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THE  
Cairngorm Club Journal.

EDITED BY  
ALEX. INKSON M'CONNOCHIE.

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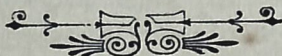
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THE  
Cairngorm Club Journal

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Cairngorm Club Journal

EDITED BY  
ALEX. INKSON M'CONNOCHIE

VOL. I.

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THE CAIRNGORM CLUB

1896

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WATERSHEDS.

BY THE REV. J. G. MICHIE.

THE yearly excursions of the Cairngorm Club should not be looked upon by those taking part in them merely as holidays, or occasions for the exercise of their physical energies, or even for the gratification of their appreciation of the grand and sublime in nature. These and other such objects are useful and beneficial in their way and are not to be despised, but there might be combined with them an investigation into many features of the localities visited which would throw no little light on obscure points in physical science and natural history. The habitats of plants, for instance, their seasons of growth, flowering, and seeding at different elevations, is a subject yet requiring much investigation. To the botanist, zoologist, and, indeed, naturalist generally, no excursion of the kind the Cairngorm Club provides need be without interest, and it may be made to contribute to the advancement or the elucidation of some branch of natural science. No one who knew him could, for example, conceive of the late Dr. John Roy (an honoured member of the Club) in the days of his health and strength accompanying his fellow excursionists to the top of Ben Muich Dhui, or even to the Brimmond Hill, without adding something to his stores of botanical knowledge; and there must be in the Club several members (to whom these excursions are rare opportunities) capable of doing good work in the same field. It is to the geological

members of the Club—and everyone is, or may become, a geologist to some extent—that the following observations on the phenomena of watersheds are more particularly addressed.

I remember—it is a long time ago—accompanying an eminent mineralogist in an excursion to Ben Cruachan. It was a fine clear day, and the view was glorious. I was in raptures with it, while he was intent on his scientific pursuits and heeded it not. “How can you, Professor”, I exclaimed, “withdraw your attention from this grand scene to fix it on the minute chips you are hammering away at”? “Well, my young friend”, he calmly replied, “I have seen all that before with as much admiration as you can feel, who now see it for the first time. A glance at it is now quite enough for me; my present business is to discover whether the rare mineral *spodumene* is to be found among these mouldering blocks of granite. You may come to this by and by, who knows”!

After having surmounted all the high peaks of the Grampians and other lofty Scottish ranges the Cairngorm Club may come to investigate more humble tracts, who knows? As a step in this downward course, I would invite their attention to *Watersheds*.

No doubt, the top of every mountain is a watershed of some sort, but often it is the least interesting to be met with. The summit of Cairn Toul, one of the highest and most imposing of the Cairngorm group, is a watershed, but one of no civil or geographical importance. It is wholly within Aberdeenshire, and drains on all sides into the Dee, presenting only weather-beaten fragments of decaying granite. As a watershed it is unimportant, though in many other respects we have not a mountain better worth making the acquaintance of. The same may be said of Lochnagar and several others. Very different are the characteristics of humbler *divides*—to use an Americanism. Most of them are full of interest to the geologist, and even to the common visitor. Might not the Cairngorm Club devote an occasional excursion to some portion of these interesting localities? The field within their reach is an

extensive one. The boundary of the Dee basin, setting out from the heights at Nigg and following the windings to the return at the head of the Spital, cannot be much under 240 miles, and not a mile of it is without some interest. Geikie, in his fascinating work on earth sculpture, has directed attention to many of the bolder features presented by the more elevated ridges, but there is scarcely any portion that is not suggestive of thought on the wonderful operation of nature continued throughout the long geological ages. Take a broad survey of that great cluster of mountains "that guard the infant rills of highland Dee", and imagine the time when the whole was one huge mass of molten granite. Then watch it during the process of cooling, how it shrank and cracked, forming gullies, corries, and gaping clefts, afterwards to become the sources and channels of mountain torrents, and broader valleys for greater rivers. You will see evidence of all this along the watershed between the Dee and the Spey. The rents that lie on either side of Cairn Toul, through which the Geusachan and the Garchary tumble are such; the wider opening that forms the Learg Ghruamach, giving passage to the infant Dee, the shattered rift at the head of the Derry, and the sneck between Beinn a' Bhuid and Ben Avon are all examples of the behaviour of this mighty mass in the course of its cooling into solid rock. It is wonderful, also, with what regularity these cracks and rents occur. This, too, no doubt, is in accordance with a law of nature whereby a cooling mass of mineral in the process of shrinkage splits up into separate blocks. The gaps thus left between our mountains have, since their first formation, been much modified by the abrading action of many agents; and nowhere can that action be better studied than on the high watersheds—the higher the better—because there we can the more plainly see the work going on before our eyes.

It is to be remarked that a watershed may, under certain topographical conditions, continue for miles without much variety of character. This usually happens where the dividing ridge is broad and but little indented, and this again is the case where the courses of the main draining

streams on both sides are parallel or nearly so. A good example of this is to be seen in the broad ridge extending westward from Mount Keen to the Capel Mounth, drained by the Mark and the Lee on the south and the Tanar and the Muick on the north, all having an easterly trend. On the other hand, where the main draining streams trend in an opposite direction, the ridge between them is usually narrow, sometimes cut through altogether, forming a larig, or pass. Originally, of course, the rock fissures determined the openings for the streams; but in after ages these have eaten into the mountain mass on either side till they have met, or nearly met, on a narrow ridge. If we examine the ten or eleven passes that formerly were frequented as traffic routes between the Dee valley and the southern counties, and still are recognised as public highways, we shall find that in most cases they have been selected on account of these natural openings in the mountain chain produced by the above-mentioned agency, namely, by streams cutting into the dividing ridge in opposite directions at, or nearly at, the same point. And, on the other hand, the fact that we have culminating points in the range, which we distinguish as separate mountains, is mainly due, after the original splitting up of the cooling granitic mass, to the absence of such agency. No doubt these original fissures to a large extent determined the course of the streams, but not always. The water supply is dependent on the internal configuration of the bounding rocks. The internal drainage may be away from the rift, and where this is the case the original rift, instead of being excavated, will be filled up with the *debris* of abraded rock material lodged there by the action of glaciers and other agents, and remain so to the present day.

There are many other interesting phenomena connected with watersheds that cannot fail to engage the attention of the intelligent observer. On the broad flat to the west of Mount Keen already referred to, the explorer will meet with many moss-hags and pools, great and small, the direction of the outflow of which he can with difficulty determine. In fact, in many cases the drainage is some-

times in one direction and sometimes in the opposite. When a pool so situated has its outflow obstructed by the growth or accumulation of moss or other matter and a heavy fall of rain occurs it discharges itself through the bank of least resistance, which may happen to be on the very opposite side from that through which it formerly found vent for its surplus waters. Thus, much of the rainfall which in one season swells the waters of the Muick may in another feed the Mark or the Lee.

But there is yet another and still more interesting feature of undetermined outflow of even large lakes situated on a watershed. There has been much contention among geologists whether lakes so placed might not have two outflows in opposite directions. There can be no doubt the thing is possible. A traveller some years ago asserted that he had discovered on the Dovre Fjeld, in Norway, such a lake, with two distinct outfalls, one westward into the Sogne Fiord, and the other eastward into the valley of the Glomen. But it is very doubtful whether this double discharge could be long maintained, there are so many causes to disturb it—the nature of the channels of the different outfalls, more or less liable to yield to the wear and tear of the current, and even the general direction of the winds and storms forcing a larger body of water in one direction, thus tending to deepen one outlet more and faster than the other.

However this may be, there is at least one lake on the watershed between the basins of the Dee and Spey which is in reality drained into both these rivers, though in a manner not affected by these disturbing elements. This is Loch Builg, situated at the eastern base of Ben Avon, and in the glack, or bealach, between that mountain and the Brown Cow Hill, which forms the pass called the Bealach Dearg, and exactly on the watershed in the heart of the pass. The only visible outlet from it is by a small rivulet issuing from the north end. At first it flows over the bare rock into which it has not worn a channel of more than a few inches in depth. At the other, or south, end there is no band of rock near the surface, but the shore consists of a



great accumulation of loose gravel. In this deposit, at a short distance from the lake, there are several blind hollows filled with water. The gravel deposit extends for more than a quarter of a mile towards the Gairn.

Many years ago Professor Heddle and the writer paid a visit to Loch Builg for the purpose of examining the geological structure of the rocks in the vicinity. What first struck us as remarkable about the lake was the small discharge of water issuing from the north end compared with the quantity poured into it by the streamlets on both sides. It seemed to us that evaporation from the surface in this cold region would in no way account for the difference. But on examination of the southern shore we were at no loss to see how it arose. We made a minute inspection of the material of which it is composed, and found that it was morainic in character, very loose and porous, and that the blind hollows, a common feature of such deposits, were all filled with water, the surface of those nearest the lake being very little below its own surface. We found also that from the lower base of the morainic deposit there issued a considerable stream almost, if not altogether, equal in volume to that which escaped from the north end of the lake.

Whence came the supply of water to these hollows? They are so situated that they can receive no surface supply, and yet they are always full. Manifestly the source is in the lake. One can easily see that a ditch of moderate depth would drain the whole lake into the Gairn and leave the northern exit quite dry.

Did the lake at any time wholly empty itself into the Gairn? If so, whence descended the glacier that deposited these moraines, blocking up the natural exit? Why is there such a large accumulation of these at the south end and none at all at the north? Where is the real watershed? If it cannot be ascertained on the bosom of the lake, where can it be found on either side? As the watershed is understood to mark the boundary of the contiguous counties and properties, is this march recognised in the boundary actually and legally agreed upon? From the fact that the legal boundary on one side at least is more than half way up the

lake, and the further fact that the proprietor on the south side has a legal right to fish on the lake, are we to conclude that there was even then, at the time when the estate boundary was fixed, a recognition of the underground drainage to which we have referred? \* These and many other interesting questions might abundantly engage the attention of the Cairngorm Club during a long summer holiday; and if the weather were favourable few excursions could be more instructive or more enjoyable.

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\* We understand that by a recent arrangement between the proprietors a fence has been erected touching the loch at its southern extremity and marking the boundary of the respective properties; but of old it was not so. The tenant of the Invercauld grazings on the south had the right of pasturage over the whole eastern shore of the lake.  
—J. G. M.

[*Vide C. C. J.*, Vol. I., pp. 239-40.—*Ed.*.]

## GLEN FESHIE.

BY ROBERT ANDERSON.

GLEN FESHIE forms the most westerly of the passes that intersect the Cairngorms and lead the pedestrian from Deeside to Speyside or *vice versa*—to speak absolutely correctly, it does not intersect the Cairngorms, but is just outside the range, skirting the western base of the Western Cairngorms. It is an exceedingly attractive glen. It lacks the stern grandeur of Glen Dee and the Learg Ghruamach, with their massive enclosing mountains; its solitude does not possess—that, at least, is the writer's feeling—the eerie loneliness of the Learg an Laoigh. But it has a picturesqueness all its own, with which nothing in either of the Larigs can compare—neither the Rothiemurchus Forest at the end of the one, nor the Nethy Valley at the end of the other. The river Feshie, which traverses the glen, is the main contributor to its scenic features, just as its lively presence saves the glen from the stigma of desolation and loneliness. A splendid specimen of the highland burn is the Feshie, especially in its middle portion, where the process of its “making” is unfolded. You follow it down or trace it up the glen with pleasure and admiration, so varied are its characteristics. Linns, falls, rapids, pools—you have them all by turns; a perfect wealth of them. Now the river is brawling over a rocky bed; now it is flowing dark and sullen through a ravine in the hill-side; anon

“Foaming strang, wi' hasty stens,  
Frae lin to lin”.

Walking along the Feshie, you are instinctively reminded of Professor Blackie's “Song of the Highland River” :—

“From the treeless brae,  
All green and grey,  
To the wooded ravine I wind my way,  
Dashing, and foaming, and leaping with glee,  
The child of the mountain, wild and free.

Under the crag where the stone crop grows,  
 Fringing with gold my shelvy bed,  
     While over my head  
     Its fruitage of red  
 The rock-rooted rowan tree blushfully shows,  
     I wind, till I find  
     A way to my mind,  
 While hazel, and oak, and the light ash tree  
 Weave a green awning of leafage for me.  
     Fitfully, fitfully, on I go,  
 Leaping, or running, or winding slow,  
 Till I come to the linn where my waters rush  
 Eagerly down with a broad-faced gush,  
     Foamingly, foamingly, white as the snow  
 On to the soft green turf below,  
 Where I sleep with the lake as it sleeps in the glen,  
 'Neath the far-stretching base of the high-peaked Ben".

