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 Edge; Beinn a' Bhùird; Ruminations.

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Easter 1938

BEN ALDER

R. L. Mitchell

The Cairngorm Club Journal.

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ECHOES FROM THE CORRIES.

BY HUGH D. WELSH.

“ Grey winding glen with long grasses blowing,
Swept by the stormwind and wet with the rain ;
Burns spraying high with the rush of their flowing,
What would I give now to know you again !
Hills of my heart, you have charms for beguiling
All of God’s world and His heavens above ;
Stern to the stranger, bleak and unsmiling,
Bleak, but how dear to me—Hills that I love.”

GRAHAM DALLAS.

THE Editor of the Club *Journal* is an individual whose job is an unenviable one, for he is ever on the outlook for suitable material for his publication for the current year and for the following year. He is very persistent, and rightly so, and it is up to members to fall in gracefully with his requests which are couched in such flattering periods! Soon after the appearance of the 1937 *Journal* I rashly agreed to contribute an article for the 1938 issue on a subject I thought would give members an added interest in the group of mountains they have come to regard as their own particular recreation ground. No sooner had I given the undertaking than I was presented with a bundle of books from the Editor’s library, with the suggestion that in them I might find something bearing upon the subject I had in mind! It is not a subject to be embarked upon lightly, but one requiring a great amount of search and selection, and I found I could not give it the attention required. The result was that I had to ask for time. That was allowed, but I was not

permitted to escape contributing something. I pleaded the usual excuse, lack of time, without success, so was asked to write upon something that would come more or less readily to the pen. I thus venture to inflict upon readers of the *Journal*, or rather those who are misguided enough to peruse this, a further portion of "Chips from the High Tops" disguised under another title. The Editor must take all blame!

A vast amount of mist has rolled out of the Cairngorm corries since I first ventured into their recesses, but the whole of it will not obscure the recollections of the myriad things experienced there during these many years. I am fully aware of the difficulty of conveying to others impressions which are intensely vivid to myself, and also of the fact that what is interesting to me may be boring to others.

It seems but a short time ago since I set out eagerly on my baptismal visit to the Cairngorms in company with my brother Willie and a friend, J. K. Forbes, in 1904. Did I say "baptismal"? The amount of rain experienced was enough to damp for ever any enthusiasm, but it only seemed to encourage. At that time there was a vogue for linen hats, and we were all equipped with this headgear in the hope that they would counteract the warmth of the hot sun and keep our heads cool. But alas! I can still sense our squelching progress among the peat hags at the base of Beinn Mheadhoin in the Lairig an Laoigh, with the white linen hats limp and sodden, and the starch caking on our faces. It was a long day for a beginner, groaning under a heavy pack, and I nearly gave out on reaching the outlet of Loch Avon in rapidly gathering darkness, and being told that we had to get over the skyline ahead before settling down for the night. The Féith Buidhe slabs then seemed very remote indeed. But after all, the Shelter Stone was to be our headquarters for a fortnight and I had no idea where that was. A day or two after, we were to be joined by J. K. F.'s father, so J. K. and my brother tramped into Braemar to meet him, leaving me at the Shelter Stone. It was a sopping day, with low mist, and superlatively dismal. But I had an interesting time exploring among the chaos of boulders in



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the neighbourhood, finding pockets of cairngorms embedded in the rock. It was late in the evening when I heard a faint hail coming thinly down from the crest above, and I hastened to get a fire going under the overhang of the Shelter Stone. In due course three bedraggled objects stepped into the fire-glow, and I yet see distinctly the gnome-like figure of J. K.'s father under the inadequate protection of an umbrella, with a large wicker fishing basket on his back, on the top of which was strapped a bundle of what was once four plain loaves, with shreds of brown tissue paper hanging grotesquely from them. One outstanding feature of our spell among the great solitudes during that year was the way in which we ended each day. It made a lasting impression, and one which will ever be a bright light in the mind. After our final meal, partaken of in the light of a flickering candle, and just before we settled down for the night, we bared our heads, and old Forbes read aloud a chapter from St John's Gospel and offered up a little prayer. In such a setting, the dark precipices looming above us ghostly in the mist, the sound of whispering, talking waters, the restless wind fumbling and moaning in the corrie, this simple act seemed very fitting, and we lay down silently, fortified against the dark hours.

In thus making the Shelter Stone our headquarters we had ample opportunity of becoming intimately familiar with the rock faces that close in the upper end of the great Loch Avon corrie. Visitors to the Shelter Stone may have observed high up on the steep face on the opposite slope of Cairngorm a small cave just at the base of the rock, but how few have climbed up to it? Tradition has it that this cave is the result of digging operations in a search for cairngorm stones. It is of small extent, but what is worth while is the amazing variety of flowering plants to be found growing luxuriantly on the earthy debris spread out at the entrance. In addition, it forms an excellent viewpoint. The precipice above the Shelter Stone was the scene of many an exhilarating scramble, primarily for Alpine plants, but I would not care to venture now upon some of the places we so thoughtlessly tackled successfully. Looking upon them now, after years of gathered

sense, I wonder how we had the nerve to attempt them without a rope! One place in particular (I cannot describe it) gave us an hour or two of anxiety, for an impossible smooth face stretched above, and our stance was so small that feet tended to numb. Holds were meagre, few, and widely spaced, and a slight drizzle had made the rock slippery. The very recollection of it makes me hold breath and draw myself together, but after very, very careful movement we got down, with trembling legs, pouring with perspiration. But our climbs on the crags of this corrie yielded a rich harvest of plants, gathered at the request of the late Professor J. W. H. Trail, of Aberdeen University. We even attempted to climb down from the top of the precipice to get a photograph of an eagle's nest, but the difficulties were too great for our inexperience.

The sight of the collection of cairngorm stones in the keeper's house at Luibeg in Mackintosh's time was an incentive to us to dig in the gravels in streams and at the bases of the crags. After diverting the course of the Féith Buidhe and digging in pockets of gravel in the bed of the stream with our bare hands until we nearly wept with the pain created by the icy cold water, we were fortunate in securing many excellent specimens, ranging in colour from pale straw to almost black. But our best finds were the result of hand-digging at the foot of Hell's Lum, a chimney in the precipice rising between the Féith Buidhe and Coire Domhain. On one occasion we were so intent upon our mining operations that we failed to notice a change in the weather, and were suddenly deluged by torrential rain with an onslaught of thunder and lightning. As many no doubt know, there is little shelter to be got up on the Féith Buidhe slabs, but we cowered most uncomfortably under what overhangs we could get, soaked and stunned. Those who have not experienced a thunderstorm on the high bills have missed one of the most awesome and terrifying happenings. So terrific were the peals and cracks of thunder echoing continuously in the corrie that the solid rock seemed to quiver and tremble. The lightning was so frequent and blastically brilliant, lighting up with a purple or bluish

glare the streaming rocks, that we were blinded and dazed. But when it all passed over, what peace there was, such glowing sunshine, such heartening fresh odours, and everything sparkled and scintillated.

Another time of storm was in 1907 when we were camped in the shallow Choire Mhoir, high up on Ben Macdhuì, facing up the Garbh-choire of Braeriach. After a sultry day, the storm broke in the late evening and continued far into the night. The reverberations of thunder crashingly echoed from the corries made the ground quake, and we sat at the tent door watching the incessant lightning glare. It was a great experience.

Rainstorms in summer are bad enough, but what is worse is encountering snow or sleet in July on the high plateau. At any other season one is more or less prepared for that sort of thing, but in summer our clothing is not just suited to a visitation of this kind. In July 1906 three of us had been exploring the plateau between Ben Macdhuì and Cairngorm. Our tent was pitched near the head waters of Coire Raibiert, and we were near Lochan Buidhe, sitting in a depression waiting for a pan of water to boil over a spirit lamp. It was a cold day, rather gloomy. At first a few drifting flakes settled down, but we thought it would pass. In a few minutes the wind increased from the north, laden with heavy wet snow that plastered us thickly. We made for the tent as rapidly as we could, blinded and benumbed, through a driving whiteness, and on reaching it could hardly unlace the entrance, so frozen were our hands.

In September 1922 my wife and I ascended Ben Macdhuì in a bitter north wind that so chilled the face that we could not speak. Above Loch Etchachan everything was covered with fine, dry, powdery snow several inches deep, and the cairn was a beautiful sight draped with icicles. Lower down it was mild!

The recollection of these days of snow brings to mind several wonderful winter days on Lochnagar with members of the Club during the past three or four years. One of my earliest was in March 1935 when, ascending from Allt-na-giubhsaich, we battled against a gale in mist, blinded by

fine blown snow, over the knees in dry drifts. The elements were too much for us; turning back somewhere above the Fox's Well, we joined the rest of the party at the col below the Well. I can still feel the snowdrift forming at my back as we crouched for lunch. A kilt to most people would be the last thing to wear on a snow climb in winter, but, wearing this dress daily as I do, this was the solitary occasion on which I suffered from the use of it, for I got frost-bite above the knees, particularly on the inside of the legs!

The very opposite of such an experience was the Club excursion to Lochnagar in February of the present year. It was an occasion when the work of the Creator was revealed in splendour and beauty, unexpectedly, and in the hush of adoration. The mountain was under deep, hard snow, but the surface was encrusted with what I can only liken to a carpet of frozen feathers and plumes. Mist was down above the Fox's Well, but as we scrambled up the encrusted boulders on the edge of the corrie it sank slowly and silently below us, gradually revealing the glittering ice-encased precipices rising against a washed blue sky, calm, and beautifully cruel. For the remainder of the day a pearly grey, rose-tinted sea of cloud lay beneath us, and all that was seen of the rest of Scotland was the upper half of the Cairngorm group, white and majestic.

Bad weather on the hills gives one a new appreciation of what one sees and experiences, and it is not the dismal, disagreeable thing one would imagine. Personally, I do not go to the hills merely for the sake of getting to the top and being able to say I was there. Even in bad weather there is a great deal of enjoyment and value to be got out of it, and I can wander quite happily with water streaming from me, and buffeted by wind. In the Cuillin in Skye during my three recent periods of solitary scrambling among the grim corries and ridges, filthy weather was very frequent, but there is a wonderful fascination in wandering under such conditions in these savage places. In September 1937 I made an ascent of Marsco, that graceful mass rising on the east side of Glen Sligachan. It was a wet, gloomy day with a rough wind, and I made the ascent by the sweeping ridge



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that faces down Glen Sligachan. Thick mist descended when I was about half-way up, and I got a great shock when I reached the crest and suddenly looked down into nothing, for I was not prepared for such a narrow ridge. The rain beat into my face and I got the full pressure of the south-westerly gale. Sudden rents in the grey curtain induced me to sit up aloft beside the tiny cairn for almost two hours. Saturated and streaming with water I had my reward, for the startlingly impressive views towards Loch Coruisk framed in storm-cloud were worth any discomfort, as were also those of Blaven, Clach Glas, and Garbh-Bheinn, and away down to Loch Ainort.

I have had the good fortune to have slept for several nights on all the Cairngorm summits, including Beinn a' Bhùird and Ben Avon, and a great experience it is. In 1908 my brother and I spent three nights in July in our little tent on the rough gravel a few yards from the cairn on Ben Macdhuì, and during that time the mist was so dense that daylight was very dim. These were the days before we knew about the Ferla Mhor, the ghost that haunts the summit plateau, and although we never saw him, sounds we heard could quite well have been caused by him. So we missed a great opportunity. What miserable anxious nights we sometimes spent on these lofty places when rain lashed, drumming on the straining, flapping canvas, and us frail mortals holding on to the short tent poles to prevent them snapping. But these things are very pleasant to look back upon!

But there are days when the comforting hills slumber in quivering heat, drenched with sunshine, parched and dry. In conditions like these it requires considerable effort to expend much energy in clambering up stony slopes. But it has compensations. One can indulge in frequent plunges in cool water or lie and gaze out upon the scarcely ruffled surface of some of the higher lochs. I remember getting badly burned as a result of sun-bathing on the rocks on the shore of Lochan Uaine on Cairn Toul. The rock was so hot! On such days the nights are usually cool, with clear, delicately coloured skies, the slight breeze lightly perfumed with elusive scents. Then it is that one seems to become

steeped in the mystic hauntedness of these lonely places, and one's inner chords vibrate to the touch of invisible fingers, the echoes from which go singing down the corridors of memory, and the themes are innumerable and heartbreaking. The sun and wind for happiness, the grey gloom for thought.

In my article in the 1937 *Journal* I mentioned hearing softly beautiful soothing singing and music in some of the corries. A rather interesting and not easily explained experience fell to my lot in Skye in 1935. One night, or rather early morning, as I lay half awake in my bedroom, I was conscious of some woman's voice softly singing a lullaby, the air of which was quite familiar but elusive. Listening idly, I suddenly remembered there was no woman occupying a room near mine, and further, the voice was a typically Highland one. I rose, listened in the passage—silence; nor was there a sound, apart from the hush of the river, outside the window. The room above was empty, and the voice was distinctly in my room, and came from someone who appeared to walk to and fro. I gave it up, went back to bed, and gradually fell asleep. Inquiry in the morning yielded no explanation, apart from the fact that my room, instead of being numbered 13, was 12A! Although I have occupied that room on my subsequent visits to Skye, I have not heard the singing again. On my return to Aberdeen after this experience, I discovered from a friend who knew the house well that my room is below what in earlier days was a nursery, and the lullaby I heard was one sung by an old nurse. The tantalising thing is that this old person is still alive!

Places often have a strange effect on one, and in some instances there may be a distinct feeling of obstruction. For instance, I have wished often to go down to the mysterious An Lochan Uaine at Ryvoan nestling deep between Creag nan Gall and Creag Loisgte. Two or three times I have been within sight of it, in company of others, but something inexplicable holds me back, and I have a feeling that I must go there alone. Some day I shall fare forth and perhaps find what the fairies have in store for me! Also, much as I would like to see Dunvegan in Skye and look upon the

treasures there, something tells me to keep away, and so strong is the feeling that I have refused invitations to accompany friends to that ancient castle, and I have not been near it!

As I write these words I sense around me a multitude of happenings and impressions, grave and gay, jostling one another and clamouring for recognition. I hear all their voices, feel the pressure of their insistence, and the warmth of contact. But, much as I would like to lead them forward and introduce them to those who are prepared to listen to their tales, I must refrain, because it is so difficult to know which to present. The echoes of their clamouring come softly out of the Cairngorm corries and sing in the depths of the grim Cuillin, making a great symphony that is ever new, and one can listen to it again and again, picking out here and there a theme that leads away, away.

“ There is a region of heart's desire
free for the hand that wills :
land of the shadow and haunted spire,
land of the silvery glacier fire,
land of the cloud and the starry choir,
magical land of hills :
loud with the crying of wind and streams,
throng with the fancies and fears of dreams.”

AN EARLY ADVENTURE ON ROCK.

BY A. W. CLARK.

Ignotum pro magnifico est, said Tacitus long ago, with the brevity and finality typical of his style, meaning that the unknown assumes in man's imagination all the proportions of the unattainably splendid and magnificent, and adding thereby a corollary on the dictum that knowledge is power. How long it was ere man overcame this trait of his imaginative powers and set to work to reduce and master the unknowns (in the physical world, at least) makes fascinating reading as the tale of exploration and travel unfolds itself down the ages. It is well known, however, that the quest and conquest of the high hills are a comparatively recent phenomenon, connected doubtless with the more comfortable circumstances and greater ease of transport ever more widely enjoyed in the last hundred years. Yet the writings of the ancients are not without signs, faint gleams though they be, of things to come.

It would be interesting to find out from members of the Club what first impelled them to climb mountains, for among most people (fortunately ?) and not least shepherds, keepers, and foresters, whose work brings them into daily association with the hills, mountain climbing is regarded as hardly a sane activity. Many, perhaps, would cite the example of relatives or friends, some the joy experienced from active effort in proximity to untamed and unspoilt nature, others the triumphant sense of achievement after the challenge of a difficulty has been successfully met. But there might possibly be a few, a very few, who could recall a day in school when they were inspired by an anecdote or tale of adventure, encountered oasis-like in the arid deserts of class textbooks, to make the acquaintance at first hand of the treasures of the hills.

For some weeks we have been making slow and laboured

progress through the succinctly phrased and at times lengthy periods of Sallust, when the other day we were vouchsafed the following :—

“ Not far from the River Muluccha, which constitutes the frontier between the kingdoms of Jugurtha and of Bocchus, there rises a mountain of rock amid a sea of plain. Despite its great eminence there is a plateau on the summit spacious enough for a moderately sized fort, access to which is made by one extremely narrow path. This rocky mass, so precipitous by nature as to suggest artifice and design, Marius strove to capture, the more steadfastly because the king kept his treasure there. His aim was achieved, however, less by strategy than by accident.

