

Vol. IV.

January, 1905.

No. 24.

THE
Cairngorm Club Journal.

EDITED BY

ALEX. INKSON M'CONNOCHIE.

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THE
Cairngorm Club Journal

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VOL. IV.

ABERDEEN
THE CAIRNGORM CLUB
1905

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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 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.



Photo by

GLEN SANNOX.

H. C. Dugan.

THE
Cairngorm Club Journal.

Vol. IV.

JANUARY, 1905.

No. 24.

BEINN EIGHE.

BY A. L. BAGLEY.

THIS interesting quartzite mountain, the dominating feature of the Kinlochewe valley, is rather a mountain range than a single hill. Although it dominates Kinlochewe, and presents a fine appearance thereto, yet only a small portion of it, the north-eastern spur, is visible from the village of Kinlochewe. This spur, I think, is barely 3000 feet in height, and appears to possess no distinctive appellation. I suppose it is reckoned part of Sgurr Ban, but, in my opinion, it deserves a name of its own.

If the intending climber walks from Kinlochewe a few miles along the Torridon road to reconnoitre his mountain, he will be surprised at the long ridge of white quartzite which gradually unfolds itself behind this nameless spur. From about the middle of this ridge rises the peak of Sgurr Ban (3188), looking at first sight like a snow-capped Alpine peak, especially when the quartz is glistening in the sun. Half a mile beyond Sgurr Ban is another peak of just 3000 feet, but I believe nameless; almost due north of Sgurr Ban, and separated from it by a considerable dip, is a hill of somewhat lesser height, sufficiently individualised to merit a name, although, if it have one, my map knows it not. About a couple of miles further west are the twin summits of Sail Mhor (3217) and Ruadh Stac Mhor (3309), with the deep hollow of the Coire Mhic Fhearchair, and the little loch rejoicing in the same

euphonious appellation, lying between them. All this aggregation of peaks is comprehended in the generic, all-embracing name of Beinn Eighe, though, to the unscientific eye, they would appear to divide into at least four separate and individual mountains. Ruadh Stac Mhor is the culminating point of the range; but while both it and Sail Mhor exceed Sgurr Ban in height, each, I think, is inferior to the latter in beauty and interest, although, as I attained not unto either of them, I cannot speak with authority thereon. I was undecided whether to walk along the Torridon road, and thence make straight for Sgurr Ban, or whether to attack the nameless spur, to which I have alluded, and which presents a great white face, looking quite sheer, towards Kinlochewe and Loch Maree. I finally decided upon the latter course, thinking that it would be interesting to proceed along the whole ridge. It was.

I left that comfortable hostelry, the Kinlochewe Hotel, at 8.30 a.m., and took the path which leaves the Loch Maree road just before the first burn, and strikes up the hills between Sgurr Ban and Meall a' Ghuibhais. I followed this path until I was about opposite the aforesaid white face. I had left it for circumstances to decide whether I should ascend the northern or southern ridge of the spur, thinking that the face itself was far too sheer. However, as I left the path and approached more closely to the face, it appeared, though undoubtedly very steep, still feasible, and finally I decided to strike straight up it. I very soon repented of this decision, but, having decided upon my plan of action, I stuck to it doggedly. It was, however, a far stiffer job than I had bargained for. The whole of this face—indeed, the whole of the upper regions of Sgurr Ban, except for an occasional outcrop of granite—consists of quartzite scree at a very severe angle. I hate screes at any time, but quartz screes are of all screes the most hateful. It was a magnificent, but very hot, day in early June; the rays of an almost tropical sun were reflected with peculiar intensity from the glaring white débris around me; the process of picking one's way up a

severe slope of loose razor-edged bits of quartz, constantly slipping back, and vainly clutching at other loose bits to save oneself, was agonising, heartrending. At length I reached the summit of this easternmost point of the mountain at 11.40 a.m., and was rather disgusted to find that there was no cairn, and that I had had that awful scramble for the sake of a nameless, cairnless point, which apparently did not quite reach 3000 feet. However, I set off gaily enough along the ridge for Sgurr Ban, imagining that only an easy promenade lay between me and the summit cone. In a few minutes I reached a great pile of rocks, and, climbing up these, found a sheer drop on the far side. Being merely a humble hill-walker, and not one of those climbing acrobats of whose wondrous feats we occasionally read with respectful awe, the descent thereof appeared to me impossible; so I had to come down again on the near side, pick my weary way round various shoulders of Sgurr Ban, and finally repeat the heartrending scramble up another steep quartz scree to the summit. I felt very much inclined to give it up, but, whatever betide, I felt that I must attain the summit, and stuck to it grimly until at length I reached the cairn of Sgurr Ban at 1 o'clock.

By this time I was parched with thirst; quartz always seems waterless, and I had had nothing to drink since breakfast at 7.30, except one little drop of water about 10 o'clock, just before I reached the quartz. This spoiled my day altogether. I had hoped to follow the ridge over the nameless peak marked "3000 feet" on the maps, and on to Sail Mhor, and possibly to Ruadh Stac Mhor; this would have made a grand day, and I could have done it easily enough, if only something had been available wherewith to moisten my interior. Also I had heard of some wonderful cliffs in Coire Mhic Fhearchair, which I was particularly anxious to see, but my prospects of beholding them, at any rate on this occasion, seemed remote, and I doubt whether I shall ever again summon up enough energy to tackle Beinn Eighe. I began to be seriously afraid that if I did not get some water very soon I should

collapse, and that was very undesirable. In a huge corrie on the south side of Sgurr Ban I could distinctly see a burn, and as it appeared the nearest place where I was certain of obtaining water, I set off down that awful scree again. It was farther than I had expected, and took me a good—or rather a very bad—hour to reach the water.

Directly after leaving the quartz scree I almost stepped into a tiny well about the size of a coffee cup—a most welcome sight. The author of "Benedicite" remarks in that most interesting book that, "He whose lot is cast amid the civilisation of the West can scarcely realise the feeling of thankfulness with which wells are regarded by the Oriental." On Beinn Eighe the civilisation of the West, amid which my lot seems irretrievably and unfortunately cast, contributed nothing towards the assuagement of my thirst, and I regarded wells, or at least this particular well, with feelings of very real thankfulness. Nor was this the first occasion on which wells evoked similar feelings in my bosom, and I would suggest that after the word "Oriental" in the passage quoted the following words be added—"and by those who disport themselves on Scottish mountains".

For about an hour I lingered in this attractive spot, dallying with my lunch, reluctant to leave the well. When I did at length gird myself up to bid it a fond farewell, I wandered up the corrie for some time in a rather aimless sort of way, for I could hardly make up my mind what to do. When I descended from Sgurr Ban I had given up all hopes of climbing any other peaks, and it certainly seemed hardly worth while, when I had come half-way down the mountain, to retrace the weary way, even if I had time to ascend Sail Mhor, which was very doubtful. On the other hand, it was only just 3 o'clock, and it seemed premature to turn my steps hotelwards, especially as two mighty and unconquered peaks were close at hand. I afterwards found that it was a much longer job to get down the mountain than I had supposed, and, moreover, when I reached the road at the foot thereof there was still a walk of five miles, so that if I had gone

straight down from this beneficent and ever-memorable well I should probably have only reached the hotel in comfortable time for dinner. Knowledge, however, in this world often comes too late. Fortified, too, by copious draughts from the well, with perhaps just the least admixture of mountain dew, I felt like a giant refreshed, and looked with some scorn at the ridge which rose abruptly from the back of the corrie, thinking, in my pride, that I should soon polish off that little lot. The ridge, however, was steeper and longer than it had appeared, and as I toiled slowly up it I felt permeated with regret that I had not gone straight down from the well. When I reached what had appeared to be the top of the ridge this feeling was greatly intensified, for I found that this seeming top was only a sort of shelf or ledge, and before me stretched once more a steep and glittering expanse of that hateful quartz scree. I know not why I was foolish enough to go on, for it was hardly possible now to reach Sail Mhor or any other summit, unless I meant to spend a great part of the night on the mountain, but I can never endure to turn back half-way up an ascent, unless compelled by some very strong reason, so I stuck to it doggedly and grimly. At any rate, I thought, I shall reach the top marked 3000 feet, and in the inmost recesses of my heart I believe I was even then not altogether without hopes of reaching Sail Mhor. I had still a few sandwiches left, and, although I did not mean to remain on the hills all night, it would not matter if I did not get back to the hotel until late. There were no feminine belongings there to worry about me, which is one of the inestimable privileges of single blessedness. It was early in June, and would not be dark even at midnight, as a full moon would be turned full on for my particular benefit. Wherefore, for the third time that day, I struggled disgustedly, but doggedly, up a very steep slope of quartzite scree.

When I reached the top, words utterly fail to express my disgust. I found myself on a pile of granite rocks, which formed a sort of natural cairn. The actual cairn, the summit marked 3000 feet, was only a few yards away,

and not many feet higher than the rock on which I sat, but it was separated hopelessly from me by a deep cleft in the ridge, and appeared to be attainable only by a long détour over the hateful scree. Looking towards Sail Mhor, I was obliged to admit that it was now too late to tackle it, as there was a big dip between us; it would probably take me at least an hour to reach the col, and then there was a long and weary climb to the summit; it must have been at least three miles from where I sat to the cairn of Sail Mhor, which I could just faintly distinguish against the sky, and every step would be taking me farther away from the hotel, where a bath, dinner, cooling drinks, and other Sybaritic luxuries were awaiting me. If I attempted to go on I could hardly reach the hotel before the small hours of the morning, and although, as I remarked just now, I have no feminine belongings to worry about me, still I felt that my non-appearance at dinner would be a source of great anxiety to good Mrs. Macdonald, my amiable hostess, as I had hitherto never been known to miss that festival, though I had occasionally been somewhat late. Also there was another party staying at the hotel, which included three ladies; these ladies had taken much kind interest in my little expeditions, and each night at dinner used to ask where I had been, and what I had done, and how I had fared, in a manner that was most grateful and comforting to a lonely male creature, even to one who does hug himself on his single blessedness. This is hardly an appropriate place for misogynistic reflections, otherwise I might remark that women are satisfactory enough—as a rule and speaking generally, that is—unless or until they belong to you; then their sweetness is apt to vanish. Possession kills the sweet illusion. However, I was going to observe that I feared if I did not turn up at dinner, nor during the evening, that these three ladies would experience much anxiety on my account. Truth compels me to admit that they seem to have endured the uncertainty as to my fate with much fortitude.

Anyhow I gave up all further ambitions, for that day

at any rate, in the mountaineering line; my only ambition now was to get back to the hotel, and to reach those luxuries just enumerated as soon as I possibly could. So I turned away from *Sail Mhor* and *Ruadh Stac Mhor*, which seemed to grin at me derisively, and went straight down. A glissade down the steep quartz scree played havoc with my boots, a pair of faithful old friends, which had seen much service in various parts of these islands; a long day on the *Coolins* a week later completely finished them off, and with much regret I bestowed them upon *Boots* at the *Sligachan Hotel*, but fear from his manner that he regarded them with a lack of enthusiasm.

After leaving the quartzite, which I did with devout thankfulness, I found that the rest of the descent was longer and rougher than I had quite anticipated. I met with nothing sensational and no real difficulties, but the way was rough and tiresome, and possibly I was getting a bit tired. I was also getting thirsty again, and was constrained to halt more than once at sundry infant burns. Altogether the descent was not accomplished in record time, and it was nearly 8 o'clock when at length I reached the road at the foot of the mountain, about five miles from *Kinlochewe*, and 9.30 when I entered the hotel.

Beinn Eighe is the only quartzite mountain which I have ascended, and if all quartzite mountains are girt about with screes of the same kind as those encompassing the peak of *Sgurr Ban*, I can only say that, fond as I am of Scotland and of Scottish mountains, I never want to ascend another. After a good clean-up and an excellent dinner, I almost succeeded in persuading myself that I had enjoyed the day. I had been thirteen hours absent; it had been one of the longest and hardest days that I had ever had, and the greater part of the day had been spent in toiling laboriously up and down successive quartz screes, and for all this expenditure of energy, I had only the solitary peak of *Sgurr Ban* to show as trophy.

THE TULCHAN HILLS.

BY REV. GEORGE C. WATT, B.D.

