

*With the Editor's Conf.*

Vol. IV.

July, 1904.

No. 23.

# THE Cairngorm Club Journal.

EDITED BY

ALEX. INKSON M'CONNOCHIE.

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# The Cairngorm Club.

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PRESIDENT,	- -	The Right Hon. JAMES BRYCE, D.C.L., LL.D., M.P.
CHAIRMAN,	- - - - -	JOHN M'GREGOR.
TREASURER,	- - - - -	T. R. GILLIES, 181a Union Street, Aberdeen.
SECRETARY,	- - - - -	A. I. M'CONNOCHIE, 115 Union Street, Aberdeen.

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## RULES.

I.—The Club shall be called "THE CAIRNGORM CLUB".

II.—The objects of the Club shall be: (1) to encourage mountain climbing in Scotland, with special reference to the Cairngorm group of mountains; (2) to procure and impart scientific, topographical, and historical information about the Scottish mountains, their superficial physical features, minerals, rocks, plants, animals, meteorology, ancient and modern public routes giving access to and across them, and the meaning of their local place names, literature, and legendary, or folk-lore; (3) to consider the right of access to Scottish mountains, and to adopt such measures in regard thereto as the Club may deem advisable; and (4) to issue a Journal or such other publications as may be considered advantageous to the Club.

III.—Candidates for admission as members of the Club must have ascended at least 3000 feet above the sea level on a Scottish mountain.

IV.—The management of the Club shall be vested in a Committee, consisting of ten members, in addition to the following Office-Bearers—a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Chairman, a Secretary, and a Treasurer—five being a quorum.

V.—The annual general meeting of the Club shall be

*Continued on page 3 of Cover.*

## *The Club Magazine.*



The Editor would be glad if Members who have mountaineering photographs which might prove of interest to the Club generally, would send copies of these to him, with particulars noted on them.

They would be inserted in the Magazine on suitable occasions, and might form the nucleus of a Cairngorm Club Collection.

# The Cairngorm Club.

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*President* : HIS EXCELLENCY THE RIGHT HON. JAMES BRYCE, D.C.L.

*Chairman* ; JOHN CLARKE, ESQ., M.A.

*Secretary* :

J. B. GILLIES,  
181 UNION STREET,  
ABERDEEN.

## EASTER MEET AT CLOVA.

It has been decided to hold a Meet at CLOVA at Easter, the Headquarters of the Club being the OGIIVY ARMS HOTEL.

It is intended that Members will leave Aberdeen by the 3.40 p.m. train on Friday, 12th April. Motors will be waiting at Kirriemuir to convey them to Clova.

It may be pointed out that Members, should they desire to do so, can very easily arrange to go to Clova or to return therefrom by the Capel, Glen Muick and Deeside, or by Glen Doll, Glen Callater and Braemar. Members wishing to adopt either of these routes might, in advising me of their intention to take part in the Meet, specify the route they desire to take, and whether they propose to take it going or coming. I should then be able to put Members desirous of taking the same route at the same time in touch with each other.

The Glen Doll Trustees have kindly granted permission to ascend any of the hills on the Glen Doll Estates, and climbs will be arranged to some of the following hills:—Boustie Ley, Craig Mellon, Tolmount (3143), Tom Buidhe (3140), Cairn-an-Tuirc (3340), Cairnna-Glasha (3484), Dreish, Mayar, etc.

It is hoped that a large number of Members and friends will avail themselves of this opportunity of visiting an excellent climbing centre.

Special terms have been arranged at the Ogilvy Arms Hotel for Members and their friends. The tariff is 7/- per day, and provides for Breakfast, Hill Lunch, Dinner (with tea or coffee later), Bed, and Attendance. Kindly let me know before THURSDAY, 4th April, if you intend to be present, and whether you will be accompanied by a guest.

J. B. GILLIES,

*Secretary.*

21st March, 1912.

Members will purchase their own railway tickets. The week-end fare to Kirriemuir is 6/2.



Photo by

THE AVON ABOVE INCHRORY.

Mrs. Godman.

THE  
**Cairngorm Club Journal.**

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JULY, 1904.

No. 23.

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**TWO DAYS' RIDGE-WALKING IN ARRAN.**

BY HUGH STEWART.

ON the evening of Friday, the 5th of May, we set foot on the good ship the Duchess of Rothesay, lying at Ardrossan and bound for Arran. On Thursday I had suggested the trip to my friend Mr. J. M. Moyes; but the suggestion was declined with thanks, an engagement on the Saturday forming an insurmountable barrier. On Friday morning, however, the gods being propitious, I received word that the engagement was off; and it required only a few winged words on my part to effect the decision that we leave the hurly-burly behind us, and set our faces towards that Island of the Blessed, lying in the western sea.

The passage across to Brodick was very enjoyable, although the weather prospects were by no means hopeful. The sun was visible for only one brief moment, and its red glare seen through the black smoke produced an almost weird effect, such as in superstitious days might have seemed a bad omen. Rain was falling persistently, and heavy mist hung low on the Arran hills, Ben Nuis alone soaring up like a great horn. And when, thanks to the "rope mannies", as the sailors were dubbed by a tinker's boy on board, the Duchess was made fast to the Brodick pier, it was with an anxiety to get under cover that we began to hunt for rooms. Then came a brisk walk to restore circulation, during which we extracted from a venerable looking native the following hopeful weather

IV. R.

forecast. "I wadna say", declared the oracle, "but what it wad be wet. It's been a baad spring, wind an' rain, an' rain an' wind. Och aye, I doot it's to be wet, wet". But the hills were by this time clearer, and the prospect both charmed and surprised me. Having come that week from the snow-clad Glen Clova hills, it was a considerable surprise to lift my eyes to hills of almost equal height and find no vestige of snow. And the clearness, moreover, not only showed us the entrancing forms of the hills, but was also hopeful of good weather to come, so that, as we turned in for the night, we trusted that as so often before, now too, oracle wisdom might prove not altogether infallible.

On awakening early next morning we found that our prophet *had* been mistaken. One glance from the window was enough to show a windless ocean and a cloudless sky. We rose at once, but our enthusiasm was soon severely tested. Breakfast would not be ready for half an hour, and of lunch supplies we had none. Did we, then, after the manner of two illustrious mountaineers (see *Journal*, Vol. I., p. 58), set off at once to feed our souls on visions of peak and pinnacle? Alas! gentle reader, more than our souls craved to be satisfied, and, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, our enthusiasm succumbed ingloriously. An hour afterwards two figures might have been seen executing a Devil's March on the grocer's unopened door in search of further provender. We laid in a mighty store of buns and chocolate bars, and at 7.45 started off for Ben Nuis. The only guide book we had taken was No. 43 of the *S.M.C.J.*, containing an excellent article on Arran. We had not had time to consult any other.

The hills of Arran may be divided for convenience into three groups, running in a roughly parallel direction from south to north:—

1. The Western Group. This group lies in the west of the island, separated from the middle group by the wide and bare Glen Iorsa. Of these rounded, heathery hills, the principal are Beinn Bharrain—the barren mountain (2345) in the south; half a mile further north Mullach

Buidhe (2368); and another mile and a half north Bheinn Bhreac—the spotted mountain, with its two cairns (2305) and (2333). Two miles on is the Meall nan Damh—the hill of the bucks (1870), where the ridge terminates. Little climbing is to be had in this group, which bears the same relation to the nobler groups eastwards that in Skye the Red Hills bear to the Black Coolin.

2. The Central Group, the longest and finest of the three ridges. Proceeding again from south to north the various tops are Ben Nuis—the face mountain (2597); Ben Tarsuinn—the transverse mountain (2706); A' Chir—the comb (2335); Cir Mhor—the big comb (2618); Caisteal Abhail—the fortress of the ptarmigan (2817); Suidhe Fhearghas—the seat of Fergus (2156). Here the ridge descends steeply to the sea.

The most important branch ridge is that running south-east from a point between Ben Tarsuinn and A' Chir. Its highest point is Ben A' Chliabhain (2217).

3. The Eastern Group, separated from 2 by Glen Rosa or Rosie in the south—the Red Glen, and in the north by Glen Sannox—the glen with the sandy bay. The watershed between these two glens, known as the Saddle, will be found much more difficult than represented in the majority of guide books. The main tops of this group are Goatfell—the sacred mountain (2866), the name of which is pronounced by the islanders with the emphasis on the first syllable; North Goatfell (2716); and in the north, Cioch na h' Oighe—the maiden's breast (2168).

Three ridges diverge from this group, all running east:

- (1) from Goatfell, culminating in Meall Breac to the south of the White Water glen,
- (2) from North Goatfell, the Am Binnein (2172) ridge to the north of the White Water glen,
- (3) half a mile further north the Mullach Buidhe (2541) ridge, dividing Coire nan Larach on the south from the famous Coire na Ciche on the north.

Our plan of campaign, as made out before breakfast,



was to climb Ben Nuis, and, following the ridge to Cir Mhor, descend to the Saddle; climb North Goatfell and follow the eastern ridge to Cioch na h' Oighe, descending by Glen Sannox and returning thence by the shore to Brodick. On the Sunday we proposed to climb Goatfell and Cir Mhor, and go on to Suidhe Fhearghas by the Castles and the Carline's Leap. Such a plan would enable us to do Cir Mhor twice, for it is undoubtedly the finest hill in the island.

We set off then in high spirits for Ben Nuis, and, passing the Duke of Hamilton's statue and the Druidstone, soon arrived before Brodick Church. Here is presented a choice of routes. The traveller may follow the String Road, so called from its appearance as seen from the sea, and strike right across the moor—a route, however, to be avoided after rain. The second route, which we followed, leads right in front of the church. A little burn is crossed by means of a footbridge, a few houses are passed on the left, an iron gate is opened, and, leaving the last house behind us on the right, we find ourselves in Glen Rosa. The lower part of the glen is sometimes called Glen Shant (the Glen of Enchantment), as opposed to the wild upper part. Generally, however, the name Glen Rosa is bestowed on the whole glen. The magnificent view which gladdened our eyes as we left Brodick is now curtailed. The argent cone of Goatfell, glittering with snow fallen during the night, and the splintered crags of Cir Mhor are now hidden, but the peaceful beauties of this part of the glen form a fitting introduction to the wild magnificence beyond. Turning northwards in the glen, a few minutes' level walking brings us to the Garbh Allt, where we are more than three miles distant from Brodick. We crossed this aptly named burn by a wooden bridge, and a tiresome ascent up a steep, grassy slope on the left bank led us to the shoulder of Ben a' Chliabhain. Here again we had a choice of routes. We could ascend the rarely climbed Ben a' Chliabhain, and, descending into Coire a' Bhradain, reach the top of Ben Nuis by a steep track winding round Coire nan Mean, or try one of the numerous unclimbed gullies

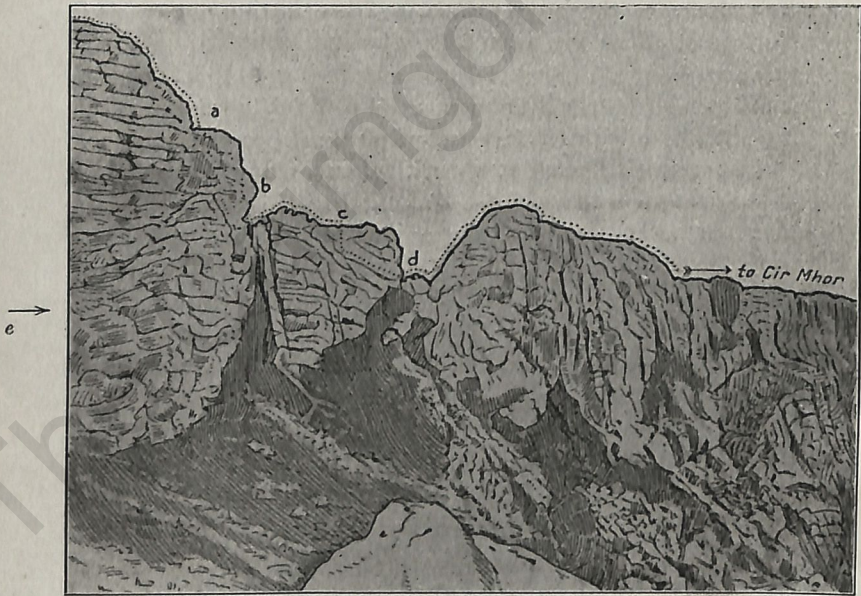
in its face. Having no rope, however, and being bent more on general exploration than on particular climbs, we adopted the second course, and ascended the heathery slope, keeping the precipices to our right.

We recrossed the Garbh Allt, whose waters we took credit for diminishing not inconsiderably; and passing under a rock slightly to the south of the top, which in rain would prove a welcome shelter-stone, we speedily gained the summit. Quite forgotten now was the tedious ascent from Glen Rosa in the magnificent panorama spread around us. To such a scene no word-painting can do justice, but in my memory there will long abide that vision of amazing beauty. To the west were the heather slopes of Ben Bhreac, the blue waters of the sea, with here and there great patches of sunlight, the green fields of Kintyre, the hills of Mull and Jura. Northwards the eye ranged over peak after peak of snow-clad hills uplifting their brilliant summits into heaven, the dazzling ramparts of the Highlands. In the foreground loomed up the noble peak of Goatfell, and the spears and wild pinnacles of Cir Mhor.

