

# The Cairngorm Club Journal



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VOL. XV.

1942-43.

No. 83.

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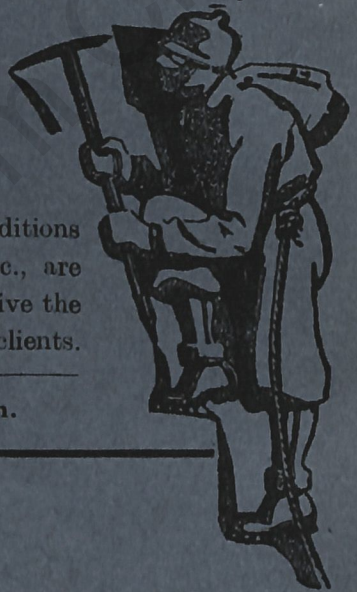
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EDITED BY

WILLIAM A. EWEN.

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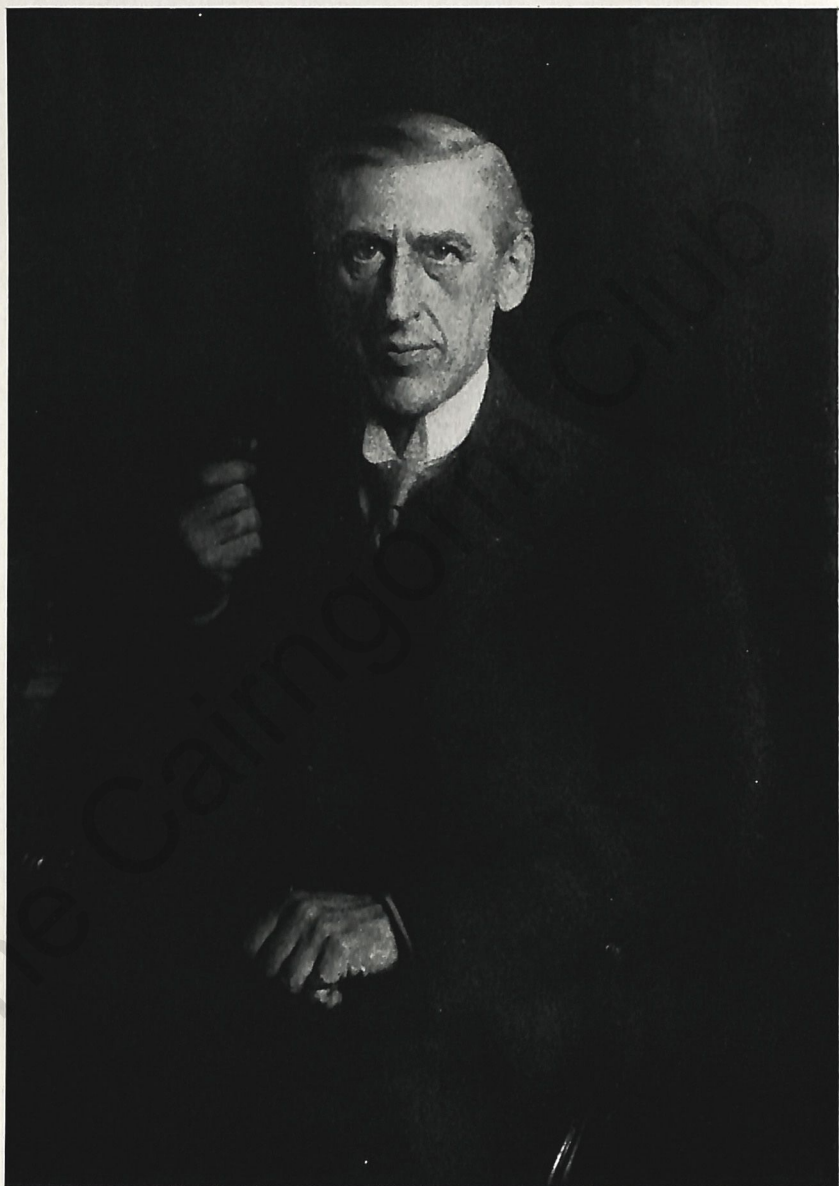
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J. NORMAN COLLIE

*Portrait by Nowell*

## JOHN NORMAN COLLIE.

HUGH D. WELSH.

By the death of John Norman Collie, LL.D., F.R.S., on November 1, 1942, mountaineering lost one of its most outstanding figures and the Club its Honorary President. To the great majority of members he was little more than a name, and there are very few of them who had actually come in contact with him.

Born at Alderley Edge, Manchester, on September 10, 1859, and receiving his education at Charterhouse and Clifton College, he always considered himself a Scot, for his father, John Collie, was the son of a George Collie who was tenant of the farm of Wantonwells, near Insch in Aberdeenshire. In his early years the family came to live for a time at Glassel on Deeside, before taking up permanent residence near Bristol.

From 1877 he studied chemistry under Professor Letts at Bristol, and later on in Wurzburg in Germany, obtaining the Ph.D. in 1884. As a chemist and teacher he made rapid advances and was the holder of several distinguished appointments. In 1885 he was lecturer in Chemistry at the Ladies' College, Cheltenham, and two years later acted as assistant to Sir William Ramsay at University College, London. While there he showed outstanding ability as a teacher, and in 1896 was appointed to the Chair of Chemistry at the Pharmaceutical College, London. In 1902 he returned to University College as Professor of Organic Chemistry under Sir William Ramsay, and when his chief retired in 1913 he became Director of the Chemical Laboratories until his retirement in 1928. It is to Collie, with his inspiration, enthusiasm, and versatility, his success as a teacher and researcher in organic chemistry, that University College owes its eminence, and there are many scientists of high distinction whose early steps to success were influenced by



the inspiration received from him. The Universities of Glasgow and St Andrews honoured him with the degree of LL.D., and Belfast and Liverpool Universities conferred the degree of D.Sc. upon him. In 1896 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

But in a Club such as ours it is not as a chemist we think of him, but as a mountaineer and explorer, and a sincere lover of the hills. At the age of eight, in 1867, he climbed his first mountain, the Hill of Fare. Even at this early age he was greatly affected by the beauty of his surroundings, and the details of that memorable day were vivid to him all his life. As a youth and young man he did little or no climbing, but spent his vacations fishing in the Western Highlands. In the early eighties he got his first glimpse of the Cuillin in Skye from Wester Ross and learned there was good fishing in some of the rivers there. With a brother he crossed to Skye in 1886, but lack of water made fishing unprofitable, so they spent a good deal of their time bathing in the sea lochs. As a result of being badly stung by jelly-fish in Loch Sligachan he gave up sea-bathing, and, as he said, "took to bad habits"; he began to climb! The Cuillin, with its mystical brooding charm, greatly attracted him and captured his heart. From that time he felt he had to give of his best in revealing the hidden secrets of the recesses of that then comparatively little known paradise of climbers. During his first visit he made two unsuccessful attempts to scale Sgùrr nan Gillean, but a third, suggested by John Mackenzie, the guide, by what is now known as the Tourist Route, gave him great delight. Skye now had him in thrall, and by 1888 he had ascended all the peaks, and in subsequent years opened up new routes on what had been hitherto considered inaccessible faces. The first route up the terrifying Bhasteir Tooth was discovered by him in 1889. Another, considered even yet as one of difficulty, is the climb to A' Chioch on Sròn na Ciche which he discovered accidentally in 1906. He was coming down Coire Lagan after a day on Sgùrr Sgumain and saw a peculiar shadow cast on the face of Sròn na Ciche. Investigation led to the discovery of the remarkable A' Chioch pinnacle, and Collie,

with John Mackenzie, worked out the first ascent and descent. His climbs on the fascinating faces and pinnacles of the Cuillin make a long list and would take up too much space to enumerate, but descriptive details are to be found in articles in the *Journals* of the Scottish Mountaineering Club and the Alpine Club. In recognition of his achievements as a climber and pioneer in Skye, one of the peaks, Sgùrr Thormaid (Norman's Peak), was named after him.

Ben Nevis attracted him, and he spent some seasons there with Solly, Haskett-Smith, Slingsby, and others. The West Highlands and the Cairngorms saw comparatively little of him, and a curious thing is that he had never been at Loch Avon or the Shelter Stone.

In 1891 he joined the Scottish Mountaineering Club, served on the Committee from 1898 to 1900, and was elected an Honorary Member in 1938. The Alpine Club added him to its membership in 1893, and in 1896 he acted on the Committee. In 1910 he became Vice-President, and President in 1920. In 1923 he succeeded Sir Francis Younghusband as Chairman of the Mount Everest Committee. In recognition of his exploratory and climbing achievements he was elected Vice-President of the Royal Geographical Society (1924-28). In 1922 our Club elected him Honorary President in succession to Viscount Bryce, and during his twenty years' association with us he was always keenly interested in its activities.

For several years from 1893 Collie visited the Alps with Mummery, Slingsby, Hastings, and Bruce, making numerous climbs of extreme severity under difficult conditions. Here, although the climbs rank high in the scale of difficulty, Collie on several occasions asserted their inferiority to climbs in Skye and Ben Nevis. In 1895 he went to India with Mummery, Hastings, and Bruce and made several attempts on Nanga Parbat (26,628 feet), but conditions were against them and the highest point reached was about 21,000 feet. Mummery, with two Gurkhas, failed to return from a last attempt, and the loss of this close friend affected Collie deeply, and it was with great difficulty that one could get him to speak about it.

Between 1897 and 1910 he climbed and explored extensively in the Canadian Rockies with Dixon, Stutfield, and Woolley. Mounts Lefroy, Victoria, Gordon, and Freshfield fell to him in 1897, and the following year he went in search of Mounts Brown and Hooker, discovered the Columbia Group and the Columbia Icefield of 110 square miles in extent, and made first ascents of Mount Athabasca and Diadem Peak. In 1901 he visited the Lofoten Islands off the north coast of Norway, for he had heard rumours that they were more beautiful than Skye and the Cuillin. Here was climbing after his own heart, and he admitted it was difficult. For two or three seasons he climbed in this mountaineers' paradise. Two of the highest peaks, Higrav Tind and Gjeitgalfar were virgin, but Collie, with Woolley, Hastings, and Priestman, after great efforts, built cairns on their summits.

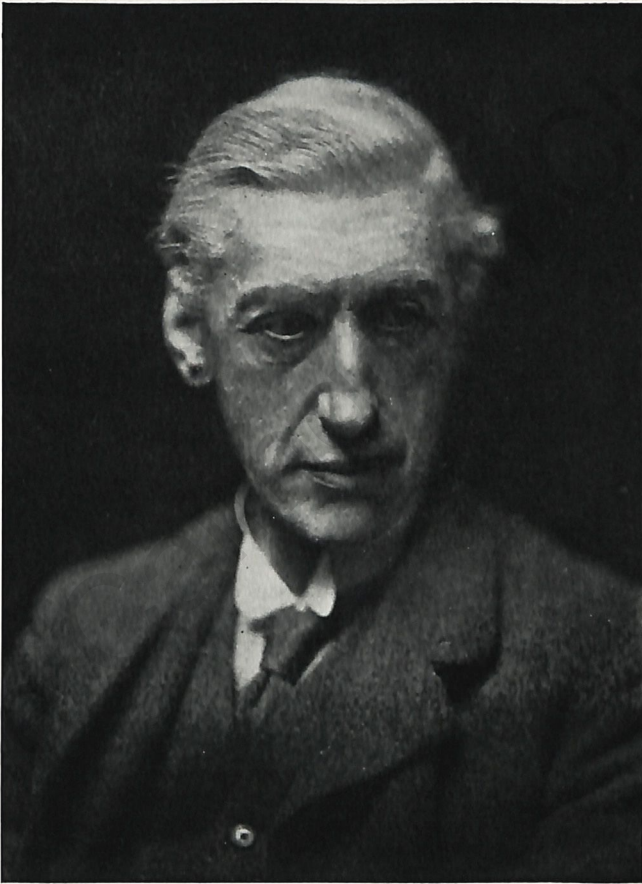
His published articles on climbing bear the hall-mark of appreciation of the subject and the necessity for accuracy and lucidity. The pages of the *Journals* of the Alpine Club, the Scottish Mountaineering Club, and the Cairngorm Club contain numerous contributions from his pen which are a pleasure to read, if only for finished style. He wrote somewhat unwillingly, but when he did write, put his heart into it. I remember him expressing his detestation of articles on climbs where distances and times are set out in detail "like a railway timetable." Beauty of form, line, or colour appealed to him strongly, especially in those places where most people would see nothing but savage desolation. He deplored the seeming inability of the majority of climbers to appreciate the wondrous handiwork of the Creator under their hands and all around them. In our own *Journal* his "Dreams" in 1932 and "Independence" in 1939 are descriptive of his intense love and appreciation of the High Places, and give us an insight to his sincerity where mountains are concerned. His "Climbing in the Himalaya and other Mountain Ranges," published in 1902, is a literary gem, and "Climbs and Exploration in the Canadian Rockies," jointly with H. E. M. Stutfield in 1903, is a valuable contribution to the literature of that region. Inspired by his

close friend and companion, Colin B. Phillip, R.S.W., he achieved some eminence as a painter in water-colours, and by this medium was able to give some expression to his sense of beauty. Most of his pictures were done from memory, and it has been my good fortune to see many of them in the seclusion of his room at Sligachan. One in particular is remarkable for its accuracy of outline, having been done after a lapse of over fifty years—an impression of the Cairngorms from near the watershed of the Tilt and the Geldie. As a photographer he excelled, and he chose his subjects with infinite patience and understanding. His early photographs in colour, on plates of German make, are masterpieces. He was a recognised expert on Chinese porcelain, lacquers, bronzes, and works of art, and possessed a valuable collection which was drawn upon for exhibitions of importance.

