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No. 1.

# THE Cairngorm Club Journal.

EDITED BY  
ALEX. INKSON M'CONNOCHIE

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CAIRNGORM FROM LOCH MORLICH.



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SOME STRAY THOUGHTS ON MOUNTAIN-  
CLIMBING.

BY THE RIGHT HON. JAMES BRYCE, D.C.L., M.P., *President.*

THERE is no despotism like that of the zealous and energetic editor who, by his own devotion to his project, acquires the right to hold to their word those who, in a moment of unguarded sympathy, have promised to enlist under his banner. The editor of the Cairngorm Journal bids me write, and so, though I have little to say, and no time to say it, I throw together at his bidding some scattered remarks on a pursuit which has always been a passion with me.

Those in whose breasts no such passion burns often ask—In what does the pleasure of mountain-climbing consist? "It is fatiguing", they say; "it exposes you to cold, and wet, and hunger, and a variety of risks to health, including those which arise from bad food, from chills up to apoplexy. If pursued in steep or rocky places it involves the risk of breaking your neck, or at least your leg. The pleasure of striving with an antagonist, which makes the charm of so many games, is wanting; while as for beauty, artists agree that the views from the lower slopes of a hill are better than those from the top".

Those who love the mountains, and have from childhood been wont to range over them, find their delight so natural and obvious that they hardly know how to discriminate the elements that go to make it up. However, I will try.

One of these elements is simple enough, for we perceive it in other forms. It is that same enjoyment of physical



exertion which comes into most games, and has received a striking illustration in the rapid growth of cycling. Moreover, in the case of mountains, the exercise takes one into fine air, and the higher one gets, the better does the air become.

Another is the pleasure of success, of surmounting difficulties, of accomplishing what one has set one's self to do. How strong this is many a climber will agree, when he remembers the dangerous bits of rock he has had to clamber up, just because he said, looking at the hill from below, that this was the line he would take. Nature, and not a rival player, is the antagonist to be overcome, but to some of us this rather increases than diminishes the satisfaction.

Then there is the pleasure in exerting and testing one's skill, of which the mountaineer has often great need. Skill is shown, not only in choosing the best route, but in the actual work of climbing, when the rocks are steep or rotten, or when the ice-wall is hard, and steps have to be cut up it. Skill is needed to judge of the weather, and to bring one's weather forecast into relation to the route, the time, the amount of food left, and other points material to success, or perhaps even to safety.

This brings me to danger, which, though it is not an essential to our pursuit, is often an important factor, because it heightens the excitement. When the danger becomes serious, there is doubtless a certain amount of pain as well as of the pleasure which, according to Aristotle, accompanies the free play of every energy. The sense of danger quickens all one's faculties, and gives a vivid sense of whatever individual force, be it mental or physical, one can put forth. It braces up and vivifies the personality. The charm of a dangerous expedition in steep and lofty mountains is like what I suppose the charm of battle must be, though in modern battles danger so often consists in standing still to be pounded by artillery, without being able to do anything for one's self in return, that there may be less in them to evoke individual daring, coolness, and resource than the scaling a rock wall, or the keeping one's



footing on the top of a narrow snow *arête*, or the threading one's way amid huge seracs, involves, even when men are roped together between their guides. It may be wrong to enjoy danger, but one must confess that the enjoyment is intense while it lasts; and though it is one's duty to strongly dissuade anyone else from indulging this taste, I cannot honestly say that if I had such temptations again offered me as have overcome me in past days, I should be sure of resisting them. And let it be said in palliation of the climber who goes into danger without, as I admit, any such justification of an important end to be attained as the soldier has, or the geographical explorer, or the physician in a pestilence, that the cases in which danger is a mere matter of chance are in mountain-climbing comparatively few. Nearly everything depends upon skill, strength, a good head, and perfect self-possession. He who ventures into places where these things will not avail to save him—he who starts for a high snow peak when a storm is obviously gathering, or attempts to cross a stone-swept *couloir* when the sun is thawing the rocks above, and the badness of the footing, or the size of the party, makes a swift rush impossible: such an one is to be condemned; and all the great masters of our craft, from Mr. John Ball and Mr. Leslie Stephen downwards, have condemned him by their example as well as by their precepts.

As to the pleasure derivable from scenery, there are two things to be said. One is that it is much more often alleged as a reason for mountaineering than actually felt, because those who really enjoy scenery are still a minority even among mountaineers. Any one who doubts this may satisfy himself by travelling in Switzerland or Scotland, or anywhere else, in company with a crowd of tourists. The large majority will pass through charming scenes, and not turn their heads to look at them, though prepared to "enthuse" (if a convenient Americanism may be pardoned) whenever the guide-book tells them that they ought to do so. It is not often, however, that this indifference is so candidly avowed as once by an old Alpine acquaintance of mine at



the summit of a magnificent pass over one of the ranges that radiate southwards from the Monte Rosa group. Two of us had reached the grass-covered top, and were lost in admiration of the wonderful prospect of the snow wilderness on the north and the romantic valleys descending to Italy on the south. But he, the third, who had come out thinking only of ice and rock perils, smote his alpenstock upon the ground, and ejaculated, "If there is anything in the world I hate, it is sauntering over a cow col".

The other observation is that, though artists are right in holding that the most sketchable bits, perhaps the most perfect landscapes, are to be found in the glens, or on the middle slopes of mountains, there is also an extraordinary charm in the higher regions, even on the craggy tops of our own hills, and still more in the snowy wastes, pierced by toppling crags or overhung by frowning precipices, of the upper ice and snow regions in very lofty ranges. As Herodotus says, "Whoever has been there will know what I mean". There are thoughts and emotions that thrill through one upon the windswept mountain top, with the contrast between its stern barrenness and the smiling plains in the far distance beneath, which nothing else can rouse.

To these emotions solitude contributes much, and doubtless one of the chief delights of our pursuit—a delight which will be more and more prized as the world grows more and more crowded—is solitude. It is a delight one can now enjoy more perfectly in our Scottish hills than in some of the greater chains, certainly more—if one excepts a few much-visited peaks like Ben Lomond—than on Mont Blanc or the Matterhorn, where one meets so many parties composed, not of true climbers, but inexperienced tourists, who pay a large sum to be virtually dragged up and down for the sake of saying they have done what was once a difficult feat. Some will prefer perfect solitude, and the impression of grand scenery is doubtless then most profound. Some are able to enjoy Nature better when they have a single congenial spirit to whom to express their transports; some more sociable beings like a larger party and the cheeriness it brings, and the foundation which such



expeditions lay for pleasant recollections afterwards, perhaps for friendship ; for hardships borne in common, if they do not destroy friendship by provoking ill-temper, do much to cement it. Even, however, to six or eight men travelling together, the loneliness of the mountains is a joy.

Last among his sources of pleasure come the opportunities which the climber has of studying natural history, especially geology and botany. To those who love these sciences, this counts for a vast deal, doubling the interest and the profit of every excursion ; and if those who are in any case fond of walking or climbing knew in their youth how much they would add to the pleasure of their later lives by acquiring some knowledge of these subjects, far more persons would betake themselves thereto.

I have spoken of mountaineering in general, trying to include our modest Scottish hills as well as the great chains of Europe, Asia, and America. Some of the observations apply less forcibly where the difficulties and dangers incident to snow mountains and glaciers, and to great elevations, are absent. There is comparatively little danger on even the highest and steepest peaks of our own country—none at all on our Cairngorm group—though both in Skye and Arran, and in a few parts of the mainland of Argyll and Inverness, one may find ascents, not of important peaks, but of detached pinnacles, where one's neck can be risked. Skye is, happily, the only place where fatal accidents have occurred, except to wholly incompetent persons. But, if Scotland affords little difficulty, and still less danger, she has three great charms. One of these is the proximity of the sea, which gives their full vertical value to so many of our summits, and adds so much dignity to many of our prospects. Another is the rich, deep, soft, changeful colour of our hills, so incomparably superior to the tints of the Alps—often cold and grey, sometimes even hard and monotonous, over large areas. The third is the fact that in our Highlands we need no guides, but can wander alone, submitting ourselves to the full impressions which the majestic silence of Nature makes. On lofty snow mountains, though most of us have occasionally made guideless excursions to



great heights or over difficult glaciers, and though we recollect such with peculiar delight, whether they were great or small—and it is by no means always the great ascents that are most dangerous, far from it—still, as a rule, expeditions without guides are imprudent. But here in old Scotland, one may properly rely on one's own strength and skill, carry one's lunch and dinner in one's own pocket, and enjoy for days together the full delight of solitude.

Perhaps I ought to add a further charm of Scotch mountaineering—the risk of encountering a band of hostile ghillies, or having an interdict applied for at the instance of Mr. Winans. But as this source of excitement is threatened with extinction, I pass it by for the present.



## THE CAIRNGORM CLUB.

BY THE REV. ROBERT LIPPE, *Vice-President.*

IT is a remark trite and ancient—as ancient, in fact, as human observation—that great events often arise from small beginnings. This was the case with our Club, which came into being from the casual meeting of a few individuals at a time, and at a place, and under circumstances, which must be all indelibly impressed upon the memories of the survivors. The time was the morning after the Queen's Jubilee; the place, the upper shore of Loch Avon, where it receives its chief feeder from the Feith Buidhe; the circumstances, simply these. The present writer, shortly before leaving home for a brief holiday among the Braemar mountains, had come to a sort of agreement with his old scholar and friend, our present indefatigable Secretary, to have an exploratory tour for a day or two among the more inaccessible heights which girdle and “guard the infant rills of Highland Dee”. This expedition was never fully accomplished, from no want of will on either side, but from my having to succumb to the irresistible attack of an old enemy, lumbago. Utterly disgusted at the turn of events, crestfallen, and literally prostrated in body and mind, I wrote, as the trysting day drew near, to my intended companion, to explain how matters stood; but my letter crossed one from him to me intimating that he and a couple of friends were just starting for the Loch Builg district, and that a few of our common friends in Aberdeen, under the guidance of our future first Chairman, were to pick me up at Inverey during the afternoon of the Jubilee day on their way to Ben Muich Dhui. The intention was that the two parties should unite in Glen Derry and proceed to the top of the mighty Ben, and there, at midnight, aid the general illumination by a grand display of fireworks. The prospect of such a midnight march to such a place and on such an occasion acted on me like the distant sound of the battle trumpet on a worn-out war-horse, and so, to make sure of being in time at the rendezvous, and without waiting for the arrival of my friends,



I hirpled off, bending nearly *twafauld* over my staff like an aged pilgrim. At length assembled at the appointed spot, though in smaller numbers than expected, we set out on our evening tramp, carrying, among other impedimenta, several large packets of fireworks of various kinds. The evening was, notwithstanding the proximity of large patches of snow, sultry and almost suffocating, but we toiled on and managed to reach Loch Etchachan in good form. Leaving our baggage by the side of that loch, and carrying nothing but our contribution to the illumination, we commenced the last stage of the ascent, and reached the summit of Ben Muich Dhui shortly after midnight. Here we found an ample reward for all our toils and anxieties. Around us on all sides, but chiefly towards the north and east, the country was lit up with blazing bonfires—"peak beyond peak in endless range like twinkling points of fire". To us, far removed from these centres of merriment and revelry, and in utter silence, broken only now and then by a sough of wind and the occasional muffled sound of falling water borne by the intermittent breeze from the distant corries, the whole had a most mysterious, solemn, and weird-like effect. The sudden flaring up, dying away, and starting up again of the blazing fires gave one the idea of being in an invaded country with its beacon fires lighted up to warn the inhabitants of the enemy's approach. After enjoying the grand panorama for a short time, we unpacked our cases and added to the general enlightenment by a continuous discharge of rockets and other fireworks of various kinds. The effect, to the bystanders at least, was curious and grand in the extreme. The rocks and boulders of Ben Muich Dhui, the dark rift of the Learg Ghruamach, and even the distant corries of Braeriach and Cairntoul, were lighted up for an instant with fitful brilliancy. These discharges, as we afterwards learned, surprised and perplexed various belated denizens in Aviemore and along the upper reaches of the Dee. They were also seen and admired by a number of our friends spending the night on the top of Lochnagar. Our stores of artillery were, however, soon exhausted, and we retraced, in the increasing light, our steps to Loch Etchachan; and



shouldering again our left luggage made for the Shelter Stone. This we reached just as the rising sun was beginning to gild the tops of the surrounding mountains. The accommodation for passing the night, or rather early morning hours, though improved from what I found it ten days earlier, was still far from luxurious. On the previous visit I found "the Stone", and several of his smaller neighbours, standing out of an immense field of snow, and under it water and black-looking, half-liquid mud. On the present occasion the snow had retreated to the shelter of the various precipices, the water under "the Stone" had disappeared, and the mud consolidated into a dank floor, so that we were enabled to spread our mackintoshes without fear of actually *lairing*. Here we six lay down, and, drawing a plaid over us, sought, or attempted to seek, a few hours' sleep and rest. The writer, however, could do neither, partly from the novelty of his surroundings, and partly from the fact that his pillow was a courier bag, whose chief contents consisted of a can of "tinned meat", and partly that he found the softness of his couch not improved by a large stone under his part of the mackintosh. Accordingly, after sundry turnings and tossings about, to the inconvenience and utter disgust of his bedfellows, he found it advisable to quit his quarters, possessing, as he found them, only one recommendation—thorough ventilation; and passed the rest of the night, or rather morning, in solemn and solitary rumination along the banks of Loch Avon. The situation was awe-inspiring; for Nature never before seemed so near and so real. The silence, broken only by the sound—softened, however, through distance—of waters tumbling over the various surrounding precipices; the savage, black, blasted, and tempest-torn rocks; and, above all, the utter loneliness of the situation produced on my feelings such a sense of sacred solemnity that I dare not secularise these feelings and musings by any attempted description. By-and-by the rising sun, mounting higher and higher, began to reach and brighten up the hitherto dark-looking loch, and show the recently fallen hoar-frost glistening in all its pearly purity. The flies now became not only visible but painfully present, as one can realise



who has experienced the pertinacious atrocity and blood-thirstiness of Scottish midges, by the side of loch or river. The trouts, too, began to rise in shoals, breaking with a constant ripple the hitherto placid surface of the water. Without much locomotion I could easily take in at a glance the dimensions of the loch, and ascertain how far it fell short of the Ettrick Shepherd's glowing account. By the aid of good Glenlivet, and with genial companions in full accord, Hogg was accustomed to extend the length of Loch Avon to twenty or even thirty miles, and dilate on its wooded promontories and beautiful islands. The poet has, however, made us all his debtors by what he has told us in that most beautiful, but it is to be feared now little read, poem of "The Queen's Wake", of Cairngorm and his neighbours, and the dread inhabitants of these elevated regions. A worthy D.D., who cannot claim the Shepherd's defence of being overborne by an overmastering poetic imagination, and who hails from Edinburgh, the habitat of the Scottish Geographical Society and the home of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, tells us, among other wonderful pieces of information, that Loch Avon "is 2,000 feet above sea level, and is encompassed by the precipitous sides of Braeriach, Ben A'n, and Ben-na-main"!! The author referred to seems never to have thought it necessary for writing his description, either to visit the locality or even to consult the really excellent map which he appends to his Handbook.