It cannot be said that the name of Tulchan is unfamiliar. The royal visits to Tulchan Lodge have made the name well known to the general public. But while most newspaper readers know the name of Tulchan, the Tulchan hills themselves are, I fancy, not specially well known, save of course to sportsmen and shepherds. I have crossed them often; I have on different occasions traversed them from end to end, but only on one occasion, and that years ago, have I met any one upon them. On that occasion one of my sons and I met a party of three hill climbers, so we were five in all, a quite unwonted assembly on these heights. The Tulchans are fairly high hills, roughly between 1700 and 1800 feet, but they are not so high as to attract the lover of great mountains seeking a new scene for putting forth his energies, nor are they so steep and rugged as to invite the attention of those who like a spice of danger in their climbing. They are not wooded hills now, although I have found traces of old woods on them; but yet they are fine hills from which one has splendid views, and where the climber can spend hours in wandering without undue fatigue from summit to summit. They are within a few miles of my home, and when I cannot get away to the great mountains I find that they afford a wonderfully pleasing substitute. A rather bright little boy of the wandering class to whom I once gave a halfpenny to buy a "piece", remarking that I was sorry I had not a penny, observed, "A ha'penny's aye a ha'penny". It was a sage remark, and in the spirit of it I may say, "A hill is always a hill". Time has been when I have climbed with considerable delight the Broad Hill at Aberdeen and played at its being a mountain. If one cannot get Cairngorm it is something to get Cairn Kitty.

The Tulchan Hills, if one is to speak very precisely, are of course just the hills between which the Tulchan burn flows. But these hills themselves form part of an elevated tract of country, roughly triangular in form, whose southern angle may be said to be about Easter Dellifure in Cromdale, two miles east by north of Castle Grant, whose eastern angle is well towards Black's Boat in Knockando, and whose northern angle is just north of Loch Dallas, through which the boundary between Edinkillie and Dallas passes. From south to north this elevated tract extends for about ten miles, while its breadth at its broadest part is about seven miles. The longest side of the triangle is the western one. To this elevated tract, with its many summits, it is customary and convenient to give the name of the Tulchans or Tulchan Hills. The Tulchan range is, I fancy, an extension towards the north or north-east of the Monadh Liadhs, with which it is connected by the high land lying east and south of Lochandorb. It is largely the watershed between Spey and Divie, but it contains also the sources of the Lossie, which takes its rise in Loch Trevie, a lakelet in the northern portion of the range.

Perhaps the best view of this hilly region can be got from the top of the Knock of Braemoray, but it can be seen to much advantage from many other points in Edinkillie. A very delightful view is to be had from the side of the Highland Railway at the Divie Viaduct, which is a mile or so south from Dunphail station. There one looks up the valley of the Divie, with its abundance of graceful birches, and over the quaint old Bridge of Bantrach, beloved of artists, over one or two upland farms, to the range of heathy slopes, rising up, not indeed into rocky heights, but into softly swelling rounded summits. On an October day, with the rich colours of autumn on the trees in the foreground and in the background, the fine chain of hills standing out clearly against the eastern sky, one could wish no fairer sight. I am a lover of great hills, and no hill of the Tulchan group reaches to the height of quite 1800 feet. Yet there is a grace about the range as

seen from the west that always fascinates me, and that no familiarity renders less attractive. And when the heather is in bloom, and the mountain sides are rich with its purple glow, one approaching them would have a dull eye indeed were he blind to the beauty before him.

There are many routes by which access to these hills can be had. One very good way of approaching them is from Advie station on the Great North of Scotland Railway. Quite near this station there is a bridge across the Spey, and one has only to cross this bridge and make his way to the Tulchan burn, which falls into the Spey a little below it, and begin his ascent. The burn—a picturesque rapid streamlet, coursing down its rocky bed—is itself a sufficient guide, but there is a track right along the side of it up to its sources. On the north side of this burn towers the fine hill known as the Larig, 1783 feet high, its sides gashed and scarred by winter torrents. One may, of course, select the point from which he would prefer to ascend this hill, but it is best to go right to the head of the burn before doing so. By going to the head of the burn one is on a kind of plateau, from which one can conveniently visit several of the summits. The ordinary climber will not find it hard to visit at least the Larig and Carn Ruigh-an-uain, and to return to Advie station in four or five hours. Living as I do in Edinkillie, I usually make my ascents from the westward, although I have climbed them from the other side on many occasions. One coming from Dunphail station, and passing near Edinkillie manse, would find the way to the hills a trifle long perhaps—it is about four miles—but there are houses along the route, and one can consequently get directions how to go. After proceeding from the station about a mile on the road to Grantown one turns sharply to the left, passes under the Divie Viaduct, goes past the farms of Beachans and Dallasbraughty, turns to the right, keeps on past the high-lying farm of Tomcork and the moorland farm of Berryburn, and finds oneself at the foot of the range. The road ends at Berryburn, but there are paths leading up through the glen, of which Cairn Kitty forms the southern side.

This is a heathery glen, with one or two lochans, leading to Loch Trevie; one does not need to go as far as this tarn, but I often do so, and climb the hill from its side. Cairn Kitty is 1711 feet high, and three parishes, Dallas, Edin-killie, and Knockando, meet on its summit. There is a fine view from the top of Cairn Kitty. Ben Rinnes, one of the most conspicuous of our northern mountains, is seen towering away to the south of east, and ranging north from it the Convals and Ben-Aigan are in full view. Looking westward one has before him the Knock of Braemora, the Cawdor and other Nairnshire hills, and the lovely valley of the Divie. To the north he has the Moray Firth and the hills beyond it, not to speak of the lochs and the lower heights which are close at hand. Near the top of Cairn Kitty the cloud-berry is fairly abundant.

From the summit of Cairn Kitty it is a walk of nearly two miles to that of the Larig, from which also there is a fine and somewhat different view. One looks well down the Tulchan glen to the valley of the Spey, and on among more distant hills, one of which is, I think, Corryhabbie. One evening in the past autumn I was on the top of the Larig when the sun went down over the Nairnshire hills. It was somewhat cloudy in the west, and there were no brilliant hues of sunset, but there was a certain grandeur in the great red disc as it sank away amid the vapours. Fortunately the moon was up before the sun went down, for the surface of the plateau, although not rocky, is rough and broken, and walking in the dark would have been sufficiently disagreeable, not to speak of the uncertainty of it all. It is told of a worthy Edin-killie man long ago that, having lost his way in these hills, and having wandered about all night, he found himself early in the morning beside a cottage, and asked the mistress, an early riser evidently, where he was. "Ye're jist here, sir", was the laconic and truthful, if somewhat unsatisfying, reply.

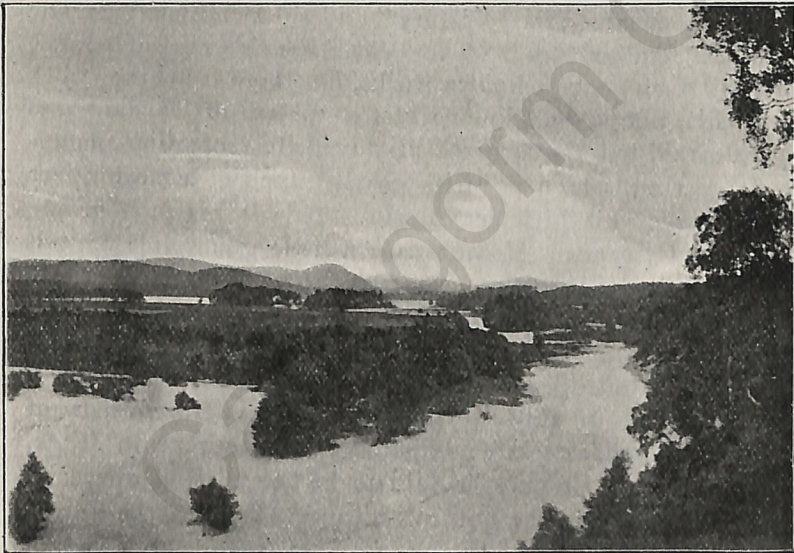
From the top of the Larig one should pass to the top of Carn Ruigh-an-uain (1784 feet), about two miles to the south-west. From this hill top there is a splendid outlook,

both on Speyside and on the Divie Valley. Between the Larig and Carn Ruigh-an-uain is a fine little mountain tarn known as the Black Loch. It is upon the eastern side of the watershed, and lies in a deep basin whose sides are somewhat rocky. It is somewhat hidden, and one coming upon it suddenly is almost startled as he looks down the steep sides of the hollow at the little pear-shaped sheet of apparently very dark water. The water may be really clear, but lying as the loch does in a deep basin among the hills it quite justifies its name.

From Carn Ruigh-an-uain it is well to continue one's walk southward to another summit, which is not named on Bartholomew's map, but from which also there is a fine prospect, and thence to the top of Carn-an-loin (1798 feet), from which one has the finest view of all. From this summit one sees, looking eastward, Ben Rinnes, the hills about Corryhabbie, and, just across the Spey, the fine Cromdale Hills. Looking westward he has before him the Monadh Liadhs and many nearer hills which are connected with them, while turning to the south he has, as it were, beneath his feet Carn-an-Fhradhairc (1648 feet) with its twin cairns, the fine country around Grantown, rich in field and forest, and a long stretch of the Spey coming gliding southward by the green haughs of Cromdale. It is a stretch of miles over rough uplands from Cairn Kitty to Carn-an-loin, but the long rough way is more than compensated for as one looks out on the grandly diversified scene which spreads itself out before him from the latter summit.

I have never continued my walk over the hill tops beyond Carn-an-loin, which is the highest of the Tulchans, but it would doubtless be pleasant to do so, and to descend at only a few miles from Grantown. Meantime I have written of the Tulchans just as I know them, and I commend them to all who love little-beaten tracks, pure air, and views of things grand and beautiful. And, in closing, I must not forget to say that from many points in these hills there may be seen towering in all their grandeur the magnificent masses of the Cairngorms. I

remember one most glorious view. I had walked up the Tulchan burn from Advie one autumn evening, and being in the hollow had not an extended view. But when I had just come out into the open there suddenly burst on my sight all the great summits, quite free from mist and cloud and, in their deep purple, clear cut against the evening sky. I had yet miles of rough walking, but that splendid vision sent me home rejoicing. Such visions ever make the Tulchans delightful.



THE SPEY AT LOCH INSH.

Photo by

D. Levack.

A CAIRNGORM CLASSIC.

BY GEORGE DUNCAN.

THE name of John Hill Burton is a familiar one to Scotsmen who take an interest in the history of their country. By Aberdonians his name should be especially remembered as that of perhaps the most distinguished member of the Aberdeen group of historical scholars, of which other hardly less notable members were Joseph Robertson and George Grub. His "History" and such volumes as "The Book Hunter" and "The Scot Abroad" are, of course, Hill Burton's best-known works, but there is another work of his, not so well known, not a volume of learning and research, but the fruit of his favourite recreation, mountaineering, which is in its way as much of a masterpiece as any of his historical works. This is his monograph, "The Cairngorm Mountains", a little green volume, not very often met with nowadays, the comparative scarcity of which may possibly be a sufficient excuse for the following pages.

"The Cairngorm Mountains" was published by Messrs. Blackwood in 1864. To a large extent it consists of a retouched article contributed by the author to *Maga*, in 1847, and it may be said to be the earliest approach to something of the nature of a guide book to the Cairngorms. It is somewhat unfair, however, so to describe it. The mention of a mountaineering guide book nowadays suggests the notion of a formidable classification of routes and an exact measurement of distances and heights—the notion, in short, of something which, while it may be scientific, is certainly not literature; and he who expects detailed information on such matters will not go to Hill Burton's work for it. His work is something altogether different from and higher than a mere guide book: it is a bit of fine literature, a book that may be read and re-read with pleasure for its literary form alone.

Hill Burton is, indeed, somewhat impatient of guides,

whether in book or human form, and his work opens with an amusing story of a dream, of which a guide was the efficient cause. He had walked one day up the valley of Lauterbrunnen, and had then climbed the Wengern Alp. Next day he was on the Grindelwald glacier. Surely there was nothing in all this, he says, to call up the dreariest recollections of bygone days. Yet so it was—his dreams were crowded with reminiscences of petty persecutions of his school life, “endured under a hard, irritable pedagogue, who made his own life and the lives of all who came about him miserable”. This curious phenomenon had its cause. He had on this occasion, “for the first time in a life of many rambles, put himself, along with two hapless companions, under the jurisdiction of a *guide*”. The suffering of spirit then endured from “the bondage of guide-hood” made him vow that some day, when he had leisure, he would lift his testimony against the extension of the system of voluntary slavery to guides that is rooted “among the hapless class of persons denominated Tourists”, and he offers his work as an inducement to the rambler to shake himself free of guidance, to “take his feet in his hands”, and step forth independently on his wanderings. It is interesting to compare this early plea for freedom with the modern aspirations for guide-less climbing on the part of such writers as Mr. Mummery.

Comparison may be odious, but it is a valuable medium of explanation, and our author therefore proceeds to “set off” the merits of the Cairngorms by comparing them with Ben Nevis. He gives a description of an ascent of that mountain from Fort-William, in the course of which he descants on hill-walking generally and gives several useful hints to climbers. At the top he had an interesting meeting with a number of the staff of the Ordnance Survey, “with red coats, dark grey trousers, and fatigue caps”, engaged in the survey of the mountain. It was then undetermined whether Ben Nevis or Ben Muich Dhui was entitled to the premier place among the Scottish mountains, and it was this survey that settled the question and awarded the palm to the western Ben.

