The pinnacle lies near the summit of a buttress formed by Raeburn's Gully on the south, the Black Spout on the east, and the Left-Hand Branch on the north.

The first recorded attempt on the pinnacle was made by Raeburn, Mackay, and Goggs on the 20th of October, 1902. (*S.M.C.J.*, Vol. VII, p. 185.) On this occasion a start was made from the base of the pinnacle at a point near the junction of the Left-Hand Branch with the Black Spout. About one hundred and fifty feet of steep and hazardous climbing was accomplished, but the party had to turn back at a narrow chimney with an overhanging top. A route was found later in the day from the summit plateau down into the "neck" and thence up the pinnacle. This route involves little trouble and is very enjoyable. Numerous parties have gained the summit since its first ascent,

and since the final portion from the "neck" to the top of the pinnacle is included in the only worked-out direct ascent, it is worthy of description.

Little difficulty is experienced in climbing down to the "neck" as there is an abundant choice of routes. Once gained, it is found to be formed by two gullies running steeply up from Raeburn's Gully on the right and from the Left-Hand Branch on the left. A very slight descent is made in the former direction on several stones bearing a crude resemblance to a short stair-case. A slanting crack in the vertical face of the pinnacle is then climbed to a small platform. Huge holds are found hidden unexpectedly round corners, making what otherwise might be a fairly stiff problem quite easy. (The descent of this pitch, when coming off the climb, is best accomplished facing outwards.) A smooth slab is then crossed to the final wall, when an oblique movement to the left, past several pointed flakes, takes the climber to the moss-covered summit of the pinnacle. To my mind the crossing of the slab is the most unpleasant part of an excellent little route.

On the 21st of August, 1927, J. Silver and the writer succeeded in finding a route up the pinnacle on the face presented to Raeburn's Gully. (*S.M.C.J.*, Vol. XVIII, p. 119; *C.C.J.*, Vol. XI, p. 313.) The course starts from the "mound," which may be ascended either by the route described under Raeburn's Gully or by using a short, "vegetable" gully to the right of the "dell." Instead of making the traverse into Raeburn's Gully from the top of the "mound," a ledge with a shallow chimney running up behind it is followed in a slanting direction up the right wall. Little trouble will be experienced in climbing up this ledge if the wall is hugged as much as possible. The shelf "peters out" below a fine cave-pitch with dark, steep walls. On our expedition no attempt was made to scale this obstacle, but, instead, a traverse to the left was effected out to a shallow groove filled with gravel and clay. This was climbed, and a return made to the right, above the pitch, into a recess with a narrow crack running up behind it separating a huge flake of rock from the mountain mass. This is the con-

necting link with the grassy gully which runs with but one break up to the "neck" between the pinnacle and the summit plateau. The solitary interruption in the continuity of this gully takes the form of a fern-decorated through-route pitch, which can be easily turned on either side. The climb from the "neck" to the top of the pinnacle has been already described, but it may be mentioned that an inferior route, starting some distance below the "crude staircase," is possible.

THE BLACK SPOUT.

This is the largest gully in the corrie, and, neglecting the Red Spout as of no importance, is the easiest route to the summit from the base of the crags. Hundreds of parties make its ascent every year, so that in an article devoted mainly to rock-climbs, it does not rank. Nevertheless, its form is admirably suited to the making of an excellent snow-climb. Under winter conditions two circumstances may contribute to its difficulty, namely, either so much snow that it is very heavily corniced; or so little that the upper rocks in the bed of the gully free themselves of snow and present a face covered with a coating of very thin, black ice, which makes the ascent quite exciting.

Although the Black Spout in the summer is singularly uninteresting, being as it is only a scree walk, it may be mentioned in passing that several very fascinating little exit problems are to be found on the right-hand side near the top. On a bad day, when it is thought inadvisable to attack one of the more tempting courses, it may be handy to know that these form a very suitable practice ground, where the moral support of a rope held from above may be utilized.

THE LEFT-HAND BRANCH OF THE BLACK SPOUT.

In making the ascent of the Black Spout it will be noticed about half-way up that a large branch gully enters it from the left. This gully is now commonly called the Left-Hand Branch.

The first recorded ascent of this gully was made by

Douglas and Gibson under winter conditions on March the 11th, 1893. (*S.M.C.J.*, Vol. II, p. 246.) Raeburn, Mackay, and Goggs, on the 20th of October, 1902, after having attempted to make a direct route up the pinnacle, cut into the gully at a point above the initial twelve-foot pitch and so continued to the top. (*S.M.C.J.*, Vol. VII, p. 185.)

