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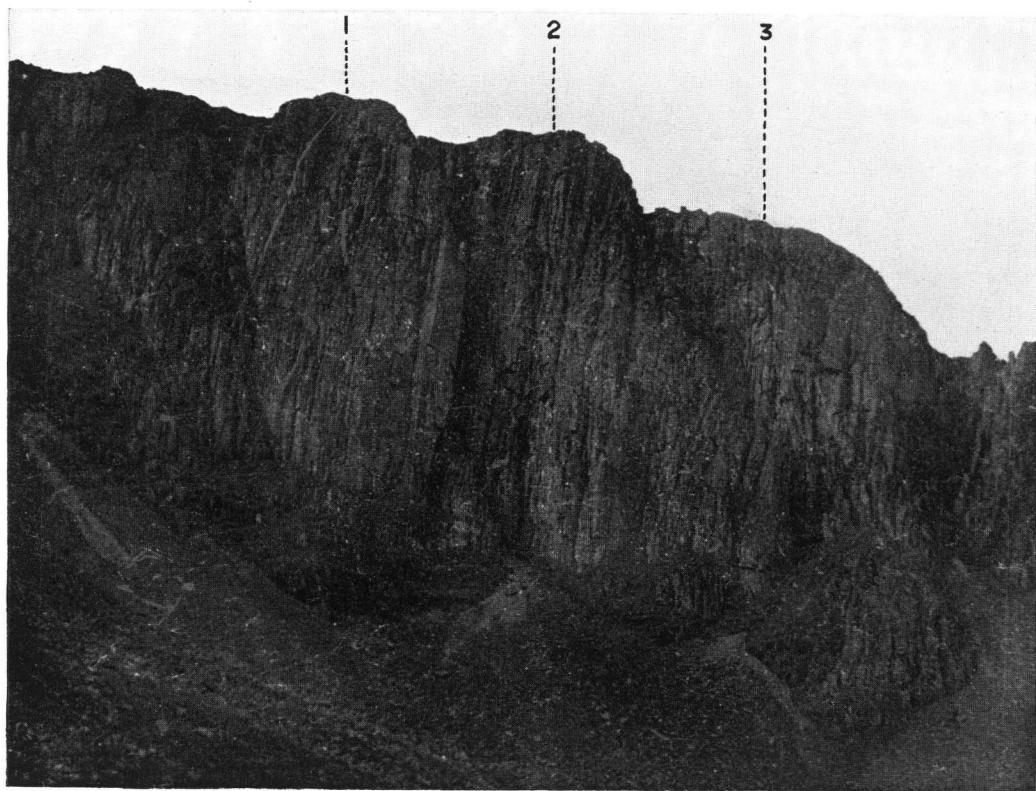
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September 1931

J. H. B. Bell

NORTH-EAST BUTTRESSES, STOB COIRE AN LOCHAN
Nos. 1, 2, 3 refer to South, Centre and North Buttresses of Article. (*See page 313*)

THE SCOTTISH Mountaineering Club Journal.

VOL. XIX.

APRIL 1932.

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THE NORTHERN CLIFFS OF STOB COIRE AN LOCHAN.

By JAS. H. B. BELL.

FOR a great many years the attractive precipices of the north and north-east faces of Stob Coire an Lochan have suffered a most unjustifiable neglect by the climbing fraternity. In May 1894 Collie and Hastings are reported to have scaled these cliffs, but their route is not indicated (*S.M.C.J.*, III., 158). The only other account of an actual climb there is to be found is in an article by Dr Clark (*S.M.C.J.*, X., 240), who describes an ascent of the middle buttress facing north-east by a party under the leadership of the late Harold Raeburn in April 1907. The climb seems to have been interesting and difficult throughout. A sketch on page 242 of that *Journal* indicates the route. I recall one other reference to the fine rock scenery of a precipitous gully between two of the buttresses, and to a weird, unstable-looking pinnacle at the northern end of the cliff. This pinnacle still stands, and seems to be quite unclimbable. In the summer of 1924, after climbing the lower rocks of Gearr Aonach, and going along the ridge towards Stob Coire an Lochan, I remember descending to the upper floor of the corrie and getting some good but indefinite scrambling on the northern face, beneath the summit of the peak. It was quite obvious, however, that the best climbing on this northern face was some way over to the right, and when new information was required for the

forthcoming "Glencoe Guide Book," it was evident that both the north and north-east cliffs would have to be explored.

The opportunity occurred on Sunday, 13th September 1931, as the rocks were all in excellent condition after the spell of dry weather. I was accompanied by C. M. Allen (J.M.C.S.), and we left Kingshouse early, as we wanted to explore all the possibilities at the head of the corrie. Nailed boots were the order of the day, as turfy ledges were expected. We soon saw what would be the most promising line of ascent on what we will now name the north buttress of the mountain. This consists of a 350-foot rock buttress which projects well into the corrie. It is joined above by a sort of col to the upper part of the mountain. The climb finishes at this col, but above it is another steep face of rock which gives easy scrambling. There is probably about 300 feet of ascent from the end of the difficult section to the summit. On the west side the buttress falls away sheer to a big scree shoot below a gully, the upper section of which is mossy. This gully descends from the first gap in the ridge to the west of the summit of Stob Coire an Lochan. There seems to be a very steep gully running down from the col above the actual climb, but this is seen from below to end in a vertical cliff. On the east side the buttress merges in the more indefinite rock face which I climbed in 1924. In fact, on a careful scrutiny of the rock face, I am of opinion that the climb about to be described is the most direct and satisfactory obtainable on this face.

The start is to the right of an undercut chimney, with a curious narrow hole in its roof about 40 feet up. This is about the lowest part of the rocks, but just east of this the rocks jut out farther into the corrie. From the jutting-out part all the features of the climb can be readily distinguished. The leader works on to the right-hand face near the chimney, and climbs some ledges to below an open-angled corner. There is a vertical wall to the right of this, which might be climbable, but is difficult. The corner itself, though wet and turfy, goes well enough. From this point it might be possible to

go up towards the left, but a neat, extended, upward traverse to the right, one of these entertaining balance movements with just sufficient holds, was preferred. It was really a series of traverse steps. Beyond this there is anchorage, and it is easy to get upwards to the left in an inclined direction for 100 feet or so. The rock face is extremely steep, and there are therefore one or two exposed sections, although perfectly secure. The way is now no longer open to the left, and the only course is to tackle the wall in front, forming the hardest pitch of the climb. Again, there is a convenient rocky corner. More than half-way up the pitch is a block above a crack on the left, and the key to the pitch is a hold behind and below this block. The pitch was ably dealt with by C. M. Allen, who, moreover, failed to discover the convenient handhold. The rock is quite sound here, and the difficulty, 20 feet in height, is compensated for by a fine belay above. After a short move to the left, the steep wall above can be tackled direct by an 8-foot overhang start, with splendid holds. Some way beyond is a long inclined chimney leading obliquely upwards to the right, with excellent holds. The crest of the buttress is now close above, and the climb is best finished by the ascent of a short steep crack. We moved fairly fast and took between eighty and ninety minutes to the climb. We left a cairn below and one above the actual climb, as the route has all the desiderata of a good rock climb—splendid, difficult pitches, sound rock with adequate belays and stances, steepness of angle, and the fact that variations are hardly possible once one is well started on the route. It should rank as a fortunate discovery this inclusion of a rock climb in the ascent of Stob Coire an Lochan directly from Glencoe.

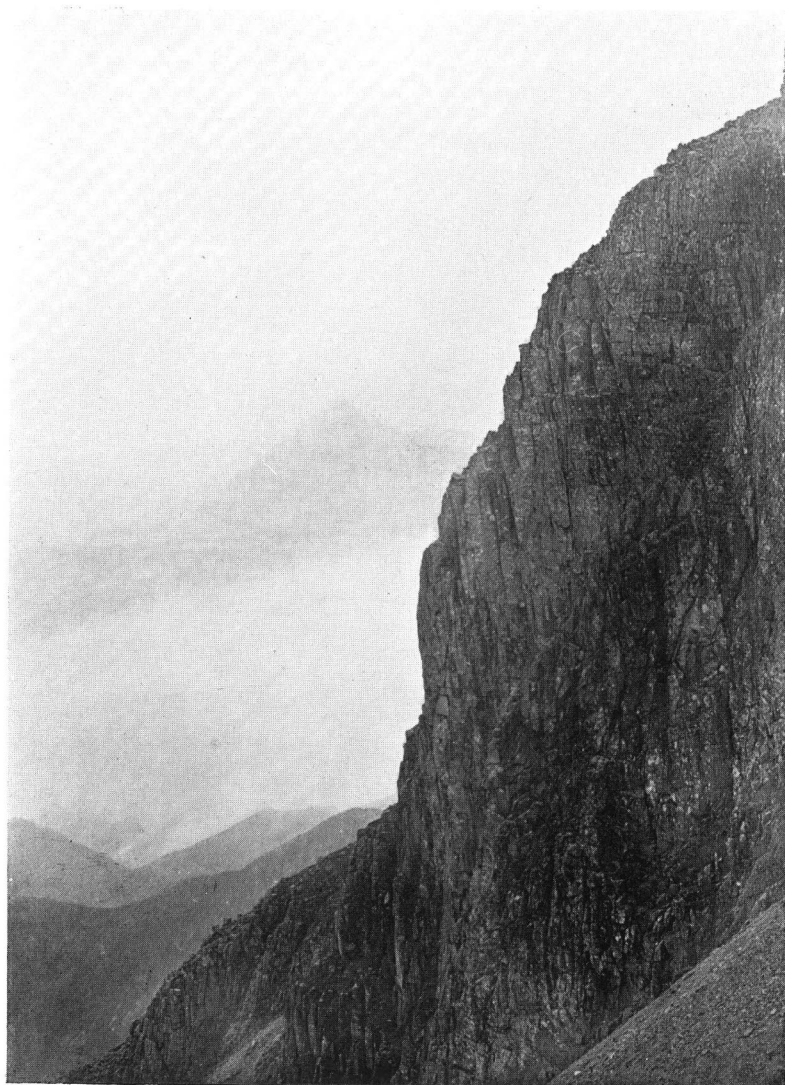
From the summit Allen and I descended the easy gully and scree shoot west of the buttress, and after lunch proceeded to investigate the north-east buttresses on the ridge between Stob Coire an Lochan and Aonach Dubh. As Dr Clark states in his article (*S.M.C.*, X., 240), there are three of these, which I shall name South, Central, and North. The intervening gullies will be referred to

as S.C. and N.C. respectively. The crazy pinnacle is still farther to the north.

We traversed beneath the south buttress. At its south end it might be possible to make a route by a kind of staircase of turfey ledges. This would be unattractive, and as there is an easy ledge from the left leading to a point midway up the buttress, it would not be climbing the buttress, the nose of which really points N.N.E., and forms the angle at the foot of the S.C. Gully. We inspected a conspicuous chimney on the north-east face, which was quite hopeless. All this face was rather hopeless, and also the N.N.E. edge. The face above the S.C. Gully actually overhangs.

The central buttress is the one climbed by Raeburn and Clark. It is also impossible immediately above the S.C. Gully.

There was nothing left but to try conclusions with the northern buttress, which, besides the upper cliff of columnar basalt, has also a lower dome of rock projecting into the corrie, the two being separated by a grassy hump. The lower section we climbed fairly direct, and we found that it gave about 150 feet of quite difficult rock, as there was a great deal of loose rock and turfey ledge about it. A very loose chimney, but with good holds above, was the end of the difficult section. The upper northern buttress is very like its neighbour, impossible on the smooth trap wall which faces N.E. by E., and with a N.N.E. edge of appalling steepness, which, however, deceived us into thinking it practicable. I succeeded in getting on to it low down from the north side, but soon it was impossible to climb farther up this edge, and a downward traverse had to be made across the north face. The only course was now to work our way up the north face by a series of loose ledges, and to try to force a way straight towards the crest of the cliff, where the final arête is nearly level. The face is disciplinary in the extreme, both loose and dangerous. From the easier ledges below to the summit we probably climbed about 200 feet. The upper part was difficult, and we were never sure of the security of such belays as we found. There was a very loose chimney,



September 1931

J. H. B. Bell

NORTH BUTTRESS, STOB COIRE AN LOCHAN. (*See page 316*)

not too difficult, and a questionable step out of it on to a turfy slope leading to the crest of the buttress. Here I wore a large flat rock plate as a headpiece, to protect myself from the debris sent down by the leader. Even the arête above the face was somewhat unstable, and very sensational. The drop to the N.C. Gully was almost vertical. We could easily see why the N.N.E. edge was quite unclimbable. Above the arête was one short pitch of moderate difficulty, and we were on the top of the buttress.