But we had a long day's work before us, and, as the view is pretty much the same all along the ridge, we set our faces northwards, and about a mile's easy walking brought us to Ben Tarsuinn. This summit, though higher than Ben Nuis, is not such a favourite, but for rock-climbers the field in the immediate neighbourhood seems a rich one. We spent some time bouldering here, and then descended to the Bealach an Fhir Bhogha—the Bowmen's Pass (2250), so called, perhaps, from having been the scene in primitive times of ambushes laid for deer. These were driven through the Bealach, and were picked off by stationed Nimrods, who thus combined shooting practice with material advantage. The pass connects the Ealta Choire with Glen Iorsa, and its crossing, though rough, is a matter of no difficulty. Shortly after this, the Ben a' Chliabhain ridge strikes off on the right, separating Coire Daingean from Coire a' Bhradain. Then we passed the lowest point (2106) in this part of the ridge, and began a delightful scramble along the rocky crest of A' Chir. The top was

reached without difficulty, and here we halted for a few minutes to lighten our hearts by gazing on the scene and our pockets by abstracting a bun or two. It was now that we resolved on a change of programme. Such a day we might not get to-morrow, and we determined to include in our Saturday's tramp the Castles and Suidhe Fhearghas, leaving the comparatively short walk along the eastern ridge to be our Sabbath day's journey.

This point settled, we moved on without taking the trouble to look at the guide book and find whether any difficulties lay before us. In a few minutes, however, we found that we had come to a place which under certain conditions might prove awkward, not to say dangerous. The accompanying diagram Mr. Douglas has kindly



allowed me to reproduce from his article in the *S.M.C.J.*, Vol. III., page 202.

From the summit of A' Chir we made our way over some rocks, and, making use of the same grass-filled crack

to which Mr. Douglas refers, we descended to the col (*b*) by a narrow, gravelly gully on the Iorsa side, with crumbling holds. An alternative route is given by Mr. Goggs, *S.M.C.J.*, Vol. VIII., page 28.

On reaching (*b*) we found the ridge to be very narrow, and at one point a yawning gulf about a foot in breadth separates the climber from the next point of the ridge. To step across this gulf does not require the athletic gifts of the Carline, and let not a person with "nerves" be disheartened. By lowering himself a little he will find a good foothold, and with the help of a projecting bit of rock on the other side will pull himself up to the desired place of security. This open place we crossed without many qualms of conscience, but a short distance further we unanimously performed the military motion summarised under the term "halt." The ridge descends to (*d*) in a manner which might be negotiable for flies or angels. Not being flies, however, and, our friends assure us, not being angels, and the days of flying carpets and other adventitious mountaineering paraphernalia being over, our course was brought to an abrupt conclusion. No hand-holds were visible, and on the rocks was written very distinctly, "No road this way. Trespassers injured." We failed to notice the route (*c-d*) on the Glen Rosa side, where a rock wall with excellent hand-holds, a diagonal grass ledge, and a little chimney lead to the col (*d*), whence the rest of the ridge is easy.

As it was, we made a hearty lunch and discussed matters. The ridge slopes very steeply on either side, but towards Glen Iorsa there led a gravelly water-course. The first part gave poor holds, then it jumped over a boulder, and its subsequent career was a matter for curiosity. That route, though apparently the only way on the west side, was not very inviting, so we turned to look at the Glen Rosa side. Here we saw a narrow, steep gully, certainly better than anything the Glen Iorsa side promised, and by this gully we resolved to descend if no better route was available. But near the towering mass of A' Chir there lay an easy way for some distance at least. So, after

completing our lunch, we scrambled down to a spot which I have roughly marked (*e*). Here was a big drop, with no very secure landing place, but a narrow ledge ran out to the left, and seemed to offer a way out of the difficulty. I moved a foot or two along it only to find that, like other good things of this world, it came to an end. Anchored here by my jacket tail being twisted somewhat after the manner of John Chinaman's pigtail, and grasped by Moyes, whose fervent exhortations to me not to overstretch myself, gave no very satisfactory assurance of his own hold, or of his power of resisting the laws of gravity, I cleared off a foot or two of moss and succeeded in finding an excellent hand-hold. The remaining biscuit bags were dropped on to a ledge some 15 feet below, whither Moyes lowered himself by means of my right leg, stretching it vigorously in the process, and with a short drop landed safely on the top of the ledge—and the biscuits. It was too narrow and shaky, however, to receive me also, so Moyes passed over a rather awkward corner into the lower part of the gully, and prospected for my descent. I had meanwhile regained a position of greater security, and was directed by him to come down the gully. Back I scrambled to the top, and began cautiously to descend. "Hullo! what noise is that?" Crash! crash! crash! off go some rocks to the left away down to the glen, occasioning some alarm lest the writer should share a fate resembling the accident that befell the individual immortalised by Bret Harte:

"Then Abner Dean of Angel's raised a point of order—when  
A chunk of old red sand-stone took him in the abdomen;  
And he smiled a kind of sickly smile, and curled up on the floor,  
And the subsequent proceedings interested him no more."

In the process of descending I contrived to heap coals of fire on Moyes' head for using my leg as if endeavouring to stretch an elastic cord. That is, I bestowed bounteous showers of stones and gravel upon his firmly wedged body, stationed below to check any undue precipitation on my part. In holding on to the icy rocks, his fingers experienced something of that feeling which afterwards

produces a delightfully glowing sensation, but at the time (when the temperature is  $6^{\circ}$  below freezing point) is not conducive to thoughts of admiration at the prudence and cautious deliberation exhibited by a companion.

The mystery of a piton which was noticed at the top of the gully was explained by reading the *S.M.C.J.*, Vol. II., page 80. Its appearance is due to a party of climbers who, on January 30th, 1892, descending by this route, drove it into the rocks. It may be mentioned at this point that there is only one record of the crest of A' Chir ridge being kept to all the way. The party hitched the rope and descended to (*d*), but found themselves unable, on returning to the col, to retrace their airy flight further.

We left our buns where they lay, to feed the hungry or interest the curious climber. *Experientia*, says the proverb, does it; and never, never again, shall the writer carry buns to the hill tops. Scones, though crushed, preserve some semblance of size and solidity; buns tend to illustrate the Lucretian theory of atoms, and struggle their owner never so hard to convey them to their assigned destination, he finds that they exhibit a lively and extraordinary preference for any other resting place.

We regained the ridge immediately, and a gentle slope led us to the summit of Cir Mhor. What can one say of that glorious hill? "Were I to discourse," writes Mr. Whymper, in speaking of the Meije, "upon these things without the aid of pictures, or endeavour to convey in words a sense of the loveliness of curves, of the beauty of colour, of the harmonies of sound, I should try to accomplish that which is impossible". And so neither can the majesty of the precipices or the grandeur of the view seen from this hill in Arran be translated into language. To rock-climbers the face offers attractions irresistible, and several climbs have been done, but the precipice is far from being exhausted. A delightful scramble again is provided by the Rosa Pinnacle, some little distance to the south, and surmounted by a small cairn; its west side still remains unscalded. Cir Mhor, however, appeals to an even wider circle, and the purpose of this paper is to bring it and

its neighbours under the notice of the Cairngorm Club. Bring forth the big hob-nailers, and hurry south, and you will not be disappointed.

Reluctantly we quitted the scene, and proceeded towards the Castles. On the slope leading to them we came upon an excellent spring, and searched our pockets diligently for food. Our search was rewarded, and for a few minutes we sat eating crumbs, and threads, and granite, and admiring the grim ridges of A' Chir, cast into deeper gloom by the snow on Ben Tarsuinn. After some difficulty with an ice-coated ledge, we climbed the highest Castle, and passed on to the Carline's Leap, keeping on the skyline along a succession of delightful pinnacles, none of which presents difficulty. The views gained occasionally through unexpected chinks in the rocks were very fine, but they were all surpassed by the weirdness of the view seen from the startlingly narrow ridge between the two great granite walls that form the Leum na Caillich.

The westerly wall of this extraordinary cleft, about 200 feet in height, slopes comparatively gently, but the easterly one is of a more formidable nature, and towers above the col with an indescribably fine appearance. Coming down the westerly side, a slip by Moyes in a part where there were few hand-holds led to the discovery that the nails on his boots had become a fast vanishing quantity. Such a discovery, along with the look of the steep grassy upper portion, which seemed frosty and therefore slippery, led to a sermon, preached by the reluctant writer to a reluctant audience, from the text of "He who climbs and runs away, lives to climb another day." Very sorrowfully we went back to the top of the west wall, and then came a moment of hesitation. Was the climb as dangerous as it looked? Did we really need a rope? But the sight of clouds of mist rolling along the other side of the glen and pouring up from the corries round Cir Mhor weighed down the scales in favour of prudence. We effected what is called a masterly retreat, composing divers Limericks in abuse of the Carline and in defiance of all rules of rhyme and geography. We vowed, too, that we would return and conquer in the

near future. For the present, we hastened over some enormous boulders into North Glen Sannox, regained the ridge, and, amid a sharp shower of hail, arrived at Suidhe Fhearghas. Hither, once upon a time, came the good King Fergus to survey his possessions, and on the top acted as better known mountaineers are said to act—he sat down to dine.

By this time the sun was close on the horizon and the mists were creeping nearer and lower; so we went down the steep, heathery north side of the hill at a pace that was surprising. After a wash in the Sannox Burn, and a long look up that wild glen, guarded by its silent sentinels—Suidhe Fhearghas and the misty peak of Cioch na h' Oighe, we passed the little churchyard with its boulder recalling the pathetic tragedy of 1889, and emerged on the Corrie road.

A suggestion on the part of the writer to attempt the giant boulders on the way to Brodick was not received enthusiastically. What thoughts, I wondered, filled Moyes' mind as he absent-mindedly replied: "We'll do them to-morrow. It's too late to-night"? Was he thinking of the mystery of the hills, or delighting in this beautiful road, in the sound and smell of the sea, the colouring of the trees, the music of the . . .? Ah! a solemn voice breaks in upon my musings, and my curiosity is about to be satisfied. "I say, . . . I *do* hope they'll have supper ready. I'm hungry enough to eat anything". And the ensuing vows, though alarming enough in all conscience, yet fell mighty short of the performance when, at 8:45, we arrived at Brodick; and an attempt to get the bootmaker to insert nails in Moyes' boots proving fruitless, we sat down to supper. Over such scenes, however, the modest historian hastens to draw a veil.

Sunday dawned rainy and cold, and we tramped up Glen Rosa in a steady shower of rain, intending to climb Goatfell by the Dearg Choirein, a corrie on the N.W. face of the mountain. On going up the glen, however, we came upon a burn smaller than the Allt an Dearg



Choirein, hurrying over enormous slabs to join the Rosa. Though unmarked on the 6-inch map it can hardly be mistaken, for close to its source, on the right bank, is a pile of rocks very noticeable to one going up Glen Rosa, and lying slightly N.W. of the summit. An ascent of the hill at this point promised to be interesting, and we started off, keeping the burn to our left. The route more than fulfilled expectations. Though it cannot be ranked as a climb, hands are required for a distance which is certainly over 1,500 feet. The angle throughout is severe, and parts are sensational enough, owing to the paucity and poorness of the holds, the effect being heightened if you look down on the burn to the left. Here and there the holds consist solely of heather bunches growing in the face of the rock, and here and there trust has to be put on distinctly untrustworthy rocks. We made the ascent as difficult as possible, and found it very enjoyable. I can confidently recommend it to parties unprovided with a rope who enjoy a stiffish scramble. With a rope the slabs on the right bank should be tackled, and would probably give good sport.

After some piles of rocks are surmounted, the angle eases off, and a leisurely walk brought us to the Cyclopean wall that forms the west side of the summit. We climbed it by a well-marked gully, easy but interesting. Its left wall runs out for a considerable distance, and on the right the regular lines on the great rocks are suggestive of masonry. In the gully itself, which we found to be a tight fit, are three jammed blocks, the highest being more loose than the others. Shortly after surmounting it we traversed to the left, scrambled over some rocks, and stood on the highest point of Goatfell.

There we remained for some time enjoying the sunshine and listening to the exultant note of a cuckoo in the Brodick Woods, proclaiming that, to him at least, life was worth living. The view is glorious. "The jagged and spiry peaks of the surrounding mountains", says Professor Ramsay, "the dark hollows and deep shady corries into which the rays of the sun scarce ever penetrate, the open swelling hills beyond,

the winding shores of Loch Fyne, and the broad Firth of Clyde, studded with its peaceful and fertile islands, the rugged mountains of Argyllshire, and the gentle curves of the hills of the Western Isles, their outlines softened in the distance, form a scene of the most surpassing grandeur and loveliness". Add to this that deeper colouring that comes after rain, the free play of sun and wind among the hills, the sight of little ships tacking on the sea, and a thousand other glories, and we appreciate the Paisley weaver's criticism, "Man, Jock, are the works o' God no jist deevelish?" We could trace the tourist path to Goatfell, and the White Water Glen through which you pass if climbing from Corrie, and the contrast between this view towards the east and that embracing the serrated peaks westward was very striking.

We scrambled down to the small spring just to the left of the scree slope on the east, and scrambled back again to see heavy clouds massing to the east and moving steadily towards us. Snow began to fall, and mist slowly but surely crept round us. A prolonged stay under such conditions was not desirable, especially as the wind began to moan among the rocks; and compass and guide book being consulted we moved on to North Goatfell. An easy track lies along the ridge, but it is far pleasanter to stick to the skyline and scramble over the intervening piles of rocks. We found compensation for the loss of the view in climbing everything that we encountered, sometimes, indeed, going out of our way to do so. Though we saw only for about 20 feet round us, and could not see the bottom of the gullies and rock walls on our left, the snow falling on the black crags, all but invisible in the dense mist, produced a very fine effect.

After climbing North Goatfell, we struck off in a N.E. direction in order to get to Cioch na h' Oighe, and followed a ridge, which however we soon discovered led us due east. We tried again to strike the ridge leading to Cioch na h' Oighe, but the compass brought us to a precipitous descent, and the fast increasing darkness, neither of us having a

watch, induced us to give up the search. We found our way down the steep Coire Larach, and after doing some mild rock-climbing there, reached the road four miles from Brodick.

Thus, the great boulders like the Leum na Caillich and the Cioch na h' Oighe we failed to do; but for the most part we had carried out our plans, and we had stored up many pleasant memories of glen and ridge and pinnacle, of the mingled perfumes of sea and wood, of peaks, now bathed in sunshine, now wrapt in the gloom of mists. When, after rushing to the pier on Monday morning, we stepped panting on board, at 6.45, and the Duchess cast off half a minute afterwards, our minds were tinged by various emotions—pleasure in our stay, regret at our departure, and a firm determination to revisit soon the glorious peaks of Arran.