The Feshie sleeps in no lake or glen, however; its rushing waters ultimately commingle with those of the swift-flowing Spey. The "meeting of the waters" is not by any means a particularly romantic spot; the most beautiful portion of the Feshie is at Ruigh-aiteachain—alternatively termed "The Huts" and "The Islands"—on the right bank of the river, opposite Glenfeshie Lodge—"a most lovely spot", the Queen writes, "among splendid fir-trees, the mountains rising abruptly from the sides of the valley. We were quite enchanted with the beauty of the view".\*

From Braemar, Glen Feshie is reached by walking up the valley of the Dee to where the river is joined by the Geldie, and by then taking the path through Glen Geldie (this path is marked by one of the posts of the Scottish Rights of Way Society, indicating a road to Insh). The path through Glen Geldie (a driving road) goes to Geldie Lodge (Sir Horace Farquhar's); but the pedestrian in quest of Glen Feshie must leave it a little short of the Lodge and just before it crosses the Geldie. He will find himself on a broad expanse of moorland, over which he must make his way as best he can. There is said to be a path, but, if it

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\* The Queen visited Glen Feshie twice—on 4th September, 1860, and 8th October, 1861. (See "Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands".)

exists, it is exceedingly indistinct and elusive; the failure of two attempts to strike it has made the writer sceptical of its existence. The only direction to be given is to walk in line with the Geldie, but gradually moving away from it—the higher up the better, to avoid the boggy ground near the Geldie, which soon becomes attenuated to a mere stream. (Once on the reverse journey up Glen Feshie from Kingussie to Braemar, I made a bee-line across this moorland by walking steadily in the direction of Lochnagar, here a prominent feature in the landscape.) The surrounding scenery is comparatively unattractive—moorland and bare hillsides; but the distant hill prospect is good, and the bold outlines of one range far away on the left (presumably the hills enclosing the Forest of Gaick) arrest attention. The Geldie diminishes more and more, until, finally, it is traced—a thin streak—descending a hillside on the left. A little distance further on you come suddenly in view of the Feshie—already a considerable stream—rushing down a wide valley, also on the left, and making a very sharp turn in its course—from an easterly to a northerly direction; and somewhere in this neighbourhood the county march between Aberdeenshire and Inverness-shire is crossed. The direction here is to get down to the Feshie, by the side of which a path will soon be struck. The Eidart Burn, which runs into the Feshie, has then to be crossed. There used to be a rough bridge over the Eidart, consisting of a couple of planks and a wire for a hand-rail, a few yards above the junction; but the last I heard of it was that it is down, in which case fording will need to be resorted to. Before crossing the Eidart, one should walk up along it for a little distance to see a picturesque fall—refreshing was the sight of it one very warm day on which I walked through the glen. The Eidart crossed, an excellent footpath runs down the glen, on the right bank of the river, to Ruigh-aiteachain and on to a bridge below Glenfeshie Lodge.\*

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\* It is almost unnecessary to say that Glen Feshie now constitutes part of a large deer forest of the same name, the following particulars of which are given in Scrope's "Days of Deer-Stalking":—"Glenfeshie Forest, in

Ruigh-aiteachain, as already mentioned, is the loveliest part of Glen Feshie. The glen—a narrow one all the way down to this spot—here opens out into a well-wooded haugh or meadow, not unlike a bit of English woodland scenery. The lower slopes of the adjacent crag-tipped mountain sides are abundantly wooded, a number of fine old pine trees being conspicuous, with which are interspersed birches and large clumps of juniper bushes.\* And a huge mountain mass projects itself prominently into the scene, separating the glen from a valley beyond, the end of which is just visible. The spot is a lovely one—an oasis in a desert. The haugh is cut into strips, or sections, by former channels of the river, hence the term, "The Islands". Another name for the place is "The Huts". The "huts" are now represented by bits of gable walls, all that remains of a series of wooden buildings occasionally occupied by a former Duchess of Bedford (a daughter of the celebrated Duchess of Gordon), when lessee of Glenfeshie. Amongst her most favourite guests was Sir Edwin Landseer, the painter, who, it is said, "obtained in the locality sketches for some of his most famous paintings".† On the plaster above the fire-place of one of the huts Sir Edwin drew a picture, part of which is still extant, showing three antlered stags and a hind. The Mackintosh, to whom "The Huts" belong, has, in order to preserve this interesting memorial of the great animal painter, erected a building over the ruined fireplace—a building that looks like a mission-hall (has, indeed, been used for that purpose), and that, in consequence, is often passed without notice by the pedes-

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the parish of Kingussie and county of Inverness, is bounded on the south and south-east by the forests of Mar and Atholl, on the west by the forest of Gaick, and on the south by the estate of Invereshie; by survey in 1770 it contained 13,706 Scots acres. It was let in 1752 to Mr. Macpherson of Invereshie, and continued to be rented by that family until 1812, when it was purchased from the Duke of Gordon by Mr. Macpherson of Invereshie and Ballindalloch. It has been pastured by cattle and sheep since 1752".

\* "Ruigh-aiteachain may possibly be a corruption for Ruigh Ait-neachain, the Stretch of the Junipers". ("Badenoch: Its History, Clans, and Place Names". By Alexander Macbain.)

† "Kingussie and Upper Speyside (Badenoch) as a Summer Resort".

trian. The numerous windows, however, enable the passer-by to view the picture with ease, without the trouble of getting the door opened.\*

Crossing the Feshie at a wooden bridge below Glenfeshie Lodge the pedestrian follows a road on the left bank, and after passing through a deer fence two or three miles lower down arrives at cross-roads with a Rights-of-Way post indicating the road to Insh. Insh will be gained by keeping the road in the line of the one you have been following; the road that turns off to the left leads to Kingussie. Insh is decidedly the nearer of the two (particularly if you can manage to strike a short cut; but how few people one meets here from whom to ask a direction!) The fact is, however, that the walk through Glen Feshie to any destination is a long one. According to the best estimate I have been able to form, aided by more or less reliable information, the distance from Braemar to Glenfeshie Lodge alone is 21 miles, made up thus:—Braemar to Linn of Dee, 6 miles; Linn of Dee to Glen Geldie, 3 miles; Glen Geldie, 3 miles; Geldie Lodge to the Eidart, 3 miles; the Eidart to Glenfeshie Lodge, 6 miles. The distance from Glenfeshie Lodge to Kingussie is 10 miles; from Glenfeshie Lodge to Insh, 8 miles.

To this general description of Glen Feshie I may add some detailed notes of an interesting "circular tour" in the region, undertaken in August, last year, by several members of the Club and myself. Starting from Loch an Eilein, we drove by Polchar, the Doune, and South Kinrara to Lagganlia, and then to Glenfeshie Lodge by the right bank

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\* The name of another painter, Rev. John Thomson of Duddingston, is associated with Glen Feshie. Thomson on one occasion paid a visit to Sir David Brewster, while the latter was residing in Badenoch, "and was, of course, taken to see Glen Feshie, with its wild corries and moors, and the giants of the old pine forest. After a deep silence, my father was startled by the exclamation, 'Lord God Almighty'! and on looking round he saw the strong man bowed down in a flood of tears, so much had the wild grandeur of the scene and the sense of the One creative hand possessed the soul of the artist. Glen Feshie afterwards formed the subject of one of Thomson's best pictures". ("Home Life of Sir David Brewster", by his daughter, Mrs. Gordon.)

of the Feshie, crossing the river at Achlean. Crossing the river again at the Lodge, we walked up the glen. After passing "The Huts", the path skirts the base of a series of precipitous crags, wooded on their lower slopes. The Feshie here flows through a narrow valley, walled in on the opposite side by the projecting mountain mass already alluded to, which is literally scored and streaked with what had evidently been not water courses merely, but torrent courses. Several burns come tumbling down the steep hill-sides on our left, forming many miniature waterfalls; and every now and again we cross "shoots" of stones and detritus discharged from the hill-tops—"shoots" of immense length, width, and depth; the depth often indicated by the "buried" condition of the standing trees in their track. Strange it was to find wild strawberries and rasps growing amid this wreck of matter; cranberries, blaeberrys, and juniper berries were also plentiful along the slopes. Animate nature, too, was not awanting. Two eagles were observed circling leisurely in the air far above the summit of the crags, and suddenly one of them darted off in pursuit of a passing bird. The swift flight of a hawk was also noted, and three or four geosanders were seen skimming along the Feshie. When we got out of the wood we had to skirt the edge of a row of immense screes, extending probably for about a quarter of a mile. This accomplished, the path descends to the river-side and crosses a grassy plateau. The frowning torrent-torn wall on the left bank of the river is now replaced by a hill covered with birches and aspens, the picturesque effect of which is heightened by two or three burns, each descending the hill in a series of waterfalls. From the grassy plateau the path gradually ascends up into a region of brownish hills, bare and treeless, save for a few alders and aspens along the bank of the river, which here descends rapidly over linns and through gorges, many of them very fine, particularly one deep gorge immediately below the spot where the Allt Coire Bhlair rushes into the Feshie—not flowing into it, but tumbling into it, in cascade form, over a shelf of rock.

An examination of the Allt Coire Bhlair was the real



order of the day. This burn crosses the Glen Feshie path at an interesting spot, flowing out of a steep, narrow gorge, at the further end of which is discerned a high waterfall. The spot is otherwise interesting, as in the immediate vicinity are the remains of some walls which at one time formed part of a hut frequently resorted to by Sir Edwin Landseer. We wormed our way up the gorge by the burn-side, as far as was possible, climbing over projecting ledges, clambering along the sides of ugly-looking gullies and deafening linns, and securing a foothold not always the most trustworthy, owing to the wet and rotten condition of the rock. But it was all to no purpose. Very soon a gap faced us that there was no getting round—the burn flowing fast and deep between two sheer walls of rock; and this gap, too, was placed obliquely, so that we had no proper view up the gorge. We had simply a partial view of a huge cleft in a mountain; precipitous rock faces on each side of us, with ferns sprouting from their interstices and a dwarf birch, or aspen, or fir occasionally showing on some of the higher ledges; and at the upper end a tantalising glimpse of a bit of waterfall. Reluctantly we had to retrace our steps—the descent, at one point, proving not quite so easy as the ascent; but with due caution the difficulty was surmounted. There was now no other course open to us but to attempt to find the waterfall from the ridge above the gorge. Ascending the ridge accordingly—the ridge on the left bank of the burn—we, in a short time, came in view of a magnificent waterfall; a fairly large body of water making the descent by three separate leaps, so to speak—first, a transverse fall from right to left, then a straight descent for a considerable distance, and then a transverse fall again, but this time from left to right. Each of us made an estimate of the total height of the fall (including all three branches); the average of five separate estimates was 166 feet. It was unanimously resolved to name them the Landseer Falls.

Leaving the Landseer Falls and the Allt Coire Bhlair, we trended away to the right and made for a summit called Diollaid Coire Eindard (3184). A good-natured dispute

arose—not infrequent on similar occasions—as to whether it would be preferable to take the hill right in front or gain it by means of a projecting shoulder. The upshot of the dispute was that it was resolved to give both plans a trial, two of us making straight for the hill, the other three making for the shoulder, all “racing” being barred. The trio gained the summit first, whereupon the couple, as a matter of course, protested that they had encountered the worser walking-ground, having to cross a long boggy moor intersected with natural trenches. Excuses for delay are as fertile on a mountain-top as anywhere else! From the summit we had a fine view of Beinn Bhrotain, Monadh Mor, Cairn Toul (with its two cairns), Braeriach, Ben Muich Dhui, and Sgòran Dubh. A brief view it was, however, for, almost immediately, down came the mist, followed by rain! Meall Tionail (3338) was then made for, and duly gained. Diollaid Coire Eindard and Meall Tionail are connected by an extensive plateau of grass, which spreads around for a considerable distance, and on which a carriage and pair could easily be driven; while in a hollow to the north lies a huge moss, called the Moine Mhor, having an area of several miles. Large quantities of porphyritic granite are to be observed on Meall Tionail; and, on descending from the plateau, the ground is found “grooved” in a peculiar fashion, bare-swept stretches of gravel alternating with grassy mounds. A sudden rise of the mist revealing Glenfeshie Lodge due west of us suggested recourse to tactics which enabled us to perform what was really a “circular tour”. Instead of returning to Glen Feshie, as had been our original intention, we struck northwards for the Coire Garblach. This corrie is of great height—looking down from its crest to the plain below, as we did, one is apt to call the height stupendous. It has four or five facets (if such a term is allowable) or separate gullies, and formidable gullies they are. They are composed of screes for the most part, with rocky escarpments, the weathered and jagged edges of which protrude in fantastic forms; yet, viewed from varying points, the entire corrie assumes a contour of form that is grand and

imposing. Seated on the verge of the corrie, and looking beyond it, we had a magnificent view of Strathspey, from Loch Insh to Loch Laggan, with the Monadh Liath range backing the strath and mountains innumerable in the south, while away northwards could be seen the Moray Firth, Ben Wyvis, and even the Paps of Caithness.

A path we struck a little below the Coire Garblach took us down the Coire Caol to the bridge at Glenfeshie Lodge. The return journey to Loch an Eilein was made by the left bank of the Feshie and Feshiebridge.

## A SCHOOL-BOY WALK OVER THE PENTLANDS.

*Aquila non capit muscas*, and why, it may be asked, should the *Cairngorm Club Journal* chronicle a trivial saunter over the Pentlands with a parcel of school-boys? Abana and Pharpar, we reply, were, doubtless, very fine rivers, but Jordan had its merits too; and it was not the least, nor least beloved, of English naturalists who saw "majestic mountains" in the smooth slopes and humble altitudes of the South Downs. Moreover, the school-boy who is entered at the Pentlands between 9 and 12 years of age may find his way to the top of Ben Muich Dhui or Cairn Toul in all the greater comfort when he is 18 or 20.

" Ere bairns can read they first maun spell,  
I learnt this frae my mammie".

It was a little before ten in the forenoon of a fine, but rather sultry, Saturday that we mustered at Princes Street station—some five and twenty boys and two men, the latter known as Pathfinder and Strayaway. The order was flannels or other rough clothes, every one to bring his own good and sufficient lunch, and those who had them to bring compasses, aneroids, field-glasses, and such-like gear. A few minutes in the train brought us to Colinton, and a few minutes' walk from Colinton to the foot of the hill. We struck up past Bonaly Tower (once Lord Cockburn's country seat) and presently found ourselves on the slope above, which gave a view, to those who cared to look back, of Edinburgh on the right and the three camel-humps of the Forth Bridge on the left—a more cheering outlook than Servius Sulpicius had returning out of Asia, for we looked not on the ruins of man's work, but on a thriving city and a busy thoroughfare of traffic. As for the further distance, it was dim and hazy, like the landscape of a troubled dream. But the boys did not care to linger long: Where was the reservoir? was their question; and when the dyke and overflow came in sight they crowded towards it like wasps to a honey-pot. There is a good old shooters' rule,

