

Vol. VI.

January, 1909.

No. 32.

THE
Cairngorm Club Journal.

EDITED BY

ALEX. INKSON M'CONNOCHIE.

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ISSUED TWICE A YEAR.

PUBLISHED BY

THE CAIRNGORM CLUB.

AGENTS:

ABERDEEN: D. WYLLIE & SON.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

Nos. 1, 20 and 25 are out of print.

The Cairngorm Club.

PRESIDENT,	-	H. E. The Right Hon. JAMES BRYCE, D.C.L., LL.D.
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TREASURER,	-	T. R. GILLIES, 181a Union Street, Aberdeen.
SECRETARY,	-	A. I. M'CONNOCHIE, 88 Devonshire Road, Aberdeen.

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

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Bruach na Frithe.

Sgurr na Fheadain.

Bidein.



Photo. by

THE COOLIN, FROM COIRE NA CREICHE.

J. R. Levack.

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THE SIX CAIRNGORMS IN A DAY.

BY IAN M. MCLAREN.

THERE was quite a gathering of hillmen in the 4.35 p.m. train for Ballater on 20th June last. One large party was going up Lochnagar next day, and another was to camp out in Glen Derry, while we ourselves, five in number, were to attempt to conquer the six highest Cairngorms in one day. It sounded a big undertaking, and our friends did not anticipate that we should succeed, but at any rate we set forth firmly resolved to accomplish our task, if nothing unforeseen occurred. I may say that most of us were in excellent training, and had carefully prepared for the venture.

We left Ballater about 7.30 p.m., and drove up to Loch Builg *via* Crathie. It was a glorious evening, and everything pointed to the weather continuing good. Leaving Loch Builg punctually at midnight we set forth on our long and lonely journey. It was quite chilly, though there was still a distinct glow in the northern sky. We followed the track up Glen Gairn, although it is two miles longer than the route by the county boundary, because it was easier going in the dim light. Before long we struck up to the right in the shadow of Carn Eas, and at 2.23 a.m. we reached the summit of Ben Avon. We did not remain long there as it was very cold indeed. The moon had risen by this time, and away to the east there

were signs that soon we should have the sun to cheer us. There was a little mist hanging about Beinn a' Bhuid, but it had quite disappeared before we reached the first cairn.

Pushing on again, we reached the foot of the Sneck exactly at 3 a.m., and at the same moment the sun rose out of the clouds. At 3.50 a.m. we were on the North Top of Beinn a' Bhuid, and after this commenced the most monotonous part of our day. It is a very long and very tedious five miles to Loch Avon, the long heather with hidden holes and loose stones making us proceed very cautiously, and it was 6 a.m. before we lay down on the shores of the loch, and, after a most refreshing dip, had our first proper meal. It was glorious basking in the sunshine and looking along the loch to the snow-crested crags at the far-end—the one drawback being the number of midges and other insects. There were plenty of trout rising at the flies all over the loch.

After an hour's rest we made a bee line for Cairngorm, and reached the top a few minutes after 8 a.m. The view was superb—there being as yet no heat haze. We recognised almost every well-known Scottish mountain, and viewed Ben Nevis with especial pleasure, as we had been on the top of the abandoned observatory at 3 a.m. exactly a week before. All the hills to the north of the Moray Firth stood out quite clearly, and we were very glad to be able to pick out without hesitation an old friend, Ben More in Assynt. Ben Alder seemed quite close at hand in the clear morning sunshine. Certainly 8 a.m. is an excellent time for a good view.

Unfortunately we had no time to spare, so once more set forth. Ben Muich Dhui was reached at 10.34 a.m., about two and a half hours ahead of the time we had allowed ourselves. After this we made our first mistake—we took too direct a route for Glen Dee, and found the descent over the huge boulders very tiring indeed. By the time we reached the Dee we were only too ready to have another hour's rest, and enjoy lunch. We started off again at 1 p.m., and ascended Cairn Toul by the ridge to the left of Lochan Uaine. It was hot work, as the

sun was very strong, and the gradient very stiff. However 3.16 p.m. found us at the cairn. Although there was a fair breeze in the valley, there was not a breath of wind at the summit—in fact the first thing that caught my eye was a common tortoiseshell butterfly (*Vanessa urtica*) flitting about the cairn. I may say here that we saw very little wild life during the day. Some gulls near Loch Builg, a few deer at the head of Glen Gairn, several grouse, numerous ptarmigan, a snow-bunting on Beinn a' Bhuid, and a lizard on Cairngorm were about all we noticed. We found two ptarmigan's nests near the Feith Buidhe, and almost trampled on some chicks on Braeriach. We were also surprised at the small amount of snow, in comparison with what we saw at the same date the previous year. In 1907 the large plateau on Braeriach was one vast snow-field—this year there were merely a few scattered wreaths.

We left Cairn Toul at 3.30 p.m., and, crossing to the south of the Angel's Peak, reached the Wells of Dee at 5 p.m., and the cairn of Braeriach at 5.30 p.m. Here our photographs were taken, and we congratulated ourselves, as our day's work was practically completed. The scramble down to the lower bothy in Glen Eunach was easily accomplished, we arriving there about 7 p.m., just as our waggonette was driving up. We had arranged that it should wait for us from 7 to 9 p.m., and so we actually finished up in accordance with our timetable. The bath and dinner that were waiting for us at Aviemore were very much appreciated.

We had been nineteen hours on foot, with about three and a half hours of rests *en route*. As far as we can make out the distance covered was about thirty-eight miles, and the height climbed nearly eleven thousand feet. Of course we had two great points in our favour—long daylight, and perfect weather with no mist or wind. Then again the hills were all quite familiar to us, and we were in excellent training. It was a day that we shall remember all our lives with the pleasantest of memories.

TALES TOLD IN ROTHIEMURCHUS.

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

THE beautiful district of Rothiemurchus is doubtless well-known to most readers of this Journal, as it is a good base for some of the best excursions among the Cairngorms.

Rothiemurchus, 'the plain of the fir-trees', is the district lying between the north face of the western Cairngorms and the right bank of the Spey. In the second volume of this Journal, Mr. A. I. McConnochie says, 'The situation and aspect of Rothiemurchus are unsurpassed. Abounding in mountains and glens, and diversified with brattling burns, mountain tarns and lochs, and clad here and there with pine and birch, the beautiful, the picturesque, and the sublime are so harmoniously blended, that the very name, Rothiemurchus, suggests all that is attractive in Highland scenery.' In 'Memoirs of a Highland Lady,' written by Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys, formerly Miss Elizabeth Grant, is given a picturesque account of the family life of a Highland laird at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Along the western part of this district lie most of the places referred to by Mrs. Smith, the Doune, Ord Bain, Loch an Eilein with its castle and ospreys, Kennapole Hill and its cats' den; from the south of it stretches Glen Eunach, leading to the recesses of Braeriach and the Sgoran Dubh; from its south-east the famous rugged pass, the Larig Ghruamach, leads to Deeside and Braemar.

In Rothiemurchus we have spent many pleasant holidays, in the first of which we made the acquaintance of the old carpenter of Inverdrue, William Gordon, then somewhat bent and enfeebled with rheumatism, but in his earlier days a fine specimen of the stalwart and active Highlander. To the end of his life his face lit up and his voice rang firm as he recounted long tramps across the hills and through the glens; and with quiet conviction of their

absolute truthfulness he told stories of the supernatural, which he insisted are not to be classed as 'superstitious' because they dealt with things that actually happened. He held the ancient Highland belief that those born at midnight are endowed with prescience of coming deaths, and, having himself been so born, he had numerous strange experiences to relate. He did not believe in the existence of fairies, and when he told a fairy tale he prefaced it by saying roundly that it was a lie.

Some of his stories are here reproduced, not with the picturesque speech in which he told them, nor with the divagations into local genealogy and topography, and the personal allusions that, while they so often broke the thread and delayed the progress of the narration, yet added to it a rugged charm, but with as near an approach to his simple style as our southron pen is capable of.

The first time we heard William Gordon tell a story was on the first day we met him. A bazaar was to be held in the Inverdrue schoolroom; he was doing some carpentry work, and we were hanging up drapings. Falling into chat, we chanced to say something about Highlanders and their superstitions. He was silent for a considerable period, and then said that perhaps Highlanders were superstitious, but he would tell us something he had seen himself. Then followed the first story set down here. The other stories were told at later times, usually at the close of the day when we were seated at the kitchen fire indulging in tobacco and gossip—a Highland *ceilidh*.

1. I was sent with a mate to do some work at Gaick Lodge in preparation for the shooting season. Two women were at work inside, cleaning the house. At mid-day, when we men knocked off for dinner, we were sitting having a smoke, when we saw a woman busy washing clothes at the bend of the burn above the Lodge. As I thought both the women were inside the house, I was somewhat surprised, and took occasion to pass the windows and saw them both there. I went back again and saw the stranger woman still at her clothes-washing. I then

spoke to the older woman at the house about what I had seen; but she took it as a matter well-known to her, and simply remarked, 'Aye! is she washing there the day?'

2. When I was a youth I served my apprenticeship at the Boat of Insh. Our workshop was on the east side of the Spey, near the waterside, overlooking the ferry and the ford, and we had charge of the ferry boat. The two older men at the place had a quarrel, and for a time were not on friendly terms, so that when one of them went to the neighbouring town of Kingussie and did not return before nightfall, the other refused to sit up to ferry him over, and went off to bed. I knew that the absent man would probably return in liquor, and might recklessly try to swim his horse across the stream if the boat did not answer his hail; and being fearful as to consequences I decided to sit up and await his return. The serving-maid also sat up, and to pass the time started baking. In order that we should readily hear and answer the hail for the boat, we kept open the back door of the house, which gave access to the river bank.

At midnight I heard a halloo from the opposite bank, but not in the expected voice. I at once quitted the house, answered the call, and started towards the boat. Before I could reach it, the cry was repeated, and I again answered it. While I was loosing the boat from the big stone to which it was tied, the cry came a third time, and my answer was given with some touch of annoyance. As I neared the opposite bank I looked out for the man's grey horse, but it was not to be seen, nor was there anyone in sight. But the man was in the habit on such occasions of making brief visits to a friend's house on the road near, and, drawing the boat a little way up on the gravel, I went on to the road to look for him. Not finding him there, I began to suspect that some one was playing a joke on me by hiding in the bushes on the river-side. I therefore called out that anyone wishing to use the boat should come out of hiding at once, as I would not stay to be trifled with. No one appeared, and I returned to

the boat. I was surprised to find that I had as much difficulty in shoving the boat off as though she were heavily laden. Thinking that perhaps some people had slipped on board while I was on the road, I looked under the deck that was provided for horses and vehicles, but found no one there. I was alone on the boat, but she rowed just as though a large company were in her. When I had crossed and was again securing the boat, I seemed to hear the steps of people quitting the boat and stepping on the gravel of the river side, and I strained my eyes against the dimly lighted sky in the vain endeavour to see who were there. But I could see no one, and with a feeling not much removed from alarm I went up the bank and towards the house. When I reached the garden gate I found myself unable to move, and stood still for some few minutes, while I distinctly heard, but could not see, some wheeled vehicle come along the road on the far side of the stream and turn down towards the ford. Filled with terror, I rushed into the house and fell down fainting.

