

have carried snow after July. (The conspicuous patch on Beinn a' Bhuid usually defies its southernly exposure and may outlast July.) The melting process is due, not alone to the rise in temperature and the prevalence of S.W. winds, but also, during periods of anti-cyclonic weather, to very rapid evaporation, relative humidity of the air being then very low. During a wet summer, when the hills are frequently shrouded in mist and the air, consequently, saturated, evaporation does not take place. I think that Mr. Seton Gordon records somewhere that only in the little corrie of Cairngorm known as 'Margaret's Coffin,' has the snow never been known to melt. But during the winter of 1932-33 there was an abnormally small precipitation. Following on that we had also an abnormally dry summer, which no doubt produced periods of low relative humidities. But I would put the very small winter snowfall as chief among these causes." Mr. McCoss stated in his speech at the Annual Dinner of the Club that during September last "every snowfield in the Cairngorms had disappeared." "This," he added, "is the first occasion in my experience that such a thing has happened." (*v. p.* 253.)

The author of a Sonnet on "The Indicator on Ben Macdhuì" is requested to communicate with the Editor.

CORRESPONDENCE.

HILL-CLIMBING PRECAUTIONS.

[To the Editor of *The Cairngorm Club Journal*.]

SIR,—Before the memory of the recent tragedy on Ben Macdhuì has faded, it may be useful to note one or two simple precautions designed to prevent a repetition of it and others of the kind of no distant date.

The complicated and widely extended system of mountains in Central Scotland demands the utmost respect from those who would explore it. The ascent of the highest peaks may require no super-human effort, but it is never quite a promenade. There is not a day in the whole year when they are not subject to that worst of all terrors, mist, and in winter and spring, when ordinary landmarks are obliterated, an expedition may be attended with very great risks. No ascent should be undertaken without careful study, and there should always be an alternative or alternatives whereby safety may be reached in case of unforeseen emergency.

To the inexperienced be it said that the first ventures can best be made under expert guidance. There are, in any case, three requisites which should never be neglected—a compass, a map, and, perhaps less essential but still most desirable, an aneroid. To go mountaineering without a reliable compass is to court disaster, is, in fact, the first step to suicide. An electric torch may be useful for reading the map in very thick weather. An aneroid enables one to check the height as well as to become aware of changes of atmospheric pressure that prognosticate storm.

Proper outfit and food go without saying. Of the latter, chocolate is a valuable ingredient. Though two are better than one, in doubtful weather the party should not be less than three.

An acquaintance with the hills between 1873 (Ben Lomond) and 1932 (Cairngorm and Braeriach), including every summit of importance from Ben Nevis to the Blue Hill, many of them repeatedly, has inspired a profound respect for their unseen possibilities no less than for their grandeur and glory. But the cost of knowledge or enjoyment is too great at the sacrifice of human life.—Yours, etc.,

JOHN CLARKE.

Chanonry House, Aberdeen.

A WIND SHELTER ON THE SUMMIT OF BEN MACDHUI.

[To the Editor of *The Cairngorm Club Journal*.]

SIR,—During the summer of 1933 I spent my holidays climbing in the English Lake District, and was very much impressed with the four-angle stone shelter on Helvellyn. As far as I can remember it consists of two walls about 12 feet long by 5 feet high, built in the form of a cross, which gives four separate right angles, ensuring a protection from the wind, no matter in which direction it may blow. The base of the walls was built up for about 2 feet considerably thicker than the top, forming useful sitting ledges on the inside. I would suggest to the Cairngorm Club, through the medium of its *Journal*, that such a shelter as I have described be gradually built up by parties climbing Ben Macdhui during 1934, and personally I feel assured that as said shelter takes form and proves its usefulness, the idea will spread to other Cairngorm summits. In the meantime we have cairns which serve no practical purpose. How much better to have some sort of protection from the fierce winds wherein we could enjoy our lunch in some degree of comfort. During eleven years of climbing, I have only once been on the top of Ben Macdhui when the elements did not seem resentful of my presence.

It would be interesting to have some members' opinions as to my suggestion.—Yours, etc.,

W. D. HUTCHEON.

Craighill, Turriff.

P.S.—Surely it is not beyond the resources of the Cairngorm Club to have its own hut among the hills from which it takes its name. Such a hut would be a real boon, and I am sure would add very much to the popularity of the Club.—W. D. H.

LOST.

On June 24, a member of the Club, on the ridge walk from the summit of the Devil's Point to Cairntoul and Braeriach, lost a Cinephot Drem Exposure Metre, telescopic type, colour black. Any person who may have found this is asked to communicate with the Editor.