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THE Cairngorm Club Journal.

EDITED BY

J. B. GILLIES.

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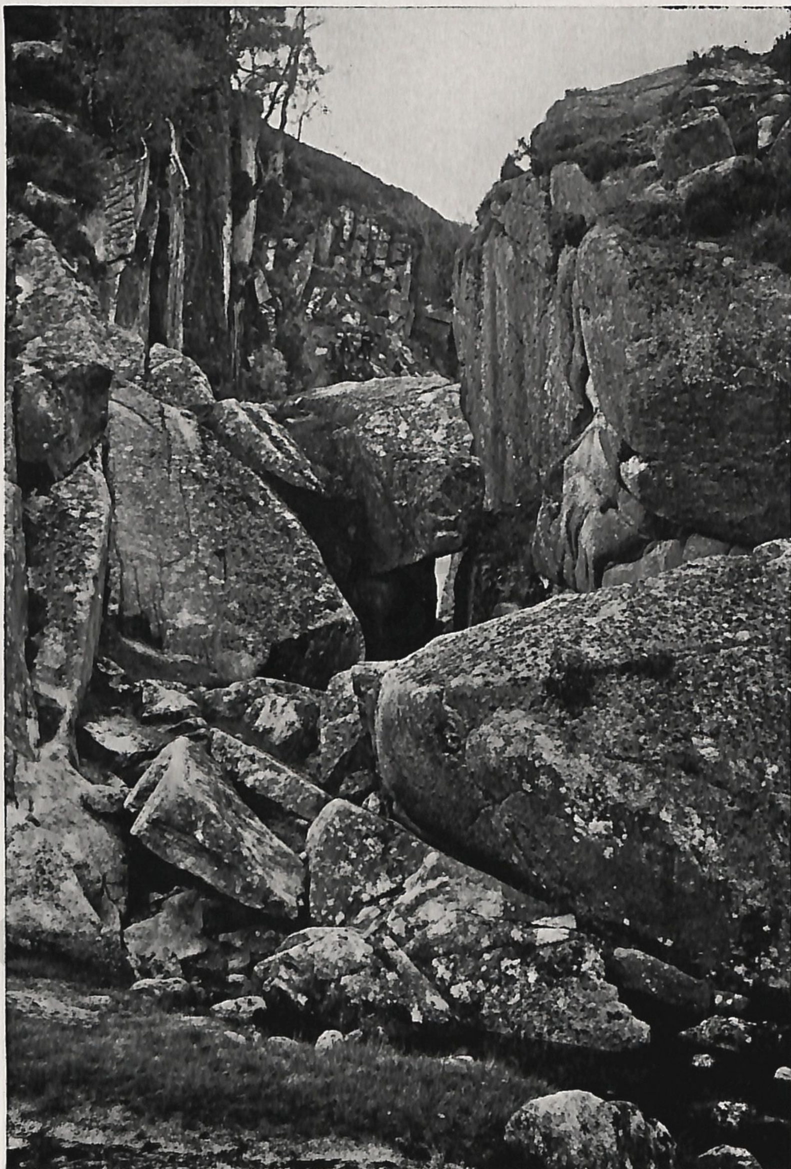

Photo by *G. W. Wilson.*

THE VAT (EXTERIOR).

THE

Cairngorm Club Journal.

Vol. VIII. JULY, 1915. No. 45

THE VAT.

By ALEXANDER BREMNER, M.A., D.Sc.

THE Vat, near Cambus o' May, is the most remarkable natural phenomenon on Deeside; indeed, so far as I know, there is nothing in this country quite comparable with it. Any attempt hitherto made to explain its origin has ignored that of the gorge in which it lies; an adequate explanation must account for the one as well as for the other.*

Approach to the Vat is usually made from the point where the road from Cambus o' May to Logie-Coldstone crosses the Burn o' Vat. For some distance nothing remarkable is encountered; but, after following the tiny stream for a few hundred yards, one enters a large hollow or cirque, rock-walled all round. On the north and south sides, however, the living rock is much obscured by scree. The east side of the cirque is breached by the stream; while a broad, shallow hollow, evidently the result of erosion by running water, indents its western rim. In the floor of this hollow two channels have been cut. The more northerly is shallow and opens out on the top of the

* The true explanation is hinted at by me in "The Physical Geology of the Dee Valley," 1912; but in that work the space necessary for a detailed account of the Vat was not available.

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cirque wall; the more southerly is the narrow gorge, 42 feet deep, that gashes the western wall of the cirque from top to bottom; in it lies the Vat. The cirque looks so like the pot-hole found below every waterfall (*e.g.*, at Linn of Muick) that one is surprised to find in it no boiling pool, but only a streamlet meandering over a grass-covered, marshy floor.

The Vat is entered from the cirque by scrambling over some fallen blocks of granite—somewhat of a feat for ladies during the regime of the trouser skirt—and passing below the north-east corner of another huge fallen block that at first sight seems to bar all passage. Standing in the entrance and looking westward, the visitor sees that the burn cascades some 15 feet into the Vat, trickles across its sandy floor, and finds exit on his left. But at first he will have eyes for nothing but the Vat itself. Its floor is an almost perfect circle, 59 feet in diameter. On both sides its curved walls rise upward and inward to a height of 19 feet on the north side and of 13 feet on the south side. As far as the eye can judge or geometrical tests can be applied, the curved surfaces are found to be *parts of an almost perfect sphere.*

Above the curved surfaces just mentioned, vertical walls of granite rise 42 feet on the north side, and 60 feet on the south side above the floor of the Vat. Both walls are formed by clean-cut joint faces: but on the south wall, above the big round of the Vat proper, can be seen a considerable fragment of what appears to have been originally a cylindrical or slightly funnel-shaped shaft. From the curvature of what remains this shaft seems to have had a radius not much more than one-third of that of the huge cauldron below. The clean-cut faces, forming a great part of the walls of the Vat as we see it now, shew where portions of the walls and roof have fallen away. How deep the Vat was originally, one cannot say; but, from the outward curvature of the spherical surfaces where they meet the present floor, it may safely be judged that much more—probably very much more—lies hidden than is now

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disclosed to view. Thus beneath the visitor's feet lies a cavity in the solid rock of sufficient size to accommodate all the debris that, falling from roof and sides, has marred the original symmetry of the Vat; indeed, the caving-in may have commenced while the lower, wider portion was in course of formation.

The Vat has been excavated in granite ("Newer Granite" of the Geological Survey), coarse-grained, easily disintegrated, and similar in colour and quality to the main body of the granite in the Cairngorm massif.

Granites are intersected by three sets of joints, one "horizontal,"* the other two vertical; the planes of jointing are mutually at right angles or nearly so, and cause the rock when subjected to weathering to break into cuboidal blocks. In the cliffs overlooking Glen Eunach the regular jointing produces on rock faces the effect of Cyclopean masonry. There all three sets of joints are strongly marked and very regular. But the manner in which granite reacts to weathering and erosion is frequently affected by the predominance of two or of one of the sets, as well as by the regularity with which, and the interval at which the joints are spaced, and by the angle at which they intersect (which, however, generally approximates to a right angle). Now the granite in the vicinity of the Vat is intersected by two strongly-marked sets of joint-planes—a "horizontal," dipping east at an angle of 30° to 40°, and a vertical, running nearly east and west; they are spaced at intervals of from 5 to 10 feet. The prominence of the vertical set has led to the caving-in of part of the roof of the Vat, explains the clean-cut faces above its great round, and has caused the disappearance of the greater part of the funnel-shaped shaft, of which a fragment of the south side alone remains. The north-south set of joints is faintly marked and very irregular in its course.

* So called for convenience. The angle that the "horizontal" set makes with the horizon varies.

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On account of the multiplicity of lines of weakness, a closely-jointed rock, *ceteris paribus*, yields to erosion by running water much more readily than one with jointing more widely spaced. At the west end of the Vat, and right in line with the entrance passage, a belt of granite, 8 to 10 feet wide, shews close-set vertical joints, a foot and less apart; it can be traced down almost to the floor of the Vat. There is little doubt that this weak belt was once continued across the space now occupied by the Vat and through the narrow gorge connecting it with the cirque. Even a cursory examination reveals the fact that the walls of this gorge, except where the opening of joints has caused rock-falls, is water-worn from top to bottom—far above the highest flood-level of the stream that now occupies it. Towards its outer end part of a considerable pot-hole, a lesser Vat, is visible.

The original depth of the gorge, like that of the Vat, cannot be determined; for its water-worn sides disappear downwards beneath an accumulation of fallen blocks. The largest of these—that under which the visitor passes on entering—shews a water-worn surface on one side, and can be assigned to its original position on the north wall of the gorge. Were it and others restored to their proper places, the gorge would have a fairly uniform width* of from 8 to 10 feet—*just the width of the belt of closely-jointed granite.* At present the distance between the solid rock-walls varies from 9 to 20 feet.

Except for its gigantic size, the Vat is exactly similar to the pot-holes formed in the rocky beds of swiftly-flowing streams by the continual whirling round of stones and sand in hollows and cracks. A stone becomes lodged in some crevice; the rush of water is unable to remove it, but keeps turning it round and round. The stone, supplied by the river with sand, acts like a lapidary's wheel, and cuts into the surrounding rock. In time it is itself worn away, but other stones get

* Except for the small pot-hole mentioned above.

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caught, and take up and help on the work; the pot-hole is slowly enlarged. In this way all pot-holes, large and small, have been hollowed out. There is, however, no record of a pot-hole that combines the size and regularity of shape possessed by the Vat.

Now it is perfectly clear that, in the formation of this stupendous pot-hole, the stream that now flows through it can have had no share whatever; the Burn o' Vat, in fact, has done its little best to obliterate the work of an infinitely more powerful predecessor by spreading a tiny contribution of sand and gravel over the floor of the Vat. Can we prove the existence of an infinitely more powerful predecessor? And can we shew that there was a likelihood of that predecessor's finding at this particular point in its bed conditions favourable for the production of a pot-hole? If these questions can be answered in the affirmative, we may safely claim to have given a satisfactory explanation of the origin of the Vat.

Of the hundreds of people who visit this locality every summer not one in a thousand traces the burn up through the gorge that leads to the col between Culblean and Cnoc Dubh. Anyone who does so will have ample proof of the former presence of an infinitely more powerful stream than that which now dodges around big boulders at the bottom of a steep-sided, rock-walled gorge, in some places close on 100 feet deep. Viewed in relation to the gorge it occupies, the Burn o' Vat is a palpable misfit: it resembles an infant masquerading in its father's shoes. There is, indeed, no doubt that the Burn o' Vat, since it first began to flow, has cut down more than 100 feet: the valley on the bottom of which the gorge has been eroded is principally its work. But its drainage area must always have been limited, its volume small, and the rate of vertical erosion consequently extremely slow—so slow that, as fast as the stream deepened its bed, the valley walls were weathered back into gentle slopes. The rock-gorge, which has considerable width as well as depth, is evidence of a stream of large volume and

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great erosive power. A smaller stream acting for a long time might have done the same amount of vertical erosion, but its valley sides could not meanwhile have continued to shew the almost perpendicular walls of living rock we here see.

As an example of the erosive power of running water, by which alone it could have been produced, the gorge is quite as striking as the Vat itself: the stream that was competent to cut the one was competent to cut the other.

If any further proof were needed that the Burn o' Vat has not carved the gorge we are considering, it is to be found in the fact that the gorge is continued beyond the point where the stream enters it. The upper end of the gorge forms a notch or wind-gap, devoid of drainage, on the col; and can have been formed by no existing stream.

To understand how the Vat and the gorge in which it lies were produced, we must consider the conditions that obtained during the Great Ice Age.