Shy and reserved with strangers and difficult of approach, Dr Collie on closer acquaintance became one of the most interesting and delightful of men. There were few subjects on which he could not talk easily and with great knowledge and authority, but perhaps climbing in his beloved hills was his favourite subject. He had a photographic memory, and could describe in minute detail every hand and foot hold of climbs done many years before. He did not talk freely until he came to know and like you; then his conversation was intimate and full of delight. From the time of my first contact with him in 1934 at Sligachan it was my good fortune to be regarded as one of his friends, and I shall always have exceedingly pleasant recollections of my association with him. My first impression of him was that of a solitary, unfriendly man living in a world of memories. But by degrees he unbent and I was admitted to the small circle of his close friends who came to Sligachan. For many years he came to Sligachan in the early spring and remained there till the late autumn, fishing in the rivers and the Storr Lochs and shooting in Glen Brittle, where for some years he rented the Lodge, and living over again his early days on the Cuillin peaks. For Skye was home to him, and his love for it was deep and everlasting. His favourite chair in the outer vestibule was known as "Collie's Corner," and

woe betide anyone who presumed to occupy it! From there he could look out upon Glamaig and the Red Hills and down Loch Sligachan to Raasay, and envelop himself in a cloud of tobacco smoke and memories. I often wondered what he thought about as he gazed out with far-regarding, listening eyes. Sometimes when spoken to he seemed to return from a great distance, as if he had been living over again some of his early exploits. He was intolerant of strangers, and as a result was thought rude and unfriendly. On one occasion he and I were sitting together in the vestibule one drenching morning when two ladies approached, clad in oilskins and sou'westers and armed with umbrellas. To their query, "Oh, Doctor, what kind of day will it be?" he gave no answer, but gazed out through the streaming window. A second venture was responded to by his withdrawing his pipe and, without taking his gaze away, replying, "Can't you use your eyes?" The ladies hastily departed. But he was at his best after dinner with his audience of a select few, for then his conversation was sparkling and memorable no matter what was the subject. But whenever strangers appeared he drew into himself, and retired either to his own room or that of Mr Campbell's, where we later on joined him to continue our enjoyment. From him I learned many things about his early days at Glassel and his introduction to Skye, and of his experience on Ben Macdhuì when he heard the footsteps of the Ferla Mhor. Skye was in his blood, for most of his talk to me was about his Cuillin climbs with John Mackenzie. John was more than a friend to him; one would almost think he was his other self, and his death was a blow from which he never seemed to fully recover. The Doctor, as he was affectionately called, was always interested in what I proposed doing each day, and I profited greatly by his advice and suggestions, for his knowledge of weather conditions was uncanny. On my return he invariably asked how the day went and what I had done and seen, and I was led to understand from others that this interest was not given to many and that I was fortunate in securing it.

Though he did not take an active part in the Club's affairs he was, nevertheless, keenly interested in its activities, and



J. NORMAN COLLIE

the receipt of the *Journal* always gave him great pleasure. He did not praise readily, but he was sincere in his praise of our *Journal*, and passed it round a select few at Sligachan. When I sounded him in 1936 as to the possibility of his attending the proposed excursion in June 1937 to the Shelter Stone, the scene of the foundation of the Club, to celebrate fifty years of existence, he showed great animation, especially when I suggested the securing of a pony for his use. However, he said he was too old for that kind of thing, and he would have to be sure of good weather. Such was his interest that soon after the excursion he wrote me asking about it, and later that year, when I was at Sligachan in September, one of the first things he asked about was an account of the visit. Again in 1938 when I suggested he might be able to attend as an honoured guest the Jubilee Dinner of the Club in November his eyes lit up and he was enthusiastic about the idea. Later on he wrote to say he was coming, and although he was in his eightieth year he made the long journey from London to be with us. That gesture showed the interest he had in us.

My last personal contact with him was at Sligachan just after the outbreak of war in September 1939. The hotel had been full, but by the beginning of the month only about half a dozen visitors were left. Dr Collie had come there as usual in the early spring, and was very worried about his house and belongings in London. He foretold a long and bitter struggle not only in Europe but spread over the whole world, and became somewhat depressed. On that occasion I saw a great deal of him, but was struck by his "far-away-ness," though he never lost interest in my doings. Since that time he corresponded with me from time to time, commenting on the ever-wonderful pageant of colour on the moors and peaks. The plight of the crofters in bad seasons distressed him greatly and his enforced exile, even to Skye, told upon him. In 1941 when I wrote on the occasion of his birthday he remarked that he was getting old and would not live to see the liberation of the world from the "foul beast of Europe." The death of his friend and host, John Campbell, at

Sligachan in the early part of that year was a grievous blow, and an accident in the autumn while fishing in the Storr Loch, when he fell in and got a thorough wetting, left him in a precarious state, and he never really regained strength. When I heard of his rapidly failing health in the summer of 1942 I tried in vain to obtain a permit from the military authorities to visit him in Skye. He was alone in the hotel but for an occasional visit from well-loved friends from Drynoch. It is good to know, however, that a friend of long standing, Mr G. H. Lee, was able to be with him at the end, which was peaceful. During his last few days his thoughts were again with his faithful John Mackenzie, and on November 1 slipped away with him into the mists of the Other Side. As was fitting, he was laid to rest beside him at Struan.

Dr Collie had a rooted objection to being photographed and I have never been able to secure one of him although I made several attempts. The portrait accompanying this note is a reproduction of what I understand is the only studio portrait in existence. The portrait is in the possession of Dr Masson, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sheffield, who lent it to the Royal Society for reproduction, and through the courtesy of the Council of the Royal Society I received a copy for our *Journal*. The frontispiece is from a reproduction in the possession of Dr Collie's old friend, Mr G. H. Lee, of an oil painting by Nowell. It is a difficult matter to secure a good photographic reproduction of a portrait in oils, but this one of Dr Collie is an excellent likeness and depicts him in a characteristic attitude. We are very grateful to the Council of the Royal Society and to Mr Lee for the opportunity to record these likenesses of a great personality in our *Journal*.

In a letter in which Professor Collie suggested certain corrections and additions to "Dreams" he wrote, "I don't think I have ever written anything better." The article, which first appeared in Vol. XIII., p. 59, of the *Journal* (1932), is reprinted here, with these changes incorporated, at the request of several members who do not have the original.



## DREAMS.

J. NORMAN COLLIE.

“ We are such stuff as dreams are made on.”

“ There was a naughty boy, and a naughty boy was he,  
He would not stop at home, he could not quiet be,  
So he followed his nose to the North, to the North,  
He ran away to Scotland.”

So Keats wrote about himself, and he further goes on, “ He ran to the mountains, and the fountains, and the ghostes, and the witches.” Probably he had grown tired of the tediousness of conventional life, and being young and in revolt fled, full of vague unrest and the glamour of youth, to the wilds, to the mountains and the heather, and to the great stretches of moorland, where he could be free from the ugliness of murky and sullen cities and the babble of his fellow-men.

In those days the beauties of nature appealed to only very few people, but Keats was one of them, and at an earlier date so also was Shakespeare. To them wide open stood the door, revealing the rich splendour of all Nature’s world. Their joy in the proud promise of Spring, in Summer’s sovereign garb, and in the golden days of Autumn, rings out like merry bells ; with them fancy plays—

“ As wanton winds do shake the darling buds of May.”

Where can we find odes more haunting than Keats’s “ Ode to a Nightingale,” or “ Ode to a Grecian Urn ” ? and nowhere exist sonnets so exquisite as those of Shakespeare. Beauty with them exists everywhere, not only in all living things, but in everything created. In the “ Ode to a Grecian Urn ”

“ Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”

In the sonnets—

“ Truth and Beauty shall together reign.”

A priceless heritage these two great minds have left us;  
we are looking through—

“ Magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.”

or,

“ Full many a glorious morning have I seen  
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,  
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,  
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy.”

Many years passed away after the death of Keats before the Highlands were often visited. Yet fortunate are those who wandering there can find the Beauty that will reveal itself to those who can understand. For it is a land wild, mysterious, with great open spaces, rushing rivers, lonely lochans, forests of twisted pines, and glens where the birch trees droop, and the burns laugh as they leave the dark corries, whilst far away on the west solitary islands lift their heads out of a sapphire sea, and the long, gleaming beaches of ever-shifting sand keep guard against the onslaught of the hungry waves that—

“ Rise and fall and roar rock-thwarted under  
Bellowing caves, beneath the windy wall.”

A land with as many changing moods as the white mists on the mountains, or the fleecy clouds weaving strange pageants athwart the azure sky. A land now glad with the soft kisses of the sunshine, now sad with the gloom of dark clouds and the memories of times gone by. A land of mystery, a land of the Heart's Desire.

If in the days of one's youth one is able to wander free in such a land, one should be grateful to the jealous gods. For youth is of the Spring Time, with all the glorious promise of the month of May, when full of life and gladness youth dreams dreams of perilous things and of the happenings of the days to come. With covetous hands, therefore, should youth win from that Tyrant Time such spoils as he may “ while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” Yes! We must gather rich plunder before those evil days

come. Happily, however, should the gods permit, though our Spring-time passes, before us our Summer and Autumn yet remain. Far distant lies that time of year when the stormy gusts of Winter's day make wail in—

“ The bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.”

With summer a richer gold greets us with new and more subtle entrancements. The song of the wilds is set to a different tune than that of “proud-pied April.” In the supreme sovereignty of our summer days we no longer owe fealty to the Gods of Spring; our worship is offered at other shrines. Summer comes a full-robed queen to welcome the Sun God as he floods with his glory the hills, the glens, and the far-off islands. Colour finer than Art can fashion flames on the rose-coloured clouds of dawn, when—

“ Lo, in the Orient the gracious light  
Lifts up his burning head.”

All day, as the long hours hasten by, the errant clouds, the lights and the shadows play an endless rhythm. Idly one listens to the song of a bird rising out of the heather, greeting the day with glad notes, or the drowsy hum of the wild bees; the melancholy cry of the curlew and the plover are heard far away. Some young grouse come out into the open and disappear again. A faint scent of the bog myrtle drifts by. Perhaps there may be a small stream with pools of clear amber water flowing over the many coloured pebbles; a few ferns and the branches of a small rowan bend down to the unruffled surface below, and near moss-covered rocks the yellow trout feeding on the gravel at the bottom of the pool. Irresistible is the charm of these small moorland waters—

“ Clear and cool, clear and cool,  
By laughing shallow and dreaming pool.”

Undefined, they laugh and play, not knowing that they must lose themselves in the great rivers, where on black and sombre pools the lost foam flakes wander ceaselessly to and fro, sadly remembering their joyous dancing in the sunlight on the open moorlands. Far away on the uplands lie the

lochans with their beauty of still waters, fringed with water lilies and rich weeds. The wild duck and the sea birds know them; on their islands the nests are hidden in the grass and the heather, whilst at night on their dark waters the moon and the silent stars are gently mirrored amongst the rushes. Wonderful is that early summer time. The new life playing and rioting over the whole land. Masses of yellow gorse in the sunshine, patches of broom flash like gold against the new green of the grass. Primroses and violets and small blue flowers hide almost unseen amongst the herbage, the tall iris nods slowly in the wind, whilst the white and red blossoms on the wild briar proclaim that the end of summer's reign is not far distant.

“ And summer's lease hath all too short a date.”

So in our summer time may we gladly rest content with the rich gifts offered to us, woven by summer from out the shining threads of the passing hours. When the soft winds gently pass across the moors, when the sun is kind, when the hills and the glens are asleep, then can one idly lie in the heather and dream as the hours decline. Images of great mountains and blue lakes with islands and old ruined towers can be seen in the drifting clouds. Memories of bygone days pass ghost-like through one's mind; sad thoughts of the old Clans, full of tragedy and gloom; how in a struggle that was worthy of a better cause they fought nobly to the bitter end.

One sees once more the Great Marquis and “ the plaided Clans come down through wild Lochaber's snow,” we hear again the pibroch and the savage song of the claymore, and the clash of shields in that fierce fight by Inverlochry's shore. The great precipices of Glencoe silently watch, where on that winter's night the butchers from Glen Lyon fell upon the doomed McLans, and all were put to the sword. The rushing waters of the Garry, and the weeping birches, forever mourn the dead Dundee, “ when in the glory of his manhood, passed the spirit of the Graeme.”

Still dreaming, legends of older and more distant days drift across one's mind. To Ossian, the Orpheus of the Gael. How he married Niamh of the golden hair, a daughter

of the Fairy Folk, and how with her he journeyed to the world's end, to Tir nan Og, the Land of Youth; and the story goes on, after what seemed to him only a few days he returned to his native land, finding that the world had grown old, and that Fion and all his comrades were dead three hundred years, and those he had loved were beneath the turf. But to St. Patrick he told the tale of the heroes of his youth, and of the free and joyous life they led in the woods and the glens. Where can we find a more beautiful legendary story than the one that tells of the great love of Deirdre and the Sons of Usna. Deirdre, fairest among the daughters of Erin. It was in the glens and forests of wild Loch Etive that they lived and hunted. Dun Scaith in Sleat sends one's thoughts back to the greatest of all the old Celtic tales—the Saga of Cuchulain, son of Lugh the Sun God. From his youth, when he learnt the art of war from Sgathach the warrior-queen of Skye, to his death after seeing the “Washer of the Ford,” the story marches with high-sounding tread that falls not far short of the greatest of epics, the story of the Siege of Troy. If in Deirdre we see the counterpart of Helen, in Cuchulain, the mightiest hero of the Celtic race, may be found a parallel with Achilles. In the great battle at the Ford, Ferdia's death is as sad as the death of Hector, and the divine help to the Greeks is the same as that afforded to Cuchulain by his father, Lugh.