When I recovered I found myself surrounded by the whole household, applying various remedies. They were eager in their enquiries as to what had happened, and I told them what I have related above.

Several days later, while we were at work in the shop, we heard a halloo from the opposite bank. I at once said that the voice was that of my strange midnight adventure. We stepped to the window that commanded a view of the opposite landing place of the ferry, and there saw a group of about a score of people waiting to be ferried across. It was at once remarked that they looked like a funeral party, but that they had no coffin with them. My master said that as I had answered the call in the midnight, so now I should answer it in daylight, and I did so. When I embarked the party, I said to them that I had already ferried them across a few nights ago. They made various comments on my story, but an elderly man among them gravely remarked that it was very likely, as they were actually a funeral party coming to a burial at Insh church-

yard, and they were to meet the corpse at the ferry. When we had landed we were halted at the garden gate, and whiskey was served round. While we were standing for this, the hearse was heard and seen driving along the road on the far side of the stream, and turning down towards the ford.

3. One night my wife and I were returning home down the east Speyside road. We had our little child with us, carrying it by turns. As we passed near South Kinrara, my wife with the child being on one side of the narrow road and I on the other, I chanced to turn and look behind me, and saw a corpse light coming along the road after us. I said to my wife, "Come across here, and let this pass." She came across, though she could not see what I spoke of, and asked, "What is it?" "Nothing that will harm you," I answered, "but stand, and let it pass." It passed, and my wife was greatly alarmed as I still spoke of what was invisible to her. As the light moved on, now in front of us, I asked her whether she could not yet see it, and as she could not, I tried an old method of making such things visible to people who have not of themselves the power of seeing them. I said to her, "Put your foot on my foot, and look out under my outstretched arm." She did this, and exclaimed, "I see it now."

A few days later a funeral party passed along the road, to the neighbouring Rothiemurchus churchyard.

4. The first time I saw a corpse light was when I was a small boy. I was out one evening with my grandmother, who was fetching water from a spring not far from the north end of Loch an Eilein. As we walked along I said, "What a bonnie licht is yon," but my grandmother did not answer. Again I spoke, "Grandmother, what a bonnie licht is yon." She said, "You see fine things, laddie; what-like licht is it?" I told her that it was a blue light, and pointed down the valley whereabout I saw it. After we had been in the house awhile we went out again and my grandmother asked me whether the light was still

visible. I replied that it was, and then she said that she also saw it, and she told me what it was, and what it meant.

A few days later a funeral party passed along the road where we had been, and along where the light had shone.

5. When I was a water-bailiff on the Spey fishings, I was out on duty one night with my mate. We sat among the junipers on the west side of Ord Bain, watching a stretch of spawning ground above the Doune. Through the silence of the night there came a sound not unlike the barking of a deer, which indeed I thought it was. The sound passed us, and travelled down-stream in the direction of Rothiemurchus churchyard. As it passed, thinking it made by a deer, I exclaimed, "I wish I had my knife in you." My mate answered, "You would better have it in yourself." I asked what he meant, and he told me that the sound was one familiar to him, and was a *bodach aibhse*, a spirit-cry, like that of a banshee, foretelling a death.

And in a few days a funeral passed along the road taken by the cry.

6. Some years ago, when there was a ferry boat on the Spey near the Doune, a bell hung on the west side of the stream, by which signal might be given by anyone needing the boat. One night when I was on watch as water bailiff near the Rothiemurchus churchyard, I heard three muffled strokes given by the church bell. Thinking for the moment that someone, perhaps a poacher, was testing whether I was about or not, I made my way quickly to the enclosure; but the untrodden snow that covered it showed that no one had been there, and that no human hands had pulled the bell-rope.

The next morning the good-wife at the neighbouring lodge asked me whether I had been out the previous night, and when I said that of course I had, she further asked whether I had heard someone ringing the ferry-bell late in the night, for her daughter, who slept up in the attic of the house, had heard it about midnight. I then told her that it was not the ferry-bell she had heard, but the church

bell, and that no mortal had pulled the rope. "Ah!" said she, "then poor Mr. Rutherford will not be long," naming the minister, then lying ill.

And in but a few days he was dead.

7. My grandmother believed in fairies, and told me a story of a thing that she actually heard and saw when she was living farther down the Spey valley. She was once carting home the peats along with several of her young companions, among whom was a girl who was in general disfavour with them. As they passed a fairy knoll in the valley they heard music proceeding from it. They stood awhile listening to it, and then some of them called out that if the fairies would play another tune they should have this particular girl as their reward. The tune changed, and as they started to resume their journey the girl fell dead.

8. A man preparing for the christening feast of his child went to fetch a jar of whisky, and a friend accompanied him. On their return with the burden, as they were passing a fairy knoll they heard lively dance music proceeding from it, and saw a door standing open in it, and the fairies dancing inside. The man carrying the whisky jar said that he would go in and join the dancers, but his friend would not enter, and went home. When, however, after several days the missing man did not return home, suspicion of foul play was directed against his companion, and his story of the fairy ball was derided. He stood his trial, and was condemned as guilty of murder. But by vigorous pleading he got execution of his sentence delayed for a year.

On the anniversary of the fairy ball he was allowed to go to the fairy knoll. He found again the door open, music being played, and his friend gaily taking part in the ball, the jar of whisky still on his shoulder. Boldly entering, he insisted that his friend should quit the ball and come home. But the dancer replied that they had not yet finished the original reel, and that it would be

absurd to come away so soon. He was incredulous when told that he had been there a whole year, and was convinced only after his return by finding his baby more than a year old.

9. A woman living at Guislich, near Loch Phitiulais, had a baby of a happy, well-tempered disposition. One day she left it in its cradle, alone in the house, while she was milking. When she returned she found it crying, and indeed its whole manner seemed completely altered. It was continually peevish and ill-tempered, and cried frequently. She was much troubled about the change, and held numerous consultations with neighbouring wives. Eventually it was decided that the baby was a fairy changeling, and that her own baby had been taken away. She was advised by those learned in such matters to take the changeling and throw it from Coylum Bridge into the pool of the Druie below, when her own child would be restored to her. This she did; and as the changeling fell from her hands towards the water, it altered in appearance to that of a little old man, who exclaimed that if he had known beforehand what she was about to do, he would have brought disasters upon her. Then he disappeared in the stream. When she got back home she found her own happy baby safe in its cradle.

MIDSUMMER IN GLEN BRITTLE.

BY H. C. BOYD.

“But in the prime of the summer time
Give me the Isle of Skye.”

So sang Alexander Nicolson more than forty years ago—better known, perhaps, as Sheriff Nicolson, as true-hearted a son of Skye as ever lived. He knew it and loved it with all the passionate soul of the Celt, and nothing in Skye held his affections more deeply than the range of A'Chuillion—The Coolin. Many of its peaks he was the first to climb, and one of them, the highest of the range, was subsequently named in honour of him, its pioneer—Sgurr Alasdair, or the Peak of Alexander.

From Nicolson's day the popularity of the Coolin may be roughly dated. It is now unquestionably accepted as the finest climbing ground in the British Isles. Men who have made big mountaineering reputations in the Alps come to the Coolin, and are conquered by its spell; year after year they return. The beauty, the mystery, the savage grandeur of these hills, the serrated ridges and shattered pinnacles, the wild corries, the majestic gloom of Loch Coruisk, exercise a perpetual fascination.

Glen Brittle is beyond a doubt the best centre for those who wish to see and do the Coolin. Sligachan, though it has great charms of its own, with its outlook on the princely peak of Sgurr nan Gillean, suffers from the disadvantage of lying at one extremity of the range, and the long walks over the rough moorland before reaching the hills are rather trying. Glen Brittle is free from these drawbacks. It is close to the centre of things. True, it has no hotel, and it is somewhat difficult to reach; but once you are there, and if you are content with the simple accommodation and homely fare of the shepherd's cottage, with its stores of scones and fresh eggs and

unlimited supplies of rich milk, your lot is one to be envied.

It is an enchanting spot. You are surrounded by meadows of soft green grass, brilliant with countless daisies and other wild flowers, rich pasture for the sheep of the glen. The grassy slopes mount straight above you to some of the wildest corries of the Coolin, above which again are to be seen the black rocky crags of Sgurr Alasdair and Sgurr Dearg, wreathed with mists or piercing the blue of the summer sky. Seaward stretches Loch Brittle, with its firm hard beach of the finest sand, washed from the mountain tops. Further out at sea one can see the low lying shores of Canna and the graceful mountain outline of Rum, and, in the far distance, bounding the horizon, the long sweep of the outer Hebrides. In such a scene and amid such surroundings you can lazily dream through a summer day, listening in peaceful content to the murmuring life of the glen and the songs of the thrushes in the trees. If it is wet, and the burns come roaring down in spate, you can ply the rod for brown trout. But wet or fine, if you are a lover of the hills you will attempt to scale the peaks.

June is proverbially the month to see Skye at its best, and it was in June of last year, during the glorious midsummer week, that I made my first acquaintance with Glen Brittle. We were a party of six, with headquarters in Mr Campbell's cottage, half of us, however, sleeping for preference in a tent perched on a grassy knoll close at hand. Collarless and hatless, and in the oldest of clothes, we lived a thoroughly primitive life, free from the trammels of civilisation. And what days we had! Skies almost cloudless, a clear cool air, and brilliant sunshine, tempered by refreshing breezes from the sea.