“ The fort was amply manned and provisioned. The locus was unsuitable for the use of ramparts, turrets, and lofty siege-engines, as the path to the fort was narrow to a degree, with a sheer drop on either side. In vain were shelters brought up at great risk, for whenever they made even a little advance, they were overwhelmed by torches and stones hurled on them from above. The soldiers could neither maintain a footing for siege operations owing to the precipitous slope nor attend to the shelters without hazard, and while all the bravest men slipped or were wounded, the others steadily grew more fearful. Marius, however, after a vast expenditure of time and effort, was anxious to reach a decision as to whether he should give up the attempt as hopeless or await a stroke of luck such as he had frequently enjoyed.

“ He had been debating this alternative for many days and nights in a fever of indecision when a Ligurian, a ranker from an auxiliary cohort, happened to go out of camp to fetch water from the opposite side of the fort to that which was being assailed. Noticing snails creeping among the boulders, he picked up one or two, then more and more, until in his enthusiasm for collecting he gradually worked his way up until he emerged not far from the summit. Realising his solitary situation, he was overcome by the desire, natural to the human spirit, to create difficulties.

“ As it chanced, a huge oak had taken firm root among the

rocks at this point. Growing a little outwards at first it then curved upwards, following the nature of all growth. By taking advantage now of its branches now of holds on projecting boulders, the Ligurian won his way to the fort plateau unseen, as all the Numidians were preoccupied in watching the efforts of the attackers. There he carefully surveyed everything likely, in his opinion, soon to prove useful, and returned by the same route, not at random as on the ascent but circumspectly, and after every move had been tested.

“ Without loss of time he sought an audience of Marius, detailed his experiences, and urged him to attack the fort on that side by which he himself had made the ascent. At the same time he offered to act as guide up the hazardous route. Marius sent some of his staff to accompany the Ligurian and report on the possibilities of his suggestion. Some thought the ascent would be difficult, others easy, according to the disposition of each, but the consul's interest was roused. Selecting, therefore, the five flute players and horn-blowers, who were fleetest of foot, and four infantrymen to act as their escort, he issued instructions that everyone was to obey the Ligurian's orders and appointed the following day for the attempt.

“ On their guide's advice the infantrymen had laid aside their weapons and equipment and proceeded with head and feet bare to ensure a firmer purchase on the rock and less restricted vision. On their backs were swords and shields, light Numidian leather targes, not only to save weight but also to deaden the sound should they strike against the rocks. The Ligurian led the way, and, to facilitate the progress of the soldiers, lassoed projecting rocks and tree stumps. Sometimes, indeed, he gave a helping hand to those who were awed into immobility by the unwonted nature of the route. When the angle of the climb steepened a little, he made the infantrymen move first ahead of him, one at a time, then followed up himself with their weapons. Wherever there appeared a pitch with doubtful holds, he was the first to tackle it, and would inspire the others with fresh heart by frequently ascending and descending the same route, then

immediately standing aside. Thus, after great and prolonged exertions, they at length reached the fort which they found deserted on that side, since everyone was facing the enemy, as before."

Bell. Ing., §§ 92-94.

It came as no surprise when we consulted the Classical Atlas to find that Liguria was that sickle-shaped strip of land which bounds the Gulf of Genoa, its sharp, cutting edge fronting the Ligurian Sea, the back reinforced by the massive line of the Ligurian Alps. Who doubts but that the hero of Sallust's tale was renewing in ungrateful Numidia happy memories of youthful scrambles in his native Apennines?



A HIGH-LEVEL ROUTE.

BY A. LANDSBOROUGH THOMSON.

WE had been climbing from that delightful centre, Saas Fee, a little village set among meadows and pines before a great curtain of glaciers cascading from tremendous peaks. Itself nearly 6,000 feet above sea-level, it is surrounded by some of the grandest of the Pennine Alps. The precipices of the Mischabel rise directly above, culminating in the summit of the Dom, well known as the highest mountain wholly in Switzerland. Although the hotels provide every comfort, Saas Fee has the further advantage (as it must appear to the discriminating) of being accessible only on foot or on mule back; but the new road carrying the motor bus from Stalden comes gradually nearer.

The weather had been good, and we had enjoyed some splendid days. Perhaps the most memorable was a morning of brilliant visibility, when we stood on the narrow snow-crest that is the summit of the Fletschhorn (13,127 feet). The Simplon road on the farther side seemed almost beneath our feet, so little was there to arrest the eye in the drop between, but it was the distant view that held our gaze. To the north the whole chain of the Bernese Oberland, with the great Aletsch Glacier winding out of its centre; to the east, receding tones of grey against the light, range after range as far as the Engadine; south-eastwards some cloud over Italy; south and south-westwards the snows of the nearer peaks gleaming in the morning sun, with other Pennine heights showing behind—and beyond and above them all, 60 miles away, the huge white dome of Mont Blanc.

We now wished to do something different, a “walk”—the term is relative rather than literal—over the high passes to Zermatt and Arolla. For the first stage we had the choice of several passes leading westwards over the Saasgrat—that

notable ridge which, in 15 miles, has eight peaks of over 13,000 feet; chiefly because one of us already knew the more usual alternatives, we had selected the Adler. The pass takes its name from the finding of an eagle's feather on the summit during one of the early crossings, as described by Alfred Wills in his recently reprinted book. It has also been known as the Col Imseng, after the famous *curé* of the name who made the first passage in 1849.

Appropriately enough, our young guide was himself an Imseng, now taking the place of the father who had led us hitherto; and the porter was a still younger kinsman, our companion on various climbs. The amateurs of the party were the writer and his niece, the latter visiting the Alps for the first time. On the afternoon of August 4 we left Saas Fee, and followed the zigzag path up the hill-side to the south. After an ascent of some 3,000 feet the route traversed a precipitous face, which in places dropped sheer on the left of the path. Gentler slopes followed, and finally we had to put on the rope to cross a snow-covered glacier. This brought us to the Britannia Hut, at a height of 9,952 feet, on a spur from which our route for the morrow was in full view. The hut is a substantial affair, presented by the British members of the Swiss Alpine Club; but it suffers from overcrowding, largely because it is the sleeping-place for the Allalinhorn, the popular easy peak of the district.

For the most part, any night in a hut conforms with a familiar pattern. Outside, the fading view and the rapid chill; indoors, the dim light and the pungent atmosphere. Supper from one's own store of cold provisions, supplemented by hot soup and tea—the latter laced with the customary wine. Polyglot talk, and then much clumping of heavy boots on wooden stairs. Sketchy preparations for the night, as each one gets under a blanket on his or her numbered section of the common mattress—of a width here reduced to an uncomfortable minimum. At length, snores from some and wakefulness for others.

An early call was welcome, and by 4 o'clock we had breakfasted and were on our way. For a little it led down a rough path, which the guide's lantern but faintly lit.

Soon the glacier was reached and the rope put on. Walking became easy on the white firm snow, and we went forward at a steady plod. The night was clear and still, cold but not too cold, holding promise of a good day. So we were well content, and each mind followed its own thoughts as our bodies surrendered to the rhythm of the march.

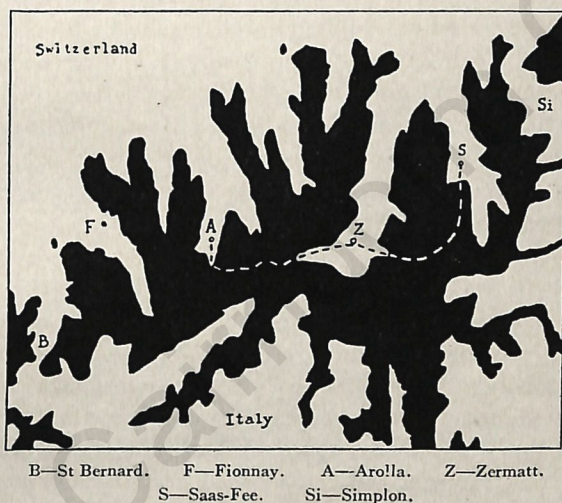
At first there were deviations, with various ups and downs, but after an hour or so we were on the wide surface of the main glacier and mounting steadily. Now we could see a dozen twinkling points of light, some ahead and some behind, that marked the position of other parties. Nearly all of these were bound for the Allalin, however, and presently we began to draw away to the left. Then the sky paled with approaching dawn, and the slopes grew gradually steeper, calling at this altitude for enough exertion to slow our progress. By the time we reached the snowy saddle it was full day.

We were now on the summit of the Adler Pass, at a height of 12,460 feet. On our left rose the easy slopes of the Strahlhorn, and on our right the precipitous rocks of the Rimpfischhorn. In the gap between we had a sudden view of the Zermatt peaks, from Monte Rosa to the Dent Blanche: in the middle stood the Matterhorn, from this distance and height only an incident in the landscape. Over a low part of the range, and across a corner of Italy, the Grivola and Gran Paradiso were faintly visible. Looking back, there was a foreground of glacier, some fleecy clouds in the valley below, and the Weissmies and its fellows beyond.

A cold wind on the top forbidding a halt of any length, we turned soon to the descent. The first part of this was an icy slope of exceeding steepness—a smooth white glacis falling sharply away for several hundred feet. This required step-cutting and caution. Our order was reversed so that the guide came last on the rope, and we moved one at a time—an occasional word of admonition, the chop of the axe, and the sizzle of sliding fragments. For a while we went in short zigzags, with special care at each turn in the steps, and then were able to make a longer slanting traverse to the right. Gradually the slope eased and the surface became

softer, so that we could go more freely as we neared the foot. (The condition of a section such as this is liable to great variation. If the certainty of a straightforward snow-walk be preferred, the alternative route by the Allalin Pass should be taken.)

We were now on comparatively level glacier, and were able to walk down the middle of it on firm snow. There were a few large open crevasses to be avoided, but most were hidden. Once or twice we heard the sharp crack in the air, like a passing bullet, which tells of a snow-bridge



settling a fraction under the strain of added weight. The sun shone brightly in a clear sky. Monte Rosa and the Lyskamm were massed magnificently on our left, while the Matterhorn was straight ahead and beginning to bulk more largely.

A little scrambling along the right bank enabled us to turn the ice-fall, when our tributary stream joined the main Findelen Glacier. We might here have taken to the moraine, but there was a theory that the ice—at this level bare of snow and with a rough gritty surface—would still provide better going. As it happened, a large transverse fissure forced us far out into the middle, with the result that we became

involved in a brisk twenty minutes of dodging and jumping crevasses or following narrow ridges between them. We were led at a rapid pace in this exercise, and as it was now a warm day we were well cooked by the time we reached firm ground. Here we unroped and shed superfluous garments.

There was now a path, gradually improving, and before long we passed the little wooden inn on the Fluh Alp, the sleeping-place if the pass or its adjacent peaks be approached from this side. As we descended, the Matterhorn loomed larger and larger, and by the time we stopped to lunch it completely dominated the scene. Early in a hot afternoon we reached Zermatt and found a welcome at the Monte Rosa. After Saas Fee this place seemed large and crowded. We watched one of the little trains arrive, as if it were a novel sight, and ate ices in the garden of a very sophisticated café. In the evening, when everybody promenades in the narrow street, a man drew music from a cow-horn ten feet long.

We made a late start next morning for a leisurely walk up the Zmutt valley to the Schönbühl Hut, the sleeping-place for the passage of the Col d'Hérens and Col de Bertol—a stage, or a recognised variant of a stage, of the classical "High-level Route" from Zermatt to Chamonix. The path ascended for a little through stone-pines, at one place noisy with nutcrackers—those spotted crows of the Alpine woods—feeding on the cones. Then it followed a steep hill-side forming the bank of a glacier almost hidden by its load of surface debris. Opposite impended the terrific north face of the Matterhorn, so close as to give us a much foreshortened view of the mountain. On our own side a gap at one point revealed the great rock peak of the Ober Gabelhorn, at the head of a short branch valley. Looking back we could see Monte Rosa and the way we had come the day before.

At length the path took to the ridge of the lateral moraine, and finally climbed in zigzags to the grassy shoulder on which the hut stands. A visit to this spot is one of the best ordinary walks from Zermatt, but it attracts only a small minority. The height is 8,860 feet and the situation magnificent. One can look right down the valley, or towards the

huge ice-fall at its head; or across to the Dent d'Hérens and the Matterhorn. One has here got behind the latter, so to speak, and sees it in unfamiliar form; the famous Zmutt *arête* is just opposite, the Italian ridge forms the skyline on one side and the ordinary north-east ridge—seen to be much less steep for most of the way than it appears from Zermatt—forms the other.

A minor attraction was provided by a marmot so tame that it came from the hill-side to be fed by hand: one often hears the whistling call, but seldom sees the animals. A pair of Alpine choughs was also, characteristically, in attendance. The hut itself was comfortable—smaller than the Britannia, but less crowded. The company was very different, consisting mostly of guideless experts, for the ascents commonly made from here are difficult. It included a German trio, two men and a woman, about to hazard an attempt on the ice-girt north face of the Dent d'Hérens. They left at midnight, armed with numerous *pitons* and such gear, but we never heard how they fared.

Our own departure was at a more reasonable hour, although while it was still pitch dark—only the faint gleams of starlit ice or snow, and the silhouette of black rock against less black sky. We crossed an arm of the glacier system without roping, for the surface was level and free from snow, and reached the foot of the Stockje, a rocky island amid the ice. We put on the rope and climbed this by a steep snow slope. A path of sorts led along the ridge and brought us to the upper basin of the glacier above the fall. We then mounted gradually over the snow in a wide curve to just below the pass. A snow bridge at a convenient point took us across the *bergschrund*, and a few steps—deeply impressed by other feet on earlier days—up a short steep section to an outcrop of broken rock. A few minutes of very simple scrambling then brought us to the summit of the Col d'Hérens (11,418 feet).

Here we were at once on the lip of a new region. Behind us the Dent d'Hérens and the Matterhorn were visible for the last time. The Dent Blanche rose on our right, and a low ridge flanked our left. Before us extended a great

snow-field of dazzling purity, with the shapes of unfamiliar peaks beyond. No living thing was in sight. By bearing to the right we could have descended to Ferpècle, but our object was to skirt round the head of the valley—losing as little altitude as possible—to our next pass. The going was good and the day perfect, so for some miles we had high-level walking at its best. In due time we reached the farther rim, at the gap which is the Col de Bertol (11,120 feet).

The Bertol Hut, the sleeping-place for this expedition if made in the reverse direction, stands on a steep rock a few feet above the pass. Ignoring it, we proceeded to the descent. The first short section was icy and fairly steep, but there were well-worn steps: below that, the slope of the glacier gradually moderated. It presented no difficulty, but the necessity for the rope was illustrated a few weeks later by the disappearance of the hut-keeper, presumably when descending here alone. We had a hint of danger of another kind at the very last, when a great boulder bounded down behind us and across our recent tracks. For a moment it seemed to be coming straight towards us and we began running for higher ground; but then it was diverted, and in the end missed us by a wide margin. This happened during our last minute or two on the rope, and an ordinary picnic party a few yards beyond had been, all unconsciously, just as much in the line of fire.

Presently we stopped for lunch on a grassy knoll commanding a wonderful view of Mont Collon and the Pigne d'Arolla, both quite close across a deep, narrow valley. An hour later we reluctantly resumed our way, following the path steeply down into the gorge and then by the side of the glacier to the village. Reluctantly, because our mountain holiday was over; and thoughts we had of lingering for a final day in so delectable a spot, or even crossing another pass to Fionnay, were soon dispelled by the discovery that every bed in Arolla was taken. So it was that we ended by racing six miles farther down the valley to catch the last bus where the road begins, and by spending the night so far from the heights as Sion.

EILEAN A' CHEÒ : AN ENCHANTED ISLE.

BY R. PARK YUNNIE.

“ Lovest thou mountains great,
Peaks to the clouds that soar,
Corrie and fell where eagles dwell,
And cataracts rush evermore ?
Lovest thou green grassy glades,
By the sunshine sweetly kissed,
Murmuring waves and echoing caves ?
Then go to the Isle of Mist.”

SKYE begins when you leave Inverness, at least that is where the wild, exultant atmosphere of the West first enters into your blood, for then you leave the last outpost of modern civilisation on the winding road to the Isles. As you skim along the road beside lovely Loch Ness a strange excitement fills your mind, the blood runs more quickly in your veins, and you seem to hear the clash of claymores in the wind and the wild cries of the Jacobites. At Invermoriston you take the hill road over to Cluanie and down to Shiel Bridge, where you go to the left over the famous hill to Glenelg and Kyle Rhea Ferry. The road leads down to the edge of the sea, and before you, across the narrow strip of wind-tossed water, lie the beckoning hills of Skye. Here the winds blow fresh and clean and you can feel the sweet tang of the Isles. Eilean a' Cheò is within your grasp.