From what we have seen, the N.C. Gully is easy all the way, as it cuts far back into the summit plateau. There is much more of interest about the S.C. Gully, and we chose this for our mode of descent. The upper half is very loose but quite easy. As we descended, the rock scenery got more and more impressive, as the walls are nearly vertical on the north side, and actually overhanging on the other. The lower section of the gully requires care. The rock is smooth, but the holds are adequate. The lower pitch is really down an inside arête, which leads down to a dividing rock rib in the bottom of the gully. This gully should make a magnificent ascent under snow conditions, as the lower section is very steep and a good deal of ice might be encountered. The total height of the gully cannot be much less than 600 feet. The looseness of the upper part of the gully makes it an undesirable line of descent for a large party.

We did not make any further exploration to the north of the northmost of the three buttresses. There may be some short climbs available there, and the crazy pinnacle is certainly a picturesque object, but after our experiences on the northern buttress, where we feared to raise our voices lest we should arouse the mountain artillery, we should certainly sound a warning that there is no sane climbing likely to be found in that quarter.

STOB COIRE NAM BEITH.

By A. HARRISON.

IN 1922 a party of us were spending some time in Glencoe. We had with us Abraham's book on "British Mountain Climbs," and on page 307 we read his description of the Arch Gully of Stob Coire nam Beith, and decided that it would be interesting to try to explore the rocks which he said were practically untouched and should give some excellent climbing.

One day we went out to try to find the Arch Gully, but we were not able to identify it from his description, possibly because the deer fence no longer acted as a guide. The deer fence was destroyed for some distance from the rocks.

The rocks of Stob Coire an Lochan attracted our attention, and we spent our time on them instead of on Stob Coire nam Beith.

Every time I came down the glen the rocks of Stob Coire nam Beith attracted my attention, they are so much more noticeable from the road than the actual top rocks of Bidean nam Bian.

In 1928 Bartholomew and I went up to Clachaig with the intention of spending some time on these rocks, but an account of a climb on the Buchaille Etive Mor lured us from our original intention and the rocks remained unexplored.

When the "Guide Book" Committee was appointed to explore Glencoe it was only natural that I should wish to explore these rocks, and so one damp May day A. J. Don and I made our way up the coire towards the rocks.

The rocks of Stob Coire nam Beith face from north to east. Those facing north are very much broken up. As they swing round to the east they become better, and it was to those facing north-east that we turned our attention.

This first day was misty, and it was only after a few expeditions that we got to know the exact details. There are four buttresses facing north-east, which I shall number 1, 2, 3, and 4, beginning at the south.

Between Buttresses Nos. 4 and 3 there is a deep chimney which extends for about 200 feet, and between Buttresses Nos. 3 and 2 there is a large vivid patch of moss. Nos. 1 and 2 Buttresses are divided by a chimney or narrow gully, which at times is steep and at times is scree-filled. A very noticeable, deep-cut chimney runs up nearly the whole length of No. 1 Buttress.

We turned our attention to the deep chimney between Nos. 4 and 3 Buttresses, but the day was wettish and we did not persevere for long, but descended, and after a little investigation commenced the ascent of No. 4 Buttress.

A slanting gully ran up to the left of our buttress, which we found was best attacked some distance from this gully, as the rocks at the foot of it were loose. After about 150 feet the slope of the buttress eased off into a rake of grass and rock which continued up for nearly 100 feet. This is really a continuation of the slanting gully. An ascent was made off this buttress to the left on to the second, which was continued for some distance, when a turn was again made to the left on to the third buttress, which proved the steepest of the three.

This third buttress was ascended directly towards the summit, and near the top a route was taken somewhat to the right, to a snow-filled gully which finished at a small cairn. From the col at the head of this gully an ascent was made to the right for about 200 feet over easy ground to the top cairn at 3,621 feet. The time taken was 1 hour 45 minutes.

Next day we turned our attention to Buttress No. 3. This buttress was commenced at a point where the scree meets the grass and to the north of the brilliant patch of moss. The rocks were ascended for about 100 feet, and after that a traverse was made upwards to the right. The day was wet and consequently the rocks were not in good condition. The rocks to the right were fairly steep, and on account of their wetness were not ascended, but a

traverse was made back to the left and a grass gully entered. This was ascended about 40 feet, and then a traverse to the right and upwards made for approximately 50 feet. Thereafter the ascent was continued directly up over rocks and grass ledges. Then the ascent continued upwards and slightly to the left beneath a wall of rock, and continued up a shallow chimney which terminated in a slight niche between a large rock and a broad shelf which ran up to the right for about 100 feet. Up to this point the nature of the rock was not of the best quality, but once the shelf is reached the rock is of excellent quality. At the top of this shelf the party, led by J. H. B. Bell, approached to within 25 feet of us. From this point the route continues straight up the ridge over excellent rocks, which gradually lessen in angle, to the top. Time taken, 2 hours 35 minutes—approximately 1,000 feet.

The same day J. H. B. Bell, Speirs, and Symmers attacked the crack which runs up No. 3 Buttress to the left of the deep chimney, and Bell gives the following account.

“The left wall of the deep chimney is interrupted by a crack, which continues up beyond the level of the top of the upper part of the gully, and our climb lies along the line of the crack nearly all the way. The climb was interesting but not difficult for a long way. We could often leave the crack. At one point we came to a wide platform, and here a short steep pitch had to be climbed (quite difficult). It was raining all the time. Some way above this we lunched. Above the luncheon spot it was easy to traverse to the right (westwards) and to cross the head of the deep gully above the pitches. This then forms a natural end to the lower buttress of Stob Coire nam Beith.

“Our next pitch was a short, steep, difficult wall, bringing us back to the crack line above it, and there was one difficult pitch above this before the climb eased off and we could move to the left and on to the easy ground to join Harrison’s party, who had ascended by a parallel route to the east of us. After some easy going we cut across to the right and had a short, entertaining

climb up a steep rock tower (a series of cracks, total height 50 feet or so). Then the easy rocks continued almost to the summit of Stob Coire nam Beith."

The next buttress to be attacked was No. 1, which was done by Nimmo Allan, Don, and myself. We started to the left of the deep chimney, and after about 20 feet crossed to the right and made an upward traverse over rather sloping rocks for about 50 feet. After this the rocks were easier, if slightly unsound, with occasional pitches. The line of the chimney was followed the whole way on the right side. The last 100 feet were steeper, and the rock was distinctly unsound. The whole climb was probably about 700 feet. The last buttress to be attacked was No. 2, and this was done by Bartholomew and myself. The climb starts at approximately 2,500 feet, and follows the line of a shallow chimney on the southern part of the buttress. The first point of interest was a forked chimney in which the northern division was taken.

After that we proceeded up, and on reaching a broad ledge traversed to the left to prospect. Continuing from the middle of this ledge we came across a slab which was the most difficult part of the climb. The top part was specially holdless. This was about 250 feet above the start. We prospected afterwards, and thought that if we had proceeded straight up instead of traversing to the left we should have avoided this, and this was confirmed by a party who did it the next day.

After another 50 feet a broad terrace was reached, and after approximately 300 feet more the top of the buttress. A cairn was built there. The top of the buttress is about 500 feet beneath the summit cairn.

If the slab is missed out, we consider the climb should be classified as moderate: length, 600 feet; time, 1 hour; 60-foot rope.

The next day Ian Campbell and Horn were also available for investigation, and we decided to try the deep gully between Buttresses Nos. 3 and 4 and the gully on the east side of the rocks, which we thought was the Arch Gully described by Abraham.

We tossed, and it fell to Bartholomew and me to try the deep gully. We ascended this, until after about 150 feet we came at the top of a 20-foot pitch to a chock-stone cave. The floor of the cave was wet and slimy, and the only holds in it were angular holes in the sloping floor. There was no anchorage underneath the chock, and the possible route on the right wall did not look easy. After studying it for some time we decided that neither of us felt inclined to tackle it, so we descended and made our way up the opposite slope to try to get a good photograph of the rocks. It was the wrong time of day, and we did not get anything worth having. A photograph of the rocks should be taken in the early morning with the sun shining on the face.

The other gully was investigated by Horn and Campbell, who give the following report:—

“An attempt was made on 21st September 1931 to climb Stob Coire nam Beith by the narrow and fairly well-defined gully, which starts at the foot of the rocks and runs up the right-hand side of the Glencoe face (N.W. face).

“There are two distinctly severe pitches at the beginning of the climb. The first of these is a 30-foot wall, on which there are very few holds but plenty of moisture. It does not appear to be climbable, but by going out a few feet to the right one can reach the scree slope above fairly easily. From this slope there rises the other difficult pitch, which is a well-defined chimney that is rather lacking in holds. Two attempts were made to negotiate the lower part of the chimney, and then recourse was taken to the easier rocks on the right.

“After this the gully climb is pretty straightforward, and one arrives quite quickly at a point about 250 feet below the summit. Here the gully forks, and if the left-hand branch is taken, the summit can be reached in about twenty minutes. There is one 12-foot pitch about 150 feet from the top, which is moderately severe and immoderately damp. There is also a 20-foot chimney, which should not be attempted by obese mountaineers. The chimney has become so blocked with chockstones

that it is virtually a tunnel, and as it is exceedingly narrow, progress is only achieved by a series of violent contortions. It is not really necessary to go up this tunnel, but it is quite entertaining—especially for the man watching from below. After this tunnel, the way to the summit is perfectly straightforward.”

The best rock is to be found on Buttresses Nos. 2 and 3, the rock on No. 1 being the poorest.

Most of the climbs are of moderate nature and should give some interesting work to other members.

The longest climb is Buttress No. 3, which is approximately 1,000 feet.

ANEROIDS AND MUNROS.

By J. ROOKE CORBETT.

THE practice of carrying a pocket aneroid is one to be recommended to all wanderers on the hills. It is a great help in route-finding, and a record of its readings makes an interesting addition to one's diary. When rambling alone I generally keep such a record, partly for future reference, but mainly because, being very careless in compass reading, I often lose my way, and I find it a great help when this has happened to have an exact note of where I was half an hour before, and what the barometer said, whether it overstated or understated the height.

Now for route-finding, when all one wants is to know which is the nearest 250-feet contour line on Bartholomew's map, the pocket aneroid is good enough, but when an attempt is made to determine the exact height of a mountain there are many possible sources of error which may arise. A glance through the footnotes of Munro's tables will show how great differences may arise in the determination of the height of a top by this means.

Let us consider some of these sources of error. First of all, there are those which arise from the carelessness of the observer.

1. It is possible to misread the instrument. The best check on this is to have several observations taken, if possible by different observers or on different instruments.

2. If the instrument has a sliding scale, it is possible to set it incorrectly. A good check on this is to take readings at several points whose heights are already known. It is, however, better not to alter the setting if a discrepancy arises, as part of the discrepancy may be due to some other cause, and any alteration of the setting causes confusion.

3. If the instrument has a sliding scale the scale

may slip. This is less likely to happen if the instrument is kept in its case than if it is carried loose in the pocket, but the safe check is to notice the reading at sea-level on the fixed scale and verify this every time a reading is taken.

4. A certain amount of arithmetic is required in deducing the actual height from the aneroid reading whether the scale is fixed or sliding. It is possible to do this arithmetic wrong. If a note is taken of the readings, the crude readings should be recorded so that the arithmetic may be checked afterwards at home.

Then there is another group of errors for which the weather is responsible. The barometer does not really measure altitude. It measures air pressure. It is only when the pressure diminishes uniformly with the altitude that the altitude can be inferred from the barometer readings.

5. The barometer may rise or fall during the day. This can be checked in the same way as error No. 2. It is also a good practice to return later in the day and take a second reading at the place where the barometer was set. In fact, without this check the readings are almost valueless.

It is quite unsafe to assume because the weather is fine that the barometer is steady. One of the finest days I had in Scotland last summer was 27th May. I spent two hours on the top of Beinn nan Ramh basking in the sun and enjoying the view of the Kinlochewe Hills, and all the time the barometer was going down at the rate of about 40 feet per hour.

6. The difference in pressure due to a change in altitude varies with the temperature. If the air is cold it will be more dense and the barometer will therefore exaggerate heights. If the air is warm the barometer will understate the height. A table for correcting this is given on p. 107 of the General Section of the "Guide Book," but I do not think much use is made of it in practice. When aneroid readings have been published in the *Journal* this question has generally been ignored.

7. When a wind is blowing there is also the possibility

of eddies being formed round a hill, which would give rise to local variations of pressure.

Finally, there are the errors due to the instrument itself.

8. If the barometer has a sliding scale, it will only give correct readings for one barometric height. This is due to the fact that 1,000 feet of air weighs less when the pressure is low than when it is high. If the standard barometric height of the instrument is known, this error may be eliminated by keeping the scale set to that height and using the instrument as a "fixed scale" barometer.

9. The barometer may be of faulty construction, may be in need of cleaning, or may have suffered from strain or shock. The operative part of an aneroid is a very delicate spring, and if it is taken up the mountains too often a permanent deformation will set in sooner or later. It is, moreover, very sensitive to ill-treatment. The story of the gentleman who accidentally dropped his aneroid on top of Scafell Pike and found, when he picked it up again, that the height of Scafell Pike was 16,000 feet is probably apocryphal, but it points a moral.