We had been greatly attracted by a recently published account of some very fine climbs to be had on a ridge of Sgurr Sgumain, above Corrie Lagan. So to Corrie Lagan we bent our first steps. The lower part of the Corrie is walled in by what has been described as the grandest precipice in the Coolin, a notable feature of which is a

magnificent pinnacle called the Cioch, about half way up the face. Below this pinnacle stretches a gigantic slab of bare rock, lying at an angle so steep that it would be hardly possible to ascend it but for the presence of a deep fissure or crack running right up it, which affords secure holds for the hands and feet. This crack we followed. The climbing was not difficult, and growing impatient of its simplicity we diverged to the right, and climbed the rock by a series of chimneys and clefts, till we reached a spot where it was necessary to traverse out horizontally on to the slab. This movement required care and some delicacy of balance, and the situation was a sensational one, as practically the whole height of the slab lay below. Our leader, safeguarded by a strong hitch of the rope, succeeded in climbing from this point to a position of perfect security in a deep gully above, bounding the top of the slab, and once he was up, his companions, held by the rope, followed rapidly. The gully led gently downwards to the right, and abutted on a knife-edge of rock, beyond which rose the strange pinnacle of the Cioch, our immediate destination. A short vertical climb brought us to the broad platform which formed the top.

It was a sublime situation. One writer has enthusiastically compared the Cioch to one of the Aiguilles of Chamonix, though it is not a mountain summit. It juts out rather more than half-way up the precipice, of which a grand view is obtained. Right beneath us, hundreds of feet below, lay Corrie Lagan, hemmed in by giant walls of rock and jagged peaks; further down were the grassy swards of the glen, and then there was the boundless ocean, shining in the sun, studded with islands. Truly a noble view!

After a short rest we completed the climb to the top of Sgurr Sgumain, meeting with various difficulties on the way. The ridge extending from this summit to the top of Sgurr Alasdair is very narrow and broken, but except at one point it is not really difficult. It may be remarked in passing that the rocks, like all the rocks in Skye, abound in magnificent holds for hand and foot, and hence are

much easier than they look. The predominant feature of the Coolin rock (gabbro) is that the surface is extraordinarily rough, and bristling with sharp excrescences, so much so that a day spent on these ridges leaves the hands, and especially the tips of one's fingers, in a very tender state, and a few days of this work would strip them of cuticle. The use of gloves is almost a necessity, at least until the hands get hardened. We lingered on the way, enjoying the perfect evening on those serene heights, and it was not till half-past eight that we reached the top of Sgurr Alasdair—a noble peak, exceedingly sharp, and bounded by gaunt precipices. Here we crowned the delights of the day by watching a glorious sunset flushing with gold the sea and the distant isles of the West. Then down we rattled by the scree of the great Stone Shoot of Alasdair, the most execrable place on the mountains that it has ever been my lot to be in. Myriads of loose stones, poised at the maximum degree of instability, moved down with us at every step, and at one place a small avalanche of these stones was started, which continued for at least a couple of minutes, with the most deafening clamour.

Our day on Sgurr Alasdair and the Cioch may be taken as typical of many others that we enjoyed, though the weather was not always so perfect. It will suffice for descriptive purposes. The enumeration of other climbs would possess little interest except for mountaineers. But for those who have not seen it, the Inaccessible Pinnacle of Sgurr Dearg deserves a few words. "Inaccessible" no longer, for it is now often climbed, still the name clings to it. But inaccessibility apart, in all truth it is one of the strangest obelisks ever perched on the top of a mountain. Perhaps obelisk is not the correct term, though suggesting something abrupt and towering. In this case the Pinnacle is long and narrow, with practically vertical sides over 100 feet high. If a comparison of the majestic with the familiar is permissible, it may be likened to a huge slice of bread. The route up the longer side affords a most interesting climb, a climb, too, which requires great care, for in places the crest narrows to but a foot in

width, and the drop on either hand is trying to a person with weak nerves. At the top the climber is compensated for his efforts by a luxuriant bed of moss, on which he may lounge in dreamy ease while he feasts his eyes on the sublime mountain panorama stretched out around him.

Truly those were great days, and loth was I to take my leave. I left my companions in Coire na Creiche, where they had moved their tent to spend a couple of those calm midsummer nights amid its fastnesses. I subsequently heard strange tales of the doings of a donkey which they had engaged for the transport of the baggage on the way up. This beast excelled, if possible, the obstinacy of Modestine in the Cevennes. During the night it was tethered to a rock by an Alpine rope, but in the morning neither donkey nor rope was anywhere to be seen, and on the return home the hapless climbers were condemned to be their own beasts of burden. All this I lost.

For me, my last evening in Skye was one of perfect peace, an evening to be remembered. As I tramped down toward Sligachan in the cool of the evening, the mists rolled up from the sea and slowly encircled the bases of the mountains. A long level band of fleecy whiteness extended right across Corrie Bhasteir, and above this the black peaks of Sgurr nan Gillean and Bhasteir, in strongest contrast of colour, thrust their sharp peaks up to the sky. Further off, and perhaps even more beautiful, a similar band of cloud wound round the massive base of Blaven. The rays of the setting sun striking across the low moorland flushed the dark rocks of the mountain with a ruddy glow and the clouds with a most delicate rosy light, save where the nearer slopes cast their shadow on the cloud, sharply changing the rose colour into cold grey. That was a picture for a painter, most fitting as a last impression of Skye, and climax to one of the finest mountain holidays I have ever spent.—*Inverness Courier.*

TOMINTOUL TO THE SHELTER STONE.

BY GEORGE ANDERSON.

IN making our annual pilgrimage into the fastnesses of the Cairngorms, it has hitherto been our wont to make our approach from Aviemore. Last year we decided upon a change of route, and who can say but that some day we may even desire a change from the Cairngorms themselves, although for the present, they afford us more than our hill-climbing proclivities call for. Consequently on August 8th the writer, accompanied by L—, detrained at Ballindalloch, and having the good fortune to secure seats on the motor just starting for Tomintoul—the horsed vehicle takes four hours on the journey—we arrived at that isolated upland village after ninety minutes run, and in time for a hot lunch. Our stock of provisions purchased and stowed away in our rucksacks, we were soon heading through the village with light hearts and eager steps.

We had intended that our route to Loch Avon should follow the course of the river of that name, but having heard at Tomintoul stories of interdicts and unwelcome receptions given to all and sundry who sought to pass that way beyond Inchrory, we reconsidered our plans. Consequently upon reaching Delnabo, where the Avon and the Water of Ailnack join forces, we “took to the hills” and kept to them through the entire length of our tramp to Loch Avon. We had thus almost from the start left the beaten track, to seek our own way thither with the aid of map and compass.

The day was getting well spent by the time we had placed five or six miles between us and Tomintoul, and our thoughts turned to the question of a shelter for the night. We had resolved to seek it in some sequestered nook or, if necessary, under the protection of a friendly juniper bush, but fortune directed our steps to the foot of Carn Ruadh-bhruaich, where we chanced upon a shepherd's

hut, in which we decided to pass the night. The situation of the hut was decidedly hygienic, and its condition likewise, as we subsequently found when we endeavoured to snatch a few hours' sleep, with the result that Sunday morning found us astir at daybreak, and by five o'clock we were again on the tramp.

The map showed that Loch Avon lay due S.W., and the compass that the cairn of Coire Riabbach lay in that direct line, so we shaped accordingly, and reaching the top, found the morning air keen as a razor edge, so quickening our steps in sympathy we made a rapid descent of the opposite side of the hill. Here we struck the Ailnack which at this point takes a somewhat remarkable knuckle-shaped bend. Turning suddenly to the right, as if seeking an outlet from an apparent *cul-de-sac*, it turns again as swiftly to the left and escapes through a deep and precipitous gorge dividing the hill we had just descended from its neighbour, Geal Charn Beag. Onwards, for the next five or six miles, was over a series of rolling hills, mostly heather clad, with here and there patches of dry bog, and an occasional bit of storm-scalped ground in the more elevated and exposed parts. Deer were now visible in several directions, and not a few lordly stags were picked out from amongst the more numerous hinds.

Save in one direction we had not as yet had any extended views worthy of special mention, but that prospect was a noble one, upon which we had been able to gaze at will throughout the day; we refer to that grand sub-range of mountains of which Ben Avon and Beinn a' Bhuird are the loftiest and most notable. The day being bright and clear, every detail was visible; the peaks, culminating in rocky masses resembling great warts, stood out against an unclouded sky, and the long extended slopes with their thin silvery streaks glistening in the sunlight marked the corries down which the mountains were hurrying their tribute of waters to the Avon. Having earned a rest and a meal after six hours' tramp, we decided to halt at a sequestered spot by the side of a small burn whose banks displayed a wealth of vegetation

and variety of plant life that were a veritable feast to the eye and would have gladdened the heart of a botanist. The perfect stillness of the morning was broken only by the crystal brook skipping and dancing merrily at our feet over its rocky bed. Lunch over and pipes hard agoing, we resumed our journey, which now lay in a steadily upward direction towards Creag Mhor.

So far, we had not consciously deviated from our direct line of route, for the way was devoid of difficulties throughout. Of steep faces or awkward edges, such as occasion sudden calls upon physical energy, there had been none. The going had been everywhere tolerable, and nowhere so vile as is to be experienced—say in the Larig Ghru.

As we made a gradual and easy ascent of Creag Mhor the ground became more and more storm-swept, and lying all round were patches of detritus which, as we crushed it under foot, reminded us of the eternal process of disintegration going on around us, and of the fact that the mountains themselves are in process of wearing away and even of ultimate disappearance. Having reached the Creag, we scrambled to the top of its rocky cairn to view the magnificent scene now opened up. Behind us were the rolling hills which faced us at early morning, and in front, looking through the pass over which Creag Mhor stands like a sentinel watching guard, we gazed into the great cavity at the bottom of which Loch Avon lies, and over which the crags and precipices frown to right and left, with Ben Muich Dhui in the background closing in the view with its snow-faced slopes. Higher up, to the right, Cairngorm rears its lofty head, and to the left Beinn Mheadhoin and Cairn Etchachan, each concealing patches of snow in their sun-defying recesses and gullies. Nearer, and to our more immediate right, Ben Bynac presented to us its by no means inconsiderable bulk and a clear view of its remarkable clustered group of rocky pillars, fashioned after no architectural order save that of nature. Turning our eyes to things in our still more immediate surroundings, we discovered at our feet something of more than passing

interest. Upon the block of stone on which we stood were a number of "pot-holes," varying in diameter from a foot to a foot and a half, and in depth from three to four inches. They were entirely circular and even, as if bored out with the precision of a mechanical tool.

