



Gars-bhinn
(Shouting Mountain)

Squrr-nan Eag
(Notched Peak)

Squrr Dubh
(Black Peak)

Squrr A'Alasdair
(Alister's Peak)

Squrr Mhic Ginnich
(McKenzie's Peak)

Squrr Dearg
(Red Peak)

Squrr-na-Banachdich
(Small Fox Peak)

Squrr-a-Gradaidh
(Oreeta's Peak)

Squrr-a-Mhadaidh
(Foxes Peak)

Bidein Druim nan Ramh
(Peaks of the Ridge of the Oars)

Squrr-na-Caistach
(The Castle Peak)

Bruach-na-Frithie
(Bank of the Forest)

Bhasteir
(The Excavation)
Squrr-na-h-Uamha
(Peak of the Cave)

Squrr-nan-Gilleann
(Peak of the Gillies)

THE CUILLIN HILLS FROM DRUM AN EIDHNE.

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THE BLACK COOLINS.

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‘THE Alps of Switzerland are exhausted;’ at least so say some members of the Alpine Club. ‘The mountaineer must now go farther afield if he wishes to see new country and climb fresh peaks.’ I may add, he must go to the Andes, the Caucasus, the Himalayas—or Skye. A few members of the Alpine Club have done their duty, and this paper is to record the doings of five or six of the more adventurous, but not younger members of the Club.

The position of the island of Skye is well known to most geographers, and even to some ordinary mortals, but the mysteries of its shape have only been revealed to few. The island is fifty miles long by twenty-six broad, and there is no part of it five miles from the sea. Beautiful bays and rugged inlets pierce the island in every direction and form one of the great charms of the scenery. The Black Coolins are a group of mountains on the southern coast, black in colour, of wonderfully bold outline, and formed of gabbro. The greater number of them rise immediately round Loch Coruisk, forming a rough horseshoe, their pinnacles breaking the sky line in bold and rugged shapes. Another half-circle starts from the north side of the horseshoe and ends in the beautiful horn of Sgurr-nan-Gillian, enclosing in its sweep the wild Harta Corrie. The range of Blaven is completely detached, a deep valley running between it and the other mountains. Beyond this valley and to the N.E. of Sgurr-nan-Gillian lie the Red Coolins, whose rounded forms and deep red colour enhance the beauty of their black and rugged brethren.*

* ‘These igneous intrusive masses consist of two different kinds of
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This is a very short and rough description of the group, but, aided as it is by Mr. Williams' excellent panorama, enough for the present paper, in which I shall only attempt to describe some of our scrambles among these Black Coolins, and a few of the impressions left on the memory after several visits to Skye by Horace Walker, Eustace Hulton, Heelis, my brothers, and myself. We were not all there together, but amongst us, and in varying combinations, we made four short visits to the mountains.

My first visit to Skye was about eighteen years ago. Fishing was the end we had in view. Dried-up streams and blue sky were what we found. We tried to catch impossible fish, but, failing, contented ourselves with crossing a humble pass or so. My next, in 1880, was to examine a moor. The traces of grouse on the particular part of the island we visited being scarcer than the traces of ancient glacial action, we did not take the shooting, but went on to Sligachan, and late on the same afternoon started for Sgurr-nan-Gillian. Two of us were members of this Club and thought little of Skye hills, so we went straight at the N.W. face of the mountain. After failing to get up we saw that the W. ridge was easy enough, but as it was getting late we postponed our ascent till the following day. I must say we felt rather small, as an elder brother, who was not an Alpine Climber,

crystalline rocks, granite and gabbro; and the contrasts between their modes of weathering are exhibited in their most exaggerated form in the island of Skye. The granite masses of the Red Mountains, culminating in Beinn Glamaig and Beinn-na-Cailleach, are as remarkable for their strikingly smooth and pyramidal forms as the gabbro masses of the Cuchullin Hills and Beinn Blabheim are unrivalled for their wild, jagged, and fantastic outlines. . . . The gabbros of the Cuchullin Hills and Blabheim pass insensibly into dolerites and basalts, and are traversed by many "contemporary veins."—J. W. Judd on the 'Secondary Rocks of Scotland,' *Quarterly Journal Geological Society*, vol. xxx. No. 119.