No boat is moored to the rough stone pier. You sound the car horn, whistle, and excitedly wave white handkerchiefs to attract attention on the other side, but your only reward is the soft murmur of the waves lapping on the shore and the sighing voice of the wind. For one horrible moment you think the ferry is perhaps no longer running. Then, after what seems an interminable period, so impatient are you to set foot in Skye, you hear the faint but unmistakable chug-chug of a marine engine and you can dimly distinguish

the ferry-boat moving slowly out from the opposite shore. Slowly the boat rides across the choppy kyle and glides gently up to the pier. A bronzed Skyeman jumps nimbly ashore and gives a rope a few turns round one of the iron rings cemented into the pier. The gang-planks are lowered with a clatter and, at a sign from the ferryman, you drive gingerly aboard. Wooden chocks are kicked fore and aft the car wheels, the gang-planks are pulled up, and the ropes untied. With a splutter the engine whines into life and the boat backs slowly away from the pier. As you lean over the deck-rail watching the dancing waves breaking and foaming against the bows and the mainland gradually receding a song bursts, spontaneously, from your lips and you are surprised to find yourself singing "Over the Sea to Skye."

Portree is the main centre of commercial activity in Skye. It is the chief port of call for the steamers from the mainland. From Portree roads lead out in all directions to Dunvegan, Uig, and Staffin in the north, to Bracadale in the west, and by Sligachan to Broadford, Kyleakin, Armadale, and Sleat in the south. Portree itself is a busy little place. No other township in Skye has quite the same air of business. You cannot call it bustle, for in Skye no one hurries. One day is as good as another. The Skyeman goes about his work with an unhurried directness which, whilst no doubt irritating to the more impatient tourist, has that fascinating quality about it you find everywhere in Skye. The Skyeman seems to embody in his thoughts and movements the very characteristics of the land in which he lives, the quiet philosophy of the hills, the unhurried march of the wind across the heather, and in his voice you can hear the soft murmur of lapping waves and the tinkling of burns through the bracken.

Portree lies under the eye of a steep escarpment at the head of a natural harbour. The houses jostle one another as they rise, terrace upon terrace, up the hill-side above the blue waters of Portree Bay, where the red and white funnelled steamers tie up at the little pier. Here are rows of white-washed cottages, a church, the yellow-walled Royal Hotel, bank offices, shops and garages, and here and there a thatched

shieling from which the blue peat smoke curls gently upwards. Like most of the other townships of Skye, Portree conveys the subtle impression that it was never built on purpose. A shieling grew up there leisurely followed by another and another, until in time it assumed the proportions of a town much to its own surprise.

Skye is a land of strange contradictions. Wild, primitive desolation, the haunt of eagles, unchanged in a thousand years, is found side by side with many of the comforts of civilised life. Gaunt, grey telephone poles stretch across the bleak moorland connecting the lone shielings with the luxury hotels of London. In the shadow of an ancient Celtic monolith a vermilion petrol pump with white leering face gazes unseeing across the placid waters of Loch Dunvegan. But let us leave the comforts of Portree for a time and penetrate the wilds of Skye.

At the head of Loch Snizort Beag the road splits into two, one branch continuing westwards to Dunvegan and the other north to Uig and Duntulm. The Uig road winds gently in and out along the lochside, rising and falling as it follows the contour of the hills. Beyond Uig, with its toy-like white pier jutting out into the loch and its clusters of white-washed cottages stuck on the hillside, the land flattens out and here is one of the few stretches of agricultural land on the island. Events took place here which altered the history of Scotland. On a dark and windy night in June, some 200 years ago, the traveller along this very road might have descried two shadowy figures with flapping skirts making their way furtively across the moorland to the old grey-walled farmhouse of Monkstadt, for it was here that Bonnie Prince Charlie was rescued by Flora Macdonald after the disastrous '45 rebellion. Farther along the same road you come to an old graveyard on the brow of the hill near Upper Duntulm. Flora Macdonald is buried here, and a beautifully carved monument has been raised to her memory. Her resting-place is fitting for so brave a Highland lass. The unfettered winds of the Atlantic blow over her grave. Across the heaving waters the blue peaks of Harris reach up to the sky and the sun salutes her each night with

waving banners of fire as he dips into the western sea. On a rocky promontory near by the crumbling ruins of Duntulm Castle—the ancient stronghold of her clan—stands a grim reminder of the relentlessness of Time. As the westering sun drops slowly nearer the sea it casts a shadow athwart a tottering gravestone. The flat top, mossy with age and lichen-covered, is carved in the shape of a kilted warrior. As you wander among the grassy mounds, the graves of long-departed heroes, strange thoughts cloud your brain and a Voice speaks to you across the waste of seas. You seem to hear the weird stirring music of the fairy pipes calling the clansmen from their hoary graves and their ghosts brush past you on noiseless feet.

The ruins of Duntulm Castle stand on the very edge of the cliffs at whose feet the waves continuously roll and break. The water is blue-green and clear, and you can see as you look down from the giddy height of the castle walls where the crumbling stones have fallen. Nothing now remains of the castle but a corner of the ancient keep. Coarse grass and thistles grow where once stern battlements reared their proud heads. It was from this hoary pile that the chiefs of the Macdonalds, Lords of the Isles, directed the bloody clan feuds that ravished the Western Isles for hundreds of years. What scenes of wild devilry and ghastly slaughter these tumbling walls could tell could they but speak. And, as if in contrast to this grim reminder of days now past, a crofter and his wife are stacking sheaves of corn in the field which runs up to the castle walls. We question them about the old castle, and the woman, leaning on her pitchfork, points with a gnarled forefinger to a grassy mound high up on the hill. "Where that telephone pole stands," she says in her soft Highland accent, "they used to hang them in the old days. Aye, and they used to roll them down the hillside in barrels," and she nods her wise old head, saying, "Ach, ach, but they were wicked in the old days."

From Duntulm the rough hill road winds round the headland of Kilmaluag, through the Quirang, a group of fantastically shaped pinnacles of rock which rear themselves up against the sky like the statues of forgotten men. Soon the

road drops to pay homage to Flodigarry, the beautiful home of Flora Macdonald after her marriage (now a modern hotel), and then rises again, winding on and on past mirror-like lochs, over roaring torrents, now crawling snake-like across the moor, now climbing steeply up the hillside, past the Old Man of Storr—an outjutting monolith of rock which, seen from a distance, bears a strange resemblance to an old man crouched, brooding, on the hillside staring out to sea—past lovely Lochs Leatham and Fada, silver mirrors in their frames of vivid green moss, and so round the headland where it finally runs down into Portree. We stop before rounding the bend and look about us. It is an unforgettable sight. The sea is a sheet of throbbing silver across which bars of molten gold quiver and run before the light breeze which caresses the green-topped islands scattered like a handful of emeralds on a silver tray. In the distance the peaks of Torridon stand softly blue against the rose-tinted clouds lining the horizon turning to crimson even as you watch as the sun sinks farther into the sea. The Old Man of Storr is sharply reflected in the clear waters of Loch Leatham. A soft opalescent haze now subdues the outline of the hills and a strange hush creeps over the island as the breeze dies away. Softly the wavelets croon along the shore. It is time for the fairies to be abroad. To the south the great peaks of the Cuillin stand clear against the skyline. Thin wisps of white cloud vapour entwine themselves about the pinnacles like frail ghosts at play. A medley of colours play about the jagged ridges of Sgurr nan Gilleann, grey, mauve, blue, and rose, changing every second. Suddenly for one glorious moment the Cuillins are on fire as the blood-red flames of the dying sun dance along the peaks before quenching themselves in the sea.

Wherever you go on the uplands of Skye your eyes are irresistibly drawn to the Cuillin. This great mountain mass, its peaks torn and riven into a thousand fearsome shapes, dominates the whole island, indeed the whole of the Hebrides. Sometimes the peaks stand out blue and serene against the sky in the clear morning light, or cruel and forbidding on a day of storm when the wind howls down the

gullies and the clouds twist and rend themselves on the brutal ridges. But even when you cannot see the Cuillins, you know that they are there watching and recording your every movement.

No holiday in Skye is complete without a visit to Dunvegan Castle, the ancestral home of the Clan Macleod. And while you are at Dunvegan it will repay you to climb either or both of Macleod's Tables, above Borreraig. The Tables are two flat-topped hills commanding the surrounding moorland, so called because of their obvious likeness to table tops and their situation in the Macleod country. From either of these summits, if the weather is kind, you obtain what is probably the most magnificent panorama of Skye and a vivid impression of the true grandeur and majesty of the Cuillin range. At your feet lie the glistening waters of Loch Bracadale, throwing arms of silver mail far into the hills; green-topped dream islands, the haunt of fairies, beckon you with a siren's smile, and out in the far-flung Atlantic the blue haze of the Outer Hebrides enchants you.

No doubt it is the historical associations of Skye that give it its atmosphere of glamour and romance, the Norse invasions of King Haco, the clan feuds of the rival Macleods and Macdonalds, the fugitive wanderings of Bonnie Prince Charlie after the '45, and the touching story of Flora Macdonald. But apart altogether from these associations Skye has in itself an indefinable air of mysticism the like of which cannot be found elsewhere in Britain. The wild natural beauty of the island, its position of isolation from the mainland, its kindly people, its rocky glens and winding sea lochs, its homely peat stacks, its white-walled cottages like doll's houses, each with its little strip of cultivated land stretching like a green carpet down to the loch side, its towering blue mountains, its fine air, all combine to give it the atmosphere of unreality. Wherever you go in Skye you have the feeling that you have stumbled upon a fairy island from which, at any moment, you may be rudely whisked back to reality. The very place-names intrigue and torment you. Kyleakin, Snizort, Kilmaluag, Borreraig, Skeabost, Talisker, Vaternish, Macleod's Maidens, to name but a few,



W. J. Middleton

GLEN BRITTLE

and when you see on the signboard of a bus the words *To Fairy Bridge* you rub your eyes and pinch yourself to see if you are awake.

You cannot get the real feel of Skye in a motor car. A car, however slowly driven, takes you too quickly in Skye. You must walk on your own two feet to appreciate the goodness of Skye. You must tramp mile after weary mile over the bleak moorlands of Skye and let the salt winds of the Atlantic blow against your glowing cheek; you must wander in the strange hush of evening through the old graveyards in the quiet glens of Skye and let the mossy stones whisper to you of the days that will come no more; you must scramble across the wild mountains of Skye and try to wrest the grim secrets from their rocky hearts; you must feel the utter desolation of Skye when, day after day, the island lies hidden in damp leaden clouds and the grey mists creep right down to the water's edge; you must awake a morning in Skye when the sun is shining in the high blue heavens and the soft breezes sweet with the scent of drying bog-myrtle come sighing over the moorland, when the white gulls wheel and dive over the dancing blue waters. On a day like this Skye is a veritable fairyland, and you wonder that so much beauty can really exist on earth. It is as if the God of all Creation had been inspired to build there a paradise of mountain, moor, and loch that the spiritually weary from the cities of the world might come here to find their souls in the peace and solitude of its everlasting hills and glens, finding each day sufficient unto itself and taking no thought for the morrow.

MONT BLANC AND THE EASTERN GRAIANS.

BY J. A. PARKER.

THE ascent of Mont Blanc is undoubtedly the finest mountain expedition to be had in Europe, and most climbers hope to make it sometime or other. Given good conditions the ascent of the mountain by the ordinary routes from Chamonix or Courmayeur presents few difficulties apart from the hard work involved. But, owing to the uncertainty of the weather, Mont Blanc is a difficult mountain to secure just when one would like. On the other hand, one may get it most unexpectedly. The three ascents described below illustrate these two points.

In August 1901 Dr and Mrs Inglis Clark and I met at Chamonix with a carefully pre-arranged programme that we would spend a couple of weeks there and would climb Mont Blanc. We regarded the latter as so much of a certainty that we had arranged for a couple of good Zermatt guides to meet us on arrival. They were to be paid a fixed sum for the fortnight and were to climb Mont Blanc and any other peaks that we wished, or were able for, without any extra charge. It was my third season in the Alps, and I hoped that it would qualify me for the Alpine Club. Such was the plan. The reality was that the weather was not good, and the only ascents that we made were the Aiguille du Géant (13,170 feet), Mont Buet (10,201 feet), and the Brévent (8,284 feet). We had many nice walks and took numerous photographs. The two guides thoroughly enjoyed their holiday and smoked great quantities of tobacco. When the fortnight was ended the guides were paid off, and I returned to London to answer the call of duty by turning up at the office at 9.30 A.M. on Monday morning according to that part of the plan. I met the Clarks in London a week later, on their way home to Edinburgh, and they told me that immediately after I had left Chamonix the weather changed

for the better and they had had a most successful ascent of Mont Blanc. All this taught me two valuable lessons, viz., never engage guides at an inclusive fee for a holiday, and, at the end of a holiday, do not regard the immediate requirements of the office too seriously.

Three years later, in August 1904, Gilbert Thomson and I arranged to go to the north of Italy and meet the Clarks at Cogne in the Graian Alps. No guides were engaged beforehand, and the simple plan was that we would meet the Clarks at Cogne and do what we could. Travelling straight through from London, Thomson and I arrived at Aosta on the evening of Sunday, 14th August.

It was our first visit to Aosta, and next morning we were much impressed with Mont Emilius (11,677 feet) which towered up on the south side of the valley to a height of 9,834 feet (nearly 2 miles) above the city. Cogne lay on the other side of Emilius, and we decided to cross the mountain to it, not a short cut by any means, and send our baggage round by road. We left Aosta shortly after midday, and had a pretty stiff climb up the steep slopes on the south side of the valley to the huts at Camboe, which we reached before dark. The shepherds placed a good room at our disposal for the night. Next morning we were up at 3.15 A.M., made our breakfast, as we did not have a porter, and were off before dawn. Passing the Arbole chalet, we went up the valley on the south side of our peak and gained the south ridge, up which we had an interesting rock climb to the summit. The view looking down the 2-mile drop to Aosta was decidedly impressive. Returning back along the ridge, we made for the Col d'Arbole, crossed it, and thence found our way over very broken-up and complicated country to Cogne, which we reached about an hour after dark. It had been a pretty hard day, and we decided there and then that we would have an off day to-morrow, and do simply nothing.

On Wednesday morning, after breakfast, we thought that it would be well to spend a bit of the off day in enquiring about a guide. So, in due course, Gerard Clement was brought forward and presented to us as being the best guide

in the district. We explained the position to him and the details of our plan, which were that we would like to climb all the peaks round about Cogne—a modest dozen or so. Clement seemed to be impressed and suggested that, as a beginning, we might make a three-day excursion and climb a couple of peaks, namely, Mont Herbetet and the Grand Paradis. We agreed, and then Clement said decisively that we would start that afternoon for the Herbetet chalet, a walk of four or five hours. So the latter half of our off day was spent in toiling up the Valnontey to the chalet.

Thursday morning was not good, mist and light rain, but later on it showed signs of clearing a little, and Clement said that it was all right for the ascent. Our Chamonix men would not have started; but Clement was paid by the peak, and he knew each of them thoroughly. Our route lay up a simple valley to the southmost Col Herbetet and then up the very steep rock and snow north face of the peak to the summit (12,396 feet). We saw nothing, in fact we hardly saw the peak, as there was a thick mist and it was snowing pretty hard. We should not have been there at all. With such conditions I was rather apprehensive that something might avalanche; but nothing happened and we got down to the col safely, and in due course reached the chalet early in the afternoon. It had been an easy day.

On Friday morning Clement wakened us long before daylight, a good sign, and on looking out we found that it was a perfect morning with the stars shining brilliantly. After breakfast we got away about two hours before dawn, and I envied Thomson the experience as it was his first sunrise in the Alps. The going was quite easy for the first hour or so and, after crossing many rocky slopes, we reached the Dzasset Glacier, crossed it, and went on to the big Tribulatione Glacier. This latter was much broken up, but presented no difficulty. Clement now made for the foot of the steep eastern slope of the Grand Paradis and reached the bergschrund at a point almost immediately under the summit of the mountain. The schrund was rather troublesome, but we got across all right and then tackled the steep slope. At first this consisted of hard snow, but towards the

top we encountered a considerable stretch of pure ice which gave Clement a lot of hard work cutting steps. Then we had some rocks and snow, and finally topped the summit ridge only a few yards away from the highest point of the mountain (13,324 feet). The slope had taken us about three hours' work, and must be about 1,000 feet high. Before leaving the summit we screwed Mummery spikes into the heels of our boots in order to be secure on the ice slope. It was certainly sensational, but the spikes proved excellent and gave us perfect confidence. The snow lower down and the bergschrund gave no trouble; we reached the Herbetet chalet in good time, and Cogné in the evening. The Clarks had arrived and were just going to bed in view of an early start for the Grand Nomenon the next day. Thomson and I made the Saturday a real off day. Sunday and Monday were devoted to an attack on the Grivola in company with the Clarks and Charlie. On the first day we went up to the Pousset chalet in rain, and there spent a most uncomfortable night. Next morning the weather was decidedly bad, but Clement took Dr and Mrs Clark to the top of the Grivola (13,022 feet) and, I believe, had a snowstorm on the top. The other three, with the second porter, climbed the Punta del Pousset (9,993 feet), to which the bad weather did not extend. The Clarks returned pretty late, and they wished an off day to follow.