At one time the whole of Scotland was swathed in snow and ice; but at a later period, under somewhat milder climatic conditions, the valleys in the higher grounds were occupied by glaciers, while the lower parts of the country, especially towards the east coast, were free of ice. The front of the Dee Valley Glacier, at one stage in its retreat, rested against the west face of the Cnoc Dubh ridge, which, jutting southward towards Cambus o' May, lay right across the general line of ice-movement. The northern edge of the glacier rested on the flanks of Culblean, and between it and the frost-riven rock-slopes above a lateral moraine accumulated. Fragments detached from the hillside and others thrown off by the ice contributed to the formation of this moraine. But the moraine, which may be traced from the mouth of the Culsten Burn behind Tomnakiest to the col at the head of the Vat gorge, forms a gently sloping, comparatively smooth-topped terrace, not much like the ordinary conception of a moraine. Along both

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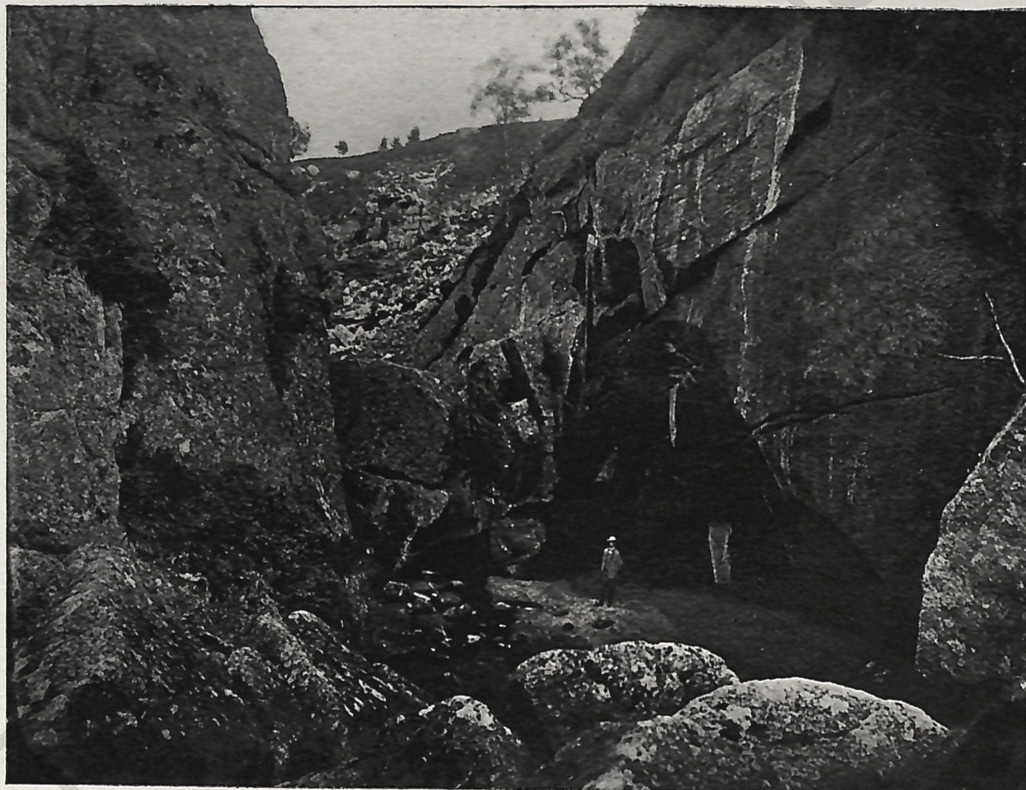

Photo by *J. Mathieson.*

THE VAT (INTERIOR).

sides of a glacier, particularly near its termination, course in summer streams of water derived from the melting of the glacier ice and of the winter snows on the slopes above. By these the rubbish lodged at the edge of the ice is washed and sorted. If the glacier stand for a long time at the same level against the valley wall, it may even happen that the solid rock abutting on the ice is cut into by these lateral streams (as has happened here above Cambus quarries); the moraine, too, may be so washed and levelled as to resemble a river terrace more than a moraine.

From various causes (which need not be detailed here) the flow of water in the case we are considering seems to have been particularly copious. When it reached the col between Culblean and Cnoc Dubh, it did not turn southward along the west flank of the latter hill, but coursed over the col, struck into the bed of the Burn o' Vat, and proceeded to erode the great gorge. At the east end of the cirque a waterfall was initiated. This fall cut back, as waterfalls do, into the solid rock, gradually increased in height (owing to the surface of the granite rising towards the west), and formed a huge pot-hole at its base—the cirque.

On and some distance back from the lip of the fall the stream found a line of weakness, the narrow belt of close-jointed granite, where vertical erosion proceeded at a greater rate than elsewhere. As the channel on the weak belt was gradually deepened, more and more of the water flowed along it, and the rate of erosion was still further increased. Boulders carried into this narrow passage and whirled round and round by the tumultuous current would be likely to form pot-holes.* This tendency would be increased by the angle at which the

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* The tendency of a strong current in a narrow channel to eddy and form pot-holes is beautifully exemplified at the Linn of Dee. The Linn, too, is an example of a narrow gorge cut in what was formerly the lip of a broad waterfall, as at the Vat; but the two cases are due to entirely different causes.

water entered the channel excavated in the weak belt, for it may be observed that the latter crosses obliquely the line of the gorge where it enters the Vat. At the precise point, therefore, where we should expect the formation of a strong eddy, and possibly of a pot-hole, we find the Vat.

The narrow upper portion of the Vat, of which only a part of one side remains, widens downward. This is probably due to increasing flow of water as the channel in which it lay was deepened; and the sudden increase in diameter shewn in the lower part of the Vat probably marks the time when practically the whole flow began to pass along this route. The formation of the pot-hole began in the weak belt; but, as it gradually increased in size, it invaded the more resistant granite on both sides.

I think it may now be claimed that we have proved (1) the existence of a powerful stream quite capable of having produced the observed phenomena; (2) the presence in its bed, at a particular point, of conditions specially favourable to pot-holing; and that we have given an adequate explanation of the origin of the Vat.

The *size* of the Vat is a result of the great volume of water poured over the col every summer, and of the strong eddy produced as described above; the *regularity of its shape* is no doubt due to the homogeneous nature of the rock (apart from the relatively narrow belt of close-jointed material) on which the water operated.

The *preservation* of the Vat is to be attributed to the cutting off (by the recession of the Dee Valley Glacier) of the stream of meltwater before it had time to destroy the symmetrical result of its previous work. There is no doubt that pot-holes of similar size and regularity have been formed at favourable points in the beds of strong-flowing streams; but these streams have continued to occupy their channels, and persistent attack upon their beds has removed many of the most striking results of past erosion. In the caving-in of the roof of the Vat and in the fallen blocks that cumber its outlet, we see

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the result of a process that would have gone on much more rapidly, had the same volume of water as formed Vat and gorge continued to pass through them, undercutting their walls and causing repeated rock-falls.

It may be added that there is in nature no more powerful eroding agent than a copious stream of water descending with torrential velocity, and charged with boulders and sharp sand washed out of the moraines of a glacier.

I may also say that, every time I visit the neighbourhood of the Vat, I come more and more clearly to realise that the most stupendous example of the erosive power of running water to be seen hereabouts is not the Vat but the great gorge above it or the cirque, similar in origin but so vastly superior in magnitude to its more bizarre neighbour.

Gorges like that of the Burn o' Vat, formed by the discharge of meltwater from glacier or ice-sheet, are known as "overflow channels." They are particularly abundant on Deeside: fifteen, large and small, can be counted within easy walking distance of Dinnet Station. But nowhere can a more splendid example be seen than that just described.

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THE CALL OF THE WILD.

By Hugh D. Welsh.

The Call of the Wild! How does one know it, and how does one answer it? Many have heard it, and many have answered it—but who can tell what are the sensations aroused and what it means when responded to? I am not capable of defining this "lure of little voices," but shall endeavour to relate—in a quite inadequate way, I am afraid—what rewards may be gained in answering their insistent call. In the desolate, mist-draped corries of the Cairngorms I seem to find a solution, and several delightful pilgrimages spent in the region have yielded some of the rewards indicated. This article is an endeavour to set out the results of one of these pilgrimages, which was undertaken with two friends.

The forenoon of a sultry Saturday one summer found us setting out of Braemar, laden with a small sleeping-tent and all the necessary paraphernalia of a camping holiday packed away in roomy rucsacks. Ignoring the remarks and stares of sundry spectators, we swung along the hard, sun-flecked road to the Linn of Dee. As the road wound in and out and the view expanded, memories awoke with each familiar object brought into sight. Corriemulzie, with its deep, cool, verdant ravine, called for a lengthy visit and a prolonged examination of its floral treasures. Friendships were renewed in Inverey, and the Linn of Dee roared a welcome. Shadows were now silently slipping through the trees, and heavy leaden-coloured clouds settled down on the ridges and dropped groping fingers of mist into the valleys. Still we wandered on; the air became cooler, and rain began to curtain off the hills. At ten o'clock, about a mile from the White Bridge, the rain increased, and in a short time we were under the welcome shelter

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of our little tent. A hot meal was soon prepared and disposed of, and we settled down for the night. All night long the rain rattled on the canvas, and little sleep was got. Out of the darkness came whisperings and murmurings blending with the eerie hurrying of the river and the rustling of the wind.

Morning showed us the scudding clouds trailing filmy streamers along the slopes, while here and there a splash of gold promised a brilliant day. In due course we were on our way again, and a short cut through the jewel-strewn heather brought us to the rushing Chest of Dee, breaking in greeny-white sheets over the ledges. Ample scope was afforded here for botanical search, and many were the plants noted. A mile or so above the Chest we pitched our tent, and in the blazing sunshine we made an ascent of Sgor Mor. Two adders were captured, and botanical finds of some interest lightened the climb. The view from the summit was beyond our expectations. The crags at the head of Glen Luibeg showed magnificently, while Carn a Mhaim, Cairn Toul, and the Devil's Point were sights in themselves. Near the summit of Sgor Mor is a large flat boulder with two good specimens of "pot-holes" such as one sees at the Linn of Dee. In descending to our tent we were rewarded by the sight of several rain showers passing across some of the southern hills, each one emblazoned with a gorgeous rainbow. Exploration of the river bed showed us numerous areas of richly-coloured moss beds—treasures so seldom seen. After a wet, misty night, the following day was one of good promise, so a visit to Ben Muich Dhui with a night or two at the Shelter Stone was planned.

At midday, giving a final look to the security of the tent with the baggage inside, we set off with a few necessities up Sgor Mor and across the west shoulder of Sgor Dubh. Near the summit ridge we lay down to watch the passage to the valley beneath of a herd of a hundred deer, most of them antlered. In batches of twenty or so they filed away, watched over by a scout

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perched on the skyline. Luibeg and Derry Lodge were visited, and acquaintance with the residents renewed.