*never to drink between breakfast and luncheon*, but to enforce it upon boys were the merest pedantry. They drank as Thor drank at the Giant's Horn, and we were half surprised when we climbed the dyke to find the waters not visibly shrunken, and a couple of wild duck—which the glasses revealed as the pied drake of the tufted duck and his smaller, duskier mate—swimming undisturbed upon its surface. They gave us a wide offing, having possibly heard of school-boys before, and we wished them good-bye and an unmolested breeding-time as we turned away. From the pool it was plain and easy going, and we were soon dropping down towards Glencorse, putting up a few peeseweeps as we got down into the valley. We struck the road close to Glencorse reservoir, and now, in the close valley, the heat began to tell; there were a good many stragglers, and a little judicious whipping-in became necessary. But the white-breasted sand-piper lured us on, crying, "Kittie-needie, kittie-needie, kit, kit, kit", from the water's edge, and a halt near the upper, or Loganlee, pool for luncheon gave the laggards time to come in. We noted then, what held good all day, that it was not the strongest built boys that went the best, but the lightest built; in hot weather, at all events, little to carry seems to be a greater advantage than much carrying power—the smallest and slimmest boys led all the way. After luncheon, we took the road again, still going up the valley, and after turning off to visit and climb about the ruins of the old royal hunting-lodge, shortly struck off on to the track leading up to Habbie's Howe. After jumping the windings of the burn—oftener, perhaps, than was in strictness needful—we reached Habbie's Howe itself, and there the boys entered upon their heritage. Walking was in their eyes all very well, but a burn to tumble into, a little rock face to climb, and a pool to bathe in were as incense thrown on their sacrifice. First they clustered together on the face of the rocks beside the waterfall like a clump of guillemots at St. Abb's Head, save that their voice was not the voice of groaning; then the bolder spirits climbed away out of sight, and the Johnny-raws, who had never tried scrambling on a

rock face before, began, with knees set painfully and precariously in the toe-holds, to follow them. It was vain to tell them that sore knees and sudden tumbles await him who uses his joints instead of his extremities: incompetent climbers all over the world will use their knees for their toes, and these were no exception; they were more grateful for an occasional shoulder-up than for a world of good advice. Here we made a long halt; some bathed in the upper pool, others, content to take their happiness piecemeal, "douked", or paddled, while the small son of a distinguished man of science sat dangling his heels from the little bridge below, begging his friends to dry their ears and faces thoroughly if they did not wish to be burnt sore by the sun. When at last we left this Happy Valley, Pathfinder went off with the vanguard, and it fell to Strayaway's lot to whip up two stragglers, one of whom was found completing a leisurely toilet after his bath and the other hunting butterflies. At the slap in the next stone dyke a double line was formed up and the laggards had to run the gauntlet, but the executioners were not in a mood to lay on with severity, and the offenders came out at the other end smiling. A little further on we found the delicate buckbean flowering in a wet spot among rushes, and before we reached Bavelaw we saw a hawk—though certain Sadducees would have it that it was only a cuckoo—and then at the water-trough at the top of Bavelaw avenue we drank surprisingly: had Gideon been to choose among us for fighting men he would have made up but a short muster-roll. Down the avenue and over the Threipmuir Bridge we went, and just beyond found the whole moor white with cotton-grass, more and more shining white than we had ever seen it. And then came "the stale bit", as the boys said, the road into Balerno. But they hastened over it, for they were thirsty again, and drank lemonade in the baker's little shop till the goodwife laughed to see them. And so we reached the train, just before the storm, which had long been threatening, burst over the village. It might rain for us: little we cared whose skins were wet, for ours were dry; we were in the "*suave mari magno*" mood,

only we didn't all know it, and our mirth was loud enough to drown the rattle of the train. As if to crown our cup, too, before we parted at the Princes Street station the rain had almost stopped.

To reckon up our day's walk: we had gone some eleven miles beneath a sultry, clouded, summer sky; no one had broken down or lost his temper; one of our number, indeed, was once seen to blush, but then it is to be remembered that, as on the noted occasion of Thrasy machus' blushing, it was a very hot day. We had done what we meant to do, and no wonder, for four of our number, two of the boys that led all day, Pathfinder himself, and Stray-away, had all learnt to walk among the Cairngorms.

On the Monday many of the boys came to Pathfinder again to ask where the walk was to be on the coming Saturday, but Pathfinder only shook his head:—" *Ne quid nimis*" is a good rule to observe even in the healthiest of all amusements—hill-walking.

STRAYAWAY.

## CÀRN EIGE AND MAM SODHAIL.

BY ARCHD. E. ROBERTSON, M.A.

CÀRN EIGE and Mam Sodhail, on the borders of Inverness and Ross, are the two highest hills north of the Caledonian Canal, and probably among the most inaccessible in Scotland. By this is not meant that there is difficulty in their actual ascent; in point of fact, on their heathery slopes and moss-covered uplands, one could almost ride a pony to their highest points. The inaccessibility consists in their distance from any public place of resort. When it is stated that they are some 18 miles from Shiel Inn on the west side, and the same from Glen Affric Hotel on the east, the truth of this will be easily seen. If the mountaineer wishes to explore this lonely district, the best way, in fact the only way, is to put aside all expectation of ordinary comfort, and to tackle it with nothing but a knapsack for luggage, taking one's chance at the few foresters' or shepherds' houses to be met with by the way. There will thus be found, save perhaps during the actual shooting season, a ready highland hospitality, a bed, and simple, yet substantial, fare.

I had had some experience of this kind of life for about ten days in Glen Strath Farrar last May, spending a delightful time rambling over the breezy summits of the many 3000 feet tops that flank this beautiful glen. Crossing over An Riabhachan (3696), and Sgùrr na Lapaich (3773), I easily obtained quarters at a forester's house at the west end of Loch Mullardoch in Glen Cannich—a convenient basis for climbing the Mam Sodhail range. Perhaps the most comprehensive way of doing this range, as well as the best way of viewing it in its most characteristic aspects, is to begin work at the eastern spur, Tom a' Choinich (3646), walking from thence in a westerly direction along the magnificent ridge to Càrn Eige, and then, turning south, scale Mam Sodhail. From this point you may descend back



to Glen Cannich by the Gleann a' Choinich, or cross over into Glen Affric by the track which leads down the Coire Ghaidheil.

An excellent shooting path, which zig-zags up the steep northern shoulder of Tom a' Choinich, led me with a minimum of toil to a height of about 2500 feet; here the path degenerated into a track, and trended easterly, so I kept to the ridge and gained the top in about two hours' time from the loch. The summit is marked by a small badly built cairn. A delightful ridge walk of about four miles now lay before me. The ridge, relieved from monotony by three or four ups and downs, never descends below 3100 feet, and presents no difficulty; it is a mere walk, though in places the going is somewhat rough and stony. It is flanked on either side by great corries, but as far as I could judge from a hasty survey, no rock climbing in the strict sense of the word could be had among them, for the general nature of the ground might be described as that where the division between what is perfectly practicable and what is absolutely impossible is always sharply drawn.

In another two hours I was standing beside the large cairn which crowns the summit of Càrn Eige (3877), the highest hill in Ross-shire, and thirteenth in order of altitude in Scotland. The day had more than fulfilled all expectations, and the most distant points in the horizon stood out in unrivalled clearness. It is not often one has the rare good fortune to make out with the unaided eye Macbrayne's steamer crossing from Strome Ferry to Portree on the one side, and on the other the dark sails of the fishing boats rounding the Black Isle in the Moray Firth. Away in the south-east lay the Cairngorms, a long and somewhat indistinct ridge, their height so little in evidence that they ran the risk of being unobserved. Looked at from this point, Cairngorm's rounded top lay farthest to the left, the neck-band of snow in Coire Cas being easily recognised. More to the right the high flat tableland of Ben Muich Dhui; then Braeriach, with its three well-known north-facing corries picked out in snow. Sgòran Dubh was somewhat lost, as the ridge tailed off

towards Glen Feshie. Over the dull table-land of the Monadh Liadths the tops of (the Athole) Beinn Dearg (3304) and Beinn a' Ghlo appear. The Creag Meaghaidh range (3700) is the next great mountain mass in the horizon. A prominent dip separates it from Beinn a' Chaoruinn (3437): through this dip I easily recognised Geal Charn (3688) in the Ardverikie Forest, with just the tiniest bit of Ben Alder (3757) appearing over his right shoulder. To the right of Beinn a' Chaoruinn Beinn Eibhinn (3611) appears, while far away in the distance, peeping up over his west shoulder, Ben Lawers (3984) is seen. The Corrour Hills—Meall a' Bhealaich (2771), Sgòr Gaibhre (3128), and Carn Dearg (3084)—come next. Much farther away in the same direction I could dimly distinguish three lumpish-looking hills, probably some of the Glen Lyon hills, above Innerwick; nearer hand Cnoc Dearg (3433), just at the east side of Loch Treig. Then the two graceful peaks of Stob Choire an Easain Mhoir, the west peak rising to a sharp point (3658). More to the right the splendid ridge of Stob Coire an Easain culminating in the high peak Stob Choire Claurigh (3858). In the gap between this and Stob Choire an Easain Mhoir I could make out away in the dim distance Beinn Creachan (3540) and his outliers at the head of Glen Lyon. Binnein Mòr (3700) next, then Aonach Mor (3999), Càrn Mòr Dearg (4012), crowned by Ben Nevis (4406). Ben Nevis looks extremely well from here, its magnificent north-east face, with all its ridges and masses of naked rock, standing out in profile. Sgùrr nan Conbhairean (3636—3634 in *one-inch* map) rose up almost due south, and only some eight miles away, into a sharp and stately peak. Far away in the same direction Bidean nam Bian (3766), that grand mountain mass which dominates over everything in Glencoe, could be plainly seen; also the twin peaks of Beinn a' Bheithir at Ballachulish and another of the Benderloch Hills, probably Beinn Sguliaird (3058). The two "sugar loafs" of Sgùrr nan Ceathramhan (3614) and Garbh-leac (3676) are no great distance off. Then the many peaks of Lord Burton's forest about Loch Quoich—among others,

Spidean Mialach (3268), Gleourach (3395), and Sgùrr a' Mhóraire (3365). In the distant horizon were Gulrain and Sgor Dhomhail, in Ardgor, the latter being distinguished by its peculiarly shaped flat top. Sgòr na Ciche (3410) stood out well, its last 500 feet rising to a sharp point. Ladhar Bheinn (3343), with its flat ridge sharply terminated by a precipitous drop on either side. The Saddle (3317) and his dependents—this is a fine-looking hill, shewing some good pinnacled ridges. Sgurr Fhuaran (3505), at the head of Loch Duich, the summit of which is like a cone with the tip sliced off horizontally. Then Beinn Fhada's flat range (3383). South-west and quite near Beinn Fhada is the high hill Sgùrr nan Ceathreamhnan (3771), sometimes mistaken for Beinn Fhada, from which fact, doubtless, the latter (popularly known as Ben Attow) has so often been accredited with 4000 feet of elevation. The peaks of Rum, South Uist (the most distant hill seen is Beinn Mhor, 82 miles off), Skye and Lewis, with the sea so still, so blue, flowing between them and the mainland. Then the Torridon Hills—Alligin, Liathaich, Beinn Eighe, dark, grim, and foreboding, Slioch's great mass, the Teallachs, with Suilven and the other Sutherlandshire giants. The long, flat ridge of An Riabhachan immediately to the north on the other side of Glen Cannich shuts out any detailed view of the many peaks to the north of Loch Monar. Sgùrr na Lapaich, a large yet well-proportioned peak, behind which are the rounded gray uplands of Sgùrr Fhuar-thuill (3439) and Sgùrr a' Choir Ghlais (3554), while much farther away in the same direction appeared the big lumpy mass of Ben Wyvis (3429).

An hour passed all too quickly in drinking in this magnificent scene, but Mam Sodhail still reared his head in front. An easy descent of some 600 feet over stones and moss led to the broad saddle-shaped bealach, and a steep pull up placed me beside the cairn of Mam Sodhail (3862). This cairn is no mean thing, being one of the largest, next to that on Ben Lawers, that I have ever seen on a hill. It has in its centre a deep cup-shaped depression into which one can get, and, sheltered from the wind, take an all-round view in

comfort. The view (see page 170) was much the same as that on Càrn Eige; suffice it to say that Ben Sgriol (3196) on Loch Hourn side was now seen—it was invisible from Càrn Eige, being hidden by Sgùrr nan Ceathreamhnan. Another hour was spent in imprinting on my brain the picture before me, so that

“ these beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye :  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart”.

Descending to the bealach, a traverse was made along the western slope of Càrn Eige. For a wonder the walking here was easy and pleasant, with none of that ankle-twisting which is, as a rule, the invariable accompaniment of a traverse. Reaching the neck between Càrn Eige and Beinn Fhionnlaidh (3294), a green grassy hill with bits of rock cropping out here and there, I struck down the steep sides of the corrie to the wee lochan, snugly walled in by the steep north face of Càrn Eige. The course of the burn which runs out of the loch was followed to Loch Lungard, and a pleasant walk of some two and a half miles brought me to my starting place about six o'clock in the evening.

## THE CAIRNGORM MOUNTAINS.

### II.—THE CENTRAL CAIRNGORMS.

#### II.—THE CAIRNGORM DIVISION.

BY ALEX. INKSON M'CONNOCHIE.

“Mid wastes that dorn and dreary lie,  
One mountain rears his mighty form,  
Disturbs the moon in passing by,  
And smiles above the thunder storm.  
There matin hymn was never sung ;  
Nor vesper, save the plover's wail ;  
But mountain eagles breed their young,  
And aerial spirits ride the gale”.

CAIRNGORM is readily accessible from Speyside between Grantown and Kingussie. But Nethy Bridge, Boat of Garten, and Aviemore are the particular points from which the base of the mountain is usually approached. Each of these places has its peculiar advantages as a basis for excursions to the Cairngorms, the Speyside approaches to Cairngorm itself all concentrating at Glenmore Lodge. Nethy Bridge is a station on the Strathspey section of the Great North of Scotland Railway in the parish of Abernethy-Kincardine. On the other (west) side of the Spey, at a distance of about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles, is Broomhill station on the Highland Railway. As the village of Nethy Bridge is provided with a hotel and not a few lodging-houses, the mountaineer should have no difficulty in securing accommodation suitable to his wants. As may be gathered from the name, the Nethy is there crossed by a bridge, the county road, along the right bank of the Spey, passing through the village. The Nethy, ranking as the sixth tributary of the Spey, has a course of 14 miles. It rises on Cairngorm, and flows almost due north to the Spey near Broomhill station, the upper part, between Cairngorm and

Ben Bynac, being known as Garbh Allt. Proceeding by the left bank of the Nethy from the village to Glenmore Lodge, the mountaineer has a pleasant walk—or drive—of 10 miles before him. The stream is thoroughly Highland, and in summer and autumn the lower part of the strath is very beautiful. The Abernethy Forest is entered as the village and Dell of Abernethy are left behind, and in 3 miles the road joins another at right angles. If driving, the left (east) turn is taken, and, half a mile further on, near Forest Lodge—the shooting-box in connection with the Abernethy Forest—a sharp turn is made to the right (north). But if walking an obvious “short cut” through the wood presents itself, saving the detour by the lodge. Beyond this there is only one inhabited house in Strath Nethy, Rynettin\*, a forester’s house on the eastern slope of Carn Rynettin (1549). This house passed, the road holds to the left (east), making its way through a field, after which it joins another road whence the direction is south to Rebhoan. On the east side of the Nethy will be observed the ruins of Boglechynack and Inchtomach. The *larach* of Rynuie will be passed on the right (west) between Rynettin and Rebhoan. The latter was formerly a farm, on the eastern slope of Meall a’ Bhuachaille, but is now part of the deer forest, the house (1300) being used as a shieling during “the season”. Three small tarns, good for trout, will be passed as the buildings are neared; below, to the east, is Loch a’ Gharbh-choire, where water was stored for raising the volume of the Nethy to float trees to the Spey when the Abernethy forest (sold for £7000 to a Yorkshire company in 1730) was cut down. On the way up to Rebhoan Cairngorm and Ben Bynac will have frequently attracted attention; now descending to Glen More—for Rebhoan is on the watershed of Strath Nethy and Glen More—a charming change of scenery will be experienced. The head of Glen More is a picturesque narrow gorge, known as the Pass of Rebhoan (frequently also called the

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\* In coming *down* Strath Nethy particular care must be taken, in approaching Rynettin, to take the uninviting turn to the left (west).