So Clement took Thomson and I on again on the Tuesday and, with a porter, we had an interesting day crossing the Glacier Monei and the Col Monei (11,247 feet) to the Pian-tonetto Club Hut for the night. The glacier was very broken up, but Clement knew it perfectly and led us across it in a thin mist to the col without a mistake. The descent of the south side of the col was rather tricky and demanded great care. The following day we recrossed the col, and after a short descent turned to the east and climbed the Tour du Grand St Pierre (12,113 feet). It is a good rock and snow peak, but the weather was not too good and we saw little. Cogné was reached in ample time for dinner. Our two-day trip had been quite good, and Clement had by now done very well indeed, considering the poor weather we were

having. The only first-class day was that on which we climbed the Grand Paradis.

On Thursday morning we were forced to the conclusion that our respective times were about up, and we walked down to Aosta where we arrived an hour or so after dark. On Friday morning we held a council as to our various plans. Thomson said that he would require to leave by train that afternoon so as to be at his office in Glasgow first thing on Monday morning. The Clarks had a week still in hand and wished to have a try at Emilius and then move on to the Dauphiné for the Meije. I also was due in my office on Monday morning; but, as it was in London, I had a clear day on hand and I therefore decided to take the motor up to Courmayeur, spend one night there, take a look round the place, and come back to Aosta the following afternoon for the train to Turin and home. The only one of these three plans that was carried out to the letter was Thomson's. I rather think that, on account of a late start, the Clarks did not get to the top of Emilius; but Mrs Clark got to the summit of the Meije all right. I was three days late for the office.

I left Aosta with the midday motor and found the journey to Courmayeur quite interesting, especially as the weather seemed to have taken a decided turn for the better. During the latter part of the journey Mont Blanc looked magnificent and became much more attractive than my office appointment for the Monday morning!

On the Saturday I climbed a peak of the Crammont (8,980 feet), descended to the Col de l'Arp, and from it to the Col de Youla. Descending 1,000 feet to the west, I struck the high-level path which runs high up along the south-east slope of the Val Veni to the Col de Chécouri, the view of the 2-mile high precipitous south face of Mont Blanc being magnificent. It was also sufficient, and on getting back to Courmayeur I went at once to the Guides' Office and engaged Joseph Croux for the ascent of Mont Blanc, to start the following morning at 6 o'clock, he to arrange for two porters and provisions. I then sent a post card to the "old man" advising him that I would not be

at the office until 9.30 on Thursday morning. So much for duty; but I had learned my lesson at Chamonix three years ago.

We were off the next morning at six sharp. There were four of us, Joseph's brother Hugo as first porter, and a second porter who would only go as far as the Cabane. We had food for two nights in case we might be delayed. Our route was up the Val Veni to the Lac de Combal and thence up the Miage Glacier to the foot of the Aiguilles Grises. A steep ascent over rocks and snow then placed us at the Dôme Cabane (10,235 feet) for the night. Later in the day two Austrians arrived from Courmayeur, and were to try the ascent to-morrow, guideless. They had a porter who returned to Courmayeur with our second man. The afternoon was perfect and we lay on the rocks for a long time basking in the warm sun; in fact, until Joseph called me to the Cabane for a wonderful dinner that he had prepared. We went to bed at 6 o'clock.

Next morning (Monday) at midnight I saw Joseph get up and go outside to look at the weather. It was a most critical moment, as I knew that should he go back to bed the weather was bad, and that my ascent of Mont Blanc would be off. On the other hand, should he light the candle I would get the peak. *He lit the candle!* A hasty breakfast and we were away about 1.30, Joseph, Hugo, and myself, on one rope. The two Austrians followed on a doubled rope. For the first half-hour we were in shadow and used our lanterns; but we then emerged into the brilliant light of the full moon and put the lanterns away. It was almost as bright as day. Our route lay up the Glacier du Dôme to the snow ridge which runs west from the Dôme du Goûter towards the Col de Bionnassay. Turning to the right, we shortly reached the narrow snow arête which is the feature of this route. It is about 50 yards long with slopes falling away exceedingly steeply on each side for several thousand feet, and requires, as Baedeker would say, a steady head. It is rather sensational and is impossible with a high wind. I believe that many parties are turned here in otherwise perfect weather.

We then skirted the actual summit of the Dôme, and on reaching the Vallot Cabane had a second, or was it a third, breakfast. We were at last in sunlight; but it was extremely cold. We then tackled the 1,500-foot climb up the Bosses Ridge to the summit. This ridge is fairly steep and was much narrower than I had expected, but there were good old steps all the way as we were now on the Chamonix highway. Going very steadily, we reached the summit (15,782 feet) about 9 o'clock. There were several Chamonix parties there. One of the Austrians arrived shortly after us; but his companion got no farther than the Vallot Cabane. The small Observatory on the summit was occupied by several scientists who wished to study solar radiation.

The view from the summit is most extensive, but with the exception of the nearer peaks such as the Verte, is not impressive as the viewpoint is too high up above everything. After about an hour on the summit we returned the way we had come. The snow arête gave no trouble, and at the Dome Cabane Joseph concocted a wonderful repast from the remainder of the two days' provisions. Courmayeur was reached about 8 o'clock in the evening, and I had got the finest climb in my life. Nine-thirty on Thursday morning saw me at the office, three days behind time, but the "old man" took a lenient view of the matter, in fact he said he was glad I had done it.

So much for what I may call Cases One and Two. Case Three was simpler. A friend of mine, whose only previous ascent was Arthur's Seat, happened to be at Chamonix for a holiday; but without intending to do any climbing. In the hotel he heard someone remark that Mont Blanc was in perfect condition and that any person desirous of climbing it should lose no time, as the conditions might change for the worse. My friend at once decided to have a try and got hold of some guides, or perhaps it would be better to say that they got hold of him. They left at midnight, got to the summit, and were back in Chamonix within the twenty-four hours, a feat seldom achieved even by experienced and well-equipped mountaineers. My friend was neither and was

lucky. Very lucky, indeed. So were his guides, who were, of course, paid full tariff rates.

Moral.—If you are going to the Alps do not make out a detailed plan before you start as you may be disappointed, and if you wish to secure peaks, engage guides at the tariff rates for the peaks. Or give them a nominal retaining fee for your holiday plus an extra, based on the tariff rates, for each peak climbed.

ABOUT WALKING.

By "VASS."

SOME disillusioned person pronounced snuff-taking the only human pleasure immediate and reliable in giving results. Yet no beneficial result appears beyond a violent change in the contents of the lungs, and it is but a fleeting, passive pleasure. Active pleasures give more deep and lasting satisfaction and, of these, walking can stimulate you physically and mentally better than rule-bound pastimes like golf. It can, but whether it does or not depends on several things.

You should have, or cultivate, a philosophy of intelligent walking, a realisation of the what and the how. Just consider two rather extreme types of walkers. Here come a couple of kilted, dyed-in-the-wool hikers bundling along in the hot sun, under bulging rucksacks, at a grim 4 m.p.h. with their eyes on the path four steps ahead. The record breakers and not so rare either! "Yes, yes, we've been to X. We've been to Y and Z, and most places you can mention." And there go the farmer and his neighbour lurching ponderously through their traditional Sunday field inspection. From time to time, after due gestation, are born observations like, "Aye, man, they dawmed craws ken fine ye manna shoot on the Sabbath." Perhaps you will agree that intelligent walking lies in a more balanced mixture of athletic leg moving and curiosity in the things not too far removed from the point of the nose.

Not that there is anything wrong in being interested in things, however trivial, in your near horizon. Far from it. It is healthy to give free rein occasionally to the born gaper—the rubberneck—in us, to look over the bridge parapet for trout, to read that moss-covered plaque, to find that curlew's nest. Let us be curious about the design of the war memorial, about the difference between the north and the south side



March 1938

LOCH MUICK

R. L. Mitchell

of the valley. And now and again we may well make little incidents. The small-boyish delight of trundling boulders into a loch! And why miss the chance of speaking to lone people like gamekeepers, shepherds, and anglers? In the latter there is generally a philosophic streak, and in all an acute eye for bird and fish, beast, plant, and weather. For example, one shepherd holds that hill sheep have their favourite howf for lounging, like street-corner boys in a city, and he can tell you in advance that a certain hollow will contain exactly twenty-five sheep.

Of course, if you indulge in such unpredictable ploys, what is going to happen to your neatly worked-out programme? Just so. In view of the normal, clock-driven routine of most of us, why trouble to have more than an outline, subject to alterations without notice—even steamship companies are not above that. You have done enough planning if you decide to pass through this village, take another photograph of that loch, ascertain if the *Cross Keys* (or whatever the hostelry) still has those cork marks on the ceiling. But have some objective, a peg on which to hang your interests and, if one does not readily occur to you, you have the unfailing inspiration of the O.S. map. The writer found his eye straying along a long straight line composed of road, track, and path, broken here and there—a Roman road that was. He felt he must follow some miles of it, and one day he did, engrossed. Although a compass was needed at times to hold to the way in field and wood, a climb on to a nearby hill showed it ever thrusting straight into the horizon. Of Roman remains there were none, yet, in places where the way was sunken, his youthful mind constrained him to poke hopefully in the bank in search of a possible classical trouser button. Equally engrossing are the eighteenth-century military roads and the devious drove roads which converged on Falkirk.

Perhaps you disagree with such sketchiness in walk programmes, but you will surely agree that every walker should have evolved for himself a methodical style of walking, which will drive him along as smoothly and effortlessly as possible. City streets generally produce a short clip-clop

step, with much bending of the knee, a step with an infectious rhythm, the step of the marching song. But it is just a road step, and once off roads and smooth ground you flounder. Perhaps the best model for a cross-country step would be that of the hill shepherd—a long, unhurried, swinging stride with leg fairly straight and a strong ankle thrust, the “heather lowp.” No similarity here to the spurious smartness of the gymnasium walk, yet this walk has its solid sturdy beauty, and is certainly effective. But how many town-bred hip-and-ankle walkers lift their 10 or 12 stones vertically an unnecessary half-inch at each step!

Thinking of the hill shepherd, you picture him with his staff. Can you picture him with a walking-stick? That traditional adjunct of the walker is useful for stabbing into rabbit holes, throwing into the river for the dog to retrieve, and even for going uphill—but how much use is it for crossing a burn, testing the firmness of peat bog, going downhill, or traversing a steep hill-side as you do in following contours?

In blowing the trumpet for outdoor recreations the keep-fitters generally overlook an important difference between walking and golf, football, or almost any other sport, the fact that walking is so much more than physical exercise. While you can enjoy tennis or cycling with the most inert-minded companions, how long could you enjoy walking with them? You should repeatedly thank your stars for a congenial walking companion, who can stimulate your interest in fleas or the alleged principles of a political party, blow away your prejudices against macaroni or museums and appreciate your apparently freakish ideas about the evils of football pools or the pre-eminence of Donald Duck as a film star. Walking certainly encourages deep breathing, which helps the inquiring mind, and from the alliance of active mind and active body arises the sense of satisfaction and recreation, which is the reward of intelligent walking.

ROSS-SHIRE RIDGE.

By R. L. MITCHELL.

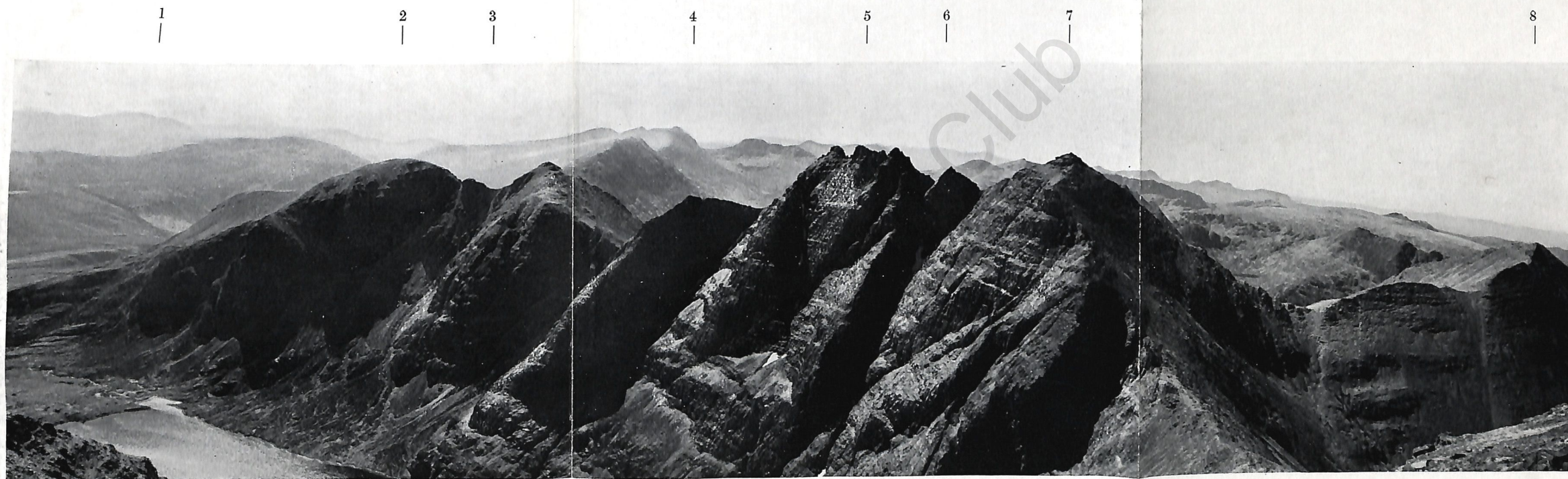
THE doubts of the multitude regarding the sanity of the three who boarded the Inverness bus one afternoon in May, equipped with ice-axes and rucksacks, were turned to certainty when three tickets to Turriff were purchased. Turriff was but the first stage on our journey, however, and less plebeian transport soon carried the augmented party of four to Inverness—stop for high tea—in much the same time as it had taken us to reach Turriff from Aberdeen. Then, enjoying the fine spring evening, we made our leisurely way to Dundonnell on Little Loch Broom, slowing or stopping now and again to admire the views of the unfamiliar peaks as they appeared in turn at each bend in the road.

Soon after our arrival the sun began to sink over the headland at the seaward end of the loch, below a cloudless sky which varied in colour from deep blue to red, and a second high tea was gulped down in order not to miss the sight.

All roads from Dundonnell lead, in the first instance, to An Teallach, and soon after nine next morning we were complaining once again of the weather—no clouds to improve the skies for photographs, and in any case it was far too hot for climbing—as we made our way up the track which leaves the road rather furtively opposite Dundonnell Post Office. This track, according to the 1-inch O.S. map, zigzags up to a height of about 1,300 feet, but can actually be followed right up to the summit plateau, at a height of 2,400 feet, west of the Allt a' Mhuillin. An easy walk then takes one to the col between the unnamed 3,001-foot top and Bidein a' Ghlas Thuill. The first top of the chain, Glas Mheall Mòr, lies less than a mile to the north over easy ground, but as we desired to have time to explore the more interesting part of the ridge it was left out. From the col, with its

extensive view into Coire a' Ghlas Thuill and away to the north-east, a scramble leads to the highest, but one of the less interesting summits of An Teallach. From it the most comprehensive idea of the whole range can be obtained. The accompanying panorama shows the more interesting part of the range. A sharp ridge runs from Bidein eastwards to Glas Mheall Liath, and this is balanced by the ridge from Sgùrr Fiona to Sgùrr Creag an Eich on the other side of the range. Of the series of four corries which these ridges enclose, the largest and most impressive was now right before us. The sun was striking down from the south-west and casting deep shadows into the corrie, the faces of the Corrag Bhuidhe buttress and its neighbours being made the more impressive by their grim blackness. The toothed nature of the ridge produced a pattern of light and shade on the waters of Toll an Lochain, some 1,700 feet below us. Again we sighed at the lack of clouds needed to produce a photograph worthy of the scene. Farther away in the grey haze the rounded tops of the Fannichs and the more inviting outlines of Beinn Dearg both suggested an objective for the morrow. At our backs the deeply indented Atlantic coast-line serpented in and out of the Loch Brooms and southwards towards Loch Torridon, while in the distance we imagined that the hills of Skye and of the Outer Hebrides were visible.