In point of stern, wild grandeur, Loch Avon may be said to occupy the third rank among Scottish lochs, Loch Corruisk in Skye and Loch Eunach in Rothiemurchus disputing the pre-eminence. The frightful, black, and gloomy-looking precipices of Braeriach and Sgoran Dubh, the highest in Britain, hanging over Loch Eunach, give, in our opinion, the first place to that loch, though the approach to it, through the flattish and rather uninteresting head of Glen Eunach, detracts somewhat from the effect on the visitor from that side. However, as Loch Avon will doubtless in the future frequently form the goal of many of our Club's excursions, and thus fall to be fitly and fully described, I leave it for the time; and as eight o'clock was



now approaching, I returned to my late companions, and roused them, still silent, if not slumbering, in their airy chamber. The camp being fairly astir, and after due performance of the morning ablutions in the crystal springs and tiny rills so plentifully at hand, and all as cold and clear as sparkling ice, breakfast had to be prepared and dispatched. Time and tide, as the saying is, will no man bide, and as a good day's tramp still remained before us, the encampment was broken up, and we descended in a body to the head of the loch. There, at a place which, surely in grim irony, is designated *Maghan na Banaraich* (in plain English, the Dairymaid's Field), a short halt and a separation took place, five electing to cross Cairngorm and proceed, *via* Loch Morlich, to Boat of Garten, the remaining one, the writer of this notice, to return alone to Deeside. Before finally taking our several ways, we spontaneously and unanimously agreed to form ourselves into the Cairngorm Club, the name being naturally suggested by the monarch mountain so full in view in the foreground, and calmly looking down on our meeting. Office-bearers were elected by acclamation, and with that generous and genial absence of exclusive selfishness which has always characterised our society, we resolved to open our ranks to the admission of men and women of heroic spirit, and possessed of souls open to the influences and enjoyment of nature pure and simple as displayed among our loftiest mountains. The Speyside contingent then scrambled across the Garbh Uisge, and I started in the opposite direction, and, as I solitarily plodded on, frequently for a time turned round to watch my late companions slowly winding their way, often in Indian file, round the upper end of the loch, till they were finally lost to view as they ascended Coire Raibert. For the sake of variety, I chose in returning, not the way of our approach by Loch and Coire Etchachan, but the more circuitous and rougher one down Loch Avon side, along the foot of Beinn Mheadhoin, and round the shoulder of this mountain into the basin of the Dubh Lochan, from which Abernethy is reached from Braemar by the Learg an Laoigh. With a tropical sun blazing down in all his fierceness, and being for long without any track over the extremely rugged surface,



my progress was slow and laborious. I was thus afforded ample opportunity for examining the landscape. This, I may confidently affirm, is not surpassed, if indeed approached, by any portion of Her Majesty's British dominions for loneliness and harsh, stern, gloomy-looking sterility. Though not wanting in a certain kind of sublime grandeur, the general aspect is depressing, no evidence of man's presence, or even man's existence, being visible for miles and miles. After a considerable downward progress from the skirts of Beinn Mheadhoin, I struck the Braemar and Abernethy path, and, following it in a southerly direction over a low ridge, by-and-by found myself in Glen Derry. My way was now comparatively easy, and in due course I was restored to civilisation and the converse of man at Derry Lodge. Here I passed several well-known Aberdeen faces, all beaming with joyous excitement and pleasure. Ladies and gentlemen were picnicing and junketing around a stranded carriage or two on the green sward in that most romantic and delightful spot where the Derry unites with the Lui Beg. Forging the Dee near the mouth of the Lui with considerable difficulty, which arose, not from the depth or force of the current, but from the exceeding slipperiness of the stones at the bottom of the river, I soon reached grateful refreshment and rest.

Such, then, were the occasion and circumstances under which our Club was ushered into being; but, like other bantlings, it required for a time nourishment and nursing, all which were liberally supplied by its progenitors; and with such effect that the youngster was soon in a condition to be presented to the public. The formal introduction took place on 9th January, 1889, when our Club passed from infancy into active manhood, as a corporation thoroughly equipped with President, two Vice-Presidents, Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and Managing Committee of ten members. Terms for admission and rules for future guidance were drawn up and adopted, and thus the Club was fairly launched upon its prosperous career.

The district, as defined in our rules to be chiefly embraced in the Club's operations, is one not only of magnificent grandeur and picturesque beauty, but also of great historic



interest. Its West and North witnessed the advance of the young English king, Edward III., with his army of archers, hobblers, and men-at-arms, on his romantic expedition to relieve the widowed Countess of Athole, beleaguered in the crannoge Castle of Lochandorb, the return home of which expedition, by the way of Fyvie and Kildrummy, brought no romance to Aberdeen but the severest calamity the city has ever undergone. The various glens of the district were also often traversed by the gallant Grahams, Montrose and Dundee, in their frequent marchings to and fro through the Highlands, memorials of their encampments being still preserved in the names of two places—Delavorar (the Lord's haugh), one on the Avon two miles above Tomintoul, the other about a mile above the Linn of Dee. Indeed the whole country is redolent of story, every corrie and glen having its own history and legend, alas! too often of violence and bloodshed. Owing to the paucity of population these traditions are fast passing into oblivion, but many of them are happily preserved in the by no means inconsiderable local literature of Upper Deeside and Strathspey, while not a few floating in the district still remain to reward the industry of the sympathetic gleaner. But this is a subject to which my past prolixity prevents me from doing anything further than giving a passing glance—a matter, however, of small account, as doubtless these romantic regions will be repeatedly and thoroughly explored by the Club, which, as is well known, contains a host of members of pent-up literary talent, whose pens are eager to leap into their inkstands to trace with fulness and felicity the events of the successive jaunts.

I conclude with simply chronicling the various meetings held and outings already enjoyed. The first expedition, as in duty bound, was to Cairngorm and Ben Muich Dhui, and extended over 8th and 9th July, 1889, the members commencing their walk at Nethy Bridge, and terminating it at Castleton of Braemar. The Aberdeen autumn holiday of that year was taken advantage of for a trip to Lochnagar, the start being made from Ballater along Muickside, and the return by the same route. The jaunting of the year 1890 was auspiciously opened by a few of the Club's more



adventurous spirits crossing Ben Muich Dhui on January 3rd, there enjoying the exquisite pleasure of witnessing the Cairngorms in all their winter glory. The next event in the Club's existence was its first annual meeting, which was held on 20th February. The first regular outing of that year was on 5th May to Mount Keen. This was the most numerously attended of all our meets, upwards of 160 being present. The great annual event took place in July, and extended over the 14th, 15th, and 16th of that month. On this occasion the party, starting from Boat of Garten, went up Glen Eunach, thence ascended to the summits of Braeriach and Cairntoul, when a separation took place, some members proceeding to Braemar, others preferring to return to Speyside. The Buck of the Cabrach and Tap o' Noth were the goals of the autumn excursion on 22nd September. The second annual meeting took place on 1st April, 1891. The trips of that year were, as usual, three: 1st, May 4th, to Morven; 2nd, July 13th and 14th, to Beinn a'Bhuird and Ben Avon; and 3rd, September 28th, to Ben Rinnes. The third annual meeting was held on 29th February, 1892. Then followed the spring outing on May 2nd to Lochnagar, by a route different from that followed on the previous trip to this mountain. The Club's great expedition of that year was from Derry Lodge as a starting point, across the summits of Ben Muich Dhui and Cairngorm to Loch Morlich and Glenmore, and came off, July 11th, 12th, and 13th; the year's outings being brought to a close by a visit to Mount Battock and Clochnaben on September 26th.

For all these various mountaineering enterprises, the Club received the most courteous facilities from the various proprietors and lessees and their dependents. In return for these favours the Club hereby records its most grateful thanks to all these benefactors, and more particularly to Sir William Cunliffe Brooks, Bart. of Glen Tanner, Sir Algernon Borthwick, Bart., the lessee of Invercauld, and Mr. Findlay of Aberlour, for their truly Highland welcome and splendid hospitality. With this pleasing duty of expressing our gratitude discharged, it remains for me now to offer for garrulous egotism the humble apology of an enthusiastic veteran hill-climber, and make my most respectful parting bow.



## BEINN LAOIGH.

BY JAMES ROSE.

HAVING found Ben Cruachan obdurately in the sulks during the meet of the Scottish Mountaineering Club at Loch Awe in the beginning of April, the writer determined to turn his attention to Beinn Laoigh (Ben Lui), a mountain of which he had heard the most glowing accounts.

On the morning of departure from that most pleasant of mountaineering centres—the Loch Awe Hotel—the weather prospects at first sight seemed as unpromising as on the previous days. A dense mist hid everything from view, obscuring even the loch, but there was a feeling of light in the air that promised better things, and long before Tyndrum was reached, the sun had swept every vestige of cloud from the highest hills, and was blazing from a perfectly clear sky, with an intensity of heat that is seldom felt even in the month of June.

Beinn Laoigh is in a south-westerly direction from Tyndrum, on the march between the counties of Perth and Argyll, at the head of a short valley, four or five miles long, down which comes the Choninish burn, the head stream of the Tay. From Tyndrum the mountain is not visible, and it is only seen for a moment from the train about a mile further down the line on the way to Crianlarich. It does not obtrude itself in the same way on the attention of the tourist as Ben Lawers, Ben More, or Ben Cruachan, and is consequently less known and less frequently visited, but it is a glorious mountain, and worthy the attention of any mountaineer.

There had been a keen frost overnight, and there was not a breath of wind. Away up the flank of the hill, on the opposite side of the valley, the smoke from an engine standing at the head of a train of waggons on the new railway to Fort William rose straight into the morning air, showing that no relief from the heat might be expected even when the higher levels were reached. At 8.45 a start was made, and in about twenty minutes the hill which lies



between Tyndrum and the Choninish valley had been surmounted, and Beinn Laoigh was in full view.

The enthusiastic way in which two gentlemen who had made the ascent of the mountain a day or two before had talked of it, prepared the writer in a measure for a fine sight, but the reality far exceeded the most sanguine expectations. Only those who visit our mountains in winter or early spring can realise how Alpine-like Scottish hills can look when they wear their garb of white. The sight of Beinn Laoigh as it appeared that April morning, rearing its chisel-like crest against the cloudless sky, and with its great thousand-feet corrie filled with snow from top to bottom, might have moved to rapture even the most pronounced disciple of that school of climbers which sees in mountaineering only an exhilarating exercise. But there was no need to stand and admire: the sight was rather one to draw the climber on, for every step made the beauty of the view more apparent.

In an hour the lonely farm-house which stands near the end of the valley had been reached, and half an hour sufficed to descend from the path to the bottom of the glen and to cross the burn, which comes tumbling down out of the corrie in a series of cascades. From this point the ascent of the mountain begins, and every step is upward till the summit is reached.

The best plan of ascent seemed to be to follow the right bank of the burn to the hollow at the foot of the corrie where it takes its rise, and from thence work a way right up the snow-face to the top. The gentlemen who had climbed the mountain three days before had generously given the reversion of the steps they had made in the snow, so that, unless unforeseen circumstances arose to cause a modification, the plan had all the simplicity of the bee-line about it, and seemed only to require time and some muscular exertion for its execution.

The ascent by the side of the stream was very steep, the heat was intense, and it took a good hour before the snow was reached. A short pause here to reconnoitre showed that the original plan would have to undergo considerable



changes. Ahead, the snow slope led all the way to the top, terminating in a long, corniced ridge. On both sides the corrie was bounded by precipitous crags, which extended up steeply to the top, where they united with the ends of the snow cornice. The previous calculations had not taken into consideration the glare of the sun on the snow, and the intense frost of the previous night. With snow spectacles and ice-axe the snow might have been possible, though it is said to lie in some places in this corrie of Beinn Laoigh at as steep an angle as anywhere in Scotland; but such a quantity of snow had not been anticipated, and Alpine appurtenances had been left behind.

No climber would have been willing to abandon, without some effort, a route which seemed to lead so directly to the summit, and, as the glare from the snow seemed the most obvious difficulty, it was resolved, instead of going straight up the corrie, to turn over to the left, where the cliffs threw a considerable part of the snow into shadow. But here the snow was found to be so hard that it was quite impossible to kick steps in it, and I had reluctantly to turn my attention to the possibility of ascending by the rocks.

The right side of the corrie seemed to be the easier and less precipitous, but a choice of that course would have involved a considerable detour, and as the top of the crags above, though certainly steep, seemed to lead right to the summit, the more expeditious way was preferred. Accordingly, a scramble up a short slope of snow, and a longer one of scree and rock, brought me to the crest of the cliffs at their lowest point.

It could now be seen that the line of ascent would lie along what was in most places a true ridge, with a sheer drop on one side down to the snow in the main corrie, and with a steep slope on the other to more snow, which, though lying in great quantities, was not quite continuous, as the flank of the mountain was here broken up into terraces. There was just one point on the ridge where it seemed possible one might be stopped, but I was loth to abandon a route which promised a capital climb.

It is an interesting fact that the rocks of Beinn Laoigh



form the termination of a narrow band of slaty, schistose stone, which stretches diagonally across the country all the way to the Benchinnans, having its other end, indeed, in the beautiful Canlochan Glen on the flanks of Glas Maol. However curious this may be from a geological point of view, the way in which this rock disintegrates makes it very unreliable material for the climber, and the small slabs into which it breaks up were scarcely ever found to give a firm foot- or hand- hold ; indeed, many of them had a tendency to come away at the slightest touch.