In one's wanderings, many are the great standing stones and stone circles that can be found scattered over the land, left by the Druids in those prehistoric days, gone long before the dread rovers from Lochlan swept in their birlinns down through the Western Isles, and the whirling swords shouted in triumph to the waves, crimson with the blood of the slayers and the slain. Only the stones are there. When were these silent monoliths, hoary with age, first lifted from the brown earth? What were the old beliefs? Who were the now forgotten Gods in whose honour these stones were raised? Their megalithic builders are unknown, but they have left an imperishable record. Their buildings remain far flung across the world. From Western Europe to Egypt, Java, the islands of the Pacific, in Peru, and Mexico,

they still point silently to the skies. Who were they? If Plato's account in the *Timæus* is to be believed, the artificers of the Great Pyramid were but a remnant from the lost island of Atlantis. It may be that some of the old Celtic myths of Lyonesse, Hy Brazil, and Tir nan Og, the Land of Youth in the western seas, are but a recollection of the perished Atlantæan continent, the garden of the Hesperides.

In an ancient Gaelic chronicle there is a legend of "four sunken cities of a world that was," Falias, Finias, Murias, and Gorias. Were these also of that "land of old upheaven from the deep, to sink into the abyss again"? From Falias, so it is believed, came the dark stone on which all the High Kings of Ireland were crowned at Tara. In the 6th century Fergus the Great, King of Scotland, begged it from his brother Murtagh MacErc, King of Ireland, and in 1297 Edward the 1st took it from Scotland to Westminster, where it still remains the Coronation Stone. Even in those days, when man contended for his right to live, the mysteries that surrounded him in Nature were not altogether hidden. All the old Celtic Deities were Nature Gods. Lugh is the great Sun God. Angus Og, Lord of the Spring Time, and Love and Song. Mananan, God of the Sea, whose horses are the sea waves. Dana, the Earth Mother. They all represent man's early efforts to find in the sky, the earth, and the sea, something, he knew not what, but something that was above him and around him. Are these desires only vain enchantments? Unreasonable and rebellious? Is this hidden Beauty only something that common sense disowns? But reasonable or unreasonable, this gesture of discontent finds a home in all living things. Man throughout the ages has always rebelled against what he is; always has he dreamed strange dreams to help him during the short period of his earthly days. These vain enchantments may after all be shadows, but they are shadows of great worth and beauty. This vague shadowy land of the Gael in which he sees beauty everywhere is now almost a thing of the past. Fewer and fewer are the Highland folk who can repeat the ancient lore, or who now use the rites and customs of their

fathers. The beautiful Blessings, Invocations, Charms, and old songs are being forgotten. Still, however, a few folk remain in whom the old spirit lives. An aged crofter who could say—"Every morning I take my bonnet off to the beauty of the world," or the old woman, throwing sticks into the sea—" 'Tis sorrows I am throwing away," they have the knowledge. It was this knowledge that enabled the Gael to give such poetical names to the birds, the flowers, and the glens. "Coire an Uaigneis," the corrie of solitude, the dandelion is "Dealán Dhé," the wee flower of God, and the Curlew "Guilbhron," the wail of sorrow. This love of all earthly things by the Gael is a precious gift; he is a friend of the glens and the green pastures, and a brother to the open spaces and the many-sounding sea.

There is a Canadian boat song, more than a hundred years old, sung by the Highlanders banished from their native land:—

"From the lone shieling on the misty island  
Mountains divide us and the waste of seas—  
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,  
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides."

A cry as bitter as the wail of lost birds driven far from their home by cruel winds across a waste sea, whose waves storm-tossed cry—

"Væ, Væ, Væ, habitantibus in terra."

The sea foam flashing on the grey shores, the woods, the crofts, and the lone shielings will see them no more, but under the shadowy rim of the Gaelic rainbow a fairy gold lies hid, more precious by far than the dross coveted and fought for in the marts of the world—

"The road to peace—missed by the young men and the old,  
Lost in the strife for palaces and powers,  
The axes, and the lictors, and the gold."

Although the old life in the Highlands has nearly passed away, the remnants of all that was beautiful in those old times shine with sunset splendour, with all the glory of Autumn leaves decay.

If one wishes to see the Highlands ablaze with colour,

the Autumn is the time when the whole land clothes itself with a garment rich and stately, fit for the palaces of kings. In the Gaelic, September is called "the month of peace." Then the mountains sleep and dream in the sunlight, as they rise out of the marshlands and the purple-brown moors, with long, curving slopes that lead to the corries and the dark precipices above, little troubled by the affairs of men. The rivers with hurrying waters wind through the glens amidst forests of flaming birch and rowan, and dark pines that keep guard over the deep pools, and the falls where the silver salmon leap. These clear waters, whose murmurings are like the sound of bells crying on the wind, have heard the raven's croak and seen the great eagles circling in the sky, they have spoken to the timid deer in the glens, and all the wild life on the far-flung moors hails them with welcome voice, bidding them God-speed on their journey to the great ocean. In the glowing splendour of those Autumn days the isles lying low down in the west are as jewels set in the diadem of the pale sea; lonely, faint blue against the sky, they dream all day, while the restless waves, pure beryl in the sunlight, lap against the weed-covered rocks, whispering to the sandy bays old strange sagas of the yellow-haired rovers from Lochlan, or wandering only to be lost in the seal-haunted caverns, by man unknown.

The long moors with mysterious distances are lustrous with light and shade and colour, spread out like some rare Eastern carpet. The more delicate summer colour of the grasses and heather has changed to flaming gold, to warm browns, soft as velvet, or to the yellow of rich amber. In the dewy twilight when the sun is setting, the earth and the heavens are lit with orange and crimson, a furnace fire of splendour, and the mountains and the corries are bathed in delicate dim topaz and purple beneath the gold-dusted sky, indescribable and magnificent. Slowly the glory fades and "swart complexioned night" holds pallid sway. The crescent moon and the stars look down with cold, clear beams, and, quivering, the moonlight passes away in the distance over the waves, to die like a dream on the far horizon.



There are other times when storms sweep over the mountains, then a different and more subtle beauty reveals itself, when the rain falls, and the winds shout and wail over a grey land; when the streams gather, and the rock faces of the hills are streaked with white waters. Torn clouds, shadowy horses of the Valkyrie, tear in mad hunt along the ridges, wan gleams of light struggle and die away in the ruined corries, and the deep voice of the tide calling on the beach can be heard in the distance, its wild waves dashing against tall cliffs and barren shores. Sometimes when the winds are at rest, the mists come down and all is hidden in a garment of white stillness. The loneliness and silence is of another world. Strange thoughts wander through one's mind. The old mysterious tales of ghostly beings who haunt the wilds. There are places that one dreads, where one trembles and is afraid, one knows not why, and fears stand in the way. For the Sidhe have power over us and can weave strong spells of magic to our undoing, and there are others, the Great Lords of Shadow, the Herdsman of Dreams, the baying of the White Hound, the Washer of the Ford who weaves shrouds out of the moonbeams by the river of Death, and those unnamed ones who can entice the soul out of the body, driving it afar into the dark and madness. To guard one from the dominion of These there is an old Gaelic prayer—"Send God in his strength between us and the Sidhe, between us and the dread Hosts of the Air."

But listen! The faint music of a dainty feadan is heard, and then lost again; dream-like yet clear, plaintive and played on thin pipes of reed. The melody low, gentle as the winds of summer, then rising with the gladness of the lark in gay laughter it soars to the blue sky, then down and down with fluttering wings it sinks to earth and dies away, only to break out again with white notes cold as snowflakes falling, changed is the tune, sad, full of tears, mournfully lamenting the ruined gold of the Autumn, and woods helpless and torn by the stormy gusts of the dying year—

"And barren rage of death's eternal cold."

It is the age-long song of the Spring Time, and the lament

of age. It is the cry of youth throughout the endless years, that with all boldness seeks the Grail, for—

“ Nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence,”

rebellng against injustice of this world, and the thankless days of old age, and winter's dull decay.

Who then may this be who plays with honey-sweet appeal, and melody that is the wistful cry of all created things? Who is this God who makes sad moan? Faintly a voice answers—

“ I am God Pan, and I am sad to-day.”

Dreams, only dreams!

*σκιάς οὐαρ γ' ἀνθρώπου.*

“ The shadow of a dream is man.”

Yet a wanderer's dreams are happy dreams. He should sacrifice often at the shrines of the Gods of the Wilds, for they are pleasing Gods when they whisper to one in the dusk. But the altars of the Gods of Wealth, the Gods of Power, and the Gods of the hurrying crowds of Cities he passes by. His Gods are those of the open sky and the mighty woods, the lakes, the rivers, and the mountains. It is they who send the memories of how in the early dawn all the tall flowers are a-swing in the wind blowing across the uplands, how in the dusk the trees—

“ Those green rob'd senators of mighty woods,  
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,  
Dream and so dream all night without a stir,  
Save from one gradual solitary gust  
Which comes upon the silence and dies off,  
As if the ebbing air had but one wave.”

It is they who give remembrance of the great mountains towering upwards, snow-covered, stately and alone, gleaming in the sunlight; and of the winter storms, savage and cruel, that clothe them in dark, mysterious gloom, only to pass with the dying day, as the sinking sun weaves magic webs in the hurrying clouds, where “ the threads are purple

and scarlet, and the embroideries flame." To the Gods that  
send these gifts be all the praise, and when—

“ All our yesterdays have lighted fools  
the way to dusty death,”

and

“ Our sable curls all silvered o'er with white,”

the old memories from the dream gardens of our youth  
return ; perchance it is only the Gods sorrowing have re-  
lented, and are but giving back some of the gold that they  
robbed from us in the days of long ago, when we troubled  
not that the years were slipping silently beneath our feet,  
and when, full of the alchemy of the Spring Time, we walked  
in the land of the Heart's Desire, careless and unafraid.

## THE CORRIES OF THE CAIRNGORMS.

T. S. WESTOLL.

THE charm and attraction of the Cairngorms is but little dependent on their form as mountains, for they have no claim to comparison with the serrated peaks of Arran or the Cuillins, being simply the remains of an obvious dissected composite set of high-level plateaux, the "High Plateau" and "Table-land of the Highlands" of Dr Bremner's account (*C.C.J.*, Vol. XV, p. 81). It is in the high corries that much of their power lies, and in the stark contrast between the "steep frowning glories" of their cliffs and the rolling slopes of the tops themselves. It is, in fact, a claim to interest and magnificence that is somewhat in the Chinese tradition of painting; what is not there gives form and impressiveness to the rest. Many things may draw one to the hills—the search for rare alpines, or the recapture of the "over 3,000 feet" exhilaration of high walks; the problems of geology, or the pitting of human strength and agility against the force of gravity and natural rock, snow, and ice in all their diversity; or the memory, always powerful, of the *genius loci* in his many weather-disguises, sometimes terrifying, but more often magnificent. No matter what the force of attraction may be, it is in and around the corries that most of one's satisfaction is found.

The term "corrie" is given to hollows in the upper parts of the hill-sides and mountain-sides of Scotland. Many of these corries are rather featureless depressions, often grassy or heathery, at the head-waters of streams. With these (except for a few points of interest) we have no present concern. But the great cliff-girt amphitheatres of the high hills, known as cirques, cwms, or karren, often containing wild and lonely lochs, are so spectacular that their origin has long been a matter of speculation. That they were

excavated by the action of snow and ice is now a commonplace, so that it is perhaps rather interesting to note that the idea was first clearly stated by John Tyndall in 1862, and that his views did not gain wide acceptance until about fifty years ago. Indeed, even at the turn of the century, Bonney and others were still holding the view that the Alpine cirques had been eroded by running water; and Sir Archibald Geikie, in the 1901 edition of the "Scenery of Scotland," was inclined to give most credit to "small convergent torrents, aided, of course, by the powerful co-operation of the frosts that are so frequent and potent at these altitudes." A picturesque but improbable theory put forward slightly earlier invoked the action of falls and avalanches of snow and ice, which were supposed to have produced deep basins just as waterfalls may do.

All modern views of the origin of the rock-rimmed corries (cirques) are dependent upon observations on the relations of snow and ice to the hollows they occupy, and upon the fundamental fact that water expands on freezing and may then exert a very great disruptive force if in an enclosed space. But many different hypotheses have been suggested in attempts to elucidate the formation of cirques, and it may be of some interest to trace the development of thought on the matter. It will soon be clear that nothing final can be written on the subject. Scientific hypotheses are rather like climbing boots and ice-axes. They help one to reach otherwise unattainable objectives and so to see new perspectives of familiar ground and to get a glimpse of fresh territory; but boots that don't fit or are not watertight are often worse than none at all, and there is no future in the uncritical persistence, however enthusiastic, in the use of a flawed ice-axe. Conversely, of course, considerate use of inferior equipment may enable one, with care and intelligence, to explore quite difficult territory, though for a complete command of his field he will need better technique and improved equipment.