The gabbro of the Black Coolins was 'intruded' during a volcanic era of much later date than the granite of the Red Coolins, for the basaltic lavas of the later (gabbro) volcano overlie in many places the weathered and denuded surfaces of the granite and felspathic lavas of the older one. After careful measurements of the inclinations of the layers of lava still left, and comparisons with existing volcanoes, Mr. Judd estimates that the cone of the Skye mountain must have reached the height of 10,000 to 15,000 feet above the level of the sea, and that it once covered the whole of Skye and the then surrounding land with layers of lava of immense thickness. Most of this, like the cone itself, has since been swept away.

was one of the party. We certainly returned with a much greater respect for the mountain than we had when we started in the morning, beautiful as it had appeared to us on our drive from Portree to Sligachan; but our admiration for it has not faded away, although we now know it can be climbed from every side and edge, with the exception, perhaps, of the centre of the N.E. and N.W. faces. It is a climb though, by whichever way it is ascended, and the summit is a real mountain-top, a ridge of shattered stone, a jump from which in any direction would relieve you from the payment of your next annual subscription to this Club. The W. ridge is broken into all kinds of graceful pinnacles, and affords a most interesting climb. The direct N. ascent of the mountain is even more interesting, and the three magnificent needles forming its N. crest present enchanting difficulties, if scientifically taken from Corrie Basteir, on the west.

The view from Sgurr-nan-Gillian is very beautiful; its details, however, are not vividly impressed upon my memory; but I do remember very well how, when, two days after the failure just recorded, we were climbing the steep W. face of Blaven at about seven in the morning, in a thick mist which had covered us all the way from Sligachan, the vapour gradually became lighter, and a little sunlight came through, and how by degrees the cloud curled back, showing a sea of mist over the valley below, whilst high away to the left a small black pinnacle soared up into the sky. It was blotted out again for a moment, only to return in company with another, and while we gazed Sgurr-nan-Gillian, with all his pinnacles bathed in the morning sun, appeared majestically above the mist, which hid the other mountains and covered the valleys with a silver shroud.

My personal experience of Skye weather is, that it is the driest place in the British Isles, for I have been there three times, spending at least ten days on each occasion, and have only had four hours' rain in the three visits. I believe, however, it is 'a wee bit moist' sometimes, as Walker, Hulton, and my brother Lawrence found to their cost in the autumn of 1883. My brother writes of this expedition, 'For three weeks it rained more or less every day: when the barometer fell it rained cats and dogs; when the barometer rose a sea mist crept up the hills in the morning, and turning into a persistent rain did not clear off until the evening. Indeed it was only by getting up determinedly at 5 A.M. whenever the glass showed signs of rising, and walking sometimes eight or

ten miles to the foot of our peak, and then waiting hours for a break in the weather, that we were able to make any ascents at all. For nearly three weeks we waged this unequal contest, but amongst other expeditions succeeded in climbing Bidien-drum-nan-Ramh, Sgurr Alister, the Old Man of Skye, and Sgurr Dubh. The quantity of rain which falls on, and the rapidity with which it drains off, these mountains is indelibly impressed on our memory. Once, having started from Sligachan for the Inaccessible Pinnacle and having reached the upper part of Corrie Labain, we were caught in a violent storm of rain and mist from the S.W. We were unable to find the Old Man of Skye, and we waited for two hours, hoping for a break in the weather; but, as the storm increased, we had to return, drenched to the skin. Reaching the opening to Corrie-na-Creiche on our way back over the moor, we found the stream a raging torrent and not the pleasant little burn we had stepped across in the morning. We had to ascend high up into the corrie, and at last, in the dark, and shoulder to shoulder to prevent our being swept away by the force of the torrent, we struggled across to the other side.'