By the exercise of a little care, however, the point where the serious difficulty was likely to be was safely reached. The "gendarme", as it might be called in Alpine parlance, proved to be a rock twelve or fourteen feet in height, breaking the continuity of the ridge, and bending outward about the middle. To add to the difficulty of the situation, the rocks leading up to it lay at a very sharp angle, and there would have been no chance of recovery if a slip had been made on the obstructing buttress. Between the rock and the top of the cliff ran a narrow ledge of about a foot and a half in width, and this was explored in the hope of finding a way of turning the obstacle in flank. A narrow gully indeed ran up the back of the rock, but it was partly filled with ice, and was at once seen to be impracticable. Not without some trouble my steps were retraced along the ledge, and the former position at the foot of the obstruction recovered.

It was distinctly a tight corner. To descend would have been ignominious, and, owing to the nature of the footing, considerably more dangerous at this point than the ascent had been. The only way of escape, therefore, seemed to be to get round the obstacle on the left. A buttress of the rock that had caused all the trouble barred the view in that direction, and what lay beyond had to be imagined. It was Hobson's choice, and the difficulty had to be tackled. This task, after some care and exertion, was safely accomplished, and to my satisfaction I could now see that a snow slope, which extended, with breaks here and there, right up to the crest of the mountain, could easily be reached.



The snow was by this time very soft, and climbing was somewhat laborious, but the most obvious trouble was from the excessive glare from the great expanse of white. Without any other incident the top of the mountain (3708) was reached at one o'clock, and forty minutes were spent in the enjoyment of one of the loveliest views of mountain and loch that it has ever been my good fortune to witness. The day was perfect: it was delightfully warm, and not a breath of wind stirred.

The first object that fixed the attention was Ben Cruachan, which had at last thrown off the mantle of mist in which for days it had been shrouded; its great aggregation of peaks and corries stood out with striking distinctness in the clear air. As the eye circled round to the east, were to be seen the mountains of Glencoe, and over them the great bulk of Ben Nevis. Far away to the north-east, rising above a sea of other hills, was a great mountain mass that might have been the Cairngorms; nearer were Schiehallion and Ben Lawers, and, quite close at hand, the cone-like tops of Ben More and Am Binnein (Stobinain). In the south, Ben Lomond and a strip of the loch looked quite close at hand. Coming round to the west again, the eye rested on Loch Awe and Loch Etive, and the mountains of Mull loomed out of a haze that closed the view in that direction.

But, after all, there was no finer sight in all the landscape than Beinn Laoigh itself, with its great snow-filled corrie, topped by the beetling cornice—the work of the winter storms.

The snow slopes lying to the south of the ridge by which the ascent had been made were chosen for the descent, and one might have glissaded most of the way, if it had not been for their terraced arrangement, and the possibility of shooting over one of the low cliffs which interrupted the slope in all directions. The point from which the ascent had been begun was reached in an hour, and a leisurely walk down the glen, with many a backward look at Beinn Laoigh, brought me again to Tyndrum, and terminated a day among the mountains such as seldom falls to one's lot in this changeable climate of ours.



## BEINN A' GHLO.

BY WILLIAM BROWN, M.A., LL.B.

HIGH up among the round-backed mountains of Athole—a central disturbance on the troubled expanse of moorland that stretches unbroken from the Dee to the Garry, from the meadows of Angus to the struggling cultivation of Upper Strathspey—rise the triple peaks of Beinn a' Ghlo (the mountain of mist).

Lying wholly in Perthshire, and jealously guarded against access from Deeside by leagues of solitary moorland, it attracts but a small proportion of the crowd of visitors who gather in the season at Inverey and Braemar, and spread themselves broadcast over the other hills in the neighbourhood. To the nobler dust of the Cairngormer even, it is comparatively unknown. He has seen it many a time from Ben Muich Dhui, lifting its shapely crest high over the brown hills of Mar, or peering over the steep walls of Glen Tilt; but, unless he is more widely travelled than his fellows, he knows only by hearsay of the glories which await him on the summit. I had long been in that tantalising position, worshipping it from afar, but never finding an opportunity to make a nearer approach, till, in company with a clubmate, I made the ascent last month from Blair Athole. Approached from this, its vulnerable side, the mountain is really one of the most readily accessible in the central Highlands. From the railway station Carn Liath (3193), the outermost summit, is distant only  $4\frac{3}{4}$  miles in a bee-line, and a strong climber will make the ascent to Carn nan Gabhar, the highest peak, in less than four hours.

To reach Carn Liath from Blair Athole the route generally adopted is by Monzie farm, which stands in a most commanding position at the base of the mountain, some 800 feet above sea level. Monzie is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the station, and is approached by a steep, winding road passing the Falls of Fender. The custom is to leave this road opposite the farm, and, after crossing some unpleasantly



rough and boggy ground, to follow the steep south-eastern ridge of the mountain, till it lands you at the summit. The better plan, however, is to follow the road past Loch Moraig till it reaches a sheep fence running straight up the face of the mountain, which is here at its steepest. Having no guiding hand to direct us except that of a rustic, who pointed to Carn Liath as the top of Beinn a' Ghlo, we left the road at the farm, crossed a few arable acres, climbed over a succession of palings, dodged the boggy ground to the best of our ability, and at last (blessed moment!) found ourselves on the bare hillside. The ridge now shot up from our feet in a perfectly straight line to the summit, and as we toiled slowly upwards, stopping occasionally to admire the view, we could appreciate the appropriateness of the name—"grey or hoary cairn". The hillside, from 1700 feet upwards, is broken up into a number of bare patches, which, added to the large blocks of quartzite that everywhere abound, give rise to a mottled appearance, which, at a distance, is translated into a dull grey. Quartzite being the geological formation of the mountain, these blocks are exceedingly common.

We had left Blair Athole at 11 o'clock, but so much time had been spent over lunch and those rough acres at the base of the hill that it was now approaching half-past two. The heat was intense, and the haze so thick that even Ben Vrackie, lying close at hand across the valley, had a blurred and misty appearance; while Schichallion, usually so majestic a figure, might easily have been mistaken for a dark cloud, so dim and shadowy was its outline. The heat and the gradient combined (the latter averaging  $28^{\circ}$ ) made climbing the reverse of easy, and I will not deny that a shout of joy went forth from two thirsty throats when the last ridge was topped, and a final spurt over the almost level summit placed us alongside the cairn (2:30).

View there was none except in one direction, but that was worth all the pains of the ascent. Lying on the opposite side of the deep, trench-like hollow which cuts into the steep northern face of Carn Liath, and connected with the latter by a narrow ridge, sloping gently to the west and



sharply to the east, were the two sister summits of Braigh Coire Chruinn-bhagain (3505) and Carn nan Gabhar (3671). A more perfect specimen of mountain architecture, depending for its effect principally upon the happy proportion of the component parts, I had never before seen. There is nothing quite like it in the Cairngorms, which, in several respects, it most resembles, and especially in the absence of warmth and colour. Cold, grey, lifeless, scree slopes, streaked with the *debris* of a hundred water-courses, and bereft of all traces of verdure, except where, here and there, patches of scrubby heath crop out through the stones, make a gloomy and colourless picture; but the sharpness of the intersecting ridges and the extent and variety of the corries—all wild and desolate and storm-riven—raise the scene to a level of grandeur at which such faults almost appear virtues.

But time is flying, and we must away. Our course now leads us along the ridge before referred to, and as we can see that it dips to an unknown depth before joining Braigh Coire Chruinn-bhagain (the brae of the round, bag-shaped corrie), we knit our muscles for fresh climbing. But the dip is less than we expected, the aneroid stopping on its downward career and beginning to reascend with its masters at 2550 feet. The ascent is easy and gradual, and, with the expenditure of the least possible amount of energy, we reach the summit of the polysyllabic peak (420). View worse than ever, except backwards to Carn Liath and forwards across the Bealach an Fhiodha to the summit of "all Beinn a' Ghlo"—Carn nan Gabhar (the goat's cairn). This Bealach an Fhiodha (pass of the timber) rises to a height of 2893 feet, and literally, as one writer puts it, "cuts the mountain in two". Be it observed, however, that it is the *col*, or highest point, which is called the Bealach an Fhiodha. The real pass, of which the Bealach is the summit level, begins at Glen Tilt, about two miles to the north of Forest Lodge, and extends as far south almost as the northern slopes of Carn Liath. From end to end it rejoices in the name of Glas Leathad, and is watered on the Glen Tilt side by the Allt Fheannach, a goodly stream, of whose waters we would gladly have drunk, as we crossed the Bealach and



breasted the 780 feet of ascent on the opposite side. At 6:20 we stood at the top of Carn nan Gabhar, and mournfully surveyed, *on a slip of paper*, the hills which we *would* have seen had the day been clear. For the benefit of the Cairngorm party this month, I cannot do better than reproduce the list, which is taken from the current number of the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal*:—

“Due north are the Cairngorms, Cairn Toul, fifteen miles off, appearing over the broad moorland of Beinn Bhrotain, which is three miles nearer; Braeriach behind it, Ben Muich Dhui next, and then the uninteresting uplands of Beinn a' Bhuird; while to the left of Braeriach, across Carn an Fhidleir and An Sgarsoch, the moorland culminating in Sgoran Dubh. Eighteen miles E.N.E., Lochnagar stands out; while the level tops of the Braes of Angus, Glas Maol, &c., lie to the right, and somewhat nearer. Four and a half miles off, just across Loch Loch, rises the fine conical Carn an Righ, with Beinn Iutharn Mhor—Ben Uarn—on its left, and Glas Thulachan on its right, Mor Shron (Morrone Hill), above Braemar, being visible between them. Mount Blair, fourteen miles E.S.E. above the Kirkton of Glenisla, is easily distinguishable, tapering above the round-topped Forfarshire hills. Across the broad Strathmore, many of the details of which can be made out, rise the Sidlaws, culminating in Craig Owl, some thirty-two miles off. Behind them may be seen the smoke of Dundee. Further off to the right, the two Fifeshire Lomonds are conspicuous; while, when there is a strong wind to blow away the smoke, the Pentlands, seventy-five miles away, are plainly seen. Due south, and some forty miles away, are the billowy Ochils. Close at hand Ben Vrackie, above Killiecrankie, always graceful; and some way further off, above Dunkeld, Birnam Hill. Standing out from the heathery uplands, which rise to the south side of Loch Tay, is Ben Chonzie. Next come Ben Vorlich and Stuc a' Chroin, Ben Ledi, forty-seven miles off; Am Binnein (and presumably also Ben More), seen over Ben Lawers, Carn Mairg, and Schichallion, twenty miles off, but looking quite near. Nearer and lower, the broken topped Farragon Hill above Loch Tummel; Ben Cruachan, the Black Mount range; Ben Nevis, Ben Alder, and his neighbours, seen over Beinn Udlaman and the flat uplands of Dunnochter; while across Glen Tilt, Beinn Dearg, nine miles W.N.W., completes the circle. I



may add, from a recent visit to the Western Cairngorms in very clear weather, that it is certain that the whole range of the Western Inverness-shire and Ross-shire mountains, from Mam Sodhail, and possibly also Sgurr Fhuaran, as far as Ben Wyvis, including the Fannich mountains and the Ross-shire Beinn Dearg, can also be seen from Beinn a' Ghlo".

Shaping our course, after a halt at the cairn (there are three in all, but the centre one is the highest), along the ridge towards Meall Gharran, we passed a succession of magnificent corries, of which the largest—Coire Cas-eagal-lach (the terribly rough corrie)—falls in a series of break-neck pitches to little Loch Loch, lying snugly and picturesquely in the hollow between Carn nan Gabhar and Feith Ghuibhsachain (the Fir-tree Bog), whose acquaintance we were to make anon. Loch Loch is as fanciful in appearance as its name suggests. It is divided into three reaches by narrow tongues of land, which shoot out from both shores, and almost meet in the centre. Seen from above, with its mirror-like surface lying calm and peaceful, it looked like a gigantic hour-glass dropped into the hollow of the glen. It is said to be the home of quite a colony of trout and char.

Further north there is another corrie (Mearach), the appearance of which we liked better than the last, so we proceeded to make the descent. As a lesson in involuntary gymnastics the experience was perhaps not without value, but it had no other advantages which two weary mountaineers could be expected to appreciate. After at least a dozen falls, we reached the bottom, and, looking back, agreed that, if there is one thing worse than coming down, it is going up. I ought to mention that, scattered all over this part of the hill, we came upon numerous patches of cloud-berries bursting into blossom—an eloquent and delightful tribute to the earliness of the season.

The day was now drawing to a close, and the question uppermost in our minds was, how to get off the moorland before darkness settled down. Ultimately we decided to steer for the Pitlochry road, lying in an easterly direction from Loch Loch. To reach it we had to cross the Fir-tree



Bog, with regard to which I will only say, that it is a very prince of bogs, and, like all majesty, not to be lightly or irreverently approached. Darkness was closing around us as we cleared the last ditch, and, stepping from the heather, felt the firm road under foot. A thin mist was driving up from the south, stealing along the ground and enveloping everything in its silent embrace; but, above all, still and motionless in the clear air, the huge forms of the hills stood black against the pallid heavens. Not a sound was to be heard save the dull murmur of the mountain torrents, the cry of a grouse, or the bark of a wandering deer in the far-off glen. Then the moon rose in splendour over all and bore us grateful company on our homeward way.

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NOTE.—Reference has been made in the above article to the Club excursion arranged for this month. It will probably be found advantageous then to make the descent by an easier and more direct route than that described by Mr. Brown. From the top of Carn nan Gabhar a northerly course should be kept on the east side of Glas Leathad. By this route the head of Coire Cas-eagallach as well as Coire Mearach will be passed on the right. Allt Fheannach should be crossed near its junction with the Tilt. A very few yards below the confluence a bridge crosses the Tilt, the Glen track being on the right bank. The walk down Glen Tilt to Forest Lodge will be found exceedingly picturesque. The Tilt at Dail-an-eas Bridge, a short distance above Forest Lodge, is particularly interesting; while the road from the Lodge to Blair Athole is as pleasant a drive as could be desired.—ED.



## SGÒRAN DUBH AND THE WESTERN CAIRNGORMS.

BY H. T. MUNRO, F.R.G.S.