Having reached Loch Avon, we chose the south side of the loch by which to approach the Shelter Stone, and it was well for our safety that we had so decided, as we were presently to realise. As we neared the head of the loch we noticed, far above us and on the heights opposite, several persons bearing downwards towards the Stag Rocks from the direction of Cairngorm. L—, who had been plagued with an appetite larger than our stock of provisions warranted, hugged the belief that they were bound for the Shelter Stone, and the hope that they would have supplies and to spare. It was a mistaken idea and a vain hope, however, as closer inspection with the aid of the glasses shewed that they were but day trippers, for they had no knapsacks, and their antics presently proved them to be singularly wanting in common sense when they commenced to loosen huge boulders which, bringing others in their train, tore down the gullies, punctuating their meteoric career by puffs of "smoke" and dust, followed by crack, clatter, and boom which reminded us of Tyndall's descriptions of stone avalanches in his "Glaciers of the Alps." They resumed their "fun" later, on the edge of the Stag Rocks themselves, hurling huge boulders over the sheer precipices some hundreds of feet in height. We had thus reason to congratulate ourselves that we had not come by the other side of the loch, where we could not have been seen by those above, and where the boulders would have intersected our course, many of which actually found their billet in the loch.

Towards evening the weather began to shew less favourable signs, the wind rising and bringing with it fitful showers of stinging rain, whilst cloud masses, breaking on the heights, were quickly dispersed, and hurried leeward. Strong gusts of wind swept down from Ben Muich Dhui, lifting spindrift from the surface of the loch to such

astonishing height as can only be accounted for by the force of the wind rushing through such a narrow defile. We were thus driven early to our night quarters under the Shelter Stone, to emerge from them at dawn, for we had to reach Aberdeen, where there were trains to be caught ere the clock took another turn, and there was a long twenty miles or so between us and any mode of conveyance thither.

The Cairngorm Club

A LONELY WANDER :
TAYNUILT TO GLEN DESSARRY.

BY WILLIAM BARCLAY.

“Oh ! for a breath o’ the moorlands
A whiff o’ the caller air ;
For the smell o’ the flowering heather
My very heart is sair.

“CHEERFUL as in a city, can we tread the houseless moor”—but on the present occasion it was from necessity and not from choice, that I did it alone. All arrangements had been made, accommodation secured even in the most out-of-the-way spots, and everything seemed propitious, when at the last moment Mac found himself unable to come. I travelled north by the “Midland,” and arrived in Edinburgh in the early morning, then went on to Perth, where I had a few minutes to spare before changing for Crieff. How beautiful and how fresh the country looked, and with what delight did I gaze on the old familiar landscapes—by Crieff and Comrie and St. Fillans to Loch Earn, up the narrow Glen Ogle to the corner where we get the surprise view of Loch Tay before rushing down by Luib and Loch Dochart to Crianlarich. The scene is now wilder as we steam onwards past Tyndrum and Glen Lochy to Dalmally and Loch Awe—Glorious Loch Awe ! soon, too soon, did we leave thee, and sweeping through the pass, draw up at our destination, Taynuilt.

Now that all the preliminaries had been disposed of, I started my holiday in earnest. It was about two o’clock, and as I had to reach a certain cottage in Glen Etive before nightfall, I made my way towards Bonawe ferry, the intention being to follow the track up the west side of Loch Etive. A few minutes after leaving the station I had a glimpse of the big hills—Ben Starav and Beinn Trilleachan—near the head of the loch, the bald yellow head of the latter seemingly rising to a greater elevation than that of the giant. The ferry crossed, I passed through

the quarry workings and their collection of workmen's houses, beyond which the road dwindled to a foot-path; and thus within half-an-hour of leaving the train I was alone in the wilds. "'Tis a vast glen," as Christopher North says, though no one can fully appreciate the deep meaning of these words till he has walked the glen from end to end, following the windings of the great sea loch by promontory and bay, in the lower reaches, and exploring the inmost corries of the great side glens that run up into the mists, in the upper. Houses there are few, now as then, road there is none till we reach the head of the loch; but here the similitude ends, for anyone now-a-days can "do" Glen Etive by steamer and coach in a one-day excursion, and from that, think they know the glen!

What an impressive sight is the head of the glen! I know many glen-heads, but none to equal this. On the right we have the noble mass of Ben Starav sloping down to the loch in graceful curves, and to the left Beinn Trilleachan rises steeply from the water; between these, but in the distance, appear the twin sugar loaves, the Buchailles of Etive, while the foreground is occupied by the great stretch of placid loch, with hills and glens and sky inverted in its depths. It was such a perfect day, and everything was so different from my usual surroundings, that in the enjoyment of it all, I simply dawdled the time; so much so, that before I reached the loch-head, the hills on the west were casting long black shadows. For the last two or three miles, in fact all along the base of Beinn Trilleachan, the track runs through a plantation of young trees, oaks and birches, and among these I gaily picked my way, reaching the loch-head at seven o'clock, then the Post Office, and in another two or three miles I arrived at my destination.

Next morning I had not even to lift my head from the pillow to know I was looking up the glen, for there were the Buchailles, its sentinels, already playing with the morning sunlight, while a few wisps of mist still gambolled along their steeply sloping sides. Ben Starav had impressed me so much on my way up the loch-

side, that I determined to give it my first attention. A bridge crosses the river just a little way below the schoolhouse, and a footpath led me over the moorland towards the gorge which the structure spans. The river was very low, but I could just imagine the scene in a flood. I followed the road that runs down to the keeper's house at Kinlochetive, leaving it, however, when I reached the Allt Mheuran and striking for the base of the northern shoulder of Ben Starav. This is a long, gradual ridge running right up to the summit, and forms the bounding western edge of the great north-eastern corrie of the mountain. When I had surmounted the first little shoulder I sat down to rest and admire my surroundings; it was too good a day to hurry—besides, why should I, had I not the whole length of it before me? As I sat I could see the people wending their way in twos and threes from up the glen and from down the glen towards the schoolhouse; for it is only every third Sunday that they have an opportunity of attending Divine service.

The ridge I was ascending contracted to a narrow neck between the two—north-eastern and western—corries, then it turned in an easterly direction rounding the tops of many narrow chimneys leading up from this N.-E. corrie. Just after this I reached the base of the final slope, and the prospect to the south now burst upon me. The prominent feature in this direction was the range of Ben Cruachan, which seemed to shut out everything else, though the whole length of Loch Etive, from the base of the mountain on which I stood right down to the narrows at Bonawe was also visible. While dodging about on the summit, I unearthed from the centre of the cairn a small bottle with the cards of two prominent members of the S. M. C. who had ascended the mountain from Inveroran, fourteen years ago; I added my own and replaced it.

Seen from a distance there are three prominences on the summit of Ben Starav, the highest, that which carries the cairn, being at the western end of the ridge; another, much about the same level though I daresay a few feet lower, is also situated at the corrie's edge but about a quarter of a

mile to the east of the first: while the other, Stob Coire Dheirg, at the extreme north-eastern end of the corrie, and at much the same elevation, surmounts a huge rocky buttress, which on the N.E. face is split into many long narrow chimneys, plunging down in appalling steepness to the corrie below. I went over both these points, in fact simply rounded the lip of the corrie, and then dropped down to the *col* and went up the short grassy slope to first a minor top and then the actual summit of Glas Bheinn Mhor (3258). This is a rather shapely hill, rising a regular cone at the head of the glen between Ben Starav and Stob Coir an Albannich. It seemed to be grassy on all sides, though on that to the west, which I descended, it was very steep and at some parts rocky. I squandered a good two hours here watching deer, and what not, then, as time was getting on, I descended directly to the Allt Mheuran, crossed it, and followed the right bank down to the road in Glen Etive.

On Monday I started up the glen, Bidean nam Bian, *the* summit of Argyllshire, being my objective, but first I was to cross Beinn Fhada, a dependency of the giant. Walking on to near Dalness, (to be precise, till I came to the Allt Fhaolain), I made straight for the steep slope in front of me, and slowly ascended by the right bank of the prominent waterfall that plunges down the hillside here. It was another hot day, and this was a very steep slope, so I got up rather slowly. I then turned sharply to the left and continued up the long gradual slope, and so on to the summit of Beinn Fhada (3497). A dense haze, which I took to be heat, had been gradually enveloping the distant hills for an hour or two, but when I reached the top and could look to the west, I found I had been mistaken and that a storm was approaching from the Atlantic. Also the temperature was falling, and I decided to descend direct to the Allt Fhaolain. On my way up I had noticed a faint track running along this glen, and thought it might be of use to me now. The whole hillside here was broken up into long ridges of jutting rock with narrow gullies and scree slopes between, and I soon found to my cost that I had not

chosen a very easy way down. The storm was also upon me, rain coming down pretty sharply, so I proceeded very carefully, worming my way through narrow chimneys or glissading down rattling scree slopes, at times disturbing a few deer, that, like myself, were seeking the valley. All along the bottom of these rocks, among the large blocks that formed the debris by the riverside, I noticed that the beautiful Parsley fern was exceedingly abundant. The glen now presented a very dismal appearance in contrast to the bright sunshine of a few hours ago: a general gloom seemed to envelop everything, being more pronounced of course in a deep and narrow valley. The rain had also settled into a persistent downpour, and, as a consequence, many little streams that had been dry for a month or more were once again brought into existence, playfully chasing each other down the steep hillsides. When I did reach the track I found it of little use, as it mostly ran through bogs, and now all these were sodden, so I had just to make my own "track." It seemed as if we were in for a bad night, for the mist was down to our very door and the rain was as thick as ever.

Tuesday was passed in the glen, loafing about, taking photographs and strolling up some of the little side glens.