Thieves' Pass), with steep pine-clad slopes. On the right (west) is Creag Loisgte of Meall a' Bhuachaille, on the left (east) Creag nan Gall of Cairngorm, a small tarn, An Lochan Uaine\*, lying in the hollow. Thereafter the glen opens out, and Glenmore Lodge, near the head of Loch Morlich, is soon reached.

A longer route from Nethy Bridge to Glenmore Lodge is by Kincardine Church and the Slugan, a distance of about 12 miles. From Nethy Bridge to a little beyond Kincardine Church the Speyside road is kept. In the churchyard a tombstone has been erected to the memory of "Walter Stuart, grandson of Robert II. of Scotland, and his family who possessed the Barony of Kincardine, 1374-1683", and of "one of their descendants", who died in 1884. The lairds were known as the Barons of Kincardine. One of them married a daughter of Lochiel, receiving with his bride twelve clansmen as a dowry; hence the Camerons of Abernethy! Nearly half a mile beyond the church the road for Glenmore Lodge leaves the turnpike at right angles, holding southward by the left bank of Milton Burn, through the Slugan and the Sanctuary of Glenmore forest, to Loch Morlich. Thence the glen road hugs the north shore of the loch to Glenmore Lodge. A right-of-way difficulty has been satisfactorily settled by the public road having been continued along the foot of the lodge garden, thus avoiding a close approach to the house.

Boat of Garten is a rising village, with a hotel close to the station. It is on the Highland Railway, and is also the terminus of the Strathspey section of the Great North of Scotland Railway. The village is on the left bank of the Spey, a carriage-ferry connecting it with the other side. Having crossed the river, the road from Nethy Bridge to Kincardine Church is reached. The distance from Boat of Garten to Glenmore Lodge is about 9 miles.

Aviemore is a favourite starting point for the Cairngorms, the distance to Glenmore Lodge being only about 7 miles. Unfortunately it has at present no hotel, and

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\* *Vide C.C.J.*, Vol. I., p. 294.

there is little accommodation of any kind for passing tourists. When the direct route by the Highland Railway from Aviemore to Inverness is opened, a hotel may possibly be built to meet the increased requirements of so important a junction. The station is on the left bank of the Spey, almost opposite the mouth of the Druie, a considerable stream formed by the drainage of Glen More, Learg Ghruamach, and Glen Eunach. Immediately to the west of the station is the hill from which the slogan of the Grants, "Stand Fast, Craigellachie", is derived. The view of the Cairngorms from Aviemore and its vicinity is one of the finest that can be obtained. The passing tourist is impressed with the extraordinary mass, as well as with the magnificent corries and the deep pass, Learg Ghruamach, which forms such a gigantic V on the horizon. An eminent judge\* had a high opinion of them, but he would seem to have been content with the view from his carriage. More than once he refers to the subject, and always in glowing language. In his opinion the Cairngorms exhibit one of the finest pieces of mountain scenery in Britain, snow only adding to their grandeur. The railway journey between Nethy Bridge (or Grantown) and Aviemore affords glorious mountain views, ever varying, especially when the corries are streaked with snow. The prospect from the road on the left bank of the river, between Boat of Garten and Aviemore, is even better than that obtained from the train. The Spey is crossed at Aviemore by an iron bridge, the road to Glenmore Lodge keeping by the left bank of the Druie, passing Inverdruie and the Free Church of Rothiemurchus, to Coylum Bridge, about two miles from the station. Both at Inverdruie and Coylum Bridge there are several cottages where visitors may occasionally find accommodation. The Speyside (right bank) road crosses the Druie at Coylum Bridge, at the east end of which is the entrance gate to Drumintoul Lodge, the shooting-box in connection with the Rothiemurchus Forest. A few yards above the bridge two streams unite and form the Druie,

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\* "Circuit Journeys", by Lord Cockburn.



the more northerly being the Luineag\* from Loch Morlich, the other, Allt na Beinne Moire—better known as the Bennie—from Loch Eunach. The Glenmore road keeps by the right bank of the Luineag, along which excellent views of the Cairngorms continually present themselves, Coylum Bridge left behind, Aultnancaber (a forester's house), two mineral wells on the left bank of the stream, formerly of some repute, and the *larach* of Inchonie, will be successively passed. Thence, as already indicated, the road keeps by the north shore of Loch Morlich to the Lodge.

Loch Morlich, the largest of the lochs in the Cairngorm district, is a mile long by five furlongs broad. Many a weary mountaineer, doubtful of his position as he makes the descent of Cairngorm to Rothiemurchus, has been invigorated on recognising the pine-surrounded loch shining in the afternoon sun, when the mist has suddenly lifted, pointing out the route Speywards. It lies at an altitude of 1046 feet, and has at the upper end a great bank of fine sand—encroaching even on the road—driven up by wind. At the lower end, where the Luineag debouches, sluices will be observed. These were used for damming up the loch in the tree-floating days. A particularly large pine has been selected by ospreys for nesting, but they have not bred there for several years, on account of the malicious persecution to which they were subjected. The loch, once famous for trout, is now, perhaps, more noted for its pike. The stream entering at the upper end is Allt Mor—a combination of burns from Cairngorm, Creag na Leacainn, and the Pass of Rebhoan. The situation of Glenmore Lodge, near the head of the loch, and facing the “snowy corries” of Cairngorm, is one of the finest in the Highlands. It is the shooting-box of the noted deer forest of that name, which so late as 1859 was under sheep.

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\* The Luineag, however, formerly flowed into Loch Phitiulais (on the east side of the Speyside road between Coylum Bridge and Kincardine Church), as may be seen from evidences of its old channel a little above Coylum Bridge.

The ascent of Cairngorm from Glenmore Lodge is both direct and easy and presents not the least difficulty. The distance, as the crow flies, is four miles; the time required will vary from two to three hours, according to circumstances. Almost the whole route is visible from the Lodge: there is no mistaking the summit, which rises boldly to the east of the fine line of corries which the mountaineer cannot fail to have admired on the way to the Lodge. A road leads down from the Lodge to Allt Mor, which is crossed by a foot-bridge and a ford at an altitude of 1060 feet. The burn crossed, the road is continued to an old house, Rieaonachan, the original site of Glenmore Lodge, after which it deteriorates rapidly, and soon becomes a mere bridle-path along the left bank of the stream. When a height of about 1400 feet, however, has been attained, the Allt Mor is recrossed, the ascent becomes steeper, and the track forks. The branch on the right is a forest path of no service to the climber, the other leads to An t-Aonach (2118), a minor height of Cairngorm, and should be followed till it begins to hold to the left, when the ridge should be taken all the way to the cairn. The "going" is exceptionally good, in many places even to absolute smoothness, not to mention a "moss carpet" of considerable extent with no boulders to negotiate. A threatening specimen, Clach Parraig, will be observed from Glenmore Lodge, and will be passed some distance to the left of the upper part of the path. A few yards beyond Clach Parraig a considerably smaller boulder will be passed on the right; immediately below it is M'Connochie's Well, the last spring that can be depended on till the neighbourhood of the cairn is reached. Above this the climber should gradually "feel" towards the centre of the ridge, having on the right Allt a' Choire Chais—a burn from the corrie of that name\* immediately to the west of the cairn—on the left a larger burn, with a deeper gorge, Allt na Ciste. At a height of about 3150 feet a granite tor, dubbed "Black Castle", will be

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\* Coire Cas frequently remains snow-patched for the greater part of summer.

passed on the left. The final rise, Sron an Aonaich, is now tackled, easily surmounting which, a few flat boulders near the top being no hindrance to a rapid advance, the summit of Cairngorm will be put under foot. The cairn is erected on a little low mass of rock which has not the appearance of being the *very* highest point of the mountain.

During the final stage of the ascent of Cairngorm the climber cannot fail to be struck with the gradually increasing view to the northward. It is in this direction that the titular peak presents the finest picture, especially before the winter's snow has quite disappeared from the mountains of Ross and Caithness. Then the distant hills across the Moray Firth appear to stand out boldly and even to approach the observer—under certain atmospheric conditions—with startling effect. This prospect alone will amply repay the little trouble of the excursion; for it is a picture to “gaze on long and lovingly”.



The view from the cairn has thus been described by the first Chairman of the Club:

“To the north-west the ample form of Ben Wyvis towered dimly through the cloud, and what we judged from their shadowy outline in the distance due north the Caithness Hills. The coast line of Ross, Cromarty, and Sutherland stretched northwards, fading into, or blending with the haze in that

direction. The Moray Firth, extending eastward and westward of our position, marked off its coast line by its lighter colour, which became brighter and clearer as the blurring rain-showers swept south-easterly in constant procession. To the north-east Ben Rinnes reared his conspicuous cairn, and the Buck of the Cabrach, and his neighbour, the Tap o' Noth, showed their well-known forms. In the far north east Bennachie projects his picturesque outline of Mither Tap and Oxen Craig . . . . . Almost due east Morven, by its proximity, shuts out the view beyond and looms grandly in the distance. Eastwards also are Beinn Mheadhoin, Beinn a' Chaoruinn, Stob an t-Sluichd, Ben Avon, and Beinn a' Bhuid. Lochnagar is in grand form in the south-east, and, over his lofty neighbour, Cairn Taggart, Cairn Bannoch asserts itself, and Tolmount and Cairn na Glasha trend south-westwards towards the Glas Maol. The mountains of Glen Ey continue the southern zone to Beinn a' Ghlo, beyond which, and far, far, to the south and south-west, heaven-kissed hills rivet our admiring gaze. In the south-west the Sow of Athole dominates the Boar of Badenoch, and the mighty Ben Alder frowns upon both. A little south of west, through the depression between Braeriach and Cairn Toul, the lofty massive outline of Ben Nevis lifts his proud crest to the clouds. Northwards and westwards the everlasting hills of Inverness, Ross, and Skye show more or less distinctly as distance or cloud limits the view. In the near foreground, across the smiling valley of the Spey, through which the river winds in graceful curves, the long lofty range of the Monadh Liath stretches from Lochindorb to Loch Lochy. Nearer among the dark wooded grounds in the wide valley Loch Morlich, Loch an Eilein, and Loch Alvie shine like molten silver, and on Airgiod Meall, the left foot, and Mam Suim, the right foot, of Cairngorm are silver buckles, in the shape of two small lochans, both placed about the 1800 feet contour line. The grandeur and beauty of the corries to the right and left, and on the neighbouring mountains of Braeriach, Cairn Toul, Ben Muich Dhui, Beinn a' Bhuid, and Ben Avon, we humbly confess our inability to describe".

Cairngorm, somewhat cone-shaped, slopes more or less rapidly all round its summit; on the north, as we have seen, to Glen More, on the east to Garbh Allt, on the south to Loch Avon, and westward to Coire Raibert. A descent

may be made from the cairn to The Saddle, but to the east and north-east the slope to the Garbh Allt is precipitous, and has to be attempted with care.\* Towards the south also there are "Stacs" that render the descent, except by one particular route, rather dangerous. Immediately to the west of The Saddle, Stac an Fharaidh frowns down upon Loch Avon; a slender stream, another Feith Buidhe Burn, finds a way over it to the loch. About a third of a mile from the head of the loch the Coire Raibert Burn discharges itself to the west of Stac an Fharaidh; to the west of the latter burn are the Stag Rocks, equally formidable to those lower down the loch. It is by the Coire Raibert Burn that the descent to Loch Avon is generally made—a steep enough route in the lower portion. This burn rises to the south-west of the cairn, and, below its fork, should be kept on the left (east).

Before leaving the summit there are two near objects worthy of attention. A short distance to the east will be observed an excrescence of rough granite which often assists in the recognition of Cairngorm from a distance. There is also Fuaran-a-Mharcuic, the Marquis's Well—so named from the Marquis of Huntly, when that family owned such extensive tracts of land in Badenoch and Strathspey. The Marquis's Well, the source of the Allt na Ciste, is situated at a height about 150 feet lower than the summit, from which it is about 270 paces to the E.N.E. There is a cairn at the Well, and also a "leading" cairn 175 paces from the summit cairn. It is a considerable spring, with an abundant supply of excellent water. A great snow-field will often be found here, quite concealing the Well even in the beginning of summer. The mountaineer who makes the ascent from Glen More, returning by the same route, should descend southward a short distance so as to have a view of Loch Avon. Ciste Mhairearaid (see page 134) should also be visited. At one time known as the "Snow House", this corrie is the main source of the Nethy, for the Garbh Allt

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\* Lewis Smith (a nephew of William Smith of Rynuie) was killed here; while following ptarmigan he slipped over the smooth rock.

issues from the snow which is always found here. Seen from the neighbourhood of Nethy Bridge, Cairngorm has the appearance of descending to the Strath by three great "steps". Of these the lowermost is known as Sron a' Chano (*c.* 3200), the middle is Cnap Coire na Spreidhe (3772), while the highest is, of course, the cone itself. The two first-named are particularly prominent, as they seem to overhang the deep, narrow gorge of the Nethy. The Cnap has half a dozen little "warts", and may be reached in a few minutes from Ciste Mhairearaid. As seen from the Cnap the "pass" below is here worthy of comparison with the rougher portions of the Larig Ghru. Snow buntings seem to nest in the vicinity.