To begin with, the position and orientation of the corries, in the Cairngorms as elsewhere, is in full agreement with the basic notion that they were produced by the action of

snow and ice. I have made a rather rough analysis of the rock-corries in the area covered by the inch-to-a-mile special O.S. map of the Cairngorms, to bring out the approximate average height of each rim and floor, the diameter, and the direction towards which each corrie faces. Taking every cirque into consideration, except the peculiar and aberrant Coire Bogha-cloiche, the following table expresses the main conclusions :—

Direction.	No.	Average Altitude of Rim.			Average Altitude of Floor.			Diameter.	
		Highest.	Lowest.	Mean.	Highest.	Lowest.	Mean.	Greatest.	Mean.
N.-N.E.	11	Feet. 4,100	Feet. 2,450	Feet. 3,500	Feet. 3,250	Feet. 1,900	Feet. 2,700	Miles. 1.1	Miles. 0.63
N.E.-E.	8	4,200	3,400	3,750	3,300	2,600	3,020	0.7	0.52
E.-S.E.	4	4,000	3,200	3,700	3,250	2,400	2,800	0.7	0.60
S.E.-S.*	2	4,200	4,000	4,100	3,300	3,000	3,150	0.7	0.63
S.-S.W.	0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
S.W.-W.	0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
W.-N.W.	0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
N.W.-N.	11	3,950	3,100	3,450	3,200	2,500	2,800	1.0	0.58
* This includes Coire Sputan Dearg, which is also somewhat atypical. Without it the line would read :									
S.E.-S.	1	4,200	4,200	4,200	3,300	3,300	3,300	0.55	0.55

From this table it is clear that the greatest number of cirques face generally northwards, that is, between N.W. and E., and the largest face between N.W. and N.E.; snow-fields or ice-fields lying on slopes facing in these directions would be most sheltered from the sun, while those facing S. and W. would be exposed to the sun at the warmest time of day. Moreover, the heights of the rims and floors are significant. The highest figures for cirques facing in almost any direction are not very different, they obviously depend only on the height of the mountains; but the lowest figures in the different groups (indicating the lowest altitudes affected by the cirque-forming processes) do seem to show an interesting change, which is set out separately below. The above table includes figures for Coire Madagan Mòr

near Loch an t' Seilich, which is at an unusually low altitude and outside the main massif. The figures in brackets below exclude this cirque and also Coire Sputan Dearg and those of Lochnagar.

Direction.	Lowest Average Altitude of Rim.	Lowest Approximate Altitude of Floor.
N.W.-N.	3,100	2,500
N.-N.E.	2,450 (3,000)	1,900 (2,000)
N.E.-E.	3,400	2,600
E.-S.E.	3,200	2,400
S.E.-S.	4,000 (4,200)	3,000 (3,300)
S.-N.W.	? >4,000	? >4,000

These figures seem to show that cirque formation could go on at distinctly lower levels in the Cairngorms on slopes facing N.-N.E. than on any others, and that the more a slope faces S. and S.W. the higher it must be before true cirque formation could have taken place. It is perfectly true, however, that the direction of exposure in relation to the solar radiation is not itself a complete explanation, for it fails to take into account the influence of differential precipitation of snow. Some American workers believe that the main snow-banks tend to accumulate on the slopes to leeward of the dominant snow-bearing wind. In the Eastern Grampians an interesting problem is presented by the extremely fine series of corries facing S.W. over Glen Clova, from Loch Wharral to Ben Reid, and also by the head of the Canness Glen. All these face S. or S.W., *towards* the now prevalent winds, and are bitten out of plateaux at about 2,600 feet, their floors cutting down to about 2,000 feet or even lower. They may owe their formation to eddies set up by the passage of dominant S.W. winds over Glen Clova, causing heavy precipitation on hill-slopes that might otherwise have been swept clean, but this is only one of many possibilities. In any case it is dangerous to argue from present climatic conditions, because some of the finest British corries are found in the Cuillins, where they cut down deeply

even on the S.W. faces. However, a general refrigeration of climatic conditions would still allow this to be explained on the basis of dominant S.W. precipitation-winds.

Broadly speaking, one may recognise three phases in the historical development of the idea of snow-and-ice excavation of corries. In the first phase (up to *c.* 1890) various tentative hypotheses were suggested, and most weight was given to evidence of intense weathering at the margins of snow-fields. One can study this process quite well in spring and early summer at the edges of the snow-wreath that persists, often well into August, in the broad hollow S.E. of the S. top of Beinn a'Bhùird at about 3,500 feet. The daily melt-water here runs into cracks in the rock at the margins, and the usual nightly freezing slowly but surely breaks down the rock into a friable sand, which can be shifted during rainfall or by wind (often to the discomfort of the observer). Year by year the snow-wreath digs for itself a deeper and deeper hollow; the process has been called nivation and is naturally most effective where the snow lies longest. It was on the basis of such observations that Helland and, later, E. Richter, both of whom studied Norwegian cirques, invoked the intensive weathering at the margin of the *névé* (permanent snow-field) as the important agent in forming the cliffs of the amphitheatre, though both gave credit to the ice (into which the *névé* passes downward if thick enough) for at least part of the excavation of the bowl. There can be no doubt that such marginal sapping is a powerful factor in rock-weathering under snow conditions, but there are many points which cannot readily be explained on this simple theory.

The second phase was marked by the recognition of the importance of the *bergschrund* or *rimaye*, a gaping crevasse usually found near and parallel to the upper margins of a glacier or *névé* occupying a cirque in alpine conditions. Penck, the great Alpine geologist, thought that the main function of the *bergschrund* was to collect and remove to the base of the glacier the debris removed by sapping along the upper margin of the steep *névé* above the glacier; this material would then become embedded in the sole of the





THE EASTERN CORRIE OF LOCHNAGAR

*T. S. Westoll*

glacier and help to rasp away the floor of the cirque. It is, however, mainly due to American geologists and physiographers (particularly to W. D. Johnson and F. E. Matthes) that an important function of the bergschrund has come to be widely recognised. Johnson, in the eighties, allowed himself to be lowered into the bergschrund of the Mount Lyell glacier. He found a rock floor and a back wall of rock rising very steeply towards the rim of the cirque. This steep wall was much shattered, and some of the loose blocks had been wedged forward by frost action so that they were partly or wholly embedded in the front wall of ice and snow. In spring and summer the bergschrund is the scene of intense weathering, for melt-waters run over the exposed rock surfaces and usually freeze at night. This explains the shattering. Each winter the bergschrund is closed by snow and ice; the loose blocks are thus cemented to the glacier, and will be removed as the ice slowly moves away under gravity. The process of weathering is probably rapid, and the recession of the head-walls of the cirque was thus explained. A bergschrund will open again each spring, and thus moves gradually a little farther towards the original position of the head-wall. A sharply marked line of differential erosion at the base of the head-wall cliffs of an empty cirque, the so-called *schrund-linie*, is supposed on this theory to mark the level of the base of the bergschrund at the final stage. It is well shown in the accompanying photograph of Lochnagar. Here, then, was a theory that seemed to explain nearly all the known properties of cirques. But particularly within the last twenty-five years new information has been available, and this has led to modifications of the bergschrund theory.

In the third phase the bergschrund theory has been tested in a number of regions, and several observers have found it inadequate to explain all the known facts. One of the most interesting points emerged from the extraordinary mountain warfare in the Eastern Alps during the earlier "Great War." Sappers on several occasions drove tunnels through glaciers in cirques, and Klebelsberg has noted the absence of melt-waters from some at least of the bergschrund-crevasses. In

the Antarctic (Priestley), the high Andes (Bowman), and elsewhere observers have noted that bergschrunds may be completely absent from some cirque *névés*. Recently much importance has been attached to the fact (emphasised also by Penck in 1905) that many cirques are immensely deep, while the bergschrund is usually assumed to be rather shallow—a figure of 150 feet is usually quoted, though I am not aware of any large body of data. Quite recently W. V. Lewis has given a short critical review of much of this recent literature and has propounded a new theory. He sets out some important points which require explanation.

1. The head-walls of several British corries show shattering right to the base, at least for parts of their circumference, and Lewis says that the depth of this shattering exceeds that of the deepest bergschrund. Sometimes, too, glacial smoothing may be found in the same corries well up the head-walls.
2. The head-wall frequently meets the glacially smoothed floor at a comparatively sharp angle, and near this point glacially smoothed knobs of rock often project through the screes at the bases of the head-walls.

To explain these points Lewis refers to observations by Priestley and by Fleming in the Antarctic and by himself in Iceland, showing that much melting may occur, even with air temperatures below  $0^{\circ}$  C., where the snow or ice is in contact with dark-coloured rocks which readily absorb radiation. This melt-water, with summer rain-water and the melted winter snows from the upper slopes, is said to pass largely down the back-wall of the cirque without traversing the glacier, or otherwise to pass largely down the bergschrund-crevasses. These melt-waters, he suggests, afford a mechanism for wetting the walls of the cirque at and below the base of the bergschrund, and thus, by alternate freezing and thawing, for deepening the corrie in the immediate neighbourhood of the head-wall, and would thus encourage the formation of an overdeepened floor meeting the head-wall at an angle.

This hypothesis is clearly a valuable one, but before it

can be accepted as a sound and dependable aid to our further exploration it seems necessary that we should know far more than we do at present of two things—the thickness of snow and ice actually existing in present-day high-level cirques, and the variation in depth to be found in a large number of bergschrund-crevasses. It is in Alpine or higher-level conditions, not in the glacier-stripped Cairngorms or other British mountains, that the testing ground is to be found.

An important point emphasised by Lewis is that in regions of complex geology the cirque erosion may be controlled to a considerable degree by the distribution of hard and soft rocks. In the Cairngorms proper and on Lochnagar there is no reason to suppose that diversity of rock types is very important in this respect, but one additional factor of interest to climbers is very significant. The granites of these mountains are well jointed. There are usually two main sets of nearly vertical joints crossing nearly at right angles, and irregularly developed horizontal joints. These are collectively responsible for the effect of massive rough masonry so frequently found in the corrie cliffs. But a set of oblique joints, at about  $45^\circ$  to the horizontal, is frequently found in addition. Where these joints dip in the same direction as hill-slopes, erosion by frost action along joint planes is facilitated, and bare slabby surfaces result. Excellent examples are to be seen on the Devil's Point facing the Dee, and as a factor in corrie development in Coire na Ciche on Beinn a' Bhùird.

To some people, but to none who has taken the trouble to learn these mountains, the Cairngorms are rather dull because they lack serrated peaks. From the point of view of the geologist this is simply because the corrie glaciers did not stay long enough in our district to eat their way still farther into the margins of the plateaux. As they are, the Cairngorms are a fine example of what an American observer has aptly called "biscuit-board topography"; the corries are bitten out of the plateau region as one might remove pieces from the edge of a sheet of dough with a circular biscuit-cutter. But where corries, by headward plucking, encroach more and more even on to a flat plateau, some of

them will almost completely reduce intervening regions. Then the walls of two corries may meet in a jagged arête complete with gendarmes, clefts, and all kinds of mountaineering improvements; three or more, encroaching from different directions, may produce triangular or quadrangular shaped peaks, growing ever steeper upwards because of the shape of the corrie walls. These, after their best-known example, are called Matterhorn peaks. The nearest approaches to this stage of development in the Cairngorms are on the Cairntoul-Braeriach mass. But what the rock-climber may deplore as the untimely wasting of the corrie glaciers is at least responsible for leaving some of the finest high-level walking that one could desire along the edges of the corries.

#### USEFUL LITERATURE.

Two most valuable works on the glaciation and geology of the Cairngorms, by Dr Alexander Bremner:—

“The Glaciation of the Cairngorms,” *The Deeside Field*, No. 4, 1929.

“The Story of the Cairngorms,” *C.C.J.*, Vol. XV., pp. 81-90, 1940.

Two works which give a good survey of the history of investigation with full references:—

W. H. Hobbs, “Characteristics of Existing Glaciers.” Macmillan, New York, 1911.

W. V. Lewis, “A Melt-water Hypothesis of Cirque Formation,” *Geol. Mag.*, Vol. LXXV., pp. 249-265, 1938.

A magnificently illustrated book, of which Chapters VIII. and IX. deal with glaciation:—

A. K. Lobeck, “Geomorphology.” McGraw-Hill, New York and London, 1939.

## THE MITRE RIDGE—JULY 26, 1942.

WING-COMMANDER LORD MALCOLM DOUGLAS-HAMILTON.

At nine o'clock on July 26, J. B. McDonald, his son Sandy, and I set out from Braemar with the object of "having a look at" the Mitre Ridge. We had seen it from the Sneck four weeks previously and it looked steep; this appearance turned out to be no fallacy on closer acquaintance.

There is a brief description in the "S.M.C. Guide" of three climbs up the Mitre Ridge, one called the "direct" route, one an alternative route, climbed by Cumming and Crofton, and one apparently very similar to the direct route, climbed by Ludwig and Dawson. The "direct" route started, it states, with 110 feet of holdless slab. This did not sound inviting, so, in advance, we decided to try the "Cumming-Crofton" route.

By one o'clock we had made our way up the Slugan, then had come over the Sneck and were seated on rocks in the Garbh Choire eating our sandwiches and looking up at the Mitre crags. Half an hour later we were at the start of the climb and had begun roping up. We made two mistakes that we shall not repeat. We each carried a rucksack. I shall not attempt again to lead up the Mitre Ridge with a rucksack on my back. The climb requires a certain amount of rather delicate balance work at times, and a heavily laden rucksack militates against this considerably. The second mistake was to bring only one 100-foot length of rope. The full 100 feet was several times required to achieve a really safe anchorage, and this necessitated a waste of time in untying the rope and throwing it back for the third climber. These two errors made the climb far longer than it would otherwise have been.