After a leisurely meal we set off down the nail-worn boulders towards Sgùrr Fiona, the shapely conical top which commences the most interesting section of the ridge. Over this whole section it is possible to avoid all difficulties by following the well-marked track of previous climbers, but often the interesting-looking boulders and crags entice one away to the left—the main road always lies to the right-hand side of the ridge. Beyond Sgùrr Fiona, Lord Berkeley's Seat rises sheer—from one side more than sheer—for several hundred feet, and, looking over the steepest edge, produces quite a strange feeling! The four tops of Corrag Bhuidhe provided some interesting scrambling, quite unnecessary but impossible to resist, and the close-up view of a pair of ptarmigan, settled on the main top, which remained there peacefully while we photographed from a range of 10 feet,



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R. L. Mitchell

AN TEALLACH FROM BIDEAN A' GHLAS THUILL.

1. Loch Toll an Lochain.
2. Sàil Liath.
3. Cadha Gobhlach.

4. Corrag Bhuidhe Buttress.
5. Corrag Bhuidhe—4 tops.
6. Lord Berkeley's Seat.

7. Sgùrr Fhiona.
8. Sgùrr Creag an Eich.

The attempt to produce a real "close-up" was, however, not allowed.

Having strayed too far from the beaten track on the descent from Corrag Bhuidhe to its buttress to the south, we found it advisable to use the rope for safety, and here Malcolm, after having had to return to rescue the too well-belayed rope, hinted that a smaller factor of safety than a permanent grip of the whole mountain might well be permitted. At this point the delay allowed a wider horizon to be scanned, for the last part of the ridge had itself taken all our attention, it had so many features of interest, and we saw to the south-west Loch na Sheallag, some 3 miles long, with, rising steep behind it, the face of Beinn Dearg Mòr, deeply indented by a hanging corrie.

The way now lay, with a voluntary detour to the head of the buttress, over easy ground, until the ridge was left at the second branch of the gully which leads down to the loch, and provides an easy descent. This gully is situated at the col before the last top, Sail Liath, is reached. From the corrie a route was taken over ground which is sometimes bare, level sandstone and sometimes peat-filled depressions, which are decidedly moist, direct to the main road at the second milestone from Dundonnell Hotel. Incidentally, not a drop of water was encountered on the hill all day, and only in the deepest and most sheltered gullies did some sandy snow remain. The gully down which we came was, however, still frozen, and small blocks of ice, up to some inches in size, scattered over the surface, had apparently recently fallen from the cliffs above.

The following day had of necessity to be short, as the return journey to Aberdeen had to be made. Smith and Malcolm, in fact, were satisfied to have a longish lie and to stroll along the lochside for a few miles. Hutcheon and I set off for Beinn Dearg, with strict injunctions to be back in time for lunch, and with the threat that, if we were not, the others would take the next train home without us! Sight of Beinn Dearg showed it to be in mist above 3,000 feet, so it was hurriedly decided to have a look at the Fannichs. The car was left a little beyond the track to Loch a' Bhraoin

and a straight course set for the top of Meall a' Chrasgaidh, which was reached soon after eleven. A rapid conference in the biting wind reached the conclusion that we could go a little farther and still be back in time for lunch. This, incidentally, was the result of several more until about twelve-thirty we found ourselves on the top of Sgùrr Mòr, rucksacks having been parked on Càrn na Criche. As the mist had been threatening all day, map and compass were not left behind even for this short distance. The return to the car was made by means of the track round the face of Meall a' Chrasgaidh and then over very uneven peat hags and recently burned heather. It was reached about 2 P.M., so that the hotel was made by half-past—previously settled as the zero hour.

Among the many impressions left by the trip, two may be set down. First, our great luck in making the long journey with only two days to spare, and in encountering such excellent conditions, especially as so many have made the pilgrimage to An Teallach only to be repulsed by the weather. Second, the impression, previously rather strong, that "Munros" do not really mean much, reinforced by the fact that the long day on An Teallach with quite a lot of climbing, produced but one, while the easy half-day on the Fannichs yielded two. And perhaps a third—were the multitude so very far wrong as far as the ice-axes were concerned ?



A WALK ROUND APPLECROSS.

BY RUTH K. JACKSON.

OF the climbs and walks that I have done, none have given me greater pleasure than my walk round Applecross. In variety and beauty the views were not less wonderful than those from many mountain tops.

To avoid walking on the main road, my friend and I drove from Kinlochewe to the head of Loch Torridon and parked the car, with the consent of a charming old Highlander, at the clachan of Annat, where the public road for vehicles ends. A notice directs one to the right-of-way footpath to Shieldaig. The two of us set forth on this path with light hearts and heavy feet, the heaviness being due to our rucksacks which were loaded with tent, sleeping-bags, ground-sheet, food for three days, a spirit cooker, and other accessories. First through larches and pines, and then through heather, the path led on distinctly. The noise of civilisation rasped on ours ears, however, when two motor cyclists sped past us on their bumpy way. After 4 miles the path, at Balgy, developed into a driving road and carried on as such through Shieldaig, a village which straggles in a delightful manner along the loch of the same name, an inlet of Loch Torridon. At the head of Loch Shieldaig a path branches off to the right. We turned down this path, crossed the river by a footbridge (not marked on

Bartholomew's $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch map), and found ourselves at last on the 4-foot-wide path which is the only means of communication, apart from the sea, between about fifty households and the rest of Scotland. This path is kept in good condition by Ross-shire County Council.

Our way was one of enchanting beauty. On our left, both on heathery moorland and on steep crags, grew graceful birches and sturdy hazels; on our right lay the glistening waters of Loch Torridon, behind which rose majestic hills, crowned seemingly with snow but in reality with the white quartzite characteristic of the district. At the first township, Ardheslaig, we were welcomed by a friendly collie. None of the Applecross dogs seemed suspicious of strangers. Ardheslaig is a typical West Highland township; the scattered black houses remain in use for cattle only, while the people live in modern cottages near which are cultivated patches, where the fishermen-crofters are trying to wrest a living from a thin and unyielding soil. The sheep and cows are athletic because they have to work so hard to find enough of the sparse grass to satisfy their hunger. It was Sunday. Not even a net was hanging out to dry on the frames by the waterside and a weird quiet hung over the little community, where almost everything is forbidden on the Sabbath. Beside the second township, Kenmore, about 16 miles distant from Annat, we pitched our tent for the night. A swift, clear burn, springy turf for a bed, and an air too cold for midges made this one of our best camping sites.

After Kenmore there were no trees. Never have I seen such a wet land. Nothing but bog, grass, rock, and more bog. Bog oozed up from the cloven feet of the cattle who gazed mildly at us. A low-level walk in such a region would be impossible without a good path. In spite of the water, we passed only one group of lochans on the way; they were near the north-west corner of Applecross and are not shown on Bartholomew's $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch map.

Before we had said *au revoir* to Loch Torridon, the island of Rona had appeared, and for 12 long, interesting miles we saw alluring pictures of Rona, Raasay, and the misty

Isle of Skye. The weird bleakness of the mainland, the unexpected appearance of a human habitation, and the mystic beauty of those western islands gave a unique atmosphere to our expedition.

At Cuaig, the only township where the houses are close to the path, a messenger had arrived by motor cycle. Later on, when we saw the hill that he had to negotiate, we felt thankful that we were relying on Shanks's mare. Incidentally, this steep hill, which is about 4 miles from Applecross, is just above a most delightful sandy bay, which would have been ideal for bathing had time and weather permitted. To those who think that we ought to have had time for a bathe, as it is only 16 miles from Kenmore to Applecross, I may say that, as we were carrying a load about three times as great as one carries for a single day's outing, our average speed, excluding halts for meals, was only 2 miles per hour.

We chose an open site near the shore at the north end of Applecross Bay for our camp. After supper a gamekeeper came to ask us if we had not seen the notice, "No camping allowed." We had not, as the notice is at the end of the motoring road, which was beyond our day's march. Fortunately we were allowed to stay, but the authorised camping ground is 2 miles farther on, beyond the village. Before we had settled down for the night a herd of cows came to investigate our tent. We took turns in warding them off, until, having eaten their fill of seaweed, the eleven cows had lain down for the night. Alas, just as we thought our watch had ended, two of the animals rose up and began fighting. Fearing for the safety of our fragile abode, we struck camp at midnight and moved to ground on the other side of a high fence. At 6.15 A.M. our slumbers were rudely awakened by the thudding of many hooves on the ground close to our heads. Another herd of cows making anxious inquiries! One of us paced up and down clutching a stick while the other dressed; then, with furtive glances at our unwelcome visitors, we packed up the tent and our belongings and tramped off to Applecross village. Truly, however, the marvellous sight of the Cuillins in the morning

sunshine made up for the inconvenience of our hasty removal.

By the time we had washed our few breakfast dishes the Post Office had opened. Here we were able to replenish our stores before retracing our steps to the River Applecross. The path, which is on the north side of the river, is of the usual hill type, not well made like the one round the coast which we had been following the two previous days. Before very long we took an hour's rest, partly to supplement our night's disturbed repose but chiefly to let our tent dry, as a wet tent can be twice as heavy to carry as a dry one. When we came to the bothy about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles up the glen we took the path to the right. This was the wrong path, and is not the one marked on the map which is at least $\frac{1}{2}$ mile farther on. The path that we were on could be seen very distinctly on the hill-face. We followed it on to the plateau, where it ended, and then, in order to regain the correct path, we climbed a hill from which we had such a wonderful view of Skye and Loch Torridon that we did not grudge the extra mile. The ground above 500 feet is not excessively boggy, so we regained the path with little difficulty. I call it a path, but, although it was a distinct scratch on the hillside, it is the roughest and stoniest thing that I have ever described as a path. About 2 miles from the keeper's cottage at Inverbain we were able to cease our jumping exercises and swing steadily along. A row of sea-boots stood at the keeper's door; it looked more like a fisherman's cottage. We now retraced our footsteps of the first day for a few miles, pitched our tent on the driest bit of bog—our ground-sheets held out manfully—and then walked back through Shiel-daig to Annat on the fourth day. The little white houses of Alligan and Torridon, beside the deep blue of the loch and the heights of Ben Alligin, Liathach and Beinn Eighe towering magnificently into the sky, made one of those perfect views which will remain in the memory for a lifetime.

During the four days we had walked about 57 miles. As some people would hesitate to carry their house and bed on their backs, I am glad to say that about halfway between Shiel-daig and Applecross by the coast is a place called

Arinacrinachd * (postal address—By Applecross, Strathcarron) where apartments are advertised. I do not know anything about them, but by staying there it would be possible to walk round the path, travelling light. There is an inn at Shildaig and accommodation may be had at Applecross, although the inn there is closed meanwhile. At least one house at Annat takes visitors and Torridon village is not far away. I would not suggest that the walk from Shildaig to Annat should be omitted as the view, going eastwards, is so glorious.

I have written this article in the hope that other members of the Club may be tempted to explore this little-known district. If they wish to enjoy the thrills of the more famous motoring road to Applecross, they could doubtless hire a car from Lochcarron village and miss out the stony path over the hills from Inverbain to Applecross.

* O.S. spelling; also, more commonly Arrin a' Chruinach.

BOGS.

I HAVE been re-reading the "S.M.C. Guide to the Islands" and re-living a most enjoyable holiday spent in Lewis with Symmers and Parker. Parker came to show us what to climb, but not how; later, he wrote against most of the cliffs — "manifestly impossible!" Among the major obstacles must be included the inevitable Lewisian introduction to the day's work, an average of 3 miles of almost impassable peat bog. Our complaints regarding these bogs met nowhere with any sympathy. An eye for country, Parker observed, is not gifted to every Tom, Dick, and Harry. And if Parker proved a broken reed, what shall I say of Morag, the daughter of the house? "Those are fine peat bogs you have here," Symmers began. Morag thought it out slowly in Gaelic and after a long silence came the reply, naïve but devastating, "Oh, but they are not ours."—W. A. E.

AGAINST SOLITARY CLIMBING.

BY G. ROY SYMMERS.

A WEALTH of literature has been amassed on this subject. Nearly all stories dealing with mountain adventure spring from it as a foundation. It is the stone on which the structure of climbing stands, the corbel from which the pitches of exploration are successfully overcome. Friendship and comradeship among the high hills are the heart and life-blood of the sport of mountaineering.

Solitary climbing has its many worshippers, but I would contend that he who determines to seek his mountain adventures alone will never discover the finer qualities of the sport. I can recall no instance of returning at sunset, after a lonely day among the bens, with the thought: "Thank God I have been alone." By this I do not mean to suggest that I did not enjoy my excursions in solitude, for climbing alone is a fine adventure, but rather that, in every case, I should have enjoyed them still more if only someone had been there to share in my pleasures.

To cite but one instance—a December ascent of Beinn a' Bhuid. The day was the most perfect in my recollections of winter days in the Cairngorms. The summit of the Sluggan Glen was full of snow; Glen Quoich wore a speckless mantle of white. The sky was palest blue with not a fluff of cloud. The ascent of the south gully in the Cioch corrie was strenuous, steps were cut in icy snow from bottom to top, and the culminating cornice steep enough at its lowest point to provoke a certain sense of exultation. The erstwhile windswept plateau was desolate, calm; the ptarmigan mocked my loneliness. The glittering hills lay westward at my feet—their coldness and majesty presented to my gaze as never before. Their message seemed to be, "We draw aside the curtain, but what we reveal is for your eyes alone. The vision which we lay before you is transient, something



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BEINN a' BHÙIRD

R. L. Mitchell

never again to be recaptured, never revived. You came alone." My pipe-smoke curled lazily in the frosty air as I walked slowly across the iron gravel; and the secret of how to enjoy climbing fully came to me. Share one's mountain adventures and they stand a chance of survival.

* * *

LIVING OFF THE LAND.

A HOLIDAY with Parker has its compensations. It is true that he will not allow you to climb with your hands in your pockets. "A mountain expedition," he said, "should not be degraded to the level of a mere casual stroll." He put it, of course, more bluntly and, as usual, concisely, "Dashed levity; showing off!" And one cannot but admire his efficiency. Throughout our holiday in Lewis, we realised that we were always learning—at the feet of a master. We came back one evening from a day's climbing on two precipitous little hills south of Ug and reported our climbs on the two nameless tors. The total for the day seemed absurdly insignificant when compared with Parker's bag. He had secured Suainaval (1,404 feet), the friendship of the shooting tenant, the freedom of the Ug hills, an invitation to dinner, and a couple of sea trout. One does, occasionally, discover a member of the genus who justifies a specific *sapiens*.—W. A. E.

In Memoriam.

JAMES IVERACH.

WE greatly regret having to record the death of James Iverach, who died on February 16, 1938, at the age of 63. Mr Iverach, who had been in ill-health for some five months, was unmarried, and lived with two sisters, by whom he is survived. A son of the late Very Reverend Principal Iverach, D.D., of the U.F. College, Aberdeen, Mr Iverach was educated at Aberdeen Grammar School and Aberdeen University, where he graduated. He received his legal training in the office of Messrs Fraser & Duguid, Advocates, Aberdeen, and set up in practice for himself in 1918. He was a prominent member of the Deeside Golf Club, the Northern Arts Club, and the Aberdeen Chess Club, being a past President of the last named. He also took a keen interest in the affairs of Aberdeen Public Library, serving for a number of years on the Library Committee. He had been a member of the Cairngorm Club since 1911.

PROFESSOR A. W. GIBB.

PROFESSOR A. W. GIBB, who died on July 12, 1937, at the age of 73, had been a member of the Club since 1912. A graduate of the University of Aberdeen, he took the Degree of Master of Arts in 1884, at a time when there was no Science Faculty in the University. Thereafter he taught for a few years in a school and, in 1895, became Assistant in the Department of Natural History under Professor H. A. Nicholson. At that time Natural History included Geology. On Professor Nicholson's death the teaching of Geology was taken over by Dr Gibb, and in 1908 he was appointed independent Lecturer in that subject. When the Chair of

Geology was founded in 1922, Dr Gibb was appointed first occupant of that Chair, which he held until his death.

Professor Gibb was of a quiet disposition, but his interest and enthusiasm for Geology naturally took him to the hills. He had a great love for everything pertaining to his subject and, like all enthusiasts, was able to pass on his enthusiasm to others. Hence the love of his students for him. Although his appearances at Club functions were very rare, there must be a number of members who will recall, with the keenest appreciation, the quiet and unfailing good humour which characterised his lectures, his wide sympathies, the ease with which he could be approached in a difficulty, and his extraordinary gift of investing his subject with the maximum of interest.