### THE THREE CLIMBERS.

Three climbers went camping out into the west,  
Out into the west as the rain came down ;  
Each kept his opinion concealed from the rest,  
But thought they'd far better have stopped up in town.  
But men must work and men must play,  
And hotels are expensive wherever you stay ;  
And tho' it be raining in torrents to-day,  
It may clear up in the morning.

Three climbers camped out in the watery west,  
And they tried to cook in the wind and the rain ;  
Each thought of the food which agreed with him best,  
And hoped he might live to enjoy it again.  
For men must work and men must eat,  
And to cook one's own food were surely a treat !  
Still there's much in the treatment and working of meat  
That cannot be learnt in a morning.

Three climbers lay out on the mountain steep,  
Three live-long nights while the rain came down ;  
They tried their hardest to get to sleep,  
And wished they had never set forth from the town.  
But men must work and men must play,  
Tho' storms be sudden and skies be gray ;  
And tho' it's been blowing a gale to-day,  
It may clear up in the morning.

Three climbers sat down by the smoking-room fire,  
By the smoking-room fire when dinner was o'er ;  
They looked at the squall and they looked at the storm,  
And they vowed that a-camping they'd go never more.  
For men must work ; but I needs must say,  
That an inn is a cosier place for play  
Than a tent on the hills on a pouring wet day.  
(But it *did* clear up the next morning !)

F. E. R.

## THE COYLES OF MUICK.

BY JOHN MILNE, LL.D.

THE Spring Excursion of the Club was held on Monday, 2nd May last, to the Coyles of Muick. The south Deeside road from Ballater was followed till the bridge over the Muick was reached. Steep banks of glacial stony clay on the south side of the road are the remnants of the lateral moraine of the great glacier which filled the valley of the Dee in the Glacial Epoch. The bare face of Craighendarroch on the north side of the river tells of severe rasping of the hill-side by the blocks of granite from Ben Muich Dhui embedded in the left side of the glacier. These appearances remind us of what was going on at Ballater many thousands of years ago; a small haugh, recently converted into a garden, between the road and the river is a more modern work. It had not begun to be formed till the Glacial Epoch had passed away, and also the great floods caused by the melting of the ice-sheets on the mountains and the glaciers in the valleys. For probably more than a hundred years, about the close of the Glacial Epoch, the Dee was normally as large as it is now in its greatest spates. During this time the bed of the river had been excavated to its present depth, which may be lower than that of the glacier of the Dee. When the time of the floods was over and the Dee had shrunk to its present ordinary volume, the river meandered over a broad, stony bed, extending from the hills on the one side of the valley to those on the other. Grass began to spring up in tufts among the stones, winter spates buried the tufts of grass in sand and mud, summer saw them green again and spreading wider; and so on the process went till the once bare, stony bed was deeply covered with fine alluvial soil caught by grass from muddy water flowing over it in spates. The site of Ballater is

part of the same little haugh at the road-side above the bridge, but now that it is not protected by grass the fine soil would be in danger of being swept away if within the reach of a winter spate.

Turning up the valley at the bridge over the Muick without crossing the burn, the road led through a wood where the ground was strewn with innumerable blocks of stone which, in the Glacial Period, the glacier filling the valley of the Muick had brought from the cliffs of Lochnagar and the hollows it excavated in its progress to join the Dee glacier. The stones embedded in the lower part of the glacier had frequently come in contact with the rocky bottom over which they passed, and had turned over many times, getting their sharp corners rubbed off and at last sticking in the bed, letting the glacier pass over them.

The Coyles came in sight, three sharp-pointed hills on the left side of the Muick, in front of us. The striking difference between the shape of the three tops called the Coyles and that of all other Scottish hills at once suggests that there must be some peculiarity in their geological structure or in the rock of which they are composed. In Scotland there are no mountains so high but that their summits were over-run with the ice-sheet in the Glacial Period. The passage of the ice-sheet over the hills has rounded down the summits of most of them, and often but for a cairn it would not be easy to pick out the very highest spot. In a few instances, as Clochnaben, Bennachie, and the Buck, solid masses of rock have withstood the tremendous pressure bearing against them by the ice-sheet in its slow progress to the sea. On the Buck the pressure came from the north-west, for the long, upright stones on the summit, though not dislodged from their sockets, have yielded so far that their tops lie to the south-east. On Bennachie several of the tops are rocky, the softer surrounding parts having been eroded by the moving ice. On two of them, the Oxen Craig and Craig Shannoch, is seen a structure like what has been recently described as observable at Mount Pelée, in

Martinique, since the great earthquake and eruption in 1903. A well-spring of molten matter has been pouring out lava in a plastic state, which does not run away like water but consolidates on the outside, while the spring still continues to discharge at the centre. The result is the piling up of a lofty conical mass of lava in layers, sloping gently from the centre to the circumference. On the two tops mentioned, layers of granite are seen sloping downwards in all directions from a central point, though there is no vent or difference there in the appearance of the rock. In the Glacial Epoch the straight course of the Aven on the north side of Clochnaben gave a freer outlet for the ice than the tortuous valley of the Dye, hence there was a flow of ice out of Glendye into Glenaven, round the south-east and east sides of Clochnaben. This caused great erosion on the south-east shoulder of the mountain, and the formation of a deep trench between it and Mount Shade. This gorge must have relieved the pressure on the great mass of rock, about 100 feet high, on the summit of Clochnaben, and saved it from being worn away.

Not many of the Scottish hills when seen against the sky show their sides concave, but the Coyles do so. They have quite the look that volcanoes usually have in woodcuts in books, and it is probably from their ideal mountain-like look that they have received their name, Coyles, which must have been an old Celtic word coming from the same Aryan root as Latin *collis*, a hill. That there must have been in the old Pictish language, from which modern Gaelic is directly descended, a word *col*, or *coyl*, with liquid *l*, no one will deny who remembers the number of hills, great and small, in whose names this syllable forms a part, such as Coleshill, Coilsmore, Collylaw, Collie (now Cowie), Glaschoil, Colleopard. It is no objection to this etymology to say that no word like *col* or *coil*, meaning a hill, is found in Gaelic dictionaries. The dictionaries were compiled from printed books, chiefly the Gaelic Bible and Macpherson's *Ossian*, and many colloquial words escaped notice. One of the most recent

editors, Macbain, gives *coileag*, a cole of hay, and he derives it from the Scottish word *cole*, a haycock. He should have known better than to put the Gaelic termination *eag*, meaning little, to a Scottish word, and should have given it as a hitherto unrecognised Gaelic word meaning a hill. The Coyles of Muick are emphatically "the hills of Muick".

The Muick was crossed at Mill of Sterin, over two miles from Ballater. This name may have been given to the spot from there having been there at one time a row of stepping-stones, from Gaelic *stair*. Bridges taking the place of stepping-stones are frequently called Star-bridge. Birkhall itself was formerly called Sterin, and the stepping-stones might have been there. After following the road on the west side of the Muick for a mile or so, the weather, which had been rather wet, began to improve, and it was resolved to go to the middle Coyle, the highest of the three. So the burn-side was left and the ascent was begun. Half-way up the hill a small stream was crossed, called the Tombreck, a Gaelic term meaning the spotted hill—the burn taking its name from the hill on which it rises. It runs down a slight hollow on the hill-side between the middle top and its neighbour on the north. At the end of the Glacial Period, when the ice-sheet had disappeared from the low country, and the glaciers in the valleys of the Dee and the Muick had melted away, there still remained for a time a thick coat of snow on the hill-tops, and some small glaciers in the hollows coming down from them. One of these retreating glaciers occupied the hollow between the middle and the north Coyles, bringing with it many large, rounded granite stones which had come originally from the hills beyond the Girnock. The point where it had long ended before finally melting away is marked by the most advanced of the stones which it had brought with it.

Here some of the party took the straight line to the hill-top; others, not so springy in the step or not so brawny in the leg, took a longer but easier way to the crest of the ridge connecting the two northern tops, and gained



the summit from the north. The distance from Ballater to the summit is under five miles. When the rock of which the hill is composed became first visible it was seen to be an igneous rock of black colour and greatly decomposed. In many blocks there were empty fissures out of which something had been dissolved, probably by the action of water at a high temperature charged with carbon dioxide. The decomposition had taken place when the rock was at a great depth below the surface of the ground and raised to a high temperature by the internal heat of the earth. By the solvent action of hot water and carbon dioxide some of the constituents of the rock had been removed, and only silica and magnesia had been left. These combining together had made silicate of magnesia, and formed the rock called serpentine. Owing to different degrees of decomposition the rock is often in alternate narrow bands of green and yellow, resembling the markings on the sides of some serpents; hence it gets its name. In some blocks the cracks and cavities had been filled up with green, glassy-looking pure silicate of magnesia which had been deposited from water. In others the cracks contained chrysotile, a yellow mineral composed of silky fibres crossing the cracks. Serpentine is not a hard rock: it can be scratched and scraped with a good steel knife. When the thick ice-sheet was passing over the Coyles their summits had been worn down like the bald, round heads of the granite mountains in the Grampian range; but when the cold period began to go off and the mountain tops peeped through their snowy covering, the eroding action continued on the soft sides of the Coyles after it had ceased to affect the hard flanks of the neighbouring granites. Partly by erosion, and partly by the action of frost on water in the numerous cracks in the serpentine, the Coyles have acquired their peculiar volcano-like shapes. Another peculiarity of the Coyles is their greenness compared with the heath-clad granite mountains. Heather does not grow on rocks containing the alkaline earths, lime and magnesia, and this restricts the vegetation to

grasses and other green-leaved plants. Magnesia seems to favour the growth of ferns, which abound on the Green Hill in Glen Nocht, which is composed of serpentine, but few ferns were seen on the Coyles, though they were looked for.

The central top rises to 1956 feet above sea, and 1000 feet above the Muick below it. The south-east top, Craig Bheag, the little Craig, is 1700 feet high and 440 yards distant from the middle top. The north top, Loinmuie, meaning the beautifully-shaped hill, is 1679 feet high, and distant from the middle top 600 yards.

The serpentine area in which the Coyles stand lies between the Muick and the Girnock; it is of an oval shape, about a mile long from north-east to south-west, and about three-quarters of a mile broad. From the north-west side issue two long projections, narrow at first but gradually widening out and curving round to the east, one on either side of the Corrie Burn, which enters the Muick above Birkhall. These two projections were at one time one broad band, but a glacier coming down the Corrie Burn hollow had cut through the serpentine in the middle, making two narrow bands.

Probably from this hollow came some well-smoothed, ice-scratched stones composed of serpentine which were found in the grey, glacial stony clay in which the sewer tunnel under St. Fittock's road was made. On this supposition they were taken off by the Corrie Burn glacier, which delivered them over to the Glen Muick glacier. By it they were conveyed to the Dee glacier, and after a journey extending over a hundred years or more, embedded in the glacier and rubbing on the rocks on its right side, they reached Aberdeen. Here the glacier had split up into two, one part holding straight out to sea, and the other, in which were the serpentines, diverging to the right to the Bay of Nigg by a passage then open but now blocked by the debris brought down by the glacier. Though these stones never reached the sea, many that did may be seen lying in the edge of the sea on the north side of the Bay of Nigg.

Serpentine is composed of silicate of magnesia, which had its origin in some other rock of which silicate of magnesia in other forms was a chief constituent. There are several igneous rocks which may be decomposed by the agency of hot water containing carbon dioxide. One of these is saxonite, or olivine-enstatite, a black, heavy rock, not so hard but that it may be indented with a hammer, but tough and ill to break. This rock has yielded the serpentine of the Coyles. It is found in Belhelvie near the Tarves road. It occurs also in the upper part of Glen Clova, and on the left side of the Capel Pass road large blocks of it may be seen in a long line on the hill-side, having been left there by the edge of the glacier which came down from Glen Doll.

At the very summit of the Coyle there were lying here and there blocks of ice-worn granite, which had come from the hills beyond the Girnock embedded in the moving snow sheet, but, touching ground on the Coyle top, had been stranded there.

Owing to the weather the view from the summit was not extensive; but Morven, covered with snow, was seen on one side and Lochnagar on the other. All the brows of the surrounding hills in the neighbourhood were covered with snow. Had the visit been made on the following morning a splendid view would have been got. On the morning of 3rd May the sky was clearer than it had been any previous day this year, and the higher mountains in the west of Aberdeenshire were completely covered with snow, a beautiful sight when seen against the clear sky.

After a rest on the summit, a straight course was taken to the Linn of Muick, about a mile distant. The descent was very steep at first, but not without interest. There were many fragments of felsite, quartz, and granite, which had been left by the ice-sheet long ago, and in cracks in the serpentine there were seams of chrysotile, a golden yellow mineral composed of silky fibres filling the cracks cross-wise.

The Linn was soon reached, and the great volume of water afforded a sight which in some measure compen-

sated for the inconvenience caused by the rain. The Linn is a little over 1000 feet above the sea. The rock at the fall is too hard for the burn bed to have been excavated by running water, and the fall must be credited to the Muick glacier which was able to pick up and carry off loose blocks too heavy for the burn to move.

The Muick was crossed by a wooden foot-bridge below the fall, and the return journey continued, a digression from the road being made at Aucholzie for afternoon tea. By the side of the path through a wood there were, near the Muick, deposits of sand which had been left by the burn when it had not excavated its bed so deep as it is now. The indications of this lay in the height of the sand beds above the water, and the accumulated depth of thin layers of fine sand which must have been laid down by shallow water in many successive spates, and not by one great, roaring flood.