I felt rather sorry next morning when I had to leave Glen Etive, for one could spend a week there, but I had no choice, being due in Glen Dessarry the following day. Since my arrival each morning seemed to outshine another in brilliance and to-day appeared to be the culminating point, for as I strode down the glen I seemed to think that never in all my life had I experienced such a breathlessly hot morning. I left the road just after passing Glenetive House, and crossed the moorland into the glen of the Allt a' Bhiarian, thus cutting off a corner. Then I got on to the track running up the left bank of the stream, and followed it westwards—a difficult job at times—till it vanished in the boggy moor. After that I just wandered on till I struck the little Lochan na Fola. There was no need for me to trouble about finding the beginnings of the track again as the moorland "going" was good, so I just

kept on towards a small glen that I knew would lead me down to Glen Creran. I got into the little pass below Beinn Fhionnlaidh and followed its babbling brook, till in about half an hour I found it opened into the larger Glen Ure. I could now see the red line of the path winding up the farther side but separated from me by a deep gorge, so I just kept on, and dropped into Glen Creran a little above Glenure farmhouse. The river was impassable here, so I wandered along its banks, upstream, for about a mile, till I was able to cross dryshod, and so get on to the road. Glen Creran I found was a very pretty glen, quiet, well-wooded in its lower and middle portions, and in its green pastoral upper reaches seemingly shut off from the world: this last no doubt being accounted for by the fact of its not being a thoroughfare. In about a mile I passed Salachail, the uppermost house in the glen, beyond which the road does not go. But the track for Ballachulish starts here and climbs directly up the hillside to a height of about a thousand feet, then it meanders over the breezy moorland for a couple of miles to the base of Beinn a' Bheithir, where it suddenly drops into Gleann an Fhiodh, and in another two miles opens on to the main road at Ballachulish. Some damming operations had been going on at a little lochan about mid-way, and this no doubt accounted for the well-marked nature of the track. I had a fine view of the top of Bidean nam Bian just before reaching the summit cairn; then I arrived under the steep stony slopes of the red mountain, Sgorr Dhearg, and had there not been a dip of nearly a thousand feet between us I should have been tempted to pay the summit a visit. As it was my path now zigzagged down to the valley, dropping 500 feet in a very short distance, and then, running round the slopes of Sgorr Dhearg led me into the little slate village of Laroeh. I had not been in the neighbourhood for ten years, and what was then a thriving hotel I now found converted into a fever hospital, so I had reluctantly to retrace my steps. In the evening I got out on the lawn in front of the house and secured a few photographs of a most gorgeous sunset. The sky had been absolutely cloudless the whole

day, but now clouds seemed to gather from all directions.

Next morning I left by the 7-40 steamer for Fort William; but what a change in the weather! the mist lay right round the hillsides to within a couple of hundred feet of the sea. The quickest and most direct way of reaching Loch Arkaig-head or Glen Dessarry from Fort William is to take train to Glenfinnan station, and then cross by the pass (1586) between Sgor Choilean and Streap, and so go down by Glen a' Chaoruinn to Strathan. That was my programme for the day. There was no improvement in the weather when we steamed westward by Corpach and along the length of Loch Eil, till after casting a glimpse down Loch Shiel we drew up at Glenfinnan, where I alighted. A well-marked path runs up the glen to Corryhully, which was pointed out to me by a friendly notice board, proclaiming at the same time the ground to be deer forest and private, with of course the usual "Trespassers will be prosecuted," so I entered the gate and followed the path up the riverside. This ended about half a mile beyond the cottage, but another then started climbing, with many windings, the side of Sgor nan Coireachan. That was then no use, so after noting it on my map, I kept straight on for the narrow V-shaped pass in front. The mist was hovering about the summit, but at times I could see sky beyond. At places there was a faint indication of a track, but at the top it completely disappeared, and as the ground fell steeply beyond into Glen a' Chaoruinn I had hopes of picking it up again; but no, there was no indication, and as the descent was mostly over boggy ground I did not much mind. About half way down the glen I crossed to the right bank of the stream to avoid some hillocks, and soon after this came within sight of the Glen Pean track, and made for that, knowing I was not far from Strathan. In about five minutes more I came upon a crowd of men clipping sheep, and was met by a headlong rush of about twenty dogs, each one of which seemed at first ready to swallow me.

My surmise of the previous evening proved correct, for the morning of Friday broke nice and clear, and it turned

out to be one of the hottest days of the month. The shepherds were off about 4 o'clock to scour the hills and hollows in search of stragglers, a most trying occupation for both men and dogs alike. I was in no hurry to start, but about 10 o'clock set off up Glen Dessarry. The road ends about a quarter of a mile beyond the house, but a footpath runs on to the next one—Upper Glen Dessarry—and then gradually dwindles away. Just after I had crossed Allt Coire nan Uth, I struck up the slope of Sgurr nan Coireachan, and so on to the summit (3125). I found two tops (north and south) about a quarter of a mile apart, and much about the same height, though I believe the northern is the higher. From this latter I had a splendid view. Sgor na Ciche looked a fine mountain with its twin peaks, and a little farther north Lurven played hide and seek among the mist. Loch Quoich was at my feet; I could look right down Glen Kingie till the eye rested on Loch Garry. To the west, through many narrow glens, one was led on to the Atlantic, on the bosom of which the Isle of Rum with its conical Sgurr nan Gillean, rose, one might say, almost aggressively, farther round, Skye was toned down by distance, but every peak of the Coolins could be recognised. Sweeping round towards the south, the eye was arrested by the huge bluff of Ben Nevis streaked with great patches of white, and farther round still was a regular sea of mountains with wave behind wave. From the summit I made the complete circuit of the corrie to Druim a' Chuirn (2980), descending direct to Glen Dessarry.

Saturday—the finish of my tramp—was to be a hard day, as I had to cover the 24 miles to Spean Bridge before 4 o'clock—the last train for the south leaving then. It was a good morning, and I got away by 7.30. There is an excellent road down to the pier at the loch-head. Beyond this, however, what is shown on the map as a secondary road, I found in reality was a very rough and nearly obliterated track which wound along the lochside, carefully rounding the bays and cutting off the promontories, mounting this hillock or bending round that, but all the while nothing more than the faintest scratch on the rough

hillside. Just before reaching Cuinich, the second house on the loch side, where I had some refreshing milk, I stepped on the upper limit of the road, and from there onwards, the surface was fairly good, except when the route ran through the shingle at the lochside, and then it certainly was rather trying. There was not another house now for five miles, so I kept up a steady pace, except when stopping to admire the scenery or take a photograph. There are some exceedingly pretty bays, but I could not stop to admire them, much as I should have liked. From Cuinich the road for a good many miles ran through woods, the cool of whose shade was very grateful. The next house passed was in ruins, but about a mile farther on I came to a keeper's cottage. It was after one o'clock when I reached the end of the loch, and found there was not time to go round by the Black Mile, so, notwithstanding the notice "Private," I took Lochiel's road past Achnacarry House, thus cutting off a couple of miles, though I did it reluctantly, as I believe the Mile Dorcha is very fine. I was now on the main road for Banavie, but soon left it to cross the canal at the locks, and then climb up hill again past the Mucomer Falls and the U.F. Church on its most commanding though it must be admitted bleak, position. While waiting on my train at Spean Bridge I had a chat with the local policeman, and when he learned where I had just come from, he quietly informed me that his beat extended as far west as Glen Dessarry, but that he had never been there in his life!

A GEOLOGIST ON CAIRNGORM.

BY JOHN MILNE, LL.D.

The name Cairngorm is a compound of the two Gaelic words *carn*, mountain, and *gorm*, green or blue. Whether *gorm* means green or blue in any particular name must be determined by the distance at which it is viewed. In Tullochgorum it must mean green, because the place is of low elevation and is not visible from a distance; but in Cairngorm it must mean blue, for near at hand it is bare and grey with stones, whereas seen from Carr Bridge, Nethy Bridge, or Tomintoul from a distance of ten or twelve miles over the heads of lower hills it is conspicuously blue.

Cairngorm is not a separate mountain by itself, but one of several summits in a large mountainous mass of granite extending eighteen miles in length from Loch Builg almost to the Spey, and twelve miles in breadth at the west end, but tapering towards the east end. About the middle it does not go so far north as Loch Morlich, and it stops short of Glen Derry on the south.

The granitic area is surrounded on all sides except the east by quartzite and schists, very old stratified rocks which have been changed by heat and pressure. Looking at the west side of Creag Pityoulish from Aviemore we see that its strata once horizontal are now bent and in some places highly inclined to the horizon, and hard strata rise up like dykes above the level of the softer beds. At the east end of the granitic area limestone comes in, and at Inchrory the Avon has eroded a deep gorge in the soft limestone, by which its upper reach has been diverted to the Spey instead of pursuing its original course eastward to the Don.

Though not the highest summit in the granite area, Cairngorm has given its name to the whole group, which is now generally collectively called the Cairngorm

Mountains or the Cairngorms. The group is divided into two parts by a deep ravine extending from north-west to south-east. To it the name Larig Ghru, the gloomy pass, has been given. It originated in a crack in the mountain mass, into which water charged with carbonic acid gas from the atmosphere descended. In long lapse of time the sides of the crack have been decomposed, and in the glacial epoch, when the land was deeply covered with snow, the loose parts were swept away by a snow-flow passing over the mountain mass. As the fall of snow is greater the farther north we go, the movement of snow was from north to south. In the course of several long glacial periods a wide gap was excavated to the depth of two thousand feet below the summits of the main mass. The highest level in the Larig Ghru is 2770 feet above sea, and when it is passed going south there are seen many blocks of granite which had got their corners rounded off when turning over and over under the ice sheet. Snow compressed by its own weight becomes solid transparent ice.

Another great crack began at the east end of the granite mountainous area and travelled westward but had stopped without reaching to the Larig Ghru. This, under the long continued action of rain, carbonic acid gas and moving snow, has given us Glen Avon and Loch Avon. The excavated material was at first carried by moving snow and ice straight out to the east. The upper part of the Don valley is not a granite area, but blocks of granite from Glen Avon may be seen on both sides of the hollow. Latterly the excavation of the soft limestone from Inchrory towards the north diverted the ice flow to the Spey, which is proved by the presence of blocks of granite in the bed of the Avon as far down as Ballindalloch. The sweeping action of snow and ice in Glen Avon has been most thorough. Not an ounce of loose matter was left in the whole Glen. The Shelter Stone and other blocks of rock at the head of Loch Avon have all fallen from the cliffs around it after the ice period had passed away.

Equally severe atmospheric and glacial action is seen on the north side of the mountain mass. West of the Larig Ghru we see, far up Braeriach, corries excavated by snow and running water, where carbonic acid has decomposed the hard granite and converted it into soft impalpable china clay. And at the base we see Loch an Eilein and Loch Eunach, the work of glaciers descending the steep mountain sides. The quantity of matter removed by snow and running water has been enormous. Besides the fine sand which is clothed by the firs of the Glenmore and Rothiemurchus Forests—all of which came from the mountains—there are blocks of granite in the bed of the Spey as far down as Boat of Garten, and an enormous quantity of fine clay had been carried to the sea by the Spey.

East of the gap we have Loch Morlich, formed by the digging of the ends of long glaciers sliding down the mountain sides. Farther east there is a ravine issuing from near the north side of Loch Avon which becomes the bed of the Nethy. This was excavated by ice in Glen Avon finding a weak place which had originated in a deep crack.