The first ascent of Cairngorm of which we have any detailed record was made by a lady in 1801\*, and on that account, as well as to shew the general ideas then as to the "difficulties" of mountain-climbing, the following extract is given :

"The 7th of September, the day of the earthquake, we left the Doune [Rothiemurchus] at a very early hour, and went to Mr. Osborne's† house in Glenmore to breakfast ; Mr. Grant [of Rothiemurchus], Mr. Osborne's two sons, with another gentleman and myself, were bound for the top of Cairngorm. I rode on Mrs. Grant's pony to nearly the summit of it ; the gentlemen walked. The view from its summit is very extensive, and the sublimity and terrific grandeur of the prospect, on the side towards Braemar, cannot be described ; but those who mount that eminence should walk to the edge of the precipices hanging over the hollow towards Loch Avon, and to the Snow House. The Snow House is not far from the cairn or heap of stones on the highest part of Cairngorm, and is a hollow, in extent an acre or two. This hollow is filled with snow, and although it faces the South (*sic*), it is never melted either by the sun or rain. Near its boundary on the south side, runs a stream of the purest water ; in its bed

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\*"Guide to the Beauties of Scotland", by Hon. Mrs. Murray. 3rd Ed., 1810.

† Mr. William Osborne, merchant, Hull, bought the timber in the forest of Glen More in 1783 for £10,000. It took 22 years to cut down the trees, on which the Hull firm is reputed to have made a profit of £70,000.

are large stones standing high and thick, serving for supporters to the roof of snow, which seems to be in some degree petrified. There was little water in this stream the day I was at it, I therefore, by bending my body, walked up the bed of this rivulet for three or four yards, without getting very wet; but it was so intensely cold under snow and in water, that I was obliged quickly to return, though not before I had collected some fine specimens of rock and feldspar crystallizations. Near the pinnacle of Cairngorm is a well of the finest spring water I ever tasted, and it is also the coldest I ever touched. . . . To ride up Cairngorm is an arduous task, and to walk down it a very fatiguing one”.

Cairn an Lochain may be visited in crossing from Cairngorm to Ben Muich Dhui by keeping along the edge of Coire an t-Sneachda. In like manner, in making for it from Ben Muich Dhui, the county (Inverness-Banff) march will be sought, thus keeping higher than absolutely necessary in a mere walk across to Cairngorm. Another route is by Creag na Leacainn, described in the next paragraph. Cairn an Lochain is distinguished by an O.S. cairn within a ring of stones and overlooks Coire an Lochain. The rocks in this corrie are fissured in all directions, shivering and crumbling to pieces on their way to the bottom. The lower part of the rocks has been swept quite bare by stone avalanches, and presents a uniform smooth surface. The top of the corrie is an appalling place should the mountaineer find himself there on a sudden lifting of the mist, as it is flush with the plateau on the south, and parts of it remind one of the corrie of Lochnagar, especially at the Black Spout, only there can be no descent, on foot, here. The view is very pleasant; Loch Morlich seems to lie just below, with Glenmore Lodge embowered among trees. Fiacail Coire an t-Sneachda is a particular feature, especially the portion at the upper end dividing the two great corries, Coire an t-Sneachda and Coire an Lochain. The former has one small tarn at the bottom, a thousand feet below, the latter has three—hence the name. Both these corries are well worth a visit from below, crossing from the one to the other by the Fiacail. If the winter's snow has



COIRE AN T-SNEACHDA, CAIRNGORM.



not disappeared a camera may advantageously form part of the *impedimenta*. Indeed, these corries sometimes contain snow—patches as hard as ice—all the year round. In spring avalanches frequently occur, the snow breaking off from the tops of the corries and falling considerable distances. A fine example might have been seen in Coire Cas in 1894, the snow gradually breaking into innumerable pieces as it descended, making a track strewn with “snow-débris” which was visible from a considerable distance below. The same season, also, a huge avalanche fell in Coire Domhain, but as evidently the snow had been exceedingly soft its downward passage had been retarded, and it broke up into great rectangular blocks before reaching the bottom. The snow cornice which had fallen on this occasion must have weighed several hundred tons. Early in the season the steep sides of the corries will frequently be seen lightly scored all over by little balls of snow which have gathered at the top and literally “made tracks” for the bottom. Coire Cas is separated from Coire an t-Sneachda by Fiacail a’ Choire Chais—*fiacail* is a tooth or prong-shaped ridge.

Creag na Leacainn, locally and better known as the Lurcher’s Rock, is a prominent summit on the east side of Learg Ghruamach, from which it is most readily approachable. The track should be left at an altitude of about 1825 feet, a little below a great boulder on the west side of the path and opposite the deep V-cut made by Allt Druidh as it leaves its plateau and seeks the bottom of the pass. There is, however, quite a choice of routes from the pass—easy, difficult, and dangerous, the two latter by scrambling up the tottering rock face of the Creag. We take the easy route, an hour landing us at the summit. Some scree slopes will be encountered near the top, one in particular a veritable staircase, most of the stones stable, but many yielding to the least touch. On the ascent an excellent “framed” view of Meall a’ Bhuachaille may be obtained through a “window” between Creag a’ Chalamain and Creag na Leacainn. Two cairns surmount Creag na Leacainn, their altitudes being respectively 3365 and 3448

feet; the former is known as the North Top, the latter as the South Top. The North Top is rather insignificant, and indeed were it not for the O.S. cairn (a four-foot one with a staff) and a few boulders it might well be ignored. The South Top, on the other hand, is a natural "Stuc", towering over a thousand feet above the level of the pass; the cairn is but a few stones thrown together. The view, particularly the near prospect, is good, and includes the upper part of Glen Dee. The Devil's Point looms quite majestic, standing out sharply outlined. Braeriach's "wall" rises up from the Larig with a uniform steepness not unworthy of that term, its face marked by storm-rills, black rock above all; little patches of verdure below. The northern corries of Braeriach give one, from this point, the impression of three gigantic pits. Sgoran Dubh, double-peaked, rises above loch and glen; farther down is the Argyle Stone, Cadha Mor, the Duke of Gordon's Monument, Carn Elrick, Ord Bain, and Loch an Eilein. On the other side of the Spey Geal Charn of the Monadh Liaths blocks the distant prospect; nearer the great flat of the glens converging on the Spey opposite Craigellachie makes a beautiful forest picture. Then we have Meall a' Bhuachaille, An Lochan Uaine, Strath Nethy, Ben Rinnes, The Buck, Mam Suim, Cairngorm and its corries. To the south-east Miadan Creag na Leacainn (the plain of Creag na Leacainn) appears to offer very smooth walking towards the Feith Buidhe or Ben Muich Dhui; a shoulder rises up to a height of 3931 feet where three counties, Inverness, Aberdeen, and Banff, meet. The monarch of the group looks from here a great mountain with steep slopes to the pass. What a deep cut the pass seems from this perch! As the Lurcher's Rock alone is but a short excursion from Aviemore, the mountaineer may as well proceed as far as Lochan Buidhe, unless a greater height is in the programme, thus making the best of the day. Keeping pretty much by the march between the parishes of Abernethy-Kincardine and Duthil-Rothiemurchus, and crossing the Miadan, the spot where the three counties meet will be first made for. From the little cairn marking the junction Cairn Toul, with Lochan

Uaine, and Sgoran Lochan Uaine are in view, but the Devil's Point has lost its commanding appearance; Beinn Bhrotain and Monadh Mor are also visible. Eastward are Derry Cairngorm, Beinn a' Bhuid, Beinn Mheadhoin, and Ben Avon. Proceeding to the head of the Feith Buidhe a most interesting, but too seldom visited, spot is next reached. The Feith Buidhe Burn issues from Lochan Buidhe, a tarn at a height of about 3600 feet. Its upper (western) bank is close to the Aberdeen-Banff march\*, on the other (Aberdeen) side of which are the springs of March Burn, one of the head-streams of the Dee. Viewed from below it appears to come toppling down as though issuing full-born from a miniature gorge—often a little snow tunnel—but as seen at the source it has a different appearance. Little labour would be necessary to give this burn a tarn as a gathering-ground corresponding to that of the Feith Buidhe Burn. As it is the burn near its source spreads and sprawls—hence mosses of all hues from brilliant green to imperial purple and gold. By descending a short distance along the March Burn the Pools of Dee may be seen, the two upper seemingly with little more than a bucketful of water. It is to these that the March Burn makes its way, but just ere it reaches the bottom of the slope it is drunk up by the thirsty and ever-falling *debris* and is lost to sight. Here the sides of the Larig appear very red, recalling the ancient name of the Cairngorms; right in front Sron na Leirg appears, a massive enough “nose”. More to the south is (the Larig) Coire Ruadh with a zig-zag path towards the summit of Braeriach; northwards is the intermittent Allt na Leirg Gruamaich, the track, a mere scratch on the surface, more easily picked out from above than when seen from the level. Creag na Leacainn and Carn Elrick are very prominent from this stand-point. Retracing our steps a little stone-shelter is passed on the left bank of the burn—probably the work of a forester, a cairn near by indicating its position. Descending the Feith Buidhe, its burn will be observed to

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\*A venerable native recently informed the writer that the correct name of this tarn is “Lochan na Criche”, the lochan of the march, a very appropriate name.

broaden considerably in the middle part of the Feith (a slushy region during snow-melting), but as it leaves the gravel—from which the name, signifying “Yellow Bog”, is derived—and makes for the rocks above the head of Loch Avon, it contracts to normal dimensions. Cairn an Lochain may now be visited by holding N.N.W.; but a more direct course could have been made from Creag na Leacainn by crossing the Miadan and keeping due east. Now making direct for the Miadan the source of Allt Creag na Leacainn is crossed, and, avoiding the actual summit of the Lurcher's Rock, the descent may be made to the point in the Larig whence the ascent was commenced.

The summit of Creag na Leacainn is marked on the six-inch map as some distance east of the edge of the precipice, whereas the cairn and the edge coincide. In this map there is also an indication, considerably overdrawn, of rock on the north side of Lochan Buidhe. The words, “Large Stone”, in the same map on the county march west of this lochan refer to a comparatively large stone lying across the march, of which advantage was taken in marking the boundary. The Aberdeen-Inverness march across the Larig, a short distance to the north of March Burn, seems to the ordinary observer to be an arbitrary one, an idea borne out by the circumstance that foresters consider the March Burn the boundary between these counties.

Creag a' Chalamain (about 2340) and Castle Hill are points on the ridge, the parish march, leading up to the Lurcher's Rock. The former has a peak of rock and stone, surmounted by a small cairn, and is noted for Eag Coire a' Choinneachaidh, which has a fine echo. Castle Hill is roundish, with a flat top covered with short heather. An excellent view is obtained of numberless lochs and tarns sparkling in the sun like diamonds; the trees by Loch Morlich can be seen reflected in the water. “Castle Hill” is but a translation of the old Gaelic name. On the west slope of the hill the *larach* of a habitation is pointed out, still called in Gaelic the “Bothy of the Castle”. The origin of the name is unknown. Airgiod-meall (2118) slopes from Castle Hill towards Loch Morlich, having on its

east side Lochan Dubh a' Cadha, a very noticeable tarn from the north side of Cairngorm.

Ben Bynac, both on account of its position and its somewhat serrated outline as seen from a distance, is one of the best known minor heights of the Cairngorms. It may best be ascended from Rebhoan—from which it is about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles distant—or it may be taken in the walk along the Learg an Laoigh from Braemar to Speyside. It presents a grand steep front to the track—enlivened by the “Barns”—and is rather an inviting climb. The Water of Caiplich rises on its eastern slope, and possibly from this circumstance the summit is inaccurately marked “Caiplich” in the O.S. maps. If ascended from Rebhoan, the Larig track should be kept till about half a mile beyond the “memorial” cairn, whence the climb is begun. The hill will be observed to have two tops, colloquially called the Two Bynacs, the Meikle and the Little. The former is the higher, towering considerably above its neighbour on the west. The corrie to the west is Coire Dearg, more to the north is Coire Dubh; each has its burn descending to Garbh Allt. Due south from the cairn are the “Little Barns of Bynac”, outstanding masses of rock not unlike, at a distance, the ruined walls of ancient castles; a little to the east of the “Little Barns” are the “Barns of Bynac”.\* These “Barns” remind one of the similar rock excrescences on Ben Avon. Ben Bynac was once noted for a male ghost known as Fhua Mhoir Bein Baynac, who seems to have had the habit of ill-treating a neighbouring lady ghost, Clashnichd Aulnaic. On account of his ungallant behaviour, James Gray, tenant of Balbig of Delnabo, shot him with an arrow through a large mole on his left breast, on which Fhua Mhoir vanished for ever.† A brief account of the view from the summit has already appeared in the *Journal* (pp. 49 and 135-6), where also Meall a' Bhuachaille and Mam Suim have been noticed. This Meall slopes to the Spey by Creagan Gorm (2403) and Craiggowrie (2237)—a range

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\* *Vide* illustration at p. 137, Vol. I., *C.C.J.*

† “Highland Superstition”, by W. Grant Stewart (1823).

known as the Kincardine Hills. On Craiggowrie is Uaimh Iain Rhuaidh, John Roy's Cave, where Colonel John Roy Stuart, a descendant of the royal Stuarts of Kincardine, a noted swordsman and poet, took refuge after the battle of Culloden. The district of Tulloch, on the north side of the Kincardine Hills, lays claim to having produced the famous Reel of Tulloch, supporting the pretension by a legend having the respectable antiquity of about three hundred years! Here, also, are Lochs Garten and Mallachie, two beautiful forest sheets of water, readily accessible from either Nethy Bridge or Boat of Garten. Loch Garten affords excellent sport to the fisherman. The burn from these lochs, which joins the Spey about half a mile south of Boat of Garten Ferry, labours under the "curse of Aultgharrach", which entails bad luck on all marriage parties crossing it, and, accordingly, in many such cases it has been most carefully avoided.\*

Immediately to the west of Stuc na h-Ioliare of Mam Suim is a ridge called Carn Lochan na Beinne, with a small tarn, Lochan na Beinne, swarming with trout. North from Stac na h-Iolaire is Sron a' Chano (already referred to) descending on the east to Garbh Allt, opposite Coire Dubh of Ben Bynac. There is a small corrie, visible from Glenmore Lodge, between Sron a' Chano and Cnap Coire na Spreidhe, named Coire an Laoigh Mhoir, in which rises Allt Clais a' Mheirlich, a burn receiving the surplus water of Lochan na Beinne and developing into Allt Ban, a tributary of Allt Mor. Allt na Ciste is a tributary of, and flows mostly parallel to, Allt Ban, their upper courses being separated by Creagan Dubh.