ON 13th April last, in glorious weather, I explored the whole of that portion of the Cairngorms which lies to the west of Loch Eunach and culminates in Sgòran Dubh. Leaving Lynwilg Inn at 7 a.m., the railway line was followed S.W. to the foot-bridge over the Spey. Geal Charn (3019) (the white cairn) was then climbed. A third of a mile beyond, a small 3000 feet contour on the one-inch map indicates a doubtful top, and a half-mile farther we rise to a height of 3185 feet (6-inch map) with the local name of Meall Buidhe (the yellow hill). Between this and the north summit of Sgòran Dubh is another doubtful top. Sgòran Dubh *Mhòr* (3635), as it is locally called, is 23 feet lower than the southern summit, known locally as Sgòran Dubh *Bheag* (3658), from which it is three-quarters of a mile distant. The north top, which appears the higher, has a large cairn on it; the southern, which has none, is grandly situated at the top of the splintered cliffs above the west of Loch Eunach, 2000 feet below, from which it could easily be climbed. Some splendid snow gullies descended right to the loch in the most perfect order for glissading.

The view is, of course, very similar to that from Braeriach, though less extensive. Due east, across Loch Eunach, Braeriach itself rises in fine broken cliffs which, with those on which we stand, form a grand amphitheatre. Beyond it and across the Learg Ghruamach are Creag na Leacainn and the other summits leading up to Cairngorm, which looks high but uninteresting. Over its left shoulder Corryhabbie is seen, and Ben Rinnes thirty miles to the N.E. Sgòr an Lochan Uaine (better known locally as the "Angel's Peak") and Cairn Toul are hidden by the big plateau of Braeriach. To the right of this plateau Cairn na Glasha is seen, both Lochnagar and Glas Maol being hidden. Near at hand, to the S.E., are the round uplands of Monadh Mòr and Beinn Bhrotain, which hide most of the Cairnwell hills.



Càrn an Rìgh, however, is in sight. A little to the E. of S. all four tops of the Beinn a' Ghlo range are seen over An Sgarsoch and Càrn an Fhidleir. Just to the left of the Athole Beinn Dearg, but double the distance off, one gets a peep of Farragon. Schichallion does not look well showing his broadside; the Ben Lawers range behind; and beyond and to the right a mass of hills scarcely distinguishable in the haze—for the southern view was not very clear—among them the Glen Lyon hills and probably Cruachan. Ben Alder was very conspicuous, the depression between it and the group immediately to the north being very marked. Among the latter Sgòr Iutharna's lancet edge stands out well. Much closer—18 miles W.S.W.—Meall na Cuaich, near Dalwhinnie, rises above his fellows. The Creag Meaghaidh range, 30 miles off, looks massive and well, with some fine crags and a curiously sharp-cut cleft to the north of its main peak, whose blunt cone shows more snow than anything else in sight, being as white as a wedding cake. In the depression between this range and the Ben Alder group, the Ben Nevis range stands out, with just to the right of it, a great distance off, a hill which is either one of the Ardgour mountains or Frosbheinn (Rosven) in Moidart. West, across the monotonous uplands of the Monadhliaths, is a noble diorama of Western Inverness-shire and Ross-shire mountains, in variety of outline far eclipsing all else in sight. Sgòr na Ciche at the head of Loch Nevis, upwards of 60 miles away, Carn Eige, Mam Sodhail, Sgùrr na Làpaich, the whole range of the Fannich Hills showing very clear, the Ross-shire Beinn Dearg 65 miles away, and then the long ridge of Ben Wyvis N.W., with some lower hills away to the north-east of it. In the foreground the eye wanders to the south over the uninteresting moorland I was next to explore, but to the west and north there is a charming view of Strathspey.

My next point was Càrn Bàn (3443) (the white cairn), one and a quarter miles S.S.W. It is a mere excrescence on the moor—a "top", though certainly not a separate mountain. Meall Dubh-achaidh (3268) (the hill of the black meadow or haugh) is more worthy so to be reckoned, both on account



of its being another mile and a quarter 'S.S.W., or upwards of two and a half miles from Sgòran Dubh, and because on the south it is cut off by the fine corrie of the Allt Garbhach. Rounding the head of this corrie Meall Tionail (3338) (the hill of the gathering) was reached at 3.10. A half-hour was then wasted visiting Druim nam Bo (3005) (the ridge of the ox). It is a mere shoulder to the S.W. of Meall Tionail, unmarked by any cairn, and not worthy to be considered a "top". Diollaid Coire Eindard (the saddle of corrie Eindard) was my next object. It is the point marked 3184 on the one-inch map. Although unmarked by any cairn, its distance from Meall Tionail—one and a quarter miles E.—as well as its nearly equal height, entitles it to be considered a "top". Near its summit I found a small nest, unfortunately without eggs, but from the large number of snow buntings about, it is not impossible that it belonged to one. From here it took me an hour to reach the top, which lies a third of a mile S. by E. of the little Lochan nan Cnapan. It is a flat-topped swelling on the moor without a cairn. Its height is 3009 feet, having a small 3000 feet contour on the one-inch map. Another hour's walk brought me to the big cairn on the south plateau of Braeriach (4149) at 6.45. The 4061 and 4036 tops were next crossed; the former has a large cairn, the latter none. Then a rapid descent down a snow gully in grand condition for glissading, and the road was reached a mile below Loch Eunach at 7.45, and Lynwilg at 11.10. These times must not be depended on, as the day had been very hot, and many halts made to identify and enjoy the beautiful views.



## THE BLUE HILL.

BY ALEXANDER CRUICKSHANK, LL.D., *Vice-President*,  
AND ALEXANDER COPLAND, *Ex-Chairman*.

WE do not propose in this paper to write of the lofty Cairngorm which dominates Glen More, but to direct attention to the eminence nearer home which has somehow got almost its Saxon titular equivalent. This explanation at once disposes of any false expectations—or, at all events, should do so. How, when, and why this part of the Grampian ridge, which passes through the parish of Banchory-Devenick about four and a half miles S.S.W. of Aberdeen—and there shuts out from view the interesting and ancient inheritance of Dugald Dalgetty, namely, Drumthwhacket—obtained its cerulean distinctive title—the Blue Hill—we have been at pains to endeavour to trace, but our success, truth to say, has not been commensurate with the labour and travail we have devoted to the quest. The reason appears to be that those whose business it was to record, for the benefit of future generations, this vital and important explanation have culpably neglected to do so.

Our earliest topographical writer, James Gordon, Parson of Rothiemay—whose name we mention with unfeigned respect, generated of admiration for his rare talents and useful geographical works—did not foresee our difficulty, or we feel sure he would have obviated it. He described the “feilds nixt to the gaitis of the citie”, [Aberdeen] as being “fruitfull of corns, such as oats, beir, quheat”, &c., but, remember, that was within a zone or belt of a mile round the town. For he mentions—“bot any wher after you pas a myll without the toune, the country is barren lyke, the hills craigy, the plains full of marreshes and mosses, the feilds are covered with heather or peeble stons”. The Blue Hill, being beyond the limit of fertility, did not receive special notice. That the hills were “craigy”, and continued so, at all events, from about 1660 till 1732, we have picturesque illustration in the East prospect of Aberdeen, by Gregory Sharpe, appended to Gordon’s “Description of Both Touns



of Aberdeen", printed by the old Spalding Club. But the hills must have got wonderfully rubbed down and rounded since that time—probably by the process which geologists call denudation—for we know for a fact that the proposal of a Shoremaster of Aberdeen to shove the nose of the Grampians into the sea to form a breakwater was not adopted, and that the Grampians were timeously saved from that indignity by the discovery and adoption of concrete. However, the smoothing-down process, in whatever way it was done, was carried so far that superficial observers now mistake the Blue Hill for a mere ridge, and hesitate to accord to it the honours of a hill. The same people daily, however, speak of the Castle Hill and the Broad Hill, neither of which can be compared in elevation above sea level with the Blue Hill, although they were placed above each other twice over. Let us ask any such objector the question—What is a hill? Is it not, in the language of dictionary-makers, "a natural elevation of land, an eminence"? and does not the Blue Hill conform exactly to these definitions? To be sure it does. Hence another reason for the propriety of this venture to correct an erroneous and hurtful impression. The Blue Hill is a hill, approach it from any quarter you please, and, although it is not precisely the culminating point of the Grampians in the parish of Banchory-Devenick, according to the Ordnance Surveyors, it comes in only a matter of 16 feet short of that proud position, and, when you mount the view tower so handsomely provided by Lord Provost Stewart, the proprietor of the estate, only 3 feet, so that the difference is hardly worth considering.

By about a century after the time of the Parson of Rothiemay, the zone of fertility by reclamation of land round the town had been largely extended, through the indomitable energy and enterprise of the native improvers and cultivators of the soil, encouraged by the reasonable feu rents which the town—in ignorance of the latter-day doctrine that property is robbery—accepted for the shaggy moorlands, bog, and "marreshes" of such subjects as, for example, the forest of Stocket, for which feu rents so low as 2s. 6d. per acre were agreed for. The good example



extended, and the surroundings of the Blue Hill, and far beyond it, were affected by the age and rage for improvements, so that ultimately it became the proud boast of after times—"Abirdene and twal' miles roun', and whaur are ye"? The visitor to the Blue Hill, therefore, now looks upon a landscape of a much more cheerful, ornamental, and fertile character than Gordon of Rothiemay, Dugald Dalgetty, or their great-great-grandchildren could have dreamed of. It may be objected that the military alumnus of Marischal College had no children, as he re-acquired the ancient "long, waste moor that lies five miles south of Aberdeen", not by re-conquest, but by pacific inter-marriage with Mrs. Hannah Strachan, a matron well stricken in years, the widow of the crop-eared Covenanter whose presumptuous purchase of Drumthwacket determined the side which Dugald Dalgetty took in the civil war. Well, we submit, "all's well that ends well". A brood of chicks on Drumthwacket is not necessary to our illustration, and perhaps, upon the whole, it is just as well that the race ended with the redoubtable Dugald, the companion-in-arms of the Lion of the North—the immortal Gustavus—and the great Marquis of Montrose.

These introductory remarks, like the oysters or kitty-wakes proffered as ticklers and provocatives of the appetite, we trust will not injure what we desire to foster. So without more ado we maintain that to obtain an adequate conception and enjoyment of the magnificent series of views which the Blue Hill affords, it is necessary to go there, and it may be convenient to take along with the reader the guidance and illustration which in loquacious detail follows.

There are several routes to the Blue Hill all more or less interesting, and not differing much in distance from the centre of the city. For our own part, having a liking for old world ways, we recommend the reader to accompany us by the remains of the ancient highway, which, leaving the Green, where the great Pasch market and other principal fairs were held in the olden time, crossed the Denburn—now invisible but still existent—by the Bow Brigg, the stones of which are in careful keeping, ascended by the Windmill Brae, and still passes on to the Hardgate by the



Crabstone, a silent witness of bloody deeds. The Hardgate still leads onwards to the Bridge of Dee, that noble and lasting monument of the practical benevolence of two illustrious churchmen, Bishops Elphinstone and Dunbar. The bridge was begun to be built in 1500 and was finished in 1527. As then built the bridge was 15 feet wide, but in 1841 was commenced the work of widening it to 26 feet within the parapets as it now exists. In June, 1639, therefore, Lieut.-Colonel Johnstone had a fifteen-feet wide bridge to defend against Montrose and the Covenanters, and right pluckily did he do so on the 18th and 19th of that month, until he was struck down by the shattering of a turret by the enemy's cannon. It is said that the bridge was insufficiently manned on the second day of the battle—that a great many of the defenders absented themselves on the 19th to attend the funeral of John Forbes, a burgess shot on the previous day. But, as there were no newspaper reporters to take down, for glorification, the names of persons attending funerals in those days, that could not be the reason of the large funeral attendance, and the motive must have been respect for the deceased, or some other motive common to soldiers in all ages who have a reasonable regard for self-preservation.

After passing the Bridge of Dee, the ancient highway lay westwards along the south bank of the river until it passed the Burn of Leggart, when it skirted upwards the east side of the Tollohill in the line of the present road, and passed over the higher part of the ridge between the Blue Hill and the Cran Hill, and so down by "Benholms Stables", near Banchory Hillock, and the farm of Greengate to the "Caulsey". This "Caulsey", kept in remembrance by the farm of Causeyport, was a causeway laid through the extensive mosses which then existed by the Town of Aberdeen, who were tolltakers at that early date in Kincardineshire. The nature of this part of the country can yet be vividly realised by inspection of the district. The highway in its primitive condition may be judged by a bit that still lies unimproved south of the farm of Craighhead, where it skirts a piece of rough moor. This road



was the eastermost passage from the river Tay to the river Dee of Sir James Balfour (1630-1657), and was called the Calsey or Couey Monthe passage. The Town of Aberdeen did not lay the Calsey in 1684 for nothing, as already indicated. Macfarlane states that in 1725 "the said town settis in tack the said port [Calsay-port] to a man who gathers up from every horse (?) that passes through eight pennies Scots". The road was described at that time as a large highway which passes from Aberdeen to Edinburgh "alongs this Calsey". Probably running footmen with staves were needed when the lumbering grand coaches of these early times stuck in mud or bog. The present coach road to the east of the Blue Hill was not formed until about 1797, as might be inferred from the circumstance that it does not appear in the road maps of 1775.

On thinking over the matter, it appeared somewhat strange that the town of Aberdeen should have anything to do with this causeway with right to exact tolls in the Mearns. Upon application to Mr. A. W. Munro, at the Town-House, he was good enough to clear up the matter by reference to the volume of "Charters and other Writs Illustrating the History of the Royal Burgh of Aberdeen, 1171-1804". This is the explanation: "The Prouest and Baillies and Counsell of the burghe of Aberdeen" presented "a supplicatioun to the Lordis of secret counsall" [the Privy Council] "setting furth that the calseyes in Cowiemont ar now so worn and decayed as there will be no possibilitie of passage in this approaching winter and the supplicants hes done alreadie all that lyes in thame for the mending and vpholding of these calseyis, bot the work is so great and the manie other burdenis lying vpoun the said burghe", &c., &c. A most matter-of-fact and plain statement of the case. "Footmen, Horses, Kows, and Noet will certainly stick in the bogs of Finnan Moss and be laired there, my Lordis, if something be not done to mend the calseyes before the approaching winter". "My Lordis finding by thair awne knowledge and also by the report and declaratioun of Barons and gentlemen that the reparatioun and vpholding of the saids Calseyis is a most important and necessar



work, and finding no other expedient for the present how the saide calseyis salbe mendit and vpholdin bot be the uplifting of the dewtie following, thairfor My Lordis gave granted and ordained that all passengers travelling be the said calseyis and all horse loads or cartis sheep and noet comeing or going that way should pay to the burghe of Aberdein—everie footeman twa pennies, everie horsman eight pennyes, everie horse load of whatsumevir comodities eight pennies, every ten sheep eight peneys, everie kow and oxe foure pennies, and every cart of whatsumevir commodities twa shillings". The Provost, Baillies, and Council were further empowered "to caus big and sett ane port at suche pairt and place of the calseyis as they from tyme to tyme sall think expedient and to close the port and suffer none to have passage that way bot such as sall pay", &c. And this authority was granted for the space of nynteine yeeres from 17th July, 1634. These powers were renewed by the States of Parliament 22nd February, 1661, for a further nineteen years. The glorious Restoration having followed, the King's Majestie and Estates of Parliament, on 3rd December, 1669, on another supplication, empowered and renewed authority to the petitioner to "vse all legall and fair means" for uplifting the said tolls and to apply the moneys for the upkeep of the calseyis at the sight of Sir John Keith of Keith-hall, the Lairds of Elsick, Haddo, and Pitfodells. Anyone looking at the height of the modern Calseyport road above the fields on either side, where it is joined by the remains of the old road west of Greengate, and keeping in mind what the undrained morass must have been, can pretty accurately estimate the absolute necessity of the calseyis being repaired and maintained, and also the dangers of being "smored" in the bog by anyone attempting to "shun" the toll.

