



DR JOHN CLARKE

In Memoriam.

JOHN CLARKE.

ON September 28, 1939, our last surviving original member passed away. Dr Clarke had a long career as a mountaineer and walker, and several generations of young people learned from him how best to enjoy the wonders of nature as they appeared to the observant eye and the cultured mind. Of his many exploits among the hills there seems no one left to tell. His son Ian died two days after his father, and his son-in-law, Sir Henry Alexander, survived him by only seven months. Both were keen mountaineers and were well fitted to write of his doings. My own recollections are in no way adequate, because I have done no walks with him for forty years. My earliest memory of him is a walk he did from Aboyne of 56 miles, but I can give no details of it except that it embraced both sides of the Dee and included the climbing of Mount Keen and Morven. His wife went out in a pony trap to meet him in the evening, but he refused to get in and insisted on finishing the last 3 miles on foot. My second recollection is more painful, and although it took place in 1893 many of the details are as vivid as if they had happened yesterday. I was nine and a half years old, and we started from Braemar at 8.30 A.M. in a dog-cart which took us to the Derry Lodge. There was thick mist and it had begun to rain. Dr Clark insisted that it was "an essentially fine day," and we started for Cairn Toul. In fording the Dee I slipped and fell into the river, and so became thoroughly wet from head to foot. On the top of Cairn Toul it was blowing half a gale, and when we eventually returned to Braemar at 8 P.M. the mist was still down to the door. During these twelve hours we had at no time been able to see more than a few yards round us, and I have never felt so cold and miserable as on that July day in 1893.

Dr Clarke was not really a climber in the generally accepted sense of the term. He was more of a walker, but he loved the hills and drew great inspiration from them. He has had many companions in his mountaineering, both members of his family and many other young people, all of whom speak of the joy of having walked with him and of all he has taught them. He taught me as a young man two things which have proved useful in many circumstances in life. The first was to observe my surroundings in a detailed manner for landmarks, flora, and fauna, and signs of wind and weather; and the second is even more important—the trick of being able to go much faster at the end than at the beginning of a walk. His finishes were in the nature of spurts. After a 28-mile walk, nearing home his time for the mile was generally thirteen minutes.

I twice climbed Ben Muich Dhui and Cairngorm with him. On the first occasion he had to carry me on his shoulder through a snowdrift, but on that occasion I again fell in, owing to the fact that Sir Herbert Grierson, who was a little behind, caught me on the back of the head with a large snowball! These excursions, with the kindly welcome we always received from Donald Fraser at the Derry Lodge on our return, were days of great pleasure, as were our frequent trips together to Lochnagar, sometimes with Downie's pony for the younger members of the party; except once, when he insisted on descending in a north-westerly direction to Ballochbuie Forest, where we seemed to be engulfed in a sea of enormous boulders which my legs were too short to negotiate. I shall never go that way again.

Dr Clarke was punctilious about mountain manners, especially as regards game, and would often make wide detours to avoid disturbing feeding deer. He used to write for and usually obtained permission from the owners of property when he wished to walk in the stalking season. One year he had been turned back by keepers when trying to climb Ben Avon, so he waited until the day of the Highland Games, when all the keepers were in Braemar. On his return at the bottom of the Sluggan in the evening he met the keeper coming back from the Games. The latter

accepted the situation and put Dr Clarke across the river in his boat.

In 1913, at the age of sixty, with Dr M'Intyre and with his son Ian respectively, he twice climbed the four Cairngorms. He did them once—Cairngorm, Ben Muich Dhui, Cairntoul, Braeriach, and once in the reverse order. Finally, in 1932, from Speyside, at the age of seventy-nine, he did a 20-mile walk, including Braeriach and down over Angel's Peak. His long walks when approaching the age of eighty caused his family considerable anxiety, and about that age he became more moderate, and contented himself with his 5 miles a day, whatever the weather. He kept this up until within a month or two of his death, and I played round Balgownie with him in April 1939 in exactly two hours. His firm belief was that a man could not be healthy unless his body was continually surrounded by oxygen, and the health he enjoyed seemed to bear out the truth of this.

As has been recorded in the *Journal*, he was instrumental in the building of a new bridge over the Allt-na-Beinne, which was opened in 1912, and which has since proved a great boon to walkers up the Larig. He also collected money and erected an Indicator on Eildon Top. He went latterly every spring to Melrose for a change of air, and enjoyed to the last his walks among the milder hills of the South.

J. B.

JOHN R. LEVACK.

By the death of John R. Levack the Club has lost one of its outstanding personalities. While indifferent health had of recent years prevented him from attending Club functions as regularly as he did in the past, he was happily able to attend the Informal Meeting which replaced the 1939 Dinner. He died at his home, 10 Golden Square, on Saturday, September 7, 1940, in his seventieth year.

Born at Lossiemouth, he was educated at Robert Gordon's College and at Aberdeen University, where he graduated M.B., C.M., in 1891. He was immediately attracted to