If accurate results are desired, a uniform practice should be adopted when reading the aneroid. The best procedure is to hold it horizontal, tap it gently, and take the reading through a magnifying glass.

Even when cared for like a baby the aneroid is still liable to a serious fault.

10. The aneroid after being taken up a hill does not always reach its final level at once. There is a time-lag. The plan usually recommended for dealing with this is to read the aneroid at once on arriving at the point of observation. This works fairly well if one is walking continuously uphill, but in Scotland one usually rises fairly rapidly to about 3,000 or 3,500 feet and then wanders about at approximately the same level. The barometer may give a correct reading when one first arrives at the high level, but will then go on falling and give exaggerated measurements of height.

A good example of this phenomenon is described by J. Gall Inglis on p. 85 of Vol. XIX. of the *S.M.C. Journal*.

I suspect that this peculiarity of the aneroid may have helped some of the less elevated Munros into the tables. Take, for example, the case of Meall na Teanga. The height is given in the tables as 3,050 feet, but the Ordnance Map shows it as between 2,950 and 3,000 feet. I have never been able to make out exactly what happened when the height was fixed at 3,050 feet, but I guess that some one took an aneroid up Meall Coire Lochain, set it on that top at the O.S. height, 2,971 feet, and then went on to Meall na Teanga and registered a further 79 feet of rise, most of which was really time-lag. I know that when I was on these tops I took Meall na Teanga first, and my aneroid did not show any change at all in descending to 2,971 feet. Of course in my case the time-lag would be acting the other way. I do not doubt that Meall na Teanga is really higher than Meall Coire Lochain. Whether it is really above 3,000 feet is another question. If the estimate of 3,012 feet given in the new "Guide Book" is correct, the barometer trusted by Sir Hugh Munro must have lost 38 feet and mine must have lost 41 feet.

The procedure recommended as a check on error No. 2 does, in fact, act as a check on most of the above-mentioned errors, and even provides a means of correcting them to some extent.

Let me illustrate this by a few extracts from my notebook. On 20th May 1931 I set out from Kinlochewe, cycled up Gleann na Muice to the fork of the path 2 miles beyond the Heights, ascended Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair by the east ridge, traversed over Sgurr Ban on to Beinn a' Chlaidheimh, and returned by Bealach na Croise to my bicycle and to Kinlochewe. The readings were as follows:—

9.9 A.M.—Barometer set at 90 feet at Kinlochewe.

10.14 A.M.—860. Fork of paths.

12.20 P.M.—3,000. Rocky pinnacle $\frac{11}{16}$ of a mile E.S.E. from Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair.

12.37 P.M.—2,900. Col.

12.50 P.M.—3,310. Very small cairn on grassy top about $\frac{3}{8}$ of a mile E.S.E. from M.C.M.F.

1 P.M.—3,210. Col.

1.10 P.M.—3,470. Top of M.C.M.F. (O.S. height, 3,326.)

1.35 P.M.—3,475. Same place. This means that the time-lag was negligible. I cannot really read this scale to 5 feet.

1.55 P.M.—2,800. Col.

2.10 P.M.—3,410. Top of Sgurr Ban. This was in the 3,200-foot contour ring, 150 yards S.W. of the cairn.

2.14 P.M.—3,340. Cairn. (O.S. height, 3,194.) There was obviously something wrong here. A drop of 70 feet in 150 yards is a gradient of 1 in $6\frac{1}{2}$, but the gradient was not more than about 1 in 30. To add to the confusion, the top of Beinn Alligin was visible right over the point where my aneroid said 3,410 feet. I went back to take the reading again, but got—

2.30 P.M.—3,410. That was the tale my aneroid had decided to tell, and it was sticking to it. I gave it up and went on to—

2.55 P.M.—2,160. Col.

3.37 P.M.—3,120. Top of Beinn a' Chlaidheimh.

The top of this mountain is drawn quite wrongly on the new "Popular" Ordnance Map. The steep slopes, instead of stopping short at 2,800 feet, are continued upwards to a sharp ridge with several tops, of which the two southernmost are the highest.

3.42 P.M.—3,110. Second top with small cairn.

4.32 P.M.—3,120. Back at first top. Again no time-lag. One of the worst troubles about this failing of the aneroid is that it is so unreliable. If it always occurred, one would know better what to do about it.

In the interests of science I ought to have returned over Sgurr Ban so as to obtain a further check on the barometer readings without too great an interval of time or height. A real hero would have gone across to Beinn a' Chlaidheimh and back to Sgurr Ban a second time, so as to have a still more perfect check on the doings of the barometer. But I thought the day's journey would be quite long enough without this, and so went by the easiest route to—

8.5 P.M.—970. Fork of paths. (860 at 10.14 A.M.)

8.45 P.M.—200. Kinlochewe.

Now let us see whether we can make any deductions from these figures. The day was fine and the visibility good, but there was a strong and cold east wind. Evidently errors No. 5 and 6 were in operation, probably also No. 7, and perhaps some of the others.

On the way up the aneroid recorded a rise of $3,470 - 90 = 3,380$ feet, when the actual rise was $3,326 - 90 = 3,236$ feet. If this error was uniformly distributed over the whole ascent, a simple sum in proportion will show that the rocky pinnacle and the grassy top were respectively 450 and 153 feet below 3,326 feet, and their heights would be 2,876 and 3,173 feet.

On the way down, the aneroid recorded a drop of $3,475 - 200 = 3,275$ feet, when the actual drop was 3,236 feet. A similar sum will show that the top of Beinn a' Chlaidheimh is 350 feet below 3,326, and is therefore 2,976 feet.

Or, if we start from the 3,194 point on Sgurr Ban, the barometer showed a drop of 3,140 feet when the actual drop was 3,104 feet. This would make the height of Beinn a' Chlaidheimh 218 feet less than 3,194, or 2,976 feet again.

More complicated calculations on the basis that the fall of the barometer was at a uniform rate per hour and that the remaining errors were at a uniform rate per 1,000 feet of height would give results 10 or 20 feet lower.

These figures, of course, cannot be taken as accurate, but they are likely to be nearer to the truth than an uncorrected reading.

In trying to determine the exact height of a mountain from aneroid measurements, we are in the position of a magistrate who has to get at the facts of a case from one or more witnesses of very moderate veracity.

Sometimes there is a considerable degree of unanimity. In the case of Beinn Tarsuinn, for example, my pocket liar and Gall Inglis' coming down from Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair and Hirst's coming up from Lochan Fada all agreed at about 3,070 to 3,080 feet, while Parker's made it even higher.

On the other hand, the new Ordnance Map shows the height as between 2,850 and 2,900 feet, the "S.M.C. Guide Book" gives it as 2,970 feet (on what authority does not appear), and on 16th May 1926 my pocket liar recorded Beinn Tarsuinn as 100 feet lower than A' Mhaighdean.

This brings to notice another point which should not be lost sight of in weighing up the evidence, and this is, that the evidence may not all be before us. When one obtains a reading like that, which does not disagree with the map or the "Guide Book," it is, in journalist's phrase, "not news." One does not write to the *Journal* about it. One is quite likely not to mention it to anybody, and in this particular case I forgot all about it myself, and only discovered it recently on turning up an old notebook.

In the case of Beinn Tarsuinn, however, there is better evidence of height available than any barometer reading, and that is the view to the south-west. If the mountain were no higher than is indicated on the Ordnance Map, this view would be bounded by the ridge of Slioch and Sgurr an Tuill Bhain. If Beinn Tarsuinn were exactly 3,000 feet high, the highest points of Beinn Eighe and Liathach would only just be visible from its summit, showing like small teeth above this ridge. As a matter of fact, a photograph taken from the top of Beinn Tarsuinn shows quite a lot of the ridge of Beinn Eighe.

Of the mountains mentioned by Burn in his notes in Vol. XV. of the *S.M.C. Journal*, the top in the Fannich group between Sgurr Breac and A' Chailleach is certainly over 3,000 feet, though hardly as high as the 3,131 feet given in his note. I had an interesting view of this top last May from Sgurr a' Choirer-ainich, near Sgurr a' Mhuilinn. This top appears to be a little higher than Sgurr a' Ghlas Leathad (2,778 feet), but is below 2,800 feet. From it the top in the Fannichs is exactly in line with the highest points of An Teallach, which appear above it as two small teeth, almost too small to be distinguished except with a telescope.

Foinaven deserves further investigation. The cairn

does not appear to be quite at the highest point, but when I was up there the weather was too thick for surveying.

Carn Gorm-loch, in Strathvaich Forest, was registered at 2,910 feet by my aneroid, which had been set at 3,120 feet on Am Faochagach, but I think this reading is too low. In 1930 I had a very good view of these two mountains from Seana Bhraigh. Seen from here, they appear as two rounded hummocks standing up in front of the skyline of the Monadh Liath, and a calculation based on their comparative heights above this line made the height of Carn Gorm-loch 2,965 feet.

Among the Cluanie hills my aneroid agreed with Burn's that Faochag was below 3,000 feet, and that Gurr Thionail was 3,065 instead of 2,965 feet. One would, of course, want better evidence than an aneroid reading before saying that the Ordnance Map was wrong.

I should like to support most of Burn's proposals for the amendment of Munro's tables, especially the deletion of Sron a' Chadha and the inclusion of the Little Bynac.

Also, I think an amendment is needed on Beinn Heasgarnich. I traversed this mountain from south to north on 26th April 1930 in search of Stob an Fhir-Bhogha, and kept strictly to the ridge over several hummocks, but in no case did I drop as much as 50 feet until I reached the cairn at 3,530 feet. There is, however, a top farther north, shown on the "Popular" Ordnance Map, for which my aneroid recorded a rise of 120 feet.

Note.—On 28th May 1931, when on A' Chailleach, I made another attempt to estimate the height of Beinn a' Chlaidheimh, by seeking out the view-point on the west side of A' Chailleach from which it was exactly in line with Beinn Dearg Mhor (2,974 feet), so that through a telescope the cairn on Beinn Dearg Mhor looked as though it were on the highest top of Beinn a' Chlaidheimh. I then tried to fix the height of this view-point, both by aneroid readings and by another method which may give more reliable results where short distances are concerned. This method is to note with the aid of the horizon (or of a pocket-level) a point on a level with one's eye, and then

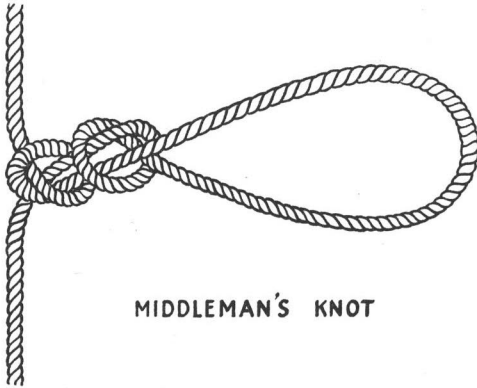
walk to this point and repeat the operation, counting how many times it has to take place in order to reach the top of the mountain. Then measure the height of your eye above your foot, and a simple multiplication sum will give the height of the summit above your starting-point.

By this method I made the view-point 190 feet below A' Chailleach cairn (3,276 feet), and computed the height of Beinn a' Chlaidheimh at 2,997 feet. The aneroid readings made the view-point a little lower.

THE MIDDLEMAN LOOP.

By A. E. MAYLARD.

WHEN visiting Melrose this last winter I was invited to hear a lecture by John Roberts, recently elected a member of the S.M.C., and President of the Selkirk Hill and Rock Climbing Club, on "Mountaineering in Skye." While there I met Mr John M'Donald, not a mountaineer, but one keenly interested in the Boy Scout Movement



MIDDLEMAN'S KNOT

of the district, and well known in Melrose for his activity in teaching the boys on various mechanical methods involving the essential requirements for climbing. The subject of "Knots" was one in which he was peculiarly interested, and he told me of a method he had devised for securing the "Middleman" when climbing with three men, say, on a 60-foot rope. It struck me as so suggestive in its ease and rapidity of application, and so secure when properly fixed, that I asked him to write an account of it and illustrate by diagrams.

The name he suggested for his proposal was "The Border Bend." To many who live far south of the Border the word would fail to convey any definite

meaning. His intention was, that having its inception in Roxburghshire, one of the Scottish Border Counties, it might be suitably associated with the district. It is, of course, difficult to suggest any simple name for what connotes more than one factor in the scheme; and, therefore, I would suggest that if this new method of securing the "Middleman" comes into vogue, it would be better to draw attention to the rope which, after all, has to undergo certain alterations in properly splicing the "Middleman" piece to the middle of the main length, and neatly finishing off the three free ends, and call it the "M'Donald Alpine Rope."