Burton pronounces Ben Nevis to be "in all respects a highly meritorious hill", but he finds stronger charms in Ben Muich Dhui. In a fine passage, he describes that mountain as standing apart from the everyday world in mysterious grandeur. The depth and remoteness of the solitude, he says, the huge mural precipices, the deep chasms between the rocks, the waterfalls of unknown height, the hoary remains of the primeval forest, the fields of eternal snow, and the deep black lakes at the foot of the precipices, are full of such associations of awe and grandeur and mystery as no other scenery in Britain is capable of arousing.

This enthusiastic admiration of the scenery of the Cairngorms, which will be readily sympathised with by all who have climbed these grand mountains and explored their wild and lonely recesses, forms the key-note of Hill Burton's volume. He proceeds to give some account of various excursions he has had among them, expressing, by the way, the opinion, now generally held, that the scenery of the range is most easily hit from the valley of the Spey, and he starts by describing the general view of the Cairngorms from the top of the lower hills between the Dee and Glen Lui. Into that long grassy glen, where everything is peace and softness, he then descends. Here, he says, "banks, lofty, but round and smooth, intervene to hide the summits of the mountains. The stream is not stagnant, but it flows on with a gentle current, sometimes through sedge or between grassy banks; elsewhere, edged by a beach of the finest yellow sand. The water is beautifully transparent, and even where it is deepest you may count the shining pebbles below. A few weeping birches, here and there, hang their graceful, disconsolate ringlets almost into the stream; the grass is as smooth as a shaven lawn". The meeting of Glen Lui Beg and Glen Derry is next reached, and the route to Ben Muich Dhui by the former of these glens is described. Loch Etchachan he compares with the lake near the Hospice of the Grimsel. Both scenes are alike "hard, leafless, and frozen-like", but, while the Alpine pass is one of the highways of

Europe, "few are the travellers that pass the edge of Loch Etchachan".

The scene at the summit of Ben Muich Dhui is picturesquely described in all its aspects—the startling proximity of the neighbouring mountains, the huge precipices of Braeriach, and the apparently endless expanse of hill-tops in the distance—and the climber is then taken to Loch Avon, by way of the Feith Bhuidhe burn, that "rumbling, irregular, unmeasured cataract" which tumbles down from Ben Muich Dhui to the loch. The mention of Loch Avon reminds Hill Burton of his old friend, the Ettrick Shepherd, with whom he had a standing feud about its extent. The Shepherd would have it that Loch Avon was twenty miles in length! His views on the subject were, however, by no means fixed. They formed, indeed, "a sort of guage of the Shepherd's spirits. In his sombre moments he appeared to doubt if he were quite correct in insisting that the length was twenty miles; when he was in high spirits he would not abate an inch of thirty". Loch Avon, Burton says, is like a fragment of the Alps imported and set down in Scotland. For his own part, he prefers the Pools of Dee and the Larig as a more peculiar and original piece of scenery, but he admits that to tourists in general Loch Avon may appear the finest feature in the Cairngorms. An Alpine devotee, he says, might realise, if he went there in winter, all the dangers, excitements, and phenomena of any of the great Alpine feats!

One or two experiences of climbs on Ben Muich Dhui are recounted by the author with great humour—one, in particular, when, losing his way, he was benighted on the hill-side, and ultimately found shelter for the night somewhere in Glen Avon, in a bothy built of the bent roots of pine trees and covered with turf. The sole article of furniture in the bothy was a trough, in which a drover, whom he had fallen in with, presented him with a supper of oatmeal and water. After supper, he fell asleep, only to be shortly afterwards wakened up by the entrance of ten other men of mysterious and surly aspect, talking Gaelic,

mingled with considerable swearing in the Scottish vernacular. They seemed to be either smugglers or poachers. All got to sleep somehow under the turf shelter, and there our author left them "in full snore" at sunrise!

An excursion to the Larig Ghru forms an interesting section of the book. In contradiction to what is now the accepted doctrine, Hill Burton adopts the Larig burn and not the Garchory stream as the main head-water of the Dee. He admits that authority is against him, but pleads that the Larig contains a greater volume of water, is more in the line of the glen, and does not join the Garchory in these great leaps which, "however surprising and worthy of admiration they may be in themselves, are not quite consistent with the calm dignity of a river destined to pass close to a university town".

For the scenery of the Larig, Hill Burton has unmeasured admiration. The scenery is entirely unlike any other part of Scotland, or any place one can see elsewhere. He compares it with Glencoe, but, grand and impressive as Glencoe is, it has no defiles so narrow as the Larig, and no precipices so grand as the wall of Braeriach.

The great water-runs that score the sides of the Larig—"trenches some forty or fifty feet deep, appearing as if they were made with a gigantic ploughshare"—recall the floods of 1829, and the awful experiences which the inhabitants of Upper Deeside had on the night of the 3rd of August in that year, when the old bridge at Ballater was swept away, and unspeakable damage was done along the whole course of the river. The author quotes the well-known passage in "The Deeside Guide", by James Brown—the *nom de plume* of his friend Joseph Robertson—in which the calamities of Ballater are vividly described, and he gives a number of interesting incidents of the floods which fell within his own knowledge.

In the concluding portion of his little volume, Hill Burton again takes up his parable, not only against guides and their "auxiliaries and accomplices", but also against other cognate systems of slavery. We are in all things, he says, too dutiful and laborious. "Perhaps it

is part of the great compensatory principle of the world's government that, along with our political freedom, we should be infested with a multitude of conventional slaveries of our own making and maintaining, from which countries where there is less political liberty are free". Mountain guides and guidedom are, however, his special abomination, and, as illustrating the domination of the idea that one must always have a guide to strange places, he tells with great glee a story of a Chancery barrister of high standing—a man "steeped in all acquired and conventional accomplishments"—who, on one occasion, while on a visit to Edinburgh, asked him for a recommendation to "a steady guide to Arthur Seat".

There are many excellent stories in the book, full of that humour which might be expected from the author of "The Book Hunter", but further quotation would only spoil the readers' enjoyment of the volume as a whole. Those whom these pages may induce to peruse it for the first time will find it to be a classic—one of those works that are to be read not once, but often.

BY LOCH AN EILEIN.

Here is the feast of beauty—take your fill ;
Not yet the blinding mists may wander down,
Nor the grave heights put on their snowy crown,
The dread, white symbol of their royal will.

Yet swift the purple glow on every hill
Fades amid bronze and russet-gold to brown,
And Loch an Eilein meets the royal frown
With the clear gaze of childhood, blue and still.

Come feast while yet undimmed the glory shines,
Come while earth revels with her festive throng,
Where wind and water join in silver song,
Where all unstinted flow the nectar-wines—
Cool air of mountains, breath of fragrant pines—
Drink deep, for joy is in the cup, drink long !

G. M. FAULDING.

[From the *Westminster Gazette*.]

EARL'S SEAT.

BY REV. A. GORDON MITCHELL.

ON 9th August, accompanied by Rev. Mr. Scrymgeour, of the Presbyterian Church, Jersey, I set out for Earl's Seat, the highest of the Campsie Fells (1894). The morning was bright and promising, the air sharp and exhilarating; and although the sky was by no means cloudless, the country was flooded with almost uninterrupted sunshine. Proceeding for some hundred yards or so along that portion of the Balfron road now known locally as the King's Mile from the fact that our gracious King, when Prince of Wales, drove backwards and forwards there for some time admiring the view of Loch Lomond and the heights that form the sky-line beyond it, we left the high road and struck across country to the south. The first part of the walk was easy, being over hay stubble and grass. We paused a moment to admire the floral symbol of our native land as abundantly represented in one of the fields through which we passed. Its "bush of spears", its purple crown of such exquisite softness and beauty, its capacity for disseminating its species over the earth by means of its flying "down" mark it out as a singularly appropriate emblem of a country noted for the valour of its men, the beauty of its women, and the ubiquity of its children. It was no doubt bad farming, but true patriotic sentiment, that made Robert Burns turn "the weeder-clips aside and spare "the emblem dear". Safely escaping from "barbed wire entanglement", we came upon a group of Scots fir, the grass being dotted with a few flowers of the scabious and ragged robin species. Then passing through a field very much overgrown with rushes, we swerved slightly to the east to avoid a field of oats. Emerging from a field in which I noticed the yarrow in flower, we began our tramp through the blooming heather, in which for some distance we waded almost knee-deep. I called the attention

of my friend to the recumbent giant of the Garlocks, as the portion of the Campsie range now before us is locally called. The conspicuous little eminence of Dumgoyne is a little way from the feet of the giant.

One thing that struck us was the scarcity of bird-life. The grouse were sitting close, as if aware of the proximity of the 12th, with its guns and shooters; and we saw not a single covey. We came upon a deserted nest littered with the remains of the sucked eggs. Our eyes were attracted to a pretty little water-course, of which the bright living green was relieved by a border of maroon-coloured moss. We now reached Machar Glen, and having descended into it, were soon fording the waters of the beautiful Machar Burn. On the east a number of little glens, densely wooded, dip down to their junction with the valley of the main stream. Looking up the burn we saw the water of the Spout of Calibae gleaming in the sun. The Machar Glen terminates in a striking cup-like depression, luxuriantly wooded. Having crossed the burn that trots so winsomely over its mossy stones through its glen of birch and hazel, we got into talk about the remarkable absence of birds. This led to Mr. Scrymgeour's saying that the mavis in Jersey has a much richer, fuller note and a more rapturous song than his brother in this country. It has struck me that in turn his note is richer here than in the Orkneys, where I was for some time a minister. Having ascended the eastern slope we looked down on the sun-flooded glen. The twinkle of the birchen foliage contrasted with the quiet green of the hazel. The former reminded one of the "*ἀνὰριθμον γέλασμα*" of the classic poet. The birch appeared to receive the kiss of the sun with exuberant joy. The hazel received it with joy equally deep and genuine, but more sober and sedate. Continuing our walk over the moor we raised at intervals three brace of grouse. Passing over a wide expanse of burnt heather we got fairly into the upland pasture. My foot sank (and a good part of my leg) into a sheep-drain, but I was none the worse of the consequent fall. The same thing happened to me twice thereafter before the con-

clusion of our walk, but with no bad results. Our climb now began in earnest, and, after ascending some little way, we were glad to rest beside a mountain stream and open our parcel of sandwiches. The view on which our eyes now rested is more easily seen than described. Looking northward over Strathendrick our prospect was bounded by "Scotland's northern battlement of hills". We remarked on the excellence of the pasture of the slopes, and our eyes rested for a while on the undulating pastoral scenery in the foreground—rank grass mingled with rushes, shorter grass, some of it bleached, and here and there patches of living green. The Endrick was for the most part concealed in its valley, emerging for a short distance into view as it approached the loch. Directly north of us lay Balfroon village. Fine masses and belts of plantation diversified the aspect of the strath. A little to the north-east rose the towers of Ballikinrain, the seat of Sir A. E. Orr-Ewing, surrounded by the splendid wood planted by Sir Archibald's father. To the north-west we had a fine view of Buchanan Castle, near the loch side, the seat of the Duke of Montrose. Resuming our ascent we were soon walking over an extensive plateau, where there is a remarkable deposit of peat. Directly to the south of us rose a ridge running up a slight eminence at its eastern extremity. We climbed this eminence, and then did a little mild ridge-climbing. Proceeding eastward, leaping over peat bogs when practicable, and going round them when not, we walked over three undulating ridges, the middle one marked by a cairn. We raised a single grouse, its partner rising a little later on; and saw our first and only whaup. I observed specimens of a plant similar to one I saw in flower last June upon Mount Tinto. The flower is like that of wild strawberry. The autumnal-tinted leaves reminded us of those of the vine. There is nothing striking about the summit of Earl's Seat, on which we were soon seated. It is a gradual grassy slope marked by a cairn. East and west along the crest of it runs a wire fence, and stretching up the northern slope is the march fence between the Boquhan

and Ballikinrain estates. We had now leisure to survey the extensive prospect which we commanded. To the south lay Glasgow, of which we could make out little more than the University spire and a forest of chimney stalks, standing out black against a heavy and widespread pall of smoke. The horizon, however, was clear, and, looking over the city, we saw a mountainous outline which we took to be that of the Isle of Arran. To the east we observed the Meikle Bin (1870), the next in height to Earl's Seat of the Campsie Fells. Mr. Scrymgeour thought the distant heights to the east were the Lomonds. From time to time the waters of the Forth glittered in the sun, and we could clearly make out the Alloa Bridge. Further to the west lay the Ochils. The Gargunnoch hills were concealed behind the shoulder of the Fintries. The nearest ridge to the north was that of the Kippen hills. To our right the valley of the Endrick narrowed between the ridges of the Fintries and the Campsie Fells. To the north lay the Lake of Menteith, backed by the Menteith hills, rising to the height of Craigmore (1271). The long, low ridge on the sky-line in the north-east was that of Slymbach. Following the sky-line round the northern to the western horizon we saw the following mountain summits—Uam Var, Ben Gulapin, Craig Dearg, Ben Voirlich, Stuc-a-chroin, Ben Ledi, distant mountains in Glenlyon, Craig Dhu, Ben Venue, Ben A'an, Ben Coira (Loch Ard), Stob-a-choin (north of Loch Katrine), Ben More, Am Binnein, Ben Tulachan, Ben Chroin, Ben Chabhair, Ben Oss, Ben Dhu Chraige, Ben Lui, Ben Lomond, Ben Vrack, Ben Ime, Ben Amon, Ben Arthur, Corrie Hill, Ben Donich, Ben Dubh, Doune Hill, Corrach an Ian, Ben Aich, Ben Verrach, and Ben Torran. Nimmo, in his "History of Stirlingshire" (3rd ed., vol. I., p. 316), says Earl's Seat rests upon sandstone, and is capped with trap. I examined a fragment of the rock. It weathers to a dull red, and the interior is a bluish grey. It is characterised by considerable density. We descended by the "Wee Corrie", the whitish rotten rock of which Mr. Scrymgeour compared to marble. A vast heap of detritus in the middle of the

gully reminded me in appearance of the moraine of a glacier.

