

A MIDNIGHT EXPERIENCE AT THE DERRY.

BY HENRY C. DUGAN.

WE left Inverey about 11 p.m. on Sunday, July 18, 1926, my friend driving the motor cycle while I took my place on the pillion. It was a pitch dark night, with heavy clouds overhead, and as we had no head-light, the driver found some difficulty in seeing the road. Neither was it an easy task to keep an even balance with a heavily-loaded passenger swinging in the rear.

We had a good run to the Linn of Dee. The bike went bounding round the corner and up the hill which leads to the Lui bridge, when all at once we found ourselves in a rut at the roadside. The machine seemed to wriggle, and the next moment we had split partnership, my friend and I deposited in the ditch with all the baggage. As there was no damage done we set off again, but this time at a steadier pace. The road was made even darker by the trees on either side. We rounded the sandy corner near the Lui bridge with care, then up the Glen Lui road and over the Black Bridge, gaining speed all the time. After dashing through the water splash we reached Derry Lodge without any further mishap.

At 12.30 a.m. we left the Derry. The night was stifling and everything around was black. On reaching the end of the plantation I drew my friend's attention to a light in the direction of the Luibeg Cottage. It was of an orange hue, and at first appeared to come from a window. All at once the light disappeared, but after a few seconds we saw it again coming in our direction from lower down the glen. "Oh!" I exclaimed, "there is some one coming with a lantern to see who has arrived at the Derry at this unearthly hour." I had hardly passed the remark when up jumped the light into the air and vanished. Once again it appeared in another place, but this time long and tapering, and in an upright position. Again it jumped up into the air and out of sight, but scarcely had this solitary one gone

when a dozen or more appeared in various shapes and colours dancing in the air. All of a sudden they leapt up and vanished into space, and we were left in the darkness. This remarkable sight could not have lasted more than a minute. So overwhelmed were we that for a time neither of us moved but waited expectantly. As nothing further happened we concluded that the luminous meteor had gone for good, and so made track for the footbridge over the Derry Burn.

On our way we passed the Luibeg Cottage. Not a living soul was to be seen or heard; only our footsteps broke the stillness of the night. We endeavoured to keep to the path, but more than once measured our full length on the heather. Crossing the Luibeg footbridge, we climbed over the shoulder of Carn a' Mhaim and into Glen Dee, passing the Devil's Point, that formidable sentinel of the glen. Everything around was dark and eerie, and the rain came down in torrents before we reached the Dee.

The Corrour Bothy was our objective. On drawing near, we noticed smoke coming from the chimney, and peering in at the window saw a man apparently asleep, lying full length on the floor before a blazing log fire. As we entered, the man arose and with becoming dignity said: "Good morning, gentlemen, I have a good fire ready for you." For this we heartily thanked him. While our outer garments were drying, we had a substantial breakfast and a prolonged rest, caused by the rain-storm which did not abate till afternoon. It was no use making an attempt on Lochan Uaine on Cairntoul as intended, for the elements were against us, so we contented ourselves with gathering firewood for the next party who happened to reach the bothy. Leaving the Corrour at 5 o'clock on Monday afternoon, we arrived at Inverey at 8.30 p.m.

Our object in going on this midnight expedition was to obtain some early morning cloud effects around Lochan Uaine on Cairntoul. This ambition was not realized, but we considered ourselves more than fortunate in meeting with an experience which few people have ever encountered.