The burgh subsequently got rid of the surveillance of the Laird of Elsick in the maintenance of the Calseyis, as his lands were ultimately acquired by the Magistrates as managers of the Guild Brethren's Hospital, and were about 1760 feued out by them in ten lots for an annual feu-duty amounting to 188 bolls of oatmeal. This



transaction affords another rare opportunity for people who, looking at the present rentals of these lands, and forgetting the immense labour and expense involved in reclaiming and improving them, imagine that the Magistrates made an inconsiderate and imprudent bargain. They did nothing of the kind. They acted according to their light and the circumstances of their time, and could not by possibility foresee and reckon upon the present state of matters and the value of land.

The lands of Elsieck lie spread out in our view from the tower in the near foreground, south-east from the bays of Cammachmore and Skateraw, to Quoscies and Wedderhill in S.S.W. The Kirk of Cookney rises on the extensive hill range running inland from Muchalls, forming the background to the south and westwards, and a line drawn eastwards from Wedderhill and the Auchlee Monument to Cammachmore would indicate their northern boundary.

If the reader will keep these details in mind he will understand that it was along this Calsey or Couey Monthe that the Covenanting armies, led by the Earls Mareschall, Montrose, and the other southern lords who pitched their p'allions near the Bridge of Dee in 1639 led their forces. We are told that they encamped on the Tollohill, and doubtless the heath-covered slope up to the Blue Hill was their camping ground. So soon as the army topped the ridge running between the Cran Hill and the Blue Hill, the Aberdeen of that date lay in their view. The bridge across the river, the great Kirk of St. Nicholas, the Tolbuith, the Greyfriars Monastery, converted into Mareschall College, and the congeries of thatched and red-tiled houses crowded on St. Catherine's Hill, the Port Hill, &c. There is no standpoint near Aberdeen where a more comprehensive view of the city then or now can be obtained than from the Blue Hill. There was no wood upon it at that time. It was clad like Drumthwacket with heather, perchance mixed with whins and broom. Robertson, writing in the beginning of this century, states that various attempts had been made by planting to disguise the barrenness of the prospect and the sterility of the soil; and we know that



the present firs and larches, which on the crown of the hill stand scarce twenty feet high, were not planted until 1832, fully 60 years ago. There was, up till that time at all events, nothing specially blue about the hill so far as we have been able to discover—nothing to specially distinguish it from its neighbours as the “Blue” Hill. No doubt for a very temporary period, in the long summer days of 18th and 19th June, 1639, the five blue banners of the Covenanting army, and the “blew ribbins” which each Covenanting soldier wore about his “craig” and scarffwyse down by his left arm, and the bushes of “blew ribbins”, called pannashes, stuck upon their heads, must have created a blue look out on the hillside for the burghers of Aberdeen. That “blew ribbin” also turned out a sair thing for the dogs of Aberdeen; for a “blew ribbin” having been tied about a dogges neck in derision by an uncovenanted jaud in Abirdene, the “soldiours” took mortal offence at the insult, “and every dogge, messen, and whelp was killed and slain, so that neither hound nor messen or other dog was left alive”. That was surely a slaughter of the innocents.

It has been suggested that the name Blue Hill is a corruption of the Gaelic, Dubh Hill—“the black or dark hill”; but surely this hill in the olden time was no blacker than its neighbours. Again, because the hill was gorgeous purple when the heather was in bloom, and at a distance, which lends enchantment to the view, became blae, the name has been attempted to be traced to the Gaelic *blath* (the *th* silent), signifying bloom, flowers, blossom. The puzzlement of the name is so perplexing and bewildering that, like Juliet, we seek relief by paraphrasing, “Oh! Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo”?

The minister of the parish, who wrote the topographical description of his diocese for the New Statistical Account, and is careful to explain that Devenick is from a wonder-working saint named Davinicus, gives us no help in this matter of the name. The worthy gentleman, following the excellent example of the bishops in Catholic times, bridged the Dee at Cults, but left not a plank to take us over our difficulty. All that he mentions about the culminating



point of his parish (and for that we are thankful, although it is slightly inaccurate) is—"The most elevated part of the Tollohill, the easternmost range of the Grampians, is in the Kincardine division of the parish, and afforded a station for the gentlemen who were employed by Government to make the trigonometrical survey of the island". The operations of these gentlemen will be referred to further on. Now, the Blue Hill was the station referred to, and, as previously noticed, the Blue Hill is not exactly the most elevated part of the parish. As for the latest local topographical account of the parish of Banchory-Devenick, it does not contain mention of the Tollohill, the Blue Hill, nor the Cran Hill.

Before leaving this part of the subject, it may be mentioned that Robertson, who compiled a survey of the county about the beginning of this century, gives graphic descriptions of the physical aspect of the country hereabouts. His zoology seems somewhat antiquated, for he described a "flying reptile" which haunted the neighbourhood of woods at that time, called the "Dracoolvan". We recognise under this terrific designation a comparatively innocent insect called now-a-days the dragon-fly. Then the east wind was not any more genial or amicable than now, for Robertson suggests that the cause of this wind's "unfriendliness" to "the feelings of man" is a subject not unworthy of investigation, and he enforces the suggestion by sundry weighty arguments, to all which those acquainted with rheumatics will cordially agree. The abundance of hares in Robertson's time in this part of the country was phenomenal; "dozens in every field—more hares than sheep in the county"—which glowing accounts raise recollections of soup and visions of roasted hare, which, alas! are now only distant memories. In fact, although the Hare Moss still exists in the immediate neighbourhood of the Blue Hill, a maukin has not been seen in it within living memory, and Portlethen fishwives have long ceased to have nervous fears of impending disaster when wicked boys, for entertainment, raised the cry, "There's a baud's foot in your creel". The hare, with his reserved contemporary, the badger, has emigrated, and



although the fox occasionally visits Kincorth, or harbours among the Tullos whins when they are allowed by Zoroaster to attain luxurious growth, and the squirrel has taken up his abode on the lands of "The Incorporation", and the rabbit and the hedgehog are yet in evidence, the *feræ naturæ* are not so abundant as of yore.



THE BLUE HILL CAIRN.

WHEN, about 1837, the senior writer of this paper began his visits to the Blue Hill (which he has continued yearly ever since), along with his father, the late Dr. Cruickshank, of Marischal College, the trees around the cairn were only two or three feet high, and for many years after they did not obstruct the view, as they increased in height only very slowly, owing to their exposed situation. But by 1879 they greatly obstructed the prospect, and, accordingly, in that year Mr. David Stewart, younger of Banchory (whose father, since deceased, had purchased



the estate from the trustees of the late Mr. Alexander Thomson), erected at his own cost, for the public convenience, the present solid and substantial cairn. It looks like a small round tower, expanding on the east side into a stair, which rises to a platform about eight feet in diameter, forming the top of the cairn, affording an unobstructed view all around the horizon. An iron rail guards the outside of the stair, while the platform is enclosed by a handsome iron railing with convenient seating. In the centre of the platform a granite millstone has been fixed, from the eye of which rises a large flagstaff. A bronze plate on the north side of the cairn bears the following inscription :—

THIS BRONZE PLATE  
Was Affixed in 1891  
TO  
THE BLUE HILL CAIRN  
BY  
DAVID STEWART OF BANCHORY  
LORD PROVOST OF THE  
CITY OF ABERDEEN  
To commemorate its erection by him  
On this the highest point of his Estate  
At the suggestion of  
Dr. A. GERRARD and Dr. A. CRUICKSHANK

The Cairn is 13 feet high and the  
Hill 467 feet above the sea  
It affords an extensive view over  
Sea, Plain, Valley, and Hill,  
The sea horizon being 28 miles distant  
And the land horizon varying from  
SIX to SIXTY miles.

The accompanying map and rough diagram—the latter the work of an inexperienced hand—show the relative position of the principal hills as seen on the horizon and foreground, while the table indicates the parishes in which they lie, their distances and directions from the Blue Hill, with their heights above the sea.

The prospect naturally divides itself into three parts—first, the level expanse of the sea ; second, a long coast line, partly high and partly low ; and third, a great tract of land surface marked by considerable inequalities of height above the level of the sea. Taking the view as a whole between the visible points in the horizon, its diameter from east to west is 88 miles, from south-east to north-west 57 miles, and from north to south 44 miles.

The arc of the sea horizon has a radius of 28 miles, which should render visible the mouth of the South Esk, but the elevation of the adjacent land prevents this view to the southward, Dunnottar Castle terminating the prospect in that direction. In like manner the Bullers of Buchan should be the extreme point visible to the north along the coast, but owing to its projection the intermittent flash of the Buchan



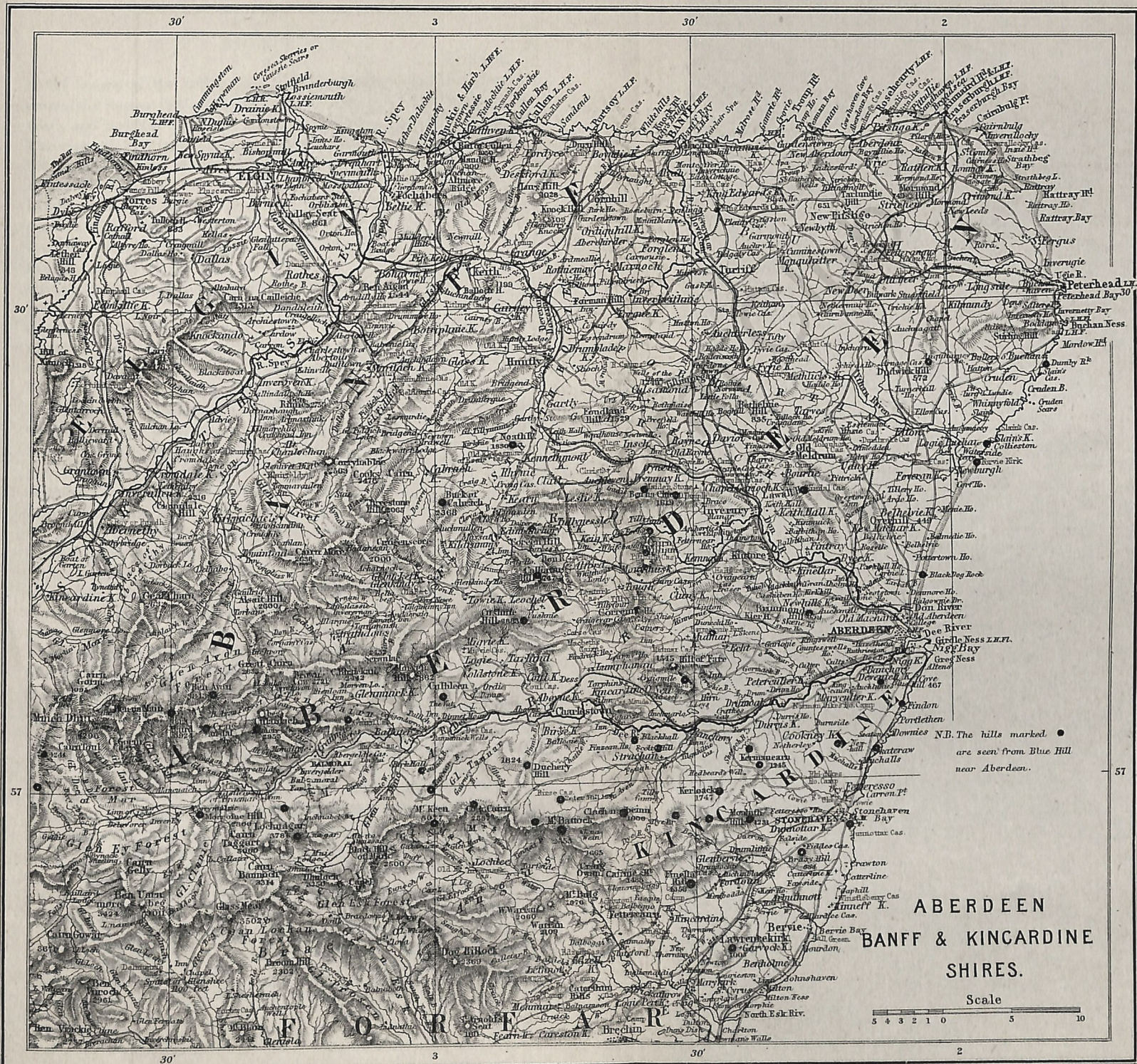
Ness Lighthouse can be seen. The distance from Dunnottar Castle to Buchan Ness is 40 miles, but only about 35 miles are actually seen, parts of the coast being hid by heights.

The Kincardineshire part of the coast, 15 miles long, from Dunnottar Castle to the mouth of the Dee, is mostly high and rocky, as is the Aberdeenshire part for the northern 10 miles from Collieston to Buchan Ness. The cliffs in the former line rise in some places to more than 200 feet, and in the latter to 80. The middle 15 miles of coast line, from the mouth of the Dee to Collieston, present a line of sand overflowed by the tide, which has been blown by the wind into a series of dunes, mostly covered with bent grass. The three northmost miles of these dunes, from the mouth of the Ythan to Collieston, broaden out to a distance of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles into the far-famed Sands of Forvie, one of the dunes reaching an altitude of 100 feet.