Glen Derry was traversed at a steady pace, a second or two here and there permitting us to gather what botanical treats we could see. The stillness was broken now and again by the plaintive cry of the curlew. At the last of the trees standing white and ghostlike, we discarded our rucsacks and each of us gathered a big bundle of dry branches. Loading up again we plodded on, and in the gathering darkness forded the Etchachan burn. The grind up Coire Etchachan was accomplished with many a sigh, and emerging upon the shore of the Loch, we were met by a stiff breeze and a shower of spray. Scudding clouds were low overhead, shutting out what light there was. Darkness was now upon us, accompanied by a slight rain. We picked our way across the plateau to the crest above Loch Avon, which glimmered dully far below. The voices of the torrents rushing down the rock wall at the head of the corrie rose and fell about us, urging us onward to shelter. Mist came surging past, and it was with some difficulty that we descended the precipitous path* and wound our way to the Shelter Stone. No one was in possession, but

*As I have occasionally encountered doubts as to there really being a path from the ridge overlooking Loch Avon down to the Shelter Stone, I may assure my readers that such a path can be found and can be easily remembered—once it is found. In my early visits to the Shelter Stone—where I have several times stayed a fortnight on end—I had ample opportunities of thoroughly examining the corrie and the ridges, and it was then that I came across the path that I refer to. At its upper end it is well defined, but as it slants across the gravel and the stony slope it becomes indefinite. In one place it cuts across a loose sandy slope where the descent of stones has cleared a passage. Just above this cut there used to be—and perhaps there is still—a large boulder which appeared ready to slide down at any moment. Many is the time that I have crossed the cut with my heart in my mouth! The path then slants down the ridge of a long moraine, and, winding in and out among the moraines at the foot of the screes, it crosses the boggy ground at the "watering-place" for the Shelter Stone, where it seems to disappear. A few feet farther on is the path leading to the Stone. I may add, however, that few of the many visitors to the Shelter Stone seem to know of the existence of this path, which saves much fatigue and many a hard knock.

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the latest occupants had left the "bedroom" in a deplorable state. We soon put it to rights, however, and, seated round the welcome warmth of a brightly-burning fire under the overhang of the "kitchen" outside, we discussed a warm meal and our day's tramp. Throughout the night the swish and drip of the rain blended with the continuous soothing rush of the torrents. The volume of the sound was so constantly altering with the gusts of wind that we imagined we heard talking, laughing, singing, and bands playing.

After a most comfortable night we emerged from under the Shelter Stone into heavy rain and driving mist. Our departure was put off, and we made ourselves comfortable round a fire in the "kitchen" and settled down for the day. The time between meals was occupied in reading "Scrambles Amongst the Alps," identifying our botanical finds with the aid of a "Hayward," and enjoying the play of mist and rain on the surrounding slopes. Night came and went, and next morning was little better than the preceding.

We were soon ready for the day's tramp, however, and set off. On the way down to the Dairymaid's Field we examined a small wasps' "bike" fastened under a ledge of rock. This bike was found to contain at least eight wasps, though there may have been more. The Feith Buidhe was plunged through, and we made a slant up the loose screes on the slope of Cairngorm beneath the Stag's Rock, reaching the ridge close on the headwaters of the Coire Raibeirt burn. Through the breaks in the driving mist we got glorious peeps at Loch Etchachan and the crags above, and, away down, at the "white horses" scudding over Loch Avon, at the bottom of its huge ditch. Not a sound was heard but the whistling of the wind against the gravel and coarse herbage. By the time the summit of Cairngorm was reached we could hardly stand against the force of the gale. In the lee side of the cairn, however, it was all right, but bitterly cold. A search by compass in the mist for almost half-an-hour, for the Marquis's Well,

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failed to find it. To Ben Muich Dhui was our next move, but it was with great difficulty that we progressed, so strong was the wind. Suddenly the mist broke away in front, and before us was the cliff wall of Coire an t Sneachda, with the little loch black and ugly under the scree. Up again we scrambled and a bee line was made for Lochan Buidhe. At one of the headwaters of Coire Domhatn pangs of hunger assailed us, and, making a ring of rucsacks, stones, and gravel, we set the spirit lamp going, and voted for mealy puddings—of all things! We explored around meantime and tried to get a little warmth; but the rain increased, and we decided that "mealy jims" half-cooked were better than rheumatism or worse. Loading up again, we set off munching the "mealies," and, leaving the summit of the Ben for another time, made tracks for the March Burn, alongside which we descended into Glen Dee. About half-way down we dropped out of the mist, but not the rain, though we had the pleasure—somewhat annoying in the circumstances—of seeing Rothiemurchus bathed in glorious sunlight. The red and green bands of screes in the Larig Pass made a magnificent setting for so fine a sight, and we decided that the spectacle was sufficient reward for all the mist, cold, and rain that we had experienced. No view was obtained down Glen Dee, and the Garbh Choire was overflowing with rain and vapour.

The Pools of Dee were duly reached, and once on the track we hastened on. By this time it was late evening and the light was failing. On and on we splashed in the rain and rapidly gathering darkness. The Corrour Bothy watched us with a yellow eye as we passed, but arriving at last in pitch darkness at our sodden tent, we soon changed into dry things and settled down for the night.

Next day was filled with sunshine, and we got our things dried, and shifted camp to about half way up Allt a' Choire Mhoir, which descends from Ben Muich Dhui. Rain fell throughout the night, and next day

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was thick with mist and rain. The cairn on Ben Muich Dhui was reached in a shower of hail, and we visited the site of a previous camp a few yards from the summit, where we had spent three soaking nights on the hard gravel some years before. The track to Loch Etchachan was followed, and we had a magnificent peep into Coire an Sput Dearg. Loch Etchachan was smothered in mist, and the corrie filled with lashing rain. Glen Derry was drier, and after crossing the swollen Glas Allt, we got out of the rain, and by the time Derry Lodge was reached were almost dry. Moonwort ferns and *Habenaria viridis* were gathered where the Allt a' Mhadaidh crosses the Lui road, and soon we were entering Inverey—again in rain.

A week-end was spent here in continual rain, and on Monday afternoon, in fine weather, we set off for Loch Callater, walking through Braemar. Corriemulzie was in spate and was a sight worth coming miles to see. The way to Loch Callater was new to us, and we were greatly interested in the numberless moraines round which the road winds. Sheep fed on all sides, and the air was filled with their pleasant odour. Camp was pitched at the loch edge near the Priest's Well, and before settling for the night, a circuit of the loch was made in the light of a crescent moon over Creag nan Gabhar. The loch rippled in brilliant sunshine next morning, and we determined to ascend Lochnagar. Creag an Loch and Carn an t Sagairt were taken on the way, and in doing so we obtained a perfect view of the Breakneck Fall and "lonely, lonely, dark Loch Candor." As Carn an t Sagairt was mounted we could see the Cairngorms, dark and grim under a huge rain-cloud which broke as we watched. Soon everything was blotted out except, for a minute or two, the wet slabs of the Glen Geusachan face of the Devil's Point, which glittered like a will o' the wisp through the darkness. Never shall we forget that sight. The plateau of Lochnagar was eventually reached, but a satisfactory view was out of the question. We were by

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this time soaked through, but we determined to proceed. A glimpse was obtained away down into Coire Lochan an Eoin with its circular loch, and Lochan na Feadaige and Lochan an Tarmachan. The summit was reached, but of "the steep frowning glories" we saw nothing, though we prowled round the lip of the cliff in the mist and rain. Back we tramped to the tent and into a dry change, and had a hot meal. Next day was sunny and oppressively warm, and we got everything semi-dried. In the afternoon tracks were made for Braemar and home to Aberdeen.

In more ways than one our little trip was profitable. Although we have gone over the same ground again and again, there is a something that calls us back, and we are always ready to answer that call, even though the way is long and " the elements war."

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THE WELLS OF DEE.

It's I that cannot rest
With the hill-thirst in my breast
And the heart of me left by the Wells of Dee.
I wonder—are there still
Sun and shadow on the hill
And mist upon Braeriach top above the Wells of Dee?

I'll be asking in my sleep
Do the cold green waves still creep
Up the shores of dark Loch Eunach near the Wells of Dee?
Down the sullen Larig Ghru
Are the winds still coming through
As once upon a dawn they came across the Pools of Dee?

It's long and it's long
That my heart will keep the song
It sang upon Braeriach top beside the Wells of Dee.
Oh! I'm longing for the feel
Of the heather under heel
And the wind upon my brow again beside the Wells of Dee.

ISOBEL W. HUTCHISON.

—"*Glasgow Herald*," *April* 17.

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AN "AUTO."-CAMPING TRIP TO THE YOSEMITE VALLEY.

BY S. LORENCIE ANDERSON.

[THE following article consists of extracts from a letter written by a young lady resident in California to a relative in Aberdeen, a member of the Club; hence the personal note and the informal style. The letter was not written with any view to publication, but the subjects dealt with and the vivacious manner in which they are treated amply warrant the transference of the subjoined passages to the pages of the *C.C.J.*—EDITOR.]

I suppose I must give you some account of our automobile and camping trip to the Yosemite Valley. You know, of course, that the Yosemite Valley is one of the great natural wonders of the United States, and I do not need to tell you that "Yosemite" is pronounced Yo-semi-té, and not Yosemīte, as I constantly heard it called on your side when I was over (the guides, by the way, told us the Indian pronunciation was "Yo-him-a-te.") As you did not visit the valley when you were here, perhaps I had better give you some topographical details to begin with.

The Yosemite Valley is about 150 miles south-east of San Francisco, on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, a mountain range which extends north and south along the eastern boundary of California. Yosemite is believed to be a corruption of the Indian word "A-hom-e-tae," which means the "full-grown grizzly bear," and the name is supposed to have been originally that of an Indian chief. There is a legend to the effect that the early Indian inhabitants of Yosemite, called Ah-wah-nee-chees, were driven from the valley by evil spirits, but, after many years, returned to their former location. Shortly after, a brave young chief won the

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Photo by *Putnam & Valentine, Los Angeles.*

EL CAPITAN.

title of Yosemite, or large grizzly bear, by killing one of these animals; and gradually the name Yosemite came to be applied to all the tribe of the Ah-wah-nee-chees. The valley or canyon is really a deep gorge in the mountains, traversed by the Merced River, which is formed in the snows of the Sierras. It (the valley) is seven miles long, and from half a mile to a mile or two miles wide. It lies at an altitude of 4,000 ft. above sea level; and it is famous for quite a number of magnificent natural features, these including gigantic mountains and huge perpendicular cliffs, and waterfalls of stupendous height but also of exquisite beauty. Fortunately the whole region—I forget its exact extent—is conserved by the Government as a national park, and travelling through it and camping in it are very strictly regulated. Needless to say, the attractions of the place draw thousand of visitors to it annually.

CAMPING EXPERIENCES.

There were four of us on the trip—my sister H. and me, our brother B., and J., B's "chum." We had planned to leave San Francisco in the family automobile about 8 a.m. on June 11th [1914], but innumerable delays detained us until 1 p.m. Then we missed a ferry-boat, and had to wait half-an-hour at the ferry with the best grace we could assume in the face of a cold and penetrating wind. At Oakland we had another delay while trying to find a telegraph office; and, to set the climax to our dilatory start, we had a "blow-out" as we were spinning along on a boulevard leading out of Oakland. After we left that city, we drove through Dublin Canyon, the scenery of which is quite attractive; incidentally, we ran over and killed a huge bull snake—my first experience of snakes in their "native wilds." Then we drove for miles and miles along an exceedingly fine broad highway, bounded on both sides by fenced-in farm lands.

No indications of a suitable place at which to camp for the night were visible, and we were almost in despair

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when we found a likely spot in a little hollow between the highway and a railroad track, and beneath "a spreading chestnut tree"—it was some kind of a tree anyhow; only that sounds poetical and picturesque. It wasn't much of a place, but it was the only one we had seen, and it was better than none; and as it was after 7 p.m., we decided to fix up for the night there. By the time the boys had built a fire and pitched our tents, and H. and I had struggled with our first camp meal, it was after 8 o'clock—dark as could be, and decidedly cold. Supper, to tell the truth, was a very dismal affair, in spite of the camp fire, an acetylene lamp, and the desperate efforts of all of us to be cheerful. Our next experience was with our novel bed—the hard, hard ground. Such a time as we had trying to find a soft spot! However, we didn't struggle long, for we were all tired and sleepy enough to bivouac anywhere, and to remain quite undisturbed by roaring trains and whizzing motors.