The name Aucholzie perhaps means the place near the burn, from Gaelic *achadh*, a field, and *willt*, the genitive of *allt*, a ravine, or a burn with precipitous banks. The name is not spelled in such a way as to indicate its pronunciation, the *z* standing for an old Anglo-Saxon letter shaped like *z* but sounded like a guttural *y*. In most words where it formerly had a place it is now made *y* and sounded like *y*, as in *year*, formerly *zeir*; in others it remains *z* but is sounded like *y*, as in *Dalziel*; and in others, as *Mackenzie*, it has remained *z* and is sounded like *z*.

After leaving Aucholzie, an hour of smart walking completed the five miles between the Linn of Muick and Ballater. There was still plenty of time for dinner before taking the train for Aberdeen, and the journey was completed with the feeling that notwithstanding the unpropitious morning an enjoyable excursion had been accomplished.

## THE MAMORE FOREST.

BY EDRED M. CORNER, M.B., F.R.C.S.

IN the January numbers of 1898 and 1899 I wrote two accounts of some excursions of mine amongst the hills of Lochaber. It is a district without the boundaries indicated by the name of our Club. But the coach from Kingussie to Tulloch brings it within moderate range. These two papers have been supplemented by a short one in the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal* on the "Loch Treig Hills". It is my intention to expand still further the knowledge of this famous and favourite region, unequalled in Scotland for the practice of our sport, the love of which has led to the formation of the Cairngorm Club. The papers that have appeared in our *Journal* and in the other one mentioned leave only one set of hills between Fort William and Loch Treig which have not been mentioned, namely, those in the eastern division of the Forest of Mamore. Yet these have forms and individualities that will always attract the true lover of the hills. For a good day spent roving amongst their ridges will rejoice the heart of any of our kind, be he walker or rock climber. There is no apology needed in introducing these hills to notice, except for the inadequacy of my pen to do them justice.

In the paper, page 383, of the second volume of our *Journal*, four of the western of the mountains of the Mamore Forest were mentioned, namely, Mullach nan Coirean, Stob Ban, Sgor nan Iubhair, and Sgor a Mhaim. It is a pure, unadulterated pleasure to recall the glorious days spent on these hills. Even without a blush is it remembered how once, on a terribly hot and thirsty day, I burst into metre, rather than poesy, on the subject of drinking. The title selected was "The Vision of Vats". The place of action was a cool cellar, filled with creaming barrels, a glorious vision for a hot, parched climber,

without food or drink, who absolutely refused to quit the mountain tops before the sun. It was a glorious day, and it is a glorious memory! The date was the 21st of June, 1896, eight years ago. Since that date, though ascents of these hills have been repeated, further exploration of the Mamore Range has not been made. On page 274 of the third volume of our *Journal*, I recorded some notes on the Black Mount, and in the first paragraph stated that I drove from Fort William to the head of Loch Leven, where I could not be lodged, though the keepers' and shepherds' houses at the head of this loch form the best starting place for the exploration of the eastern mountains of Mamore. After this failure it was not till May, 1901, that any further attempt was made. On the beautiful morning of May the 16th we drove to that charming spot, the head of Glen Nevis. It seemed even more beautiful that morning! We then followed the lower of the two tracks which lead through the narrow gorge at the head of the glen. This brought us up to the flatter and more open country by the forester's house at Steall. All the while our eyes were feasted with the magnificent fall of water out of the corrie of Mhail, just west of Sgor a Mhaim. It might be expected that this corrie would be called Coire a Mhaim, being under the mountain Sgor a Mhaim, but it is called Coire a Mhail. This is perhaps an Ordnance Survey error. But perhaps some Gaelic scholar who is a member of our Club can tell us what differences exist between the two words. Entrance into this corrie is apparently cut off by a high cliff, over which the burn tumbles in a splendid cascade. A little above Steall there is a bridge, which allows us to cross the burn. We then started upwards over the slopes of Gearanach into Coire na Ghabalach, the big corrie west of the monarch of the Mamore Forest, Binnein Mor. At the burn we lunched, and then struck up the long, steep grass slopes of Binnein Mor. Grass slopes which are steep are more easily and quickly passed than those of a smaller gradient. We speedily arrived on the ridge, which we followed to the summit. All the hills in Mamore except Mullach nan

Coirean are made of quartz. All of them are narrow, and form most beautiful snow *arêtes*. The slopes are all steep, so that these hills look their best when seen end on, as Binnein Mor seen from Stob Coire an Easain (Vol. II., page 227). When the same mountain is seen from the south, as from the east end of the Aonach Eagach ridge of Glencoe, its main ridge is seen to divide into two gigantic arms which it extends to its neighbours. The actual summit of Binnein Mor is at the south end of a nearly level stretch of narrow ridge, where there is a large cairn. The height is 3700 feet. From here the ridge runs south, abutting on the main Mamore ridge, whose direction is east and west. Turning east after we had crossed the subsidiary Top of Coire nan Laoigh (3475 feet), we were soon breasting the steep slopes of A Grugach. Between the Top of Coire an Laogh and A Grugach is a drop of 300 feet. Mr. Munro in his famous tables has not dignified this eminence a separate mountain. This seems wrong as the two tops of A Grugach are well separated by both dip and distance from Binnein Mor on the west; whilst on its east is a drop of at least 800 feet. The heights of the two tops are 3442 feet for the west and 3404 feet for the east. The dip between them is about 200 feet. Their slopes rise steeply from both ridge and corrie. The view from the summits is very fine. All the peaks of Glencoe are easily distinguished and named. In all directions old friends are seen and welcomed.

Between this and the next peak eastwards is a drop of 800 odd feet, the descent of which is easily accomplished at a run. An easy rise of 600-700 feet brings one to the cairn of Stob Coire a Chairn, 3219 feet high. This peak is on the main, east to west, ridge of Mamore, and at this point we leave it for a subsidiary northern ridge. On this secondary spur is situated a distinct mountain with two tops. The illustration, Vol. II., page 253, shows this ridge in the centre, with a top at either end of it. To the right is seen Stob Coire a Chairn, and to the left the predominant heights of A Grugach, which almost

hide the Top of Coire nan Laogh immediately behind them. Close to the left hand of the illustration is the summit of Binnein Mor, its height dwarfed by its distance. On the extreme right is the ridge leading up to Am Bodach. The picture shows all the high level parts of this day's work.

After a drop of 400 feet, we commence the ascent of the southern peak of the ridge, namely, Garbhanach, 3200 feet approximately. The ridge is distinctly narrow, but easy. The whole crest of the ridge as far as the southern top of Gearanach, also about 3200 feet high, is a similar "knife edge". Mr. Munro has stated that this is the most Coolin-like ridge in the mainland of Scotland. This praise certainly needs a good deal of qualification. And the ridge of Aonach Eagach in Glencoe is certainly a closer approximation. We now descended and crossed the same bridge over the stream, rejoining our track of the morning, and also later our trap at the head of Glen Nevis. We had had a most enjoyable day in every sense of the word, the pleasures of the climbing being intensified by the beauties of the scenery and weather. In fact, we could not have asked for a better day.

To the above I must append some geographical notes on this range of hills. They present marked characters which are well defined and noted.

The main ridge may be said to start in the west at the Cow Hill, 901 feet high, just behind Fort William. Its direction is practically east and west, both ends curling round northwards. Along this long line no spurs of note are given off in a southerly direction, whilst there are six to the north. The tendency of all these northern spurs is to be narrower and steeper than the main ridge is. This character is well seen in Binnein Mor, Garbhanach, Gearanach, etc. The northern extremity of these spurs frequently ends in a rounded hill, as seen in Sgor a Mhaim, Binnein Beag, etc. It is now possible to give a short, simple sketch of the main ridge and its six northern spurs.



## FROM EAST TO WEST.

1. Mullach nan Coirean, 3077 feet.  
A broad mountain, joined by the northern ridge 1, which begins in the rounded hill of Sgor Chalum, 1823 feet. This spur is not so narrow as its western brethren. Between this mountain and the pass is the Top of Coire Dearg, 3004 feet.  
Pass, 2800 feet.
2. Stob Ban, 3274 feet.  
A sharp, quartz top, joined at its shoulder by the northern ridge 2.  
Pass, 2450 feet.
3. Sgor Iubhair, 3300 feet approximately.  
A rounded top, joined by the magnificent northern ridge 3, which begins at the north in the rounded hill of Sgor a Mhaim, 3601 feet, which is joined to Sgor Iubhair by a narrow grassy ridge, with a summit on it about 3300 feet high, cut off on either side by a drop of about 250 feet. This point has no name.  
Pass, 2800 feet.
4. Am Bodach, 3382 feet.  
A fine, rocky peak on the main ridge.  
Pass, 2800 feet.
5. Stob Coire a Chairn, 3219 feet.  
A small, grassy top, joined by the sharp northern ridge 4 of Garbhanach and Gearanach, both about 3200 feet high, and separated from it by a drop of 300-400 feet.  
Pass, 2600 feet.
6. A Grugach.  
Two fine tops, separated by a dip of 200 feet. Height of the eastern one 3442 feet, and of the western 3404 feet.  
Pass, 3100 feet.
7. Top of Coire Laogh, 3475 feet.  
A poorly marked top, which is joined by the mightiest northern ridge 5, on which is situated Binnein Mor, the monarch of the forest, 3700 feet high.

This spur begins at its northern end in the rounded hill of Binnein Beag, 3083 feet, which is separated from Binnein Mor by a col 2400 feet high.

Pass, drop insignificant.

8. Sgor na h-Eilde Beag, 3140 feet.

A top poorly marked from the west, but with a good drop on the east.

Pass, with lochan, 2400 feet.

9. Sgor na h-Eilde, 3279 feet.

This is a broad top at the most western end of the range. It is joined by the 6th northern ridge, which is broad and unlike the others, beginning in Meall Doire na h-Achlais.

The heights of the passes are only approximate.

This brief survey closes the account I offer of one of the most delightful regions of the Scottish mountains.



AN ABERDEENSHIRE EYRY.

[Photo by Seton P. Gordon.

## THE CLUB ON CAIRN-MON-EARN.

BY A. MACDONALD, M.A.

WE live on the bright spots of our past existence, and forget as best we may the sadder incidents. Times of elation and pleasure are memories; those of depression sink down to a subconscious region from which we never voluntarily recall them. Why should we? Man was not made to mourn, but to enjoy himself—to rejoice in his youth and in his age too. The afternoon of the 16th of April is a keepsake among the days of 1904, and that for many reasons. The weather made a bright break to mark it out; the company formed a happy combination of all ages and both sexes animated with one desire—to enjoy the outing. Spring was breaking out. The dry earth-wall was fringed with a white coronet of erophila, and among wiry heather roots the scarlet fructifications of the lichens lit up the hillside with a fairy illumination. The crowberry was already in flower, and the early migrants piped along the fallows. Up and up we went, through the young belt of Scots pine about the mountain's base, the home already of many a timid roe and reinstated capercailzie; through the rank ling and over denuded boulders, where some took to slower steps and to looking downward to the valley and upward to the Cairn, where youth and beauty clustered round the flagstaff. Here, too, as in every highway and byway of life, the ladies are coming up shoulder to shoulder with their brothers, some of them, like senior wranglers and double firsts, shooting ahead of the duller, lazier sex.

At length, across the screes the slowest were clambering on the great stones about the pole, turning eyes and binoculars to every point of the compass. The variety of sights presented was considerable, and, the light being good, some time was spent in singling them out. Many looked into the wise east, where the North Sea and the wood at

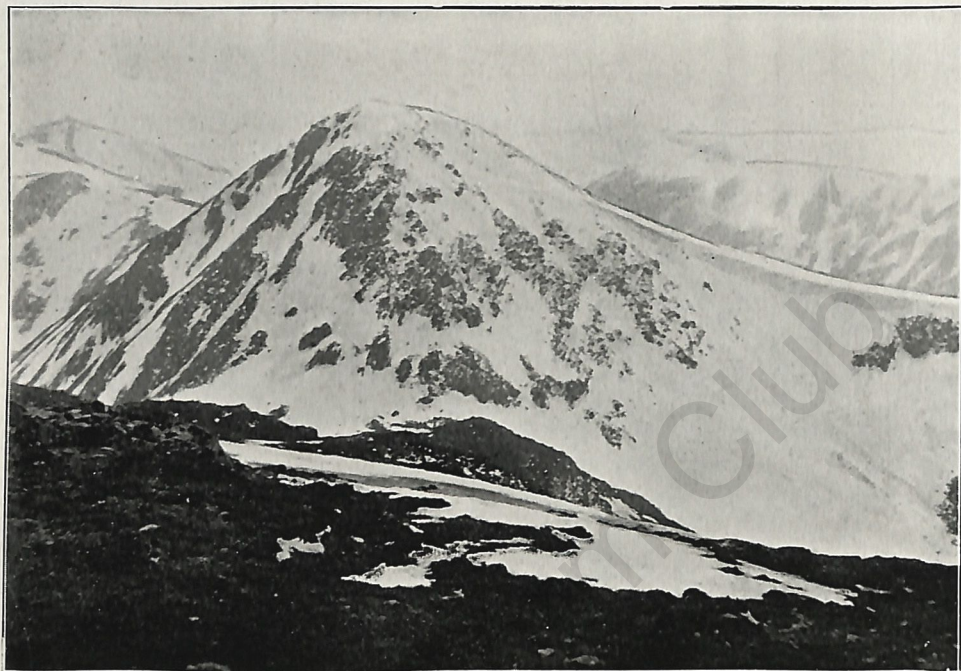
Muchalls appeared ; others picked out their villas below Culter, while a few took note of groups of rustics in the foreground gazing up and wondering what men and women, many of whom were past their first love, could seek upon the Cairn. In spite of the Press, neither the first notion of science nor any comprehension of the amusements of the more leisured classes has entered some minds as yet. If you are a geologist or an antiquary, you must be on the outlook for gold ; if you are a botanist, pot herbs or simples are your quest ; but, if you are a mountaineer, you must be a mild maniac.