Any account of an ascent of Earl's Seat which did not make reference to the view of Loch Lomond from the summit would be incomplete. Other sheets of water one sees—Menteith, Chon, Arklet,—but Loch Lomond is the eye of the landscape, lying there in her majestic expanse, "with all her daughter-islands about her". A striking feature in the neighbourhood to our left as we turned round for a few moments after descending the hill was the Corrie of Balglass, a great semi-circular basin, with apparently precipitous sides.

Reaching the Mount farm we were glad of some milk and biscuits, hospitably provided for us by Mrs. Johnman, wife of the head shepherd. Thence we continued to descend by the farm road, stopping for a little to inspect the remains of the outer wall of Balglass Castle, which is said on one occasion to have sheltered Sir William Wallace. Mr. Scrymgeour mentioned the interesting fact that his family claims to be descended from the Standard-bearer of the immortal hero. Skirting the edge of a wood, and drinking in the delicate fragrance exhaled from flowering limes, we came upon the public road. On our right we passed Old Ballikinrain, where Thomas Carlyle sojourned as the guest of Mrs. Anstruther. The district is not without association with other great men. Napier, the inventor of Logarithms, resided for some time by the side of the Endrick at Gartness. Near the manse of Killearn, where I write, rises an obelisk of millstone to the memory of George Buchanan, a native of this parish. It was dusk by the time we reached Killearn village after a very enjoyable excursion.

THE ABBEY CRAIG.

BY DAVID B. MORRIS.

SHORTLY after the train, on its northward journey, has left Stirling station, the traveller may see, a short distance to the east, a precipitous hill surmounted by a conspicuous tower. The hill is the Abbey Craig, a fitting pedestal for the Wallace Monument, and it is worth while to break the journey to visit it. No mountaineering skill is required for the ascent of the Craig, whose height is but 362 feet, and the paths are pleasant though steep. The hill is, however, a notable one among the lesser heights of Scotland, as it is a place of much historic interest, while the view from the summit is of great extent and beauty.

Geologically, the Abbey Craig is a mass of intrusive basalt which has been thrust along the bedding of the Carboniferous rocks. This probably took place in Tertiary times, and was part of the great outburst of volcanic activity of which we also find evidence in the terraced lavas of Skye, Mull, and other Western Islands. The basalt or ancient lava, of which the Craig consists, was never poured out at the surface, but was thrust along between beds of rock then existing, and consolidated under great pressure. It now presents a steep cliff facing west, with a gradual slope to the east, and its peculiar appearance is due to the influence of denudation upon rock structure. The softer sedimentary rocks which lay above and around the basalt sheet have been worn away, but the basalt, being harder, has resisted denudation. Not only so, but the basalt cap has also protected the softer underlying rocks. If we examine these we find that they dip eastward. The slope of the hill is therefore very much the natural dip of the strata. It follows from this that, as the strata dip east, the cliff will face west. This is the case with Stirling Castle Rock and with most of the other similar crags in the midlands of Scotland. At the base of the

Abbey Craig, the two ancient marine terraces known as the 100 feet and 50 feet raised beaches may be well seen. When the 100 feet terrace was the sea beach, the Craig was an island, and at the later stage, when the 50 feet beach marked the limits of the sea, it was a rocky promontory on the northern shore of the old Firth of Forth. Immediately opposite, on the southern shore, Stirling Castle Rock formed a similar promontory, and as the waves washed westward as far as Gartmore, sixteen miles away, the tides must have run strong through the narrows between the Abbey Craig and the Castle Rock. This would have made a splendid site for a prehistoric Forth Bridge, but the human inhabitants of the time were content to paddle about in their canoes, formed of hollowed oaks, while the whales, whose remains are now frequently found in the clays of the carse, disported themselves in the water.

From the days of the Neolithic men, whose rude horn implements have been found beside whale skeletons at the base of the hill, the scene of stirring events in the national history has never been far from the Abbey Craig. On its summit stood an ancient British hill fort, whose protecting mounds encircling the hill-top from cliff to cliff can be seen to the present day. What events occurred here, how the Caledonian watched from his perch the marching Roman legions in the plain below, what strife of contending Picts and Scots took place, who can say?

The Abbey Craig receives its name from the Abbey of Cambuskenneth, whose mouldering remains lie in a loop of the river Forth to the South. The Abbey was founded about the year 1147 by David the First, who established so many religious houses throughout Scotland. The Abbey was appropriated for monks of the order of St. Augustine, and was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Many events of great importance took place within its walls. The building suffered very severely at the Reformation, and now only the tower is standing, while a few fragments of stone work and the foundations of walls and pillars give an idea of the extent of the original structure. At the high altar were buried the remains of James III., who

was murdered at Milton Mill after the Battle of Sauchieburn, and his tomb was restored by the late Queen Victoria in memory of her ancestor.

But the Abbey Craig is specially memorable as the scene of Sir William Wallace's great exploit, when he overthrew the English at the Battle of Stirling Bridge in 1297. There is some doubt as to the exact site of the bridge, which was destroyed at the battle. Tradition has placed it at Kildean, about a mile westward of the town, but it seems now to be established that the ancient bridge stood at or very near the site of the present old bridge, which was erected to replace it. Wallace had his army posted on and behind the Abbey Craig, where their numbers would be hidden from the English. A stone near the top of the hill is pointed out as the spot where the Scottish hero watched the movements of the enemy and timed the decisive stroke. The English army were in the act of crossing the bridge, which was narrow and frail, and half their number had assembled on the northern bank when the Scots rushed from their hiding place and overwhelmed them. Their friends on the southern shore could render no help, and the bridge became so crowded that it fell, and many English were drowned. The slaughter was great, and the immediate effect of the victory was to secure the independence of Scotland, until it was finally established at Bannockburn in 1314.

The Abbey Craig at the present time is thickly planted with trees except on the highest parts, and is laid out with beautiful winding paths. The western face is a perpendicular cliff formed of basaltic columns. At the base of the cliff lie great masses of rocks which have become detached from the columns above and fallen. The Craig is very rich in wild flowers. Along the edge of the cliff grow the rockrose (*Helianthemum vulgare*) and the Viscid Campion (*Lychnis viscaria*), while among the rocks below may be found the Deadly Nightshade (*Atropa Belladonna*). The view from the summit is very extensive. The Grampians are outlined against the Western sky, including Ben Lomond, the Cobbler, Ben Venue, Ben

Ledi, Am Binnein, Ben More, and Ben Voirlich. The green Ochils lie to the North, the Campsie Fells to the South-West, and in the South-east may be seen the distant Pentlands. In the valley below, the silvery Forth threads its winding course, doubling and bending like a gigantic serpent.

On the summit of the Craig stands the National Wallace Monument. It is in the form of a Scottish baronial tower, surmounted by a crown, and is 220 feet high. The Monument is a magnificent piece of work, and, though it may be doubted if Wallace needed any such structure to keep alive his memory in the hearts of his countrymen, there can be no question that the Monument is a fine one. It was erected by public subscription at the cost of £18,000, and was opened in September, 1869. Inside are preserved a number of relics, and one chamber is set apart as a "Hall of Heroes", where busts of eminent Scotsmen are gathered together.

The Abbey Craig is no lonely mountain peak which only the stout climber may hope to reach. It is one of the most frequently visited hills in Scotland in the holiday season, yet it is a spot of rare beauty, where much may be quietly learned of nature and her ways. From no other point can the topography, particularly the relations of the hill groups of central Scotland, be so well studied, while all who have a true love for their country will wish to visit a place which has been the scene of such great events in the national life. For these reasons I would commend the Abbey Craig to the members of the Cairngorm Club.

THREE VISITS TO THE GARBH COIRE.

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

“THREE VISITS” I have written, but, as will be seen, one of them did not “come off.” But its story may be told here nevertheless. Of the Garbh Coire and of its wild attractions not a little has already been written in this journal and elsewhere. Certainly I know of no bit of Scottish wilderness at once so sternly wild and so strongly attractive. This attractiveness of the upland wilderness seems to me to make appeal to each of the main elements of the human constitution—to the body, to the mind, and to the spirit. There is physical joy in the muscular exertion of the walk and the climb, and in the consciousness of victory over distance and material obstacles; there is a constant demand for accuracy of poise and movement, and a continual and rapid change in eye focus; the breathing of the pure and rarer air is deep, the heart beats strongly; all bodily functions are vigorous, and make for health and development. The mind, *mens sana in corpore sano*, is all alert, and finds its interests in recognising the relation of topographical details, and the geological phenomena of tor, cliff, scree, ravine, moraine-heap; in noting the distribution and limitation of plants, and their modification in adaptation to their environment; in observation of the special and somewhat less abundant forms of animal life, their protective colouring, and their behaviour in security and in alarm. The spirit is greatly moved and delighted. The impressiveness of wide space, the massiveness of crag and cliff, the brightness of sun-lit colour, the solemnity of gloom, the exquisiteness of the dainty mountain flowers gleaming in their wet rocky nooks, the soaring flight of the eagle, the agile beauty of the running deer; over all the vast embracing silence, punctuated rather than broken by the rush of distant water, the babble of the neighbouring burn, or the sighing of the wind through the dry

grass; or at times the mighty roar of storm winds, and the wild welter of rain and snow;—all these are potent to lift the spirit out of the duller commonplaces of life, and to impart an exaltation that clarifies and strengthens; and nowhere are these meted out in fuller abundance than in such wildernesses as the Garbh Coire and its surrounding crags and plateaus. “Solitude is charming”, said the witty Frenchman, “but it needs someone to whom one can say, ‘Solitude is charming’”. Solitude *a deux* undoubtedly has its delights, though they are scarcely those of the mountain wilderness. And though congenial companionship will certainly add some charms to an excursion, yet the sheer impressiveness of the wilderness is most felt when one strays alone, scarce conscious of one’s own physical presence, and entirely open to the appeal of great nature. This is as the matter seems to me, and it is for these joys that I turn more and more often to that great plateau of Braeriach and Cairn Toul, and to the huge Garbh Coire embraced in its curves.

But to my story. The rocky walls of the Garbh Coire are the home of Alpine plants. Their granite weathers into a less fertile soil than the mica schist of the more southern mountains of Breadalbane and Clova, but still they yield many of our Alpines, and these constitute certainly one of the most interesting of the natural groups of our flora. A botanical friend from the south wished to spend a day gathering these treasures, and I was to act as guide and manager of the expedition. Accordingly one morning at the beginning of August last he arrived at Aviemore soon after 4 a.m., and after some breakfast we drove to the bothy at the head of Glen Eunach. On the way we had the unusual sight of a fine badger running across the road and into the ferns near Loch an Eilein Gate, and as we passed the loch we saw a heron flying. We reached the bothy at 7.30, and having arranged for the trap to return for us at 6 p.m. we started up Coire Dhondail. Before we got more than halfway up, the weather showed unkindness; mist came down, the wind began to blow more strongly, and fine rain fell, increasing

rapidly in heaviness. On the rocks at the head of the corrie we got a few Alpines, notably some pretty *Veronica alpina*. When we emerged from the corrie and halted awhile at the leading cairn at 9 a.m., the weather conditions were severe and disagreeable; rain was falling heavily, the mist was very dense, and the wind was cold. I made the most direct line I could under such circumstances for the edge of the corrie of Lochan Uaine, in which I intended that most of our time should be spent. But the badness of the weather increased so much that at 10 o'clock, when I thought we ought to have reached the lip of the corrie, it was quite impossible to judge with any accuracy where we had got to; and my companion—not a bad-weather hillsman—was pleading for retreat. For shelter and a few minutes' rest we descended into a wide gully containing a large wreath of snow. I could see only a few yards down the gully, but I judged from that little that we were on the lip of the Lochan Corrie, and so we were, as I ascertained on a later visit. It was, however, quite out of the question to take the risk of scrambling down into the unknown under such conditions, and also botanising would be impracticable, so I reluctantly consented to return. My companion was now anxious to know how I was going to find my way back, for nothing was visible around except a closely encircling pall of dense driving mist and rain. It was impossible to exhibit a map, and so I tried to explain to him the mental model of the plateau surface that I was following, and in less than half an hour I showed him marks that I had made on a gravel patch during our outward walk. Those familiar with the ground will recognise that it is not altogether a simple matter to hit the top of Coire Dhondail in such weather, and that the great probability is that of bearing too far southwards, yielding, that is, to the slope of the hill. I was guarding against this tendency, and, as a matter of fact, I bore about a hundred yards too far to my right, and was checked by coming to the unnamed stream that flows south-westwards into the Coire Dhondail. Thus ended this "visit" to the Garbh Coire, if it may so be called.