The sun shining on our tents at 5 o'clock the next morning was the first thing that roused us. We were all in fine spirits then, and "This is the life!" was the joyous refrain we sang while we cooked breakfast. "Breaking camp" was a lengthy proceeding for us amateurs, and it was 9 o'clock before we were ready to continue our progress towards Sacramento, where we arrived about noon.

VISIT TO LAKE TAHOE BARRED.

The first item on our projected programme was a visit to Lake Tahoe, a famous beauty-spot on the borders of California and Nevada. It is situated 6,200 ft. above sea-level, is 23 miles long by 13 wide, and is surrounded by mountains of great height, rising 3000 to 4000 ft. above the elevation of the lake. The scenery is superb, a specially attractive feature being the wonderful hues of the lake itself. I find them exuberantly—but I fancy excusably—described in this wise in a recently published book, "California, Romantic and Beautiful"—

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When the day is calm, there is a ring of the lake, extending more than a mile from the shore, which is brilliantly green. Within this ring the vast centre of the expanse is of a deep yet soft and singularly tinted blue. Hues cannot be more sharply contrasted than are these permanent colours. They do not shade into each other; they lie as clearly defined as the courses of glowing gems in the wall of the New Jerusalem. It is precisely as if we were looking on an immense floor of lapus-lazuli set within a ring of flaming emerald.

Prudence, however, sent us along to the Chamber of Commerce at Sacramento to find out about the road to Lake Tahoe, and there we learned that the road was quite impassable, being covered with a foot and a half of snow. I am almost sorry now that we were too cautious and abandoned the trip, for we might have got through after all, and so won the cup which is given to the first motor-car that reaches Lake Tahoe after the winter season. By-and-by we discovered that unless a road in California is almost swept, dusted, and polished every day, it is labelled "Dangerous but passable." That is why I think we might have reached Lake Tahoe.

However, we had also Yosemite on our itinerary; and so we proceeded to retrace the route we had followed in the morning until we reached our former camping-ground, which we promptly named "Camp Ditto." We spent another night there, and set out for Yosemite about 9 o'clock next morning.

TROUBLE WITH BAD ROADS.

From that time until 1 p.m., when we reached Merced, a town 66 miles from "Camp Ditto," we had a continuation of the fine highways and the rural scenery so distinctive of California. At Merced we bade farewell to paved highways and pleasant rural scenes, for, before reaching the mountainous district which was our destination, we had to travel along a rather rough and dusty road that traversed a somewhat barren strip of country which radiated as much heat as a Numidian desert. At Snelling, a small "burg" 18 miles from Merced,

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the car and one member of the party had an opportunity to "cool off," which afforded much amusement to the rest of the party. Quite unexpectedly, we came to a section of the road that was for some distance entirely covered by water. We hadn't an idea how deep the water was, or how solid the road-bed underneath it might be. Consequently, "yours truly," as the only member of the party who had on high water-proof boots that day, had to wade in and make a spectacle of herself before the car was permitted to dash through the water with a grand splash. I may mention here that long before we reached Yosemite we crossed so many streams that our experiences bore a resemblance to those of the gallant young Lochinvar—

> He staid not for brake, and he stopp'd not for stone,
> He swam the Eske river where ford there was none.

Soon after we left Snelling we found ourselves on a mountain road where we had some fairly stiff climbing to do before reaching Coulterville, a small town 31 miles distant. I almost feared that we would not reach the place before dark; and the prospect of camping on a narrow mountain road, far from a good water supply, was not altogether pleasing. However, we did manage to reach the town just as "the shades of night were falling fast." As it was dark by this time, and as we had driven 115 miles, a hot supper and a decent bed looked pretty good to us, so we put up for the night at a hotel. It was the typical hotel of a Western mining town, but the meals were good and the rooms clean, and I guess the place was respectable enough, though we took a chance on that.

A HAZARDOUS ASCENT.

We learned next morning that the Commandant at Yosemite was not to open the Park to autoists before the 16th of June—three days ahead—and maybe not then. But as other "auto." parties had gone on to Hazel Green, a nice camping ground about 30 miles from Coulterville,

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the last town on the route to Yosemite, we decided to join them; and, accordingly, we departed soon after 10 o'clock, thinking we would reach our destination about 1 p.m. We were mightily mistaken, for we did not arrive till 3. The road was "something fierce"—to use an expressive Americanism. It was good enough for a mountain road, though inclined at just the right angle to engender the uncomfortable feeling that one might tip over the mountain-side at any moment.

When I tell you that in the thirty miles from Coulterville to Hazel Green we climbed from an elevation of 1675 ft. to that of 6115 ft., and dropped again to 5665 ft., you can imagine what sort of work our good little car had to do. It was up hill and down dale the whole way, but that is too mild a way of putting it—it was more like scaling a precipice and then dropping into a gorge. The grades ranged from 1 in 17 to 1 in 3, and most of the way the road wound along the mountain-side in an exceedingly perilous fashion. If anything happened to a car, and it went off the road, it would roll down hundreds and hundreds of feet to the valley below. I fancy the road is so dangerous that every driver is extra-cautious, and so accidents are rare, while "speeding" is out of the question. To many autoists the trip to Yosemite is entirely spoiled by the thought of the terrors of the outward journey.

We were all of opinion, however, that it had been more than worth while to brave the dangers of the road for the sake of the magnificent scenery observable from every point of view—to say nothing of what awaited us at Yosemite. There was one place in particular so like the Trossachs that H. and I both called attention to the resemblance, in one breath as it were; only "our Trossachs"—I mean the Californian sample—extends over a much larger area than the Scottish Trossachs, and has, besides, a background of stately pines.

When we reached Hazel Green we found about an acre of ground fairly well cleared and supplied with fine

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spring water. It was a delightful spot in which to pitch a tent—just in the midst of a huge pine forest. The place should have been re-christened "Starvation Camp," however, for the majority of the large number of autoists temporarily detained here had expected to go straight through to Yosemite, and had only a limited supply of food and blankets. Those of us who were well furnished with such comforts shared them with our less fortunate fellows, and a fine spirit of comradeship was thus developed.

THE YOSEMITE VALLEY.

On the morning of Tuesday, 16th June, word came that we would be admitted to Yosemite as soon as the stage coach to Crockers had passed the cross-roads. There was a general stampede to break camp, and for a grand finale one of the men killed a huge rattlesnake —about 100 feet only from our location.

We were among the first to proceed to the Ranger's camp, where we skidded our wheels to show that our brakes were in good working order; then registered and paid an admission fee of 5 dollars (£1), and duly received a time schedule that had to be followed exactly for the next 22 miles. One could drive as slowly as he pleased, but woe betide anybody who covered the distance in less time than that specified in the schedule! He would be promptly "pinched" for "speeding"—in other words, arrested. The penalties for this offence vary according to the degree of defiance of the regulation. Some offenders have to go all the way back to the Ranger's camp, and then make the journey at the schedule pace; others are charged a second admission fee in addition.

After we left the Ranger's camp the scenery became grander every mile until we got to Yosemite, where it reached a climax of absolute magnificence. So wonderful and varied is it, on such a stupendous and colossal scale, that my poor powers of description are inadequate to depict it or to enable you to realise it. I am

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Photos by *S. Lorencie Anderson.*

YOSEMITE FALLS (UPPER FALL).

MIRROR LAKE.

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afraid I must fall back on the awfully banal phrase—"Words fail to convey an adequate impression of the scene."

Yosemite, as I said at the beginning, is a valley—a beautiful and fertile valley, well wooded—lying between precipitous mountain sides, ranging from 2000 to 5000 feet in height. The geological theory is that the mountains were riven asunder—one can almost see where the mountains would fit were they drawn together again. This theory is better and more scientifically stated thus—

> The high vertical walls, the small amount of debris at their foot, and the character of the Yosemite chasm itself, have led the geologists to ascribe its formation not to erosion or glacial action, but to a mighty convulsion in the granite rocks, whereby part of them subsided along lines of fault-crossing nearly at right angles. The observer, standing on the floor of the chasm, can see no outlet anywhere, the almost perpendicular walls towering on high in every direction.

The Merced River winds through the valley, receiving many mountain tributaries which are fed by numerous falls. The falls, indeed, are a conspicuous feature of the Yosemite; here one can fully comprehend the felicitousness of Tennyson's description in "The Lotos-Eaters"—

> A land of streams! Some, like a downward smoke,
> Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
> And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
> Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.

One of the most notable of the falls is the Bridal Veil Fall, which is about 70ft. wide, and descends vertically 630ft. It is appropriately named, the wind often making the foaming column flutter like a white veil. Another fall ordinarily named the Ribbon Fall has the very pretty alternative name of the Virgin's Tears.

There are a great number of objects of interest and "scenic views" at Yosemite. Among the first things to arrest the attention of the autoist as he enters the valley, driving his car along the fine road which the Government

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has made through the Park, is El Capitan, a cliff rising almost in a straight line to a height of 3360ft. You may be specially interested to know that an American writer terms it "the most kingly, awe-inspiring, single mass of granite known." As we progress we come in succession upon the Bridal Veil Falls, the Cathedral Rocks, the Yosemite Falls, the Half Dome, and Glacier Point.

We had our camp within sight and sound of Yosemite Falls, one of the most beautiful in the valley; at the same time it is, I believe, one of the highest waterfalls in the world, if not the highest. The upper fall is 1,600 ft. in height, the lower 600 ft., and the cascades at the foot of the falls constitute a drop of 400 ft.; so that, altogether, the volume of water descends 2,600 ft. One day we followed the trail [track] to the top of the falls, and it was wonderful to watch the mountain torrent rushing over the precipice, breaking into sprays of foam like the bursting of rockets in mid-air, and shooting down to the ledge 1600ft. below, where the water foamed and boiled in a seething cauldron. Anyone walking within a quarter of a mile of the foot of the falls gets sopping wet from the prevailing mist. We know by experience.

Two other magnificent falls are the Vernal Falls and the Nevada Falls. They carry tremendous volumes of water, but lack the slender and graceful lines of the Yosemite Falls. They are seen to advantage when following the trail to Glacier Point, which we did on mule-back.

GLACIER POINT.

Glacier Point (5000 ft. high). is famed for the splendid view of the valley that is obtained from its summit, and also for an overhanging rock projecting out from the mountain side, suspended, as it were, in mid-air, the side of the mountain here being a sheer precipice for at least 3000 ft. down. Many people are venturesome enough to walk out on to the rock, but the performance requires some nerve and we one and all begged to be excused.

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The panorama unfolded is certainly very wonderful. In the foreground is the deep gorge forming the pleasant valley of the Merced River. Across the gorge is a succession of noble mountains, and away behind them stretch the high Sierras, their snow-capped peaks glittering in the sunlight, the torrents dashing down their rocky sides looking like white streamers floating in the breeze. May I transfer a passage from a glowing description of the scene? All descriptions I have seen are equally luxuriant in style—

Not a few experienced travellers have pronounced the Glacier Point view the grandest sight on earth. It is one that every visitor should see, for from this point his eye may range over all of the more striking glories of Yosemite. Well might one yield himself up to silent amazement as the scene slowly possesses him, for he will be totally unable to grasp its full grandeur in a moment or even in an hour. There is a vague impression of vastness and beauty, but it is some time ere the mind is able to dwell on the details and to analyse the marvellous landscape into its component parts.