Going up Cairn-mon-earn is not a climbing feat. Its ascent is tolerably easy, and its altitude is only 1245 feet, but it has its own distinction as supplying an educative landscape and scene of rural peace and beauty that might inspire a new Dyer to write a new "Grongar Hill." Far to the west the giant Cairngorms lose themselves among the clouds, while nearer rise the fabled Stane o' Clochnaben, Cairn o' Mount "sae bleak an' bare," Kerloch, Mount Battock, and Mount Keen. It was for the juniors to listen to the masters of the craft whose feet had trod the sod of every summit. Not a visible peak but was distinguished, discussed, dissected ! The man who spoke of making the boundless universe his university must have been a mountain-climber. Such an idea might occur only to him who often sees a wide prospect spread out below, with its multitude of details all combined in one magnificent whole, and all his own as truly as if he held the title-deeds in his breastpocket. My Lords of the Education Department, who have sent down so many enlightened circulars, might well issue another requiring every pupil, before leaving school, to ascend such a height as Cairn-mon-earn and get its geographical notions corrected and stereotyped. This would be an object lesson worth a hundred—to view the great sea, with fishing boat and trading steamer making their silent way upon the watery waste, in the distance the vast mountain ranges, the larger and lesser river valleys, tributary and confluence, field and forest, lake and moor, town and village, and all in

their natural combinations and repose. Add to this the heightening of feeling and widening of the mental outlook, and we make bold to say no day of all the school year would compare with that one in the classroom of the hilltop.

There is a tale connected with the mountain that will embody the foregoing. Thirty years ago an LL.D., of Aberdeen, a famous mountaineer, reached the hillfoot, and left his overcoat with three lads hoeing turnips. When he returned, his enthusiasm kindled the boys' desire to see "how great the world was." They are now occupying three pulpits in the Church of Scotland, and one of them has at least a local fame as a scholar, while another is widely known as a poet. They trace the first awakening of their intellects to the climbing of Cairn-mon-earn.

There is little further to record. The hill was once like so many others—a commonity. Not so long ago the people of Auchinblae had a right to pasture cattle on it. It is sixty years since a great lawsuit between two proprietors raged round its possession, in which dozens of farmers and others were cited in evidence. The Cairn is the point of most interest to some. An account of its erection, with the reason therefor, would bring fame to that member of the Cairngorm Club who can relate it.



AN STUC—BEN LAWERS.



THE MITHER TAP OF BENNACHIE.

4th JUNE, 1904.

## SNOW CLIMBS IN PERTHSHIRE.

I.—BY WILLIAM BARCLAY.

ON the Edinburgh Spring Holiday (18th April, 1904), a friend and the writer spent a most enjoyable day on the mountains at the source of the Tay. Leaving the "Waverley" at 4.30 a.m., the railway journey was uneventful till the beauties of the west began to open up. Arrochar was passed just as the last fringe of mist disappeared from the snowy peak of Ben Lomond. Then, as Crianlarich was neared, an amorous passenger along the corridor was heard remarking about the snow-crested peaks, "These are places where the foot of mortal man hath never trod"! I wonder what observation he made as we dropped from the train at the next station, armed with an iceaxe. Between Crianlarich and Tyndrum a peep is always to be had of Beinn Laoigh, and this morning we were not disappointed; there he was, towering above the head of Choninish Glen, a study in white.

We left the West Highland station of Tyndrum at 8.15, and made our way down through "the village" to the station of the rival railway company.

**BEINN LAOIGH.** From the vicinity of the latter a path runs over the shoulder of the hill into Glen Choninish, joining the main road about a couple of miles on, thus forming a profitable short cut. The remaining four-mile walk up the glen was soon accomplished, and at 10 a.m. we were at the junction of the three head streams of the lordly Tay, right under the great front of Beinn Laoigh. In another five minutes we had commenced the ascent, the first 500 feet or so being over grass, and then at a height of about 1800 feet we struck the snow. At first this was softish, but as we got higher up the condition improved, though now the heat of the sun began to be felt.

As we stepped into the hollow of the "big corrie" the sight that met our eyes was one not soon to be forgotten. In front and on either side towered steep slopes of dazzling whiteness, broken up here and there by long black streaks where the huge rocky buttresses pierced the white mantle. All round the summit these great slopes carried huge overhanging cornices, which were continually breaking off and sending miniature avalanches hissing down into the great basin.

Our course was now diagonally upwards for the ridge connecting Stob Garbh with the summit, and when this was topped it was seen that the western side of the hill carried even more snow than did the great corrie. Then we kept directly upwards, intending to strike the cornice at a point where it appeared to be somewhat smaller. The gradient was steep, but the snow was hard, so we rapidly cut our way upward and were soon beneath the cornice. Here the slope was much steeper, or, as my companion put it, "almost perpendicular", and our position somewhat sensational. Above us towered the cornice, overhanging to some extent, while from our feet the snow stretched in one long chute of 1500 feet. Next came the task of breaking through the cornice, but this was accomplished without much difficulty by the help of the iceaxe, and I was able to pull myself on to the top. My companion followed, and as the cairn was only about 50 yards off we were at the official summit of our mountain at 11.55. There was a slight haze below, but despite that the prospect was one to be remembered. Though it was grand all round, that to the west and north-west undoubtedly carried off the palm—the many tops of Ben Cruachan, Beinn Eunach, and Beinn á Chochuill, the great bulk of the Black Mount overtopped by the Glencoe hills, and these again by the "King of Mountains". Lochs Awe, Fyne, and Lomond were visible, as well as innumerable smaller sheets of water. My friend was enraptured with the sight—it was his first view from a mountain top. As he humorously expressed it, he had learned two things that day, one that a person



could go up the side of a house provided it was covered with snow; the other that he had no idea there were so many mountains in Scotland.

We spent half-an-hour on the summit and then wandered down to the col between Beinn Laoigh and his neighbour, Beinn Oss. Here

BEINN OSS AND by the infant waters of the Tay  
BEINN DUBH-CHRAIGE. we lunched, thereafter walking  
in a very leisurely fashion up  
the slopes of Beinn Oss. The snow was now intermittent, large patches alternating with slopes of grass and stone. The ascent from this side is very gradual, in striking contrast to that from Glen Choninish, and affords splendid backward views of Beinn Laoigh. We were at the small cairn (3374) at 2 p.m. It was now decided to climb Beinn Dubh-Chraige, so we descended towards that hill. The east side of Beinn Oss had a very deep covering of snow, rather wet for glissading, but just suitable for a run, so off we set at a breakneck pace, reaching the hollow in "no time". Two long streaks in the snow, continuous from the top to the bottom of the slope, indicated our line of descent. A very steep, rocky slope now faced us, but once we had surmounted that the rest was plain sailing—long, gradual snow slopes. The cairn (3204), a goodly sized one, was reached at 2.55. The wind had now risen, so the haze disappeared, and the circle of our vision was increased. We were particularly interested in the Crianlarich hills as viewed from this point. Beinn Dubh-Chraige is much flatter than either Beinn Laoigh or Beinn Oss, and abounds in gentler slopes, all grass covered, except that to the south, which is steeper and more rocky.

We descended on long snow-beds to Allt Gleann Achrioch and followed that stream, through a somewhat straggling wood, to its junction with Abhainn Choninish, crossing the united streams by the railway bridge. Thus we gained the road, and as we had still 40 minutes before train time we lay down on the grass just outside the station in full view of these three fine hills, and climbed them over again—by telescope.

The long chain of mountains rising above Loch Tay on the north is divided into two groups by the pass of the Lochan na Lairige, crossing from Glen Lyon to Loch Tayside.

THE  
BEN LAWERS RANGE. The wild and rugged summits of the Tarmachans lie to the west of this pass, while the higher and more massive group of Ben Lawers rises to the east. The latter range includes the following summits:—

1. Ben Lawers (3984).
2. Beinn Ghlas (3657); 1 mile south-west of Ben Lawers.
3. Meall Corranaich (3530);  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles west of Ben Lawers.
4. Sron dha-Murchdi (3040);  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south-south-west of Meall Corranaich.
5. Meall a' Choire Leith (3033); 2 miles north-west of Ben Lawers.
6. Creag an Fhithich (3430);  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile north of Ben Lawers.
7. An Stuc (3643); 1 mile north-by-east of Ben Lawers.
8. Meall Garbh (3661);  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles north-north-east of Ben Lawers.
9. Meall Gruaidh (3280); 3 miles north-east of Ben Lawers.

Creag an Fhithich is a rocky prominence on the north side of Ben Lawers, while Sron dha-Murchdi culminates the south running ridge of Meall Corranaich. With these exceptions, the above are separate and distinct peaks.

During the first week of May, I was on holiday at Killin, and had at least one good day on the hills. For three or four days previously there had been almost constant rain on the low ground, and every morning the hills showed a fresh coating of snow; so that when a good day did come I was all the more able to appreciate it. The morning of the 4th was clear, calm, and bright, the hills looked only half their distance away, and the snow on their summits appeared exceptionally white. I walked (this time without the pleasure of a companion) along the north side of Loch Tay for about four miles to Edramuchy, and there joined the Lochan na Lairige road coming over the hills from Glen Lyon. This was followed uphill to near the Lochan, under the frowning crags of Meall nan Tarmachan; then I struck off to the right on an old and somewhat indistinct cart track, which wormed its way through the boggy ground of Coire Odhar and

ended in the hollow between Beinn Ghlas and Meall Corranaich, the two most westerly summits of the Lawers range. In the hollow of the corrie I found snow in large patches, but on the slopes above it was continuous.

Between the termination of the path and the summit of Meall Corranaich there is only a difference in level of something like 1500 feet, so that the actual ascent is small. A breathing space will now bring to notice the upper part of Ben Lawers, looking over the slope of his lesser neighbour, Beinn Ghlas, and away down the corrie, over the loch and the low hills between, rise the stately forms of Ben Vorlich and Stùc a' Chroin. Just before I stepped on to the summit crest I encountered the remains of a handsome cornice, in the shape of a vertical wall of snow nearly ten feet in height.

It was 11.30 when I reached the summit—there are two small cairns a considerable distance apart—of Meall Corranaich, and found it completely under snow, so much so that the fence which runs over it was at places invisible. The view was magnificent: from Ben Ledi to the Cairngorms stretched one long, billowy line of snow-clad mountains, from the knobby tops of the Tarmachans in front right on to, and perhaps beyond, the burly Ben Nevis. Of course to the east I had the other summits of Lawers.

Meall a' Choire Lèith I did not think worth visiting, as it is simply the shoulder of the ridge running north from Meall Corranaich. There is only a dip of about 500 feet between this (Meall Corranaich) and the next summit, Beinn Ghlas, so I rapidly dropped down into the hollow, and within 40 minutes was on top number two. Although not honoured with a cairn, Beinn Ghlas is a fine hill, with a large, north-facing corrie. To the east now rose the steep face of Ben Lawers itself, 327 feet above me, but separated by a dip of 400 feet. The ascent of the slope before me, though steeper than either of the previous ones, could hardly be called severe, so at 1.25 I planted foot on the summit of the biggest hill in the big county. There are now two cairns on the top

of Ben Lawers, but only a few feet from one another, and, no doubt, the stones composing the smaller have been poached from its larger neighbour. This, the remains of that elaborate structure erected by Mr. Malcolm Ferguson in 1878, and rebuilt in 1898, is again in ruins, though it still retains something of its former glory in its wide-spreading base.

After spending some time in a further examination of the horizon, I turned my steps northwards, and descended over Creag an Fhithich, and so reached An Stuc. This is a fine rocky hill just above Lochan a' Chait. Its east and north-east sides are very steep and rocky, and I found considerable difficulty in getting down the north-east face. The slope was snow-clad, and the rocks glazed with ice, so that it took fully an hour to descend this 400 feet. From the dip, however, it was an easy pull up to the summit of Meall Garbh. From this top I had a fine backward view of the great north-east face of Ben Lawers, thickly coated with snow for 1400 feet. The surface of the little Lochan a' Chait at my feet was covered with huge blocks of ice, as if it had only lately broken up. On Meall Garbh there was much less snow than on the other tops; although its north face was well covered, it was present only in patches on the other sides.

There remained yet another summit, Meall Gruaidh, to be conquered. This one is separated from Meall Garbh by a dip of 1100 feet, but the slopes though long are very gradual. I reached the hollow in 20 minutes, and the ascent occupied about the same time, so that after passing over one or two subsidiary tops I arrived at the cairn at 4.20. By this time the weather had undergone a complete change: it had become cold, the wind had risen, and a thick haze had fallen all around; thus the sun was obscured, and it began to get chilly. After a halt of a quarter of an hour, I descended to the path by the Lawers Burn, and so got on to the Loch Tayside road.

There was now  $8\frac{1}{2}$  miles between me and home, and as there was no chance of a steamer or other conveyance

I had just to use my shanks still. Such a tramp, over a hard metalled road, following a big day on the hills, is always a severe trial to the feet, but in due course I reached Killin at 7.55, as the last rays of the setting sun were gilding the summit of Creag Hialach.

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II.—BY E. R. BEARD.

WE (H. Stewart and the writer) left Auld Reekie on Monday, 23rd May, by "that dreadful train", the 4.30 a.m., and on reaching Tyndrum were welcomed by BEINN LAOIGH. rain, mist, and all uncharitableness.