"The brown Cairngorm, whose feet with native pine  
Are, ever-during, girt; his frozen head  
Is sprinkled early with autumnal snow,  
And crumbled rocks are strewed with brilliant gems

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\* According to tradition, a bridge at Hoxne, near Eye, in Suffolk, had, owing to a certain incident which had happened there, the inscription—"Cursed be the wedding party that passes this bridge". The bridge was avoided accordingly.

Whose brightness, sparkling in Altera's hair,  
Or blissful, on her panting bosom hung,  
The topaz envies, not of citron tint,  
In circlet bound about Circassia's neck".\*

Cairngorm crystals, as indicated in the preceding article, have long been found on these mountains, and from this circumstance Cairngorm itself has doubtless derived not a little of its fame. But owing to the great fall in their value systematic search for them has ceased, though both in last century and the present it afforded employment for a considerable number of people, whose families, during the summer months, resided with them on the mountains. Lapidaries came from the south to purchase the stones or to hire labourers to dig for them at the rate of from 5s. to 10s. per day. In 1811 it was estimated that not less than £2000 worth were found on the Cairngorms.† Yet towards the end of the previous century Cairngorm mining was stated to be "an employment by no means worth following"‡. The value of Cairngorm stones in the middle of last century is referred to by the Chevalier de Johnstone from whose Memoirs§ the following passage is quoted (he had spent the previous night in Glen More):

"near a mountain called Cairngorm where the shepherds often find precious stones of different kinds, without knowing their value. For some years I had made a collection of these stones, without being on the spot where they are found, and some of them were very beautiful; especially a very fine ruby, which cost me no more than a crown in its rough state, but for which, when polished, I refused fifty guineas from the Duke of Hamilton. This stone was of the size of a bean, the colour was a little deep, and the fire equal to that of the most beautiful diamond. All the jewellers of Edinburgh had taken it for an oriental ruby. I made a present of it to Lady Jane Douglas [sister of the Duke of Douglas], who paid me amply for it some

\* "Wallace's Views", quoted in *Scots Magazine* (1798).

† Souter's "Agriculture of Banffshire" (1812).

‡ "A Survey of the Province of Moray" (1798).

§ "Memoirs of the Rebellion in 1745 and 1746", translated from a French MS. of the Chevalier de Johnstone, 3rd edition, 1822.

time afterwards, by saving my life. I had likewise a very fine hyacinth, and a topaz of the size of a pigeon's egg, of a beautiful colour, on which I caused the arms of Great Britain to be engraved; both of which I, afterwards, presented to Prince Charles; the hyacinth at Perth, when I joined him, and the topaz, with his arms, on our arrival at Edinburgh. . . . Forgetting, for a moment, our disasters, I rose at an early hour and flew immediately to the mountains, among the herdsmen, where I found some pretty and beautiful topazes, two of which, sufficiently large to serve for seals, I afterwards presented to the Duke of York [Henry Stuart, brother of the young Pretender] at Paris".

But a time came when Cairngorms were not to be picked up in a walk before breakfast; in 1810 we read that no less than 25 acres had been trenched to a depth of from five to six feet. Ben Muich Dhui and the other mountains in the Forest of Mar also yielded at one time a plentiful supply, from which the Earl of Fife was reputed to derive annually "a handsome sum"\*. According to geologists these crystals are found in cavities in rock and in the *debris* of the burns, the common colours being white, pink, dark brown, and black; the topaz and beryl likewise occur†. A fine specimen, weighing about 56 lbs., was, along with two small crystals, purchased by the Queen for £50 from the finder, a native of Strath Nethy, who discovered the prize on the Garbh Allt side of Cairngorm.

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\* "The Highland Note-Book", by R. Carruthers (1843).

† Nicol's "Geology of Scotland" (1844).



SGURR DEARG AND THE INACCESSIBLE  
PINNACLE.

BY WILLIAM TOUGH, M.A.

A WEEK'S climbing in drenching rain and clinging impenetrable mist—broken only by one beautiful day on Blaven—had rewarded our visit to Skye in the beginning of August, 1894. The weather was bad even for Sligachan, but we had stuck to our work, regarding our daily soaking merely as part of the ordinary programme, and putting in our dismal ten or twelve hours a day without a murmur. But after Brown had driven off into the darkness of that abominable Saturday night, and left me to the bitterness of my lonely reflections, matters rapidly became worse. Such climatic hardships as we had experienced in common might have befallen us on any part of the west coast. They had no purely local characteristics. But I was now to learn what Skye really can do when it sets about making a display of water-works in earnest. The result is not rain. No metaphor which goes on that assumption—not even that one which tells of proving Skye terriers—can convey any idea of it. "The fountains of the great deep were broken up and the windows of heaven were opened . . . and the waters prevailed greatly upon the earth". For three days not a soul could stir beyond the hotel door. Waterproof was a term of derision; climbing and drowning were for the time being used as synonyms in the strictest sense of the word. But this kind of thing cannot go on indefinitely, even in Skye; and just as I had resolved to run all risks rather than remain longer inactive, the change came—in time, as I verily believe, to save me from a watery grave.

The morning was clear and cold, when John Mackenzie, one of the local guides, and I started on our 15 mile drive to Glen Brittle House. That drive, if it did nothing else, enables me to point a moral to those who may think of visiting Sgurr Dearg. This moral is summed up in the one word, *Walk!* That is, walk openly and avowedly, and

make no parade of hiring a conveyance. Otherwise, after driving and walking turn about for an hour and a half, you will be disgusted to see yawning in front of you the great opening of Coire na Creiche, and to realise that by taking the well-known pony track you could have reached the same point within the hour on foot.

The ascent of Sgurr Dearg begins immediately behind Glen Brittle House, and leads at first over soft, grassy slopes which come upon one as a pleasant surprise in the midst of the rugged Coolins. But, further on, the grass slopes are succeeded by the usual outcrop of smooth, slabby rock, lying in many places at an angle sufficiently sharp to necessitate the use of hands as well as feet, and to impose upon the climber the advisability of carefully picking his way. When once the ridge of the mountain is reached, however, things become decidedly easier. The ridge is broad and not at all steep, and, although considerably broken up, forms throughout a safe and simple walk. Indeed, although Sgurr Dearg, with its altitude of 3255 feet to the top of the Pinnacle, is the second highest mountain in Skye (the west peak of Sgurr Alisdair, 3275 feet, being the highest), it is also one of the tamest and least interesting. Even its height gives it no sense of grandeur such as occasionally impresses one in the case of much lower peaks, and what fame it has it owes almost entirely to the presence of that singular freak of nature, the so-called "Inaccessible Pinnacle" or "Old Man of Skye".

This striking object appeared suddenly before us at the distance of a few yards as we topped the highest point of the main ridge of the mountain. On this side it is of no great height, but as it loomed up before us out of the mist it looked at first view uncompromising enough to satisfy the most ultramontane of tastes. A very good description of the Pinnacle appeared in Vol. II. (page 134) of the Journal of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, and the following sentences, which I quote from that article, may serve to give an idea of what it is like. "The pinnacle of Sgurr Dearg, variously called the Inaccessible and the Old Man of Skye, may be seen by the most unobservant on a

clear day from a considerable distance, forming a distinct top to its mountain: and resembling, as Sheriff Nicholson tells us in one of his admirable articles on the scenery and climbing of Skye, from some points a huge horn, and other points a chimney can. It stands quite alone, having no companion points or ridge of rock, and is a survival of the fittest of the range, being a hard slab of trap which has more successfully than the rest of the mountain withstood the weathering action of the elements. It is fixed into the east side of the mountain summit, its western end forming a point topping the mountain, while running down to the east a long sloping edge falls for some hundreds of feet at a somewhat similar inclination to the mountain side, until, becoming more steep, it terminates in the mountain side. Mr. Clinton Dent, in an article on the 'Rocky Mountains of Skye' (*A.J.*, 112, p. 422), very aptly likens it to a comb stuck in the middle of a hair-brush for convenience of packing".

It was the perpendicular western end of the pinnacle that faced us as we reached the top of the mountain, and we attacked it on this side without loss of time. As I have indicated, it is quite a short climb. The only difficulty consists in passing a sloping slab about half-way up. This slab rises from about the level of one's shoulder, and as it offers no hold for the fingers it is necessary in surmounting it to depend very largely on the resistance to a rapid descent offered by the power of friction. After the slab is negotiated there is no further trouble. I do not think this place would offer any particular difficulty in ordinary circumstances, but those in which we were now placed can hardly be described by such an adjective as "ordinary". My old fortune still pursued me with dogged persistency. The weather had again broken down, and it was now blowing a gale from the north, which drove along before it stinging blasts of hail, sleet, and snow. The consequence was that the rock face streamed with water, and this, with the force of the wind made any attempt at adhesion by friction a proceeding not quite devoid of risk. Still as the ascent had to be made, I climbed up to the highest foothold below the

above-mentioned slab, and stood waiting there for the wind to moderate so that I might make a dash for the top. But ten minutes of this sort of thing was as much as I could endure. I had come away without my gloves, and the hail, beating on my bare hands, soon numbed them to such an extent that all feeling left them. I accordingly had to descend, and put in a period of vigorous shoulder-slapping, in the style generally approved and adopted by members of the cab-driving profession, with the view of restoring the circulation in my powerless fingers. This having been partially accomplished, another attempt was made, but with the same result. Whenever I got above the protecting ridge of the mountain, the wind and the sleet swept down on me, and I again retired, reluctantly, almost angrily indeed, but this time convinced that the idea of climbing the west side of the pinnacle in such weather was out of the question.

However, the eastern edge still was left to us, and to it we accordingly transferred our attentions. This eastern edge, while not so steep as the western face, is very much longer, and offers a far more sensational climb. The whole of the ridge is exceedingly narrow and falls off on both sides with great steepness. But, fortunately, the rock is fairly good; while the ridge had been so thoroughly cleaned by previous climbers that we did not meet with a single dangerously loose or unreliable hold on the whole ascent. In fact, the climb is one of comparative ease, and even on the narrowest, which is also the most perpendicular part of the ridge there should be no difficulty to a man with a good head. Our method of procedure was for me to climb to the full extent of our 60-foot rope, and then, anchoring myself and hitching the rope over some projecting knob, to nullify the effect of a possible slip, to pull in the slack as my companion ascended. In ordinary weather this slow process would not have been at all necessary; indeed, the rope could quite well be dispensed with altogether. But with the wind blowing a hurricane, and at times threatening to throw us off the ridge altogether, it was desirable to adopt every precaution.

The halt on the summit of the pinnacle was a miser-

able business. As the ascent of the western side had proved impracticable, I was all the more anxious to descend by it. So we sat crushed into a niche near the top for more than an hour waiting for the weather to give us a chance. But the only result was that the driving sleet wet us to the skin. And when at last John, who evidently did not like the idea of descending the long eastern edge in such weather, asked me to lower him past the awkward slab on the western face, I was unable to face the responsibility. My hands by this time were like miniature boxing gloves in appearance, and not at all fitted to withstand any great strain on the thin rope. As John was in as bad a condition for assisting me as I was for helping him we found ourselves driven to the longer route.

As we began the descent we were delighted by the appearance of one of those beautiful phenomena, which at rare intervals, surprise and gladden the eye of the mountaineer. Long before we had reached the top of Sgurr Dearg the mist had blotted out of view everything beyond the range of a few yards. But, for the last few minutes, the dim and watery sun had been making a desperate effort to pierce the gloom; and now, just as I was standing on the edge of the pinnacle, preparing to follow my companion, who was some thirty feet below, I suddenly saw my own figure boldly silhouetted on the curtain of mist to my left. The shadow was surrounded by a series of concentric circles glowing in all the rich prismatic colouring of the rainbow. John looked up at my shout, and saw that he also was glorified. The vision lasted for about half a minute, and then gradually and slowly faded away, only, however, to return in a few seconds more brilliantly beautiful though also more evanescent than before. It was the first time either of us had seen such a sight, and we remained a long time standing where we were in the hope that the vision would be repeated, but in vain. Each of us saw his own figure only, that of his companion being invisible.

This beautiful and interesting sight was followed by a rapid breaking up of the ocean of mist to the south and west. In a few minutes, out of the gloom that had en-

compassed them for hours, shot suddenly the black craggy peaks that encircle the head of wild Corrie Labain. It was a most impressive spectacle to watch the white mist, torn into shreds by the furious wind, eddying and whirling round the great gaunt precipices in that suggestive partial revelation which adds such an infinity of grandeur to the finest mountains, and can impart a feeling of dignity and bulk even to the humblest hills.

Our further progress towards the base of the pinnacle was saddened to me by the loss of an old and faithful companion. A sudden upward movement of the knee jerked my good old briar out of my jacket pocket. A single bound was sufficient to carry it far beyond the possibility of recovery, and much I lamented its loss before I got back to the hotel. Otherwise our descent was accomplished without incident, and when we once more set foot upon the solid mountain side it was with the feeling that, if we had not done all we intended, we had, considering the circumstances, put in a fairly successful day, and stored up one more pleasant memory for the days that were to come.

The drive home is *not* a pleasant memory. Wet, cold, pipeless, the alternate driving and walking over those wretched fifteen miles was a miserable experience. But all the more on that account, the enjoyment got out of the usual rubber as we sat round the fire in the smoking room that night was, mayhap, greater than if the expedition had been blessed with the most glorious of weather.

A DAY ON LOCHNAGAR.

(To A. I. M. and A. C.—30th September, 1895.)

I AM come up from Egypt. It is well  
That I, whose birthright is the love of hills,  
Have left to poorer sons of Israel  
The endless tale of bricks and all the ills  
Of bondage, and am hither come, to stand  
On this predestined Pisgah-top and see  
The heights and hollows of the Promised Land  
Stretch at my feet in vast sufficiency.  
Yet, not unlike the prophet-seer of old,  
I must descend upon the hither side—  
Forsaking an untrodden land of gold  
For alien pots and strangers that deride—  
Yonder to dream within my prison walls  
That here for ever manna nightly falls.

W. A. M.

## EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

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BOAT OF GARTEN was the headquarters for the summer CAIRN TOUL excursion of the Cairngorm Club. Cairn Toul was the peak the Club meant to climb. On the morning of the 13th July a party of twelve left the hotel, and as we drove off the wisest of the village weather prophets promised us a fair day. Put not your trust in prophets! In the annals of the Club's excursions the weather beat the record for badness.