Just opposite one sees the white swaying ribbon of Yosemite Fall; to the right rises the tremendous bulk of El Capitan, which suffers little from the distance, and towering just behind this is Eagle Peak. A still grander view greets the eye as one turns to the left and gazes up the valley. The dominating feature is the rounded white summit of Half Dome, for its bold situation in the foreground gives the impression of greater height than the still loftier Clouds Rest just behind it. One is quite overwhelmed by this weird, glistening mountain, so strangely different that it seems as if some titanic architect had planned and reared the stately dome as the crowning glory of his gigantic palace. When the eye at last breaks away from the fascination of this strange peak, it ranges over an undulating sea of mountains—the high Sierras, which stretch away sharp and clear to the horizon. Vernal and Nevada Falls may be seen in the foreground, white pillars standing sharply against dark masses of rock and pine trees—but why continue a futile effort to set forth the glory of the Glacier Point panorama in words?

We had the advantage of beholding this gorgeous panorama under particularly auspicious conditions—sunshine followed by a storm. The storm gathered in the mountains across the valley, and it was an awe-inspiring sight to watch the clouds envelop one peak after

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another, and then sweep across the chasm and overtake us in a downpour of rain, adding immensely to our discomfort, as already we were all more or less damp and shivering.

With a slippery trail ahead of us, and bearing in mind several stories we had heard of its sharp and dangerous turns, we had expected all sorts of thrills on the way up and down, but not one did we experience. After the sensations of our "auto." journey, we had become immune to all dangers, so far at least as nerves were concerned. At times I felt a bit anxious about B., for he is not what you might call an expert horseman, and was mounted on a rather mean-tempered animal. I had a very sedate mule bearing the aggressive name of "Carrie Nation" (the lady who smashes drinking saloons with an axe), but she—the mule, I mean—displayed no eccentricities other than an intense desire to contemplate the scenery below from a position uncomfortably close to the brink of the trail on its outward side, and a very unfriendly disposition to constantly bump my knees against the rocks on the inward side.

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We could have spent an indefinite time at Yosemite, revelling in its beauties and exploring its many features, but "time and tide," etc.; and at the end of a week we—I was almost going to say, quoting once more—"folded our tents like the Arabs, and as silently stole away." There was, however, nothing particularly silent or stealthy about our departure, as the engine of the automobile was as noisy as engines usually are, and, besides, we had to report at every checking station. But once out of the boundaries of Yosemite we went on speedily, and, after two days on the road, found ourselves once again in San Francisco in fine health and spirits, and the auto. not much the worse of the wear after such a hard trip. New brake bands and the vulcanising of a couple of punctured tubes were the only repairs needed.

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MACGILLIVRAY'S "DEESIDE."

THE activities of the Club having been suspended during the war—there are no "Proceedings" to chronicle in the present issue—attention may be profitably directed to a book dealing with the region over which those activities ordinarily range—an almost forgotten book, we suspect, and one certainly not so well known as it ought to be. We refer to "The Natural History of Dee Side and Braemar," by William MacGillivray, LL.D., who was Professor of Natural History at Marischal College from 1841 to 1852.

Macgillivray, who was born in 1796, was a native of Old Aberdeen, the son of a soldier who fell at Corunna in 1809. His childhood was spent in Harris, on a farm occupied by two uncles. At the age of eleven he was sent to Aberdeen to school, and afterwards attended King's College, where he graduated M.A. in 1815. While a student he spent his long summer holidays with his relatives in Harris, and always walked from Aberdeen to the west coast, whence a boat took him to the island. He thus early became inured to long "tramps," and he remained a vigorous and indefatigable pedestrian all his life. One who was a student under him has described him as "tireless" when "pedestrianising with his class among the hills and heather of Deeside," adding—"He could walk the most active of them into limp helplessness, and remain as fresh as at the outset of the march." As a sample of his walking powers, it may be mentioned that, when a youth of three-and-twenty, he walked from Aberdeen to London, for the sheer purpose of "seeing the country," a visit to the British Museum being also an objective. Deeside became familiar to him, partly by his youthful journeys to and from the west coast, which were made in something like a direct line right across the hills; and subsequently by more specific excursions for scientific investigations. The

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"Deeside" book, however, was more especially the outcome of an elaborate tour of what Macgillivray termed "the Central Highlands of Braemar," which extended over about a month in the autumn of 1850, and in which he was accompanied by his eldest daughter and his son Paul, then a lad, but who afterwards distinguished himself as a naturalist in Victoria. It is believed that, although he felt at the time that he had benefited in health by the excursion, the fatigue to which he had subjected himself had been detrimental to him; and, owing more or less to its effects, Professor Macgillivray died in September, 1852. The manuscript of the work was completed by him just before his death, but his family not wishing to publish the work, the manuscript was purchased by Queen Victoria, and, by Her Majesty's command, it was printed in 1855. The work, which was edited by Professor Edwin Lankester, was published for private circulation only. Presentation copies, however, have found their way into public libraries and private collections; there is a copy, for instance, in the Aberdeen Public Library.

Professor Macgillivray modestly described the account of his tour as that of "the simple journey of a pedestrian naturalist through a very peaceful tract of Scotland," mentioning that he had in view principally an examination of the geological structure of Braemar, its alpine vegetation, and, to a certain extent, its zoology. His book, accordingly, is, in the main, a scientific one, devoted largely to the geology and botany of the Dee Valley. Its survey of those and other natural features of the district is, for one thing, exceedingly comprehensive. Not only did Professor Macgillivray follow up the Dee from its debouchure at Aberdeen to its sources on the gravelly plateau on the summit of Braeriach, but he seems to have traversed most of the mountains and hills comprised within its basin, and to have explored with equal assiduity the numerous glens by which these mountains and hills are intersected. The extent of his wanderings, as demonstrated by the

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details of configuration he furnishes and the numerous references to places visited, is little short of astounding; and men of to-day who fancy they "know" Deeside may well feel abashed when they compare their comparatively limited peregrinations with the wide range of the wanderings of this patient and ever-enthusiastic investigator. Professor Macgillivray was a distinguished scientist—he has been described as "an all-round naturalist," keenly interested in many branches of nature study, on all of which he wrote with authority and in a fascinating style. He was the author of several important works, and his "Deeside" unquestionably occupies a high position among the books which deal with the natural features of the district. The geological features in particular receive much attention, though it has been suggested that some of the views expressed are now, in view of later investigations and conclusions, susceptible of considerable modification; an entire section is devoted to natural history proper, the flora and fauna; and there are charming disquisitions on forests and moors and lochs as well.

The main interest of the book to the general body of mountaineers, however, lies in the felicitous descriptions of the scenery of Deeside and the Deeside Highlands in which it abounds. Macgillivray was much more than a scientist—he had a keen sense of the beauties of Nature, a distinct feeling for the picturesque. The faculty of appreciation is not always accompanied by that of expression, but Macgillivray possessed the latter in addition to his many other attainments. With a depreciation of his own qualities that appears almost to have been characteristic, he declared that "A single-minded man may by a right use of his eyes, anywhere that the sun shines and the winds blow and the rains fall, find abundant matter for observation and instruction." The statement is incontestable, to be sure—incidentally, it indicates the alertness of Macgillivray's perceptions and the readiness to utilise them; but to the seeing eye must be added, for those less favoured, effective powers of

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description. Macgillivray was singularly well-equipped in this respect. He had the enviable faculty of so portraying a scene in words as to make the reader instantaneously realise its features and character. Nothing came amiss to him. The Dee at old Invercauld bridge, sunset on Glen Gairn, a wind storm in the Ballochbuie forest, thunder in the corries—they are all depicted with naturalness, but yet in such a way as to be intensely vivid and impressive. Macgillivray's superb qualities as an artistic master of language were well set forth in the eulogy delivered by the late Mr. John F. White, LL.D. (one of his old pupils), at the unveiling of the mural tablet to the memory of the great naturalist placed in the Natural History class-room at Marischal College—"The 'Natural History of Deeside' shows him to have been a profound lover of Nature in its largest sense. In clear, nervous prose it reveals a fine poetic vein. He uses his word-palette like a landscape painter. There are passages in this book which for splendid yet sober description will compare not unfavourably with some of the finest passages in 'Modern Painters.'"

SNOW AND RAIN IN THE CAIRNGORMS.

As a sample of Macgillivray's descriptive powers, we may quote a passage descriptive of snow and rain in the Cairngorms as witnessed from an eminence about the entrance to Glen Ey on an August morning :—

In the north-west is a scene, the magnificence of which might well repay a journey of a hundred miles—at least to a person of some taste, a little superfluous money, and plenty of spare time. Directly opposite is a long hill range, having its broad flank covered with a forest of pine and birch, its shoulders and rounded head purpled with flowering heather. Its outline descends gently into Glen Lui, on the other side of which, to the westwards, rises a lower brown hill of similar aspect. Beyond this western hill, and at the head of the wooded glen, rise, ridge behind ridge, the mountains of the Mona-rua [Monadh Ruadh, or Cairngorm range], presenting various forms, most of them massy and rounded. Behind these, the far distant summits of Ben Vrotan, Cairntoul, and Ben Muich Dhui rise in beautiful magnificence, clothed in snow—not in small and isolated patches, the remains of their winter clothing, but in continuous sheathing, the result of yesterday's storm. It would be difficult for a person not looking upon these mountains to imagine the beauty which they have so suddenly received. But two days ago and they were simply prominences of

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from three to four thousand feet, or a little more, above the sea level, much less, of course, above the general elevation of the district ;—now they seem a superb range of lofty mountains, having their summits clad in perennial snow ; and they thus represent the great ridges of the earth, the Pyrenees, the Alps, and the Andes. You may fancy them any height—fifteen thousand feet, if you please—their actual aspect will accord with the supposition. Instead of from twelve to fifteen miles, let them be supposed thirty miles distant—or you may contemplate them in their actual and unexaggerated condition ;—the highest of our Scottish mountains, on which the white mantle of winter gleams among the sober tints of autumn. How beautifully their white summits contrast with the blue sky above, and the purple hue of the lower hills, or the dark green of the solemn pine-forests !

As I gaze, a dense mist creeps over one and the next summit, glides along, obscuring another and a fourth. They seem abolished, obliterated, swallowed up. The nearer hills are now involved. Fifteen minutes has sufficed for this envelopment. We watch the progress of the rain-cloud, and in fifteen more the whole valley of the Dee from Ben Vrotan to Craig Cornach [Choinnich] is overhung with a sheet of grey vapour. Rain falls in flakes, driven by the wind into wavy streaks.

. . . .

Dimly gloom through the rain the massy forms of the nearer hills; then, behind them, ridge after ridge, the whole presenting a rather melancholy, though still beautiful scene, which one would scarcely wish to continue. Presently, the conical peak of the Cairngorm [Derry Cairngorm], white with snow, shoots np clear from amidst the vapour ; beyond it, Ben Muich Dhui discloses its massy form, its summit still involved in clouds ; the other mountains appear successively ; the rain-clouds have passed down the valley of the Dee, and are watering the pines of the Ballochbuie and the birch woods of Balmoral and Abergeldie. Glimpses of sunshine gleam upon the hills. But in the far west another vast mass of vapour rolls its wreaths along, enveloping hill after hill, and advancing towards us.

STUMBLING ON THE WELLS OF DEE.