Without further introductory remarks, I leave Mr M'Donald to describe and illustrate his ingenious suggestion:—

"Middleman's Knot—Suggested New Method"

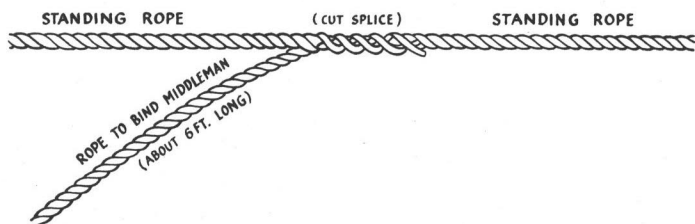
"Some mountaineering friends, knowing that I have long been interested in knotting and splicing, recently asked whether I could suggest any other fixing than that generally used for the middleman of the three roped together in a climbing rope.

"It savours somewhat of presumption to offer any solution differing from the accepted mountain usage; but the method I now venture to propose has commended itself to some mountaineering acquaintances, who have urged me to place it on record.

"My proposal is based on the idea of using the bowline-hitch instead of the middleman's knot. To make a bowline in the middle of a rope is difficult, if the rope is lengthy. A knot resembling a bowline, namely, the man-harness knot, is made in the middle of a rope; but I do not favour that method for our present purpose. My suggestion is to splice a short piece of rope into the middle of the main standing rope, by means of the knot called the 'cut splice.' This is made in a manner similar to an eye splice at the end of the rope: that is, the strands of an end are opened out and interwoven into the main standing rope.

“ The short piece of rope, which I shall call the middleman’s rope to differentiate it from the main standing rope, should be about 6 or 7 feet long. During the time in which the rope is not being used, and while marching to the place of ascent, the middleman’s rope is wound round the hanks of the main standing rope, which it thus retains tidy and ready for use. It should be secured by a half-hitch, so that a slight pull on its loose end frees the whole rope for immediate use.

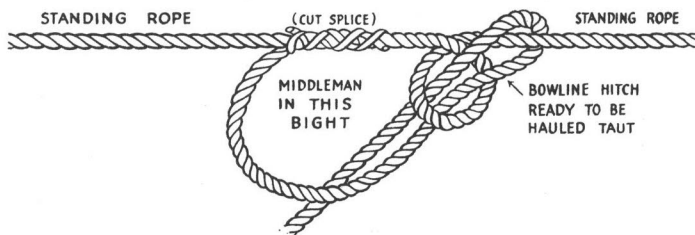
“ The middleman then holds the main standing rope close to his left side, with the leader’s end towards his right, and the cut-splice on his left; passes the middleman’s rope round his back, and to a place about 9 inches to 1 foot nearer the leader’s end than the splice. When



in the bight of the rope he proceeds to make a bowline-hitch on the main standing, with the free end of his rope, at this point, viz., about 9 inches or thereby to the right of the splice, thus joining both ends of the middleman’s rope with the main standing rope.

“ The dependable qualities of the bowline, as a knot which will not slip, are too well known to require explanation. In the event of the middleman making a slip, his weight will come in the middle of the bight of his rope, borne off the main standing rope, and fairly distributed between the bowline and the splice. The knot being firmly adjusted before climbing commenced, there is no risk of any part slipping and causing constriction on the chest. The exact tension is determined when drawing the slack of the middleman’s rope through the small loop, which is formed temporarily in making the bowline, just before the knot is hauled taut.

“ When forming the splice, which would, of course, be done once for all before the rope is used (and which should not take longer than ten minutes at most), the middleman’s rope should be introduced into the main standing rope in such a manner that the strands are pushed in the direction of the leader’s end of the rope ; there is then no possibility of a nip taking place should sudden strain be thrown on the bight of the middleman’s rope.



“ The attached diagram indicates the whole process, which, when once the splice is made, can be carried through most expeditiously ; and the bowline, while holding most tenaciously, can be unloosed with perfect facility.

“ Should this method of attachment be found adaptable I suggest that it be named ‘ The Border Bend.’

“ JOHN M‘DONALD.

“ MELROSE, 26th January 1932.”

The specimen which Mr M‘Donald showed me he had himself made, indicated that an amateur could quite well cut off the required length of 6 feet from his 60-foot rope, splice, and finish off as required. But others less skilful might prefer to have the rope in a finished state. For general trade purposes, therefore, it would be well that the rope so prepared should have a definite name.

THE SECONDARY TOWER RIDGE,
BEN NEVIS.

By J. Y. MACDONALD.

TURNBULL and I arrived at the Hut on the 17th March 1931, having walked up the highway of frozen snow which formed the bed of the Allt a' Mhuillinn, and on the following day, in bright sun and keen frost, we climbed the Castle Ridge, and descended by the rocks of the Carn Mor Dearg arête. The upper cliffs of the Ben were heavily draped in ice and snow, and the Tower, glowing golden in the sun, stood out from its cold-white background to form a truly magnificent spectacle.

On our second day we climbed the N.E. face of the Douglas Boulder. The weather had remained clear, and the rocks were warm and dry, but a heavy thaw which had set in during the night had softened the snow, and the ease with which we plunged down the East Gully was in marked contrast to the hours of step-cutting which had been necessary the day before.

This was one of the factors which decided our route for the morrow. The other was the wind, which howled down Coire Leis all night, and insisted in no uncertain voice that we should choose some sheltered spot for our last climb. Now the most sheltered part of the mountain seemed to be the great corridor running high up on the west side of the Tower Ridge. The outside wall of this corridor is the Secondary Tower Ridge, and according to the "Guide Book," no ascent had been made upon either of these two routes; so we decided to explore the region, and if possible to open up a new way to the Towers. With the snow in an easy condition, it was clear that the only difficulty would be to surmount the steep lower buttresses, for above them the angle eased off, and either the snow on the left or the rock ridge on the right could

be taken as fancy suggested. This, indeed, turned out to be the case.

The wind had abated somewhat in the morning, and was to die down altogether before the day was out, but it had given place to an intermittent drizzling rain; and the mists hung about the Tower as we trudged up past the Douglas Boulder, looking for a likely way on to the great shelf. An obvious chimney, slanting to the left, overlooks the Douglas Boulder Gully, and may well provide a feasible route in summer; but now it was filled with ice and needed no second glance. So we started on the fan of rock at the foot of the next buttress, about fifty yards beyond the gully.

The start was promising enough, the climbing being rather similar to that on the lowest rocks of the Boulder. But we had scarcely gone 100 feet on an upward traverse (more traverse than upward) when the holds, which had never been really brilliant, gave out altogether, and we looked out on to a wilderness of uncompromising slab. There was nothing for it but to cut our losses and retreat, a manœuvre which turned out to be a little harder than we expected.

As twenty minutes had been taken up over this false start, we lost no time in rounding the rocks and a large area of ice, and then striking up the steep snow towards two chimneys which formed the "trouser-legs" of a shallow gully running up the face of the cliff. This gully can easily be identified, as it is only a hundred yards beyond the Douglas Boulder Gully; and a similar snow tongue runs up to each, clearly seen in the photograph on page 28 of the "Guide." We chose the chimney on the right, and Turnbull led off. The way lay roomily under a large chockstone, but the floor of the gully was covered with a sheet of steep ice, and the first step off thin snow was very awkward. To add to our troubles a useful-looking little platform dissolved at a touch and presented the leader with a lapful of large stones, only a portion of which he was able to guide into a harmless slither down the snow.

However, after one or two preliminary contortions he

got started, standing on his axe and pressing up on a distinctly shaky block, and then crept slowly up under the chockstone, throwing down most of the holds as he reached them (at least I found mighty few left when I followed him), and disappeared into the mountain. The rope paid out almost imperceptibly, but the sound of hob-nailers feeling for a toe-scrape, and the little pieces of trap-dyke tumbling past showed that ground was being gained. At length when the 80-foot rope was nearly all out the welcome news came down that some sort of belay was at hand, and almost at once I got permission to move through the barrage of dripping water instead of merely standing under it.

The first step I accomplished in a more orthodox manner than the leader, and finding that the moral support of the rope more than counterbalanced the dubious nature of the holds, I soon looked out from the other side of the chockstone. I found that the chimney turned slightly to the left here, and ran upwards in the form of a steep shelf, overhung by the cliff on the right and enclosed on the left by a curtain of water from the eaves above. In a nook at the far end of it sat Turnbull, wedged behind a water-pitted cone of snow, looking like a goblin on a puddockstool fishing up a toad. But he was rather a damp goblin, for a playful little waterfall from the rocks above caressed his neck, and he was being given plenty of time to reflect upon the thoughtlessness of the more skilful bootmakers who fail to provide adequate drainage to their footgear.

It is not surprising that he shouted to me to hurry, and I did my best. But a poor best it was. The holds were conspicuous, as the Irish would say, not only by their absence, but by the fact that they were all small and sloped outwards, while the few that were of the right shape were loose. There was no place below the snow-cone where one could stand with any degree of comfort or safety, and we found that it was easier for me to pass Turnbull than to change places with him. So, being nothing loath to remain in the comparative aridity of the March drizzle I went on to the end of the shelf and

looked round the corner. "It's easy," I cried, and immediately volunteered to lead, thus letting Turnbull "enjoy" his rest a little longer.

It certainly looked easy. The shelf joined the main gully, which consisted of a series of grooves bounded by what seemed well-broken walls, with a few rounded clumps of moss to emphasise the gentler angle. But the appearance was deceptive. The holds when reached proved to be small, water-worn, and always sloping outwards. Always, too, those just ahead looked better--till the groping fingers had struggled within reach and found that they, too, were mere rounded depressions. At last, however, about 50 feet up, I managed to get wedged in a narrow part of the groove I was following, and with one foot in a step hacked out of a small blister of ice, I felt secure enough to bring up Turnbull. It was a very sodden bundle that squirmed round the corner, climbed past me, and led on.

It would be monotonous to describe the remainder of the gully in detail, for the climbing was all of the same nature, sometimes in the groove, sometimes on the rib on the left, where as a rule the rock was sounder but the holds more steeply sloping. Until the final pitch was reached we found no belay; and apart from a level-topped jammed stone which mocked us by giving considerably when pressed upon, I only remember one hold big enough to take the whole foot. Nearly the whole of the 80-foot rope was run out on each occasion before standing-ground was found, and twice I had to climb a short distance unprotected to let Turnbull reach a stance.

There is one consolation in waiting for the next party, however: there is nothing harder than the first pitch to be encountered higher up, though we were of opinion that two of them ran it very close. On both of these Turnbull suggested a little pull on the rope "just to save time." He tactfully made this offer before any time had been wasted, so that it could be gratefully accepted without loss of dignity. The difficulty of the climb, however, lies in the absence of easy steps and suitable belays and the length of the pitches, rather than in the necessity for any

special feats of gymnastics or balance. The easiest pitch was as hard as anything we found on the face of the Douglas Boulder, but the most difficult was not much harder.

The final pitch was a thing of joy. Three chock-stones had neatly found their way to the bottom of a little chimney, just leaving room for us to cork ourselves horizontally over two and under the third, and to crawl within the inverted bottle-neck where at last, with a sense of immeasurable relief, we felt thoroughly secure. No one could *fall* out of that chimney!

Henceforward the rock was excellent, and a few feet of luxurious chimney work brought us on to the Secondary Ridge, apparently about 50 feet higher than the top of the Douglas Boulder. By contrast the place seemed comparatively level; yet some little search had to be made before the rocks provided accommodation enough for two to sit down for a much-needed rest and lunch. The time was 1.35, and we estimated that we had done 300 feet in the last two and a half hours. This rate—2 feet per minute—does not compare favourably with the latest records for mechanical propulsion.

We spent little time over lunch—we had become too chilled in the gully for that—but pushed on up the ridge, keeping at first to the rocks. And what rocks they were! Not exactly easy, but abounding in pulling-in holds, with glorious belays and anchors every few yards. Had we been a little less wet we would probably have climbed on them the whole way. As it was, we were anxious to finish the ascent, so we traversed across some slabs on to the main corridor, a short distance above the place where it narrows into a conspicuous little ice-fall and kicked our way up the soft snow.