This year, at the end of May, Walker and I (without the assistance of Eustace Hulton, who, greatly to our regret, was unable to accompany us) introduced Heelis to the Coolins, under very different circumstances. Having spoken of them in glowing terms, we were anxious he should not be disappointed with his first view of those famous hills. We steamed N. from Oban on a bright breezy day through the Sound of Mull, round wild Ardnamurchan Point, and past the blue islands of Muck, Eig, and Rum, till at last Skye came well in sight, and there against the now glowing western sky the serrated range of the Coolin Hills stood out grandly about twenty miles away. We got the telescope out and named the peaks to our own satisfaction, though not without several warm arguments between Walker and myself. Heelis was impressed that was the main thing. There is hardly any night at that time of the year, and the long evening got gradually more and more beautiful as the near mountains became darker and softer like rich velvet pile, and the distant islands were black purple against a sea of fire. The stars came out as we cleared the narrows between Skye and the mainland; but the twilight remained, enabling us by its weird and hazy light to get indistinct views of the islands of Scalpay and Raasay as we passed, thus compensating us for the steamer being seven hours late at Portree.

Early next morning we drove on to Sligachan Hotel and spent the rest of the day amongst the pinnacles of Sgurr-nan-Gillian.

Unfortunately, though well situated in many ways, Sligachan is at the extreme N. end of the Coolins, three miles of moor lying between it and the nearest mountain. Five miles of ankle-breaking and temper-destroying track leads through Glen Sligachan, and has to be traversed before the Blaven range can be reached; and it is at least ten miles over the moor to the foot of the fine peaks on the S. side of the group. We wanted a Riffel for our Zermatt, and we found one at Glen Brittle, for through the kindness of Mr. Mackenzie, The Macleod's agent at Dunvegan, we had arranged to spend some part of our time at Glen Brittle House, on the W. side of the group and close to the base of the hills. So after climbing some of the peaks near Sligachan we started for Glen Brittle, meaning thoroughly to explore Coire-na-Creiche on the N.W. side of the group, and the rocky peak at its head on our way; sending one—John Mackenzie, whom we had engaged as a handy man—some fifteen miles round by the track with a cart loaded with bedding, provisions, and Heelis's camera. I hardly know why I choose to describe this expedition more than any other; it is, however, characteristic of Skye climbing, and was certainly a surprise to us, for, judging from the map, we started up one mountain and found ourselves on another when the climb was done.

Leaving the path from Sligachan to Brittle at the top of the pass, we skirted the slopes of Bruach-na-Frithe on our left, and reached the head of the Corrie without losing height. A bold rocky buttress, extending from our mountain on the main range, divides the Corrie in two. We started up the N. branch,* and, as the sides were steep, we scrambled along the bed of the stream over large boulders for some distance, till easier ground followed. On our right rose a fine rock peak which we knew must be our mountain, though whether the highest point or not we could not tell. At last, working our way up over screes mixed with rock and snow, we gained the ridge and saw a sight that I am sure none of us will ever forget. The other side shot steeply down to Harta Corrie, and opposite to us rose the range of Sgurr-

* This N. branch of Corrie-na-Creiche is wrongly called Corrie Mhadiadh, for Sgurr Mhadiadh lies to the S. of the southern branch, called Tairneilear, its highest peak being at the junction of the Thuilm ridge with the main chain.

