

RAEBURN'S GULLY OF LOCHNAGAR.

BY JAMES MCCOSS.

AFTER the first ascent in 1898, Raeburn's Gully was left severely alone for 30 years, and only by the admirable enterprise of Roy Symmers in 1928 was it again opened up for traffic (*C.C.J.*, Vol. XII, p. 6), followed by W. A. Ewen a few weeks later. Till this year (1931) the ascents stood at three in number.

Hundreds of climbers must have passed the foot of the Gully on their way to the Black Spout, without even having looked into it. This being the case, it might reasonably be expected that if a party wished to try its ascent, they would have the climb all to themselves and possibly make the fourth ascent.

The Gully is apparently best accomplished after a spell of dry weather, and even then water is present in a surprising quantity. The reason for the aquatic condition of the Gully is to be found in the fact that a spring rises in it near the top.

Our party, consisting of I. F. Booth, W. A. Ewen, and myself, decided to try the ascent on August 30, after waiting about a month for suitable conditions. On that date, under most excellent weather conditions, we were ascending the boulder-fan below the Gully when we heard a cry and saw three figures following us. They were Bothwell, Cowie, and Hay, who also intended doing the Gully. We all ascended to the foot of the rocks, and there we found to our surprise that the Gully was already in possession of another party, consisting of Cheyne, Gordon, and Yunnie, who were negotiating the difficult pitch when we got a view of them. It was certainly a most curious coincidence that three parties, all of the Cairngorm Club, should be there on the same date. We were actually forming in a queue for a climb which had been achieved only three times in 33 years. As the bed of the Gully is most unsafe when a party is climbing above, we left it and ascended the Mound.

From this vantage point we could view the Gully in complete safety, till all-clear was given by the first party. They found some difficulty in overcoming the Chokestone Pitch, but they made it go (Cheyne leading), and it was then obvious that the Gully was theirs.

The Mound is a triangular mass of rock covered with vegetation, including a few Alpine plants. It fills the space between the entrance to Raeburn's Gully and the Dell at the foot of the Black Spout. Its summit can be attained without any climbing whatsoever, by ascending a small green gully starting at the Dell. Anyone who may happen to be in this part of the corrie should not fail to make its ascent, as it gives the only close-up complete view of the Gully and is well worth the trouble. Raeburn's Gully cuts sharply to the left beyond the Mound, and is, therefore, not seen from the corrie. Those who contemplate the ascent of the Gully, however, may very well omit the easier route over the Mound, and start with the first pitch, which consists of smooth, water-worn rock-hummocks, because, if it does not go well, the higher pitches will not be found suitable for them.

After getting the signal from those above we roped up in the following order—Ewen, McCoss, Booth. We made good progress and were very quickly at the foot of the Great Cave section, which has three distinct pitches. The bed of the Gully up to this point is of solid rock, and although there is plenty of water, no vegetation covers the bare red granite, mainly from the fact that it is washed clean of soil, and that sunshine cannot penetrate into it except possibly at the summer solstice, and then only very early in the morning. We had now reached the point where the real climbing of the Gully starts (*C.C.J.* Vol. XII, p. 197). Ewen led us up quickly in a neat and finished style, and we found ourselves at the Upper Chokestone before we were aware of it. An extra rope was threaded behind this overhanging obstacle, which is some 70 feet above the foot of the series of pitches. By this means the leader was safeguarded. The real thrill of the Gully is here, and even though one is safeguarded by the rope, a really difficult



Overhang.

Cave.

Start 2nd Pitch.

O.L. 4, 1931.

W. A. Ewen.

RAEBURN'S GULLY, LOCHNAGAR.
Photo from higher up Pinnacle Route.

manœuvre is required before one can pull over the Chokestone.

The difficulty seems to be in the lack of an adequate foothold while the Chokestone is being hugged. Above this double cave pitch there is a kind of convex staircase of red granite, and although there are plenty of handholds, they are not very reliable. Then higher up there is a rather awkwardly placed large boulder wedged in the bed of the Gully. A back up here is helpful and saves time. The climb is most enjoyable throughout, and the various difficulties absorb one's attention all the way and time passes all too quickly.

The question may be asked, will Raeburn's Gully become a popular route from the corrie to the plateau? I think the answer is, yes—provided those who select this route are properly equipped, but—

If you are a delicate man
And of wetting your skin are shy,
I'd have you mark, before you start,
You'll not emerge out of it dry.

The Gully has not been ascended in winter. When will it be climbed, and who will do it?

The third party saw that the day would be too far advanced if they waited till we had ascended, so they did the Black Spout Pinnacle and met us at the top of the Gully.

The first party, not content with their first ascent, returned a week later on September 6 and climbed the Gully again. This time Yunnie was leading. They had somewhat different conditions the second time, however, as they were caught in a snow shower when half-way up. The rocks carried ice in places, and the Chokestone, above the double cave pitch, was slippery owing to ice adhering around it.

LIST OF ASCENTS OF RAEBURN'S GULLY.

- 1st ascent, by Raeburn, Rannie, and
Lawson November 12, 1898
2nd ascent, by Symmers and Miss
Bruce August 5, 1928

3rd ascent, by Ewen and Paterson	September 16, 1928
4th ascent, by Cheyne, Gordon, and Yunnie	August 30, 1931
5th ascent, by Ewen, McCoss, and Booth	August 30, 1931
6th ascent, by Yunnie, Cheyne, and Brockie	September 6, 1931
1st descent, by Maxwell, Miss Robert- son, Miss Roy, and Forrest	September 13, 1931

THE IDEAL DIET.

I do not look for luxury ; I envy no man's wealth,
I've got a fair philosophy and rude robustious health,
So give me but a mountain, and that's all ambition begs,
With a day to spend upon it and, returning, ham and eggs !

Be the weather ne'er so wicked, rain and mist or sleet and snow,
Better far be up amongst it than disgruntled down below ;
The gale will air your grievances and blow away the dregs,
And life be sanely simplified to need for ham and eggs.

Oh, bless the streams and bless the ice, the tools of tireless time
Who quaintly carved the patient hills, for me at last to climb
With buoyant heart and armoured boots and self-reliant legs,
That bring me back at evening to my bath and ham and eggs !

[This poem appeared originally in *The Glasgow Herald*, and we are indebted to the editor for permission, most readily granted, to print it.—ED., C.C.J.]