H. J. B.

CAIRNGORM—MECCA OF THE FAITHFUL.

BY WILMA HAY.

HUNTING for a needle in a haystack is a proverbially hard proposition, and finding members of a climbing party on Cairngorm in thick weather is scarcely less so. This was the problem set us on July 25 last year on the occasion of a Meet of the Moray Mountaineering Club, the notice of which gave no indication of the proposed route.

Unable to join the main party at Coylum Bridge, we decided to make the ascent from Derry Lodge. At 9 A.M., then, we set off gaily through the scented firs of Glen Derry. From the upper, open glen we could see that weather conditions beyond the watershed, towards the Lairig an Laoigh, were not to be of the best.

The play of light and shadow in Derry relieved to a great extent the monotony of the trudge up this familiar glen, but the way in which the mist poured out of Coire Etchachan, an indication of the shape of things to come, was anything but reassuring. Two hours after leaving Derry Lodge, we topped the watershed in thin drizzle and a chill north wind, and looked down into the mist-filled Lairig. From the hidden slopes of Beinn Mheadhoin came the roar and rush of swollen waters, and a thinning of the mist revealed glimpses of white torrents magnificent in spate. Our progress down the sodden track was brightened somewhat by a gradual lifting of the mist. Crossing the stream just above the Dubh Lochans, we skirted the foot of Beinn Mheadhoin into Glen Avon, taking advantage of deer tracks among the moraines and peat hags. At this stage of the journey the rain was at its worst, and difficulty was experienced in crossing the swollen Avon. The peat-bogs on the lower slopes of A' Chòinneach were very treacherous, but the going improved as we progressed upwards to the Saddle between Loch Avon and the headwaters of the Nethy.

The rain had now ceased but the mist was still thick ; Loch Avon was invisible, and a chill wind came up Strath Nethy.

It was now after 1 P.M. and it seemed useless to go looking for anybody on Cairngorm in such conditions, and besides, we were hungry! A slow rising of the mist revealed an entrancing picture of the ruffled waters of Loch Avon sparkling under shafts of sunlight which lit up the submerged golden sands at the margins. In this light the colours of the vegetation and scree were extraordinarily brilliant, and the myriad shades of blue, so characteristic of this lovely



sheet of water, were intensified to a marked degree. It was a picture worth the long journey, worth the rain.

The object of the excursion now being abandoned, we decided to return by the Shelter Stone and Coire Etchachan. Above us the mist wove in and out among the splintered crags of Stac an Phàraidh and presented an impressive picture. Eventually, after wading the Féith Buidhe, we reached this haven of refuge to find, to our surprise, three members of the party we had set out to find. No one had gone to Cairngorm—the faithful were having a day off, so that our last-minute change of plan had saved us a fruitless search!

These three set out for Coylum Bridge, disappearing very soon in the mist, while we directed our steps towards Loch Etchachan. The steep ascent has many places where one unconsciously lingers and looks back on the magnitude and magnificence of the setting in which the Shelter Stone lies. Leaving the path on the plateau, we diverged to the lower slopes of Beinn Mheadhoin and rediscovered the well-preserved walls of a small shieling tucked away in the side of a moraine. The evening light in Glen Derry softened the beautiful colours in this green glen and, for a time, we lay in the heather at the Etchachan ford to appreciate the scene before us. The late sunlight glowing on the fir trunks of the old Caledonian forest gave a friendliness and warmth that was a fitting climax to another day on the hills.

SKI-ING IN NORWAY.

By E. BIRNIE REID.

IN 1934 some friends, with whom, in previous years, I had done some ski-ing in Switzerland, suggested that I should join them in the latter half of March at Finse, almost midway between Bergen and Oslo. I accepted, and enjoyed the fortnight most thoroughly. They say that many people go to Finse once, and that, if they go twice, they keep on going; that has been my experience, and as a result I have not explored any of the ski-ing centres which lie to the north of Oslo.

The twenty-one hours' sail from Newcastle to Bergen deters many people from visiting Norway. But the B. and N. Steamship service is very comfortable, and the bi-weekly runs of the swift and luxurious M.V. "Venus" are now augmented by an even faster and bigger ship, the "Vega."

One gets broken in gradually to Norwegian food and customs; on leaving Newcastle at 8 P.M. dinner is served in British style, but next day, at lunch, one meets the rather bewildering *Kolt Bord*—a large table full of cold dishes of nearly every possible kind, from cold turkey and caviar to tinned herring and some quaint varieties of fish. One generally finds these so succulent that there is no appetite left for the various hot luncheon dishes provided.

Bergen is, in many ways, like Aberdeen, although on a smaller scale, and the late afternoon approach by the fjord is most attractive. Also, like Aberdeen, there is a standard joke about the *Bergenser* that he can never be without an umbrella. On the way to Finse there is a choice of trains, one leaving at 8 P.M., two hours after the arrival of the steamer, and one at 8 A.M. next morning. The Bergen-Oslo railway is a wonderful feat of engineering and climbs to over 4,000 feet. From the scenic point of view I think it is rather disappointing, because there are so many tunnels and

snow-sheds in the mountainous parts that to look out is tantalising, as well as trying to the eyes.

On arrival at Finse one finds just a station and hotel adjoining, and one or two railwaymen's cottages. Across the railway there are excellent nursery slopes and a ski-ing instructor. Ski can be hired quite cheaply, although it is found more satisfactory to have one's own. Being practically at the summit of the railway, one can get easy runs in each direction, with a train to bring one back, although the service is *not like that* between London and Brighton.

The snag about Finse is the weather. There may be blizzards for days on end, even in March, when only the hardy will venture out. There is an antidote to a certain extent, in that one or two routes are marked with sticks like garden stakes about 20 feet apart. Sometimes it is difficult to see the next one, as it may get covered with snow. Then in bad weather one must turn.

The most popular run is to the top of the mountain, Hardanger Jökelen, a climb of about 2,300 feet above Finse. The top is a large plateau several miles wide. Aeroplanes, fitted with ski instead of landing wheels, can take off from the lake at Finse and land you at the summit. This must beat the Swiss funiculars for time-saving on the ascent, but I hear that the Insurance Companies are now discouraging the practice.

At Easter time there are many tourist huts open within ski-ing distance of Finse. These are used in the summer by hill walkers, and all that I saw were most clean and comfortable. After a hard trek in a grilling sun the Norwegian red, white, and blue flag outside a tourist hut can be a most cheering sight. Every year I find some new runs to do, but most of the large runs may be tackled only with a guide. Now Finse is a small place and the hotel holds fewer than 100 people; as a result there is only one guide. He is a grand fellow but his English is very limited, so, to get the full value out of a day with him, one must have an English-speaking Norwegian in the party.

Many people are interested to see the reindeer. As a rule they are herded like sheep are in this country, though living

in the snowy wastes. On one of our trips a tame reindeer attached himself to the party and followed us for 30 kilometres. He was offered food of all kinds, including chocolate, cheese, orange, and prunes, but the only thing we saw him eat was some moss which he scraped up for himself. At times he got in the way, but it is a real thrill when descending on skis to have a galloping reindeer immediately ahead. The speed at which they can travel even in soft snow is amazing.

The cost of a fortnight at Finse is quoted at approximately £24 from Newcastle, but this may be cut down by travelling second class on the steamer and third on the railway, both without any hardship. The company, with many nationalities—Danish, Norwegian and British predominating—is cheery and homely, and there is light for ski-ing in March up to 7 P.M. It may not interest many readers, but in Norway spirits of any kind can be bought only at State (Vinmonopolet) shops. One can, however, get beer and wine almost anywhere and at any time.

To any fellow-members who are wondering where to put in a fortnight's hill-walking in the summer months, I can recommend the Jotunheim area, going from hut to hut as one feels inclined. The routes are marked with cairns having a coloured mark painted on them. Certainly the language may present a little difficulty in the remote parts, but I think this gives an additional spice to the holiday.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

THE Forty-ninth Annual General Meeting of the Club was held on November 24, 1937, Dr D. P. Levack, President, in the Chair.

The accounts for the year to October 31 were read and approved.

Office-bearers were elected as follows:—

Hon. President—Professor J. Norman Collie.

President—Dr D. P. Levack.

Vice-Presidents—Messrs E. B. Reid and H. D. Welsh.

Hon. Editor—Mr William A. Ewen.

Hon. Librarian and Custodian of Lantern Slides—Mr James A. Parker.

Hon. Secretary and Treasurer—Mr William Garden, advocate,
18 Golden Square, Aberdeen.

THE ANNUAL DINNER.

THE Forty-ninth Annual Dinner of the Club was held in the Caledonian Hotel, Aberdeen, at 7 P.M., on Saturday, November 27, 1937. Sixty-six members and guests attended the Dinner, including Lord Provost Watt and Mrs Watt, and the Rev. Professor Fulton from Glasgow. The guest of the evening was Professor T. E. Phemister, of the Department of Geology, Aberdeen University. Dr D. P. Levack, President, was in the Chair.

In proposing the toast of the Cairngorm Club the President made references to the many activities in which the Club had engaged throughout the past year. He said that there was every indication of an extremely enthusiastic turnout on the part of the members to the many Meets and excursions which had been arranged. In particular, the snow-climbing excursions appeared to be as popular as ever, and the new week-end Meet of the Club at the May Holiday in Braemar had obviously met with hearty approval and was very well attended. The membership of the Club had dropped a very little in the past year, and the Chairman urged that all members should, if possible, try to bring along fresh blood so that the Club would continue to flourish.

In connection with the proposed Cairngorm Hut, towards which an anonymous donor had given such a generous assurance of support last year, the President indicated that the matter had had the serious

consideration of the members of Committee. It had been obvious that such a venture could not be tackled without very great consideration and that, while all were agreed that the provision of such a hut would be a great boon to the members, certain points had arisen which made it inadvisable for any definite steps to be taken at the present time. The matter had been fully discussed at the Annual General Meeting, and it was decided not to proceed until such time as the Scottish Youth Hostel Association had made progress with their hostel in the Braemar district.

The President also made references to the difficulties which occasionally arose in connection with Club excursions, and once more expressed his views on the disadvantages of "mass mountaineering."

The toast of the Cairngorm Club was responded to in a most hearty manner and was followed by the Club Song, which was sung by Mr B. J. Grant, everyone joining in most heartily. Before the party adjourned after dinner Mr Grant sang several songs in his usual delightful way and was accompanied by Miss Merchant.

The toast of the guests was proposed by the Vice-President, Mr Hugh D. Welsh, who, in a humorous speech, indicated that the invitation to dine with the Club had a purpose behind it, apart from mere hospitality and good fellowship. It was obvious, of course, that the idea was to prevail upon the guests to become members of the Club as quickly as possible. The Rev. Professor Fulton in a very humorous reply, amongst other things, indicated that, while he himself never undertook expeditions into the hills, he had for many years been surrounded by them and had looked up to them from the golf course at Braemar. He thanked the members of the Cairngorm Club for the exceedingly warm welcome and great hospitality which had been shown to the guests.

After dinner the members and their guests listened with great pleasure to Professor Phemister, who delivered a short address on the Western Cordillera of Canada. His lecture was on the geological formation of this great expanse of mountainous country and, although partly technical in certain details, Professor Phemister described in a most delightful way the vast changes in the earth's surfaces which had finally led to the formation of these mountains. His lecture was illustrated by lantern slides of the most magnificent scenery encountered in the Cordillera. Many of the photographs were taken from the air, and there were a number of diagrams illustrating the geological changes which had taken place. The President proposed a vote of thanks to Professor Phemister. The way in which the members responded indicated that they had thoroughly appreciated Professor Phemister's Address.

SUMMER EXCURSIONS, 1937.

MIDNIGHT EXCURSION TO SHELTER STONE—
JUNE 19 TO 20, 1937.

THE midnight excursion was made the occasion of celebrations to commemorate the initial founding of the Club which had taken place actually on the same night at the Shelter Stone fifty years ago.

Thirty-three members approached Loch Avon from the north and four from the south, and a party of thirty-seven spent about three to four hours at and about the Shelter Stone in the middle of the night. The party from the north travelled by the Speyside excursion train to Nethy Bridge. Parker had come to the station to see the party on its way, but was persuaded to get aboard without much difficulty. His intention was to travel as far as Craigellachie, but before arriving there he decided to come all the way to Nethy Bridge and to walk as far as the Forest Lodge before returning to Aberdeen at night. As usual he proved a most entertaining companion on the railway journey. The Hotel at Nethy Bridge was warned by a telephone message from Dufttown of the arrival of a hungry crowd, and a most excellent meal was provided almost immediately after the party arrived. Shortly after 5 o'clock the journey towards the hills began, and a private car was hired and made one or two relay journeys with members and their rucksacks to Forest Lodge. About half a dozen members, however, walked from Nethy Bridge. From Forest Lodge the route lay southwards up Strathnethy by the well-marked track to Ryvoan and then by the trackless valley of the Garbh Allt between Bynack More and Cairngorm. This part of the journey proved possibly the most tiring and arduous part of the day for most members, for the upper limits of the burn on the north side of the Saddle present an air of desolation and a conglomeration of shattered rocks, which becomes truly monotonous towards the summit. Two small parties had broken off from the main body before this, one group of four going straight over Cairngorm, which was shrouded in thick mist, while another group of four ascended Bynack More. Two of these returned to the main party, while two others continued over Cairngorm. By midnight most of the party had arrived at the Shelter Stone. The weather had been uniformly dull and cloudy, with occasional rain but very little wind, since the start from Nethy Bridge. The mist was well down below the 2,000-foot level, and a somewhat forbidding aspect of Loch Avon was accentuated by the gloom of the falling night. The Cairngorm party were very late in arriving, and it was not until 2 o'clock in the morning that the last two members appeared on the north side of the loch, their lantern showing fitfully in the darkness. The four members who had come from the south were already at the Shelter Stone when the main party arrived. In honour of the great occasion of the Jubilee of the Club's inception,

fireworks had been purchased by Mr Parker and one or two other members before leaving Nethy Bridge, and for the best part of an hour the silence of the hills was shattered by the explosion of crackers and the hiss of rockets. It was quite extraordinary to see how the brilliance of the rockets was swallowed up in the gloom of the great rocky hollow where the party lay. After some considerable manœuvring various groups settled down about the Shelter Stone for the night. Ultimately twelve members passed a somewhat uncomfortable two to three hours under the Stone itself, the quarters being found in the rather disgustingly untidy and dirty state, which unfortunately is the condition prevailing there now. About 2 A.M. four members left via Ben Macdhui, and an hour later seven other members followed them. Between 3 and 4 A.M. the rest of the party had left the neighbourhood of the Shelter Stone, and climbing up the steep path to the south, gained the plateau and the shore of Loch Etchachan. By this time light had returned and the wind had fallen. Not a sound could be heard except the occasional call of a bird, and nothing could be seen of the loch except a few yards of glassy water as the party gained the outlet at the top of Coire Etchachan. The mist lay like a white blanket over everything. Just before beginning the descent of Coire Etchachan the mist began to lift a little and a faint glimpse of the steep western shore of the loch was seen by the last members as they began the descent. From here to Derry Lodge the well-known track was followed and the morning improved as the party neared the end of the journey. In Glen Derry the day felt milder, and one group of seven members spent fully half an hour resting beside the remains of the bridge over Derry Burn, about three-quarters of a mile from the Lodge. The last part of the journey proved distinctly tiring to many, the hard road from Derry to the Linn making itself felt to weary feet. Transport was waiting at the Linn of Dee and the whole party, except seven members who had gone over Ben Macdhui, had arrived at 8.30. At 8.50 the charabanc left for Braemar and a car was ordered and sent out for the seven people yet to come in.

It was good to reach the amenities of civilisation again and the comforts of hot water at the Invercauld Hotel, and an excellent breakfast restored everyone after the long night march. Everyone agreed that, in spite of the rather unfavourable weather, the expedition had proved a great success and marked an important event in the history of the Club.

D. P. L.

BEN AVON—JULY 4, 1937.

A COMPANY of twenty-eight journeyed to Delnadamph, near Cockbridge, on a day of fine drizzle and heavy mist on the tops. But notwithstanding the conditions, an interesting day was spent on the eastern slopes of Ben Avon. The ascent was made by Càrn Fiaclach, which comes down

into the angle formed by the Avon and Builg waters. Heavy mist was entered at a low level, but good progress was made, thanks to Malcolm, who acted as leader. Many of the astonishing rock outcrops, which are such a feature of this side of Ben Avon, were examined and climbed, one in particular, Clach Bhan, with its enormous pot holes, coming in for special attention. Here there joined the party Mitchell and Mackay from Stonehaven, who had taken another route. As far as could be judged in the thick weather, the highest point reached was at 3,354 feet, the summit of a rocky ridge on the east of Lochan nan Gabhar on the north side of the hill. The descent was made by this ridge into Caol Ghleann, which flows into the Avon about 2 miles above the Linn of Avon. A good path was found above the river, and rapid progress was made to Inchroary, over the watershed, and on to Delnadamp. —H. D. W.