The scenery was magnificent, and one seemed to realise the grandeur of the Tower Ridge even more from this perch on its flank than from its airier crest. The finest part of all was where the Secondary Ridge curved in in a delicate little snow-crest to join the parent ridge. We mounted the crest and looked across a wide funnel-like cone, the head of a great gully, to the Pinnacle Buttress

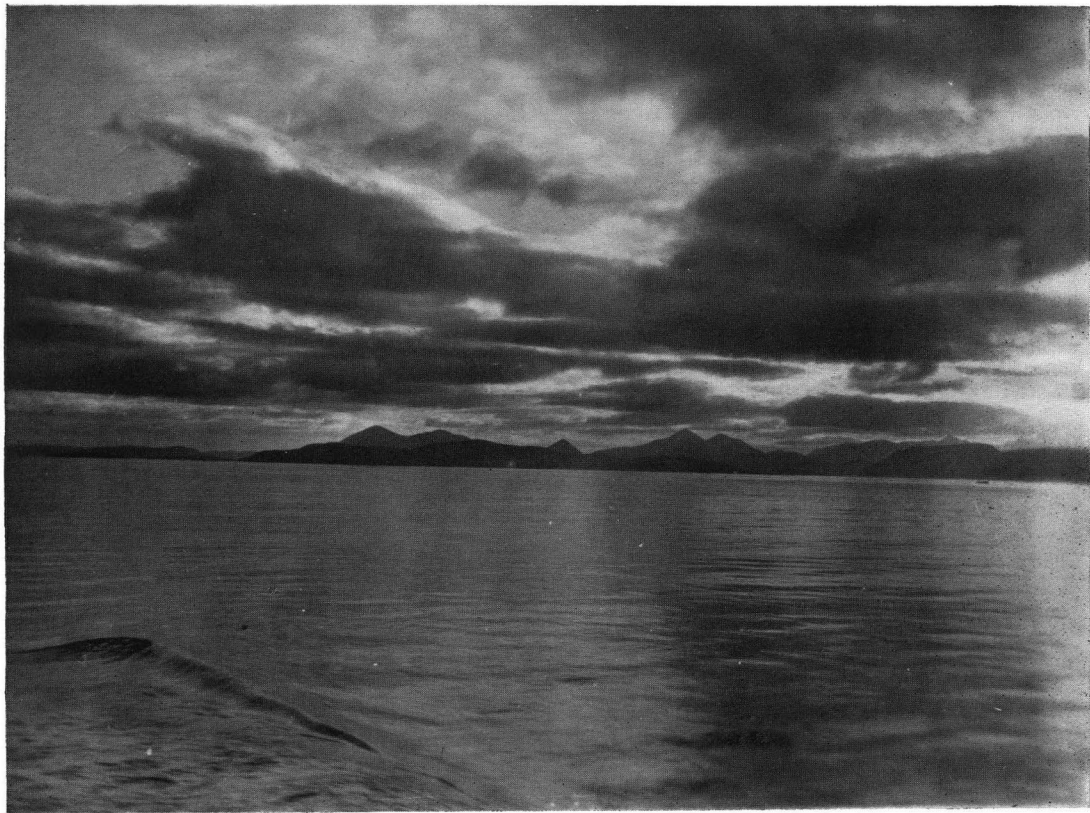
running up from the Garadh na Ciste to the Tower, still dimly veiled in mists. It would have been possible to have continued on the snow right up to the Tower itself, but to do so would have meant a steep traverse round the head of the gully. It looked as if it would also be possible to descend the gully to the Coire; but we thought we could see an ice-fall at the foot, and preferred to wait till we could prospect it from below.* So we followed the curving snow-crest, and climbing a jolly little rib of rock reached a level platform of snow on the Tower Ridge.† Our aneroid read 3,750 feet. Our watches, 3.15.

It was an obvious place and time to finish our curtailed lunch, and we munched busily for a few minutes, and then turned to descend. There was no question of going to the summit. The lateness of the hour, the sight of ice on the rocks above and, most of all, our memories of the snow-plastered Tower of two days ago prevented that. I believe it might have yielded to a determined attack, but we felt we had done our bit for the day and were in no mood to get benighted. So we kicked and stamped our way down the knife-edge snow arête that this March crowned the crest, very different from the scene two years ago when the first snow encountered was on the Eastern Traverse. The greater part of the way lay thus over snow, but where rocks appeared they were often iced and cost some time to negotiate. The final pitch, the chimney down to the Douglas Boulder col, gave as much trouble as any, containing ice at just the wrong places, and being much looser than we had remembered it to be.

A final glissade, a run down the easy slopes, and we were back once more, to be greeted by the welcome words, "The kettle is just boiling," from the other occupants of the hut. And in the steam of drying clothes and hot cocoa our story must end.

* This has since been done. The gully is not continuous, and would make a difficult climb under the best conditions.

† About 100 feet below the Little Tower.



February 1932

SKYE FROM THE SOUND OF SLEAT

Eric P. Buchanan



April 1931

CARN LOCHAN AND COIRE AN T'SNEACHDA

G. R. Speirs

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1931.

REV. A. E. ROBERTSON presided over a large attendance of members at the General Meeting held on Friday, 4th December 1931, in the Central Station Hotel, Glasgow.

The ASSISTANT HON. SECRETARY read the minutes of the last meeting, and submitted his report, from which it appeared that the membership of the Club now stood at the satisfactory figure of 288, including 34 new members approved by the Committee and admitted after the usual ballot of members.

The HON. TREASURER submitted his usual carefully classified and clear-cut statement with regard to the Club's financial position. In regard to the "Guide Book" Fund, the general effect of the Treasurer's explanations was that the funds available were such as to enable the Club to produce future "Guide Books" at slightly below cost price, provided reasonable expectations as to sales were realised.

The PRESIDENT, in thanking the Hon. Treasurer for his report, took occasion to mention this particular matter, and to emphasise that the Western Highlands Section, edited by J. A. Parker, was about to be issued at a price much below its real value.

The HON. EDITOR submitted his report on the *Journal*, in which he made reference to the question of the geographical limits which precedent had placed on its contents. This matter having again been raised, he took occasion to mention that his view lay in favour of the present practice, and that nothing short of an extraordinary resolution of the members, or absolute beggary in material, would alter him from this course.

J. H. BELL, in a short, crisp speech, very definitely expressed the view that the precedent laid down by William Douglas, gave the *Journal* a distinctive quality and a special appeal. He moved that no change be made, and the meeting approved without any expressed dissent—so far as could be judged.

The HON. LIBRARIAN submitted a report on the Library and Slide Collection, and R. R. ELTON, the Hut Custodian, submitted an interesting report on the C.I.C. Hut, in which he dealt with Hut Nights, Coal Deficits, the Washing of Blankets, and a number of other matters relating to hut-interior economy. He made it clear that the site value of coal at the Hut approximated to that of gold in Threadneedle Street, and more in sorrow than in anger pointed out that the flight of coal without adequate representation in the money-box resulted in quite a serious loss under this head. The report was especially satisfactory in regard to the manner in which the fabric of the Hut had stood up to weather conditions, and he indicated that a thorough examination made by the President and T. Gibson in the summer (in the course of which they had practically pulled the Hut to pieces and rebuilt it) had shown everything to be in a satisfactory condition.

The PRESIDENT assured Elton that the members would be more scrupulous in future in making a full charge against themselves in respect of coal used.

In happy and appropriate phrases the PRESIDENT moved a cordial vote of thanks to these various officials for their work and reports, administering in the case of the Hon. Editor a friendly cuff.

On the completion of the business on the Agenda, A. E. MAYLARD read an interesting passage from the report of the afternoon Reception given thirty years previously, and commended to the consideration of the Committee whether some variety in the form of the Reception might not be adopted. The PRESIDENT promised that this would be gone into by the Committee.

The following changes were made in the office-bearers :—

Henry Alexander in place of Lord Mackay as Vice-President.

E. N. Marshall, W. Ross M'Lean, and J. Dow in place of J. H. B. Bell, R. R. Elton, and R. W. Martin on Committee.

Rev. A. E. Robertson in place of Henry Alexander as General " Guide Book " Editor.

The Committee under power, possessed or usurped, informed the members that the New Year Meet for 1931-32, fixed for Brodick, had been changed to Blair Atholl.

The New Year Meet for 1932-33 was fixed for Tyndrum. Alan Arthur undertook personally that the Hotel would be rebuilt by that date.

It was decided, after discussion and representation of the Eastern interests, to hold the Easter 1933 Meet at Fort William and Ardgour.

A vote of thanks to the Chairman by T. S. FRASER CAMPBELL terminated the proceedings.

RECEPTION.

THERE was a specially large attendance of members and others in the Central Station Hotel in the afternoon. After tea the President showed a series of slides from photographs taken in the Glen Moriston District. These were of the high quality and artistry which one expects to find in the photographic efforts of the President. The slides were much enjoyed, and the showman, in his running commentary of Highland phrase and fable, revealed his happiest vein. He has very tender memories of his experiences in and around Cluanie Hotel.

ANNUAL DINNER.

THE Forty-third Annual Dinner was held in the Central Station Hotel, Glasgow, at 7.30 P.M., at the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting, on Friday, 4th December 1931. There were 78 members and guests present. Among the guests were Col. John Buchan, Rev. George

M'Leod, William Alexander (Cairn Gorm Club), C. K. Brunning (Wayfarers), H. G. Taylor (Yorkshire Ramblers), E. Maxwell (Grampian Club). W. N. Ling and D. Pilkington represented the Alpine Club and the Rucksack Club respectively.

The President occupied the chair. After the Royal toast had been duly honoured, W. Ross M'Lean was called upon to propose the toast of the "Guests." In a witty speech he welcomed them, coupling the names of Col. Buchan and the Rev. George M'Leod with the toast. The former he thanked for having introduced him to the Coolins by means of his novels, and heartily endorsed the new geographical lay-out of Skye suggested therein, which brings the sea up to Coire na Creiche. Then followed some "words" from a M'Lean to a M'Leod on the ancient history culminating in the battle of Culloden. He concluded with a graceful tribute to the member of a rival clan in whose property these wonderful mountains lay.

Col. Buchan responded to the toast and touched on the sanctity of deer forests. From the middle of August to the middle of October, climbers should be careful how they approach their climb, as a careless individual may spoil a day's stalk. Outside these months, however, no harm can be done by wandering parties. Passing on from this aspect, Col. Buchan gave us in his own well-turned phrases an appreciation of the special spirit of the hills that has seldom been equalled.

The President then rose to propose the toast of "The Club." He dwelt at some length on Club activities, and concluded with earnest words, which were evidence of the deep influence the Scottish hills have had on a responsive spirit during a busy life.

After the toast, J. S. M. Jack rendered the Club's Song in his usual hearty and effective style.

The diners were then allowed fifteen minutes' respite, during which they stretched their legs and took the opportunity of having a chat with the acquaintance three tables away. This is a pleasing innovation which may well pass into current use at future dinners.

On resuming, J. C. Thomson rose to propose the toast of "Kindred Clubs." Before he was able to utter a word, however, J. S. M. Jack, under pressure of his neighbours, broke in with an impromptu and characteristic address in poetry to the President. Guests and members listened delighted as the verses rolled forth.

"Hail! Chieftain of a thousand hills,
Hail! Monarch of the glens,
You've revelled while the storms' fierce thrills
Rush roaring o'er the Bens.
In other mood thou too canst turn
To where the wild flowers grow,
By pleasant path beside the burn
Where softest breezes blow.

With loving steps each crest you've trod,
From North to South, from East to West,
And fearless faced the lightning's rod
To rise undaunted from the test.
Hail! Chieftain of a thousand hills,
Beloved and honoured too,
May memories of a lifetime's thrills
Within thy breast renew
Those days of sunshine and of storm,
Still fresh, though past and gone,
With loving wish and feeling warm
We hail thee, Robertson."

When the bard sat down, J. C. Thomson, in no way disconcerted, began his speech. In welcoming the "Kindred Clubs" he traced a common ancestry to all climbers via the honourable occupations of sheep and horse stealing. These instincts, he explained, inevitably found outlet even in a cultured age in oromaniacal manifestation. In this connection he was good enough to say that the present generation were still worthy of their ancestors. He wound up patriotically by extolling the attractions of the Scottish hills.

The reply was given by William Alexander of the Cairn

Gorm Club. He submitted that all mountaineers had their own pet playgrounds, and pleasingly divided the mountain area of Scotland into psychological areas of "Mountaineer's Delight," each with its distinctive quality.

Every one was glad when the President asked the Rev. George M'Leod to "say a few words." In a model impromptu speech he first of all dealt in kind with W. Ross M'Lean and carried the tide of Highland war far into the enemy's country. Then, seizing on J. C. Thomson's remarks anent the rising generation, hastened to enlarge on these. He told of a rising movement in his parish of young men who had not the opportunity of the gentlemen present, but who satisfied a genuine craving for beauty by "hiking." This desire, he was convinced, could be extended into a proper appreciation of mountains, if guided in the proper way. To prevent "hiking" developing into "sauntering," he asked the assistance and kindly interest of the Club.

In spite of the financial depression, the attendance was up to the usual standard of a Glasgow dinner, and we think all present will agree that the evening was a success.

NEW YEAR MEET, 1932—BLAIR ATHOLL.