We descended to the rocks at the top of the corrie, and spent some more time looking for Alpines. And now occurred one of those rapid changes that mountain weather is liable to. Quite suddenly, about 11 o'clock, the sky cleared, the sun shone out warmly, and the wind moderated. We were certainly very wet, but we began to dry, and I proposed that we should make a round of the head of Glen Eunach, and see what we could get there. We made our way up to the plateau again, and followed the edge of the corrie towards the stream that flows from Lochan nan Cnapan. I scrambled down over very broken and treacherous rocks and screes to Am Bodach, the Old Man, of Coire Odhar, a notable spire of rock that can be well seen from Ross's Path, and that stands over against A' Cailleach, the Old Woman, of Sgor Gaoith. We searched many of the wet gullies and rocks of the head of Glen Eunach, and got certainly many Alpines, but not the three or four that we most desired. *Veronica alpina*, *Potentilla Sibbaldii*, *Sedum Rhodiola*, *Silene acaulis*, *Rubus chamaemorus*, *Epilobium alpinum*, *Salix herbacea*, *Salix Myrsinites*, and *Alchemilla alpina* were among the things noted. In the afternoon we dropped down into Coire Odhar, getting white and deep red heather, and followed Ross's Path to the outlet of the loch. We saw some few deer, perhaps not more than a score, and also three sheep high up in the corrie. Sheep are often to be seen there, and perhaps wander up from Glen Feshie. The trap met us near the lower bothy, and we had the pleasure of a drive down the glen and through the forest in the fine summer evening. Early the next morning my friend returned to town; and thus ends the first part of my story.

My second visit to the Garbh Coire last year was late in August. I left Inverdrurie about 5.30 on a dull, quiet morning, with the sky prettily dappled with "mackerel" clouds, and the barometer falling. By 6.30 I was at the beginning of the Lairig track, and then had a very pleasant walk on that roughest of roads. The weather improved as the day got older, the sun was bright and fairly warm, and the early chilliness of the wind lessened.

Having walked the Larig many times, and become somewhat familiar with it, I was interested in some of its details, and specially in the crags of the Sron na Leirg, and in a rather attractive-looking green corrie due east from the Sron Cairn. On these crags it is probable that eagles sometimes nest, as they are occasionally seen flying in that neighbourhood. I had seen three flying near there only a few days before, and one of them was a young bird. About 9.30 a.m., when I had passed the Pools of Dee, I bore off to the westward, keeping about the level of the 2750 feet contour line, and so entering the Garbh Coire on its north side. The going here was very troublesome, because the steepish brae was all irregular with great blocks of fallen granite, and the gaps and holes were often hidden by a tangle of heather. There seems nothing gained by keeping so high up, for the roughness of the surface confines one's attention, and prevents free enjoyment of the grand surrounding scenery, and certainly the heather and scree give less pleasant company than the babbling burn in the hollow. Towards 11 a.m. I reached the opening of the Fuar Garbh Coire, the north-western section of the corrie, striking the Dee at about 3200 feet, just where it is leaving this huge recess and dropping to the lower level of the main hollow. Here I was at the upper limit of the heather and also off the screes; so walking became vastly easier, and, indeed, very pleasant. The stream varied much between brawling rapids and quiet shallows, and the ground near it was in many stretches richly coated with herbage, giving smooth going, and offering good feeding for deer, of which, however, to my disappointment, I saw none. Among the big rocks that lay about I found many ferns, and notably the Parsley fern, *Allosorus crispus*, which seems not commonly distributed in this district. The previous year I had noted [C.C.J., IV., 200] that a deer track ascended from the south-western section of the Garbh Coire to the plateau by a gully a little to the west of the Angel's Peak, Sgor an Lochan Uaine. This route I intended to use as a way up out of the corrie, and accordingly I was studying the

face of the crags in that neighbourhood to see whether the gully looked practicable from below. I readily identified it, and, as far as I could judge at the distance, it looked as though it could be ascended without much difficulty. Its lowest section was all very rough scree, but the upper part looked reasonably easy. But when I had gone far enough northwards to get a clear view of the walls of the Fuar Garbh Coire, I saw that there was yet another route, and obviously an easier one, about a quarter of a mile east of the Dee Falls, and therefore much more convenient for me upon this expedition. Here, above a moderate scree, was a wide stretch of the steep corrie side covered with green growth, and diversified by jutting ribs and masses of rock, above which a red scree of moderate extent led to the plateau level. This was so clearly my easy and near way up that I relinquished all thought of crossing the whole width of the corrie to the Angel's Peak gully. I had now the Dee Falls full in front, and, as I got nearer, their splash and roar filled the air with a cheery sound, and the picture of the stream leaping over the sky-line and falling in broken cascades adown the crag was most attractive. I have seen no representation of this that does it anything like justice. As I approached the base of the fall the ground got steeper, and presently I was scrambling rather than merely walking. The wet rocky sides of the stream yielded a good harvest of Alpines and Sub-Alpines, and my vasculum soon began to fill. Scanning the crag more narrowly at close quarters, I saw that by following the east bank of the stream for less than a quarter of the height of the fall I could gain access to a sort of gallery or terrace in the crag that slanted away upwards and eastwards, and then seemed to turn in again towards the stream, and come out at the head of the fall. It was not possible from below to work out all this route with detailed certainty, but I was quite satisfied that it was worth attempting, and so I gave up my intention of using the broad green ascent that I had noted further east. But, as it turned out, I was not, on this day, to use even this third projected route. For when I actually got to the base of

the fall, where climbing with hands as well as feet became necessary, I happened to be on the west side of the stream, with a little above me some ground that looked as though it bore a good crop of Alpines. My first attempt to climb up to it was a failure. I should, perhaps, say that I am not a "climber", for I have never been "roped", and am not at all an expert on rocks. But still I did want to reach this bit of the crag, and, putting my best efforts into the task, I surmounted the intervening rock-face, and reached my reward. I got a goodly number of plants, especially some large and beautiful specimens of *Veronica alpina*. Now came Nemesis. After a little scrambling to and fro, I turned to make my descent over the rocks I had just ascended, so that I might pass to the other side of the stream and try my gallery. But here came in a common-place difficulty of climbing: what I had ascended with much difficulty I could not descend at all. I had to take serious counsel with myself, and I decided that, as descent was plainly impossible, further ascent would have to be attempted, though I had no idea at all how I was to succeed in reaching the crag top. As I had looked up at this part of the crag from below, its ascent seemed utterly impracticable, but the conditions that had developed made the attempt imperative. Of course I had been reading, as I suppose all of us had, of the numerous—far too numerous—fatal accidents that had occurred during the summer in the Alps through people getting into dangerous places, and I had joined in the usual condemnation of such folly. Yet here, very innocently, I had placed myself in just such a dangerous position. For real danger there undoubtedly was. The whole crag was dripping wet, and so the rocks were slippery and treacherous; the jutting stones that I had to grip or stand on might be sufficiently loose to give way under my weight, and each one had to be strongly tested before I could trust to it. The position was certainly one to try the nerves, and, though I recognised the seriousness of the case, and the practical certainty of a disastrous fall in case of any slip, I was well satisfied to find that I had no feeling of fear,

but only a strong sense of the absolute need of the utmost steadiness and caution, and a tenseness of nerve that precluded all carelessness. Nevertheless, now and again I paused to gather fresh plants, and was specially delighted with a group of beautifully flowering *Saussurea alpina*. By 12.15 I was well pleased to emerge from this crag on to the plateau, and to feel that I had escaped from a decidedly uncomfortable position. After a short rest by the head of the falls, I went direct to the summit of Braeriach. From the summit cairn I looked up Speyside, and saw that all the upper part of the valley was hidden in rain clouds, and that these were travelling towards me. Moving then down the brae westwards, I lay down by the first spring I came to, and had some lunch. Then, repassing the head of the Dee Falls, I followed the edge of the corrie to the top of the great horn that separates Fuar Garbh Coire from An Garbh Coire. On the very top of one of the rocky ribs of this horn there is a small grass-covered seat, from which is to be obtained one of the most striking views of the whole corrie. The little seat has to be approached with extreme caution, but whenever I get near it in fair weather I like to creep down to it and enjoy the wide and deep outlook. As viewed from this point, my recent climb looked utterly impossible, and I was tempted to think that I must have dreamed it. Turning from the corrie edge I went next to the neighbouring March Cairn (4149 feet). As I approached it I became conscious of a decided increase in the strength of the wind and a lowering of its temperature, and began to fear that the rain-storm I had seen in the distance would yet reach the Cairngorms. From the March Cairn I strolled down over the easy gravel of the plateau to the Fuaran Dhe, the true Wells of Dee, and then went across to the Eunach Cairn (4061 feet), which I reached a few minutes after 2 p.m. The clouds had by this time covered the summit of Cairn Toul, and as I walked northwards along the ridge overlooking Glen Eunach I saw the cloud cover the March Cairn, and a few flying rain spots reached me. At the north-west corner of the plateau I began to

descend towards Glen Eunach, near the stream a little south of the upper zig-zag path, came upon a herd of some sixty deer feeding on the grassy terrace that is one of their favourite resorts hereabouts, and then finished the descent by the lower zig-zag and the long flattened shoulder towards the lower Little Bennie, getting a few very fair pieces of white heather. When at 4 p.m. I halted awhile at Quain's Well the rain cloud was dark on the Sgoran Dubh, and a little later on Braeriach also; but it was fair, though very dull, below. As I passed near White-well I could see that heavy rain was falling at Carr Bridge, and then over the ridge of the Monadh Liadh. I reached Inverdrurie just before 6 p.m., and within half an hour rain began there, and there was a heavy downpour all the rest of the evening.