As the water of the Spey runs to the north-east we are apt to suppose that the flow of snow and ice was always in the same direction; but in some great glacial epoch ice from the lofty mountains of Norway filled the bed of the North Sea to overflowing. The lowest part of the neck between the Spey and the Spean valleys is only 848 feet above sea level, and the Norway ice entered the Moray Firth and pressing against the glacier of the Spey forced it back over the *col*, when it descended to the Atlantic and speedily melted. On the other hand it appears that at some time ice from the west side crossed the *col* and descended to the Moray Firth. These extraordinary movements might have happened with the land at its present level, but it is quite certainly proved by raised sea beaches that the land was at least 400 feet deeper into the sea at some time than it is now, which would have facilitated the flow of ice up the Spey valley.

There is Old Red Sandstone Conglomerate rock in the

lower part of the valley of the Spey, but it does not extend farther southward than Mulben, where the railway crosses the river. Old Red Sandstone pebbles are easily distinguished from seaside or river pebbles of similar size. They have been immersed in water coloured red by volcanic ashes and tinged by them externally; but the colour has not penetrated to the heart, and if they are broken by a hammer it is seen that the redness gradually diminishes from the surface to the centre. Dunnottar pebbles are cracked from pressing against one another in the conglomerate bed. Though this is not seen in the Spey valley pebbles, they have the characteristic colour-mark. Old Red Sandstone pebbles are found at Aviemore, and this is conclusive evidence that ice from the Moray Firth has at one time passed up the Spey valley as far at least as Aviemore. For several miles above and below Aviemore Bridge there is no fall on the Spey, and this may be attributed to the contraction of the valley above Aviemore, which led to greater friction of the ice-flow on its bed. The effect of this would have been to deepen the valley till it again opened out, and after the ice age passed away there would have been a lake in the Spey valley above and below Aviemore.

It is no doubt due to the passage of ice along the Spey valley that the surface of the ground is so uneven and hummocky; and to the same cause must be attributed the numerous lochs, large and small, seen in the valley and on its margins. Where the valley became contracted, or where additions to the valley ice were made from side ravines and burn courses, an increased pressure on the ground below the ice resulted, and this caused excavation in one place and heaping up in another.

The beds of stratified sand seen in the valley of the Spey, above and below Aviemore, are of various ages. The level of the river there is now about 700 feet. Some of the sand layers go up to 800 feet, and as they had been laid down in floods of the river, they show that the Spey valley has been excavated to the depth of 100 feet.

The flat area at the base of the Cairngorms, covered

by Glenmore and Rothiemurchus Forests, was excavated by coalescing glaciers from the Cairngorm Mountains on the south and Meall Bhuachaille and Creagan Gorm on the north. The outflow was by Loch Pityoulish, which discharges into the Spey near Kincardine church. The flat area slopes from 1100 feet near Glenmore Lodge to 700 feet at the Spey; but the ice found a lower route by Pityoulish which is only 674 feet above sea. The fine sand that covers the forest area was laid down in floods of the Allt Mor, Allt Ban, and Allt na Feithe Duibhe. The Geological Survey Memoir of the Abernethy district says that the great deposit of sand in the valley of the Dorback burn was made when its water was dammed back by the upper end of a retreating glacier in the route of the Nethy burn. If this were so, then the outflow of the lake thus produced must have been by the Allt na Feithe Duibhe to Glen More. This would have augmented this burn and helped to inundate the forest area and increase the surface deposit of sand.

AN ASCENT OF CAIRNGORM.

Glenmore Lodge was named as the rendezvous in July of 1908 for members of the Cairngorm Club who were to come on from Nethy Bridge, and the writer and his wife who were at Aviemore. In 1855 there were fewer mountaineers than there are now, and the writer was then unable to find a companion in a walk which he proposed to take from Aviemore to Braemar. Rather than abandon the design of seeing Loch Avon, he made the journey all alone *via* Cairngorm, Loch Avon and Ben Muich Dhui.

From Glenmore Lodge to the summit of Cairngorm is four miles in a direct line. At first the road goes downhill to a bridge over the Allt Mor, which is 1060 feet above sea, and the summit of Cairngorm is fully 3000 feet higher. Crossing the burn the road passes

through a wood for more than a mile. Some very large ant-hills were seen, each under the shelter of a fir. Ants were hurrying about in all directions, most of them empty-handed, but some carried needles of Scots fir either to serve as food or to add to the heap. Whatever may be the daily bread of ants, they enjoy a meal of flesh when it can be got. The dead body of a wood-pigeon lying in the path was swarming with ants.

It was rather a surprise to see that the stones in the bed of the Allt Mor were not granite but fragments of stratified rock. At a mile and a half from Glenmore Lodge the wood ends and the path begins to climb the hill. The route lies straight to the top, and there remain two and a half miles to go, with a rise of 3000 feet. On the whole, though the way is steep, it is best to make straight for the top of the mountain and not to diverge far to the right or the left. By keeping to the right, however, and following the course of the burn upward, some interesting rock faces may be seen. The granite lies in layers sloping downwards as if they had oozed at intervals in a semi-fluid state from some vent farther up the hill.

On leaving the wood and making some progress uphill, a change is seen in the stones at the surface. Quartzites and schists give place to fragments of granite, and some very large granite boulders are passed, lying where they were dropped by a glacier. Rows of very fresh-looking granite stones are seen which slope downwards. These mark the east margin of a glacier which came down the bed of the Allt Mor, and they indicate that the most recent glaciation was not on so great a scale as some of the previous had been.

Within a mile of the summit, where the surface is bare and stony and no trace of a path can be seen, "stone-men" have been placed at intervals to show the way to the top, which is not always in sight. Large quantities of pure white stones are seen lying on the surface, arranged in lines. When the granite mass of the Cairngorm Mountains was first formed it was much loftier than it is now. In cooling, it became fissured by long and deep cracks such

as have been already mentioned, but in movements of the crust of the earth some parts of the rocks were compressed and crushed, while in other parts, probably during elevation, there had been tension or stretching of the rocks. By this means deep-seated fissures were made which did not reach the surface. Tension fissures are not long, but they are numerous and run parallel to one another. These fissures, if at a great depth from the surface, would in the wet season of the year become full of hot water containing quartz in solution. In the dry season the water would pass away leaving quartz on the walls of the cracks. In the course of time the fissures became completely filled up with quartz. If there remained cavities not fully charged with quartz they would be lined with crystals, but not with those called Cairngorm crystals. These were formed in small pockets or cavities interspersed through the body of the rock. In granite quarried on Bennachie and used as a building stone at Oyne, there may be seen numerous very small cavities containing crystals adherent to the wall at one side and free at the other. These serve to show the mode of the formation of the large valuable Cairngorm crystals.

When glacial epochs came, and coats of snow hundreds of feet thick covered the mountain mass and crept slowly towards the sea, so much of the upper part was removed that the quartz in the fissures and the crystals in the cavities came to be at the surface, though originally deep in the heart of the granite mass.

When nearing the summit, a slight diversion to the east would bring the thirsty traveller to a spring of pure water issuing from the ground. This is now called "The Marquis's Well"; but five and fifty years ago it was a treacherous bog in which the unwary traveller, anxious to get a drink, ran some risk of wetting his feet. Since then the bog has been cleared out, and the "well eye" may be approached in comfort. Seeing that this well is within 100 feet of the summit level it is surprising to find it flowing at all times of the year. Probably there are in the cone on the mountain top some cracks made too recently

to become filled up with quartz, and the eye of the well may be so small that it does not allow the reservoirs in the cone to empty themselves during the intervals between rains.

On reaching the summit a good view all around was obtained; but it was felt that a useful thing would have been a small chart with Cairngorm in the centre and lines radiating from it and pointing to the principal mountains and places within the range of vision. Some far-off hills to the south-west were identified, and most of the Cairngorm summits were in sight. By turning westward and going along the crest of the ridge, Ben Muich Dhui could have been reached and Loch Avon would have been seen by the way. Most tourists, however, prefer to take Loch Avon in the way to Ben Muich Dhui, and go down into the glen at the head of the loch. The descent is easy at first, but steep near the bottom.

Loch Avon is about 2400 feet above the sea, and cannot be seen from the top of Cairngorm, which rises to 4084 feet. It may, however, be seen by going south-east from the summit to a group of rocks, the position of which is not indicated on the Ordnance Survey maps, nor has it been provided with a name. For the sake of identification it might be called Creag nan Cuach, rock of the cups, because on the top of one block there are several deep round cups about three inches wide. They are smooth inside, and evidently the work of natural agencies. In the glacial epochs Cairngorm was clothed with a mantle of ice, hundreds of feet thick, produced by the melting of snowfalls by day and refreezing at night. So long as the ice had a uniform slope in its progress down the sides of the mountain its surface remained unbroken; but, in passing over a steep place, cracks widening into crevasses were formed. Alternating snowfalls and heavy rains produce innumerable streams on ice-clad mountains, and a stream coming to a crevasse and plunging into it would have gained great force in its fall. Water swirling in the crevasse and carrying round grains of quartz could in long lapse of time have eroded the holes in the rock. The cup

nearest the edge was formed first, and slight changes in the place of the crevasse altered the position of the others. Similar cups are seen in rocks in other places among the Cairngorms. The seams in the cup-crag look as if at it molten granite in a semi-fluid state had welled up from the interior and slowly oozed out. This would account for the resistance it has made to abrasion by the ice sheet.

Though the day was fine there was a slight wind, and it was too cold to make a long stay at the cairn on the summit. A violent gale must have passed over it from the south-west, and other signs indicated that this had been a recent occurrence. The upper part of the cairn has been moved bodily towards the north-east several inches without displacing individual stones. Further evidence of the force of the wind was seen in descending. Numerous small hollows were observed, the bottoms of which were covered with angular grains of quartz. A shower of these had been swept along by the wind and driven with great force against the north-east sides of the hollows. There they had worn away the fog or heather growing on the surface, and the look of the vegetation indicated that the gale had been raging not very long before.

The surface of Cairngorm is very bare, and rare plants need not be looked for. A species of willow grows in the wet places at springs, even within 100 feet of the summit of the hill. The recumbent stems creep on the surface and send up shoots which must die down in winter. It is probably *Salix herbacea*, Least Willow. Dr Macmillan states that *Drosera rotundifolia* grows very abundantly on the north shore of Loch Morlich. From what he says it might be looked for towards the west end. On the north shore also may be seen a large stone which gives the loch its name. Morlich is a corruption of the Gaelic words, *mor leac*, meaning big stone.

A WEEK'S CLIMBING IN SKYE.