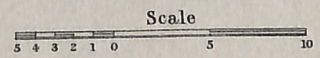
A little inland of each end of the middle 5 miles of this 15 miles of dunes, a conspicuous object is seen to the north-east over Aberdeen. At the south end is the little conical Hill of Tarbathie (168), surmounted by a round building, and at the north end the row of white-washed houses of Leyton Coastguard Station, on a height 114 feet above the sea. Along the Belhelvie Links, just landward of the line of dunes between these two objects, Captain Colby, R.E., in 1817, with Ramsden's steel chain, measured the Belhelvie base line of the Trigonometrical Survey, to verify the computed length of the sides of the many larger triangles formed over the country between hill tops where the angles of these triangles were observed with the theodolite. The final triangle used in computing this base had its angles observed at the Blue Hill, Tarbathie Hill, and Leyton, and its three sides were computed (from these data, with those from the great triangulation of other parts of the country) to be about 13.3, 8.4, and 5 miles long. On checking these computations, by using the Belhelvie base line as a side of better-conditioned triangles, with angles at Brimmond, Dudwick, &c., in eastern Aberdeenshire, the final result was that the base line as measured was found to be 26,517.530 feet, and, as computed by triangulation, 0.240 feet more. It will thus be seen that the Blue Hill was an important station in the principal triangulation for the Ordnance Trigonometrical Survey of the country in connection with the Belhelvie base line of verification.

The view over the part of Kincardineshire is generally of a bleak moorland character. North-eastward are the hills of Nigg, stretching by the Church of Nigg to the south end of the Bay of Nigg. West of the Church they were not planted with trees till about 1840. Eastward is the Loch of Loirston, with gravel mounds on its east side forming part of the moraine of the glacier which came down the Dee valley. The fishing village of Cove, once famous for penny weddings and salmon dinners, lies a mile east of the loch. Southwards about three miles from Cove, snugly nestling at the foot of the Hill of Findon, are some





ABERDEEN  
BANFF & KINCARDINE  
SHIRES.



N.B. The hills marked  
are seen from Blue Hill  
near Aberdeen.



of the houses of the fishing village of Findon, or Finnan—*magnum et venerabile nomen* (according to the late Dr. Joseph Robertson) fifty years ago and for centuries before that time. Ichabod! Ichabod! The moss of Finnan is nearly exhausted, and there is but one fishing boat in the harbour of Finnan, where numerous fleets rode at anchor in bygone days, or serenely rested on the rocky beach. And “Finnan haddies”, what of them? The modern “finnan” is a fraud and alien product of the “Mononday’s” fish of the trawler unguently treated with the sawdust of soft Swedish white wood, in place of the blue and aromatic smoke of the peat and the bog fir. Avoid them even when insinuatingly offered at the breakfast tables of the grand hotels of the metropolis. On the north limb of the Hill of Portlethen the fine steading of Mains of Portlethen and the well-laid-out fields of that model farm will be seen, and, if the day is clear and your optics good, some of the prize doddies on the grass, the models of the handsome black bull which figures on the grass bank at Portlethen Station. On a rising ground a little above and to the south-east of the station, past which trains are constantly running, is perched the Kirk of Portlethen (the red kirk). Away over the eastern ridge of the hill, upon which you will perceive a farm-house planted in an airy and conspicuous situation, is the fishing village of Portlethen, or Port-Leviathan, because tradition has it that the whale that swallowed Jonah, coasting northwards attended by a group of sympathising *balanae*, unfortunately entered the bay of Steinhive, or “Stinking Hive”, according to Captain Richard Frank, and this visit having acted as an emetic, the prophet was got rid of at Portlethen, where in their sickness the whales got stranded. Keeping still southwards, about a mile farther on is Cammachmore Bay, with the fish town of Downies on its south side; while farther on about a couple of miles, at the south end of Cran Hill, Skateraw Harbour and village is reached. Whether the one bay was nominated by the Celt and the other by the Norseman cannot with certainty be now ascertained. But the philologist must rejoice in the sonorous, vigorous, and expressive names which have been bestowed upon these places, and which, indeed, need no explanation. The next point, that of Carron, hides from our view the county town of Kincardineshire, but you will perceive across the streak of blue, a black, rocky, jagged headland, jutting into the sea. This is the rocky coast line south of Stonehaven, which, being composed of conglomerate or plum-pudding rock, like softer plum-pudding, has to give way to the ravening appetite of the sea. On the south rocky promontory bounding the third bay south from Stonehaven, called Castle Haven, is perched the ruins of Dunnottar Castle—the cruel prison of the Covenanter and the last refuge of the insignia of royalty in the days of the Commonwealth; from whence the regalia of Scotland was deftly abstracted by the stratagem of two Scottish ladies, and buried for safety under the pulpit of the kirk of the neighbouring parish of Kinneff.



An interesting addition to the inventory of the Regalia was made the other day by the presentation to the nation of the belt of the Sword of State. This belt is found to have a buckle hole at a point which indicated a jimpy waist such as Mary Queen of Scots was known to possess, and there can be little doubt that it exactly indicates the measurement of that waist in her earlier days, when the affairs of a turbulent state, and the plots and quarrels of ambitious nobles, were beginning to bring clouds of care upon what ought to have been her happy days. The ruins of Dunnottar Castle may be seen when the sun is in the N.E., or when the view is exceptionally clear. From Dunnottar the ground gradually slopes upwards as you proceed onwards, and a little before you reach the Law of Lumgair (492), there is a slight elevation of 433 feet, which shuts out from view the farm of Kittlenaked, 400 feet, which otherwise would have proved an attractive feature in the landscape. The Law of Lumgair is five miles to the west of Dunnottar Castle, and a dozen miles S.S.W. of the Blue Hill. Then Bruxie Hill (710), and Carmont (700), are seen bounding the horizon. The Caledonian Railway runs in the hollow by the west base of the Carmont. At a distance of 21 miles, along a line running S.S.W. past Bruxie Hill, is seen the Tower of Johnston on the Hill of Garvock, two miles east of Laurencekirk. About 3 miles westwards from Skateraw Harbour the Kirk of Cookney will be perceived on a small wooded elevation, the spire or steeple of the edifice almost topping the ridge forming the horizon, S.S.W., in that direction, and to the west of it the woods of Netherley, backed by the low hills of Curlethney (804), and Meikle Carewe Hill (872). Just over Curlethney Hill is located the famous camp of Raedykes, the camping ground of Galgacus with the Caledonian army before his great battle with the Roman general Agricola, according to the late Professor John Stuart of Inchbreck, from which battle Agricola, having got a bellyful of fighting, retreated southwards.

Keeping along the horizon a far distant hill will be noticed peeping over a depression in the ridge. This hill we take to be Strath Finella (1358), in the parish of Fordoun, S.W. of Auchinblae. In the middle distance is seen the hill of Auchlee, with the conspicuous monument to the memory of the late Mr. John Boswell of Kingcausie, an eminent agriculturist and stock-breeder, and a thorough gentleman of the olden time. Ascending again to the distant horizon, at another depression to the west of Strath Finella, a group of high hills are seen towering above each other in the far distance. These are the Goyle Hill (1527), and the Hill of Gothie (1468), and probably Meluncart (1725). Again proceeding along the horizon westwards just before commencing the ascent of the conspicuous hill, Cairn-mon-earn (1245), you will notice a slug-shaped hill peeping over the ridge, Mongour (1232), and further away a higher hill rising beyond it, almost eclipsed by the eastern face of Cairn-mon-earn,



Tipperweir (1440). Look well at that hill, Cairn-mon-earn, for on Friday, the 13th day of July, 1296, Edward the 1st (Langshanks), with an army of our auld enemies the Inglishe, got their first sight of the Cytie of d'Abbardon from its conspicuous ridge, and the prospect was so inviting that they came and stayed with the burghers five days, but, somewhat shabbily, they went away without paying for their board and lodging, or so much as offering to do so. The lower hill to the right of Cairn-mon-earn is Mundernal (1035), and looking over between them is Kerloch (1747). Beyond and west of Kerloch, Clochnaben (1963), that "landmark o' the sea", asserts his claim to attention by the huge granitic bump—95 feet of rocky height—on his shoulder or caput. Towering above Clochnaben, Mount Battock's fine cone (2555) is easily distinguished from the Blue Hill, as it is also from many points near Aberdeen, such as the railway bridge near the entrance to Allenvale Cemetery. Between Mount Battock and the Peter Hill (2023) stretches a saddle of high mountain land, the highest corrugation of which is Mudlee Bracks (2259). The Aven has cut out a deep gorge between Clochnaben, Mount Battock, and the Peter Hill, and the Feugh flows through the forest of Birse on the north side of the Peter Hill. West of this hill the sky line shows a mountain range rising step by step in the Hill of Cat (2435), the Cock Cairn, and the Braid Cairn (2907), ambitiously to shut out from view the beautiful cone of Mount Keen, a little of the top of which can only be distinguished from the summit of the Braid Cairn on rare occasions, when the sun shines on Mount Keen and clouds shadow Cock Cairn and the Braid Cairn. Lochnagar, further west, attracts the eye by its wide expanse of eastern precipice, 890 feet high. At its west foot may be perceived Mor Shron of Braemar, in something like the form of a Bath bun.

Along the north side of the valley of the Dee, from east to west, the hills visible are Countesswells, Barmekin, Fare (which hides Morven), Cushnie, Geallaig, Culardoch, Craeg na Dala, Ben Avon, Beinn a' Bhuird, Cairn Toul, and Beinn Bhrotain. The five last-named mountains are the only ones seen of the great group of the Cairngorms. Cairn Toul is seen past the slope of Beinn a' Bhuird, beyond which it is eight miles to the west. Ben Avon and Beinn a' Bhuird appear as one, the former being distinguished by huge granitic "warts", over 60 feet in height, and the latter by its fine corries facing the east. Patches of snow will often be observed late in summer in the eastern corries of Beinn a' Bhuird. Cairn Toul and Beinn Bhrotain, which are at the head of the Dee valley, on the borders of the counties of Aberdeen and Inverness, are the most distant objects (about 60 miles off) in the view.

The finest stretch of hollow seen from the Blue Hill is to the north-west, and begins at the gap eight miles broad between the hills of Countesswells and Fare, and runs thirteen miles north-west to another gap (Tillyfourie) two miles broad, between the Hills of Corrennie and



Cairn William, through which the Alford Valley Railway enters the Vale of Alford, over which, at a distance of thirty-five miles, the Buck of Cabrach is seen in the horizon. Beyond the north side of Pitfichie Hill, which appears disjoined from Cairn William, is seen a little of the cone of Tap o' Noth.

Beyond the east end of Countesswells Hill, to the N.N.W., are seen Bennachie, Brimmond and Tyrebagger Hills, and Lawall Hill near Oldmeldrum. To the north, over Cairnery (two miles N.W. of Aberdeen) are seen Overhill and Hill of Dudwick. To the N.N.E., over the city of Aberdeen, and near the coast-line, are seen Tarbathie Hill, Leyton Coastguard Station, and the Forvie Sands; and still farther N.N.E. Slains Castle, looking like a speck on the cliffs, Dunbuy Rock, and the Buchan Ness Lighthouse with a powerful glass. Tarbathie Hill is the south-east end of a series of gravel mounds, of about the same height, called the Hills of Fyfe, lying between the Ellon turnpike and the sea, and running two miles north to Millden. These mounds, similar ones traceable to the west by the Corby Loch to the banks of the Don, near Dyce, are regarded as moraines of glaciers which once moved down the valley of the Don.

The view three to five miles to the north comprises the greater part of the city of Aberdeen.

The walk to and from the Blue Hill from the centre of the city affords a fine constitutional of about nine miles. It can be seen from a good many points in Aberdeen, appearing as a flattish wooded eminence. The following may be named:—Broad Hill, Castle Hill, Victoria Bridge, South Stocket Road, west end of Union Street, Queen's Gate, Whinhill Road, and Bridge of Dee.

Such is the variety, the magnificence, and the beauty of the view from the Blue Hill. On a spring morning, in the bright sunshine, when light clouds slowly float seawards across the vast blue canopy above, the sea between Carron point and Dunnottar shines and shimmers like molten silver. The horizon landwards stretches around in a rising range of wooded and brown heath-covered ridges, until the eye reaches the Alps, draped in virgin snow, through which the precipices of dark Lochnagar, the "breasts" of Beinn a' Bhuid, and the gigantic granitic peaks of Ben Avon, assert themselves sixty miles away. Still sweeping round, variety and beauty paint the landscape. The mass of the Hill of Fare and Corrennie on the one side, with Cairn William on the other, bound the magnificent vista, which, softened by distance, is closed by the fine outlines of "the Buck". Farther round, Pitfichie and the Tap o' Noth strive to peep over the wooded ridge of Kingshill, Countesswells; and the Oxen Craig of Bennachie presents its southern aspect over the ridge to the east. Then the Mither Tap, like a cock of the north, with independence marked imperishably on its rocky peak, shoots up into the blue, and the Brimmond Hill, Tyrebagger, and the wooded slopes eastwards frame the Silver City, from whence the deep boom of Victoria,



mellowed by distance, reaches the ear. The graceful sweep of the bay northwards is traced, and bounded by the golden sands which terminate at the large dunes of Forvie, forming, like the pillar of salt, monuments of retribution and warning. Beyond, the sea, a deeper blue than the sky above, from whence it derives its colour, is framed by the rocks which rise at Collieston, and save the pleasant sandy break at the bay of Cruden, disastrous to the Danish invader, continue to Buchan Ness, whose kindly light to the mariner is more reassuring than the Inchcape Bell. Collieston ! redolent of the toothsome spelling, thy maidens no longer barefooted lilt along the golden sands, and, with tucked-up drapery, ford the Don, to bring their welcome wares to the Plainstones of Aberdeen. The "Plainstones" ! where are those cherished memorials of the times in which, with powdered wigs, the Provost and the Baillies, and the mercantile burgesses of the burgh, sedately strode to and fro upon their polished surface, discussing the affairs of the State and town's affairs of greater moment than robes, and cocked hats, and badges, and fireworks, and cart-horse processions ? Where are the recruiting sergeants, with their streaming ribbons, inviting enterprising young men to glory ? And the town's drummer and the hangman, where are they ? They are but memories. They have gone, vanished, evaporated, and we all must follow.



## EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

was held in the Café, Aberdeen, on 28th February—  
 OUR FOURTH Mr. Alexander Copland, ex-Chairman, presiding. The  
 ANNUAL Treasurer's statement showed a balance at the credit of  
 MEETING the Club of £37 2s. 2d. Office-bearers for 1893-94  
 were elected as follows:—*President*, The Right Hon.