The brief description of the climbs in the "S.M.C. Guide" gives no indication of the standard of difficulty, and even now I should not like to give an opinion on this point. The weather was wet most of the time we were climbing; the rocks were wet and cold all the time, and so were we. These conditions made the climb both difficult and unpleasant, though in retrospect one can really look back on it with

the pleasure with which one always does look back on a hard day on the hills. The crags scare you, handle you roughly, and sometimes defeat you altogether. But if you fail, there is no ignominy in your defeat. Triumph there may be when you succeed, but it is the triumph of character first and foremost, and a victory in which there is no unpleasant aftermath because there is no vanquished. You take with you as you begin the descent a sense of achievement and physical fitness, a camaraderie with those who have shared the rough passage, and, above all, that lasting friendship with the hills.

The climb commenced with some moderate rocks leading up to a chimney. I could not get up the chimney unaided; it was made for a smaller man. I might have managed it if I could have jammed myself in, but my chest, swelled doubtless with the pride of hoped-for achievement, just would not fit. The chimney splayed open and gave no holds on the outside. McDonald came to the rescue to give me his shoulder, but I had to stand on his head before I just managed to reach a hold above and wriggled up to a stance. Fortunately for McDonald I had started the climb wearing *kletterschuhe* and his head remained fairly intact. The rucksacks came next, and then McDonald with the help of the rope. Sandy, being the slimmest, could jam himself into the chimney, and was thus the only one to climb it honestly. The next step was across wet slabs to the right, and doubling back to the foot of a crack 100 feet high. Having got to the crack the holdless nature of the wet rock gave me insufficient sense of security, so I retreated and changed my chilled and soaked feet into nailed boots. Then the rain came, and for the next three hours poured and sleeted on us until we were fair imitations of damp rags. We continued to climb, however, and moved just often enough to keep us alive. Here I abandoned the "Cumming-Crofton" route, and by a traverse to the left got into a shallow gully by which it was easy going to reach the platform on the "direct" route.

The next step was a balance traverse to the right, a pull up, and a traverse to the left on to a grassy platform. Sandy

came next and then the two rucksacks, and lastly McDonald with his rucksack on his back. The next lead was 100 feet over what was the most enjoyable part of the climb—not too difficult, fairly strenuous, and with good holds. It ended on a sloping grassy ledge like the roof of a house, but I was able to get a fairly good belay round a rock. Sandy followed, then the rucksacks, and I threw the rope down to McDonald. It went wide, and while drawing it up again it got wedged between two rocks. No amount of pulling would shift it, so there was nothing for it but to climb down to the jam. Even then I could not get the rope loose, and was faced with the alternative of cutting off the end. Foolishly, I had brought no knife, and my attempt to cut the end with a stone made little impression on the rope. All the while sleet and rain was beating down on our already soaked bodies; life seemed a pretty miserable affair. Then McDonald, having said he also had no knife, suddenly remembered he had a sgian dubh in his rucksack, and with difficulty he got it out, and I was just able to reach down for it. The rope cut and lowered, he soon joined us, and that trouble was over.

Above the grassy slope was undoubtedly the crux of the climb. The ascent of a vertical wall followed by steeply sloping rocks and grass and then another vertical wall was hard going, and at the latter I had to pause and warm my fingers before tackling it. A pull up on what seemed inadequate foot and hand holds enabled me to surmount the wall and scramble up to the gap where the two climbs join. Throughout this pitch there is no good belay, and the leader has the uncomfortable feeling that if he should slip he will drag the others down with him into the fearful chasm below. In dry weather the difficulties may be slight, but in wet conditions everything is slippery and the rocks seem to slope the wrong way. However, at the gap is real security. Sandy and the two rucksacks followed, and then McDonald tied himself on for his effort. He had a heavy rucksack containing a cine camera which he was loth to risk being hauled up over the rocks. He found it difficult to balance on the traverse we had gone, and thought that with a pull he could come straight up. I had had a look at the route he proposed



to take and was certain it was far harder. With the help of the rope some progress was made at first, but only served to get McDonald into a worse jam. With the next handhold just an inch or two beyond his reach he slipped off and swung clear of the rocks with a clatter, to dangle on the rope over the void below. From my stance I couldn't see him, but I shouted down, "Are you all right?" He apparently was unconcerned about his predicament, for the reply I got was, "Look at the marvellous rainbow." With our faces to the cliff we scarcely had time to see anything more interesting than handholds or footholds, but the first thing that struck McDonald when he swung round was the wonderful sight of a rainbow below him and completely filling the wild Garbh Choire. Unfortunately, the rainbow to us was merely a promise of "No rain for a bit—only sleet!" I lowered him until he got hold again, and eventually he made it by our original route. Sandy was cold and shivering, but he had the life in him to say to his father, "I wish I'd seen you hanging on the rope!" One trouble on this pitch was the steepness which prevented the leader being able to direct the others, who were out of sight until the last few feet.

After that the climbing was straightforward and quite pleasant, despite the weather conditions, which were showing some slight signs of improvement. The three teeth almost level with the top make a sensational but comparatively easy finish to the climb. It was 7.30 P.M. when we shook hands with each other on the top, having spent six hours on the rocks.

There was some coffee in the flask, and McDonald and I laced ours with his "emergency" brandy, which, together with the warmth of our congratulations, restored the circulation in our chilled bodies.

We descended by way of the tops and the Snowy Corrie, picking up on the way down an exposure meter which McDonald had lost four weeks previously. But that's another story.

It was 11.30 P.M. when we got back to Braemar to do justice to a meal which marvellously had not been spoiled by our very late arrival. It was a good hard day, with the weather conditions only really bad during the actual climb, but, as McDonald said, "It Mitre been much worse!"

## AN GARBH CHOIRE.

W. THOMSON HENDRY.

“ The great amphitheatre of cliffs, two miles across, which stretches from Cairn Toul to Braeriach, has no parallel in these islands. . . . ”

THE quotation is from the “ S.M.C. Guide to the Cairngorms,” which, strangely enough, goes on to describe fewer than ten climbs on the 2 miles of cliff. The Garbh Choire seemed to offer a promising field of exploration, the results of which are described below. In addition to the notes on new climbs, brief descriptions of several unclimbed buttresses are included to indicate what may still be done without giving rise to any overcrowding of routes.

In describing the corries, the features are taken from left to right, and these terms are used throughout with reference to the climber ascending. The climbs were made, for the most part, by George Lumsden and the writer ; but Pinnacles Buttress and the four gullies in this corrie were first climbed by the Tewnion brothers, and A. Tewnion accompanied us on the ascent of Campion Gully and of Braeriach Pinnacle.

### GARBH CHOIRE MÒR.

Except possibly in the neighbourhood of Chokestone Gully, the cliffs from Sgòr an Lochan Uaine to the Braeriach col, although continuous, are too broken and vegetated to present good routes of any length. To the right of the col are five main buttresses which we named West, Crown, Sphinx, Pinnacle, and East. The first three are separated from each other by deeply indented gullies, but the line of demarcation between the latter two is less marked.

THE WEST BUTTRESS is the smallest, much broken and vegetated, and of little importance. The West Gully is short, without interest or difficulty, but it provides a simple way of descending.

CROWN BUTTRESS was so named from a rock formation at the top. There are, apparently, no records of ascents. A short climb was made on the buttress immediately to the right of the West Gully. Starting over steep red slabs, the route continued over perfect rock and provided interesting and not very difficult climbing.

The Great Gully is a wide scree shoot with two easy indefinite pitches. It carries an apparently everlasting patch of snow at the summit. This would make a splendid snow climb and would be very steep at the top.

SPHINX BUTTRESS is the largest of the buttresses. The Sphinx, a peculiar rock formation on the right-hand side and about half-way up, is guarded on three sides by smooth walls of rock and is joined to the main mass by a short sneck. Above it, almost at the plateau level, stands a pinnacle with a short sneck beyond composed of filthy rock. The left side of the buttress rises steeply, and indeed overhangs at places, and is cleft by several parallel chimneys. Any climbing here would be of a difficult nature.

To the right of this and left of the Sphinx is a shallow gully which widens at the top. A branch runs up to the sneck of the Sphinx. Another (unclimbed?) gully to the right of the Sphinx, containing a big pitch half-way up, also sends up a branch to the Sphinx, narrow and overhanging. Between this and Pinnacle Buttress is a smooth, slabby part of the cliff in a large recess, featureless and less steep than the rest. The shallow gully to the left of the Sphinx was climbed by Tewnion in July 1941. Hendry and Lumsden have descended the buttress as far as the top of the Sphinx.

PINNACLE GULLY ("Guide," 156).—Parker and Alexander were forced into this gully when attempting to climb the pinnacles on the buttress. The gully, which presents no difficulties, sends a branch to the sneck above the first pinnacle.

PINNACLES BUTTRESS.—This is formed almost entirely of the pinnacles. The boundary on the right is a steep, narrow chimney starting from slabs. It, too, has an open branch, steep and grassy at the top, leading to the sneck above the first pinnacle.

A snow-field of considerable dimensions lies throughout the summer at the base of this buttress; the depth of the *randkluft* will vary, but is usually about 10 feet.

The direct route over the pinnacles starts over some low rocks above the snow-field and to the right of Pinnacle Gully. For 250 feet the cliff is broken, and easy scrambling over this and the chaos of boulders above leads to the foot of a crack 80 feet high splitting a large slab lying on the left of the first pinnacle. The crack is climbed to the top, after which the route lies over piled boulders overlooking Pinnacle Gully. From a square block covered with vegetation the route lies up the wall on the right to a broad grassy ledge, which is followed to the end. A choice of routes to the summit of the pinnacle is now open, either by traversing to the right across a very exposed face and by working up on small but adequate holds to the summit, or by surmounting a series of mantelshelves on the less exposed north face.

The summit is not extensive. From it a drop of 15 feet leads to the narrow and crumbling sneck above which the second pinnacle rises for 120 feet. Several routes are open and, while without difficulty, care is necessary. From the second pinnacle the summit is reached in 20 feet without difficulty. 350 feet. Difficult.

EAST BUTTRESS.—Steep and lofty for some time, this buttress soon deteriorates and becomes an open grassy slope. The precipitous part is cleft by three gullies, deep rifts for 150 feet opening out on to grassy slopes above.

#### GARBH CHOIRE DHÀIDH (DHÉ).

MONOLITH GULLY.—This gully, the first, looking from left to right, is well seen when approaching the corrie by the Dee and appears as a formidable black rift extending the whole length of the sgòr dividing the Garbh Choire Mòr from the Dee corrie. (This sgòr is unnamed on the O.S. maps; Sgòr a' Garbh Choire seems appropriate, and a name will be useful.—ED.)

The climb starts just where the Dee reappears after running a subterranean course for some 200 yards. After

a steep grind up grass and scree, one enters the shallow bed of the gully, which for 200 feet is fairly steep but always easy. A small chokestone pitch is interesting if taken direct.

After this the gully steepens and the walls close in. Here a few steep, slabby pitches crowned with scree bar the way, but little difficulty is encountered. This is quickly followed by large piled boulders, which were found to be loose. After another short scree patch the gully divides; the right branch is indefinite, steep, and shallow and of little interest. Except at the start, where the rock is very steep and exceptionally rotten, there is little difficulty in climbing this anywhere. The rib between the branches may be climbed as an introduction to either and is moderately difficult.

The left branch offers better climbing. Forty-five feet of wet mossy rock, offering only minute holds, lead to a cave. A difficult movement to the right, round the top chokestone, again on very small holds, is followed by an unsatisfactory climb over large unstable boulders to a second smaller cave about 45 feet above the first. In 20 feet the ridge of Sgòr a' Garbh Choire is reached, and further scrambling for 150 feet leads to smooth slabs at the base of the monolith. (The more modest form—tooth—would be an equally suitable but more hackneyed description!) Although the rock is very smooth the slabs and the tooth may all be climbed direct. The descent on the far side, leading almost immediately to the plateau, is an easy scramble. 600 feet. Moderate.

SLAB AND GROOVE.—To the left of the Dee an oblique crack will be seen terminating in a cave above which the gully appears to have little character. The route lies up a steep slab about 250 feet high on clean, fairly sound rock, but wet in places. This was climbed up the right-hand side to an overhanging wall of 5 feet which was climbed by keeping well into the right wall up a series of sloping shelves. The final step round a corner on to the top of the wall was definitely difficult. Another 20 feet brings the climber to the top of the slab, from which he is able to see the course of the gully up to the right. So far the climbing took one hour.

The gully is featureless, practically without pitches, although there are six sections of about 60 feet steeper than the rest of the gully bed and, if possible, more rotten. The gully is wet almost to the top, where the angle steepens and the gully contracts to a narrow crack some 150 feet high. This last section was found difficult owing to the lack of stable holds. 600 feet. Difficult.

THE DEE WATERFALL.—Various ascents and descents on either side of the waterfall have been made. The ascent to the right is to be preferred, as the rock is good. The true right bank is clothed in vegetation and is an unpleasant climb, up or down.

CHIMNEY-POT.—Between the Dee cascade and the easy rocks on the right-hand side of the corrie is a huge buttress which appears too formidable at all points. From the back of the corrie, however, a dark chimney is revealed, offering a possible route of ascent. Twenty feet of wet rock brings the climber to the base of a great pointed dividing rib cleaving the gully in two. The left branch is wet, dirty, and of moderate difficulty. The right branch, with its black initial chimney, its piled boulders and huge final chokestone, attracts immediate attention. The chimney, about 20 feet high, is topped by a chokestone over which a waterfall tumbles. The back-and-knee method was used to reach a small foothold on the left wall from which the chokestone may be assailed direct. From the scree patch above, another chokestone pitch of 10 feet is climbed on the left. Another scree platform follows, leading to the gigantic chokestone and final through-route, which is reached over the large rectangular blocks on the left wall. The tunnel portion is about 8 feet and is climbed by back and knee. The whole pitch is about 150 feet high and is, to say the least, difficult. The top of the rib is reached in a further 20 feet.