One of the most interesting narratives in the book is that in which Macgillivray describes how, as a youth of twenty-three, he stumbled by mere chance, and all unknowing, on the sources of the Dee :—

In September 1819, a poor student of King's College, Aberdeen, ascended to the sources of the Dee, on his way to Kingussie and Fort William. From his journal I make the following extract :—"About three or four miles above the Linn, the Dee is joined by a river equal in size, named the Geaully [Geldie], the source of which I had explored in 1816, when I came across the mountains from Blair Atholl. Hitherto I had travelled in a westerly direction, but now proceeded northwards, following the river. There are no houses beyond the junction mentioned. About a mile above it, I came in sight of a most magnificent rock, with a mountain peak behind it, of greater elevation. When I reached this rock I learned by the light-scarlet colour of the clouds on the ridge, that the sun was setting. Passing the rock, I entered a valley bounded on both sides by very lofty and

rugged mountains, and terminating in a vast mass, towering above the whole. Before I reached the upper end of this magnificent, though wild and desolate valley, night fell. About this time I saw a deer not far from me. Near the upper end of the valley, the stream which I had followed separated into two. It was with great difficulty that I clambered to this part, to see which was the largest, that I might follow it. Having ascertained that the largest stream came from a valley which branched off at a right angle from the extremity of the main one, I entered this valley, and proceeded about three quarters of a mile. It was by this time completely dark, and I determined to rest myself."

The narrative goes on to state that the night was passed here, in a sheltered place, but with little sleep, some shivering, and many melancholy thoughts:—

"About midnight I looked up and saw the moon, with some stars. They were at times obscured by masses of vapour, which rolled along the summits of the mountains. I had now a better view of my situation. I was near the upper end of a high valley, completely surrounded by enormous masses of rock. Behind me, my face being towards the mouth of the valley, there rose at its upper end a high mountain involved in clouds; on the right hand was another, in the form of a pyramidal rock, and contiguous with it, a peak of less elevation; on the left hand, a high ridge running from the mountain in the north-west, and terminating at the mouth of the valley in a dark conical mass; and straight before me, in the south-east, at the distance of nearly a mile, another vast mountain. The summits of all were at times enveloped in clouds. The wind, which blew from the west was not keen, and the night was such as in comfortable circumstances might be called warm. Yet on awakening from my slumber, I felt chilly, and soon after began to shiver. I then rose and gathered a few large stones, and a good deal of grass and short heath, with which I formed a somewhat snug sort of couch. Unloosing my pack, I took a night-cap and a pair of stockings from it, which I applied to their proper use, for my feet had been wetted in crossing a brook, and my hat alone did not keep my head warm after the perspiration it had undergone. Then, eating a little of my scanty store of barley bread, and drinking two or three cupfuls of water from a neigbouring rill, I lay down, put heather and my knapsack over my feet, placed myself in an easy posture, and fell asleep.

"I awoke fresh, but weak, about sunrise. The stream which I had followed here divided into two, and I chose the largest. It led me to a magnificent corry, in the form of a deep hollow scooped out of the great ridge, on the left of the glen, as described, but now on my right hand in ascending it. The sides of this corry were formed of sloping rocks of vast height. The rivulet came tumbling down the centre in the form of a cataract. Here the rocks were most abrupt; but I had determined to proceed—at least to attempt the ascent. Before I reached the base of the rocks, I felt very weak, and was obliged to halt every now and then. However, I proceeded, and at length, being well accustomed to rock-climbing, found myself on the very summit of this vast mass of rock. It was covered with mist, which rolled rapidly along the ridges. The sun now and then appeared through it. The view down the corry which I had

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just ascended was delightful—dreadful it might have been to some;—the whole glen, the deep corry just beneath, with its fearful rocks, the opposite mountains, with an alpine lake before me. The scene was truly sublime, and I contemplated it with great delight. . . .

"I had now reached the rounded summit of the ridge, and proceeding along the streamlet, which was the principal object of my research, I traced it to two fountains, and several smaller springs. I took a glassful from each of the larger, and drank it to the health of my friends. Near these fountains, which were among coarse granite sand, I saw a covey of ptarmigans, and a small bird which I took for *Alauda pratensis* [meadow pipit]. The only phænogamous plants which grew on the summit of the mountain were *Silene acaulis* [moss campion], and *Salix herbacca* [least willow], both in abundance, the former still in flower. . . . "

Not knowing by name a single one of the localities mentioned in the above narrative, I had not been aware of my having passed up Glen Dee to the base of Ben Muich Dhui and slept in the Glen of the Garrachory. . . I had visited the so-called sources of the Dee on the ridge of Braeriach.

Extracts could be multiplied; but those we have given will suffice to show the interest that attaches to Professor Macgillivray's work on "Deeside," and the pleasure, let alone the instruction, that may be derived from its perusal. The book, we venture to think, even at this distance of time from the date of its publication, is still deserving of a word of commendation in the pages of the *Cairngorm Club Journal.*

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CORRESPONDENCE.

THE BEN UARNS.

TO THE EDITOR, "CAIRNGORM CLUB JOURNAL."

SIR,—In the last number of the *Journal* attention was again directed to the Ben Uarns. As stated in the note on the subject, the proper Gaelic spelling and derivation of the name of these hills at the head of Glen Ey has always been a matter of dispute. The Ordnance Survey adopted the provincial spelling "Iutharn" (or "Ifrinn"), i.e., hell; hence the hills have recently been known as "the mountains of hell" (See *C.C.J.*, vii., 250).

The word "Drumwharran"* quoted in the note (p. 76) in all probability refers to the Glen Ey Highlanders and the Ben Uarns, and in every likelihood is a corruption of "Druim-urrainn" (*dreem-ooarn*, the ridge of strength or power). This meaning might have reference to the strength of the mountains, as a natural barrier against the enemies of the men of the glen.

Mr. J. A. Robertson, in his book "The Gaelic Topography of Scotland," published in 1869, prior to the making of the Ordnance Survey map, says on this subject—"The heathen Caledonian Gael appear to have paid to mountains, as well as rivers, a superstitious reverence, by ascribing a power and strength in them. There are in the extreme north-east boundary of the royal forest of Benachrombeg, in Atholl, Perthshire, and close on the county march of Aberdeenshire, two very remote mountains called '*Beinn-urrainn-mor*' and '*Beinn-urrainn beag*,' which mean '*the mountains of power or strength*;' and they are also distinguished by being called 'the greater and lesser.'

* The Gaelic u is sometime turned into w by English-speaking Scots.

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The situation of these two mountains is very solitary, and far removed from any habitations. They, and the whole neighbourhood also, are unoccupied by either sheep or cattle, whereby it is probable that not a dozen people have ascended their tops during the whole of last century."

Although the English-named "Devil's Elbow" and "Devil's Point" are in comparatively close proximity to the Ben Uarns, we might reconsider our interpretation of the names of the two hills in question.—I am, etc.,

J. McCoss.

Aberdeen, 22nd January, 1915.

PLACE-NAMES IN THE CAIRNGORMS, ETC.

Sir,—I have begun to read the *Cairngorm Club Journal* only recently, but as I have just bought a complete set to date and become a regular subscriber, perhaps you will allow me a few remarks.

I observe in the issue for January, 1913 (Vol. vii., pp. 235-40) a report of the opening of the "Allt-na-Bienne Moire" Bridge. The Cairngorm Club is to be congratulated on constructing this really excellent bridge; but, in the *Cairngorm Club Journal*, why has the name of the stream it spans been mutilated? All through the report, and particularly in the reproduction of the inscription placed on the bridge, (not on the bridge itself, for I specially walked out to see it, but on a buttress), the name is given as "Bienne," whereas it should be spelt "Beinne."

Also, "Larig Ghru" is an impossible form. Larig should be Làirig by the rule leathann ri leathann is caol ri caol. Grù (or gnù) = (1) famous, (2) stingy, (3) grippy, (4) surly, (5) envious; so Dwelly's Dictionary. The word for gloomy is gruamach. The two do not seem in any way interchangeable or synonymous; nor

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does Dwelly or MacBain give the one as a contracted form of the other. MacBain's giving of them as from separate roots appears to me conclusive that they are different words; and I suspect it is simply a blunder of the cartographers to assume that they are synonymous.

But I know no Gaelic. I have been trying to learn it, but have hardly got beyond the beginnings of it yet. Still, the above represents what I believe to be accurate. Anyhow, "Bienne" is quite wrong. The combination "ie" never comes in Gaelic.

I am glad to see that there is a prospect of Mr. Copland's "Panorama of the View" being placed on the summit of Beinn Muich Dhui, and I heartily wish the projected memorial every success. If only the Club would erect a similar panoramic view on the top of Lochnagar! In my opinion, the view from that summit is unrivalled; besides, the mountain itself is climbed far more frequently than is Beinn Muich Dhui.

May I venture to dissent from your too favourable notice of the erection at the "View Point" here? The hills are so badly drawn that, unless one already knew some of them, he could not find any like those delineated. The Cromdale Hills, *e.g.*, are largely unrecognisable. Several are quite out of proportion, particularly the Ben Avon and Beinn a Bhuird section. Several peaks marked as *visible* I could not see; nor again could I make the large number of peaks given on the panorama as lying between any two selected points correspond to the few in actual sight; and these peaks are all drawn—not merely their position indicated by arrows. The idea is so excellent that one wishes it had been carried out better.

Please forgive my criticisms—they are not meant to be carping.—I am, etc.,

RONALD BURN.

THE PRESBYTERY,
GRANTOWN-ON-SPEY, January 23, 1915.

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[While "Larig Ghru" has been constantly used in the *C. C. J.* as a convenient name for the well-known pass, it has all along been recognised that the proper form was "Learg Ghruamach" (Vol. I., 319; II., 297). We may confess to having no predilections on the subject. The trouble is that "authorities" on the Gaelic language are at variance, and those of us, like our correspondent, who do not "have the Gaelic" are apt to be bewildered. Mr. John Milne, LL.D., the author of "Celtic Place-Names in Aberdeenshire," for instance, suggests a delightful compromise, "Lairig Ghru;" while Mr. F. C. Diack, in an article in the *Aberdeen Free Press*, 6th May, 1911, dismissed "Lairig Ghrumach" in this contemptuous fashion:—

"The famous pass leading from the head of Dee to Strathspey is often given in maps and guide books as Lairig Ghrumach, 'the gloomy pass.' Gaelic speakers know nothing of this: they call it L. Ghrū, or, in better spelling, for the sound is the same, *L. Dhrū.* Dr. Macbain pointed out that the stream which rises in this pass is known in the lower reaches as the Druie, and that the name therefore probably means 'the pass of the Druie river.' The desperate expedient of explaining Ghrū as a 'contraction' of a hypothetical ghruamach is hardly worth mentioning, except as an illustration of the curiosities that find ready currency in this department."

The varieties of spelling as between "ei" and "ie" are notorious, even in English. It may be that "Beinne" is the more orthodox form, but Gaelic orthography is a subject on which doubts may be fairly entertained by those who are not Celts and are not familiar with the language, especially when the experts differ so much as they do, *e.g.*, in the adjacent Larig Ghru. It may be pointed out that the latest edition of the O.S. one-inch map gives "Beanaidh" as the name of the burn—this, we understand, on the authority of a Gaelic-speaking member of the Ordnance Survey.—EDITOR.]

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EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

Lochnagar in Snow.