THE New Year Meet, 1932, was held at Blair Atholl, the following members and guests being present during all or part of the Meet:—

Members.—A. E. Robertson (President), J. L. Aikman, J. T. Addenbrooke, J. F. Anton, L. St. C. Bartholomew, D. Rainy Brown, J. R. Corbett, H. J. Craig, J. Dow, Dr Geddes, T. J. Gibson, R. Gibson, G. T. Glover, J. Harrison, K. K. Hunter, A. G. Hutchison, J. Gall Inglis, J. S. M. Jack, K. G. Jackson, R. Jeffrey, R. W. Graham Kerr, W. N. Ling, D. C. Macdonald, J. Y. Macdonald, I. W. M'Innes, H. MacRobert, J. MacRobert, E. N. Marshall, M. Matheson, A. J. Paton, D. W. Robinson, T. G. Robinson, R. N. Rutherford, A. G.

Smith, A. M. Stephen, D. H. Steven, Evershed Thomson, Gilbert Thomson, Prof. H. W. Turnbull.

Guests.—N. L. Hird, S. J. Jack, Thomas Jack, G. R. Roxburgh, R. M. Scott, W. A. Stewart, J. M. Thomson.

Wednesday, 30th December 1931.

The following members arrived during the day and were greeted with hard frost and 2 inches of snow, truly seasonable weather which betokened well for the pleasure of all concerned :—

The President, Ling, Corbett, Bartholomew, Matheson, Dow, Addenbrooke, and Geddes.

No climbing was reported for this day.

Thursday, 31st December.

The President waded alone up to his waist in snow-drifts on Carn Liath. Those members who arrived later in the Meet to find all the snow gone found it hard to credit this statement. It was on this historic morning that a Past President arrived in a train half an hour before time—so the sleeping-car attendant says—thus breaking all records for fifty-three years in the Past President's experience, and possibly also in the Highland Railway records themselves.

Such an outstanding event encouraged that same Past President to accompany Ling, Matheson, and Dow to Carn a' Chlamain and Beinn Dearg by Glen Tilt, returning by the Bruar Lodge Road. Addenbrooke, Bartholomew, Corbett, and Geddes did Carn Liath and Braigh Coire Chruinn-bhagain.

Both these parties reported the snow to be covered with a hard crust, but insufficient to bear one's weight.

The majority of the remainder of the members and guests arrived the same evening by train or car.

Friday, 1st January.

It was a great disappointment to wake up this morning and find the rain fast washing away the snow and all traces of frost gone.

The President, with Gall Inglis and Gilbert Thomson, walked about 3 miles up Glen Tilt in the forenoon, and later in the day the President and Geddes climbed the Fincastle foothills on the other side of the Garry.

Carn Liath seems to have been the favourite hill for the day, being visited by four parties, as follows:—

H. MacRobert, Jeffrey, Hird, and Harrison in the first; Ling, Craig, Marshall, and Scott in the second; S. J. Jack, Graham Kerr, Gibson, and M'Innes in the third; and Stewart and Rainy Brown in the fourth.

Should the official reporter of the Meet be censured for giving any party precedence, let it be understood that the above is the order in which the exploits of the respective parties were handed in.

It is not to be thought for one moment that MacRobert's party was the most important of the four.

J. MacRobert, J. S. M. Jack, Matheson, and Evershed Thomson went to Ben Vrackie and pronounced this hill to be the most shapely in the district. Was this to offset the fact that the same hill is not a Munro?

Corbett, Aikman, and Turnbull did Beinn Mheadonaich, while Steven, D. W. Robinson, Thomas Jack, and Roxburgh went by car up to Dalnaspidal and did the round of Coire Dohmain, thus covering the Boar of Badenoch, A' Marcaonach, Beinn Udlaman, Sgairneach Mor, and the Atholl Sow.

Bartholomew, Addenbrooke, and J. M. Thomson climbed Beinn a' Chait and Beinn Dearg from Glen Tilt, taking the car as far as possible up the Glen.

R. Gibson and M'Innes, as well as doing Carn Liath, included Braigh Coire Chruinn-bhalgain. (No wonder this name is only included on the 6-inch map!)

Hunter and Dow motored up to Dalnaspidal and climbed A' Bhuidheanach Bheag and Meall a' Chaoruinn. As the sun shone whilst they ate their lunch, they seem to have had the best of the weather. Hutchison, Rutherford, Jackson, and T. G. Robinson motored from Glasgow, climbing Carn Mairg *en route* (on foot).

J. Y. Macdonald left by the morning train, having

accomplished no climbing owing to indisposition, and Glover left by the evening train.

Saturday, 2nd January.

The mild, open weather continued this day with the mist hanging generally about 2,000 feet.

The President, with J. MacRobert and Paton, visited Blair Castle, where they were met by Lord James Stewart Murray, who conducted them over the Castle, having very courteously come from Dunkeld for the purpose. They saw many things of great interest and beauty.

H. MacRobert, Jeffrey, Hird, and Harrison motored to Dalnaspidal, and climbed Sgairneach Mor and the Atholl Sow.

Their expedition does not seem to have been a happy one throughout, for one of the party was heard to remark that the Sow was very well named.

Corbett and J. S. M. Jack climbed Farragon Hill, but missed the bus back. Jack, however, enlivened the weariness of the tramp back by snatches of song.

Anton, R. Gibson, Scott, and M'Innes motored to Dalnaspidal and did the round of the Coire Dohmain.

Dow and Matheson also motored to Drumochter Lodge and climbed Geal Charn and A' Marcaonach.

J. M. Thomson, Craig, and Marshall visited Ben Vrackie. Stephen, Steven, Thomas Jack, D. W. Robinson, and Roxburgh took their car to Newtonmore and climbed Geal Charn, A' Chailleach, and Carn Sgulain. Hunter and Turnbull attempted to shorten the distance to Beinn Dearg by taking Hunter's car up the Bruar Lodge Road, but after encounters with two snowdrifts, which took up a lot of time, they landed in a third, which took a whole hour to get out of. They climbed a small hill called Leac Liath. Two parties, Hutchison, Rutherford, Jackson, and T. G. Robinson in the one, and Stewart, S. J. Jack, Graham Kerr, Rainy Brown, and Evershed Thomson in the other, motored to Dalwhinnie and along Loch Ericht-side, climbing Ben Alder from there.

The former party had trouble with the Allt a' Bana

and the Allt Pharphar, which seems to have added interest to their long day. It is difficult to resist punning those two burns.

Addenbrooke and Ling left, and T. J. Gibson arrived in the morning in time to accompany the President's party to the Castle. Anton also arrived in the morning with Yeaman, and did the round of the Coire Dohmain, Yeaman leaving the same night.

Sunday, 3rd January.

A very mild day, almost summer-like at first, though a thin drizzle set in later, and the mist hung low on the hills.

T. J. Gibson and Paton climbed Carn Liath and Braigh Coire Chruinn-bhalgain, walking all the way, while A. M. Stephen, D. W. Robinson, and Roxburgh did the same climb, using a car as far as possible up Glen Tilt.

T. G. Robinson, Jackson, Hutchison, and Rutherford also climbed Carn Liath, using a car part of the way.

Dow, Matheson, and S. J. Jack motored to Drumochter Lodge, and climbed Udlaman and Sgairneach Mor. Anton and Scott also accompanied Dow in his car, but climbed Meall a' Chaoruinn and A' Bhuidheanach Bheag instead, also including Glas Mheall Mor. Gibson and M'Innes did Chaoruinn and Bhuidheanach, but the method of reaching Dalnaspidal seems to have been obscure. J. S. M. Jack and H. MacRobert climbed the Boar of Badenoch and A' Marcaonach. Jack is reported to have gone to kirk at night. The President conducted a party of enthusiastic mountaineers to Blair Castle, and they saw much of interest therein. They were Turnbull, who accompanied the President to evening kirk, Jeffrey, Evershed Thomson, Rainy Brown, Graham Kerr, and Stuart.

Hird, Corbett, Geddes, Harrison, Marshall, and Craig also accompanied the above party, and then went on to the Falls of Bruar. Bruar being in spate, the water was coming down the fall in grand style.

Monday, 4th January.

Alan Smith arrived at 11 A.M. and, in company with the President and T. J. Gibson, visited the famous Falls of Bruar.

The weather was fine and mild. The President and Gibson left by the evening train, which was nearly two hours late.

Tuesday, 5th January.

Smith, Geddes, and Macdonald took car to Marble Lodge, and climbed Carn a' Chlamain in heavy rain and a high wind. Geddes left the same evening and Smith the following morning.

During the Meet the evenings were enlivened with music and dancing, genuine reel dancing, much new talent being forthcoming. Geddes introduced to us Gaelic songs of a type indubitably suited to mountaineers, and those who had delivered their turn faithfully for the past thirty years were able to assure the newcomers that they also would be expected to give their stock item in the same generous spirit for the next thirty years.

Our genial host at the Atholl Arms, Mr Macdonald, gave us a Highland welcome, and made every possible arrangement for our comfort—very definitely an hotel to revisit. At the Tilt Hotel, amid the difficulties consequent upon the proprietor's death, we were well served.

Mr Inglis, the factor of the Blair Castle Estate, visited us on Saturday evening, when he received, on behalf of His Grace the Duke of Atholl, the thanks of the President and members of the Club for his kindness and courtesy in permitting us to climb unhindered over his domains.

In his reply, Mr Inglis told us of an interesting statement made by his stalkers regarding the frost which so lamentably departed after the first day of the Meet.

This, which should interest professing weather prophets, was that the severe frost would not last, because it had started in the valleys, and, in fact, was less hard on the tops than down below. If cold, seasonable weather

is to last, then it must start with a black frost on the tops and work down. The same applies to snow.

To satisfy the purist the following Notes of Climbs by Sir Hugh and D. H. Macpherson are reported separately, since their visit to Blair Atholl being necessarily fixed in relation to the London Christmas holidays, terminated on 29th December, the day before the official Meet commenced :—

“ We left King’s Cross on the night of 23rd December and arrived at Blair Atholl on the early morning of the 24th. We found on arrival that the weather had been marvellously mild for December, and there was no trace of snow on the hills, so our ice-axes were not likely to be called into play.

“ On the 24th we went up Glen Tilt by the old Braemar road, and from a point short of Forest Lodge climbed Carn a’ Chlamain. The wind was blowing with gale force, and we found it difficult to keep our feet on the exposed ridges. There was some mist above the 2,000 feet level, but it cleared after we reached the summit. We regained the road about 4.30 P.M. and walked down Glen Tilt in the dark, getting in about 6 P.M.

“ Next morning we were joined by a friend, C. F. Marshall, from Edinburgh, with whom we decided to traverse the Beinn a’ Ghlo group. The day being short, we drove by car as far as Black Bridge beyond Forest Lodge, which saved us a walk of 10 miles. From there we ascended Carn nan Gabhar, Braigh Coire Chruinn Bhalgain, and Carn Liath in succession. The wind was less boisterous than on the previous day, but it was much colder, and a sprinkling of fresh snow had fallen above 3,000 feet. There was some mist, but it was not very thick, and we had delightful vistas down the valleys to the west. We came back past Loch Moraig and got in about 6 P.M.

“ On the 26th we went up by goods train about 10 A.M. to Dalnaspidal and took the round east of the road by A’ Bhuidheanach Bheag and Carn na Caim to

Dalwhinnie. It was clear till midday, but the weather then broke down, and our trip over the hills was completed in a drenching mist. We saw a pathetic sight on our way: the skeleton of a poor stag which had got the wire of the county boundary fence lashed round its horns and had been unable to free itself. We reached Loch Ericht Hotel by 4.30 P.M., and returned by the 6 P.M. train to Blair Atholl.

"Beinn Dearg was our objective for the 27th, but the mist was very low all round and the weather far from promising, so we contented ourselves with a moorland tramp, going up by Glen Banvie and returning by Glen Tilt, which we had not before explored by daylight. Marshall left for Edinburgh in the evening.

"On Monday the 28th we caught the early morning train to Dalnaspidal (it stops there on Mondays only). We found that snow had begun to fall heavily all round, but it cleared for a couple of hours while we made our way to the summit of Sgairneach Mor, and we had fine views towards the south of the Lawers and other ranges mantled in white. A fresh snowstorm on Sgairneach Mor lost us half an hour in the descent, but when it cleared once more we made for the top of Beinn Udlaman, from which the Ben Alder group looked ominously dark. A regular blizzard soon assailed us: we guided ourselves by the county boundary fence to the top of A' Marcaonach, but from there were glad to drop quickly to the sheltered valley separating it from Geal Charn, which we had to omit from our day's programme. We made our way slowly to the Loch Ericht Hotel and returned by the evening train to Blair Atholl.

"Next day we returned to London. We voted that our expedition to Blair Atholl had been entirely successful. It was a great joy to get away for this brief spell from London, where we had not seen the sun once during the previous fortnight. We have nothing but praise for the hospitality and comfort we enjoyed at the hands of Mr Macdonald of the Blair Atholl Arms. Our only regret is that we had perforce to miss the company and comradeship of the Meet which began the day after we left."

LIBRARY.