nan-Gillian. The ridge separating Glen Coruisk from Harta Corrie was far below us, and all the rocky peaks on the other side of Loch Coruisk were well in view, a splendid wall of dark ultramarine colour. Whether we saw Loch Coruisk itself I cannot say. What does it matter so long as the remembrance of that solid dark blue and jagged ridge remains, and that we do not forget how the green and blue sea came up Loch Scavaig and all around the base of the hills; and how the purple islands of Rum and Eig came out of a sea that Italy might have envied; and how in the distance the whole range of the Scottish coast from Ben Cruachan to the mountains beyond Ullapool glowed in the soft sunlight, relieved by patches of cloud and shade and the glittering snows of Ben Nevis? One of us said, 'Well, this is the most beautiful view I have ever seen.' He was allowed his fling and not contradicted at the time. Some days afterwards we argued the question out, with the professional assistance of Mr. Alfred Williams, whom we had the good fortune to meet at Sligachan; the verdict being, that we may have seen grander forms in the Alps, and as beautiful colouring in Italy, and we *may* have seen many views of equal loveliness, but know of none to *beat* it for beauty of colour combined with grandeur and variety of form.

Like most of the Coolins, the peak of our mountain was of solid rock, no grass or earth finding holding ground to rest on.* The northern ridge rose steeply in front of us, falling away precipitously in great rough slabs on the E. side, whilst to our right it was cut off in broken cliffs. We soon joined the first summit, only to find ourselves separated from the next and highest by a wall-sided dyke, which forms a characteristic stone shoot, descending on either side of the ridge. Into this dyke we let ourselves carefully down and looked for a way up the next peak. To the left, on the E. face of the peak, there was a possible passage up a crack for a short distance, but it ended in some nasty slabs sloping out towards Harta Corrie; we therefore

* Speaking of 'the basic crystalline rocks of the Western Isles,' Mr. Judd says, 'Acted upon very slowly by the agents of atmospheric disintegration, the rock-surfaces assume a remarkable roughness, owing to the persistence of the crystals of diallage and augite, acquiring at the same time a deep brown tint from the peroxidation of the iron; and moreover these surfaces, not giving rise to the formation of soil, are altogether destitute of any covering of vegetation.'

hesitated before trying it. Walker had been thinking for some time that our peak bore a striking likeness to a three-headed castellated one which he had climbed with Hulton and my brother from the ridge dividing Harta Corrie from Glen Coruisk. He was now confirmed in his opinion. We therefore determined to explore it thoroughly from the W. (which really meant that we did not like the look of the smooth slabs). We descended the stone shoot to the right, skirted under our peak by a patch of snow, and kicked our way up a snow gully on the other side of it. Looking up at the head of this perpendicularly-sided gully, a smooth black rock seemed to bar the way. There might be an outlet, however, at the top corner; one never knows what to expect in a basaltic dyke; but we were hardly prepared to find that the steep black rock in front was a tremendous stone, forming a natural arch from the central and highest to the southern peak, and making a magnificent frame for the view straight down on to the head of Loch Coruisk, below. Passing under the arch and turning to our left, an interesting scramble soon brought us to the mossy summit of our mountain, where we found the small stoneman built by the others four years ago.

Writing to me of their ascent, Hulton says, 'Ascending from Harta Corrie, we gained the ridge between it and Loch Coruisk, which from this point seemed to lead straight to the summit; but we soon found the direct ascent cut off by a series of dykes, and were forced to work along below the crest to our right until we gained the foot of the mass of rock forming the peak itself. Here we regained the crest and traversed a ledge on the Coruisk side of the mountain, until it lost itself on the face of the cliff. A long reach and a lift from below enabled us to gain the next point, whence a series of narrow ledges and long lifts, first above Glen Coruisk and then above Harta Corrie, brought us to the top of our mountain, a fine moss-covered summit, with no stoneman to mark a former ascent. We meant to have descended by the N. ridge, but the rocks looked so smooth that we did not attempt it.'

We enlarged the cairn they built, and then took bearings of all the principal peaks round us with a prismatic compass. As they seemed to read very curiously, I went over them again quickly, steadying myself on another rock. They were all more or less wrong. Now, having an engineering reputation that requires maintaining, being not yet good enough to maintain itself, I had to explain to Heelis

that the compass had not been used for a considerable period, that it must be strained or dirty and not sufficiently free. We examined it and then placed it on a stone: the needle went right round at once and scoffingly pointed south. The rocks were magnetic, some more, some less: the bearings were useless.