In winter the "Branch" makes a very fine snow-climb, being slightly steeper and usually carrying a heavier cornice than the Black Spout. On the right wall of the subsidiary spout, beyond the choke-stone pitch, rises a very deeply-cut chimney. On the 21st of December, 1913, Miss Inglis Clark, Mrs. Hunter, and H. Alexander made a magnificent climb up this chimney and hacked their way through the cornice at the top. The writer hopes that this example of prowess will lead some of our lady members to take matters in their own hands and start rock- and snow-climbing with the ultimate aim of leading on the rope.

The first recorded summer ascent of the initial pitch in the Left-Hand Branch and of the chimney previously climbed under snow conditions by Miss Clark and her party, was made by F. King and the writer on the 1st of August, 1926. (*C.C.J.*, Vol. XI, p. 283.) The pitch proved adamant to direct, unaided attack, and only by using a threaded rope and the assistance of the second's shoulder was the leader enabled to overcome the difficulty. (From a report by Miss Bruce, who climbed the gully on the 15th of September, 1930, it would appear that there is now a through-route which provides an easy way up the pitch.) The chimney is one of the most disintegrated places that it has been the writer's misfortune to visit. Its ascent is one continuous nerve-strain for the second, who cannot possibly get out of the way of any debris dislodged by the leader. A small bridge-stone spans the exit and provides a somewhat spectacular finish to an otherwise dirty climb.

Before leaving the Left-Hand Branch, it may interest some to mention a possible new route up the Black Spout Pinnacle from this side. On the wall of the "Branch" opposite to the "Chimney" a very steep crack rises to

the "neck," and it appears probable from a superficial examination that this may yield a good climb.

THE BLACK SPOUT BUTTRESS.

Apart from the Central Buttress, this is the only ridge climb which might be considered suitable for the beginner. It was climbed by W. Ewen and the writer on September the 29th, 1927, under very wet conditions. (*C.C.J.*, Vol. XI, p. 316.)

A start may be made on a "vegetable" slope, near the foot of the Black Spout opposite the Pinnacle, and thence over easy rock and moss up the middle of the buttress till a distinct twin-chimney is reached. The one on the left provides excellent practice in back-and-knee work, and is not sufficiently long to prove irksome. Easy climbing then continues to a kind of terrace in the ridge where an arête crosses the top of two minor gullies coming up on either side. Beyond this break the buttress is of a more definite character, and the mountaineer is obliged to attack first great masses of fallen rock, which provide interesting scrambling; then a steep wall, which proves more difficult; and finally a second wall which will probably repel a direct attack and send the baffled climber to seek a less arduous route in a gully on the right. A loose pitch near the summit of this exit should be treated with respect, but if climbed on the right, it should offer little resistance.

Like the Central Buttress, this climb admits of endless variation, and any party which embarks on its conquest can do so assured that difficulties which prove too great can be readily turned by easy alternatives on either side.

THE CRACK.

It will be noticed on examining the cliff front between the Black Spout and the West Gully, that the upper portion of the crag is split by a very fine, dark line showing the location of a narrow chimney. There is no record of any attempt having been made on this line of weakness. A survey of the top of this probable route has been made, the result being satisfactory, despite the fact that the

explorer came off on the rope while making his reconnaissance.

THE WEST GULLY.

Last, but by no means least among the routes described in the course of this article, comes the West Gully. It is situated well to the right of the Black Spout and appears as a mysterious, dark cleft, splitting the upper rocks of the corrie in a steep and awesome chimney. To the true mountaineer this appearance of inaccessibility cannot but imply a challenge.

The first party to explore its fastnesses was led by Raeburn, accompanied by Mackay and Goggs, on the 19th of October, 1902. (*S.M.C.J.*, Vol. VII, p. 188.) This expedition appears to have followed more or less the same route as Miss Bruce and the writer, who, on the 12th of August, 1928, succeeded in making its ascent. (*C.C.J.*, Vol. XII, p. 8.)