THE NEW YEAR MEET.

THE New Year Meet was held in Braemar from Friday, December 31, 1937, to Tuesday, January 4, 1938. During that time twenty-nine members and guests gathered at the Invercauld Arms Hotel, and a most successful and enjoyable series of climbs and expeditions was undertaken.

A most interesting note of an expedition a day or two before the Meet was sent to the President by Mr Ian Rose. With a friend he left Aberdeen at the very early hour of 5.50 A.M. and reached the Danzig Bridge at 7.50 A.M., finding the roads very ice-bound. From the Bridge they took the usual path through the forest and arrived at the foot of the Stuic Buttress at 10.50 A.M. The going was soft and tiring, but they resolved to tackle the climb and found it moderately easy, arriving at the top of the buttress at 11.55 A.M. in a biting wind and thick mist. Following a previously planned course of compass directions and timed marches, and helped by one glimpse of the main top, they eventually struck the cliffs of the main corrie of Lochnagar and recognised the right-hand division of the left-hand branch of the Black Spout and, finally, the Spout itself. Very little snow lay on the cliff margin and plateau, and the summit was reached at 12.55 P.M. The descent was made by the usual route directly down the west ridge and so back to the Danzig Bridge at 3.30 P.M. It appears that they found navigation very difficult but spent a very enjoyable, if somewhat strenuous, day on the rather storm-swept mountain.

On December 31 the members and guests attacked Lochnagar again from the Ballochbuie Forest. The large party, which left the hotel in several cars, divided into three smaller groups. Of these groups, the largest made a more or less direct ascent of the western slope of the mountain from the corrie of the Sandy Loch. A second party climbed the nearer summit of Meall an Tionall (2,903 feet) and then walked along

the high ground directly eastwards on to the north top. The third party, hotly pursued by a solitary member who had not been wakened at the proper time, and who was seen fastening his collar when the transport left the hotel, made a direct attack on the Stuic Buttress and had a most enjoyable climb under fairly easy conditions, coming round the corrie to join the rest of the members at the top.

The whole party descended by the Blacksheil Burn, certain members making a detour towards the north and eventually reaching the Prince's Stone at the head of the Feith an Laoigh. All eventually regained the cars and so returned to the hotel after a most enjoyable day.

The weather was kind and the temperature not too low, but a general haziness and low cloud made the views rather remote.

The usual most enjoyable evening was spent at Invercauld. In the course of the evening the members learned with great pleasure of the honour done by His Majesty to Mr Henry Alexander, one of the most prominent members of the Club. The President sent a telegram of congratulations to Sir Henry Alexander from all those present, and received the reply, "I deeply appreciate your kind message and send my best wishes to my fellow-members for the Meet and for the New Year.—Henry Alexander." A telegram was received from Mr E. Birnie Reid, Vice-President, wishing all good climbing and happy days.

During the evening some exceedingly vigorous dancing was indulged in under the enthusiastic leadership of Mr Hugh Welsh, and at midnight all gathered in the drawing-room, where Mrs Gregor and her daughters once more wished every one a Happy New Year. The toast was responded to in no uncertain manner, and the President called on every one to join in drinking the very good health of their friends in the Invercauld Arms. It is not recorded exactly how long the festivities were kept going, but it is believed that there were some very late sittings!

On New Year's Day the party divided into several small groups. In all, some twenty-two members and guests set out on various expeditions. Four tackled Ben Macdhui and Derry Cairngorm and four made a straight ascent of Cairn a' Mhaim. Seven made an ascent of Beinn a' Bhuid, in two groups of three and four, the former making the south top only, while the latter did a survey of the top of the corrie, one member making a solitary climb in one of the gullies. The weather was fine, with a very low temperature and a tendency to mist condensation on most of the summits.

Four other members spent a pleasant few hours on the Cow Hill in Braemar. Two members went to the Linn of Dee and three went to Derry Lodge.

On Monday, January 3, most of the members and their friends left Braemar, but the following expeditions were undertaken:—

Misses Duncan and Pittendrigh motored to Derry Lodge and had a short day on Càrn Crom.

Bothwell, Smith, Mitchell, and Hutcheon, with Mrs Hendry, picking up Griffith in Inverey, motored to Derry Lodge, and, starting

from behind the lodge, traversed Meall an Lundain, Beinn Bhreac, Craig Derry to Beinn a' Chaorruinn. They descended to Glen Derry, opposite Coire Etchachan, and came down to the lodge.

Misses Hay, Davidson, Murray, Wood, and Brown, with Shand and Welsh, had a short day on Morrone. The weather was ideal, though at times mist came down; visibility in some directions was excellent, especially south and west.

Miss Brown, Mitchell, and Welsh stayed overnight, all the rest returning to Aberdeen during the afternoon or evening of Monday.

LOCHNAGAR—FEBRUARY 20, 1938.

THE first snow-climbing excursion to Lochnagar took place on Sunday, February 20, when a company of twenty-eight members and guests enjoyed what was perhaps one of the most successful and memorable expeditions to this familiar mountain. Leaving Golden Square at 7.30 on a bright morning, the company arrived in due course at Spital of Muick. The higher hills were cloud-obscured, but there was ample evidence that they were heavily snow covered. The usual route by Allt-na-giubhsaich was followed, and soon there was entered upon a region completely encased in thin transparent ice which gave the landscape a peculiar grey appearance. Every rock and boulder was enclosed in a glass-like covering through which every detail was clear; gravel stretches were paved with it; vegetation was sheathed with clear crystal and the trickles of water were indicated by the breaking runs of air bubbles under the ice. The passage of the party was punctuated with the crisp crackling of the ice-sheet underfoot. A chill mist came down just below the Fox's Well, where a halt was made. Above the Well snow was lying to a considerable depth and had a hard, crisp, icy covering that made progress a matter of great ease. Most of the party descended into the corrie with the intention of attempting climbs in the gullies. Mist was very dense, and all the indication of the presence of the descending party of twenty-one was the crackling of the ice and the sound of voices. The remainder of the party made the ascent of the boulder slope of Cuidhe Crom and were rewarded with one of the most wonderful sights to be experienced on the high hills. In the first place, the icy covering on the snow had taken the form of what looked like large feathers and birds' wings—for all the world as if the whole hill had been covered with white feathers of all sizes and frozen hard. It was a beautiful sight. The mist began to thin and bright lances of sunlight pierced downwards. Then came the most beautiful spectacle and one which rendered speechless those who had the good fortune to behold it. Gradually the mist sank into the corrie, curdling into a pearly grey cloud that lay stretched like a floor from rim to rim of horizon. Slowly and silently through it rose the ice-covered cliffs brilliantly sunlit,

glittering, majestic; above was a cloudless, intense blue sky; the breeze died and there was an impressive and oppressive silent calmness. The walk round the edge of the corrie was one that will be long remembered.

All the summit plateau was a mass of frozen feathers, the precipices were encased in like manner; as far as the eye could reach, in all directions stretched a sea of grey cloud, tinged with rose and lavender, and apart from Lochnagar itself, all that could be seen of the rest of Scotland was the upper half of the Cairngorm group, glittering white against the blue sky. The Spectre of the Brocken, surrounded by a rainbow ring, kept pace with the party almost all the way to the summit.

Of the company in the corrie, two roped parties made an interesting ascent of the Black Spout, experiencing ideal conditions. Another rope of four did the Left-hand Branch, Hutcheon doing this route alone with the aid of crampons. Four and a half hours were spent by another group of five, led by Dyer, in getting up the Central Buttress gully. The climb required care as the rocks were glazed, but was successfully accomplished.

The descent was made via the Dubh Loch and Spital reached about 7 P.M. The half-dozen or so who were making their first winter ascent were very fortunate indeed to be on the hill under such conditions.—H. D. W.

LOCHNAGAR—March 13, 1938.

THE second excursion to Lochnagar, which took place on March 13, was intended as a snow-climbing one, but exceptionally dry and warm weather had cleared off most of the snow and all that remained lay in the sheltered gullies and in isolated fields, being for the most part damp and heavy.

Twenty-four of a company, members and guests, left Aberdeen at 7.30 on a dull, close morning, and arrived, after an uneventful run, at Spital of Muick. A dark haze obscured the near and distant hills, and the atmosphere was oppressively mild. The usual track by Allt-nagiubhsaich was followed and, in due course, the Fox's Well was the scene of the lunch halt. Malcolm had broken off at the col below the Well and ascended the three tops of Conachcraig and crossed to the Meikle Pap. Welsh took a party of nine, climbed Meikle Pap, descended to the loch in the main corrie, and made the summit by way of the West Buttress. Large quantities of crowberries were found and enjoyed, but, owing to the dark haze, the fine views of the precipices were obscured. Smith and other four circled round the north side of Meikle Pap and ascended by the West Buttress, finding, like the others on that route, the temperature more like that of summer than one might expect to encounter in March. The rest of the company climbed the Central

Buttress gully on firm, dampish snow without difficulty or incident. Little or no extensive view was obtained from the summit.

Bothwell and Lawson descended by the Central Buttress; Smith's company crossed to the Eagle's Rock above the Dubh Loch, descended to Loch Muick and down to Spital by the east side of the loch. The main party descended by the Glas-allt and so on to Allt-na-giubhsaich.—H. D. W.

LOCHNAGAR—MARCH 27, 1938.

GOOD weather again favoured the company of thirty-two attending the third snow-climbing expedition to Lochnagar. A little fresh snow had fallen a day or two previously, but on the whole there was comparatively little lying for the time of the year. Spital of Muick was the jumping-off place, and here the party divided. Smith, Mitchell, Dyer and wife, and Lyra Murray kept to the east side of Loch Muick and made the round of Broad Cairn, Cairn Bannoch, and Càrn an t-Sagairt, returning by the Dubh Loch. The others went by Allt-na-giubhsaich. Train ascended the Black Spout; Lorimer and Bothwell led parties up the old hard snow of the Left-hand Branch and Welsh took a group by Cuidhe Crom and the precipice edge. A cold wind at the summit curtailed the halt there. Malcolm and two guests descended by the Black Spout; Lorimer and Bothwell's party went by way of the path to Glen Callater and caught the last Braemar-Ballater bus with a few minutes to spare. Welsh's company crossed to the Dubh Loch and continued along the east side of Loch Muick to the conveyance at Spital of Muick.—H. D. W.

THE EASTER MEET, NEWTONMORE, 1938.

PROMPTED either by a desire for a peaceful week-end, such as the report of last year's Easter Meet promised, or to provide records of ramblings more substantial than those of Robert found therein, the following members gathered at the Balavil Arms, Newtonmore, on the evening of Thursday, April 14: the President, Misses Bothwell, Duncan, Pittendrigh, and Taylor (guest), and Messrs Bothwell, Lawson, Low, Mitchell, and Whitehouse. They were joined next evening by Dr Sellar, while Rose was a very late arrival. Whitehouse capped an over-night journey from the south by bagging two of the Monadhliath tops before the others arrived.

At rather too late an hour on Good Friday morning, lunches having been carefully ordered, re-ordered, and finally acquired, the party set out for Creag Meaghaidh. These lunches, it may be noted, had all the ability, peculiar to hotel supplies, of transmutation from marmalade to



Easter 1938

THE LANCET EDGE OF GEAL CHÀRN

R. L. Mitchell

lemon curd, apple to orange *en route*. After traversing some 7 miles of exceedingly bad road between Drumgask and Loch Laggan Hotel, the cars were left at the sheep farm of Aberarder, and the well-made track up the Allt Coire Ardair was followed to the lochan. Here a decision as to the routes to be taken to the summit was reached. Bothwell, Lawson, Levack, and Mitchell decided to tackle a snow-filled gully just north of the Pinnacle Buttress, while the others chose to ascend the screes and slopes south of this buttress. The whole corrie was already almost clear of snow, although what remained in the gullies was in good condition. The gully party reached the summit some two hours after the others, having had to turn a steep snow pitch about 20 feet high and presumably formed by the collapse of a snow bridge. The obstacle was overcome by backing up between the snow and the rock face, an unpleasant method, as the chimney was occupied by a miniature waterfall from the crags above. The ladies of the party went up some steep rocks in the south end of the corrie and came up on to Creag Mhòr; Low and Whitehouse made a more direct route to Creag Mhòr, but Whitehouse went off on his own and climbed a fairly steep snow gully because, he said, he wanted to use his new ice-axe!

The Pinnacle and the Puist Coire Ardair were included on the way to the summit, whilst the return journey was made by the Window, Poite Coire Ardair, and along the ridge as far as Càrn Liath, and thence down heathery slopes to the cars. While the weather was perfect for climbing, a slight haze prevailed and no distant views were obtained.

The atmosphere was much clearer for the ascent of Ben Alder, which was made from Ben Alder Lodge by way of the path which passes the end of Loch Pattack and leads into the corrie. The final ascent was by the scramble up the Short Leachas ridge. The panorama from the summit stretched from the Cairngorms in the north-east to the hills of the north-west Highlands, with Beinn a' Ghlo, Schichallion, Ben Lawers, Stobinian and Ben More, and Ben Nevis easily spotted among the masses of peaks. It was one of those infrequent days on which good visibility and good cloud effects combined to produce a perfect view. The return was made by way of Sròn Coire na h' Iolaire, a vantage point overlooking the whole extent of Loch Ericht, and Beinn Bheòil. Attracted by its magnificent aspect, Sellar left the party at Culra Lodge to ascend the Lancet Edge, but found the wind rather too strong on the narrow ridge and climbed Càrn Dearg before returning to the cars.

"When do you wish to be called to-morrow? You see, it is Sunday," did not, with its implied hint, worry the party unduly—a slack day was indicated in any case. Bothwell, Lawson, Mitchell, and Sellar climbed Meall Chuaich from Quoich by way of Loch Cuaich (O.S. spellings!). Low and Whitehouse motored to the summit of the Drumochter Pass and did the round of the Drumochter hills. They climbed the Sow of Athole, then crossed Sgairneach Mhòr to Beinn Udlamain; Geal Chàrn provided a third Munro and A' Mharconach

a fourth, the round concluding with the Boar of Badenoch. Several good paths not shown on the 1-inch maps were noted, while the day was one of extensive views and a cold north wind.

On Easter Monday Low, Sellar, and Whitehouse did a round in the Monadhliath. First climbing A' Chailleach from the Allt a' Chaorunn, they followed the ridge to Càrn Sgùlain and returned along the Geal Chàrn ridge and Creag na h-Iolaire.

The Meet, despite the small attendance, was most successful in all respects, being favoured with excellent weather; in view of the drift to the south, however, Dalwhinnie might have been a more convenient centre.—R. L. M.

BENNACHIE—MAY 21, 1938.

EIGHT members and two guests left Aberdeen at 1.25 P.M., in uncertain weather, for Oyne. The ascent was made from there, passing the croft of Hillfoot on the way to the path up Craigshannoch. From that summit to the Mither Tap the going was through short heather, and the rock outcrop on the summit provided the only climbing. Lunch was taken here in a sheltered spot out of the cold wind. The party had become interested in one member's carefully guarded lunch, the mystery being solved by the production of a substantial portion of plum duff!

Bothwell and guests joined the party at this point, having come up from Pittodrie. The main party returned by the track between the Mither Tap and Millstone Hill. Here Malcolm, Smith, and guest broke off towards Monymusk, the remainder following the road to Burnhervie on the Don. Kemnay was reached about 7 P.M.—W. H.

GLEN CLOVA—MAY 29, 1938.