While the difficulty lessens, extreme care is needed on the next section, which is wet and rotten. The first chokestone encountered may be climbed direct or passed on the left, the second more or less directly and with a careful eye on the abundant loose material above. At the top the rock

becomes steeper and yet more rotten, and a way of escape on the right, on sounder rock, may be preferred. 700 feet. Difficult.

#### CHOIRE BROCHAIN.

The RED GULLY, on the extreme left of the corrie, is the easiest way of descent. Full of scree at the top, it develops into a natural staircase in its lower reaches.

WEST BUTTRESS.—The only climb recorded starts near the foot of the West Gully, works across the buttress, and continues to the top in or near an open chimney ("Guide," 158 and 227). Hendry and Lumsden attempted to follow this route, but failed to identify description with reality until the final chimney was reached.

CAMPION GULLY leaves the West Gully on the left-hand side, near the foot of the main gully. The subsidiary is open, scree-filled, and unpleasant for about 150 feet. The first pitch, a chokestone 6 feet high, may be climbed direct or by using the left wall. The second pitch, 25 feet, is steep slab, chokestone, and water, and is passed on the right. More scree leads to a third pitch, rather higher than the second, and the main obstacle in the gully, two massive blocks above a cave. A through-route leads to the top of the first block, from which a delicate movement out to the right enables the upper chokestone to be taken on that side. The fourth pitch is also of the cave variety and is climbed on the right for about 15 feet. Some difficulty may be encountered in making the final pull. A fifth steep, slabby pitch makes a good finish to the climb. 450 feet. Difficult. Three-quarters of an hour.

WEST GULLY, climbed in 1898, consists of scree and slabs, with steeper rocks at the top, not of any great difficulty ("Guide," 157).

BLACK PINNACLE, Central Buttress, was climbed in 1911 by J. A. Parker, H. Alexander, J. B. Miller, and W. A. Reid, but their route was not direct. The new route starts, as did the original, over the slabs at the foot of Central Buttress Gully and continues up the great slab on the right of the pinnacle base. The first party climbed the gully and

Sgor an Iochain Uaine

Chokestone Gully

West Buttress

Pinnacles Buttress

Monolith Gully

Dee Waterfall

Chimney Pot

Red Gully

West Buttress

West Gully

Black Pinnacle

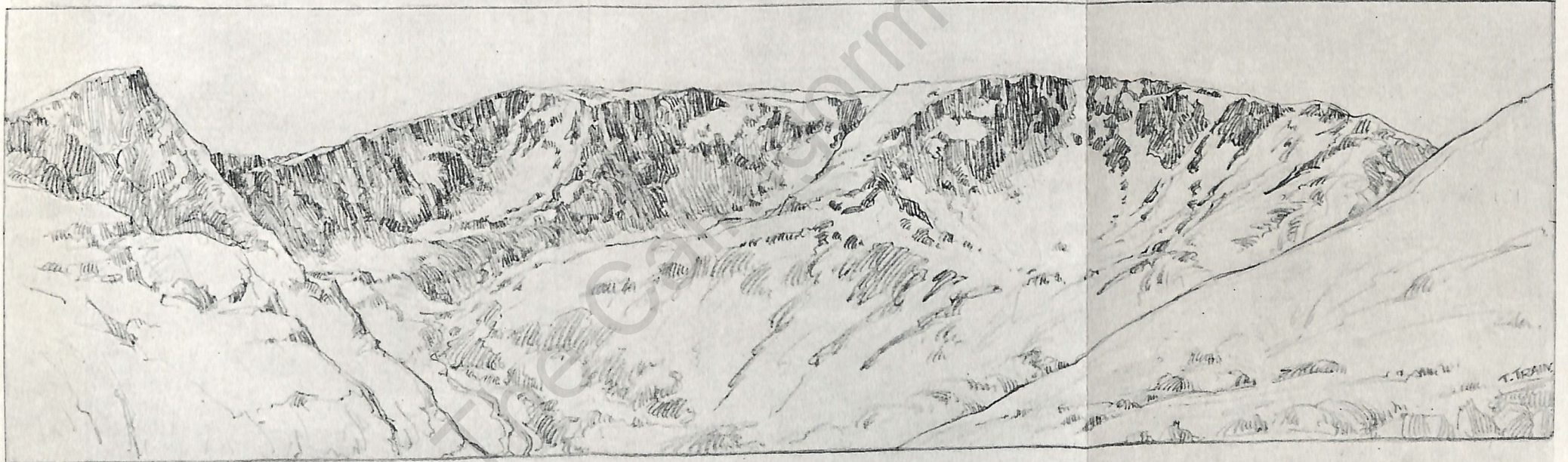
C.D. Gully

Braeriach Pate

East Gully

East Buttress

Ben Macdui



Garbh Choire Mòr

Garbh Choire Dhaidh

Choire Brochain



its left branch ("Guide," 158). The top of the slab overhangs this branch gully, and from this point a traverse to the left was made to a point between the two hillward pinnacles. These were speedily climbed, as was the outermost prong which was not included in the pioneer bag.

A steep descent was made into the branch gully, from which the plateau was reached via the Central Chimney. 500 feet. Moderate.

**CENTRAL CHIMNEY.**—Although Central Buttress Gully branches about half-way up the buttress, a narrow chimney continues in the direct line. The first pitch is about 100 feet up; it is a chimney of about 8 feet, topped by a chokestone and designed for back-an-dknee climbing. Two more pitches of a similar nature follow. Wet in its lower reaches, it improves with height and makes a delightful climb. 300 feet. Difficult.

**CENTRAL BUTTRESS GULLY** was first climbed by W. N. Ling and H. Raeburn on snow to the col behind Braeriach Pinnacle ("Guide," 158). Central Chimney makes a better climb than either branch in summer.

**BRAERIACH PINNACLE** ("Guide," 157-158, 227).—From the bifurcation in Central Buttress Gully our route lies directly up the wall on the right (cairn). An easy traverse back to the right leads to a small platform, from which a steep and exposed face was climbed by combined effort. About 50 feet of very difficult climbing ends in a small grassy niche on the west side of the pinnacle. The route now lies up the very exposed ridge and continues difficult for 60 feet to a narrow, V-shaped chimney. This is started on the right after a difficult traverse and is climbed by straddling. Loose rock adds to the difficulty here. From a small platform above, a hazardous traverse on the very exposed face is made and the summit boulders 6 feet above gained by horizontal ledges. On the ridge the angle eases off and easy scrambling follows for 200 feet, over three subsidiary pinnacles, to the main top. For some 250 feet the climbing is continuously very difficult and exposed. 650 feet. Very difficult.

**EAST GULLY** ("Guide," 157) was climbed in April

1901, when no pitches were visible. Six appear in summer, all of moderate difficulty and all more or less wet. In 1940 four Junior Members—Hendry, W. Lumsden Walker, L. Durpo, and G. Morrison—traversed into the gully, above the first pitch, from the Central Buttress and climbed to the top. In 1942 Hendry and Lumsden descended the gully, taking in the first pitch. 600 feet. Moderate.

**EAST BUTTRESS GULLIES.**—The East Buttress is cleft by several gullies and close to East Gully by two or three short, steep chimneys. On the right of the buttress two conspicuous gullies catch the eye, one with a double-barrelled start, separated from its neighbour—farther to the right—by a rib large enough almost to be regarded as a subsidiary buttress.

The first we called Pyramus Gully; both branches and the intervening rib were climbed. The right leg of the pair is the more important, and the two join about 300 feet up. The left branch is moderately difficult, the rib perhaps a little stiffer.

The climb starts as a steep scramble from the scree shoot of East Gully to a shallow basin formed of water-worn rock. The basin is common to both branches and is harder to vacate than at first appears. Above this the route lies over piled boulders for 35 feet to the first pitch where back-and-knee work for 30 feet brings the climber to a natural staircase (30 feet) leading to the second obstacle. This wet bulge was climbed on the right for 30 feet to reach a third slabby pitch about 80 feet high, providing delightful climbing of a not too difficult order.

Above this the gullies join and a further 100 feet of easy slab follows. The gully steepens again, but the slabs provide good holds and excellent climbing for another 100 feet, above which the rock deteriorates. Eighty feet from the summit the gully branches, the right fork providing only dirty scrambling and a poor finish. The left is a narrow chimney with a final chokestone of good, rough rock. 600 feet. Moderate.

The left leg is dirty, clothed in vegetation, and harbours five small pitches of no great difficulty.

THISBE GULLY.—This is a larger gully than its neighbour and lies to the extreme right of the corrie. The first pitch is of the chokestone variety and is mildly difficult. Above it a natural staircase leads to a steep, smooth wall, climbed at first by a crack on the right and then up the middle until an overhang forces one to the right again. The third pitch is a chimney and chokestone, climbed inside the crack; after a nasty bend is passed, the chokestone proves easy. The fourth follows immediately and is climbed by the back-and-knee method. The fifth goes easily, although steep and wet, to a double chokestone obstacle which is passed on the left. The section above was unpleasantly littered with recently fallen boulders, many of them unstable. The sixth pitch is definitely difficult: a narrow crack, 18 feet in height, is climbed by jamming the right knee while the left leg performs an experiment in friction on the inclined plane outside. The final pitch is a large chokestone, taken on the left, above which scree slopes lead to the summit. 600 feet. Difficult.

Although reputedly inaccessible, from the climber's point of view, the Garbh Choire will reward the resourceful climber willing either to camp near his objective or to start from a more comfortable base at an uncomfortable hour.

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

THE Fifty-fourth Annual General Meeting of the Club was held in the Caledonian Hotel, Aberdeen, on Saturday, November 28, 1942, the President, Mr Hugh D. Welsh, in the Chair.

The President referred to the death of Professor Collie, deploring the loss of our very distinguished Honorary President and describing some of his more remarkable achievements. After discussion it was decided to postpone the election of an Honorary President until after the war.

The Statement of the Accounts for the year ending October 31, 1942, was not posted to members, as is usually done, but may be seen at the Secretary's office. A brief summary of the situation is set out below:—

Balance at credit of—

1. Revenue	-	-	-	-	-	£31	3	7
2. Life Membership Fund	-	-	-	-	-	64	2	3
3. General Works' Fund	-	-	-	-	-	48	10	9

All funds show increase over the amounts at credit at October 31, 1941.

Membership at October 31, 1942:—

Ordinary Members	-	-	-	-	-	219
Junior Members	-	-	-	-	-	4
Associate Members	-	-	-	-	-	1
Life Members	-	-	-	-	-	16
						<hr/>
						240

One Life Member and three Ordinary Members enrolled during the year. Forty-one members, so far as is known, are now on service with H.M. Forces. Thirty-two names appear in the last issue of the *Journal*, the others are: Misses I. E. Spalding and M. G. Fyfe; Messrs J. R. Blair, A. S. Howie, W. Lawson, J. H. Calder MacLeod, Ian C. Ritchie, J. S. Shand, and C. H. Wilson.

It was the general opinion of the meeting that Meets and Excursions were not really necessary. Nevertheless, the Committee co-opted five more members (replacing, *pro tem.*, Messrs Bothwell, Levack, Lorimer, and Lawson, who are on service, and Miss Hay) to carry on the work of this austerly A.G.M. A Sub-Committee was appointed to arrange for Indoor Meetings of the Club during the winter months.

It is scarcely necessary to add that there was no Annual Dinner. Even the customary vote of thanks to the Chairman was overlooked,

MR JAMES L. GEDDES.

By the death of Mr James L. Geddes, of Craigentoul, Murtle, the Club has lost one of its oldest members. Born in 1851, he was associated for sixty years with the Culter Mills Paper Company, in the development of which he played a leading part. Taking an active interest in the welfare of the local community, he served on various public bodies, and founded the Culter and Drumoak Nursing Association.

He joined the Cairngorm Club in 1890, the year following the founding of the Club, and very few of our members go back as far as his day. Colonel Godfrey P. Geddes recalls a day on Ben Macdhuì with him in 1924, and he set a good pace even at the age of seventy-three. Most of his climbing was done prior to the last war, but in his day he had covered most of the Cairngorms, although Lochnagar, Mount Keen, and Morven were his favourite excursions.

SECOND-HAND.

A Cairngorm Club, affiliated to the Scottish Ramblers' Federation and to the S.Y.H.A., with its headquarters in Glasgow, has apparently been in existence for some months. It styles itself the Glasgow Cairngorm Club, thereby hoping, presumably, to avoid confusion with The Cairngorm Club. Nevertheless, we think that the Glasgow body should, if only in its own interest, have given more thought to naming the baby. The leading city has failed to display any very great originality in this instance.

A statement circulating here to the effect that the Glasgow Club is so-named with the permission of The Cairngorm Club is, of course, without foundation.

MEETS AND EXCURSIONS, 1942.

What was probably to be the last New Year Meet for the duration was held at the Inver Hotel, Crathie, from December 31, 1941, to January 4, 1942. The limited accommodation at the hotel was fully occupied and there was some overflow into neighbouring cottages. On New Year's Day eleven members and guests were on Lochnagar in moderately good conditions. On the following day Cairn Taggart was one of the hills visited, whilst on the 3rd the party was on Ben Macdhuì. The soft slush on the summit plateau near the Stob was particularly objectionable, being some 9 inches deep, but better snow took the party down to and over Loch Etchachan. It rained on the last day, and whilst one or two enthusiasts went out for a soaking, it was really much more comfortable at the sitting-room fire—after Col. Butchart had got it going. Others present at the outings included Misses Wood, Davidson, Crowder, and Meikle, and Messrs Lawson, McArthur, Mitchell, Ramsden, Scott, Smith, and Whitehouse.