The slabby section below the actual gully has never been surmounted, and from its general appearance does not lend much hope to the idea of a successful frontal attack. At all events the two parties which have so far completed the ascent of the gully both started the climb some little way to the left. Three parallel chimneys give access to the grass slopes above, and any of these may be employed. The most difficult is on the left, where several pitches rise above the entrance to a deep, narrow cave, cut into the heart of the mountain. The preliminary difficulties, which vary according to the introductory chimney used, having been overcome, the next part of the climb takes the form of a scramble up steep, overgrown slopes for about one-third of the total height of the cliff. At this point it is desirable to make a traverse along an ample ledge which leads into the bed of the West Gully. The steep and unreliable nature of the rock is quickly manifested in a stretch of water-worn, disintegrating slabs, which pave the way up to the first pitch. This is composed of a slab of rock, about seven feet in height, which forms the doorstep to a small cave beneath an overhanging choke-stone. The upper edge of this slab is quite

sharp, and a pull on the arms allows a leg to be thrown over the top, and the body raised into the cave. The overhang immediately above presents a somewhat harder problem. The route lies to the right, so as to dodge the choke-stone until it is possible to double back on extremely inadequate holds actually over the nose of the jammed-block. The complete height of the pitch would be in the region of fifteen feet. Immediately beyond this obstruction the gully branches, throwing out a very well defined and rather steep chimney on the left. The continuation of the main gully is blocked by a huge cave-pitch, which in wet weather presents rather the aspect of a waterfall than a rock feature. It would appear from a glance at the report by the pioneers that this obstacle was overcome by hitching the rope over some protuberance above. The writer employed combined-tactics in gaining a small platform to the right of the pitch, and from this situation, by moving upwards to the left on the boulder-wall, where much excavation had to be carried out, the summit of the pitch was reached. The exit now comes in view, but before freedom and success can be grasped, a last cave pitch has to be tackled. Beyond a very loose branch on the left, the gully narrows down to a vertical chimney in which are piled, one above the other, a series of huge boulders constituting the lintel to the entrance of a diminutive cave. Care must be taken in negotiating the crumbly bed-rock on the way up to the niche. Once in the cave, it will be noticed on turning round and facing outwards that above the choke-stone is a small window just sufficiently large to allow the passage of a human body. If the climber is heavily built this threading process may be no mean contortionistic feat, and for such the backing-up method, after looping the rope, may be more comfortable. Once through the "eye" magnificent holds, both for hands and feet, lead up to the summit, and one of the most difficult climbs on Lochnagar is accomplished.

And now farewell to Lochnagar and to the mighty bastions which protect the lonely tarn nestling at their feet, to the wild and shattered buttresses, and to the dark, enticing gullies—farewell! If I have accomplished my object,

then let our members follow in the steps of Raeburn, Mackay, Douglas, Tough, and Brown, and show that many a new route can yet be found from scree to summit.

Summary of Climbs in order of Difficulty.

<i>Easy.</i>	The Red Spout.
	The Black Spout.
	The Black Spout, Left-Hand Branch.
<i>Moderate.</i>	The Black Spout Pinnacle from above.
	The Chimney in the Left-Hand Branch.
	The Central Buttress.
	The Black Spout Buttress.
	The Black Spout Pinnacle direct from Raeburn's Gully.
<i>Difficult.</i>	Raeburn's Gully Variation.
	The Tough-Brown Ridge.*
	Raeburn's Gully Direct.
	The West Gully.
<i>Difficult and Exposed.</i>	The Giant's Head Chimney.
	The Parallel Gully A.

* Unknown to the writer.

The Major Climbs on Lochnagar, as indicated on the photograph facing page 187, are as follows:—

A.	Shadow Buttress A.
B.	Shadow Buttress B.
C.	The Eagle's Buttress.
D.	The Parallel Buttress.
E.	The Tough-Brown Ridge.
F.	The Black Spout Pinnacle.
G.	The Mound.
H.	The Dell.
J.	The Black Spout Buttress.
L.	The Summit of Lochnagar.
a.a.	The Giant's Head Chimney.
b.b.	The Douglas Gully.
c.c.	Parallel Gully A.
d.d.	The Tough-Brown Ridge Climb.
e.e.	Raeburn's Gully.
f.	Raeburn's Gully Variation.
g.g.	Black Spout Pinnacle, Direct Route.
h.h.	The Black Spout.
m.m.	The Black Spout, Left Hand Branch.
n.	The Chimney, Left Branch.
o.o.	The Black Spout Buttress Climb.
w.w.	The West Gully.
x.x.	The Crack.