Without delay we crossed the Meall Odhar shoulder and descended to Choninish Glen after nearly making for the Beinn Chuirn corrie, which the mist for a minute revealed to us and which looked magnificent. However, thanks to compass and map, and a momentary glimpse of a great corrie in front of us, all doubts were removed. That glorious expanse of snow could be no other than the Big Corrie of Beinn Laoigh, and what cared we then for rain or mist or cold? We took snap-shots here and there, lunched under the shadow of Stob Garbh, and reached the snow line at 11.15. We donned the rope, and, Stewart leading, went straight up, it being manifestly impossible in the mist to make sure of any definite gully. Up and up we went, finding the snow in fair condition but avalanche-marked on every side. We were destined to make a closer acquaintance with these foes of climbers, for at one point, when we were resting for a moment from the labours of step-cutting, there was a sudden ominous hiss from above, and through the mist came hurrying down a stream of snow. Fortunately we were firmly hitched, but to the writer it was a somewhat awesome sight to see the snow keep pouring out of the unseen above, rise about our bodies, and vanish into the unseen below. Stewart was unorthodox enough to view it with undisguised satisfaction,

and that too though we were on a slope which, as it seemed to be over  $60^\circ$ , was probably quite  $45^\circ$ . Still we cut steps up and up, and the gully became hemmed in with rock walls, looming finely through the rain and mist. At last we came to a point where, on seeing forbidding rocks ahead, we traversed through a gap in the rock wall to our left into a narrow, steep gully, and in a few minutes reached the ridge, which at this point bore no cornice. The gully by which we had ascended must be, I think, that which is known as the South Central Gully. (See *S.M.C.J.*, Vol. VI., No. 35.)

By the slippery, ice-clad ridge we gained the top with some difficulty, and our efforts were rewarded by a view extending to perhaps 10 feet. Such are the pleasures enjoyed by those "who go up to the mountains in the snow". It was now 3.15, still raining, still misty, so we abandoned the plan of bagging Beinn a' Chleibh, Beinn Oss, and Beinn Dubh-Chraige, and resolved to make straight for Crianlarich. We struck the head waters of the Allt nan Caorunn, and then came mile after mile of dreary trudging past an interminable series of moraines, varied occasionally by a walk through the burn. At last, however, woods were seen, a track emerged apparently from nowhere, and the burn is now called the Dubh Eas. The river scenery is magnificent: copse, rocky hill-side, here a black pool, there a foaming waterfall; but its romantic beauties seem quite unknown and unappreciated. We tramped up Glen Falloch in gathering darkness, and I need hardly add, in torrents of rain, and reached Crianlarich at 9. In the morning we had left sleeping-bags and other impedimenta at the station, proposing to sleep out; now, having procured these, we made straight tracks for the hotel and for supper, having subsisted on *one* Vienna roll all day.

When we awoke next morning the rain was still pouring. It was still pouring when we passed Loch Dochart and climbed Ben More. Thanks to the mist, we were blissfully unconscious that any corrie existed on the mountain, and simply walked from Ben More

BEN MORE AND  
AM BINNEIN.

farmhouse up the steep, grassy slope. On the N.E. face was a great snowfield, but we met with little snow till near the top. By this time it was actually fair, and above the sea of mist shone the blue sky—a wonderful picture. But the mist gave no sign of rising, so we set off towards Am Binnein, when suddenly, at a breath of wind, the mist parted as a curtain and revealed the snowy side of Cruach Ardran. Then it settled down again, but not for long; and at length we were rewarded by seeing it disappear on every side. And then, O goddess of the mountains, with what a scene thou didst reward us! Lochs sparkling in the sunshine; Matterhorn-like Ben Vorlich and Stuc à Chroin; the snowwhite hills of Lomond, Ledi, Laoigh, Cruachan; Ben Lawers, Ben Alder; the Glencoe and Black Mount monarchs; and the soaring head of Ben Nevis. To see Stewart on a steep ice-slope humbly salaaming the Alpine peaks, then shouting for the camera which was on his own back, added no little interest to the scene! We then climbed the graceful Hill of Birds, and, having exhausted every plate and film, discovered we had barely time to catch the train. Then followed cross country running down the slope of Am Binnein, over rocks and snow, through the glen, and along the high road, upon which even now I look back with feelings of horror: my thoughts and expressions at the time on the few occasions when Stewart allowed me to rest and take breath must have been appalling. With a minute to spare we caught the train, convinced more than ever that no pastime can compare with the glorious fascination of “spieling the braes”.

## AMIDST THE SNOWS OF THE GRAMPIANS.

BY SETON P. GORDON.

MOUNT KEEN lies about forty miles west-south-west of Aberdeen, and, although of no mean altitude, is comparatively easy of ascent in winter. It is remarkably free from crevasses, swamps, and like dangers, while there is little risk of accident should a mist suddenly envelop the mountain, provided the mountaineer keeps well to the west side; but facing the north-east there is an almost perpendicular slope which presents a very treacherous surface when covered with frozen snow.

Accompanied by a friend, the writer arrived shortly before Christmas at Aboyne, from which the ascent is usually attempted; but from Christmas Eve onwards it either snowed or rained almost without cessation, and we were giving up all hope of a favourable climb, when on 8th January the weather at last showed signs of improving. The next day dawned very promisingly, with a sharp touch of frost in the air and an almost cloudless sky, and so we decided to risk the climb.

The base of Mount Keen being nearly twelve miles from Aboyne, how to reach it was rather a problem, as a twelve-mile cycle ride is not quite the best preparation for climbing a mountain. At length, however, the difficulty was solved by my doing the distance on my motor cycle, and towing my friend behind by means of a rope attached to my saddle-pillar. As the roads were in places very rutty, the ruts being rendered as hard as iron by the night's frost, the ride was a somewhat eventful one, but after several narrow shaves—my friend at one place running right off the road into the heather—we eventually reached our destination about noon, and after a short rest commenced the ascent.

There was no snow on the low grounds, but Mount Keen was deeply shrouded in white, and the snow-line was reached shortly after the start. It turned out that we had chosen a very favourable day, as, owing to the



severe frost, the snow had become so hard that it was possible to walk on the crust, just as one would walk on ice. We had not gone far ere the wind increased to a gale from the west, and it became no easy matter to progress against it—the “spindrift” being blown past us in clouds.

At length, after a stiff climb, the summit cairn (3077 feet) was reached, and we were rewarded by a magnificent view. To the east the sea was visible from the north of Aberdeen to Montrose, while trains were plainly discerned on the Caledonian Railway at least twenty-five miles



CAIRN OF MOUNT KEEN.

distant. We also noticed houses, which, if not actually Aberdeen itself, must have been very near to it. To the north the view extended right away to Knock Hill at Glen Barry, Buck of the Cabrach, and the Bin Hill of Cullen, the latter about sixty miles distant, and also the Tap o' Noth, at Gartly, while just across the valley of the Dee Morven looked very insignificant from our standpoint; westward, Lochnagar stood out prominently, its

summit being at times just touched by the clouds. We also caught fleeting glimpses of Ben Avon and Beinn a' Bhuid. To the west, however, the view was not so clear, as every now and again the higher mountain tops were shrouded in heavy snow clouds.

At length we bethought ourselves of our sandwiches, and made a hasty meal, although it was rather chilly work—a thermometer placed on the snow registering 22° Fahrenheit, or 10° below freezing point.

All the stones of the cairn were plastered with frozen snow and ice to the depth of fully half-a-foot, and great care had to be exercised, as the drifted snow had covered over all the crevices between the boulders around the cairn.

The descent was just about to be commenced when two magnificent golden eagles, probably male and female, came soaring over us with outstretched wings, in the very teeth of the gale. They were evidently on the keen lookout for some luckless ptarmigan or mountain hare, and sailed right over our heads without apparently deigning to notice us, being soon lost on the sky line. Although flying dead against the gale, their wings were practically motionless, the only movement being an occasional slight quiver as if to steady themselves.

Standing still, however, at a temperature of 22° F., with an icy wind sweeping down from the snow-clad mountains to the west, is not very pleasant, and so the descent was commenced. Taking a somewhat more circuitous route, we struck due west, and after about half-an-hour's walk turned abruptly to the north—in which direction lay the base and our cycles.

By the time the base was reached darkness had begun to fall, so we made all haste to mount our cycles, as a twelve-mile run over a practically unknown road, with treacherous frozen ruts about a foot deep, was not a very enjoyable outlook. A last glance at Mount Keen showed that we had been very fortunate, as ominous dark clouds were scurrying up and were already enveloping the summit. An hour's ride brought us once more to Aboyne, the lights of which seemed to welcome us back to civilisation.

## AMONG THE HILLS IN MAY.

By REV. D. C. MACKAY.

TAKING a ramble through Strathglass and Glencannich towards the end of May, I marked how deeply the spring had imprinted its track on the hills. From a distance little of this change could be recognised. No doubt the spotless whiteness of the night-dress worn in winter sleep had been replaced by the more sombre hues of the ordinary garments of the hills; no doubt too the coming viridescence could be seen, even afar off, where fledgling birches struggled up the slopes. But it required a closer inspection to reveal the more intimate touch of spring on every little knoll and hillock. One has to go there to see the dainty violet sunning itself, with clusters of "cat's-paws" and wild thyme on the bare spots of grass. The heather itself, though the bloom is still far off, already tells that the sap is circulating in its veins again, for the tender twigs about the roots are fresher and greener than when they languished under the snow. St. John's wort is already bright and full, hoisting itself up on a still longer stem where the heather is deeper so as to obtain an unobstructed view of the sun.

It is not long since the deer might be seen in dreary files on the snow, not from choice but from the necessity of seeking fresh pasture; but now they may be seen, not hurrying over it, but lingering fondly on the white patches far up the hills to cool their heated hoofs. But it cannot be said that the deer are particularly interesting in the month of May. The hinds are heavy with calf, and the stags are mostly shorn of the glory of their "beamed frontlet". The antlers are generally shed in the month of April, but before the end of May the new horns have already attained a considerable size.

A stroll through the hills, especially in Glencannich, discloses other less pleasing indications of the spring, for

the vipers and slow-worms, so strongly represented in this district, are now abroad, and may be met with, basking in the sun on grassy hillocks and even crawling along the public roads. An old native tells me that the dangerous viper may be easily recognised by the mark of the "V". As I take no undue interest in the study of ophiology I am taking his word for it, and perhaps the reader who has a care for his comfort would be well advised to follow my example in this point, and leave the experimental test to the specialist. The "V" very appropriately designates the viper, villainous, vicious, vindictive, virulent, venomous, v . . . v . . . v . . . *ad lib.* Anyone may exercise his ingenuity by filling up the spaces, which reminds me of the trick of which I was wont to suspect Cicero in my school days, as he seemed to be fond of throwing in an "&c." only when he had exhausted all the stock of indeclinable nouns and irregular verbs that he could conjure up in support of his plea. Cases are reported in these glens, where the bite of a viper has been fraught with serious consequences, though it is seldom, if ever, fatal to a strong, healthy person. Still, when you meet a viper it is well not to caress it too familiarly, or to cherish it too tenderly when you find one "almost frozen to death".

It is surprising how susceptible the hills are to the changes of the seasons, and how eloquent their expressions are to those who can read them aright. They are a perpetual poem, changing with the changing year. Look at them in the winter time huddled up in their white furs—monuments of resignation—waiting, with the patience begotten of secular antiquity, for the coming of the summer which they love so well. Watch them again in the autumn when the splendour of their vesture is fading. They are still rich and beautiful, though subdued in their sepia, old-gold, and olive hues. In the autumn especially the hills form a sympathetic background for the play of the elements, now showing the perspiration of the labouring blast in ripples and swathes along their slopes, now toning and softening the cold glint of an October sun. And when the thunder comes, how grandly the electric

organ of the heavens reverberates in the wilderness of their crags, and gorges, and corries!

The chief glory of most of our Scottish hills is, undoubtedly, their gorgeous display of heather blossom, rolling away in undulating miles of purple glory. This is at its best in the early autumn; but at the time when the spring and the summer meet on the hills their beauty is richer in variety and detail. Then it is not merely one tone that prevails—it is not a solo that the hills are singing then—but a full, exuberant chorus, for every peeping bud, every tuft of moss, and every trickling rill has its own little ripple of gladness. The wild birds, too, in the profusion of their renewed vitality, make the moors vocal with many a mingled shout of joy. The red grouse are nesting, and often startle the solitary intruder with their sudden quack and whirr as they dart from the heather at his feet. On the higher reaches the ptarmigan is to be found, also absorbed in family cares. In order the better to adapt itself to its background, it has come nearer to its red brother in appearance by assuming its summer dress. The white hare also has now followed the change of shade in its native hills. It is well for these creatures which inhabit the heights that nature has furnished them with this wonderful means of evading detection on the part of their ever watchful foes. At this season particularly there are greedy eyes scanning every acre of the hills from morning till night, for the eagle, and the fox have also hungry broods eagerly awaiting, in their wild eyries and cairns, the return of their parents with the daily booty, and it needs all the delicacy of nature's brush to paint its defenceless children so as to deceive the eye of the eagle. Though the fox does not command the same wide range as the bird of prey in its airy height, still it could not by any means be called short-sighted. Again it is well compensated for any restriction in the limits of its horizon by the extraordinary keenness of its sense of smell. A gamekeeper lately told me of a recent experience where an eagle and a fox were both led on to meet their death by their predominating senses. He saw an eagle swoop

down, apparently from the bounds of heavenward space, on the fresh carcase of a hind. By a rapid stalk he was soon within range and secured his prize as it rose. He had not gone far when he spied, in the distance, a fox coming up wind towards the same spot with its nose in the air. Swiftly and stealthily he took up his position for a good shot, at the same time taking due care to avoid the zone of wind that would have betrayed his presence to the fox. With undeviating precision reynard drew on to his anticipated booty, but alas! the gamekeeper's gun was endowed with equal precision, and suddenly interrupted the poor fox in its expectations. Those who are much among the hills at this time have opportunities of witnessing many an interesting sight begotten of the complexity of desires and impulses which move the inhabitants of those remote haunts of nature.

Unquestionably the hills have a wonderful fascination in the spring and the early summer, but, spring, summer, autumn or winter, they have an enduring charm which is all their own—which can be adequately appreciated only in their midst, but which appeals deeply even to the tamest heart once they have allured it far from the dull prose and the artificiality of mercenary men.

## EASTER AT AN TEALLACH.

BY GEO. T. EWEN.