During last week-end (wrote "W. A. R.," in an article in the *Free Press* of 29th January), four hill-lovers, members of the Cairngorm Club, resolved to have a walk over Lochnagar—one of them a gallant soldier, who had got a few days off to say good-bye to his friends before going oversea to drive the Germans out of France and Belgium. It was a beautiful clear morning with sunshine on the surrounding hills, and we found that we were in luck, for there was a white mantle for many, many miles all over, and the snow was in perfect condition. The Alltnagiubhsaich path was filled with snow, and the snow all over was nice and crisp, and, with the continuous crunching under foot, made exceedingly pleasant walking, while the temperature, probably about freezing point, was not uncomfortable. The view of Ben A'an on the ascent was very striking. The path was completely lost before we got to the turn towards the west, and, of course, the Fox's Well was nowhere to be seen. Ascending the shoulder by the Devil's Ladder, which, by the way, was not visible, we had to face a good deal of ice as well as frozen snow, and on some of the slopes we felt much more comfortable in having an ice axe to cut steps here and there. On the plateau it was very fine, but there was very little inducement to remain on the top on account of the cold and a slight drifting of snow. We had to pause, however, to have a look at the great giants in the west, made more striking by reason of many snow clouds playing about their tops. There is certainly nothing finer to be got in Switzerland than was our five hours on snow—and we unwillingly retraced our steps, returning by the Glassalt Shiel and taking a couple of very good glissades on the way. Over Loch Muick was a beautiful herd of deer on the horizon, feeling themselves quite immune from danger, and our semi-friendly mountain friends, the ptarmigan, seemed to be numerous, and gave us a few croaks as we passed along. It took us two hours and a half to get to the top, and we dawdled down to the Glassalt Shiel so as to get to Ballater before dark.

Ballater to Mount Keen on Ski.

Wintry weather prevailed in the Scottish Highlands in the last week of February, and the Deeside hills were well covered with snow. In the last days of the month, a party of four, one of them a young lady, went from Ballater to Mount Keen upon ski. The whole distance from Braikley to the summit of Mount Keen and back to Pannanich was covered on ski. The snow was rather icy on the surface, and this interfered with the running and made it dangerous in places. The lady carried a rucksack with 8 lbs. weight in it for the whole distance, this being one of the conditions laid down by the Scottish Ski Club for an excursion qualifying for the touring test. The view from the summit of

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Mount Keen was exceptionally clear to the east. The sea horizon was seen from Buchanness right down to Fife—not a hazy, indistinct sea horizon, as is often observed from the Deeside hills, but a clear-cut definite line.

MR. H. RAEBURN ON THE CAUCASUS.

MANY members of the Club, we were glad to see, were present at Mr. Harold Raeburn's lecture on "The Russian Alps—Travels and New Ascents in the Caucasus Mountains," delivered in Aberdeen, under the auspices of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, on 8th February. Their attendance was a very proper compliment paid to an expert and eminent mountaineer, who has made numerous "first ascents" and greatly extended our knowledge of high altitudes. In addition to many notable feats, Mr. Raeburn has carried out a very special work in the Caucasus, hitherto little explored, not merely by climbing mountains never before ascended, but by accurate observations of the orographical features of the region. He headed an expedition to these "Russian Alps" in 1913, and another last year, seven unclimbed mountains being ascended by the first party and other four by the second, these mountains ranging from 13,500 to nearly 15,000 feet in height. The lecture embraced graphic descriptions of the passes and ranges traversed, the glaciers and ice-fields encountered, and the new peaks "bagged," along with a pleasing and occasionally humorous narrative of the adventures that befel the hardy explorers. Unfortunately, Mr. Raeburn has yet to acquire a good deal of the art of the successful lecturer, and many passages of his interesting and delightful story were lost by persons seated at a distance from the platform. There was ample compensation, however, in the large number of beautiful pictures thrown on the screen, which conveyed excellent impressions of the prominent features of "the frosty Caucasus," and revealed wonders little imagined to exist in this remote and comparatively unknown tableland.

THE PTARMIGAN'S WINTER PLUMAGE.

ALL hillmen are familiar with the hoarse croaking cry of the male ptarmigan as he circles round to settle on some neighbouring rock. The summer and the autumn plumage of both male and female are also well known, and are admirably suited to the barren hill-tops and watersheds where these birds find a home among the scattered boulders. The winter and early spring feathers of this Arctic grouse, however, are probably not so often observed.

Perhaps no members of the group of hairy-footed heath cocks are more interesting, on account of their peculiarly amusing antics at the nesting season, and the seasonal changes of plumage they undergo in order that they may assimilate themselves to the colour of their surroundings, and be thus protected from their numerous enemies. Ptarmigan are essentially high-ground birds, and are to be found in the most stormy weather on snow and ice-covered rocks, without any apparent sign of plant-life for miles around, and one is at a loss to understand what they get to eat. During this period both sexes of the common species become pure white, with the exception of their outer tail feathers, which are black, the male being distinguished by the presence of a small black patch in front of the eye.

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It is noteworthy that the changes in colour are due, to a considerable extent, not to moulting, but to a rearrangement of the pigment in the feathers themselves. I have noticed, however, that absolutely pure white plumage on the back is not often met with, even on the higher Cairngorms, except in unusually severe winters, there generally being a few of the greyish autumn feathers left in the plumage on the upper parts. On the other hand, I believe that in the case of ptarmigan, which inhabit colder climates such as the north of Scandinavia and Spitzbergen, the male at least rarely dons the full summer and autumn plumage; a number of white winter feathers being retained throughout the summer, and in some instances, only the head and chest change colour, the rest of the plumage remaining white. It would thus seem that, in those countries where the summer is of short duration, sufficient time is not allowed for the full summer and autumn changes to be effected before the winter sets in. The armour of Nature is indeed wonderful, and it is possible that this particoloured plumage affords even better protection in such localities than if a complete change to the darker feathers took place.—J. McCoss.

The Glenmore Pine.

The story of the famous block of pine from the forest of Glenmore, at the base of Cairngorm, is told once more by Sir Herbert Maxwell in an elaborate and well-illustrated book on "Trees" recently published. This is his account— "In 1783 Alexander, fourth Duke of Gordon, sold a great breadth of the pine forest of Glenmore to an English merchant, who took twenty-two years to fell it. The logs were floated down the Spey, and built at Speymouth into forty-seven ships of an aggregate burthen of 19,000 tons. When Mr. Osborne, the purchaser of the timber, finished his work in 1806, he sent a memorial plank to the Duke, which now stands in the entrance hall of Gordon Castle. It measures 5 feet 5 inches in width at the butt end, and 4 feet 4 inches at the top, and is of a rich dark brown colour. The top of this magnificent tree lies where it was cut off more than one hundred years ago, on the hill above Glenmore Lodge, 1,400 feet above the sea, and is still hard and sound, 3 feet in diameter where it was cut off. Now, had that been part of a tree, say, fifty years old, frost and wet would have rotted it to the core in ten years or less; but the snows and rains of a century have made little impression on the bones of the giant. Mr. Elwes was shown a tree in the King's Forest of Ballochbuie, on Deeside, which had been cut up after lying for seventy years where it fell, yet the timber was quite sound."

The Strathspey Woods.

Sir Herbert Maxwell comments on the strangeness of "the Scots pine" being so designated, having regard to its enormous geographical range, and to the insignificant area it occupies in Scotland as compared with the vast forests in Russia, Scandinavia, and other countries. It has received its name, he explains, because, although at one time it was spread as a native over all parts of the British Isles, it is now only to be found in a truly wild state in the fragments of old forest remaining in Strathspey, Deeside, and here and there in the counties of Inverness and Perth. He adds that, despite all the scores of exotic conifers introduced to furnish

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British woodlands with profitable timber, the Scots pine, in his judgment, need fear no rival in beauty after reaching maturity. He has apparently no patience with the common objection that a pine forest creates a tiresome monotony, and he declares emphatically that the most beautiful tract of Scots pine forest he has ever seen is that which clothes the slopes of the Wishart Burn, near Gordon Castle, and was planted about 180 to 190 years ago. In a section of the book devoted to the birch, Sir Herbert Maxwell refers briefly to the beauty of the birch woods of Strathspey, specially eulogising those on both sides of the railway near "Lochinsch Station"—Kincraig is doubtless meant.

A LADY MOUNTAINEER.

AMONG mountaineering books recently published is "The Conquest of Mount Cook and Other Climbs," by Freda Du Faur—an account of four seasons' mountaineering on the Southern Alps of New Zealand. The *Times Literary Supplement* of 8 April, in a notice of the book, said Miss Du Faur must be accorded a high place among climbers, and gave the following summary of her feats :—"Few people of any sex can record four years of achievement more noteworthy than that described in this book—two ascents of Mount Cook (one including the traverse of the whole summit ridge), the first traverse of Mount Sefton, ascents of Mount Seely, Monnt Malte Brun, the Minarets, Mount de la Bêche, Mount Tasman, Mount Dampier, and Mount Lendenfeld, together with several virgin peaks and numerous failures, each almost as honourable as any success. This is a splendid and crowded tale, for many of these expeditions required one or two bivouacs, and almost all were, though not wholly new, sufficiently unusual to import that touch of uncertainty which keeps the climber on stretch throughout the day and gives the alternation of agony and delight."

DEATH ON THE HILLS.

AN ardent hill-climber met his death on the hills in a somewhat tragic manner in the beginning of April. Mr. H. A. R. Chancellor, of Newton and Birkcleugh, Elvanfoot, Lanarkshire, left Edinburgh one day for Wanlockhead, intending to ascend Green Lowther. Two days later, his body was accidentally found by a shepherd lad in a lonely spot on the Stake Moss, near the Enterkin Pass. It is surmised that the climb had been too much for Mr. Chancellor—he was seventy-three years of age—and that he succumbed to an attack of heart disease, dying all alone in this remote place among the hills.

BARBED WIRE.

"CONFOUND the fellow that invented barbed wire !" The all too mild imprecation will be heartily endorsed by every mountaineer. It came, however, not from a hill-climber, but from an officer at the front (Captain Robert Miles) who fell two days after writing the letter (subsequently published) in which the phrase appeared. Barbed wire entanglements are a conspicuous feature of the defence of the trenches—"a horrid-looking sort of exaggerated crinoline of barbed wire," Captain Miles described a German arrangement he had an opportunity of inspecting. "Charging that little lot under heavy fire," he wrote sardonically, "will be a very pleasant business. At the best one will tear one's only pair of trousers, and at the

worst one will get hung up in it while they shoot you in the more tender portions of one's anatomy." Fortunately, damage to clothes is the most that results from an encounter with barbed wire in our "operations," but it generally provokes a volley of language which, like that of Truthful James's friend, is "frequent and painful and free."

THE LATE MR. WILLIAM C. SMITH.

A sense of personal loss must have been experienced by not a few members of the Club on the announcement of the death of Mr. William C. Smith, K.C., LL.B., advocate, Edinburgh, which took place (after an operation) on 11 May. Mr. Smith was a keen mountaineer, and a past President of the Scottish Mountaineering Club; and some of us have met him and "tramped" with him in the region of the Cairngorms. He had a very warm heart to the Cairngorm Club, and doubtless pleasant memories still survive of the genial and interesting lecture on "The High Hills" which he delivered to the Club in March, 1910. Mr. Smith was an occasional contributor to the *C.C.J.*; to him we owed the articles on "The Cairngorms" (July, 1899) and "The Attraction of the Hills," (July, 1911). He also contributed to the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal.*

OBITUARY.

WE lost another occasional contributor in the person of Mr. John Milne, LL.D., the well-known historical and antiquarian writer, formerly schoolmaster of King-Edward, who died at Aberdeen on 15 January, aged 83. His most important article was "A Geologist on Cairngorm," in our issue for January 1909, but he also wrote on "The Coyles of Muick" (July 1906), and on "Kirkmichael (Banffshire) Place Names" (January 1904).—A warm friend of the Club, well-known to the older members, was the late Mr. John M'Donald, Deebank, Braemar, formerly in Bragarrie (Corriemulzie).—Mention may also be made of Donald Scott, for long a well-known figure at the Linn of Dee, where he latterly resided, and where he died on 24 April. He had been employed on the Mar estates for the last thirty years, and was at one time stationed at the Corrour bothy, and afterwards at Derry Lodge, and so was known to many mountaineers.