BY JOHN R. LEVACK, M.B.

GRAND as the Cairngorms undoubtedly are, and especially so in winter, when they afford almost boundless scope for snow work, they are lacking in one thing—the facilities they give for good rock-climbing are meagre and unsatisfactory, and the climber who would indulge in this fascinating branch of his sport must go afield. To nowhere can he go where the conditions desired are so nearly perfect as on the Coolin in Skye.

Accordingly, a party of three, Messrs. William Garden, W. A. Reid and the writer, under the leadership of the first named, set out for the "Isle of Mist" one day last September, bent on a week's "ridge-wandering" over the most wonderful hills in the British Isles. As we wished to be as close as possible to the great peaks, we obtained accommodation at the shepherd's house at Glen Brittle, and Miss Campbell, the shepherd's sister, had everything in readiness for us when we arrived at 1 a.m. from Portree, after a six hours' heartbreaking drive. Without doubt, the proper way to reach Glen Brittle from Portree is to drive to Sligachan, stay over night, and walk the rest of the way next day.

Our lodging was situated within a mile of the western slope of Sgurr Dearg, whilst the tops of Gobhar, Bannachdich, Alasdair, and Sgumain, less than two miles away, could be seen from a grassy mound in front of the house. On looking out next morning we found everything shrouded in dense mist, and it was past mid-day before we set out to explore the burn coming out of Coire a' Ghreadaidh. This burn has cut out a rather remarkable gorge in the foot hills, in some parts about 100 feet deep, but, as one follows it up into the corrie, it comes to the surface again and tumbles in noisy fashion over the

Sgurr
Sgumain.

Sgurr
Alasdair.

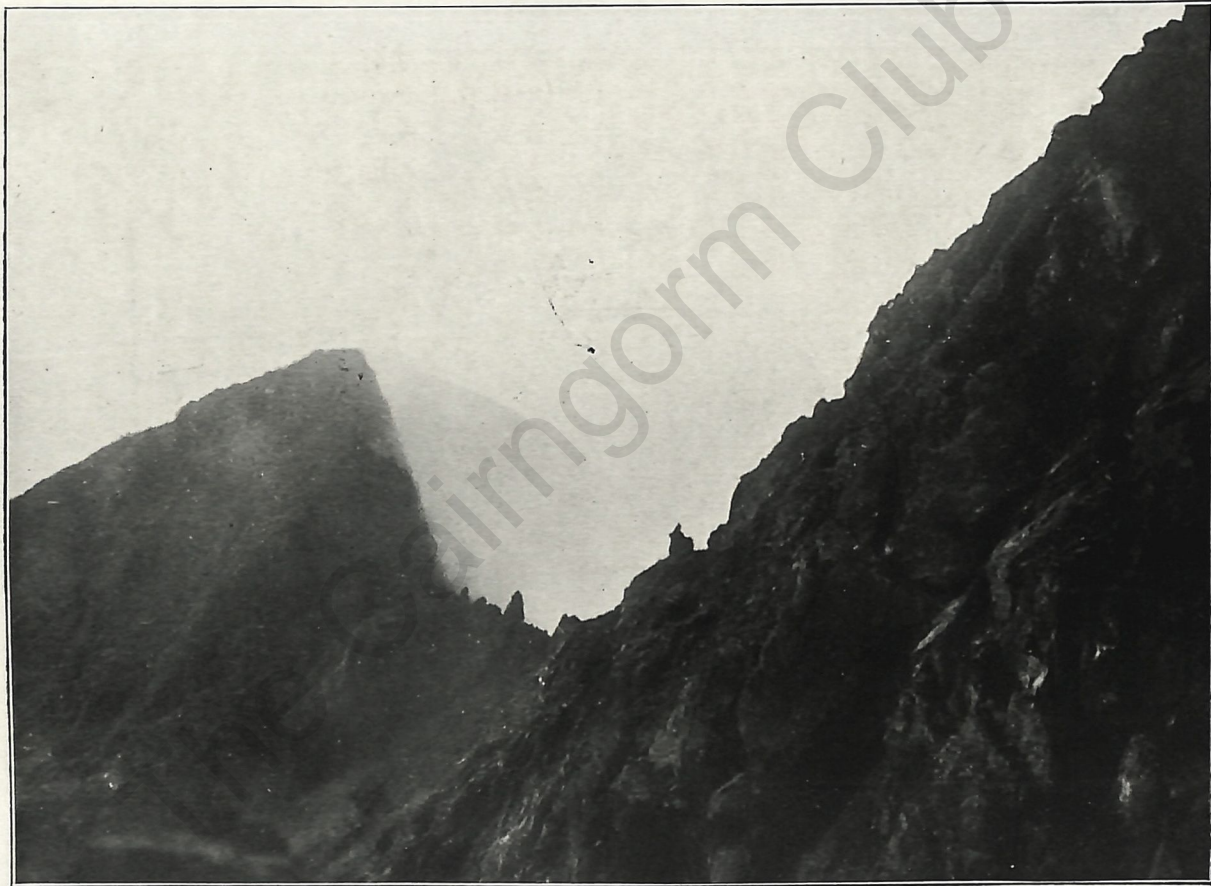


Photo. by

THE SGUMAIN-ALASDAIR RIDGE, SKYE.

W. Garden.

clean bare rock. The corrie runs up on the right to a steep rock face on the north side of An Diallaid, a spur of the main ridge at Sgurr na Bannachdich.

As we had a rope with us, we could not resist a scramble up the rocks, in spite of the fact that it was now raining steadily, and every little gully on the hill-face streamed with water. A short pitch, with an unstable chock stone, in a steep gully gave some exciting moments, but ultimately the ridge was gained and traversed for some distance, and then we made our way down the scree slopes into Coire an Eich, and so home, drenched to the skin, but perfectly pleased with our first day's introduction to the Coolin. Towards evening the mist cleared off the topmost peaks, whose needle-like points showed black and grim against the evening sky. The mist lingered in the corries, and some magnificent colour effects were witnessed before the sun finally dipped below the horizon.

Next morning we were off at daylight, and crossing the moor we reached the western slope of Sgumain, up which we toiled to the ridge. This we religiously followed to the cairn (3104 feet) on the highest point of the hill. Some interesting scrambling downwards, necessitating the use of the rope, landed us at the top of the Bealach or Col between Sgumain and Alasdair. The ridge beyond this is narrow, and presents, at intervals, rock pinnacles or "gendarmes," which we surmounted one by one, with a single exception which was "turned" on the right. The drop on the Coire Lagan side is perpendicular in places, whilst that on Ghrunnda side is scarcely less steep. Stones dislodged into Coire Ghrunnda bounded off in great and ever-increasing leaps, dislodging others in their train, till finally huge masses joined in the mad rush, and the whole corrie resounded with the roar of the rock avalanche as it crashed to the bottom of the cliffs. Mercifully everything was shrouded in mist, and we were not troubled with the sensational nature of the climb. Once or twice as we looked ahead the topmost rocks of Sgurr Alasdair peeped out above the mist, for all the world like a glorified Mitchell Tower, gleaming in the sun.

The highest point seemed thousands of feet above us and apparently inaccessible.

Soon we came to the "mauvais pas"—the one difficult place on the ridge. The rocks at this point slightly overhang up to the level of one's neck, then slope steeply upwards without a vestige of hand-hold for some little distance. One man alone cannot get up here, but, by getting a "back-up," one of our party could just get a knee on the sloping ledge. By then lying flat on the good rough rock, utilising the friction of "Harris cum Gabbro" to hold the body in position, it was possible to worm one's way slowly upwards till some projecting knobs of rock gave the required hand-holds, and firm anchorage was obtained. The other two members of the party quickly scrambled up, and the ascent of the remainder of the ridge, though steep and requiring care, offered no difficulty, and the cairn on the highest point of Sgurr Alasdair (3309 feet) was reached. The mist cleared a little as we stood beside the cairn, and we obtained a superb view of Sgurr Dearg with its "Inaccessible Pinnacle." Sgurr Tearlach loomed up close at hand, separated from us by the top of the Alasdair Stone Shoot, and, as the day was still young, we determined to include Tearlach in the programme. As we prepared to climb down the steep rocks of Alasdair to the top of the shoot we had the great good fortune to witness the Spectre of the Brocken,—our shadows projected on the mist, which still lay in Coire Lagan. The three shadows looked gigantic and weird, and were inclosed in one large halo. A photograph was taken of the apparition by Garden, with a satisfactory result.

The climb down to the top of the stone shoot was short, but required careful management, and we ultimately stood on the top of the shoot, that remarkable gully which stretches downwards in one single sweep to the foot of Alasdair. Its upper part is flanked on either side by the gigantic overhanging cliffs of solid rock of Alasdair and Tearlach, and forms an easy but exasperating way up or down Alasdair. The way up Tearlach was not

very apparent, but by searching the rock face we came on a spot, a little to the Ghrunnda side of the highest point of the shoot, where the scratches of hob-nails were unmistakable. Up we went, and in twenty minutes the cairn was reached. Unfortunately the mist again closed in, and so we did not have the luck to see around us from what is admitted to be one of the best view points in the Coolin. The climb down to the Col again was a little more difficult than that from the cairn of Alasdair, as the holds were not so plentiful, and it took us half an-hour to descend. Then we coiled up the rope and had lunch.

The mist had lifted once again, and we lay on the sun-bathed rocks, at peace with the world and with all men. Now that we had no longer to concentrate our energies on balancing feats on narrow ridges, and on keeping our feet clear of the rope, we had time to look about us. We got another view of the Brocken Spectre, this time over the shoulder of Tearlach, on looking into the Garbh-Coire. After a short rest we turned our steps down the stone shoot, plunging again into dense fog. The sharp boulders forming the slope of the shoot lie exactly at the angle of repose, and, as we stepped forward, the whole mass frequently slid downwards with us. The journey down the Coire Lagan took three quarters of an hour, and was an experience which was both tiresome and monotonous. We hurried down Coire Lagan, and Glen Brittle was reached just before dark.