NOT many Sassenachs get so far afield as Wester Ross for the short Easter holiday, but those who brave the discomfort of long railway rides and coach drives thither will be abundantly rewarded. Neither E. A. Baker nor I had paid a winter visit to Scotland, and one very wet day last October whilst on the way to a certain cave in Derbyshire the project was discussed and carried unanimously. After two hours in the aforesaid cave, which contained its maximum quantity of water, thoughts of crags, gullies, and snow slopes gave place to the more mundane considerations of dry clothes and tea, and further discussion was adjourned *sine die*. Until a few days before Easter I thought I should be unable to make the trip, but the unexpected happened, and at the unholy hour of 1.30 a.m. on Wednesday, the 30th March, I met Baker at Carlisle *en route* for Dundonnell. After leaving Perth we had glorious views of the Grampians, and as the sun was shining brilliantly I grew unduly optimistic. But when Baker solemnly assured me that during ever so many trips to Scotland he had never had really fine weather, I began to "hae my doots". From Garve we intended to coach to Braemore, sleep the night at the lodge, and then have a long day on the Fannichs on the way to Dundonnell. On inquiry at Garve, however, we learned that the lodge at Braemore had been uninhabited for a couple of years, and not being able to make certain of other accommodation we wired for a trap to meet us at Braemore, and reached Dundonnell early in the

evening. The outstanding features of the drive were the magnificent views of Ben Wyvis, which carried a huge quantity of snow, of Ben Dearg (3547), and of the whole range of An Teallach, which when seen shortly after leaving the "Junction" is one of the finest mountain pictures in the British Isles. We spent half-an-hour viewing the falls of Measach, which should on no account be missed.

Baker's evil genius had evidently accompanied him as usual. The weather broke in the night, and when we turned out next morning a terrific wind was blowing, and there was every prospect of snow, and plenty of it, on the hills during the day. The only information we had regarding An Teallach was Messrs. King and Munro's article in Vol. III. of the *S.M.C. Journal*, which gives a most accurate account of the range, and was of great assistance to us. Having decided to make for Glas Mheall Mor (3176), the most northerly peak, we followed the capital path which leads from Auchtascait almost to the foot of the mountain. The rocks of the north-east ridge by which Messrs. King and Munro ascended in 1893 were badly iced, and we decided therefore to ascend by the north face, and a start was made upon an apparently easy snow slope. The snow hardened as we went upwards towards a small buttress of rock, the leader cutting steps most of the time. The rocks here were also badly glazed, but at the third attempt a likely route was found, though a small pitch of unusual difficulty was only surmounted after sundry gymnastics by Baker. Half-an-hour's careful going brought us to the north-east ridge, about 400 feet below the summit. On the ridge the wind was terrific, and blew the now rapidly falling snow in all directions. We got a glimpse of the grand ridge between Bidein a' Glas Thuill and Glas Mheall Liath, but the details thereof, dear to the heart of any cragsman worthy of the name, were obscured by the blinding snow. We saw them from below a day or so later, and were much impressed by the climbing possibilities the north face of this ridge offers. After a short halt for lunch, during which I sat on the



lee side of my companion, we pushed on to the summit over easy snow slopes. The small cairn had evidently seen better days, and had eventually reached the bed rock of misfortune, for its component parts were scattered over a wide area. Sgurr Creag an Eich (3475), the most westerly peak of the Teallachs, looks grand from this point, and will undoubtedly afford great sport for enterprising climbers. The clouds to the north lifted a little, and we could make out Ben More Coigach (2438), Cul Beg (2523), Cul More (2786), and Suilven (2399), the latter very disappointing as it is seen broadside on.

A short, rocky ridge leads to another summit (3001), which has not yet received the dignity of a name. Seen from the west it is uninteresting, and scarcely deserves the distinction of being marked a separate mountain, but from the corrie below appears a sharp, conical peak. Whilst we were descending to the next col some 200 feet below, the snow again came on, but it was decided to try and reach Bidein a' Glas Thuill, the summit of which was some 600 feet above us. Under ordinary conditions and in ordinary weather the ascent would be perfectly easy, but we found it far from being so, loose, irregular blocks lying at a steep angle, and here and there short, rock ridges, the whole thickly plastered with hard snow and ice, whilst the covering of new snow was not yet deep enough to give a decent foothold. Utilising the rocks whenever possible, cutting a step every now and again, and keeping away from the heavily corniced ridge, we made fair progress, and soon after four o'clock stood by the side of a very respectable cairn on the highest point of the group, 3483 feet above sea level. The wind blew the snow in every direction, and made the top anything but a desirable place for a halt. We waited some time, however, being anxious to obtain a near view of the other peaks of the range and of an alternative route down, but fate was against us, and we had to depart without seeing anything. There was never any question of going on further, as the weather was about as bad as it could be, and neither of us cared to descend by any of the

gullies, which we could make out from time to time. The descent to the col took longer than the ascent, both of us having slight falls, owing to the new snow covering the icy slopes of older material. In trying to get across a wide patch of snow the upper layer gave way, and by means of a "stomach" glissade I reached a point 80 feet below. The next moment Baker joined me by means of a similar performance, for in leaning over to cut a step his foot slipped and down he came. Two bruises, both acquired by Baker, were the whole of the damage, though the changing mechanism of my camera, which was in Baker's rucksack, was put out of order, but this was not found out until later. We crossed the ridge leading west from the unnamed peak close to its summit, and ran down easy snow slopes until we reached the stream. A tramp along an old moraine brought us to the path again, and the comforts of the Inn were reached about seven o'clock. The route we followed in our descent is much the easiest line of ascent, whether Glas Mheall Mor or Bidein be the objective. Had we kept more to the right when starting to climb the former we could not well have overlooked it, and should have probably missed the most interesting part of our climb.

Next morning the wind was blowing harder than ever. In the glen it was raining hard, and everything over 2000 feet was covered with a mantle of fresh snow. Serious climbing being obviously impossible, it was decided to explore the resources of the lower levels, and in particular the gorge marked on the map Corryhallie, which our host assured us was quite out of the common. Leaving the high road at the third milestone from the Inn, we descended a steep, heathery slope for a short distance, and found ourselves on the top of the gorge, at this point only about a dozen feet wide. A ricketty plank bridge gave access to the other side, and enabled us to look down into a narrow vertical passage about 200 feet deep, at the bottom of which the Strathbeg River flowed at a tremendous pace. In places we could see the water white with foam, but so much do the walls of the gorge over-

hang that from no point is it possible to get a complete view. A huge rift at right angles to the main passage contained a waterfall which would make the fortune of any so-called glen in a tourist centre. The rock is a gneiss, and is moulded into most fantastic shapes. It reminded me somewhat of the gorge of the Aar at Meiringen in Switzerland, though it is of course on a much smaller scale. In a dry season it might be possible to enter the gorge a mile lower down and get into its highest recesses, though great difficulty would be experienced in negotiating the water-worn pitches.

We renewed our acquaintance with An Teallach next morning, making for the south end of the range. A capital though little used cart track to Strath na Shellag leads almost to the foot of Sail Liath (3104 feet), the only peak of the range which cannot boast of beauty of outline. We left the track too soon and crossed the burn, and in consequence had some rough scrambling over a quartz outcrop before the foot of the south-east ridge of Sail Liath was reached. This ridge is very uninteresting, and, being exposed to the wind, we took the north-east face, which was an unbroken snow slope and likely to provide us with a good sporting route. Steps had to be cut the whole way as we traversed upwards towards a tiny ridge. Rejoicing in the possession of freshly nailed boots, I'm afraid the steps I cut were rather small, and Baker, who was not the fortunate owner of new nails, had to re-cut most of them. It was a nasty place in case of a slip,

“For if we had blundered  
We had shot down five hundred,  
With never a stop  
To a thousand feet drop”.

The credit of being the author of so picturesque a rhyme belongs solely to my companion, who spent most of his evenings at Dundonnell in turning out numberless verses of a similar character, which were carefully transcribed into the visitors' book, in order (as I suppose) to harrow

the feelings or enlist the sympathies of other patrons of the Inn.\*

The worst part of the climb was not the step-cutting or the possibilities in case of a slip, but the wind, which generally came from the least expected quarter and almost blew us bodily from our foothold. The only thing to do was to dig the axe well in and hold tight, and both of us were glad when the main ridge and then the summit was reached. The former had a splendid cornice, which in some places was quite eight feet broad. We were rewarded for our exertions by the finest view during our visit. To the north Ben More of Assynt (3273) looked splendid, as did also the lesser peaks surrounding him. Canisp (2779) could be plainly seen, but we were doubtful whether we saw Suilven or not. Ben Dearg (3547) and Eididh nan Clach Geala (3039) were the features of the

\* Baker did not confine himself to the visitors' book, for a Dundonnell post card told us:—

“ The S. M. C. J.  
 Arrived safe yesterday,  
 Shewing Baker and Ewen,  
 The short road to ruin.  
 Right up from the balloch  
 To the peaks of An Teallach,  
 Snow storms and blizzards  
 Blew right in our gizzards.  
 We cut up the face  
 At a rather slow pace ;  
 Wind and snow at the top of it  
 Made a cold shop of it.  
 We took off the rope  
 To come down the snow slope,  
 But the ice-covered rocks  
 Took much skin off our houghs.  
 The snow was so hard  
 That we could not glissade,  
 And we tramped down together  
 Thro' wet bogs and foul weather,  
 Till we came to the glen  
 A pair of bruised men,  
 With only a bag of  
 Three Munros to brag of”.

—Ed., C. C. J.

eastward view, but best of all was the panorama of snow-clad peaks to the south. Skye was hidden in the clouds, but Slioch (3217), Sgurr Ban (3194), and Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair (3250) looked thoroughly Alpine in their mantles of fresh snow. Ben Dearg Mhor (2974), however, was the finest of the lot. The grand precipice face on the north of this peak reminded me greatly of Lliwedd on Snowdon, though it is much higher, and the solemn effect of the crags was heightened by the dark clouds of a storm which was quickly gathering behind. If ever a peak deserved to be over 3000 feet that peak is certainly Ben Dearg Mhor. The Fannich Hills, topped by Sgurr Mor (3637), completed a mountain picture of rare beauty, though the heavy clouds gave the scene a somewhat sombre tint. We descended a little towards Corrag Bhuidhe, but the certainty of a heavy storm and the high wind counselled prudence, so we turned tail and made for Coire Toll an Lochan by means of a snow gulley. Neither Baker nor I had seen anything quite so fine as this corrie presented, nor did we imagine that such a wealth of climbing remained to be done even in Scotland. There are at least a dozen first-rate buttresses in this corner of An Teallach alone, all of which will give a thousand feet of continuous rock work, and one or two, such as the Corrag Bhuidhe buttress, nearly fifteen hundred feet. What the gullies are like in summer I do not know, but I should imagine they will provide most excellent sport for the most hardened rock-climber. The buttresses we adjudged to be difficult, that of Sail Liath exceptionally so, but until a party has actually been on them it is perhaps unwise to prophesy. Loch Toll an Lochain was half frozen over, and with the dark rocks and dazzling snow made a fine picture. This corrie, we learned, was the sanctuary of Dundonnell forest, and any climbing must be done before the end of June. The evidences of ancient glaciers are very distinct, *roches moutonnées* and moraines being numerous. The terminal moraine is especially well defined. On leaving the corrie we kept fairly high, hoping to avoid the boggy ground, following

the route recommended by Messrs. King and Munro. Very little is gained, however, by so doing, and the route we adopted in the morning would, I think, be the quickest and best to take when returning to Dundonnell from Sail Liath or from Coire Toll an Lochain.

Thus ended our wanderings on the Challich Hills, which delighted us as much by their beauty as by their climbing possibilities. It is already settled that we shall go again and try some of the climbs, which we are firmly convinced will be found almost equal to the Coolins or Ben Nevis, and probably more difficult than either, since Torridon sandstone is not so good as, say, the Skye gabbro. We marked down one or two special "tit-bits" we hope to subdue—that is, if the members of the Cairngorm Club do not get there before us.

Dundonnell Hotel affords most comfortable quarters for anyone visiting the district, and we received every attention from Mr. and Mrs. Urquhart.

## TIMBER FLOATING AT ROTHLEMURCHUS.

BY C. G. CASH, F.R.S.G.S.

READERS of "Memoirs of a Highland Lady" will remember with pleasure the animated account Mrs. Smith gives in her eleventh chapter of the varied proceedings connected with the forest industries in the early years of the nineteenth century—the felling, lopping, barking, driving, and floating. It could be truly said that then "the number of people employed in the forest was great. The logs prepared by the loppers had to be drawn by horses to the nearest water and then left in large quantities till the proper time for sending them down the streams. In order to have a run of water at command, the sources of the little rivers were managed artificially to suit floating purposes. Embankments were raised at the ends of the lakes in the far-away glens at the point where the different burnies issued from them. Strong sluice-gates, always kept closed, prevented the escape of any but a small rill of water, so that when a rush was wanted the supply was sure. The night before a run, the man in charge of that particular sluice set off up the hill, and reaching the spot long before daylight opened the heavy gates; out rushed the torrent, travelling so quickly as to reach the deposit of timber in time for the meeting of the woodmen, a perfect crowd, amongst whom it was one of our enjoyments to find ourselves early in the day. The duty of some was to roll the logs into the water. This was effected by the help of levers—like Harry Sandford's snowball, Johnnie screamed out the first time we took him with us. The next party shoved them off with long poles into the current, dashing in often up to the middle in water when any case of obstruction occurred. They were then taken in charge by the most picturesque group of all, the youngest and most active, each supplied with a *clip*, a very long pole, thin and flexible at one end,

generally a young, tall tree. A sharp hook was fixed to the bending point, and with this, skipping from rock to stump, over brooks and through briers, this agile band followed the log-laden current, ready to pounce on any stray, lumbering victim that was in any manner checked in its progress. There was something graceful in the action of throwing forth the stout yet yielding clip, an exciting satisfaction as the sharp hook fixed the obstreperous log. The many light forms springing about among the trees, along banks that were sometimes high and always rocky, the shouts, the laughter, the Gaelic exclamations, and, above all, the roar of the water, made the whole scene one of the most inspiring that either actors or spectators could be engaged in. There were many laughable accidents during the merry hours of the floating; clips would sometimes fail to hit the mark, when the overbalanced clipper would fall headlong into the water. A slippery log escaping would cause a tumble, shouts of laughter always greeting the dripping victims, who good-humouredly joined in the mirth. As for the wetting, it seemed in no way to incommode them; they were really like water-rats".