James Bryce, D.C.L., M.P.; *Vice-Presidents*, Alexander Cruickshank, LL.D., and Rev. Robert Lippe; *Chairman*, Rev. Professor George Cameron, D.D.; *Secretary*, Alex. Inkson M'Connachie; *Treasurer*, T. R. Gillies; *Committee*—Robert Anderson, Alexander Copland, Robert Harvey, W. J. Jamieson, Charles M'Hardy, Alexander Macphail, John M'Gregor, William Porter, John Roy, LL.D., Charles Ruxton, Rev. A. M. Scott, and Rev. Robert Semple.

The following excursions were fixed for the current season:—  
 Spring—Hill of Fare and Barmekin; Summer—(1) Beinn a' Ghlo  
 and (2) the Benchinnans; Autumn—Bennachie.

The Committee's Report suggested the publication of a Club Journal, a matter which was referred back with powers. The Committee thereafter resolved on a Journal, and the Secretary was appointed Editor. It will be issued, meantime, twice a year—on 1st July and 1st January.

Mr. Charles Ruxton, the retiring Chairman, who wrote apologising for his absence, was thanked for his services during the past two years.

The following gentlemen have been admitted members since the annual meeting:—James C. Barnett, Robert Aitken, G. M. F. Foggo, W. Milne Gibson, William Anderson, Harry A. Holmes, Ranald R. Macdonald, Thomas Milne, M.D., W. A. MacKenzie.

formed the Spring Excursion of the Club on 1st May.

**BARMEKIN HILL** The party, which numbered 40, drove from Aberdeen, proceeding by the Skene road and through the policies

**AND**  
**HILL OF FARE** of Dunecht to Culfossie, Echt, whence a footpath leads to the top of the Barmekin (899). The Barmekin is a densely-wooded hill, a conspicuous feature in the landscape of the district, but there is an open space at the summit, on which there are remains of an ancient fortification, generally (but without any hitherto ascertained authority) called a Danish Camp. There are five walls and three outer ditches; the innermost enclosure (at the summit) is 300 feet in diameter, and contains about an acre of ground. From this enclosure there is an extensive view, including the Lochs of Skene and Park, the lower Grampians—Cairn-mon-Earn, Kerloch, Clochnaben, Mount Battock, and Mount Keen—Lochnagar, Beinn a' Bhuid, and Ben Avon (thickly coated with snow on the day of the excursion), the Buck of the Cabrach, Morven, Bennachie, &c., with, of course, the Hill of Fare



adjoining. Five new members were admitted on the top of the Barmekin, and Mr. Jaakoff Prelooker, a Russian exile (late head master of the Government School, Odessa, and founder of the New Israel "movement" in Russia), was admitted an honorary member—the first of the class. The party descended on the south-east side, and made for the village of Echt, where luncheon was served. They then drove to the Birks of Cullerlie, on the south-east side of the Hill of Fare, and ascended the Hill. The Hill of Fare is a long, low wide hill, extending from Echt to Learney, the circumference of its base being computed at 18 miles. It has a number of tops, the highest being 1545 feet. A central ravine, in which the burn of Corrichie rises, and through which it flows, is the site of the battle of Corrichie, fought between the Earls of Huntly and Moray in 1562.

The point first made for was Queen Mary's Chair, a niche in the face of a granitic mass overlooking the battle-field; and then the party divided, some making for the Meikle Tap (1179), others for Greymore (1291), and others ascending the ravine between Greymore and Blackyduds (1422). The views from the various summits reached were practically identical with the view from the Barmekin. Re-uniting at the base of the Hill, on the Midmar side, the party made a hurried inspection of Midmar Castle, having shortly before that encountered a smart shower of rain, the only (and a quite insignificant) drawback to a delightful outing. The excursion was finished by a rapid walk to Echt, and, after tea, the party drove back to Aberdeen by the Echt road. Mr. Alexander Copland was the Chairman of the day, and furnished historical and descriptive accounts of the Barmekin, the battle of Corrichie, &c.—ROBERT ANDERSON.

THE local mountaineering season was opened on New-Year's Day by a quartette making the ascent of Ben Avon from Inchrory. The previous evening was not without sign of a change in the weather—to the bad, and the bright, clear day which had been anticipated turned out otherwise. The start was made at 8'45, the aneroid marking 28'8, the thermometer, 28. The route selected was by Meall na Gainimh (2989), one of the minor summits of Ben Avon. The surface was quite white, there being a good deal of fresh snow, with here and there hard snow slopes. The top of the Meall was reached at 9'45, when the temperature was found to have fallen to 17. The region of mist was now entered, nothing being visible at the distance of fifty yards. An abortive attempt was made on Clach Bhan, and, as time pressed, the onward route was quickly resumed, a good deal of time being necessarily lost in walking by compass. The denseness of the mist will be better understood when it is mentioned that Clach a' Chuitseich—and it is no trifle—was passed unobserved. The summit (3843) was reached at 12'30, the aneroid marking 26'05, the thermometer 13. The anemometer showed that the



velocity of the wind was 22 miles an hour (force 4, Beaufort's scale). In these circumstances, the stay at the cairn was as short as possible. The Sneck was made for—unsuccessfully; it was originally intended to ascend Beinn a' Bhuid as well. The connecting link, however, proved the missing link in the mist; but as only two of the party were armed with axes, it was perhaps as prudent to leave it alone. Turning now to the southward along the ridge of Carn Eas, and crossing the intervening "Saddle", the cairn of Creag na Dala Moire (3189) was passed, and the descent made, by slopes measuring from 35° to 40°, to the head of Glen Gairn. The bottom of the glen reached, the mist was left behind. A course by the south-west shoulder of Creag na Dala Bige and the path on the east side of Glas Allt was now taken, and so, passing Invercauld House, Inver Inn was reached at seven o'clock. Lochnagar was ascended next day *via* Glen Gelder.—Abridged from *The Scotsman*.

A PARTY of cyclists, who had fixed their headquarters at BEN AVON Colquhonia, Strathdon, devoted one of their holidays IN MAY. to an ascent of Ben Avon, *via* Allt an t-Sluichd. The first stage was accomplished on our "safeties", the machines being left at Delnadamph. The weather was so unpromising that half a dozen friends, who were passed at Cock Bridge, decided, in spite of previous arrangements, not to join in the ascent.

Inchrory was passed at 12.10, Glen Avon being entered as the weather improved. But at Inverloin (12.45) biting showers of hail gave a foretaste of what would likely be met higher up. The site of Slochd Bridge was reached at 1.20, and lunch discussed, the Meikle Slock being picturesquely lined with snow. Fording the Avon was no easy matter, for it was icy cold and the stones slippery. Once fairly into the Slock—there is a path for about two miles from the bridge—the showers of hail were not so disagreeable as in the glen, the wind being now in rear. The Sneck was reached in detachments—one section descending to the bottom of the Slock, and climbing on to the Sneck at the east end (a rather stiff bit of work); the other keeping higher up and rounding the top of the corrie, and so coming on to the Sneck. Unstable boulders, with snow in the interstices, made progress here very slow.

Once on the Sneck the full force of the storm was encountered, the wind, laden with ice pellets, blowing in a hurricane, while snow and hail came whirling up the Slock, threatening to send us into Glen Quoich. An occasional short respite was taken by setting our alpenstocks in the snow, and turning our backs to the whirlwind.

The cairn was reached at five o'clock, but there was, of course, no view, owing to the storm. Despite the intense cold, several of the rocky excrescences were visited. The quantity of new snow on the summit was surprising; great wreaths were found at the back of the tors, several of them from 10 to 20 feet in depth. Lower down more



than one of the party plumped into holes through snow up to the waist. Ptarmigan were the only living things seen.

The original intention was to descend over Meall na Gainimh, but it being late, a course was set by Da Dhruim Lom, striking the Avon at Caol Ghleann (6'40). After a descent of about 500 feet from the summit, we found ourselves below the storm, which still raged above. Our appearance was wintry enough—clothed, as it were, with crusted ice and snow, which we got rid of only as Glen Avon was entered. Delnadamph was reached at 8'30, and Colquhonie shortly after 10 o'clock.—JOHN A. M'HARDY.

MEALL A' were tackled from Speyside by a few members of the Cairngorm Club in the end of February. The BHUACHAILLE, first day was devoted to glen work and the ascent of the "Meall", which, as it is only 2654 feet in CAIRNGORM, height, and in the immediate neighbourhood of CAIPLICH, AND Cairngorm, is generally ignored by the giants of the BEN BYNAC Club. The ascent is a mere trifle, as, Rebhoan reached, there are only about 1350 feet to be surmounted. The view, however, is not one to be despised, for, in addition to the Cairngorms from Ben Bynac to Sgòran Dubh, a large extent of Strathspey, with numerous lochs, is at one's feet. A big cairn marks the top. The southern shoulder, Creag Loisgte, forms, with Creag nan Gall (of Mam Suim), the beautiful narrow gorge at the head of Glen More, known as the Pass of Rebhoan or the Thieves' Pass.

Next day Cairngorm was ascended *via* Rieaonachan, the day being bright and clear at the start. Before the summit was reached, however, the clouds were upon the party, and apparently on Loch Morlich also, but, as was afterwards ascertained, Glen More was quite clear the whole day. Above 2500 feet the mountain was more or less covered with snow, but the summit was practically swept bare, only a very thin icy covering being left. At the cairn one could see such a short distance, and the weather was so threatening, that a contemplated visit to Ben Muich Dhui was given up. The descent was made by the east side, looking down on the Nethy, along to Stac na h-Iolair (the Eagle's Cliff), the southern side of Mam Suim (2394). Below the 3000 feet line, the mountaineers were once more in sunshine; and at the foot the thermometer was at 72°, whereas on the top it reached only 32°! Ripe bear-berries were found in abundance on Mam Suim.

The third day Donside was made for *via* Learg an Laoigh and Glen Avon. The Nethy was left at the pony bridge above Loch a' Gharbh-choire at 9 a.m., the "Learg" there being pretty free of snow, but in a short time the path was entirely obscured. The opportunity was taken of ascending Caiplich (3574) and Ben Bynac on the west side of the path. Concerning these two (?) mountains Mr. H. T. Munro says:—"Caiplich is the highest point of Ben Bynac. The 3296 point of the latter, marked on the one-inch map, is merely a shoulder



running up to Caiplich". A seemingly reasonable statement, yet the writer has heard the natives speak of "the two Bynacs". The ascent was rather stiff, the whole Ben being almost covered with deep snow—a striking contrast to Cairngorm on the other side of the Nethy. The ascent up Caiplich was by a rocky "knife edge" leading directly to the cairn, a considerable one with a stick. A great many snow buntings were seen on Ben Bynac, and not a few tracks of the fox with ptarmigan side by side. The view from the summit is very extensive—from the mountains on the further side of the Moray Firth to Bennachie. The following tops may also be named:—Beinn Mheadhoin, Ben Muich Dhui, Cairngorm, Mam Suim and Meall a' Bhuachaille, and Ben Rinnes, while the Ben Avon group was a grand sight. The Dubh Lochan, Lochs Garten and Mallachie are readily picked out, and the greater part of the Feith Buidhe between Ben Muich Dhui and Cairngorm is also visible. The south side of Ben Bynac is studded with lumps of rock known as the "Barns" and the "Little Barns", somewhat after the manner of Ben Avon. The incident of the present journey was the approach to one of these "Barns" in mist. It had just been decided to descend towards the Allt Dearg, which enters the Avon near the point where the path to Inchrorry commences, when, walking along the unbroken snow, a gigantic black object appeared to be approaching the party! The snow, driven by the wind, surrounded the huge rock, leaving a "moat"-like space at the foot of this mountain excrescence. This gave an opportunity of observing the depth of the snow, which was here estimated at from 25 to 30 feet.

Striking the head of the Glen Avon path at 12.45, the downward trudge along the snow-filled track was commenced at 1 p.m., Inchrorry being reached at 6 o'clock. The walk, though pretty stiff and long, was by no means wearisome, the variety of scenery, especially on the south (right) side of the glen, preventing monotony. The first halt was at Findouran Lodge, a little shooting-box used only in "the season", which lies on the left bank of the Avon at a height of 1920 feet. Two small burns there enter the Avon, the upper Caochan Craobh a' Chuimeneich, the lower Feith an Dobhrain, from which latter the building derives its name. Findouran is comparatively new, and so does not appear on the O. S. maps, but its exact position is in the north angle formed by Feith an Dobhrain with the Avon. The two streamlets named and the situation of the lodge will be recognised on the one-inch map by the figures "1920". The best part of the glen lies below Findouran, but the river abounds in picturesque bits between the loch and this point, numerous burns contributing to the beauty of the scene. Stob an t-Sluichd (3621) appears to advantage on the south side, here looking a little conical peak with round, warty-like rocks behind. Then, with the Meikle Slock between, comes Ben Avon himself in all his crowned dignity—visible also on the railway journey between Nethy Bridge and Boat of Garten. Next comes (on the south) Caol Ghleann,



and a "narrow glen" it is. The uppermost fir trees in Glen Avon are to be seen opposite its mouth. Shortly after passing Caol Ghleann the pony track crosses the river. On the north side is Inverloin at the mouth of Glen Loin, with marks of old houses of sheep-farm days. Then comes the Linn of Avon, where the river rushes between narrow rocks, only to have another struggle ere Inchrory can be passed. Crossing the Builg Burn near its confluence with the Avon, a short ascent was made, passing Inchrory and Lagganau, so as to change from the watershed of the Spey to the Don. But darkness began to fall, overtaking the party before the Donside road—such as it is—was well entered on. The Don and its tributaries appeared to be mixed up with the road, which, where not overflowed by some burn or other, was quite covered with snow. Then bog succeeded bog, and the party were very glad to accept the shelter of a shepherd's house for the night and give up all thoughts of Cock Bridge and its comfortable inn. Next day Ballater was reached *via* the head of the Don, Glen Builg, and Glen Gairn. In the former glen a fierce snow storm had to be faced, while the latter was full of snow till near Rinloan. Loch Builg was covered with ice, and the road at the head of the loch was impassable for even pedestrians.—W. CRUICKSHANK.

were ascended in the first week of April by a small party of hillmen from Aberdeen. The ascent of the BRAERIACH AND CAIRNGORM former was made by Glen Eunach, and the pony path on the east side of Loch Eunach. Sgòran Dubh looked exceedingly grand, the summits being quite white, and the rocky side presented to the loch beautifully snow-marked. The burns crossed by the pony path were full of snow, and at the head of the corrie, where the track is rather steep, the snow was so forbidding as to compel us to take the bare face of the mountain at an angle of sometimes over 50°, an avalanche of stones saluting us on the right. The great plateau was duly reached, and found to be completely covered with hard snow. The "infant Dee", where it tumbles down the Fuar Garbh-choire—the Dee Corrie, as it is sometimes called—was invisible; as also was the cairn. The *only* indication of the latter was a swelling in the snow. The snow cornices overhanging the corries were a pretty sight, great breaks frequently occurring, with icicles forming at the fractures. The view, considering the late hour (5 p.m.) the summit was reached, was extensive, but none of the mountains visible seemed to be so snow-clad as the Cairngorms. The descent was made by the narrow ridge between Coire an Lochain and Coire Ruadh.