My third visit to the Garbh Coire last year was at the end of August. I started at 5 on a cool, quiet, misty morning, with the old moon high in the southern heavens, and all the hills clean cut silhouettes against a perfectly clear sky. At the Bennie Bridge I got my first touch of sunlight from the recently risen sun, but after I entered the Larig track at 6 I walked up into the shadow of the mountains along its eastern side, and did not again get direct sunshine till at 8.35 I reached the lowest Pool of Dee. This walking in the shadow had the advantage of coolness. Soon after I got fairly up into the Pass, and cleared the trees, I became conscious of a peculiar condition of the atmosphere. All the air was visibly thick and murky; there was nothing like a cloud or mist, but an appearance as though all the air was full of fine, dull grey smoke; and there was at the same time a heavy odorous sensation not amounting to a positive smell, but rather a dull, vague suggestion as of incense. I was at first reminded of the condition of the air in the spring, when the heather is being burned, but the smell was not that of burning heather; it had no pungency, but merely a dull murkiness of flavour just comparable to the air's dull murkiness of appearance. I do not remember to have experienced just such olfactory sense impressions before, and they were

certainly curious. The southward aspect of the Larig could hardly be called inviting, and, indeed, I began to fear that a storm was brewing. As a matter of fact, this eventually proved to be the case, but I did not suffer from it. I noticed two new points in the Larig: one was the abundance of water ousels, one especially showing itself very freely near the Lochan nan Uilleam Ghow, and the other was a considerable cairn of large stones near the south-west corner of the lowest but one of the Pools of Dee. I seem not to have noted this cairn before, and it would be interesting to know whether it has some special history.* At the lowest Pool I rested awhile, and then I followed the stream down to the junction of the Allt Mor, which is just about the 2250 feet contour. I paused a while to look up into the deep, green corrie of this stream, which rises on the plateau of Ben Muich Dhui, perhaps at a loftier elevation than any other stream in the country. Then I bore off westwards, keeping just above the contour line, and so striking the Dee, that is the Allt a' Gharbh Choire, just above the junction of the stream that comes tumbling down from the Lochan Uaine of Cairn Toul. In this traverse I found multitudes of springs and rivulets of water. Hereabouts I was conscious that the murkiness of the air was much increased, though the sun heat was great. Looking towards Ben Muich Dhui I could see at times no detail at all, but only the huge dark mass of the mountain. I followed the stream upwards, keeping as near as the uneven ground would permit, in many places finding well-marked tracks of the deer through the rich herbage. At the 2750 feet level I was at the junction of the stream from An Garbh Coire with that from Fuar Garbh Coire; immediately below the junction the stream has cut out a very decided little gully or ravine. It was now 10.15 a.m., and I was really not sorry to see that clouds were gathering in the sky, for they afforded me some shelter from the intense and increasing sun-glare. The air between me and Ben Muich Dhui was plainly

* Has it? (Ed.)

getting murkier, also I was increasing the distance, and at times the mountain was barely visible; the effect was strange, almost uncanny. When I turned northwards and entered the Fuar Garbh Coire I saw that I had started some deer, and I sat awhile to watch them run. There were two stags, two hinds, and two calves, and they ran directly towards my green-clothed possible route up to the plateau to the east of the Dee Falls. This was a confirmation of my opinion, and it was with much interest that I saw them working their way up the steep. When they got about halfway up they seemed to disregard my distant presence, and began to feed. So I pushed on by the riverside till I was again at the base of the Dee Falls, but this time on the east side. The great heat in which I had been walking now for some two hours made the pleasant leap and splash of the water irresistible, and in a few minutes I found a convenient standing place below one of the great spouts of water, stripped, and took a delicious standing bath. The thundering crash of the water on my head and its chill buffeting on my body acted as a bracing tonic, and I soon felt ready "to go anywhere and do anything". But my experience on my previous visit had not been wasted, and I was quite resolved not to attempt to go up to any place from which I was not quite sure of being able to get down again. Under protection of this piece of discretion, I made my way to the lower end of my gallery or terrace, and was pleased to find that it proved a rather easy way up the crag, so that within half an hour from the termination of my bath I was at the head of the Falls. I am, however, not sure that it would be quite easy to hit this route from above. I next went along the crag-top eastwards to look at the upper end of the green deer route. This I at once saw was a quite practicable route either up or down, and I set up a stone man as a guide, though this is perhaps scarcely necessary, for the way is pretty obvious to anyone looking for such a route. Crossing the plateau in a northerly direction, I lunched at the same spring as before, and then spent some time getting pads of *Silene acaulis* and *Salix*

herbacea for a botanical rock-garden. I was amazed at the length of the underground parts of these plants. Of course it is obvious that plants exposed to the furious storm blasts that at times sweep across these high plateaus must both crouch low for shelter and grip hard for security. But when I had several times dug down more than a foot into the granite gravel, and still failed to get below the roots of these plants, I realised more than I had done before the severity of the conditions of their growth and the wonderful provision the plants make for meeting them. My practice in getting plants for cultivation is to cut out of the ground a ball of earth enclosing all the roots, and to wrap this up in several thicknesses of newspaper, wrapping at the same time part of the paper loosely round the aerial part of the plant. Thus treated, plants may be carried and kept for several days without material damage, and will have a good chance of continuing their growth when set in the garden. Passing over the summit of Braeriach I found the higher air very much clearer, and was able with the glass to watch the movements of three men at the cairn of Ben Muich Dhui. I soon gathered that they had no good map, and did not know the mountain well, for they descended the western face to the top of impossible rocks, and I could see that they conferred as to what they should do, and then moved in the least profitable direction to get down. It is curious and interesting to sit afar off and criticise the actions of some fellow-mountaineer in this way. I wonder who was watching me! About 2 p.m. I left the main mass of Braeriach, and made for the Sron na Leirg, going first to look down the zig-zag path and its Coire Ruadh into the Larig. Following the Sron northwards I kept as near its Larig side as I could, so as to visit the Eagle's Rocks and the corrie near them. The walking for much of this distance was very delightful. The ground was thickly carpeted with a soft turf, stones were very few, and deer tracks well marked. When I got north of the 3860 feet cairn, which I did not visit, I had to descend those extremely rough-stepped terraces by which the Sron drops to the lower level

of the Coire Odhar an Lochain Dhuibh. Beyond here I explored several of the stream hollows leading down to the Larig Burn, and in one of them I found an amazingly abundant stretch of white heather, unfortunately much past its best. Had I been to this a fortnight earlier I think I could have carried off an armful of fine sprays. Finally, I descended to the side of the Larig Burn, and followed it to Aultdrue, and before 7 p.m. was back at Inverdrue well satisfied with my day's tramp. Late at night rain began, and early next morning we had lightning and thunder, followed by hours of heavy rain. This was, I take it, the storm of which the previous day had shown the anticipatory gloom.

TO THE ROAD.

Cool is the wind, for the summer is waning,

Who's for the road?

Sun-flecked and soft, where the dead leaves are raining,

Who's for the road?

Knapsack and alpenstock press hand and shoulder,

Prick of the brier and roll of the boulder;

This be your lot till the season grow older;

Who's for the road?

Up and away in the hush of the morning,

Who's for the road?

Vagabond he, all conventions a-scorning,

Who's for the road?

Music of warblers so merrily singing,

Draughts from the rill from the roadside up-springing,

Nectar of grapes from the vines lowly swinging,

These on the road.

Now every house is a hut or a hovel,

Come to the road:

Mankind and moles in the dark love to grovel,

But to the road.

Throw off the loads that are bending you double;

Love is for life, only labour is trouble;

Truce to the town, whose best gift is a bubble:

Come to the road!

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR.

(From "Lyrics of Love and Laughter").

THE CLUB ON BRAERIACH.

BY HARRY JOHNSTONE.

BEFORE describing the actual events of the day of the midsummer excursion of the Club, which took place last year to Braeriach, it may not be inopportune to give a short account of one of the most interesting of the Cairngorms, one which, in the eyes of many competent judges, stands second to none in point of general attraction, both to the occasional tripper and to the practised mountaineer.

Braeriach forms one of the Western Cairngorms, being separated from the central group by that stupendous rift, the Larig Ghru, and is very well known on account both of its vast expanse of flat top and of the tremendous corries with which its sides are scarred. Briefly, its position is as follows:—The Larig bounds it on the east, Carn Elrick and Glenmore on the north, Glen Eunach and Loch Eunach on the west, and An Garbh Choire and the tableland sloping towards Glen Feshie on the south. On all sides except the last the boundary is clear and distinct, but between Braeriach and Cairn Toul it is hardly possible to lay down a dividing line, and say on one side, "Here Braeriach", and on the other, "There Cairn Toul". In fact, as one walks round the top of An Garbh Choire, one is off Braeriach and on to Cairn Toul without being conscious of the fact, much in the same way as one may proceed from Ben Muich Dhui to Cairngorm, and almost fancy he was still on the same hill. As already noted, Braeriach is remarkable for its large extent of plateau on the summit. Indeed, it may be stated that no such vast extent of tableland exists on any other British mountain. Though covered here and there with boulders, as are most of the higher Cairngorms, there are great expanses of pure gravelly surface, with, however, only mosses and other hardy Alpine plants growing. What gives Braeriach its main characteristics is the steep descent of its sides from the tableland on all the sides except the south-west, a

descent which every now and then resolves itself in the numerous corries into precipices of heights varying from 1000 to 2000 feet. On the north side are Coire an Lochain and Coire Ruadh, whose dividing ridge forms an easy ascent to the summit from the Aviemore side; another Coire Ruadh slopes down to the Pools of Dee, not to be confounded with the "Wells" on the plateau. But the corrie par excellence of them all is An Garbh Choire, which, forming an enormous rift between Braeriach and Cairn Toul, is really the geographical head of Glen Dee. It is the beetling crags and precipitous walls of this great gap that give Braeriach its powerfully attractive appearance, especially when viewed from Cairn Toul or the slopes of Ben Muich Dhui in the neighbourhood of Cairn a' Mhaim. This corrie forms a never-failing object of interest whether it be covered with deep snow and the infant Dee frozen, or whether, as when we saw it, there be just a touch of snow at Fuar Garbh Choire, where the Dee takes its first wild plunge.

Braeriach cannot be said to be actually difficult of ascent, as there are numerous easy climbs by which the summit can be reached; the main difficulty is the long approach, whether it is tackled from Speyside or from Deeside. The former route is usually chosen, as one can drive by way of Rothiemurchus Forest and Glen Eunach to the very foot of the hill, whereas in going from the Braemar side the driving road stops at Derry Lodge, and a good long tramp has to be faced before commencing the actual climb of the mountain. Climbing from Aviemore, the best route is to stop at the Lower Bothy in Glen Eunach, and make for the ridge separating Coire an Lochain from Coire Ruadh, and follow it right up to the summit. Alternative routes are by keeping to the southwest side of Allt Coire an Lochain, or up the east side of Loch Eunach and up Coire Dhondail, which derives its name from an Ossianic giant. From Deeside the best routes are up Glen Geuschan, and over the shoulder of Cairn Toul to the edge of An Garbh Choire, or else through the Larig till the lowermost of the Pools of Dee is reached,

and then up the track which leads to the summit by the Larig Coire Ruadh.

Whichever route is chosen for the ascent, the view from the summit will amply repay the mountaineer, so remarkable is the extent of country that can be seen. To those who have only ascended Ben Muich Dhui, the most strongly appealing point will be the remarkable view to the west, which has no hindrance in the way, as is the case when on Ben Muich Dhui, while, owing to the situation of the hills, the view from Braeriach eastwards is hardly one whit inferior to that from Ben Muich Dhui itself. To the eastward the view is terminated by Bennachie and Coillebhar; on the west Ben Nevis marks the limit, though one of our party maintained that the Coolins of Skye could be seen; southwards the Pentlands, Ochils, Lomonds, Campsie Fells, and Ben Lomond may be seen; while northwards the hills of Caithness, Sutherland, and Ross form the sky-line. The intervening country on all sides appears as a billowy succession of hill-tops, which here and there is broken and varied by stream or loch, or by the changing colours of arable land, while ever and anon ascending smoke marks the busy haunts of men. In fact, for an excursion of mountaineers, or for a party out for a day's climbing, we maintain no more interesting mountain could possibly be chosen. Geologically also Braeriach is somewhat interesting. The main mass of the mountain consists of an igneous rock which has been called by some Cairngorm granite. At the head of Glen Eunach metamorphic rock may be found in the shape of a fine grained gneiss or mica schist. There are numerous lateral and terminal moraines on Braeriach, especially near the head of the northern corries, while the long gravel flats by the side of Loch Eunach denote the long continued action of ice as well as water, and attract the attention of every one who passes, be he geologist or not.

It used to be said that all roads led to Rome, but on the 16th and 17th July last, for members of the Cairngorm Club who were to take part in the mid-summer excursion

it could be equally truthfully said that all roads led to Aviemore. For from that beautiful spot, village and railway junction, the start was to be made on the morning of the 18th for the ascent of Braeriach and, if the Fates permitted, Sgoran Dubh, and to the rendezvous members arrived practically from the four points of the compass. Many an anxious glance was turned skywards to try to forecast the weather for the succeeding day, and the general opinion was favourable, and in this instance correct, for when morning broke a white haze along the valley of the Spey, gradually rolling up and dissipating before the strengthening rays of the rising sun, betokened a day of cloudless sunshine, coupled with intense heat, of which more anon.

And what a morning it was, and what surpassing scenery! Oh! ye dwellers in the dusty, smoky cities, could you have been there you would have never tired feasting your eyes on the surpassing beauty of the country, and filling your lungs with pure mountain ozone, and you would have been so restored, both in mind and body, that work itself would have been the veriest child's play. Right behind us lay the huge rock of Craigellachie—the real Craigellachie—towering up in massive grandeur against the sky; before us on the horizon lay the lofty masses of the Cairngorms, piled one on another, and following in succession like ocean's billows, while the middle distance was occupied by the forests of Rothiemurchus and Glen More, grand in their sombre hues, and forming an admirable setting for the picturesque valley of the Spey.

Passing Loch an Eilein in its lovely sylvan glory, our road soon landed us in the valley of the Bennie, up which, the road now rapidly rising, we pursued our way, with Carn Elrick, one of the most symmetrical of hills, on our left, and Cadha Mhor, down whose steep sides a genuine Alpine avalanche has been known to rush, on our right. Our objective was now the Lower Bothy, where it had been settled that a conference was to be held as to the *modus operandi* of attacking our day's work, and in due course we reached it, experiencing, by the way of a pre-

liminary canter, an attention which we could well have done without from the flies, that were to pester us yet more pronouncedly before the day was over. Arrived at the Bothy a halt was called, and after some slight discussion it was unanimously agreed to tackle Braeriach first, and then, if time allowed, Sgoran Dubh.