For many years preceding the Rothiemurchus Forest fire of 1899 there had been a cessation of these interesting and picturesque scenes; indeed the forest needed a rest, during which trees might attain a size fitting them for cutting. But the fire made it necessary to clear away many trees that had been killed on the slopes overlooking the south-east of Loch an Eilein, and each year since cutting has been going on. A sawmill was started at the outflow of Loch an Eilein, and the mills at Inverdrue were kept busy. This season a mill has been established on the Glen Eunach road, just north of the forest march, and a small tramway has been laid on the acclivity from Cross Roads.

Some three hundred trees had been cut down during the past season along the course of the Luineag, the stream flowing from Loch Morlich. My wife and I happened to be at Aviemore when the logs were to be



floated down to the Inverdrueie sawmills. Accordingly we went up to Coylum Bridge to see what could be seen. The day, though dull and drizzly at sunrise, turned brilliantly fine and warm, and we saw two swans flying up Spey, their long necks outstretched. The hills were beautifully clear and shining in their spring coats of snow. Every cairn could be plainly seen, except the two on Braeriach, which are small and were apparently snowed up.

When we reached Coylum Bridge we followed the side of the stream to choose a place for the view. After trying several spots we decided that the best one was at the little wooden foot-bridge at the small fall, the Coyleum, that gives name to the hamlet. This is a few hundred yards above the stone bridge. Here we commanded a good view up the stream, and could watch the logs and the floaters at advantage. Soon we saw that the sluices of Loch Morlich had been opened, as the water flowed more abundantly, and then the logs began to make their appearance. Some floated end on, dipping gracefully as they came; others rolled crosswise, and bumped and splashed clumsily and heavily. At a shallow some of these caught and stuck, others drove against them, and soon there was a "jam" of a dozen or so logs. Along came a "floater" carrying his clip. He took stock of the "jam", waded into the water, which must have been very cold, and soon released some of the logs. The labour was obviously heavy, and no one could long remain in the cold, quickly-running stream to work at it.

While we sat on the little foot-bridge on the rocks close by it, we were told the story of the last recorded appearance of a fairy in Rothiemurchus—for it should be known that fairies and bogles of varied type used to frequent these parts in by-gone days; and if they are not now seen, it is plainly hinted by some of the older people that the reason is to be sought rather in the blindness and scepticism of modern people than in the absence of the "little folk". Fairy pools and fairy hillocks still exist, and we have seen at least one fairy dart, which we readily mistook for a flint arrow-head! But to our story.

“Once upon a time”—we did not get any very exact date—a woman was crossing the Luineag at the spot where we were. The river had then no bridge across it; at low water it was crossed by leaping. The woman was carrying her baby, bound in a plaid, on her back, and as she leapt, the child slipped out of the plaid, fell into the water, was swept over the fall, and disappeared. The poor mother, turning swiftly round to the stream as she reached the farther side, saw, standing on the side she had just left, an old man, who was not there when she leapt. This was a fairy “bodach”, and he told her that if she would at once return home she would find her child there safe and sound. Of course, the woman obeyed, and, equally of course, her child was found at home safe and sound.

With such story and gossip we filled up the intervals between the exciting moments when the big logs were swept down to the fall and plunged with sullen bump into the pool below, thereafter nodding their way down stream. Following them to the stone bridge, we had there a continuation of the view, and with a rough tree-branch shoved off some logs that got stranded. Just below the stone bridge is a deepish pool, and not a few logs spent a considerable time slowly circling round it.

The next day it was expected that the logs would all be got down to Inverdrue, so we took good care to be early at the back of the Free Kirk. The day was again brilliantly fine and warm, and a pleasanter way of spending a holiday forenoon need not be wished for. The logs were coming down at a great pace; the school children were lined up on the bank behind the school, all eager with their exclamations and cries as the logs raced by or stuck on the gravel banks. They showed their desire to help by throwing stones at the racing logs, till it was pointed out to them that they would damage the artificial embankment, and thereafter they had to limit their demonstrations to shouts and cheers.

Just below the Dell Bridge some men were stationed to guide the logs into the mill lade, and from them I

borrowed a clip. This is a twelve-foot pole, armed at one end with a steel spike and hook, the spike for shoving and the hook for dragging the logs. There was a considerable "jam" of logs on the gravel banks just behind the Free Kirk, and when a "floater" came to break it up I put in some work in dragging the released logs past the back of the schoolhouse and the smithy, and seeing them fairly on their way again. My wife had the "honour" of the first log, but the work is too heavy for a woman's hands and muscles, and, having opened the proceedings, she was content to let me do the work while she "superintended". And, indeed, the work affords good, hard exercise, bringing into play all the muscles of the body in the many postures assumed and the strenuous exertion called for. The only real drawback I felt was that, having no waders, I could not go into the stream, but was confined to the bank. Of course the "floaters" were up to their waists in the water much of the time, but "no me".

That afternoon saw the end of the task, all the logs being in the dock at Inverdrue, and the "ploy" was over. In the old days the proceedings ended with a "floaters' ball", which was the great event of the season. But in these days, when, alas, so much of the picturesque has passed out of life, there is no ball. Still, to the holiday onlooker, the "floating" presents pictures of an interesting and picturesque kind, and we are glad to have added them to our many pleasant recollections of Rothiemurchus.

## EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

A VISIT to Bennachie must be a *sine qua non* to a mountaineering club whose headquarters are in the "Silver City by the Sea". It

is one of the nearest hills, it is very accessible, and THE CLUB it stands out prominently alone as the central ON BENNACHIE. figure of Aberdeenshire. Wherever one may wander throughout the county its graceful outline rises up to vision, and its strikingly protuberant features attract the attention of all travellers. Not only is "The Mither Tap o' Bennachie, the sailors' lan'mark frae the sea", but also it is a characteristic silhouette of grandeur in the shire. Although it has no pretension as to length of range or height of summit, yet it seems to stand out in clear profile from many points, and is recognised from a distance of 40 to 70 miles in a clear atmosphere. Being thus a distinctive mark in Aberdeenshire, and standing between the classic Gadie and the Don from which Aberdeen takes its name, Bennachie claims the first attention of an Aberdonian mountaineer. Working from the centre to the circumference the hill climber finds Bennachie a good beginning for the season's exploits, and might be taken as the first step of the training ground for the ascent of 3000 feet which is the standard for membership of the Cairngorm Club. The journey can be accomplished with ease and comfort in an afternoon, and forms a delightful excursion from the city. Bennachie can be ascended from several points—the most popular being Oyne and Pitcaple on the one side, and Monymusk and Kemnay on the other. It is generally recognised that *via* Oyne is the most direct route, and the nearest.

On 4th June, 1904, the Cairngorm Club, to the number of 30, bound on their climbing accoutrements and, instead of an "alpenstock", seized a cudgel and went forth to the Gariochland with the intent of again "doing" Bennachie.

When Oyne was reached (for this was the route chosen) one would have thought that only a few steps were necessary to reach the summit. To the uninitiated the top right opposite the railway station is regarded as the same peak that was visible from the train on the journey. The ascent, however, soon reveals the fallacy. Craig Shannoch looks down quite imposingly upon the village at its base, but when one reaches the summit it loses its majestic appearance beside "Oxen Craig" and "Mither Tap".

Proceeding from Oyne the party set forth by the banks of the Gill Burn, which rises between Oxen Craig and Craig Shannoch and flows into the Gadie at Oyne Station. Along by the rugged bed of

this little stream that wimples placidly in times of summer drought but which breaks forth in roaring torrents when the storm bursts on the high ground, the party wended its way onwards. Crossing the old Aberdeen highway near the croft of Howeford—a place no doubt taking its name from the “Three fords”, or place where three burns met—the ascent proper was begun. Instead of following the path by the old beech trees and Shannoch Well, a straight course was steered through wood, bracken, and heather to Craig Shannoch. On the face of the crag, about 1000 feet up, a splendid view is obtained of the valley of the Gadie with its strange admixture of ancient and modern picturesqueness. There is the old road from Huntly to Aberdeen close by the foot of the hill, and there is the wider turnpike road nearer the level. Then there is the modern mansion of Petmathen, with its red roof appearing to advantage with the background of dark green trees on the slopes of Parnassus Hill and there is the more ancient house of Westhall with its old fashioned tower and foreground of fine old trees; but further to the eastward there is to be seen a mark of antiquity dating at least to the beginning of the 17th century, the Castle of Harthill. It stands in the midst of modern peace as a memorial of the troublous times of old. This hoary pile is now a stately ruin, but its presence marks the age of pillage and plunder, and tells of the clang of war and fierce conflict. Near the top of Craig Shannoch can be seen a cave formed by a projecting rock, and it is reputed that the last laird of Harthill hid himself there to watch his castle smouldering in the flames.

But now the first peak is reached and the eye naturally takes a longer radius and forms a wider arc to the north-west. Standing at an elevation of about 1600 feet, the Foudland Hills, Dunnideer, Buck of Cabrach, and Tap o' Noth could easily be discerned. Faintly, behind the Noth, the dim shadow of Ben Rinnes appeared through the heat haze. Only a short stay was made here as the desire seemed to be to reach the Mither Tap, as the point most prominent, although not the highest.

Oxen Craig (1733) was left unvisited by the majority of the Club, and the coign of vantage for the day was to be the Mither Tap (1698). This is the most popular peak of the range, partly, no doubt, because it is the most imposing, and partly because it abounds most in historical interest. On its rocky summit a good view is got of the beautiful valley of the Don winding through woodland to the sea; and sweeping the eye from left to right one can distinguish, under favourable conditions, Clochnaben, Mount Battock, Mount Keen, Lochnagar, Morven, Ben Avon, Ben Muich Dhui, and Cairngorm on the south-south-west, while to the east the North Sea may be discerned. But perhaps the chief concern of the mountaineer lies in the local topography of the summit. One may cast the eye around in calm deliberation in the twentieth century, but at the same time one can easily imagine the furtive look that

may have been cast from this same rocky ledge in the wild proceedings related in early Scottish history. There are here sufficient traces of a fortification, which must have done service in the past; an outer and inner rampart are still partially visible, and the very place to which the tourist now joyously hies his way had no doubt been the scene of more anxious outlook than at the present day. It does not require any great stretch of imagination to conceive that such a conspicuous mark in the natural contour of the country should be converted into a watch-tower and stronghold for the safety and defence of the district. And there is little doubt that Tap o' Noth, Dunnideer, and Mither Tap had been a chain of forts along the valley and highway, from which signals could be swiftly sped in the times of danger or invasion. Connected also with the Mither Tap, report says that there was an ancient "Causeway" known as the "Maiden Causeway", stretching down past Hosie's Well, through Pittodrie Woods, but whether this is of Roman origin or simply a road made in warlike times for the better access to the fortifications it is impossible to speculate. However, there is much legendary lore respecting the "Causeway", the "Maiden Stone", and the Hill-fort itself, which was left to be meditated upon and discussed by the members in the quiet of the winter hours when they are living over again their pleasant ramble on Bennachie.

Tea was waiting the party at the Oyne Hotel on the descent, and the arrangements allowed time for a pleasant chat among members and guests. Among the latter were Rev. A. Galloway and P. S. Bisset, Oyne; and Rev. W. Cruickshank, Leslie.  
—P. S. BISSET.

It is with much regret that we have to report that no Osprey has put in an appearance at Loch-an-Eilein this season. There is reason to fear that this bird is doomed to rank among our extinct species. Last season there was no Osprey at Loch-an-Eilein, and but one at Loch Arkaig. This season no Osprey has been recorded as building anywhere in the British Isles, though there is a rumour that one was killed in the Lake district.

Mr. William Garden, Advocate, gave an interesting address on "The Rocky and Selkirk Ranges" to the Aberdeen branch of the

ROYAL SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY ON 8th MARCH. He accompanied Mr. William Douglas, of Edinburgh, to Canada, in August of last year, and took part with him in the ascent of Assiniboine, the loftiest peak in the Canadian Rockies (11,860 feet). The last part of the ascent was made by Mr. Douglas alone, Mr. Garden remaining in the final camp pitched (at an elevation of 7175 feet) and watching his companion through a telescope. Ascents were made of various other mountains, including Mount Sir Donald (10,645 feet), named after Lord Stratheona.

*Continued from page 2 of Cover.*

held in December for the following business: (1) to receive the Treasurer's accounts for the year to 30th November; (2) to elect the Office-Bearers and Committee for the next year; (3) to fix the excursions for the ensuing year; and (4) to transact any other necessary business. Special general meetings shall be held whenever deemed necessary by the Chairman, or on a requisition by at least ten members of the Club. General meetings shall have power to deprive of membership of the Club any member who may, in the opinion of the Committee, have misconducted himself.

VI.—A Minute-Book shall be kept by the Secretary, in which all proceedings shall be duly entered.

VII.—The election of members of the Club shall be made by the Committee in such manner as they may determine.

VIII.—The entry money of members shall be 10s. 6d., and the annual subscription 5s. Members shall receive copies of all current issues of the Club publications.

IX.—The annual subscription shall be payable in January. Members not in arrear may retire from the Club at any time on sending notice in writing to the Secretary or Treasurer.

X.—The Committee shall have power to elect suitable persons to be Honorary Members of the Club. Honorary Members shall have no voice in the management of the Club, but otherwise shall have all the rights and benefits of ordinary members.

XI.—No change shall be made on the Rules except at a general meeting of the members, called on seven days' notice. Intimation of any proposed change must be made in the notice calling such meeting, and any alteration proposed shall only be adopted if voted for by at least three-fourths of the members present at the meeting.

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