R. L. M.

The Easter Meet was also held at the Inver Hotel, Crathie, Miss Bothwell and Messrs Whitehouse, Ramsden, and Train attending; there was an even more impressive attendance at Braemar, viz., the President, who went there believing the Inver Hotel to be full, Col. Butchart and ski. The parties did make contact, however, in spite of mist and bad weather. Butchart visited all the more promising snow patches in the district, but apart from a visit to Ben Macdhuì the other members were content to view the distant snows from lower and drier altitudes.

Z.

An excursion to Lochnagar was arranged on Sunday, March 1. The party spent Saturday night at the Inver Hotel. An early start was made by Balmoral and Gelder Lodge. The snow was soft until the slopes of the West Buttress were reached. Visibility was variable, as there was considerable low cloud at times, but the summit cairn was reached and the return made by the Black Shiel Burn and the wood-cutters' bridge over the Dee near the Hotel. It was a very fine day indeed, especially in retrospect, as it turned out that the other projected excursions had, for reasons connected with travel restrictions and other war-time activities, to be abandoned.

The Saturday afternoon excursions fared similarly, as it became impossible to get bus transport even as far as Hill of Fare. The only walks completed "according to plan" were over Brimmond Hill and the Fungle.

E. W. S.

#### INDOOR MEETINGS.

Indoor Meets were held in the Caledonian Hotel on February 26 and March 20, 1942. At the first Dr A. Fraser Ross showed a collection of beautiful Kodachrome slides of Lochnagar and the Cairngorms, with several studies of Alpine plants. A large audience was very appreciative of the pictures which, apart from their excellent technical qualities, exhibited unusual artistic perception. The second was the occasion of the Club Dance, which was well attended.

H. D. W.

#### VIEW FROM CLACHNABEN.

On an exceptionally clear day in September 1942 I spent some hours on the summit of Clachnaben, and while examining the southern horizon with a ten-magnification glass noticed a tower on a hill-top, invisible to my unaided eye, just visible above the western slope of Craigancash (1,772 feet), the south-west spur of Sturdy Hill.

On returning home and studying the appropriate maps I decided that the Tower lay somewhere within the angle contained between Inchkeith and the Forth Bridge.

An appeal to authority, in the person of our Past President, Mr J. A. Parker, produced the suggestion that I had probably seen Corstorphine Hill and Tower, just west of Edinburgh.

I next checked the possibility of seeing Corstorphine, allowing for curvature and refraction, according to the article in the *Club Journal*, Vol. IX., contributed by the late Gordon Jenkins.

By taking the height of Corstorphine Hill from the 1-inch scale map and of the rock summit of Clachnaben from the Brimmond Hill Indicator, and by using the differences of the latitude and longitude of the two hills for obtaining the distance, the following data were obtained:—

Corstorphine Hill, 532 feet, Clachnaben at 13 feet below the summit rock, 1,950 feet; distance between,  $74\frac{1}{2}$  miles; line of sight crossing the west slope of Craigancash at  $5\frac{3}{8}$  miles from Clachnaben at a height of about 1,625 feet.

Using the above data and allowing curvature and refraction as per Jenkin's Table showed that Corstorphine Hill should be visible from just below the rock summit of Clachnaben by the amount of about 33 feet, which appears to agree closely with what was seen.

Neither the height nor position of the summit rock of Clachnaben are given on the 6-inch scale Ordnance Survey map, and it is hoped someone will check the height of this rock above the 1,900 feet top shown.

Those who are interested in similar problems to the above should obtain the excellent diagram designed by Mr J. A. Parker and published in an article entitled "Curvature and Visibility," contributed by him to the *S.M.C. Journal*, Vol. XX., April 1935.

With the aid of this diagram one can easily solve such questions approximately by a graphic method once the correct data *re* heights, etc., have been obtained.

W. M.

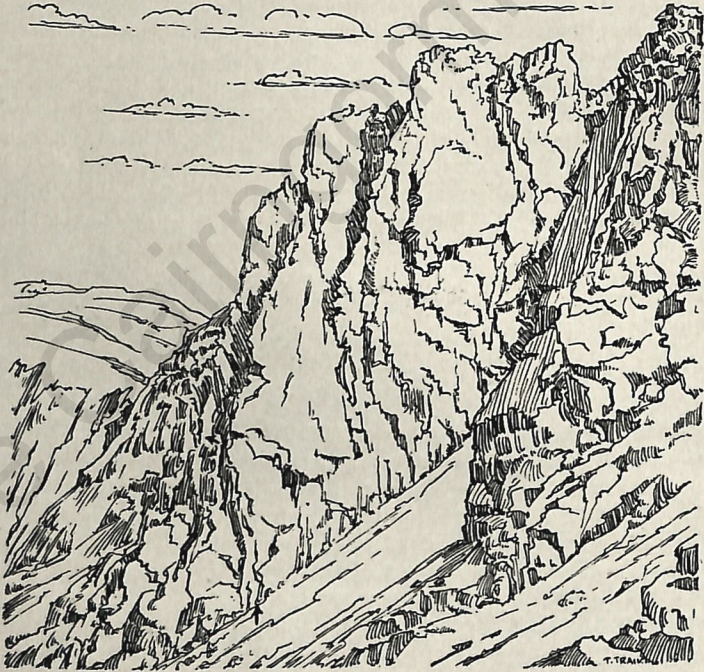
#### LOCHNAGAR.

*Polyphemus Gully*.—In August 1942 W. Hendry and F. Wilson climbed the gully and found that the rock tooth, or spike, on the main pitch has now disappeared, along with the boulders that formerly crowned the pitch ("S.M.C. Guide to the Cairngorms," p. 217). Their route lies to the right of the original and is apparently rather easier. The great chokestones pitch, avoided by the original party, was climbed for half its height, until progress was barred at a narrow cave in an overhanging wall. An attempt to climb the right wall was frustrated half-way up by large loose blocks, the removal of which would allow of ascent. Escape was found on the vertical left wall, above which the original route was joined.

*Tough-Brown Traverse*.—In October 1942 Hendry and Lumsden followed the old Tough-Brown route, with various deviations, and report finding a somewhat easier and more direct way than that followed by Symmers and Ewen in 1931. In particular, while the leader climbed the wall above the great terrace leading out of Parallel Gully B in the

orthodox unorthodox way, the second man climbed the chimney at the end of that terrace. The first party must have seen it, the second did not like it, but Hendry reports that it is not more than difficult. It appears to have mellowed with the years!

The name Tough-Brown Ridge was formerly applied to this climb, but the pioneers, forced far to the left, reached the ridge proper only after a long upward traverse. The ridge proper was climbed in July 1941 by Dr J. H. B. Bell and Miss N. Forsyth. Dr Bell agrees that the new climb should be called the Tough-Brown Ridge, to preserve the old associations, and that the original route should be altered, to avoid confusion, to Tough-Brown Traverse. For notes on this and other climbs on Lochnagar see *S.M.C.J.*, Vol. XXIII., p. 28 (April 1942, No. 133).



THE MITRE RIDGE



## SKI NOTES, 1941-42.

THE 1941-42 ski season was one of the best for many years, with skiable snow on Deeside from January 18 until the first Saturday in May. But, alas, few people had the time to take advantage of it. As often happens the season opened late. I have skied on Craiglich as early as October 30, but last season I took my ski to Inver at New Year and did not use them—no snow. In January and February a number of Service men, British and others, had some good skiing both from Ballater and Braemar. It was not until Easter, however, that I was again able to take my ski up Deeside when I went to Braemar for the best part of a week. There was by that time no snow in the village. The first day we attempted Ben Macdhui; the Sròn Riach was well covered and, with skins, we made good progress although there was a stiff breeze blowing and clouds were gathering. By the time that we got to the top of the Sròn the mist was so thick that there was little point in going farther, since skiing in mist is very little fun. The first part of the run down was difficult, with many wind ridges and visibility very bad. Farther down we got on to the eastern side of the ridge where the conditions were excellent and we had a good run to the burn.

Next day we tried Lochnagar, but again we were defeated by mist. We climbed to the back of the Stuic Buttress and took the run down the burn, *i.e.*, north-west. By this time it was raining or snowing alternately and the run was far below its best. As we returned, however, the weather improved and we had many fast and amusing runs down the burn where the snow was excellent spring snow, which always flatters one's skiing. Our next objective was Càrn an Tuirc, but here it was no better—mist and rain. Once more, when we got lower, it cleared and we climbed in clear weather to the western shoulder of Sròn na Gaoithe and were rewarded by a magnificent run to the burn. I had a day off when it rained, then once more to Càrn an Tuirc, which, in good conditions, gives one of the best runs in the district. On this occasion we were accompanied by a member of the Polish Forces. The mist was even worse than before, although the snow was good. We lost our Polish friend in the mist, and when we found him he had lost a ski! Fortunately, there was a large island in the snow on to which the ski had run. As Sròn na Gaoithe was again clear we negotiated a snow-bridge and climbed up a snow-covered burn. Suddenly my companion disappeared—all but her head. Fortunately, there was little water in the burn and no harm was done. The running on the way down was very good and fast.

Another day of rain followed, and then, after a morning of mist and rain, a beautiful blue sky and bright sun—the day I had been waiting for! But now it was too late to get to any of the continuous snow-fields, so after studying the apparently small snow patches on Morrone I carried my ski up to a snowfield just above the 2,500 contour to the north-west

of the summit. After a few runs here I had a most entertaining run down, the best of the week. There was perfect spring snow, and frequently the run was so narrow that there was scarcely room to turn. I was able to ski within 100 yards of the road at Tomintoul, and for the whole distance I had to cross not more than a total of 200 yards of heather. So ended my season for 1941-42. But had I been more energetic I could have had some perfect running on the first Saturday in May when I walked over Ben Macdhuì and Cairngorm of Derry in perfect weather—bright sunshine and blue sky—but I did not have my ski with me. From the summit of Macdhuì down to the point where one strikes off for Cairngorm of Derry was a continuous snow-field, and by carrying one's ski for about a quarter of a mile one could get on to a continuous snow-field on the north-west of Derry Cairngorm where one could have skied about a quarter of the way down. But ski-ing in Scotland is full of "might-have-beens," and that is part of its attraction. Fortune favours the brave.

H. J. B.

The unusually heavy fall of snow early in 1942 provided much better sport than usual on the lower hills near Aberdeen, and several week-ends were spent during February and March on the slopes of Cairn William on Donside. One week-end in February a fresh fall lying on already compact and deep snow supplied first-rate conditions, especially where, on the south and west sides, a brilliant sun had consolidated it on to the foundation.

At the Joint Meet of the Cairngorm and Etchachan Clubs at the Inver Hotel on March 1 six members, mainly of the latter Club, climbed on ski from within a hundred yards of the hotel to the top of Culardoch. The lower slopes had a covering of fresh snow on a hard under-surface, and the ascent was achieved with comparatively little effort by the use of sealskins. The summit plateau was found to be windswept, hard and polished, and on the descent those with ski fitted with metal edges had the advantage. As we were sitting at lunch in the brilliant sunshine admiring the view of the snow-covered precipices of Lochnagar to the south, it was suddenly noticed that a halo round the sun could be seen through snow-glasses, but that when these were removed the phenomenon was not nearly so marked. Once observed it was seen to persist for over two hours.

The best ski-ing of the season was undoubtedly in April when W. Lawson, R. O. Scott, and W. Bennet (J.M.C.S.) spent a week at Lui Beg, others joining them at the week-ends.

On Sunday, April 12, Ben Macdhuì was climbed in mist via the Luibeg Burn to the path above Loch Etchachan and thence to the top, as unfortunately the snow on the Sròn Riach was too patchy. The run down was slow at first, but improved as more crystalline snow was reached on the lower slopes. A hard frost overnight and a clear sky made the running much faster on the Monday, one party climbing Derry Cairngorm, and others traversing Ben Macdhuì to Cairn Lochan.



SKI LANDSCAPE

*F. W. Morgan*

The rest of the week was perfect ski-ing weather, with frosty nights, a blazing sun by day, and practically no wind, the only fault being the rapidity with which the snow-line receded. We must have appeared strange objects clad only in snow-glasses, trousers and boots, with liberal applications of glacier cream to prevent the uncomfortable effects of excess sun. In a climate such as ours it is seldom that I have experienced such marvellous conditions holding so long during early spring at this altitude.

Tuesday night was spent at Corrou Bothy, and the following day the cliff edge from Devil's Point to Cairn Toul and Angel's Peak was traversed, with finally a very fast run down from the latter to the head of Glen Geusachan. Unfortunately, there was no snow in the glen itself and the ski had to be carried back to Corrou and from there, after tea, to Derry Lodge.

After an off-day good runs on the north-west slopes of Derry Cairngorm were made on Friday. The texture of the snow on the steeper parts near the top was rather peculiar as, although it was all homogeneous and crystalline, the sun had apparently softened the upper surface so much that, when turning, the ski tended to make the soft surface layer slip over the crystalline snow beneath.

Ben Macdhui was again ascended on Saturday and Sunday by the Luibeg Burn, the snow from the cairn down to Loch Etchachan in the bed of the stream north of the path being perfect crystalline spring snow and probably the fastest of the week. The rest of the descent was made as before by the Luibeg Burn.