Next day we were off at sunrise to explore Coir 'a Ghrunnda—a corrie which has only one way in—by keeping to the left high up on the screes of Sgumain. We followed the burn, and had some exciting scrambling up steep rocks before we eventually reached the loch. Mist was over everything as usual, but we struck up the rocks to Caisteal a' Garbh-Choire, which stands sentinel-like at the head of Coir 'a Ghrunnda. Skirting the base of this tower we went up the rocks to the left, and eventually, by a series of steep chimneys, reached a narrow ridge with a cairn on its highest point, the height of which the aneroid gave as slightly over 3000 feet. We hoped we

were on Sgurr Dubh Mohr, and, as the ridge extending to the eastward looked grim and forbidding through the mist, we concluded we had done enough for one day, and attempted to descend again to the castle. This proved rather difficult, and several routes were tried before we reached the Col. The waning light warned us to hurry, for Coir 'a Ghrunnda is no place in which to be benighted. We fairly raced homewards, and reached Glen Brittle about six o'clock. On discussing, after dinner, the events of the day, with the aid of maps and other things, we found we had been on the top, not of Sgurr Dubh Mohr, but of Sgurr Dubh na Da Bheinn, and that the ridge we saw through the mist was that leading to the former peak.

Next day the rain came down in earnest, and we had perforce to stay indoors. It cleared a little about mid-day, so we went boulder-scrambling on the huge rocks that lie scattered below the mouth of Coir 'a Ghrunnda. This filled in the afternoon, and we returned to our quarters before seven o'clock.

Next morning we were out early in spite of the mist, and went up the western slope of Sgurr Dearg. The ridge was traversed, and we eventually found ourselves looking up at the "Inaccessible Pinnacle," round whose perpendicular flanks the mist swirled in the most eerie fashion. The climb of this most fascinating pinnacle we decided to postpone to a more convenient season, and continued our ridge walk towards Sgurr na Bannachdich. Holding too much to the right (we could scarcely see ten yards ahead), we found our progress barred by a vertical cliff, and had to search for a way down. Eventually the Bannachdich ridge was found, and the three peaks were traversed. Sgurr Thormaid, the fourth peak of Bannachdich, showed at times through the mist, but seemed so far away that we postponed its ascent also to a more suitable occasion, and we lunched under some rocks near the highest point of Bannachdich. The rain-drip over our shelter afforded a convenient means, with the aid of a drinking cup, whereby we could allay our thirst. The

descent of the screes of Sgurr Gobhar into Coire na Bannachdich, varied by exciting scrambles over steep rocks, ended a delightful and exasperating day. We turned in early and had a ten hours' dreamless sleep.

We started early next morning with the intention of having a big day. A long walk over the moors brought us to the south-west side of Gars-Bheinn, the most southerly peak of the Coolin. The day was misty as usual, and nothing could be seen of the tops, but we struck up the screes, and soon reached the cairn that marks the southern termination of the main Coolin ridge. From this the ridge runs north-westwards to Sgurr a' Choire Bhig, and then to Sgurr nan Eag. No difficulty was experienced anywhere, but we crossed a deep fissure in the ridge, the bottom of which we could not see, but which was bridged by a convenient slab of gabbro. We dropped stones into this "crevasse," and counted the seconds until they struck the bottom. The average time was $2\frac{1}{2}$ seconds, and so we reckoned the depth of the gap to be about 100 feet.

Beyond the cairn of Sgurr nan Eag the ridge turns northwards and descends rapidly towards Bealach-a-Garbh-Choire. As we clambered downwards we saw nothing, but we heard the roar of a stream, which we recognised as that which comes down off Sgumain into Ghrunnda Loch. Soon the base of An Caisteal was reached, and we got out at last below the mist. The face of Sgurr Dubh Mohr and that of Sgurr Dubh na Da Bheinn were both visible, and the route up the latter was eagerly scanned. It looked terribly steep and uninviting, but the map said there was a way, so on we went. Some rough clambering was met with, but, with the exception of a slimy chimney, no serious climbing was encountered, and we duly reached the summit cairn (3089 feet).

Sgurr Dubh Mohr is a magnificent mountain, but we were denied any view from its peak, as the clouds enveloped us once more. We groped our way downwards to the Bealach again, and so into Coir 'a Ghrunnda. The light was failing as usual as we hurried along round

the base of Sgumain, and it was dark before we got to Glen Brittle.

Next morning, having arranged for a gig to take our baggage to Sligachan, we walked up to Coire na Creich, passed Sgurr an Fheadain, with its famous "water-pipe" gully, into Choire a' Mhadaidh. A toilsome grind up a stone shoot brought us to the Bealach between Bruach na Frithe and Bidean, from which a short climb landed us on the former hill. As we neared the summit cairn the mist made attempts to lift, and we had the most ravishing glimpses of corries, pinnacles, sunlit seas, and distant isles. The Outer Hebrides were at times plainly visible, set like jewels in a glistening sea, whilst the Castles of Bidean and the peaks of Mhadaidh loomed dark and forbidding above the misty swirl that still hid the corries from our sight. A descent was made into Fionn Coire, and so on to Sligachan, where we stayed the week-end.

Sunday was almost cloudless, and Sgurr nan Gillean looked most inviting, but the writer's muscles rebelled after seven days' climbing, and we lazed about the glen, admiring the view from below. Next day was to be devoted to Sgurr nan Gillean, but in the morning the mists were tearing across the ridges on the wings of a hurricane, and the "Pinnacle Route" looked doubtful. We made an attempt, however, and reached the base of the first pinnacle, but found it impossible to keep our feet, and so we regretfully turned our backs on the "peak of the young men," and reached the hotel drenched to the skin.

Thus ended our week in Skye; a week full to the uttermost of strenuous climbing on the most perfect rocks in Britain, of days of mist and of sunshine, of toilsome grinds and exciting climbs, of gloom, and of colours gorgeous beyond belief.

EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

THERE has just been erected in the cemetery at Bowness-on-Windermere a headstone to the memory of the late Mr. Mountford J. B. Baddeley, author of many guide-books. The headstone, which takes

THE LATE MR. the form of a Ruic Cross, is hewn out of two M. J. B. BADDELEY. large boulders of granite from the summit of the famous Scawfell mountain. Great difficulty was experienced in getting the granite down the mountain side; sometimes it was carried, and sometimes rolled. Several times the task was given up in despair, as often the men who were getting the granite had to stand in as much as twelve inches of water to get the stone out of the bogs.

A PARTY of four left Ballater at 8.30 p.m., on 6th June, driving as far as Corndavan Lodge, (11.10 p.m.). The night was dull and gloomy and

Ben Avon was buried in mist almost to its base.
NIGHT ASCENT Leaving the trap, we walked along the road on the
OF north side of the Gairn to a point where it crosses
BEN AVON the water by a dilapidated bridge. Here we struck off
AND sharply to the right, crossing a deer fence and
BEINN A' BHUIRD. stumbling in the dusk over the rough peaty ground.

An Alpine lantern served to light our way and to accentuate the gloom around us. No sound could be heard except the occasional whirr of a startled grouse, and, once, the soft patter of a herd of deer which scudded away on our approach. Darkness increased as we mounted into the mist, but there was of course always a fair amount of dim twilight. We mounted steadily in a north-westerly direction, stumbling occasionally upon a path, and losing it as quickly again. A few patches of snow were met with low down, but soon we came upon wide stretches of recent snow which had fallen the night before.

At 1.50 a.m. we reached the first tor or natural cairn, then continuing our journey along rising ground, using the compass to keep in a north-westerly direction. We reached a second tor at 2.10. This tor is a double one, consisting of two separate and enormous rock masses. At 2.35 we reached a third cairn, and we now extinguished the lantern as the light was getting better, although we were still in dense mist. The rocks on this cairn were coated thickly with very large fog crystals. A fourth cairn was reached at 2.45, a fifth at 3 o'clock, a sixth at 3.7, a seventh at 3.20, an eighth at 3.25, and a ninth which proved to be the main top, at 2.45. The mist was still very dense, and our caps, coats, and moustaches were covered with ice crystals. The ice coating of the rocks was particularly thick on the main top.

From the top a course was set to the "Sneck," which was reached at 4.45 and we at last emerged from the mist. Tea was made and proved very refreshing, after which a snow gully was ascended on Beinn a' Bhuid. At least two of the members finished the climb on snow, the

other two traversing to the right on some rocks half-way up the gully. The sun was now breaking through the mist, and we had a superb view. Beinn a' Bhuird was clear and all its corries were bathed in the sunlight. The cairn of Cnap-a'-Cheirlich was reached at 6.15, the North Top of Beinn a' Bhuird at 7 o'clock, and the South Top at 7.55. The descent was made by the snow corrie, and the Quoich was crossed at 9.40, Braemar being reached *via* the Sluggan at 11.45.—JOHN R. LEVACK.

THE "Times," in a review of "Rock Climbing in Skye" by Mr. Ashley P. Abraham, says—It is difficult to distinguish logically between a mountain

MOUNTAIN
VERSUS
HILL.

and a hill. Mere height above the sea-level is no test ; height above the general level from which a system rises is a better one, and it is one by which the Cambrian and Cumbrian systems as well as the Coolins would not come off badly. There is something to be said for the doctrine that a true mountain should carry perpetual snow, or even glaciers ; but it would only apply strictly to the temperate zone ; in the tropics it would exclude mountain ranges of real geographical importance. Magnitude, however, should count for something in the list of attributes of a mountain system. Ranges like the Alps and the Pyrenees, the existence of which has helped, in virtue of their size, to shape the history of Europe, are more properly termed mountains than systems that are too low to have any permanent influence on history. From the standpoint of the pure mountaineer, we are inclined to frame a definition according to which a mountain must have rock (or snow) on its summit ; any elevation whose top is grassy would then be classed as a hill ; but even this definition would have to be read to some extent by the light of considerations as to shape and structure, and the extent to which it is equipped with ridges. That a mountain system should be complex, furnished with real ridges and respectable precipices, is essential.

THE Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Club was held on 22nd December, 1908, the Chairman, Mr. James A. Hadden, presiding. The office-bearers were re-elected and the following Committee was

OUR TWENTIETH
ANNUAL MEETING.

constituted for the current year :—John Clarke, James Conner, John R. Levack, John McGregor, R. W. Mackie, George McIntyre, W. M. McPherson, Alexander Simpson, William Porter, and George Wood. The Excursions for the current year were fixed as follows :—Spring Holiday, Cromdale Hills : Summer (26th June), Cairngorm : Saturday afternoons, Ben Rinnes (June), and Carmaferg (July). It was remitted to the Committee to report on a proposal for widening the scope and increasing the membership of the Club.

New members—Howard G. Drummond and W. L. Marr.

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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 may compound future Annual Subscriptions by payments as follows:—members entered before 20th February, 1890, £1 1s.; members of fifteen years and over, £1 11s. 6d.; ten years and over, £2 2s.; five years and over, £3 3s.; and new members £5 5s., including entry money. 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.