Without waste of time a start was made, the chosen direction being that which would land us at the summit by the narrow ridge separating Coire an Lochain from Coire Ruadh; and many were the injunctions laid on the long-legged members of the party—of whom there was a considerable number—that the pace must be suited to that of the man with the shortest, and equally strong the promises that they would be observed. By this time the heat was getting intense, and promised to be melting later on, and, as the labour of climbing increased, so did the desire of the climbers for the coolest mode of progression. On the principle of overdoing nothing, frequent halts were made, and indeed it could not be otherwise, for the man who could tamely climb on and never give look or thought to the ever-unfolding panorama spread out to our view would be a mere automaton, a piece of flesh, nothing more. A day there may have been as clear, but clearer, never. Not a vestige of cloud or haze obscured even the furthest horizon, and every detail on the landscape was perfectly clear. To left and right, as we looked back, appeared Cadha Mhor and Carn Elrick, looking diminutive now by reason of our greater elevation; to our right, going forward, towered Sgoran Dubh, its steep sloping sides reminding one almost unconsciously of the precipices of Cairngorm above Loch Avon, the resemblance being heightened as the corrie at the head of Loch Eunach came to be more clearly made out; as far as the eye could reach stretched hills on hills, those of Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, and the west of Inverness being clearly visible on the horizon; the huge Monadh Liadhs filled up the middle distance; while at our feet, so to speak, as far as could be seen, was spread the valley of the Spey—here close covered with the ancient forest of Rothiemurchus,

there variegated with the different tints of cultivation, while ever and anon could be seen the various villages in their diverse settings, and now and again, like a huge shuttle, darted through the varied landscape a hurrying railway train. And so the ascent progressed—now one party leading, now another, but generally the same order was preserved, those in front, as the oldest climber phrased it, having easier work keeping there than those in the rear had in coming up, and ever, as the view which greater elevation gave increased, so did the wonder and admiration of the climbers at the prospect. There was only one fly in the ointment, or rather, I should say, there were thousands, for the fly I refer to was the flies themselves. In buzzing clouds they hung around each climber, and alighted in their hundreds whenever they got the chance. Some smoked, some anointed their heads with special preparations, other covered their heads with jackets or water-proofs, while others still did nothing but—the rest may be supposed; but one and all agreed that flies must have been one of the sorest of old Pharaoh's plagues.

As the summit was neared we began more and more to study our mountain, as well as to look around us. The ridge itself is closely covered with huge boulders, scattered here and there promiscuously, and lying evidently pretty much as they were left by the ice cap when it melted away. The penultimate stage of the ascent is much steeper than the rest, and proved a tough nut to crack, coming as it did after a long spell of trying work, and, as a result, the tailing-off process, which had now become much more pronounced, increased still more, till the party was stretched out into a long single file. Those who were up first had the advantage of longer time in which to look around, as well as to study the mountain itself. An interesting feature in this connection was that one of our candidates for initiation, Mr. George Henschel, was able to recognise with the naked eye and point out to us his lovely residence at Allt-na-Criche, near Aviemore, a fact which gave him more than ordinary pleasure, as it is left to very few to be initiated within sight of their own door.

As we thus rested and feasted our eyes, a shout from the cairn told us that the remainder of the party, having gone round the shoulder of our steepest climb, were now on the actual summit, but we considered that our temporary defeat was more than compensated by our splendid view of Strathspey and the minute study we made of Coire Ruadh. However, across we hastened, and being thoroughly rested, our sprightly movements, and especially those of Veteran Shearer, who, despite his seventy odd summers, was always in front, excited some envious remarks from our companions, who had gone the longer road, and the usual good-humoured chaff took place as to the respective excellence of our various routes.

During the wait till every one should have arrived at the summit, maps and telescopes were produced, and, though no Copland has sketched the horizon from Braeriach, yet that prince of mountaineers' maps of the "Horizon from Ben Muich Dhui" was in evidence, and proved about as serviceable from the one hill as from the other. Fortunate, indeed, we were as regards weather, for not a particle of cloud, mist, or fog could be descried, and every mountain peak and rounded hill-top stood out as clear as could be. To one viewing the enormous expanse spread out at our feet on all sides for the first time there was something so magnificent, something so grand, something so sublime, as to defy any ordinary power to describe the feelings which crowded through the brain. One could not but feel a certain awe in looking over the prospect of mountain, gully, moor, and moss, of streamlet, lochan, waterfall, and cataract, of stupendous precipices, and beetling crags, of the oldest mountains, shall I even say roots of mountains, in Europe, and wonder what must have been the state of matters when, in their original glory, studded with mighty volcanoes in unceasing eruption, these mountains formed the backbone of a mighty continent, now long thousands of years engulfed in the stormy waters of the Atlantic. But though one might feel that the proper way to get the best of the situation was to moralise in solitude, there were others to consider, and there were names of peaks to

be learned from old and tried hands in the mountain climbers' work. Even as the various peaks are named one's wonder increases more and more, as it scarcely seems possible that we can actually be viewing peaks so distant. From Ben Nevis right round to the Pentland Hills the eye wanders, noting Ben Lomond, the Campsie Fells, the Lomonds, the Ochils, and the Pentlands themselves, these forming, as it were, the boundary line, while nearer and clearer stood out Beinn a' Ghlo, Schichallion, Ben Lawers, Sgarsoch, Cairn Ealer, and hundreds of more or less well-known peaks. Away to west and north stood out the Monadh Liadhs (and one individual was willing to risk his reputation that he saw the Coolins of Skye), Ben Wyvis, the Strathglass mountains, and those of Ross, Sutherland, and Caithness, stretching away in apparently interminable succession. To the eastward appeared towering in the foreground Ben Muich Dhui and Cairngorm, and in extreme distance could be discerned such old friends as Bennachie, looking very conspicuous by reason of its height about its surrounding country, Foudland, the Buck, Tap o' Noth, Ben Rinnes, and Ben Aigan; while on the south of eastward lay Lochnagar, the Coyles of Muick, Morrone, and Morven. But it is impossible to specialise in any detail—in fact, merely to name the summits visible would occupy more space than can be allowed for this article.

All being assembled on the summit, a meeting of the Club was duly constituted, the Chairman presiding. In a short, felicitous speech he bade the members welcome to Braeriach, congratulated them on the capital turnout, and the lovely weather, and hoped that the homeward journey would be as successful as the outward had been, and concluded by briefly reviewing the season's work, and announcing the most important part of the day's proceedings, viz., the initiation of five candidates for admission. All were found duly qualified for membership, and the ancient and honourable ceremony of initiation was carried out in its fullest details, which gave the liveliest satisfaction to all concerned, to the candidates

who were initiated, because they felt that they were being properly introduced into so worthy an organisation, and to the members, because they felt that they had duly performed the ceremonies which were proper to so important a function. The meeting being closed in due form, an adjournment was made for lunch to Fuar Garbh Choire, where the "Infant Dee" leaps over the precipice, and where it had been resolved we were to have lunch. As we crossed the broad gravelly plateau we saw several parties on the summit, and, most interesting to relate, the members of one were clad in the Garb of Old Gaul. When we arrived at Fuar Garbh Choire we found very little snow indeed, only one large lump, under which the current rushed to make its final plunge into space, but sufficient to allow us to make snowballs and have a gentle pitch at one another just for the sake of having thrown snowballs on one of the hottest of July days. On the banks of the rivulet all threw themselves down; sandwiches, etc., were produced, flasks opened, and general good comradeship was the order of the day. For about an hour we remained there, and talked and chatted, enjoying our well-earned rest, and in the intervals glancing over to Cairn Toul and studying its frowning aspect as it rises steeply from the Larig and from An Garbh Choire, remarking especially the desolate grandeur of Lochan Uaine in its circular bowl of rock. But time was passing, and though we could have sat there much longer, there was the homeward journey to face, which to two of us meant the Derry, and to the remainder Aviemore, while there were still the Wells of Dee to visit and examine; so a start was at once made. In the course of our journey to the Wells a vast herd of deer was noted disappearing over the skyline in the direction of Glen Feshie. We soon reached the Wells, and viewed with great interest the undoubted source of the Royal Dee, whose waters it was incumbent on all to sample at this their very fountainhead, where contamination from sewage or vegetable growth at least had no terrors, for here was the water as it bubbled up from its gravelly spring in virgin purity. Personally we prefer just a shade of "use and wont" in it, so

as to be on the safe side, but Shearer, who is something of a water expert, and who had the advantage over us of never having tasted "use and wont", and so impairing the tasting power of his palate, took it raw, as someone put it, and after mature deliberation, which occupied him some time, and necessitated several samplings, gravely pronounced that, in his opinion, the southernmost spring was best. This operation past, we made a start again, and, passing March Cairn, made tracks for Glen Eunach, down which it was resolved to make the homeward journey, the ascent of Sgoran Dubh being omitted, as we concluded that, having done so much already, and the day being well spent, we were entitled to make tracks for home without incurring greater labours. Just when the descent to Loch Eunach was seen, rough and steep, though quite safe, a halt was called, and the Chairman and the writer turned back. Before we said "Good-bye", a most hearty cheer was given for Mr. M'Gregor for his ability in the capacity of guide, philosopher, and friend to the excursion, which we in no way exaggerate when we say that it was simply invaluable.



LOCH COIRE AN LOCHAIN, BRAERIACH,

Photo by

On 17th July, 1904.

A. M. Cook.

CIBUS SCANSORUM, OR, BELLY-CHEER.

A Treatise on the right Feeding and Dyeting of Those who ascend the great Mountains; with a Discursus on Drinks.

THE antient Apothegm, "Venter Magister Artis," were never more pithy than when spoken of that Art which hath of late grown to such an Head among our Youth—I mean the Art of Climbing. And certain it is, that the weak Man who doth rightly order his Belly, may accomplish beyond measure more than the strong Man who neglecteth it. Nowe, by "rightly order" I would not have you to understand that unnatural, overcareful pampering, perpetual doctoring and physicking, wherewith some do cherish their inward Parts to the neglect of all else; running greedily after strange new Meats and Foods; who at every Borborygmus* believe that their end is near, and at the least Discontentment do so torment their Bowels with filthy quackish Drugs and silly Nostrums, that their Belly doth at last become their Bully, and will not let them work by day nor sleep by night. Beware of such in small crowded Inns, for they are no comfortable bed-fellows, I warrant you.

Neither by "neglect" do I intend "starve"; for he who over-feedeth is guilty of as great a Neglect as he who eateth not enough. (And truly he who eateth not enough is but seldom found among those who take their Exercise and Pleasure upon the mountains; howbeit I grant you the feathered Archer hath smitten many a bold Fellowe in his Belly, who had before-time been a mighty Eater.)

Nowe, as there are among us in these Dayes greedy stuff-gut Fellowes who will fill themselves at all seasons with whatsoever is laid before them, so also there be those of such queasy niceness that they will only taste that

* "Borborygmus—a rumbling or croaking in the guts." Bayley.

which falleth in with their Phantasy or with the last new Scheme of Dyet which they have obtained from some Quacksalver or Empirick.

Of the first, you shall find them asleep before the Fire after Dinner, stertorations; yet they cannot sleep o' nights for strange horrid Dreams and Nightmares; heavy and lethargick o' mornings, rising late and feigning excuses from their Bath; sulky and wheezy on a Grass-slope; uncertain on a Climb, swearing much, and marvellous heavy on the rope; churlish if dinner be served but a few minutes late; fond of Easy Dayes. Their converse is of their past Meals, of Schnitzel, Delicatessen, French Plums and the Persian Poets; and they had rather dye than be late to dinner.

Of the other Sort are those who can endure no Salt; who eat no meat; who love their Porridge made with chopped straw; who leave the Table if Kidneys be brought on; mightily afraid of Draughts (I mean Draughts of Winde) and damp Sheetes; who cannot sleep with their heads to the East. These are either fainting for lack of Food, or altogether without Appetite; carrying the whole Pharmacopœia either in their Pocket or in their Paunch; wearers of Cholera belts and Chest-protectors; always ready for hard work when there is no necessity for it; players of Fives after supper, who yet cannot walke up Brown Tongue next morning. They are Merry Andrews one hour and Agelastics the next; and their Stomach is turned for the Daye if their Nose do but come within wind of a dead Sheep. They also run out at much length concerning their Humours, Megrims, and internal Grievs; their talk likewise is of Aperients, Gastric Juices, Walls of the Stomach, Appendicitis, Pills and the last new Food; moreover they are much given to unprofitable Disputation and Wrangling by the way, and do greatly affect Monkish Tayles* and Romances.

Nowe I would have the Climber eschewe both these

* Monkish Tayles. Perhaps a reference to a contemporary author. Query, for "Monkish" read "Mankish," *i.e.* Manx. (Ed.)

