

In Memoriam.

MISS MARGARET SKAKLE.

It was with deep regret that it was learned that Miss Margaret Skakle had passed over at her home, Ernan, Cults, Aberdeenshire, on Saturday, January 28, 1939.

Miss Skakle joined the Club in 1920, and she served on the Committee during the years 1934-36. She took a keen and lively interest in the activities of the Club and in everything that pertained to its welfare. Several contributions to the *Journal* appear from her hand, and although in her paper on "A Spring Traverse of Lochnagar" she said it might be a hackneyed subject, it was not so coming from her flowing pen. No Club Dinner would have been complete without the Club Song, composed and set to music by her sister and herself, which she always sang so artistically, for her musical talent as well as her dramatic skill were widely known and appreciated by a large circle of friends. Miss Skakle was a fine walker, and a delightful companion on the hills. It was a pleasure to be in her company, especially on a spring day excursion, and to hear her appreciation of the budding trees and the singing of the birds, for these things appealed to her equally with the rugged beauties of Nature's great cathedrals. Many a long hill expedition she had to her credit, but whether it rained or shined she was always in her element among the hills, and many of us will miss her happy laugh and the sunshine of her smile.

W. G.

MISS MAGGIE GRUER.

THE closing of the hospitable door of "Thistle Cottage," Inverey, and the passing of its notable hostess, Miss Maggie Gruer, who died after a short illness on March 11, 1939,



MISS MAGGIE GRUER

E. W. Smith

will be regretted by all members of the Club, and indeed by all climbers in the Cairngorms.

"Maggie" was essentially part of the glen. Her couthie fireside was the resting-place after many a hard day on the hills. Her quaint bedrooms and sleeping neuks could be as welcome as any Ritz bedroom to the bedraggled "laddies" down from the Shelter Stone or from the Corrou.

"Maggie Gruer—Hostess"—what a subject for an essay! Did you arrive at midnight, she had not gone to bed; or come off the hill in the early hours of the morning, she was up and about. To your request—Could she put you up for the night?—the answer might be—"Well, there's a bed in the hut at the back"—or—"If you dinna disturb the laddies in the bedroom, you can ha'e a shak' doon at the tap o' the stairs"; but seldom, if ever, was the reply—"There's nae mair room."

Maggie—as a raconteur—on a winter evening after tea and before time for the byre—a chat with Maggie was a delight; whether it was local gossip, or an adventure with marauding stags; the foibles of her pet cats "Ramsay MacDonald" and "Morris Cowley"—(ladies both); or, best of all, back to the days of the Queen and John Brown, and to the heyday of the "New" Mar Lodge. She had a remarkable memory and a very picturesque way of describing events of these times. Her story of how she went with the laundry staff to listen in the background to the singing of a noted *prima donna*, her description of a dinner party given by the Earl and Countess of Fife (as seen by the cottagers peering over a hedge), or of being called out to curtsy to Queen Victoria, were tales told again and again.

To climbers Miss Gruer's great gift was her uncanny appreciation of their wants and weaknesses. This was understandable, for they had been her life. She was of the second generation of climbers' hostesses: her mother was well known to the founders of the Club.

Although Maggie had had little opportunity for exploring the hills and the glens, she had a great knowledge of routes, sometimes more colourful than accurate, and she was seldom at a loss for an answer when questioned by

newcomers. Her patience must have been sorely tried at times, for novices from south of the Border, where her fame had reached, were apt to expect a great deal of guidance from her, but she was a good hillman and never failed to impress such questioners with a wholesome awe of the ground beyond the Derry.

The Club has been fortunate in receiving from the President, to whom they were presented by Miss Gruer's heirs, her collection of Visitors' Books. These are now in the Library. How Maggie treasured them! "Have you put your name in my book?" was a ritual question to be asked of each guest; and a compliment to her scones or her remarkable porridge, in either prose or verse, gave her great pleasure.

E. W. S.