Our route led us past Loch Vaa, at which we stopped for a few minutes and admired the prettily situated tarn; then on to Aviemore, through Inverdrue, and along the banks of the Bennie. On our left we had Carn Elrick with its cone-shaped peak guarding the entrance to Glen Eunach on the one side and the Larig on the other. On our right all the way up the glen we had a view—worth the journey—of the steep scarred sides of Sgoran Dubh. The drive ended at the bothy near Loch Eunach. Some of us who saw that loch for the first time were charmed with the lovely blue of its waters, the solitary grandeur of its situation—closely shut in on all sides but one by the crags of steep frowning hills. Before we commenced the ascent one of our party photographed us under somewhat unfavourable circumstances, for now the wind began to rise and the rain to fall. But wind and rain were not the worst of our difficulties. Scarcely had we started our upward march along the Stalker's Path when the mist came down. One section (the younger) of the party had gone on before; they disappeared from our view, and we saw them no more until, later in the day, we met once again at Loch Eunach to resume our homeward journey. Where they went we do not know; they did not know themselves! But they never reached Cairn Toul. What were their difficulties, and how they met them, no chronicler tells; they had probably spent their time on the minor summits of Braeriach.

Rounding the shoulder of Braeriach we waded through a wreath of snow half a mile long—surely an experience for a midsummer day. Our range of view was limited, and everything we saw looked grey and gloomy, and it was something of a treat to come across patches of star-shaped, bright, pink flowers. The botanist of the party told us it was moss campion (*Silene acaulis*), an alpine flower that loved the heights and scorned to grow at a lower range than 4000 feet or thereby. In passing along the top of An Garbh-choire we had a kind of awesome pleasure in looking down the gullies at the bottom of the corrie. We got an occasional glimpse of the infant Dee; but the summit of Brae-



riach was resolutely invisible, though once or twice we were blessed with a blink of Ben Muich Dhui, on whose sides still lay great patches of snow that had defied the power of the summer sun. Rounding the Angel's Peak, we began the final stage of our climb. Most people speak poetically of our "heather-clad hills". It is a mistake. The last 400 feet of Cairn Toul is nothing but a conglomeration of stones of all shapes and sizes thrown together in wildest confusion. We clambered up as best we could and reached the summit, where the Club held its usual meeting for the initiation of members. The meeting was of the shortest, for

"The wind blew as 't wad blawn its last,  
The rattling showers rose on the blast".

And then the driving mist! "The tourist" (says A. I. M. in his Monograph) "cannot fail to be impressed with the grandeur of the view". Our view was limited to a range of 50 yards, and sometimes less. In making again for Loch Eunach we were quite certain of our way, of course, and consulted neither compass nor map until we had to confess we were figuratively, as well as literally, in a mist. After animated discussion as to our exact whereabouts we set our faces northward. We had not gone much out of our way after all, as it turned out; for when the mist lifted it showed us the blue waters of Loch Eunach, and in an hour we reached our starting point.

Then came the return drive, and with the known perverseness of the weather it cleared up, and we had a delightful drive through Rothiemurchus Forest and past Loch an Eilein. After dinner, thoroughly enjoyed, we discussed the adventures of the day, and concluded that, spite of wind and rain and mist, the excursion had been a success.—A. MURRAY SCOTT, M.A.

is an ideal mountain, especially in a distant view. From SCHICHALLION the east and north-east it appears as a huge cone, rising at a rather low angle and ending in a peak, and is thus very conspicuous beside the rounded masses of Ben Lawers and other surrounding heights. The view from the road leading up from Strath Tay and Glen Lyon is equally fine, as the mountain seems to rise out of a small valley, and shows a dark craggy ridge. The first of the above views, that from the east, which we obtained from Ben Vrackie, so delighted us that we determined, if possible, to visit it. The most feasible route from Pitlochry, where we were staying, appeared to be *via* Aberfeldy; so we took an early train there, and started on the tramp of five or six miles along the Glen Lyon road as far as Coshieville. The only two plants that we took special notice of were *Geranium phæum* and *G. pratense*.

At Coshieville the Kinloch Rannoch road leaves the Glen Lyon road, and we followed the former up the pretty wooded valley of the Keltney Burn. After two or three miles the scenery changed, and,

instead of trees and bushes, we came to bare heaths and rocky mountain spurs, with Schichallion rising dark and gloomy before us. On the banks of a wayside streamlet we found *Parnassia palustris* in full flower growing in extraordinary luxuriance, at least 15 inches high. Soon after this we left the road, and, passing across some half-cultivated ground, struck into a shepherd's track above the bed of the Keltney Burn, here flowing down a narrow rocky gorge. As we were not sure of the distance we pushed on rapidly for some time, not stopping to look for plants till we reached a bend in the stream where it runs parallel to the ridge of Schichallion. From this point we made our way across a heathy plateau to the actual ridge of the mountain. The heather was here thick, and afforded but poor walking and few opportunities for botanising, but in one open spot we found two mosses, *Tetraplodon bryoides* and *Ditrichum homomallum*. From this place we began the ascent of the last few hundred feet of the mountain. Striking into a kind of water-course with but little flowing water in it, we followed it straight up. Growing amongst the stones we found *Lycopodium annotinum*, and in the damper ground *Juncus triglumis* and *Polygonum viviparum*. After a long stretch of tiresome walking we reached a boggy piece of ground, thickly clad with *Rubus Chamæmorus* the rich orange berries of which were extremely refreshing. Having now reached a considerable height we began to look out for a fine view, but a great part of the surrounding country was hidden by a mist, and such mountains as we could see were largely enveloped in clouds. Beinn a' Ghlo, however, stood out conspicuously to the east, Ben Lawers to the south.

We continued to climb over ground which became more and more stony, expecting every moment to see the cairn on the summit rise before us, but we were often disappointed, and when at last the summit really came into view, although it was no great height above us, yet we considered that to reach it would require more time than we could spare, and the intervening ground seemed to be a repetition of what we had already crossed and not likely to afford anything of interest botanically. Retracing, then, our steps we came across the only wild animal we saw on the mountain, namely, a blue hare, which seemed as much surprised to see us as we were to see it. Instead of following the route we came up by we bore to the left, descending a much steeper slope in order to reach the Kinloch Rannoch road, which we could see far below us. Just as we sat down for our lunch by the side of a small stream we found a plant we had been on the look-out for—*Gnaphalium supinum*; following the stream downwards we joined the road, and, knowing that a long trudge was before us ere we could reach Pitlochry, we were obliged to settle down to a steady pace and were unable to botanise on the way. From what we had seen of the mountain our impression of the day's excursion to Schichallion was that the mountain was well worth a visit and would



*Photo by W. A. Hawes.*

*Collotype by G. Brodie.*

LOCHNAGAR—TOP OF BLACK SPOUT, 6TH MAY, 1895,

repay in many ways a far more thorough investigation.—C. H. BLAKISTON.

ON 1st August last Tough and I left Inschnabobart at mid-day with the object of finding a way, if possible, up the formidable crags, which, under the shelter of Byron's poetry and their own unpromising appearance, have long evaded the attack of the rock-climber. The history of these cliffs, so far as it is known to the writer, is singularly lacking in incident; for although many persons make the ascent annually by the Black Spout—a perfectly simple route—there is only one recorded instance of an attack upon the precipice proper. This was Gibson's and Douglas' attempt in March, 1893 (recorded in Vol. II. of the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal*, p. 246) which was made upon a steep snow gully in the east corner of the big corrie, and ended some 100 feet below the summit at the base of a smooth perpendicular rock-wall which both climbers pronounced impracticable. So like the king of Spain they climbed down again.

Having the experience of this capable party in view, and having carefully reconnoitred the crags on former occasions, both from above and below, Tough and I resolved to make our attempt by the great rock buttress to the west of "Gibson's Gully", and which is easily distinguishable in all the photographs of the mountain in coming lower down the screes towards the loch than any of its neighbours. Successors in our climb will find it right in the centre of the western or right hand branch of the corrie at the point where the rocks are probably higher than anywhere else.

The take-off from the screes consists of steep grassy slopes which presently bring the climber to a region of slabby rocks set at a high angle, across which he must proceed by slippery and narrow grassy ledges, over first one gully and then another. Between the gullies we made an attempt to climb straight up, but a slabby bit about 20 feet high compelled an undignified and not very easy retreat. Crossing the second gully we scrambled up its western bank on to the broad grassy ledge, which, had it continued, would have afforded a Royal Road to the summit. It ended, however, quite suddenly on the face of the precipice, and with it, for the time being, seemed to end our chances of getting any higher. A shaky-looking rock shelf running up towards the east invited a visit of inspection to a grass plot which we could see fixed solitary in the rock-wall some distance above us. From this plot, by a series of rather original gymnastics which consisted ultimately of Tough being thrown up from distinctly insecure standing-ground to a hold beyond his reach, we succeeded in climbing up to comparatively easy ground, whence, with stiff little bits at intervals, we worked upwards to the summit. The whole climb, from the screes to the summit plateau, had taken exactly three hours.—W. BROWN, M.A., LL.B.

MEIKLE SGRILLEACH HILL (2432). THE old military road between Crathie and Corgarff crosses the hills dividing Dee from Don at a height of about 1800 feet on the shoulder of Meikle Sgrilleach Hill. The summit of the hill is about a mile to the east of the road, and the slight divergence and climb will reward the tourist. The road crosses the Gairn at Gairnshiel, and striking in to the head of Glen Fenzie by Allt Glas-choille, descends on the Don alongside the Burn of Tornahaish. Sgrilleach is rather a flat, humpy hill, partaking much of the nature of the watershed ridge from Meikle Geal Charn to Morven, the boundary between the parishes of Glenmuick-Tullich-Glengairn and Strathdon. Peats are still cut both on the north and south sides almost to the very top—where quartz crops out—so that altogether the ascent is a very small matter. The view includes Glen Fenzie, Mount Keen, Glen Muick, the Coyles, Capel Mounth, Conachraig Hill, Lochnagar, and the hills westward on the south side of the Dee to the head of Glen Ey, Brown Cow Hill, the Craigandals, Beinn a' Bhuird—the top of the eastern corries being seen over Ben Avon—Ben Avon, Ben Bynac (?), Meall na Gainneimh, the Don about Cock Bridge, Allargue, Corgarff Church, Lonach Hill, Buck, Tap o' Noth, Ben Newe, Bennachie, Morven, Kerloch, Clochnaben, and Mount Battock. Descending a little towards Little Sgrilleach Hill (on the north) Inverernan will be seen. The graceful outline of the Buck relieves the rather monotonous and featureless ridge on the north side of the Don, Ben Newe only standing out boldly with its distinctive peak among the upper Donside hills. The Mither Tap and the Millstone Hill are the prominent summits of the "grey king of common hills". Morven, as usual, shuts out a very considerable portion of the eastward scene, and "the stone" of Clochnaben is under the horizon; Allt a' Bhreabadair Hill (2456) on the east, and Carn a' Bhacain (2442) on the west, are the immediate neighbours of Sgrilleach and restrict, from their proximity and slightly greater elevation, the prospect. The cone of Keen was white (the date was 27th October, 1894), while in Corgarff the scythe was seen at work.

IN Ben Muich Dhui and Cairngorm the great mountain plateau sweeps up into two eminences each more than 4000 feet above the sea, and separated from each other by the shallow depression through which runs the upper waters of the Feith Buidhe. Both are composed, like the other contiguous members of the Cairngorm range, of granite, generally coarse in grain, and made up of felspar, glassy quartz, and a little black mica. The felspar, which is the predominant mineral, varies from pale flesh-colour to deep red in hue, giving to the whole rock a reddish aspect. The well-known "Cairngorm" stones are isolated crystals of clear quartz, coloured in various shades of yellow by oxide of iron, and are found usually in veins and cavities of the rock or loose in the sandy *debris*.

The granite weathers readily along the parallel horizontal joints, giving the tabular appearance that is so marked a character of the isolated "tors", or rock masses, on the summits. Large areas on the tops of these mountains are paved with weathered slabs of rock, or covered with angular gravel and sand, the result of the disintegration of the granite by atmospheric agencies. In some of the high level corries there are fine examples of glacial tarns or lakelets, such as Loch Etchachan, the two Lochan Uaines, and Lochan nan Gabhar. These are partly rock basins, and partly dammed back by the terminal moraines shed by the melting glaciers as they retreated up into the mountain fastnesses at the close of the Ice Age in Britain. Splendid examples of moraines, both terminal and lateral, often strewn with huge "perched" blocks of granite, are to be seen in Glen Derry, Glen Dee, the upper part of Glen Avon, and in most of the glens amongst the Cairngorms.—L. W. H.

IN August, '91, J. and I passed Derry Lodge at 10:30 a.m., crossing the Dee at 11:45 on some very good POINT (3303). stepping-stones about  $\frac{1}{3}$  mile north of the junction of the Geusachan. The question now arose as to our exact route. The slopes towards Glen Dee were obviously impracticable, being steep, wet, naked rock; but just in Glen Geusachan there is a gully that runs up along the west side of these bare rocks. Up this we made our way, and a very fine and enjoyable scramble it afforded us. Its lower part is all fallen scree, torrent-washed, but along its west margin the turf gives excellent footing. Above the screes one enters the gully proper, and for some 800 feet or so there is very good scrambling over the rocks. Above it rise many jagged towers and cliffs of rock, and the upward spectacle is very fine. A cold, heavy wind was blowing across Beinn Bhrotain towards us, sweeping up the gully with great force; its roaring, yelling, shrieking, and hissing among the rocks above was very striking. Now and again we halted and looked back at the startling mist effects. The sun was bright, and was reflected in the multitude of pools that studded Glen Dee. The wind often rolled masses of cloud over the ridges of Beinn Bhrotain; they were flung in a hurtling mass into Glen Geusachan, and rushed up the gully, blotting out of sight everything beyond a few feet. Then, as suddenly they passed, our view extended to Beinn a' Ghlo, and our eyes were dazzled with the "many twinkling smile" of Glen Dee. This rapid change, many times repeated, was nearly enough to make one giddy, and was certainly the most powerfully impressive cloud show I have ever "assisted" at. The top part of the gully opens out into slopes covered with grass and heather, and, bearing a little to the left, we stepped on to the ridge at 12:50. Here everything was hidden in dense, driving mist, and the wind was bitterly cold, numbing our hands and making our eyes smart. Nothing could be seen in any direction, and we hastened forwards toward Cairn

Toul, hoping to get below the mist so as to see our way. That, however, was not to be, and we guided ourselves largely by sound and by a general sense of direction. By and by we found ourselves on the top of the almost precipitous edge of Coire an t-Saighdeir, and followed it till at 1.45 we reached a cairn. This we then supposed was the summit of Cairn Toul, though I have since learned that it was only the southerly cairn. For the last half mile the going had been very rough, and we were not a little glad of a rest. We scrambled a few yards down the steep slope to get shelter from the wind, and there lunched in a dense enfolding mist. Since leaving the Devil's Point ridge we had been in continual mist, and had seen nothing beyond our immediate surroundings. Resuming our descent, we made our way Deewards, down the wildly rough corrie side, many large stones turning under our feet and thundering downwards. This part of the descent called for very great care and not a little agility. We got a few good botanical specimens on the way, and repassed Derry Lodge at 6.15 p.m.