Although the snow was disappearing rapidly several enthusiastic members took ski to Derry Lodge at the May holiday week-end and were repaid by fast conditions from the summit plateau of Ben Macdhui to Loch Etchachan.

Though the snow did not lie so long on the Cairngorms as in 1941, it provided on the whole better ski-ing than last season, and it is to be hoped that there will be sufficient snow in 1943 to enable us to enjoy to the full this exhilarating sport, and to justify us in considering that our journey is really necessary.

R. O. S.

A generous covering of snow on the ground and the brilliant light of a full moon on a night in April 1942 induced a party of us to attempt Lochnagar on ski. We left Braemar at 1 A.M. and cycled to the Suspension Bridge. We had intended to ski through the Ballochbuie forest, but on reaching there we found the snow on the track iron-hard, which rendered ski-ing without skins impossible, so we walked through the forest till we came to the valley above the tree-line. There we found the snow much more suitable, and adjusting our ski we slid smoothly onwards to Lochnagar.

The full moon lit up the snow-covered mountain, which sparkled myriad-pointed from myriads of snow-crystals. In its bright light the icy slopes gleamed coldly and the forms of the party were boldly

silhouetted on the unbroken snow. There was no whisper of wind; it was breathlessly beautiful.

We made straight for the western corrie, crossing the Sandy Loch. On reaching the corrie we stopped and planted our ski and ski-sticks. Grasping our ice-axes we began the slow, steep climb to the summit plateau. Frequently we paused, panting for breath, glad to stop and admire the moon now sinking westwards behind thin streaks of purple cloud. The precipices of An Stuc gleamed dim and white against a golden purple haze. As we pushed upwards again, feet plunging into snow (how smooth and effortless by comparison the movement on ski), the eastern sky began to grow paler.

The summit of Lochnagar was reached at dawn. Summit boulders, so familiar in summer weather, were now unrecognisable; the indicator hidden; never was so much snow here, nor such beauty of wind-sculptured snow-flowers. And those immense cliffs at the Eastern Corrie! Nearly a thousand feet of sheer rock, covered in every inch with snow or ice; curling cornices; icicles draped in flowers of snow; the whole corrie glistening in the pale dawn light.

Exhilarated by all this beauty, and with excited thoughts of the views awaiting us when the sun rose red to transform by its colour the whole of that corrie, we did not stop, but went admiringly round the summit plateau to the Meikle Pap. While we breakfasted here a cold north wind blew powdered snow into every crevice of our clothing, and the sun, somewhat colourless, rose hesitatingly above gathering clouds.

More cloud drove down from the north. In the brief half-hour of sunlight we traversed the foot of the corrie to the Black Spout. Familiar slopes of immense tumbled boulders were replaced by a uniform whiteness; until we reached the shelter of the gully bottom the snow was blown mercilessly into our faces; great precipices towered gleaming-white and terrible above us; it was exhilarating and the beauty of it all defies description.

Low cloud capping the mountain cheated us of the warm sunshine that should have been ours in that sheltered gully. The photographer too was cheated of that light which would have turned snow-crystal and icicle and climbing companions, precipice, mountain, and sky into vivid and colourful pictures.

We conquered the Black Spout to find ourselves in thick cloud with visibility at 10 yards. Fifteen minutes brought us upon our upward tracks; a rapid glissade replaced the toilsome ascent of the earlier hours; we tore downhill out of the cloud, straight towards our ski. The remaining 5 miles were mostly gentle downhill gliding—a pleasant contrast to the weary trudge of a day's end on foot.

After twelve memorable hours on the hill we re-entered Braemar.

MARY FARQUHARSON.

## REVIEWS.

**Britain's Mountain Heritage.** By Arthur Gardner, F.S.A.  
(Batsford. 12s. 6d.)

A title of this nature implies a reasonably unbiased account of the mountains of Britain, but in this instance the performance falls rather short of the promise. It is essentially a plea for the establishment of National Parks and a glorification of the English Lake District, which receives 22 of the 40 pages of descriptive text and 63 of the 128 photographs. All Scotland is covered in 14 pages and 45 photographs. In our opinion this proportion is so far out of accord with the relative importance of the mountains in the two areas as to be ridiculous in a book bearing this title. The Cairngorms, it may be noted, receive six lines of disparagement and no photographs!

The photographs are printed on rather poor paper, unavoidable, perhaps, in these times, and reproduction suffers. We should have welcomed more snow scenes and winter views, as then more of the atmosphere and character of many of the hills can be conveyed in a photograph.

The author goes out of his way to attack the work of the Forestry Commission, often quite without justification so far as Scotland is concerned. One wonders, too, if the Association for the Preservation of Rural Scotland is really "fighting . . . to preserve what is left of England's green and pleasant land." This misstatement gives the key to the tone and object of the book, which is of less interest to hill-men than Batsford's other mountain publications.

R. L. M.

**The Alpine Journal**, Vol. LIII., Nos. 264, 265, 1942.

The Editor of *The Alpine Journal* may deplore the lack of material relating to great expeditions; he is still able to include accounts of recent visits to new mountains. Almost he could maintain interest and the issue on the footnotes to Alpine history, tales of famous guides, and recollections of the great days of Whymper and Mummery, although future editors may find it difficult to hark back to the well-documented modern expedition!

T. Graham Brown forsakes history and Mont Blanc for some very interesting climbs on the Nordend of Monte Rosa, but, so far as the Alps are concerned, the Editor has to fall back chiefly on reminiscence. G. A. Solly describes an ascent of the Alphubel with J. A. Parker in

1906, while E. L. Strutt writes of the Eastern Alps in the nineties. The Alps, however, are also the main theme of such articles as "First Affections," by the Editor, and "The Middle Land," by C. W. F. Noyce—two very enjoyable papers—and, less directly, in "Mountain Inns," by G. W. Bell, and "On Cairns," by Peter Lloyd.

Ranging farther afield, R. A. Hodgkin describes an attempt on Kenya Mountain in conditions that appear to have been no less than formidable, and a climb on Ruwenzori (Punta Margherita, Mt. Stanley), while Lord Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton's account of his attempt on Kenya will be of special interest to those of our members who had the privilege of seeing the film of this expedition at the author's lecture to the Club in December last.

In "A Winter Expedition to the Zemu Glacier," John Hunt discusses the possibility of a post-monsoon attempt on Everest. Opinion among experts seems to be fairly evenly divided, but any post-war expedition would presumably stay on and put the matter to the test. Other Himalayan articles are R. L. Holdsworth's "Ascent of Mankial Tsukai" (18,750 feet), and "Kulu Revisited," by J. O. M. Roberts.

It is only on very rare occasions that any reference to the British hills is admitted to *The Alpine Journal*. In addition to occasional and brief references to British climbs there is an attractive sketch of Sligachan in 1873, by H. G. Willink.

**The Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal**, No. 133, April 1942.

There has inevitably been a reduction in climbing activities of late and much of the space in climbing journals has been occupied by reminiscence. It is therefore agreeable to find now the introduction of more concrete articles dealing with the evolution and development of the hills as we know them, with their vegetation and utilisation. This tendency is to be seen both in our own and in the *S.M.C. Journal*. In the only number of the latter issued since our last review, Dr G. K. Fraser deals at some length with the Forest History of the Highlands. He tells of the use of pollen grains preserved in peat to elucidate the forest history of a region since glacial times, and points out that the character and area of woodland in the Highlands has not varied appreciably for some 4,000 years. Stumps of pine forests which may be found buried in peat at up to 3,000 feet above sea-level date from a warmer climatic period and are no evidence of lack of enterprise in afforestation at the present time.

J. H. B. Bell deals with some variations of routes in the north-east corrie of Lochnagar and a new climb on Creag an Dubh Loch. The climbs are difficult or severe, often necessitating stocking-soles and pitons.

W. H. Murray describes an ascent of the Crowberry Gully early in

the winter, whilst the usual section on New Climbs includes notes on Buttresses 1 and 2 on Sgóran Dubh.

R. L. M.

**The Journal of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club**, Nos. 35 and 36 (1941, 1942).

The Journal maintains its excellence, in spite of present difficulties, and if a trifle smaller is still beautifully produced and well illustrated. In the latter connection the camera work of F. H. F. Simpson and W. A. Poucher is especially good.

Of the two issues, the later I found the more interesting, although J. W. Haggas's contribution to the 1941 number—"The Gordian Knot"—is remarkable both for climb and description. Minute detail in description may sometimes be tedious but the effect here is almost of suspense. E. W. Hodge contributes a skiers' guide to Lakeland and continues the good work in the 1942 issue. Of the rest, the best reading was in S. B. Beck's account of a gully climb and F. H. F. Simpson's "Year with the Club."

The 1942 issue raises the very vexed question of pitons. Mr Bentley Beetham remarks on the apparently paradoxical position of allowing experts to use them while novices are debarred. But this is no paradox; as C. F. Holland later points out, there is danger in novices using them, arising from their inexpert application. Mr Beetham then proceeds to the very pertinent question: pitons are used only when further ascent becomes impossible—but, impossible for whom? There being no satisfactory answer, the author then makes the excellent suggestion that certain places of no interest to the pure rock-climber be set aside for the piton users. A very practical suggestion; the reviewer would go further and confine their use to pot-holes!

F. S. Smythe discusses adventitious aids to climbing, covering a wider field in "Mechanised Mountaineering." But Shelter Stone enthusiasts will find something still more to their taste in John Bechevaise's "Alpine Adventure in Lakeland," an account of a skating-cum-climbing camp near the top of the Styhead Pass. Adventure is the word!

**Climbers' Club Journal**, Vol. VII., No. 1, 1942.

Members serving with H.M. Forces have contributed much to the success of this issue. Robin A. Hodgkin describes the first ascent of Jebel Kassala (4,400 feet) during four days' leave. Motoring from Khartoum to Kassala—300 miles—with a Dongalawi servant and a demobilised Abyssinian patriot, they ascended the mountain in three and three-quarter hours and tasted of the leaves of the "Tree of Life" growing on the summit. The ascent had been attempted by Italians during one of their earlier occupations of the town.



Another member snatches a day or two on Syrian snow, and John Hunt describes a toughening school for one of our armoured formations. The number contains a guide to Clogwyn du'r Arddu, Notes on New Climbs, etc.

In addition to the above we have received

**The Scottish Geographical Magazine**, Vol. LVIII., No. 3,  
December 1942.

This contains two articles that may be of special interest to members: Part III. of "The Origin of the Scottish River System," by Alex. Bremner, and "'Auld King Coil' and Scottish Place-Names," by James Meikle.

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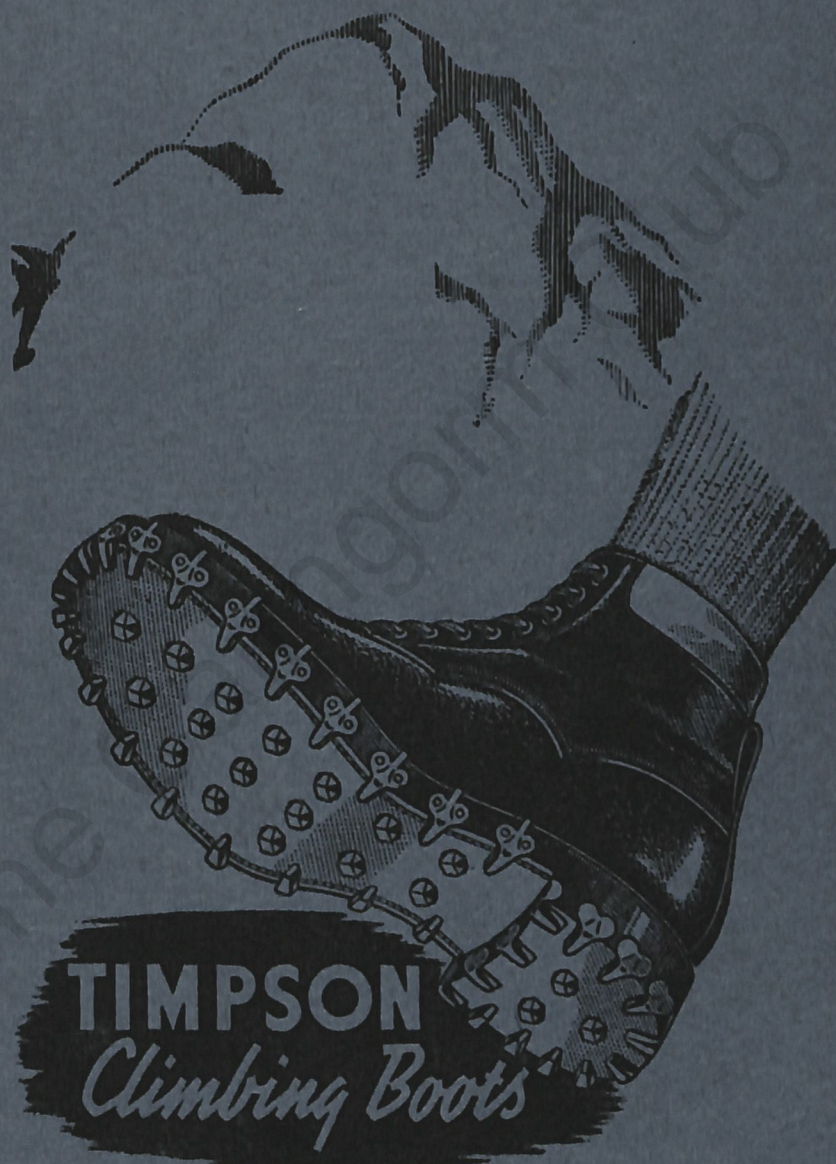
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