Wayes, for the one doth lead to Corpulencie, Apoplexie and Gout; and the other bringeth on Melancholie, Wasting and Cholerick Humours. But chiefly I would have him refrain from all new and wonderful Foods, Dyets, Condiments and Alimentary Preparations, which are so much cryed nowadays by Empiricks; for such have been the undoing of many a tall fellowe, which was never yet said of good Beef, Bread and Ale. For, in good sooth, we are a Nation which doth love a Quack, if he do but bawl loud enough, and there be many such who think no shame to crye their Wares with as much indecent Clamour, outrageous Barbaritie, and damnable Iteration, as the peoples of the Western Main,* as Travellers do tell.

But I would have the Climber cleave to plain Vyands, well cooked withal, and leisurely devoured. For what saith the sage Epictetus, *Simplex Cibus optimum est pueris*. And this is true, but in a greater sense, of *men* also, which Philosophers do hold to be but a Species of large Boyes somewhat marred in the making; and truly, if the Childe be Father of the Man, he hath begotten but a sorry family.

He who regardeth his Belly wisely, and considereth well his Bowels, doth sleep sound and riseth betimes; he hath a chearful Face in the morning, yea, and after dinner he is merry also. He writeth no letters before he setteth out, and doth seldom think it will rain, or, if it be raining, that it will continue. At all times he is the first who is ready to take the Road, yet it irketh him not to tarry for others. He hath no fear of fainting by the way, and taketh no strong waters with him, neither doth his Rück-sack gurgle as he goeth. Yet he scorneth not to carry good store of Meat and Bread in his pouch. To such a one you may safely trust your life, though it be never so precious, for in time of Peril neither his Head nor his Limbs will fail him.

Nowe in the matter of Drinks, true it is that every man hath libertie to drink whatsoever and whensoever he doth

* Obscure. Perhaps the barbarous tribes then inhabiting the American coast. (Ed)

desire. Yet if he would be strong and lustie he will forbear some at all seasons and all at some seasons. For if we do rightly consider it, the purpose of Drinking is to quench our Thirst. Nowe never man did quench his Thirst with Aqua-Vitæ or Sloe Gin. And as I hold not with such as think it a sinful thing to drink these and other Cordials on any occasion, yet so also do I aver that their frequent use, whether on the Hills, or at the Inn; whether to avoid a Rheum, or for fear of foul water, is an unnecessarie thing, and that he will be most fitt for his work or playe who eviteth them altogether.

THOMAS BRUGIS,
Doctor in Physick.

Note.—Dr. Thomas Brugis was a seventeenth century Army Surgeon who wrote two small books on medicine. Climbing would seem to be an older art than is generally supposed.

EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

WE went to Aviemore on April 13th and left on April 29th, 1904. The journey thither was made on a cold, wet day: rain fell nearly all

the time, and at the summit level the clouds rested on the carriage tops, and the outlook was limited to the immediately surrounding dreariness of dripping fence and dense, driving mist. We had no sight of the surrounding hills, and could form no estimate of their snow condition. The air cleared towards evening, and we saw some of the tops, including that of Cairngorm itself, clear of clouds. On all the northern face of the Cairngorms the snow lay in detached masses: there was no continuous coating below the great plateau. Each corrie had its wreath, and the usual big wreath of Coire Cas was well marked, but all the ridges showed much dark earth.

On the 15th I went through the Larig as far as the watershed. There was practically no snow below the ford, and but discontinuous snow between it and the Lochan nan Uilleam Ghow. From here to the summit I walked on snow all the way, though in places the earth and rocks showed through. The snow was in capital condition for walking, and only once did the crust let my foot through. I saw very few ptarmigan. All the hollows of the Pools of Dee were snowpiled.

During our first week there was very much hot sunshine, and the diminution of the snow was noticeable. But on the 20th there was a fall of fresh snow that coated all the ground above 2350 feet; a renewal of sunshine on the next day, and succeeding rain showers, removed all this fresh snow and continued the lessening of the old. Early on the 25th there was again a fresh coating, reaching even to Tullochgrue (1000), but this vanished during the day. On the 26th the Nettin Hills had a thin coat, though there was none fresh on the Cairngorms. On the 27th the Nettin Hills had rather more, and the Cairngorms were freshly sprinkled as far down as the tops of Creag Dhu (2766), though Carn Elrick had none, being some 300 feet lower. Rain on the 28th and sunshine on the 29th cleared away all this fresh snow, and I could see that the ascent of Cairngorm would have involved not more than 300 yards of snow walking. As far as I could judge from below, only the highest portions of the great plateau had then continuous snow. This year's (1904) record is a decided contrast with that of 1903.

THESE two gullies lie to the west and east respectively of the Shelter Stone Crag, Loch Avon. They are both of pretty much

PINNACLE GULLY

AND

CASTLE GATES GULLY.

Carn Etchachan than has hitherto been employed, and are a pleasant variation of the ordinary route to Ben Muich Dhui. In both the rock scenery is extremely fine; and, near the top of Pinnacle Gully, there is the unclimbed Forefinger Pinnacle, distinctly worthy of attention. Various climbs, moreover, seem possible on the west and east faces of the Shelter Stone Crag, but the slabs towards Loch Avon seem, if not impossible, at any rate most forbidding. An idea of the gullies' appearance from above may be obtained from the illustration opposite p. 332 in Vol. I. A rather fanciful representation of Castle Gates Gully is to be seen in the frontispiece to Burton's "Cairngorms"; it is easily recognised, however, in Wilson's series of photos., Loch Avon and the Cairngorms No. 1, with a long streak of snow. At the beginning of September, 1904, some difficulty was caused in ascending it by such a streak of steep and hard last winter's snow. A word to boulder climbers, who may be staying a night under the Shelter Stone, and have an hour to spend in the evening. There are in the neighbourhood many opportunities for displaying skill in this art. The Shelter Stone itself offers a nice little problem, and it has no lack of giant neighbours. — HUGH STEWART.

THIS excursion took place on 2nd July last, to the Sow of Atholl. The party journeyed by rail to Dalnaspidal, and, as this is at an

MOUNTAIN EXCURSION

OF THE

PERTSHIRE SOCIETY

OF

NATURAL SCIENCE.

elevation of over 1,400 feet, about half of the climb was accomplished in this easy fashion. The rest of the way was by no means difficult, but then the object of the Society is not hill-climbing; it is the pursuit of natural history. With the exception that a shower or two fell, the day was fine.

There were more patches of snow to be seen on the hills around than is usually the case at this season of the year. The principal object of search was, of course, the rare plant, found in Britain only on this hill, *Bryanthus taxifolius*, better known, perhaps, by its former name, *Menziesia coerulea*. The plant was found, but only in small quantity, and care was taken that the quantity was not made less, an example which, it is hoped, will be followed by all other visitors. The other plants found were mostly those that love to grow on peat, a thick coating of which covers the greater part of the hill. The mountain cornel, *Cornus suecica*, was especially abundant and fine. Other plants worth mentioning were—*Azalea procumbens*, *Tofieldia palustris*, *Juncus triglumis*, *Potentilla Sibbaldi*, and there were also several of the

commoner Alpines. A meeting of the Perthshire Mountain Club was held on the summit, at which the Cairnmaster, assisted by the Quaichbearer, initiated a new member with the usual mysterious rites. The Bard, Mr. Kennedy, schoolmaster, Ballinluig, recited a poem in Gaelic, specially written for the occasion, and followed it up by giving a translation in English prose, which was much more edifying to those present than the poem itself. A section of the party climbed the neighbouring and higher peak, Sgairneach Mor (3,160), from the summit of which they enjoyed a fine and extensive view.—WILLIAM BARCLAY, Sen.

THE Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Club was held on 16th December, 1904—the chairman, Mr. John M'Gregor, presiding.

Office-bearers and Committee were elected as OUR SIXTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING. on page IX. The Excursions for the current year were fixed as follows:—Spring Holiday, Lochnagar; Summer Holiday, Ben Lawers; Saturday Afternoon Excursions—Kerloch, Cairn William or Corrennie, Carmaferg or Hill of Fare, as may be arranged by the Committee.

REVIEWS.

To a new and illustrated edition of "The Lady of the Lake" just published by Messrs. Adam & Charles Black, has been appended an interesting article on the topography of the poem, by BEN MUICH the late Sir George B. Airy, the Astronomer-Royal.

DHUI. In a foot-note to a reference to Ben A'an (the Ben A'an on Loch Katrine side), Sir George Airy says—"One of the hollows, under a steep rock, is called 'Sgiath nam mucan dubha' ('Shelter of the black hogs'). The name of the second mountain in Scotland is 'Ben Muich Dhui' ('Hill of the black hog'). It seems not improbable that the wild boar may have inhabited these localities. It is conjectured that the names 'Grisdale' and 'Grassmoor', in Cumberland, have been derived from the same circumstances". It is noticeable, however, that Sir Archibald Geikie ("The Scenery of Scotland") derives the name from Beinn na muich dhu ("The hill of dark gloom").

MESSRS. CASSELL & COMPANY are at present issuing, in fortnightly parts, a somewhat elaborate account of the scenic features of the United Kingdom, under the title "The British Mistakes About Isles Depicted by Pen and Camera". The chapter DEESIDE. on "Deeside", however, is marred by several blunders. The river—reversing the ordinary method—is followed from its mouth to its source, mention almost at the outset being made of Archibald Forbes' grave in Allenvale

Cemetery (of which an illustration is furnished)—a somewhat new “feature” of Deeside scenery. The writer has muddled up his Culter—the paper works are at Peterculter, not Maryculter; and he hardly seems to be aware that the “old” Roman Catholic College of Blairs has been virtually supplanted by a spick-and-span new building, a very distinctive object in the landscape. The author of “Deeside Tales” has now, unfortunately, to be referred to as the “late” minister of Dinnet; and we suspect the writer of the article has made a mistake in his allusion to “Birse tea”—it should be a “Birse cup”, a mixture of tea and whisky. Due mention is made of a mountaineering club having been started to explore the “rugged sources” of the Dee, but clearly, the writer is not a member. If he were, he would not have committed himself to the statement that the ascent of Lochnagar “is by no means easy”. Of course, it isn’t easy if you attempt to scramble up the rock faces of the corrie, but you can gain the summit by a regular path in a couple of hours without undue stress. Then we are told that Ben Muich Duhi is “temptingly dangerous”. If the writer had said “exceedingly toilsome”, he might have been excused, for the walk to the top is a long one, and to many often a weary one, but there is nothing whatever dangerous about it—unless one goes out of his way to create danger. And even “the average traveller”, despite the “fearsome” consequences conjectured by the writer, may reach a destination “beyond the Linn o’ Dee” without having to sleep out in the open. Blair Atholl, Kingussie, Aviemore, Nethy Bridge can each easily be reached in a day’s walk. All depends, however, on the definition of “average traveller”!

THE January No., 1904, of the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal* contains an instalment of the “S.M.C. Guide Book” devoted to

“The Lochnagar Group”. It is furnished by “G.D.” —initials which, to members of the Mountaineering CLUB and the Cairngorm Club, sufficiently disclose the personality of the writer—and is exceedingly accurate as well as detailed. Even many pretending to be familiar with Lochnagar will probably be surprised to find that there are seven separate ways of ascending the mountain, not to mention half a dozen “climbs” up the precipices from the shores of the loch, though some of these latter routes have not yet been fully conquered. Then Lochnagar can boast of eleven distinct tops, while the neighbouring Broad Cairn ridge has no fewer than eight. “Twenty of our Scottish mountains”, we are told, “exceed Lochnagar in height, but very few of them have finer features than the lone Dubh Loch or the ‘steep frowning glories’ of the great north-east corrie. None, it may be safely said, has a greater wealth of interesting associations”. Mention is also made of the interesting and rather striking fact that, though Lochnagar is wholly situated in the Royal deer-forest of Balmoral, it is, nevertheless, a mountain to which access is always open.

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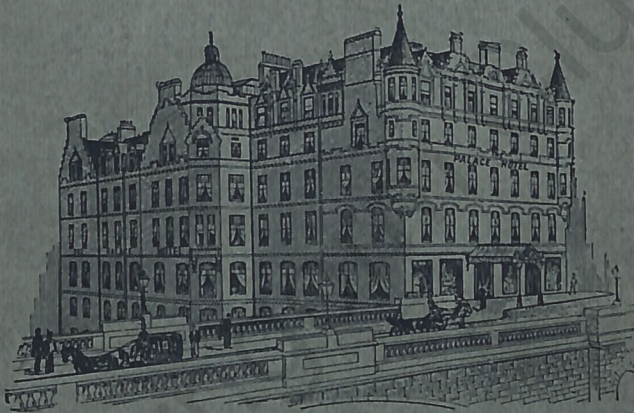
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