The ascent of Cairngorm was made by Rieaonachan, from which it occupied about two hours. We observed that where the track forks (about 1500 feet) a little above the foot-bridge over the Allt Mor, two direction posts have been put up. One points out "Path to Cairngorm", while the other is marked "Private Path through Forest—Please Don't Trespass". We commend both to the attention of mountaineers, and would suggest another post or two a little further up, as one is apt to



go too far to the east unless careful attention is paid to the route. Very little snow was found on the north side of Cairngorm, except in the corries, which were looking picturesque enough. The summit was quite bare, but towards Loch Avon and Ben Muich Dhui the snow was almost without a break. Large numbers of ptarmigan were seen, evidently pairing, as well as a couple of snow buntings similarly engaged. The southern face was descended as far as the lower end of Loch Avon could be seen. It was free of ice, only there appeared to be a little at the outlet forcing its way to the river. Loch Etchachan was covered with ice, as also were Lochan nan Cnapan, Lochan Uaine (of Cairn Toul) and Loch Coire an Lochain. Last year snow never completely left Coire an t-Sneachda of Cairngorm. The descent was made by Ciste Mhairearaid and the Marquis's Well, the latter, however, invisible. Large numbers of stags were seen on the lower grounds, some of them with only one horn, many with none. In the evenings we were entertained by the cries of several varieties of birds, including the heron and the owl; in the early morning flocks of black-cock broke the stillness by their peculiar cries when fighting with one another. Considerable stretches of heather, both in deer forests and grouse moors, were being burned; in particular there were many black patches on Cairngorm. As we descended late in the evening, distant fires could be seen eastward and northward, having a brilliant appearance in the darkness.

We took a stroll one evening to Coylum Bridge, to settle by observation the disputed point as to the relative size of the Bennie and the Luineag, which there meet and form the Druie. Something, we found, could be said for each, so a residenter who happened to be on the spot was appealed to. His reply left the problem unsolved:—"He would be a clever man who could tell that; sometimes it's the one, sometimes the other". The bridge over the Bennie, by the way, just below Aultdrue, is in a very dangerous state, especially in the dark.—W. A. HAWES.

THE forenoon of a recent holiday found two clubmen admiring the Falls of Tarf from the Bedford Memorial Bridge. One of the first thoughts to strike an observer is:—What a grand sight here when the Tarf is in flood, or when, after a thaw, ice-blocks are hurled down with a noise that is heard at a distance of several miles.

Proceeding along the steep, high cliffs that guard the Falls right and left, the Upper Falls, of whose existence we, like most others, were ignorant, came into view. Half an hour enjoyably spent in this neighbourhood suggested a further advance along Tarfside, one of the most unfrequented glens in the Highlands. The "Water" is over 11 miles in length, and rises near the head streams of the Bruar. Owing to its remoteness it is seldom visited. Trout are numerous, two or three rising to every cast, and, though small, a basket of over 50 lbs. is not unfrequently made. A short distance above the Falls the character of the Tarf changes, the rocky gorge giving place to a strath-like glen, the river having a broad, shallow channel—broader in many parts than the



Dee above Invercauld—which it is steadily widening by eating into the low grass-clad banks. The middle portion of the glen is the best feeding ground for deer in the immense forest of Athole, the grazing by the stream being excellent, and deer are therefore numerous. The Duke of Athole has a shooting bothy picturesquely situated on the south bank at the confluence of the Feith Uaine Mhor.

The day's outing ultimately resolved itself into an ascent of An Sgarsoch (3300) and Carn an Fhidleir (3276). The left bank of the Tarf was kept till near the mouth of the Allt a' Ghlas Choire, the forkings of which are at an altitude of 2350 feet. Here a considerable halt was made admiring our surroundings, as well as the great snow patches which still ornamented the head of the grassy corrie, and watching with our telescopes the motions of a herd of stags which alternately fed and looked at us, slightly changing their ground, but evidently somewhat averse to crossing snow. The top of Sgarsoch was easily reached from the forkings, grass and heather—much more of the former than the latter—clothing the slopes, which are at a moderate angle. Then the summit is little more than a plain, with a prominent cairn erected to mark its centre. Thus the hill itself does not specially appeal to the mountaineer, lacking, as it does, both "form and comeliness", but the view from the top is a revelation. The excellent situation of Sgarsoch, on the Aberdeen and Perth county march (between the Geldie and the Tarf, with the great mountain masses of the Cairngorms in the immediate north, and the grand group of Beinn a' Ghlo to the southward), renders it one of the best coigns of vantage for a mountain prospect in the north. The list of distant hills is a very long one, embracing most of the higher well-known summits of the Highlands, which even more than an hour's stay at the cairn was insufficient to completely identify. But, however grand the distant prospect, it was the nearer mountains that were most impressive. Beinn a' Ghlo, triple-peaked, looked particularly imposing, but the Benchninnans did not show to advantage—Lochnagar even having but a poorish appearance. The view of the Cairngorms was what most delighted us. They lay due north, so near that we could readily pick out each summit without the aid of the glass. The whole was in line, from Carn Bàn to Ben Avon, the only important summit invisible being Cairngorm itself. Commencing at the west, we had before us Carn Bàn; Sgòran Dubh, the rocky face of which above Loch Eunach was quite apparent—and which appears to be worthy of more attention than yet paid it by the Club; the gorge of the Eidart; Braeriach, with the tops of the corries Dee-wards; Sgòr an Lochan Uaine (Angel's Peak); Cairn Toul, looking precipitous towards Glen Dee; Beinn Bhrotain; Beinn Muich Dhui, appearing quite monarch-like with the top of the precipice above Lochan Uaine; Beinn Mheadhoin, with its "warts" that so considerably help in its identification; Carn a' Mhaim, with Derry Cairngorm behind; Beinn a' Bhuird and the peaks of Ben Avon. More to the eastward Morven stood alone and imposing.



The weather was glorious as the ascent had been made, but on the summit it was not so pleasant as to allow one to enjoy the prospect in comfort. There the thermometer stood at 38°, but a southerly wind blew that made it feel liker 32°, which was the minimum that day on Ben Nevis; in Aberdeen at the same hour the reading was 54°. Occasional runs had to be taken to keep up the circulation. The Geldie Burn was at our feet, with Geldie Lodge in the upper angle formed by that stream with the Allt Coire an t-Seilich, which rises near the top of Sgarsoch. The Lodge, however, cannot be seen from the cairn. At one time a cattle market was held on Sgarsoch, and a right of way exists from the Falls of Tarf direct to Glen Feshie by the east shoulder of Sgarsoch.

Carn an Fhidleir (the Fiddler's Cairn) was too near us—some two miles to the westward—to be left unclimbed. But a big cut, 1200 feet deep, divides the two summits, so that it is not altogether a walk over. Yet 55 minutes sufficed from cairn to cairn, and that with no attempt to "make a record". Both hills are very much alike, grass abounding. One striking feature was that, while deer were much in evidence, little else, if indeed anything was to be seen with life. The view from Carn an Fhidleir was essentially the same as that from An Sgarsoch. The only differences were that, being now more to the eastward of us, the Cairngorms were not so well seen—though the view of them was really excellent—while the Feshie, both up and down, was much better seen. The great bend of that river as it seems to seek the Geldie was particularly noticeable, approaching so near it, with the intervening ground so low and flat, that it is evident little effort would be required to send the Feshie to the Dee. This course might be considered by the Aberdeen Incorporation when finally driven to earth for a larger supply of water. It might be cheaper than bottling up Loch Muick or Loch Callater! The flat, foggy summit, though a noted one, as there three counties meet (Aberdeen, Inverness, and Perth), is not distinguished by such a cairn as one would naturally expect. Beinn Dearg (3304), the monarch mountain of the west side of Glen Tilt, as Carn nan Gabhar (3671) of Beinn a' Ghlo commands the east side, appealed to us, and we would fain have made for it, but the rather leisurely manner in which we had done our day's mountaineering forbade. With the telescope we could discern the tree roots in the lower end of Loch Mark (misnamed, with its burn and glen, *Mhaire* in the O.S. maps), which lies at its north-east foot.

Two streamlets rise in the hollow between Sgarsoch and Carn an Fhidleir, one flowing northwards to the Geldie, the other southwards to the Tarf. Both have the same name, Allt a' Chaorruinn (the Rowan Tree Burn). We made for the Tarf in a much less dignified manner than we had hitherto indulged in. Down the now treeless burn at something like a scamper; yet had we kept exactly by its course we perhaps had been there still, for it has "as many crooks as Don". Consequently we cut across them, leaping from bank to bank, and



startling the troutlets that swarmed in the burn. It required but little imagination to clothe the grassy banks with the rowan trees that had at some remote period given name to the burn, for here and there sections showed the old roots of trees that had perished and left no successors. As we got lower down the glories of evening were on us, and the mist, summoned from some unseen cloudy hold, silently filled the corries and glens. By and by a snug one-roomed shieling received us, where, with well-lined knapsacks, the night passed as pleasantly as any son of the mountains could have desired.

was attempted on 12th March by Mr. J. H. Gibson  
 LOCHNAGAR and the writer, by a snow-gully in the east corner of the big corrie. We got to the head of this gully, which runs to within 100 feet of the top, but were stopped there by a sheer wall of smooth rock. On our left was a sloping slab some ten feet high, covered with rotten ice, leading on to the face of the cliffs, showing beyond a possible, though an exceedingly difficult, way to the top. These 10 feet might have "gone", but with only two men on the rope we decided it prudent not to attempt it.

On our right, we might have got out on the rock wall of the gully, but this was over some steep, ice-covered blocks, and we could not tell what was beyond. The result of a slip from either of these ways would have been more than serious. We therefore gave it up, and descended face inwards by the same way as we had come, using our old steps, and reaching the foot of the gully in safety. The time in the gully occupied  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours— $2\frac{1}{2}$  going up and 1 in descent.

Skirting the foot of the cliffs, we ascended to Cac Carn Beag by the snow gully, known locally as the "Black Spout". This ascent we found exceedingly simple, and there ought to be no difficulty to those properly equipped for winter climbing in ascending it at any season of the year. It took us thirty minutes to reach the top, by the left hand branch which comes out at the cairn of Cac Carn Beag. Steps were kicked all the way up, but of course we had our axes ready to anchor in the event of a slip. Without them, and once started, we would have glissaded all the way to the foot.

In the first gully all the steps were cut by Gibson, and no one, without a long training at step-cutting could have cut such a staircase of steps as was required in the ascent of this gully. I have not given up hope of eventually ascending this gully, and I am looking forward to some day returning with a strong party and again tackling him.—  
 WILLIAM DOUGLAS.

is the title of a neat little brochure of some 40 pages  
 "FROM by Mr. F. Davie, recently published by Mr. J. D.  
 ELGIN TO Yeadon, 62 High Street, Elgin (price 6d.). A good  
 BEN MUICH view of the Shelter Stone is given as a frontispiece. It  
 DHUI" seems there is an Elgin Cairngorm Club, for "the  
 author dedicates this little production to the Elgin  
 Cairngorm Club. He had, last summer, desired to be admitted a



member of this club, but was informed that his application could not be entertained till he had first climbed the mountains of Cairngorm and Ben Muich Dhui and published an account of his journey". These conditions of membership should make *the* Cairngorm Club revise its rules! Mr. Davie's essay-piece will certainly be found interesting from a certain stand-point, but it does not pretend to make the ascent easier in any way to candidates qualifying for membership. Indeed, except to "old Parliamentary hands", the route is rather obscured than otherwise. The Cairngorm flies were found to be particularly numerous and voracious, and the "excursion wasted many a precious hour hunting for these delusions (Cairngorm stones)". The top of Cairngorm reached (6 p.m.), Ben Muich Dhui was made for, but abandoned, and the Shelter Stone descended on. Here "the Moray loons"—there were seven of them—found two mountaineers already in possession, so the accommodation was scarcely equal to expectation, apart from certain natural drawbacks there that some of us are not unfamiliar with. An early start was made for Ben Muich Dhui—"The call to breakfast sounded at 3 a.m. The excursion breakfasted in the open air all save one, whose appetite was not equal to the opportunity. . . . We soon reached Loch Etchachan, where the excursion made a great mistake. It took the wrong side of the loch, the side next Ben Muich Dhui", and the result was almost disastrous. "Yet, on and on we wandered, until we passed entirely round the lake, and there appeared no passage leading from that eternal valley, either back into this world or on to the next. . . . Yet, on we went, and round and round the lake we staggered, weary, hopeless, forlorn, till the rocks and the mist melted away, and we seemed to be wandering on the open hillside".

THE  
OSPREY.

MR. J. A. HARVIE-BROWN, F.R.S.E., F.Z.S., thus writes the Editor :—I visited the Ospreys' nest on Loch Morlich side one day in May last year. One bird only seen; the nest complete but empty. I picked up a first primary feather at the foot of the tree *shot-shattered*, and the direction of the shot clearly traceable, scarring the fibre after cutting away a large piece. The shot must have then struck the bone close to the base of the first primary (right wing), causing extension of the muscle and the consequent casting of the quill. Shame it is!! If anyone has a stuffed Osprey look out for defective right wing. To conceal this the wing will probably be lightly tucked to the side, and Ospreys are usually stuffed showing extended wings. I am preparing a chronological history for the past 100 years of the Ospreys of Loch an Eilean. At the last Council meeting of the Zoological Society the Society's medals were awarded to the representatives of the Grants of Rothiemurchus and to Cameron of Lochiel for the past continuous protection afforded by these families to the Ospreys at Loch an Eilean and at Loch Arkaig. . . . If you have any influence will you also use it for their better preservation? I ask it in the interest of the birds, of which there are now only *three regularly occupied* eyries in all Scotland.



The Cairngorm Club