

## THE PAST PRESIDENT : H. D. WELSH.

THE Annual General Meeting, 1946, saw the end of an outstanding Presidency, outstanding for its length—it started in 1938—but more so because of the qualities Hugh Welsh brought to that office. At p. 14 of Vol. XV. of the *Journal* you will see at the lower corner of the pen-and-ink sketch by Tom Train, in the company of a band of illustrious climbers past and present, a solitary kilted figure, bright, youthful, cheery looking : that is the figure we came to take for granted at all our Meets, excursions, and social functions. Against the background of his predecessors it is difficult to see what special qualities he had to bring, but these can only be fully assessed by those of us who had the good fortune to spend long days on the hills in his company.

First amongst them was probably his great love of the hills and the people who either live on the uplands or like to spend their time there. This is brought out in his contributions to the *Journal* and his many admirable lectures delivered very willingly to scores of audiences, but more so in his attitude to junior members and to newcomers to excursions. If he has no first ascents to his credit he has certainly done more towards spreading an interest in hill-walking and in mountaineering into a widening community than has anyone in the Club since its inception.

The first President in the second half-century of the Club's existence, Hugh was well versed in and keen on the traditions it has built up. He had known most of the original members either personally or at second-hand through his familiarity with their doings and writings, but his greatest link with the early pioneers of mountain-climbing in Scotland lay in the deep friendship that sprang up between him and the late Dr Norman Collie, our Honorary President for many years. Two men could scarcely have been more unlike. Dr Collie was almost a recluse and Hugh the most companionable of fellows, yet, in the porch



of Sligachan Hotel, Dr Collie's home for many years, the two of them got together, and in that way much of the hidden charm of the recluse was conveyed to members of the Club in the yarns with which Hugh interspersed his lectures on days in the corries of the Cuillins.

Our Past President set a very high standard in his organisation of excursions. Those of us who turned out with him just knew that we had very successful outings, but there is much more to it than that. A successful satisfying day for a mixed party does not just happen. It cannot be arranged beforehand, and any attempt to appear to organise it would have the opposite effect. The carrying out of the duties of President has to be done in such a way that it does not appear to be done at all. Hugh Welsh knew just how to do that. Maybe it was that he was always lucky in his weather for, according to him, he has never had a bad day in the hills. His mists are always rose and opal!

With the general tendency to co-ordinate interests on a National scale, Mountaineering Clubs, during the last year or so, have been getting together, and the Cairngorm Club was very fortunate in having as its representative at the various meetings a President who was in himself the embodiment of the aims and objects of its constitution. Having seen him in action at these meetings I must admit to feeling a certain justifiable pride in watching the President establish for the Club the standing which its seniority merited, yet never in the smallest degree overlooking the welfare of all who seek pleasure and recreation on the hills.

Hugh's period of office was a long and difficult one. The outbreak of war in 1939 led to a decision being taken to keep the Club alive in all circumstances. Transport difficulties put Meets almost out of the question. Members were scattered in the Forces and those at home were kept busy with Civil Defence—our President could now be seen in the guise of a sergeant of the Special Constabulary looking for black-out offenders—but the Club was kept alive, and its decision to retain their President in the chair through the first year of an uneasy peace was a happy one. The Club Dinner, held in November 1946, at which he made his last

appearance as President, was indeed the proof, if any was necessary.

In saying good-bye to him as President we all look forward to sharing his perfect mountain weather, his opal mists, and his music of the corries in his company for many days in many years to come.

E. W. S.

The Cairngorm Club