Since the last issue of the *Journal* there have been presented to the Club :—

- “ The Mountains of California ” and “ My First Summer in the Sierra.” John Muir. Presented by J. Rennie.
“ Frequented and Unfrequented Ways in the Selkirks and Rockies.” Noel E. Odell. Presented by the author.
“ The Geology of Central Sutherland.” Presented by the publishers.

The Club avails itself of this opportunity of thanking the donors.

During the same period the following journals from kindred societies and others have been received :—

- Alpine Journal. Vol. XLIII., No. 243.
Ladies' Alpine Club Year-Book, 1932.
Ladies' Scottish Climbing Club. 24th Annual Record.
Cairngorm Club Journal. Vol. XIII., No. 72.
Italian Alpine Journal. September to December 1931.
Les Alpes. October 1931 to February 1932.
La Montagne. September 1931 to February 1932.
Fujiyama.
British Ski Year-Book. Vol. VI., No. 12, 1931.
Scottish Ramblers' Year-Book. 1932.
Bulletin of the Appalachian Mountain Club. December 1931.
Nos Montagnes. February and March 1932.
Zeitschrift des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpen-Vereins, 1931.
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SLIDE COLLECTION.

The collection has been increased by eighteen slides, presented by L. St. C. Bartholomew and G. F. Gregor Grant. These include the Buttresses of Bidean nam Bian, Buchaille Etive, Climbs on the Salisbury Crags, and four maps.

In Memoriam.

THE LATE C. E. W. MACPHERSON, C.A.

WE regret to record the passing away of Mr Macpherson, whose death occurred on 6th December. He joined the Club in 1890.

Mr Macpherson had many interests in life, and the benefit of his financial skill and experience was unstintingly given to a large number of good causes. A devoted churchman, he was well known throughout the old Church of Scotland as Collector of the Ministers' Widows' Fund, and he served, both in the larger work of the Church and in St Bernard's, Edinburgh, of which he was an elder, loyally and in many ways.

His was a full life, and his kindly nature and unfailing courtesy won him many friends, who mourn his passing. He retained a warm affection for his native Highlands, and the call of the mountains ever found an echo in his heart.

Mr Macpherson is survived by his widow, son, and daughters, to whom the deepest sympathy is expressed.

One notes also with deep regret the passing of three other well-known names on the Club Roll :—

Howard Priestman, who joined the Club in 1921 and was a Life Member ; H. C. Comber, who joined the Club in 1908 and was a Member of the Alpine Club ; and A. B. Noble, who joined the Club in 1904 and was a Life Member.

REVIEWS.

The Scots Magazine for December 1931 contains two articles dealing with climbing in Glencoe and Skye. Mr J. H. B. Bell, in the second of his "Leaves from a Mountaineer's Diary," pays tribute to Glencoe as a climbing centre, and tells of his successful first ascent last August of the Diamond Buttress of Bidein nam Bian, as described in greater detail in the last number of the *Journal*. A very useful photograph of the twin buttresses—the Church Door and the Diamond—accompanies the article. A short article, "Autumn in the Cuillin," by Mr Neil M. Gunn, deals not so much with actual climbing as with the joys of colour and cloud effects in a leisurely ascent of one of the higher tops above Coire na Creiche.

Alpine Journal, Vol. XLIII., No. 243. Edited by E. L. Strutt. Price 10s. 6d. Sold by Edward Stanford Ltd.

Articles of note in this number are many, and it is difficult to select one of more outstanding merit than the others.

The number opens with an account of the "Conquest of Mt. Fairweather" in Alaska, by Mr Allan Carpe and party. They set out from their base on 4th April 1931, and returned on 10th June. A great deal of their time was occupied in reconnoitring, and it was not until two attempts had failed that the mountain was conquered. The expedition ranks among the best undertaken amidst the Arctic Mountains.

"Mount Robson and Other Climbs in the Canadian Rockies," by Mr C. G. Crawford, describes several new ascents, accompanied by more than one night out, in the summer of 1930, with the camp of the Alpine Club of Canada.

Mr F. S. Smythe describes his Kamet Expedition of 1931, and we take this opportunity of congratulating Mr Smythe and his party on their very fine performance.

After reading, amongst others, the above articles, I was surprised to find a whole two pages given up to reviews on popular cinema shows, "The Song of the Alps" and "Avalanche." Surely this is out of place in the *Alpine Club Journal*.

As usual the illustrations are plentiful and are excellently reproduced.

NOTES AND EXCURSIONS.

The Editor will be glad to receive brief notices of any noteworthy expeditions. These are not meant to supersede longer articles, but many members who may not care to undertake the one will have no difficulty in imparting information in the other form.



HOSPITALITY.

THE Club returns thanks for hospitality from kindred Clubs at the following dinners :—

S.M.C. Representative.

| | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|
| The Alpine Club | - | - | Rev. A. E. Robertson. |
| The Grampian Club | - | - | Prof. H. W. Turnbull. |
| The Climbers' Club | - | - | F. S. Goggs. |
| The Rucksack Club | - | - | A. M. M. Williamson. |
| The Wayfarers' Club | - | - | G. G. Macphee. |
| The Fell and Rock Club | - | - | R. R. Elton. |

In addition, the Club received several invitations from the L.S.C.C. Ceilidh held in Glasgow, in January, at which four or more members were present.



PROBABLE NEW VARIATION OF JAMB-BLOCK CHIMNEY ON BEINN NARNAIN—ARROCHAR

Expedition of 20th December 1931 from Edinburgh.

Party: A. R. Wilson (S.M.C.), Wedderburn (J.M.C.S.), Blackwood (J.M.C.S.).

Conditions: Very fine and mild; no snow; rocks moderately dry.

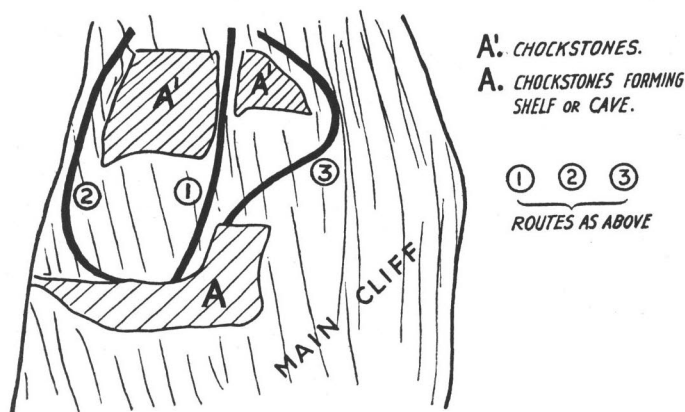
Beinn Narnain was first climbed via the Spearhead Arête, and then we dropped down again to the foot of the Jamb-block chimney. This was first ascended by going up the back of the chimney and getting out at the top by the very narrow crack. It was then reascended by the new route.

Climbing up the back of the chimney one comes finally, about 30 feet below the top, upon a kind of ledge or cave, with three exits:—

1. Directly up and through the narrow crack, well known to thick-set climbers.
2. Going still deeper into the chimney, through a window, and up.
3. In the reverse direction from No. 2 leading out on to the open part of the chimney.

This third exit marks the commencement of the new route, labelled the "Fat Man's Way" by Wedderburn.

The following rough sketch may make the route clearer.



VIEW OF JAMB-BLOCK CHIMNEY. SECTION IN PLANE OF SIDE WALL OF CHIMNEY. (*Looking from true right side.*)

Preliminary reconnaissance revealed it to be necessary to turn, either in the chimney or before stepping off from the ledge. At first it is necessary to get far enough away from the shelf to avoid the overhanging chockstones wedged in above one's head. This traversing must not be carried out so far that one gets out into the "open air," but only far enough to avoid the overhang. From here the climbing is straightforward chimney work, though the chimney is too wide to allow of back-and-knee methods. Footholds are small but sufficient, and handholds are mainly of the push-up variety. It is possible to belay high up in the cave for the first half of the climb over a mass of rock projecting high up from the true left wall of the cave. After that no belay for the leader is possible.

About 30 to 40 feet of rope were run out. The climb was done under dry conditions, and would be very much more difficult under wet conditions, when friction holds would be less secure.

WM. BLACKWOOD.

OSSIAN'S CAVE.

I. H. Ogilvie, G. Lindsay, and A. Horne, J.M.C.S., took the new visitors' book to Ossian's Cave on 24th November 1931. For this a bronze container was kindly provided by A. Harrison.

BEINN NAN OIGHREAG.

Final Instalment.

The shortest and easiest route up this hill is by the northern ridge from the foot of the Allt Breisleich, on the Lochan na Lairige road. As the climbing begins about 1,250 feet, the ascent can be commended to members of the old brigade who like a fine view without undue call on their reserves of energy. From the footbridge near the road, the best route is diagonally up somewhat boggy grass and heather to the ridge, which rises in a succession of easy steps to the top. The path up the glen leads to a rather broken-up region of the hill, and, besides, dips sharply into and out of a succession of deep gullies for some time.

The panorama from the top is rather impressive, the hill being low enough to give full effect to the great bulky mass of the Lawers Group which towers above it near at hand, yet high enough to display on fairly equal terms the numerous sharp peaks rising round it, from the rocky Tarmachans, just across the corrie, and round by Beinn Vorlich and Stuc a' Chroin to the sharp twin cones of Ben More and Stobinian. North of the latter, the mountains stand out less prominently, except to the north-west, where the great hump of Ben Nevis—glistening white in fitful sunshine as we saw it—soars head and shoulders above everything else.

When my son and I visited the hill on Good Friday 1930, on reaching the ridge we found that there was a very strong cold nor'easter blowing, which deserves record for what is best described as its gusts of dead calm. I have never experienced anything like it, and am at a loss to account physically for its peculiarities, though doubtless the configuration of the hill must have had something to do with it. Yet, so far as could be judged from above, the windward slope was an open heathery hillside, without signs of gullies or corries.

As the wind was at our backs, for a time it was quite a help up the slope: though the strength varied, there were no gusts, and the velocity was so steady that we ascended leaning backwards at a considerable angle to balance the pressure. But after a while conditions changed: every now and then, without the slightest warning, the steady 40-mile-per-hour gale would drop to dead calm in (literally) a small fraction of a second, for a short time, with dire results to our equilibrium. And the curious thing was that the wind only recovered strength slowly after the calm. Some idea of the strength of the wind and the instantaneous nature of its stoppage may be gathered from the fact that once, after I had been leaning far back for some

time to balance greater pressure than usual, when the calm came I collapsed straight backwards with a queer sensation of falling into vacancy, and my head was almost level with my feet before I could adjust my axe to break the fall.

Towards the top of the hill the conditions again changed. Every now and again the wind would shift round to the side for a while, so that we had to lean sideways to balance it; then the pressure would suddenly fail, sending us staggering sideways, only to be buffeted back again as the returning blast smote us before we had time to regain our balance. It became very exhausting work after a time, and it was the unwelcome attentions of this gale that precluded the verifying of our position by following the windings of the fence referred to in a previous note.

We made the height of Oighreag about 2,990 feet approximate, which seemed to be confirmed later by the apparent rise to the actual top from the O.S. cairn. Parker, however, considers this is rather optimistic, but we are both agreed it is somewhere about 2,985 feet.

To get out of the cold wind we descended diagonally towards the Allt Breisleich, expecting to strike the path we had seen: we got entangled among rocks, however—with a snow slope that ended in miniature “seracs” where it disappeared over a rocky pitch—and had to zigzag a good deal before getting clear. When we did reach the path, we wished we had kept to the ridge.

It may be as well to mention that the road over the Lochan na Lairige pass is just the width of a car, and that “passing” is almost impossible for some 2 or 3 miles over the summit, as the road has either a deep drain on both sides or else a vertical bank on one side and a dangerous slope on the other. Returning home, we preferred to go some 20 miles round via Glen Lyon rather than risk meeting another car. There is a quarry near the top of the pass, however, which affords a parking or passing place; the next is a narrow parking platform just opposite the foot of the Allt Breisleich, soon after which the road gradually becomes more amenable for traffic.

On the south side there is a small platform at the lower end of the Lochan na Lairige on which a car can be parked or turned: from this point Meall Corranaich and Meall nan Tarmachan are most easily ascended, as the climbing begins at 1,600 feet.

J. GALL INGLIS.

NOTES FOR THE “GUIDE-BOOK.”

1. *Sgurr a' Mhuilinn*.—Div. III., Group 26—Accommodation: add Achnasheen Hotel.

2. *Strathcarron and Achnashellach Hills*.—Div. IV., Group 1—To hill-walkers may be recommended the fine ridge walk round the Lair Valley over Fuar Tholl, Sgurr Ruadh, and Beinn Liath Mhor

in this order. In returning, descend to the exceptionally fine gorge scenery of the lower Lair. An Ruadh Stac and Meall a' Chinn Deirg may be included in a longish day.