THE Club excursions for 1938 have been favoured with excellent weather, and the visit paid to Glen Clova was made very pleasant by the climatic conditions. A company of twenty-three left Aberdeen in thick mist, rather apprehensive of what would be encountered on the hills of their choice. However, nearing Laurencekirk, spirits were raised by bright sunshine and the spectacle of mist rolling rapidly off the heights. Heavy rain had fallen, for the Esk was high and brown, as were also the smaller streams. In due course the Ogilvie Arms Hotel was reached, and here Malcolm, Middleton, and Mrs Taggart broke off and made a circuit of Ben Reid, Boustie Ley, Benty Roads, Green Hill, and Ben Tirran, encircling Lochs Brandy and Wharral. The remainder continued to Braedownie and divided into small companies. Lawson and Esslemont had an interesting day with a rope on the rock of The Scorrie in Winter Corrie across the Esk from Braedownie. Bothwell, Mitchell, and Smith continued up Glen Doll to Tom Buidhe, crossed the head stream of the

White Water to Tolmount at the head of Loch Callater, descended to Loch Esk and Bachnagairn, and then down the Esk to Braedownie. Mackay, McDonald, Muriel Cameron, Melvin, Johnston, and McIntosh went by the footpath up Capel Burn over Capel Mount to Lochend at the lower end of Loch Muick and returned by Sandy Hillock and the Esk to Braedownie. Johnston and McIntosh included Broad Cairn and came down Glen Doll. Welsh led Misses Davidson, Norrie, Murray, Thomson, Woollard, and Welch, with McMillan and Sandison by way of the Shank of Drumfollow to Mayar, Driesh, Hill of Strone, and Cairn Inks, and down to the hotel. Two or three rain showers came across, but views were extensive. The Cairngorms carried fresh snow and the higher hills to the west and south-west were heavily coated. Ben Nevis could be made out distinctly. Most striking was the amazing variety of shades of blue on the hills to the south. A substantial tea was partaken of in the Ogilvie Arms and the return journey begun about 8 P.M.—H. D. W.

CLOCHNABEN—JUNE 4, 1938.

THE second afternoon excursion was the first Club outing since the New Year to be marred by bad weather. Showers of fine rain persisted practically all day, and the summit of Clochnaben was enveloped in mist.

Leaving Aberdeen at 1.30 P.M. the party travelled via the South Deeside road to Strachan, where the Feugh was crossed, the bridge at the Inn being down. The bus had difficulty in negotiating the old Brig of Bogendreep, but the party eventually disembarked about 3 miles along the Cairn o' Mount road, at the second water splash. From this point the party, numbering fourteen, ascended Threestane Hill through long heather. The summit was reached by 3.40 and a route set for Mount Shade. The view westward was obscured by mist, but glimpses of Glen Dye and the Feugh valley were obtained. On the way the Devil's Bite was examined before commencing the final climb to the summit, which was reached at 4.45. The weather conditions were conducive neither to a long stay nor to doing any of the climbs on the summit outcrop. The descent was made by the Burn of Greendams and the Water of Aven and along Cuttie's wood to Balblyth. The Feugh was crossed by the temporary foot-bridge at the Inn, reached about 7 P.M.—W. H.

THE INDOOR MEETS.

THESE continue, to judge by the attendances, to be highly popular events.

On January 24 the President and Mr Hugh D. Welsh presented a number of slides in monochrome and in colour (Dufaycolor). Some

excellent slides were shown, many striking effects having been obtained with the Dufaycolor material. The President's selection covered a wide area, while Mr Welsh restricted himself to the Cairngorms and the Cuillin, where he made good use even of the most adverse weather conditions. Mr Parker's discourse on the Club's collection of lantern slides completed an entertaining evening.

On February 24 we had three sub-standard films: "Crossing Mont Blanc," photographed by Captain Finch; "Crossing the Coast Range, B.C.," Sir Norman Watson's ski expedition to Mystery Mountain (Mount Waddington); and Mr H. G. Dason's film, "In the Shadow of the Matterhorn," the record of a winter sports holiday at Zermatt, photographed largely in colour. Apart from the advantage of colour, the region makes a strong appeal to climbers and the film was highly popular. Mr Dason's kindness in showing the film was much appreciated.

The third of this series took the form of a Dance, held in the Caledonian Hotel on March 29. An interested spectator during part of the proceedings was Professor Einstein, a guest in the hotel, who saw and heard, for the first time, the performance of Strip the Willow. The excellent music supplied by G. F. Davie's band added to the success and enjoyment of the function. This was the first official dance in the annals of the Club, and was so successful that it may be the forerunner of an annual event.

Mention may also be made of an unofficial dance arranged by Mr Hugh D. Welsh on December 10, 1937. A circular was sent to members in town and neighbourhood, and fifty-four welcomed this opportunity of meeting in a social way other than during climbs. Whether the whole aim of the organisers was achieved is doubtful, as the company comprised, for the most part, those who regularly attend the Club excursions!

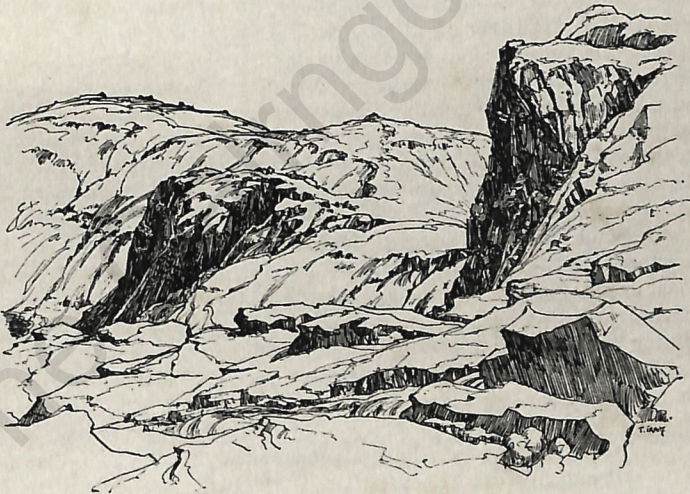
THE AILNACK AND CAIPLICH WATERS.

ON Sunday, September 26, 1937, the writer and E. W. Smith tried the route between Tomintoul and Derry Lodge, described by Mr William Garden in his article, "A New Approach to the Cairngorms" (*Cairngorm Club Journal*, Vol. xiii., July 1929).

Leaving Tomintoul at 9 A.M., in good weather, the true left bank of the Ailnack was followed to the ford below Càrn Ruadh-Bhreac. We crossed the stream here and contoured Càrn na Ruabraich above the gorge to the bend beyond "The Castle." The going here had nothing to recommend it, and is probably no improvement on Garden's route. From the bed a more or less straight course was steered, mainly over tufted grass, heather and bog, towards the Barns of Bynack, just visible on the horizon, the Glasath stream being reached about half a mile

below the point where the Lairig an Laoigh track crosses it. Derry Lodge was reached at 7.15 P.M.

Two halts of about half an hour each were made for meals, otherwise the going was pretty steady. The interest of the route lies mainly in the views of the Ailnack gorges and in the distant views of the Cairngorm summits. The gorges deserve more time than can be given to them on such a walk as this.—W. MALCOLM.



NOTES.

THIS number completes Volume XIV. Title-pages and Index to the volume will be issued with the next number.

To those who have responded to my frequently repeated request for material I tender thanks, not alone for their contributions but also for their patience with the whims and foibles of the Hon. Editor! Mitchell and Train, in producing the illustrations and embellishments, alternatives to these and improvements upon them, have suffered much from my inability to put the tongue of criticism in the cheek of discretion. And yet, withal, our relations continue to be friendly! The pages of notes are largely the efforts of the President and Mr Welsh, who appear to have accepted the principle of the division of labour.

We have suffered of late from a dearth of articles, but an improvement in this respect is noticeable. I received this year two separate accounts of the Easter Meet, to say nothing of several unsolicited articles. Contributions to the next number should be sent to the Hon. Editor, 25 Cairnaquheen Gardens, Aberdeen, *at the earliest moment*, and not later than the 29th April 1939.

Members' subscriptions are due on January 1 of each year; the Secretary's reminder is sent out in December. Nevertheless, a considerable number delay sending in subscriptions until near the end of the financial year in October. As this naturally causes inconvenience in the payment of Club accounts, members will facilitate the work of the Hon. Secretary by remitting subscriptions as soon after January 1 as may be convenient.

The Club membership now stands at 261 as compared with a total membership of 257 at October 31, 1937.

It does not seem to be generally known that the Club Library is in the Secretary's Office, and is always available for reference or borrowing during business hours.

In addition to the Journals, etc., under review, the following additions have been made to the Library:—

“The Technique of Alpine Mountaineering,” S.A.C. (no date).

“Scottish Youths' Hostels Handbook,” 1937.

“The Highlands of Scotland,” Ward, Lock & Co., 8th Edition, 1937.

“My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus,” by A. F. Mummery, New Edition, 1937.

“Wanderings in the High Alps,” by A. Wills, New Edition, 1937.

“List of Altitudes in the Counties of Aberdeen, Banff, and Kincardine,” by Thos. F. Jamieson, 1859.



R. L. Mitchell

“The sundry contemplation of my travels, by often rumination,
wraps me in a most humorous sadness.”

- "The Complete Scotland," Ward, Lock & Co.'s Guide,
2nd Edition, 1937.
"Italian Alps," by D. W. Freshfield, New Edition, 1937.

LANTERN SLIDE COLLECTION.

THE following additions have been made to the collection: 27 slides presented by Mr Hugh D. Welsh.

Mr Welsh has also kindly presented four grooved boxes for holding the slides.

THE SILVA COMPASS.

THE Silva Compass, which is made in Sweden, should be of great use to climbers for route-finding in thick weather. The needle is enclosed in a circular box, which is inserted in a rectangular piece of celluloid or other transparent material, and can be rotated with reference thereto. On the underside of the box there is a circle of degrees reading from 0 to 360, which enables one to use the instrument as a protractor if desired. The method of using the instrument is extremely simple and is as follows:—

Orient your map carefully, with the meridian lines pointing true north and south. Place the instrument on it, with the centre direction line, or one of the longer edges, of the celluloid base parallel to the line of the route to be followed and pointing in the proper direction. Hold the base firmly in the above position and rotate the compass box until the pointer on its window is exactly above the north end of the compass needle. The instrument is then ready for use, as it will always point out the proper direction when held with the pointer on the window directly above the north end of the needle.

Luminous points are provided for use at night. The instrument is sold in two forms, liquid-filled and not so filled. The liquid-filled is the one to get, as in the other the needle is too lively and would cause loss of time waiting for the needle to settle. It is marketed by Messrs T. Black & Sons of Greenock, but may be obtained locally.—J. A. P.

REVIEWS.

The Alpine Journal, Vol. XLIX., Nos. 254 and 255.

With the completion of this volume, the Editorship passes from Col. Strutt to Mr H. E. G. Tyndale, M.B.E., and a tribute to Col. Strutt is justly due for his excellent services since he became Editor in 1927.

The ascent of Nanda Devi by Messrs H. W. Tilman and N. E. Odell will surely ever be looked upon as a marvellous exhibition of mountaineering skill. That mountain is the highest in Garhwal, and indeed in British territory. It is interesting to note that, in this British-American expedition, Mr Tilman concludes his article by stating that "As nations, the Americans and ourselves do not always see eye to eye, but when it comes to doing a job of work together, as, for example, in the late war, or in more serious affairs like climbing a mountain, we seem to pull together very well. We worked united in the will to put any two of our members on the top—the team accordingly deserves the credit."

The German Sikkim Expedition of 1936, conducted by Paul Bauer, which culminated in the ascent of the magnificent peak of Siniolchum by Messrs Göttner and Wien, must thrill and inspire every mountaineer.

In the Western Hemisphere an interesting and graphic account is given of the first ascent of Mount Waddington, by Fritz Wiessner, who says that, as regards the route taken by his party, it is difficult throughout, and extremely so in the upper parts, but it can be climbed safely when all precautions are applied by a competent two-men rope.

Chomolhari (23,997 feet), one of the holiest mountains in the Buddhist world, has fallen to the attack of Mr F. Spencer Chapman, along with his native porter, Passang, who had been with Bauer in 1929.

Mr R. L. G. Irving's "Relativity in Mountaineering" is the first paper read in the new Rooms of the Club, and it is a cleverly expressed opinion of mountain climbing, from a graded scale of difficulty point of view.

Both numbers of the *Journal* are profusely illustrated with photographs of the usual high order.—W. G.

The Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal, Vol. XXI., No. 124 (November 1937) and No. 125 (April 1938).

"Defeat," the tale of a December night on the Crowberry Ridge, is a most entertaining account of an unsuccessful attempt on Garrick's Shelf route under winter conditions—a climb successfully completed the following March—and deservedly occupies first place in the November number. Incidentally, the party concerned appear to specialise in working in the dark, as we find them, in the next issue, spending "Fourteen Hours on the Observatory Ridge" during February.

The fourth and fifth articles in the series on Scottish Mountaineering and its Relation to Mountaineering Abroad concern "Rock Climbing," by E. A. M. Wedderburn, and "Scenery and Photography," by H. Gardner. The former is a very practical description of the similarities and differences one must expect to find when attempting rock climbing in the Alps or elsewhere on the Continent. That on Scenery and Photography, while of rather less practical value, is accompanied by a magnificent set of photographs contrasting Alpine and Scottish scenery. Those showing a Swiss Alp and a Scottish sea loch deserve special mention. It is perhaps a pity that, at a time when many more cameras are being taken into the hills and interest in the science is increasing rapidly, the opportunity was not taken here to give the technical data for the prints reproduced—camera, stop, exposure, filter, and sensitive material employed, with some indication of weather conditions and time of day. Such information teaches much more than pages of descriptive matter.

Not only Mr Gardner's photographs but also most of the others are of a very high standard and excellently reproduced. Carn Dearg, in the November number, is a particularly good example of a well-rendered snow study.

A Guide Book article on the "Galloway Hills," by John Dow, and "Under the Western Horizon," by E. W. Hodge, an account of a trip to the islands on the west coast, provide accounts of parts of the country which are less frequently visited for climbing purposes. R. M. Gall Inglis brings his series on old numbers of the *Journal* up to date, completing an interesting review of the first twenty volumes. While such series as this and that on Mountaineering Abroad are most welcome, it seems a mistake to break into parts articles such as "Recent Rock Climbs in Coire Ardair," more especially when it is found impossible to complete it in the following number.

"The Friendly Road" reminiscences, by T. Ratcliffe Barnett, and the usual features on New Climbs, Reviews, and the Proceedings of the Club, complete two numbers which can be read with profit and enjoyment by all who have an interest in the hills.—R. L. M.

The Yorkshire Ramblers' Club Journal, Vol. VII., No. 23, 1938.

This is an informative and interesting *Journal*. It deals in great part with the sport of pot-holing, which, for the benefit of the uninitiated, means the exploration of subterranean caves. Such caves abound in Yorkshire, Derbyshire, and in parts of Wales and Ireland. Roughly, half the *Journal* is devoted to detailed descriptions of excursions to these places. Anyone who wishes to learn more about pot-holing will find in this *Journal* a mine of information about routes, climbs, methods, and equipment. In the present reviewer's opinion, pot-holing does not seem to lend itself so well to description in the *Journal* as the more orthodox forms of climbing. "I to the hills will lift mine eyes," cried

the Psalmist, and I, too, am of the opinion that more inspiration is to be found in the high places.

But the *Journal* is not concerned only with pot-holing. There are two very good descriptions of yachting expeditions up the West Coast of Scotland, and "An artless story of a day spent in climbing the Aiguille du Géant," which is written with that rare art which conceals itself. These, along with an interesting article on the Susten Pass buttress my opinion that scaling the heights is more conducive to good writing than plumbing the depths.—J. S. C.

The Rucksack Club Journal, Vol. IX., No. 1, 1938.

Of the many ways of presenting the charms of a mountain district, it may be difficult to single out a best. It is not so hard, I think, to find a worst. The bald, topographical thesis finds no place in these pages. The narrative is lively with incident and comment, and a model to budding essayists who would steer a clear course between the Scylla of technicalities on the one hand and the Charybdis of trivialities on the other. One may miss that master of the polished phrase, the late J. H. Doughty, but his humanising influence does, and will, persist.

This number is remarkable for its wide variety, touching the Caucasus, Lofoten, the Alps and Dolomites, Corsica, Scotland, and the underworld of England. We granite dwellers appear to have no burning desire to share in the Stygian activities of the pot-holers, but *Th' Ole* is a vastly entertaining piece of work and persuades one that pot-holing has all the thrills of exploration above ground, plus a number of added difficulties and dangers and an entirely different and more elaborate equipment.

E. W. Hodge, speaking of Inverey in winter, says, in *Winter Diaries*, that no one would take him in except upon his promising not to go on the hills. Is this attitude of the people the result of recent misadventures in the Cairngorms? Or is it possible that Mr Hodge fell in with Maggie Gruer in one of her mock-serious moods? The author's interest ranges wide and his observation is acute.

G. Alan Deane's party in Lofoten had the unusual experience of spending sixteen days there with only an hour or two of rain. Only on three days did mist touch the peaks at any time. From the descriptions and photographs the Lofoten peaks appear to offer something like the Cuillin on a bigger and yet steeper scale and, normally, an even heavier rainfall!

The articles reach a high level of interest and the illustrations are in keeping.—W. A. E.

In addition to the above, we have to acknowledge with thanks receipt of the following:—

The Scottish Ski Club Journal, 1937.

The Scottish Geographical Magazine, Vol. 53, Nos. 4-6;
Vol. 54, Nos. 1-3.

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