LEAVING Glen Lui (at 7.15) at the mouth of Allt a' BEINN A' Mhadaidh, we kept by that burn for about three-  
 BHUIRD quarters of a mile, and, at 8.50, forded the Allt an  
 AND Dubh-ghlinne immediately above its junction with the  
 BEN AVON. Quoich, commencing the actual ascent of the chief summit of the Eastern Cairngorms ten minutes thereafter on a hot July morning. Soon the Allt na Beinne, a clear, dashing, mountain burn, was crossed, and we looked down on the weather-beaten pines we had recently left behind us. The South Top of Beinn a' Bhuidr was reached at 10.30, not without a change in the weather. Great clouds followed each other in quick succession from the west, affording only occasional glimpses of such well-known landmarks as Lochnagar and Morven. At 11 we were sheltered by A Chioch; the wind had prevailed, and clouds ceased to obscure the prospect. The walk along the edge of Coire an Dubh-lochain and Coire nan Clach was exceedingly interesting, and the distant view good, particularly the sandy shores of the Moray Firth, sparkling in the sunlight. Passing the North Top the Sneck was made for; somehow the distance seemed much greater than we had anticipated, the Barns of Ben Avon looking so near, just across a vast hollow. At 12.40, however, we found ourselves sheltered by Clach an t-Saighdeir of Ben Avon, having latterly run before the wind, now blowing a gale. Refreshed by lunch (and an hour's sleep, be it mentioned) we climbed the Clach—on all fours; the gale put the erect position out of the question. The prospect was much enjoyed; Ben Muich Dhui was observed to be receiving visitors. At 2.30 we commenced the return journey, and at 4.10 we had left the summit of Beinn a' Bhuidr, holding in a south-west direction for Glen Derry. Our experience, however, of the Moine Bhealaidh was such that we would recommend the following of Allt an Dubh-ghlinne to Glen Quoich. Getting clear

of the bog at 6:30 we made our way, mist now settling down, over the shoulder of Beinn Bhreac, landing in Glen Derry about a mile above the Lodge, quite satisfied with our day's experiences.—WILLIAM GARDEN, M. A., B. L.

I HAD visions, Mr. Editor, of a paper for you headed GOATFELL. "Three Days in Arran", as a result of a proposed holiday in that charming island. The three days were duly spent and enjoyed, with Corrie for the base of operations, but a steadfast haze doggedly held possession, and quite prevented the prospect that I had anticipated the pleasure of seeing and describing. Corrie is only a little place, so small that there is danger of passing it by in the "Ivanhoe"; but it is beautifully situated. It has a hotel, and practically every house is devoted to visitors; but the accommodation does not always meet the demand. In such cases nothing remains but a bed in the bracken, or Glasgow by the next steamer. We raced, in a quiet way, a little crowd of tourists bent on the same purpose, and had the good fortune to secure quarters ere the supply failed. The weather was too warm for hill-climbing—at least to the extent that some of us had planned; besides the haze robbed half the reward of the exertion. Thus we had to be content with pleasant wanderings in the neighbourhood, exploring the White Water one day, finding out the rugged beauties of the lower end of Glen Sannox the other, and devoting a day to Goatfell. Brodick is the recognised centre for that peak, but it is nearer to, and particularly easy of ascent from, Corrie. Armed with "Baddelley" and "Grierson" [The 16th No. of the *S.M.C.J.* would also have been found serviceable.—Ed., *C.C.J.*] we set out for the monarch of the island. Though the height is only 2866 feet, the ascent is practically about equal in altitude to any of the Cairngorms. The route is up the right bank of the White Water, keeping the burn on the right till Coire Ian is reached. There is no track, but the going is good, and the steadily increasing sea horizon gives good excuses for resting. Coire Ian is steep, and requires some effort to get out of it; but once above it the climb may be said to be accomplished. We overshot our peak, and so had to retrace our steps a little; however, on descending by the ordinary route there did not seem any reason to regret the blunder. The Arran hills *are* hills; their serrated outlines, familiar from the Firth of Clyde and the mainland, are not indebted to distance for their "enchantment". Seen from Goatfell itself, their summits form a crowd of finely contoured peaks, picturesque though frightful to the "safe" mountaineer, but inviting to the "rock-climber". We had to be content with a simple and reverent admiration of the rock-crested tops before us: they will bear a good honest "glower", and, indeed, but for a blunder of the man with the bag, who had carefully left behind the most important of the proposed contents, we could have spent an hour or two at the "cairn"; there does not, however, happen to be one. If you turn to



"Observations" at page 169 of the Journal, you can understand our disgust at the haze. To think that the "adjacent islands" of Great Britain, Ireland, Man, the very Cumbraes themselves, and others—truly "too numerous to mention"—were temporarily hid from us by the irritating haze was a grievous disappointment. Yet the limited horizon delighted us, and we consoled ourselves with the thought that Ben Muich Dhui was distant only two "steps of the eye"—Ben Lawers, the Ochils, or the Pentlands serving for the intermediate "step".

We found several parties on the top, one composed of ladies alone, which should give you, sir, some idea of the difficulty of the Brodick route. That was how we returned, a track developing into a path, the path into a road. To describe this route so that it could be followed from Brodick would be tedious; fortunately there is no lack of direction posts. The hill road landed us at the turnpike near the north end of the bay; the village is at the south end, and thither we sent the bag-man for supplies. Of solids he brought back enough, but a dairy, where he made a passing call, was found to have been raided hours before. The dairymaid dismissed him with a flea in his ear for his folly in seeking milk at such a late hour; he will not soon forget the lady's advice, given in kindly but vigorous language, that he who wants a bed or milk in Arran must apply early in the day.

Brother Grierson, in his homely loquacious style, tells us that the islanders "have generally a starved, dejected look", but that must have been before the natives devoted themselves so much to letting lodgings! Master Baddelley does not seem to have observed this appearance; he, more to the point, speaks of "economy of space by the use of hammocks let into the side walls for bedroom accommodation". But I'll require to pull up, for two reasons—to avoid the closure, and to keep something in reserve for an article which I promise you after my next ascent of Goatfell. Only for it you must give me your big type; I know your "cutting" style, and will be thankful for a "corner" for this letter—that is, if it escapes the W.P.B. To wind up; we walked along the coast to Corrie, and thus made a circular tour of our pleasant little excursion. There's a coach, but we missed it; moreover 'twas a glorious evening, the sea was beautiful, and dotted with passenger steamers and yachts, and we were now reconciled to a late dinner.—

GLASGOW.

of Cabrach was ascended by the Club on 23rd September, the Autumn Excursion. The party left Aberdeen for  
 THE GARTLY at 7.32 a.m., where conveyances were in waiting  
 BUCK for Elrick, at the base of the hill. One of the very finest days of autumn, the weather was nevertheless most unsuitable for hill climbing, as a heat haze completely concealed the distant prospect. The only hills visible were Tap o' Noth, Ben Rinnes, and Morven; even Bennachie was obscured. But none the less was the

excursion thoroughly enjoyed; indeed, as an "outing", it was one of the most successful arranged by the Club. The usual meeting was held on the top for admission and initiation of new members, and several photographs were successfully taken by one of the members, Mr. W. Y. M'Donald. The Club is indebted to that gentleman for pleasant souvenirs of more than one excursion. Several natives met the party at the cairn, and contributed not a little to the pleasure of the excursion.

The descent was made to Clova House, where the carriages met the party, thence driving to Lumsden. At the hotel there dinner and tea were provided by Mrs. Smith in such a kindly and homely way, as, accustomed as the Club is to hospitable treatment, will not soon be forgotten. Resuming the drive, Gartly station was reached in time to catch the train arriving in Aberdeen at 9.30. The Chairman of the Club, Mr. Robert Anderson, was in charge of the party, and presided at the cairn and the dinner.

The Buck is poor in its vegetation, and nothing was observed during the excursion that deserves mention, except, perhaps, a profusion of flowers in several large patches of Red Whortleberry or Cranberry (*Vaccinium Oxycoccus*) passed through in the descent of the hill towards Clova. The vegetation on the summit is not at all alpine in character, though the Least Willow (*Salix herbacea*) grows somewhat lower down. The plants noted were only such as are widely distributed on the hills and moorlands of the district.—J. W. H. T.

was held on 27th December—the Chairman, Mr. Robert Anderson, presiding. Office-bearers and Committee were elected as on page V.

OUR SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING The excursions for the current year were fixed as follows: Spring Holiday—Broad Cairn; Summer Holiday—Ben Vorlich and Stuc a' Chroin; Autumn Holiday—Lord Arthur's Cairn (Correen Hills).

Mr. J. G. Murray, Artist, Glasgow and Stirling, was thanked for Sketches presented to the Club. Mr. W. A. Hawes, Aberdeen, was also thanked for permission to reproduce photographs.

## REVIEWS.

MESSRS. R. S. SHEARER & SON, Stirling, have recently published a coloured "Panorama of Mountains, Lochs, and Islands seen from the Summit of Ben Nevis". It is a capital production, and is certain to receive a ready welcome from mountaineers. The price is only 1s., but special editions can be obtained at 3s. 6d. and 15s. The Cairngorm Club has now a "Cairngorm" map, but with the Ben Nevis Panorama as an example, we "won't be happy" till, somehow or other, a Ben Muich Dhui Panorama comes into existence.

THE last three Nos. of our excellent contemporary THE SCOTTISH (No. 18 completes Vol. III.) leave nothing to be MOUNTAINEERING desired either in matter or illustration by the most CLUB JOURNAL. rabid mountaineer. The rock-climber especially will revel in No. 18. In that No., also, Professor G. A. Smith, D.D., writes, under the "Rise and Progress of Mountaineering in Scotland", of Professor James D. Forbes, a great though almost forgotten Scottish climber. A four-inch map of Ben Nevis is one of the most useful illustrations accompanying that No.

THIS little book by Mr. R. B. Cunninghame Graham NOTES ON (A. & C. Black) is one of the oddest guide books ever MENTEITH. published. It is hardly a guide book at all, but an exposition of what Mr. Graham thinks of the Earls of Menteith and other former dwellers in the region; anyone who knows the eccentric style of Mr. Graham will be prepared to shriek with laughter at some of his grotesque remarks. Yet he can hit it off well when he likes, as witness this general description of Menteith—"A mass of hillocks and hummocks, broken up by little pools intersected with rushing streams, hirsute with heather, the fields stony as those of Palestine, the whole country bounded by mountains to the north, and huge flat mosses to the south". And this picture of Ben Lomond—"Ben Lomond dominates the land, a sort of Scottish Vesuvius, never wholly without a cloud-cap. You cannot move a step that it does not tower over you. In winter, a vast white sugar loaf; in summer, a prismatic cone of yellow and amethyst, and opaline lights; in spring, a grey, gloomy, stony pile of rocks; in autumn, a weather indicator, for when the mist curls down its sides, and hangs in heavy wreaths from its double summit, 'it has to rain'".

UNDER this rather affected title, Mr. D. H. Edwards, AROUND Brechin, has published a description of six circular THE ANCIENT tours from Brechin to Glen Clova, Forfar and Kirrie- CITY. muir, Edzell and Glenesk, and so on. The book is a little discursive; but pedestrians in Forfarshire and Kincardineshire districts will occasionally find it useful.

is the title of a story contributed to the Holiday Number of *Belgravia* by one of our members, Mr. W. A TERRIBLE J. Jamieson. The scene is laid in Braemar, and the IMPASSE tragic denouement occurs on Lochnagar, where the hero and a friend, climbing the corrie from the loch, encounter a terrible *impasse*. Whether or not Mr. Jamieson has drawn upon his fancy for his description of this *impasse* and its dangers, will be for readers of his story to decide.

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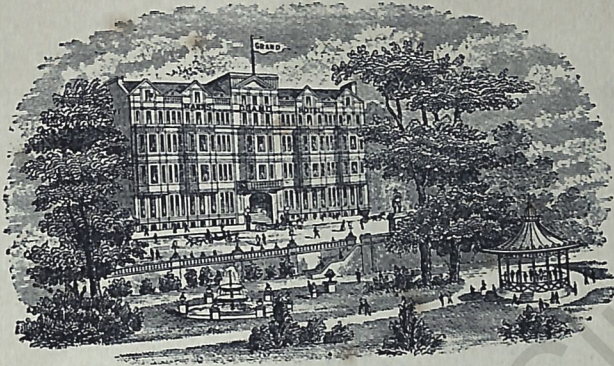
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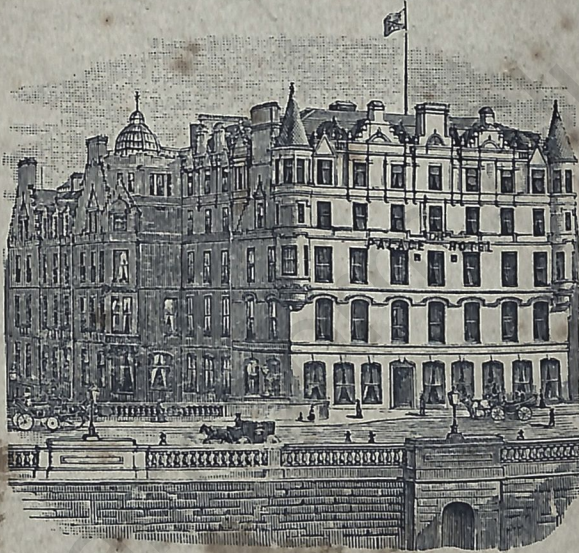
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