3. *Slioch*.—Div. IV., Group 5—The little lochs under Meall Each and the cone itself merit mention, as also the pleasant easy ridge to Sgurr an Tuill Bhan from the summit.

4. *A Mhaighdean and Beinn Dearg Mhor*.—Div. IV., Group 6—The erection of the bridge (*cf.* Vol. XVIII., 107, p. 269) over the stream in the Gleann na Muice has made the caution to cross at "the Heights" to the left bank unnecessary.

Mention should be made of a third route by the track from Loch Maree up Gleann Bianasdail (Vol. XI., 62, p. 90). This is perhaps the better way home to Kinlochewe. After a heavy day, Gleann na Muice is not inspiring.

5. May a plea be entered for judicious references, when possible, under each hill or group to articles in (*a*) the *S.M.C.J.* and mountaineering books and journals; (*b*) scientific or sporting books and journals; (*c*) literature generally, histories, essays, novels, poems, etc.? Noteworthy articles in the Press could be included under (*a*) or (*b*) according to matter.

H. STEWART.

S.M.C. ABROAD.

James F. Anton writes from Sumatra with reference to a holiday spent at Brastagi :—

Brastagi is a small hill station over 4,000 feet above sea-level on the Karo plateau in this island. Here live the Karo Battaks, the aborigines of Sumatra, a primitive people who only a few years ago were cannibal savages, and are still known to indulge in forbidden orgies in the unknown fastnesses of their mountain homes. This knowledge, and the fact that all the mountains in this country are clothed with virgin jungle, which becomes a dense scrub mingled with tall elephant grass and heavy bracken, tends to make mountaineering very difficult. In fact there are several mountains near Brastagi of which no record exists of them having been climbed. Sumatra is a volcanic island, and there are two volcanoes on the Brastagi plateau—Sinabæng, held sacred by the Battaks, and Shibuyak—picturesque and yet forbidding-looking masses, 7,557 and 6,456 feet respectively. Sinabæng bears a very close resemblance to Fujiyama, and when rumblings are heard the natives declare the gods are angry. Both of these mountains I climbed accompanied only by a Battak guide and porter, exploring boiling lakes, streams, and steaming blow holes, and reaching the summit inspected the huge crater. The bubbling sulphur lake in the Shibuyak valley gives one an uncanny feeling. The track up the mountain slopes goes for many miles through dense jungle through which the sun never penetrates, and

is an ideal haunt for snakes, wild boar, and panther. Suddenly a valley opens out, and we found Battaks cultivating rice; these were flooded, and we had to struggle through water and mud up to the ankles.

Then into jungle again, but we soon began to feel the effect of the sulphur fumes from the crater.

Soon we came on the blue and yellow sulphur lake, gently bubbling like a huge pot of porridge. The water was soft and hot to the hand, and the temperature high enough to boil an egg. Hardly a beast, bird, or insect is to be seen here.

When I climbed Sibuyak I had a most wonderful day, not a cloud to be seen, but climbing Sinabeng I was not so fortunate, as at 5,000 feet I ran into dense mist and drizzling rain—really cold, too, and similar to many days I have spent on the mountains in Scotland. One part of the goat track was impassable, and we had to cut our way through. I did not get a single photograph on this mountain, but I left for the estate next day with the knowledge that I had been to the summit.

Other mountains climbed were: Sibœatan, 7,585 feet; Piso Piso, 6,004 feet; Dolok Pintau, 7,227 feet; and Dolok Baros, 6,427 feet.

SOLUTION OF PUZZLE WHICH APPEARED ON PAGE 297.



THE JUNIOR MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF SCOTLAND.

NEW YEAR MEET, 1932—CRIANLARICH.

THIS Meet will be remembered by most of us as the first at which we have known the weather to be really bad, so bad, indeed, that it could not have been much worse. Nevertheless the attendance was very good, though not so large as last year.

The following were present * :—Allen, Baird, Coats, Coutts, Drever, Duncan, J. Forrest, W. Forrest, D. T. Gibson, Hewit, Horne, Humble, Innes, Jack, G. G. Jackson, Jowett, Lindsay, M'Allum, M'Geachy, M'Laren, M'Leod, M'Nab, Marjoribanks, Milne, Miller, Dr Myles, R. Neill, H. G. Neill, Ogilvie, Orr, Paris, D. Q. Sandeman, Scott, Sutherland, Traquair, Waddell, Welsh, and Willer.

S.M.C.—J. Logan Aikman, W. J. C. Ainslie, J. H. B. Bell, L. St. C. Bartholomew, A. M. Cram, R. R. Elton, N. Sandeman, G. F. Todd, E. C. Thomson, and G. C. Williams.

We were fortunate in finding the alterations to the hotel complete. The result was very pleasing, and the arrangements for drying our very wet garments deserve especial praise. The excellent bathing facilities were made full use of, and much appreciated, despite the brown colour of the water. It was not the proprietor's fault if we had to wash in hot mud instead of hot water.

Those of us who were lucky enough to arrive on Thursday, 31st December, got the last of the snow.

* Apologies are tendered for any omissions or errors found in any part of this article.

It began to rain in earnest that afternoon, and by Friday night there was no snow left.

A large number of parties were out on Friday. Most of these intended bagging more than one peak, but were driven home by the rain. Cruach Ardrain was very popular, and was climbed by W. Forrest, J. Forrest, W. Waddell, Jack, M'Geachy, Williams, Scott, Todd, Jackson, Bell, Baird, Ainslie, N. Sandeman, and D. Q. Sandeman. Ainslie was, as usual, in intimate communication with Olympus, and was able to assure his companions that Jupiter Pluvius really was the reigning deity, a fact sufficiently evident to most of them. In return for his diligent invocations a special cold bath was showered upon him. At the summit, members of the Glasgow Section had occasion to compliment their Edinburgh friends on their moderation in bringing no tobacco. The Glasgow people had cigarettes but no matches.

Snow conditions were hopeless; while the first man climbed on snow, the last had only a waterfall to climb.

M'Nab, Milne, Dr Myles, and Cram claim to have climbed Cruach Ardrain, Am Binnein (Stobinian) and Ben More. Thomson, Elton, Orr, Coutts, and Humble climbed Beinn a' Chroin from Glen Falloch. M'Laren, M'Allum, M'Leod, and Gibson bagged Beinn Oss and Beinn Dubhchraig, and Sutherland, Paris, Innes, and Welsh sought solitude on the distant slopes of Beinn Laoigh and Beinn a' Chleibh.

On Saturday it did not rain quite so hard, and the river, which the night before had been well over its banks and right across the valley almost from railway to railway, receded during the day, and by evening was once more within its channel. Beinn Chaluim was a popular mountain that day, though it did not draw so big a crowd as did Cruach Ardrain the day before. It is a good hill for a rainy day; standing as it does all by itself, one cannot be expected to tackle any second peak; the south top, too, provides a pleasant surprise with its cleft to summit and little ridge in the midst of a very ordinary hillside. This attractive peak was climbed by

three parties: Miller, H. G. Neill, and R. Neill; M'Geachy, Innes, Waddell, and Jack; and Baird, Hewit, and Traquair.

A party of Perth enthusiasts seeking new worlds to conquer travelled to Bridge of Orchy and there climbed Stob Ghabhar.

Thomson and Ainslie, and Duncan, J. Forrest, W. Forrest, and Coats were on Ben More; both these parties claimed to have reached the top, although neither saw the other all day. M'Geachy and Innes climbed Beinn Laoigh. Ogilvie, Lindsay, Horne, and Marjoribanks climbed An Caisteal, Beinn Chabhair and Beinn a' Chroin; only the added stimulus of a sixpenny bet enabled Lindsay to cover all three tops in one day.

Bartholomew arrived from Edinburgh in the evening by car. Fair weather was reported at Balquhider, but was not evident at Crianlarich.

The Annual Dinner and the Edinburgh Sectional Meeting and Annual General Meeting were held on the Saturday instead of the Friday, to enable those members who could only get away for the week-end to attend. G. Gordon Jackson was in the chair. Lindsay had provided a bottle of Vodka, but this was already half empty by the time it reached the table. What remained was strongly reminiscent of methylated spirits.

The toasts were as follows:—

| | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|-------------------|
| "The King" | . | . | . | The Chair. |
| "The J.M.C.S." | . | . | . | G. F. Todd. |
| "The S.M.C." | . | . | . | W. G. P. Lindsay. |
| Reply | . | . | . | J. Logan Aikman. |

The Edinburgh Sectional Meeting was held in the hotel, and the office-bearers, co-opted on the resignation of their predecessors during the year, were formally elected. The Annual General Meeting was then held in the Church Hall. The meeting amused itself by singing the usual songs, Waddell kindly assisting at the piano until such time as our Honorary President was dug out of the bar. The meeting was then constituted, and business proceeded with in the Chairman's usual brisk

manner. The proposal that the J.M.C.S. should, as a whole, not only the separate Sections, associate with the Scottish Youths' Hostel Association, was the subject of much discussion. Questions were asked regarding the liability of private members to meet financial claims made upon the Society. Lindsay made repeated but unavailing attempts to terminate the discussion by offering to shoulder all the liabilities himself. No answer satisfactory to the questioners was forthcoming, but on a vote being taken the motion was agreed to. It was agreed that the next New Year Meet be held at Killin.

The meeting then relapsed into song, and slowly dispersed to bed.

On Sunday morning it was still raining, and the river had again risen so as to stretch across the valley. The more energetic members were early out of bed and out on the hills. M'Allum, M'Leod, M'Laren, and Jack climbed Beinn Chabhair and An Caisteal. Bartholomew led D. Q. Sandeman, Horne, and Sutherland up Beinn Chaluum. Ogilvie, Lindsay, and Marjoribanks were on Beinn Oss and Beinn Dubhchraig. Allen and Cram motored to Bridge of Orchy and climbed Stob a' Choire Odhair.

Many members left on the morning bus, and four stayed in the hotel; of these Baird and Traquair went for a walk along the Glasgow road and returned with the Beinn Chabhair party, nearly as wet as if they had been out all day.

A second exodus took place with the departure of the evening bus to Glasgow, and only Bartholomew, Baird, Hewit, Humble, Ogilvie, Marjoribanks, and Traquair remained.

At 11 P.M. the weather was so clear that stars could be seen, and the *Dundee Courier* reporter rang up to inquire whether we were all alive and well. Our honorary president was able to assure him that none of us were drowned, and that no publicity was really necessary.

On Monday the weather was so good that the hill-tops could be seen from the hotel; they looked absurdly close in the clear air after the rain.

Humble went to Ben More in search of photographs, Bartholomew and Ogilvie motored down Glen Dochart and climbed Sgiath Chuil, and Baird, Hewit, and Traquair climbed Ben More and Am Binnein (Stobinian). They reported a small mud avalanche at the base of Ben More. Marjoribanks left for Arrochar by the morning train.

The rain held off until midday, and then began to fall again with renewed vigour. When the last of us left by the evening train it was still raining.

Looking back on the Meet, one feels justified in stating that the weather was really atrocious, and that the attendance of nearly forty members and a number of guests is a sufficient demonstration of the enthusiasm of the Club.

Most of us were out on two days, many were out on three, and some even suffered four successive wettings for the sake of the cause.

In conclusion, our thanks are due to Mr Stewart and his Staff for the excellent entertainment we received at their hands in spite of trying conditions.

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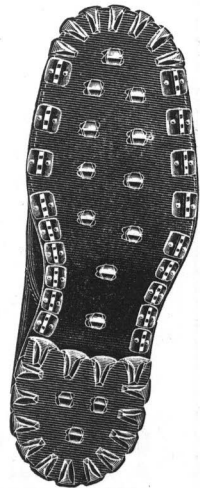
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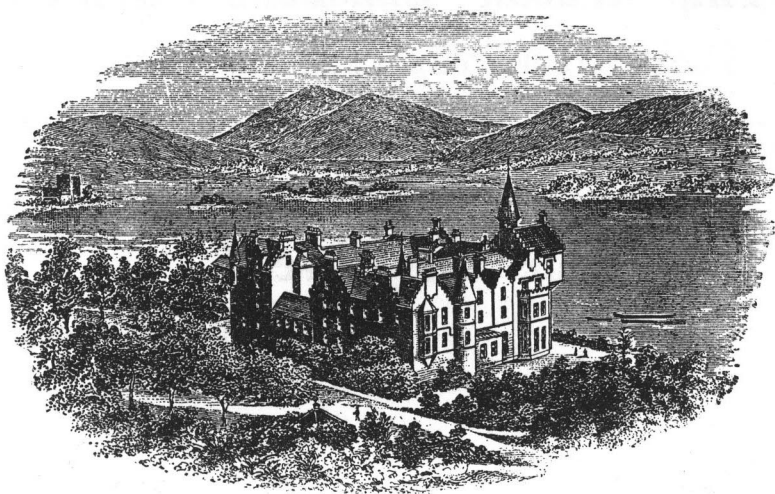
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