THE CLUB AND MILITARY SERVICE.

THE number of members of the Club engaged in military service in one form or another, as a consequence of the demands occasioned by the war, is now twenty-six. The following have to be added to the list given in our last issue:—

Captain E. W. H. Brander, 4th Gordon Highlanders.
Lieut. R. J. A. Dunn, 2nd/4th ,, ,,
2nd Lieut. W. B. Meff, 1st/7th ,, ,,
Captain J. B. Miller, Abd. Fortress Coy., R.E.
,, John Murray, 2nd No. 1 Coy., N. Scott. R.G.A.
A. I. M'Connochie, A.S.C. Office (Transport work), Glasgow Barracks.

Captain Dickson, Lieut. W. L. Cook, Lieut. A. M. Johnston, and Lieut. A. M. Wilson have been wounded.

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REVIEWS.

A HIGHLAND NOVEL.

Our perusal of Mr. Neil Munro's latest Highland romance, "The New Road," has been so long delayed that a notice of it at this time of day has, unfortunately, the appearance of being excessively belated. But it would be unpardonable not to say something of a book that deals so extensively with the Central Highlands—"Corryarrick and the wilds of Badenoch, the Wicked Bounds, and dark Breadalbane's corried hills"—and that breathes through every page of it the love of the hills and the moors, and the delights of open-air life. "Didst ever lie on heather, lad? and waken in the morning with the plover whistling?" asks one of the characters, who is also responsible for the protestation that there is "nothing better than the shanks," and that one can see a good deal more on them than when cocked up on a saddle. The "New Road" is the road through the Highlands from Perth to Inverness which was constructed by Marshal Wade after the '15 as part of the policy of bringing the clansmen under the subjection of law and order. Its construction marks the difference between the old, turbulent Gaeldom, and the new influences introduced by the dominant Sassenach; and the road, with the conflicting sentiments its making evokes, forms the underlying keynote of the book. There is a story of course—a story with a mystery involved in much duplicity and treachery, the unravelling of which affords great scope for the ingenuity of a Highland "beachdair" or scout. The personalities of Duncan Forbes of Culloden and Simon, Lord Lovat, figure throughout the story; and the hero and the scout have adventures in the hills which fairly rival those of David Balfour and Alan Breck. It is less in the story itself, however, than in these adventures, with their consequential descriptions of the country traversed, that mountain-lovers will be most interested; and they will be attracted as well by the constantly-recurring disquisitions on the new road and all that it means, all that it involves. The "beachdair" contemptuously disparages the road as "Bad for the feet! bad for the feet! Harder than ever to walk to kirk; it's neither good for men nor horses"; the hero espouses the utilitarian view that it will "likely be very good for business;" and the sensible but far from unsympathetic Culloden regards it thus—"Ye saw the Road? That Road's the end of us! The Romans didna manage it; Edward didna manage it; but there it is at last, through to our vitals, and it's up wi' the ell-wand, down the sword!" which reflection expresses the true philosophy of the whole matter. In many other passages does Mr. Munro finely convey to us the transition from wildness and strife to convenience and comfort, the change from the past to the present, and the disappearance of the old manners and modes of living. Delightful also are his sketches of the Highland character, with its curious amalgam of superstition, sentiment, and devotion, and its highly poetic turn of language. The chief representative of the antique Celt in the book, for instance, is made to remark—"There is a wise old word that will be saying, 'Men may meet, but never the mountains!'" and on being pressed for an explanation, he adds—"It

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sounds a little flat in English, but in the Gaelic it will break men's hearts to hear. I canna put it plainer in the English, but it means that old friends meeting in a foreign land will vex themselves to think the mountains of their home so distant." There is an exquisite feeling in delicate touches such as this, which gives an added charm to a work that is otherwise captivating in a high degree. R. A.

THE GREEN RAY.

By far the most interesting article in the February number of the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal* is one by Mr. James A. Parker on "The Green Ray." This is a somewhat rare atmospheric phenomenon, seldom observable because occurring only under very exceptional conditions. "When the sun sets behind a clear and cloudless sea horizon," Mr. Parker explains, "its last ray of light, seen only for an instant as the upper edge of the sun disappears behind the horizon, is sometimes, not white as one might expect, but bright green. This beautiful phenomenon, which occurs also at sunrise, is known as the Green Ray, and it is one of the most rarely observed natural phenomena. It is also occasionally seen in a modified degree with low land or cloud horizons." Mr. Parker has witnessed it four times, and furnishes very precise details of his observations. He first saw it at sunrise (above the sea) from the Cruden Bay Hotel on a morning in November, 1907—"a most vivid point of brilliant emerald green light," which lasted for a second to a second and a half. He saw the green ray again on a morning in December, 1913, from a house in the western outskirts of Aberdeen, as the sun was rising from behind the Hill of Nigg; and a second time, from the same point of observation, in November, 1914. And, on an evening in June, 1914, while walking along the cliff path from the Bullers of Buchan to Cruden Bay, and on the top of the high ground near Dunbuy, he watched the sunset with an eight times prismatic binocular, and was once more successful in noticing the green ray. Besides recording his own observations, Mr. Parker furnishes particulars of observations by others which he has been able to collect; and, in conclusion, specifies the conditions which are favourable to the appearance of the green ray. The combination of these conditions, he says, can only occur very rarely, but the Green Ray, he adds, "would no doubt be seen more frequently if people knew to be on the outlook for it when the conditions were favourable for its appearance."

"FELL AND ROCK CLIMBING CLUB JOURNAL."

No fewer than thirty members of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District were last year serving with the colours in different parts of the world, but half-a-dozen of them found time to forward articles and photographs to the issue of the Club's *Journal* for 1914. It is no wonder that the Editor, in his Foreword, points to these contributions with "extra pride," and instances them as "tributes to the great love of the mountains which possesses the writers, and to their unselfishness in once again making a great effort to please and help their fellow-climbers and mountain lovers." The Club's specialty is that of rock-climbing, and the bulk of the articles are devoted to that particular feature of mountaineering. The President, Mr. W. P. Haskett-Smith, made the first ascent of Napes Needle in 1886, and vividly describes how he managed to accomplish what,

from the accompanying photographs, looks an almost impossible feat. Instructive accounts are given of other climbs in the Lake District; and in an interesting article it is contended—and with a good show of reason—that the poet Coleridge was the first man to ascend and so "discover" Scafell Pike. The Scottish climbs described are two in Skye. Some very striking verses, "The Cragsman," are reproduced from a volume of poems by Mr. Geoffrey Winthrop Young. They picture the delights of the rock-climber, but also the dangers:—

> In this short span
> between my finger-tips on the smooth edge
> and these tense feet cramped to the crystal ledge
> I hold the life of man.
>
> * * * *
>
> For what is there in all the world for me
> but what I know and see?
> And what remains of all I see and know
> if I let go?

"RUCKSACK CLUB JOURNAL."

FOUR of the fifteen articles in the *Rucksack Club Journal* for 1915 deal with climbs in the Alps—or, rather, with attempted climbs, for in several cases the projected programme was seriously interfered with by too much snow and unfavourable weather conditions. One writer, indeed, makes this candid confession—"No, we did not see quite everything in our first Swiss holiday—no chamois, no golden eagles, no wild, whirling blizzards and terrifying thunderstorms. We did not see a stream that took our fancy half so much as, say, the Garry in spate." He and his companions had to be content with passes instead of peaks, yet they "enjoyed themselves abominably well." The other articles are characterised by the same spirit of making the best of adverse circumstances—surely infectious in the Club, and highly to be commended. There are contributions on walks in and around Plynlimon and elsewhere in Wales, and on climbs of the Ilam rock in Dovedale and the Troutdale Pinnacle in Cumberland; while the longest and in many respects the most valuable article is devoted to a traverse of Jotunheim, the highest mountain region in Norway. Those who carry a camera in the hills will find many useful hints in the article on "Photography as a Sport."

"SCOTTISH SKI CLUB MAGAZINE."

THE apparent disappearance from Scotland of what is ordinarily termed "real winter weather" is evidently interfering seriously with the pursuit of ski-ing. As much may be gathered from the suggestive titles of two articles in the current number of the *Scottish Ski Club Magazine*—"Ski-Running (?) at Ballater" and "A Meet of One" (at Newtonmore); and the disappointments resulting from the unfavourable weather conditions which are therein chronicled lend emphasis to the title—and the matter—of still a third article in the same pessimistic vein—"The Winter of our Discontent." Despite the drawbacks to the sport thus indicated, the contents of the *Magazine* are as interesting as ever, and there are excellent articles dealing with ski-ing at Davos and Zermatt, and in Bohemia, supplemented by admirable photographs. In the matter of photography, the opening article on "Snow and Its Photographic Expression," by Dr. W. Inglis Clark, is well worth careful study by all devotees of the camera.

The Cairngorm Club

S. AFRICA MOUNTAIN CLUB "ANNUAL."

WE cordially welcome the *Annual* (for 1915) of the Mountain Club of South Africa, published by the Capetown section, which has just reached us. The Club is no new affair evidently, for this is the eighteenth issue of the *Annual.* It contains a really formidable list of peaks ascended by members during the past year. Naturally, the attempting of new routes up the rocky faces of Table Mountain is largely a preoccupation of the Club, and many of the articles in the *Annual* are descriptive of the adventurous feats involved. The opening article is an interesting account of an ascent of Mount Kibo, Kilimanjaro, in what is (or was) German East Africa.

R. L. STEVENSON IN KINGUSSIE.

THE last entire month that R. L. Stevenson ever passed in Scotland was that of August 1882, and it was spent at Kingussie, on the advice of Sir Andrew Clark, who was a great believer in the tonic influence of Speyside air. There is an incidental allusion in "Memories and Portraits" to "the golden burn that pours and sulks in the den behind Kingussie"—the Gynack. An article in *Alma Mater*, the Aberdeen University Magazine, of 13 January, alludes to a little volume of poetry which was not only written by Stevenson while at Kingussie, but was "actually printed by Stevenson's own hand in the local printing office of a stationer." Stevenson, moreover, furnished the illustrations, and cut the blocks for their reproduction. The volume was entitled "The Graver and the Pen, or Scenes from Nature with Appropriate Verses," and though a copy of the volume is exceedingly rare, the illustration of one little poem at least, says the article, "may be seen in the original by all who will." It represents a clump of pines—"The Disputatious Pines"—the poem it illustrates being as follows—

The first pine to the second said :
"My leaves are black, my branches red ;
I stand upon this moor of mine
A hoar, unconquerable pine."
The second sniffed, and answered : "Pooh !
I am as good a pine as you.'
"Discourteous tree," the first replied,
"The tempest in my boughs had cried
The hunter slumbered in my shade
A hundred years ere you were made,"
The second smiled as he returned
"I shall be here when you are burned."

So far discussion ruled the pair
Each turned on each a frowning air,
When flickering from the banks anigh
A flight of martens met their eye.
Some time their course they watched, and then
They nodded off to sleep again.

The writer of the article says the pines stand by the brink of the Spey, a little below the junction of the Gynack with the river, and adds—"A native of the place pointed out to me in all earnestness the very individual two trees of this great adventure—but on that point one may be allowed a few religious scruples."

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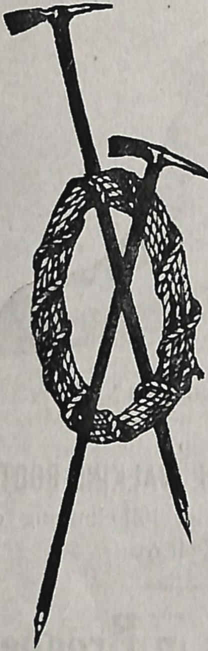

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