We descended by the way we had come up, as far as the bottom of the snow gully; then we turned to our left instead of to our right, and crossing the ridge projecting into Coire-na-Creiche, we went down a long shoot of screes into the southern half of the corrie called Tairneilear (the Thunderer) and thence by the slopes of Thuilm to Glen Brittle. Brittle House is a good-sized square building, with all the usual collection of sheds and outhouses belonging to a large sheepfarm. When we were there it was unlet, but worked by a manager for The Macleod. We found Mackenzie, our 'guide, photographer, and friend,' had come over safely with the luggage and camera, so we were soon comfortably installed in the unoccupied front of the house. I camped in a corner of the large drawing-room, which I had all to myself, with no furniture to bother me except a small four-legged object holding a jug and basin. The dining-room contained chairs and a large sideboard, where we 'cached' our provisions. We spent a pleasant evening and had a long talk with our host. He confirmed our opinion that there was little animal life in the higher mountains. There are a few deer, but this year we only found the body of a young hind that had fallen over a cliff. There are also foxes and hares. We had seen several eagles sailing round the peaks, and once a golden eagle, sufficiently near to appreciate his tremendous sweep of wing as he alighted on a rock tower close above us. We were glad to hear that The Macleod objects to their being killed, though they may take a lamb or two from the flocks. A few ravens, hawks, and ptarmigan make up the list, though there are of course grouse and the usual moor birds below.

In exploring a new country it is always well to record every fact tending to the advancement of science. Indeed, in one of the latest Alpine books published this Club has been taunted with its decadence from the glorious past and its present general uselessness. To escape our being included in this sweeping denunciation, I wish to state that Walker and Heelis made the astonishing ornithological, and to them troublesome, discovery that the cuckoo does not sleep. Walker timed one carefully every hour of the night,

and Heelis said it sat on the roof and shouted down the chimney.

Next day we spent in Corrie Labain (pronounced Laggan), one of the finest and wildest hollows of the Coolins—a steep, short glen, whose rocks are wonderfully rounded and smoothed by ice, with a small loch at its head. The upper part of the corrie is filled with tremendous slopes of screes, coming steeply down in every direction. The main one on the left comes down from the very top of the depression on the S.E. of Sgurr Dearg; over it lies a short, rough pass into the head of Glen Coruisk, while the narrow, wall-sided shoot to the right runs up between the N. and the highest peak of Sgurr Alister, and forms an easy but disagreeable way to the summit of this grand mountain, whose magnificent precipices rise steeply above the loch in large, bold masses of rock whose sharp points and bold ridges show so well from the neighbouring peaks. The head of the corrie is closed by a nameless mountain, well known by its peculiar shape, and which Mackenzie and others said had never been climbed (probably because no one ever had cause to do so). Two of us photographed, whilst the other two climbed the N. peak of Alister by the difficult and precipitous rocks facing the corrie. As there was no stoneman we built one, and, descending on the other side, gained the head of the great stone shoot from the E., whence we easily reached the highest summit by its N. edge. The top is a very sharp ridge overhanging Corrie Labain on the one side and shooting steeply down in broken ledges to Corrie-na-Ghrunnda on the other. The upper part of this latter corrie—which we unfortunately did not explore, owing to circumstances over which we had not sufficient control—is a bare glacier worn hollow, with a lonely loch in its centre; the rocky slopes falling to the lower part of the corrie look so steep and ice-worn from below that I believe it might be difficult to find an easy way down.

Our descent of Alister was made by the S. ridge, or as near to it as possible. We often had to circumvent rock towers and needles, and at one place were forced far out on to the steep E. face by an uncouth obelisk of extraordinary size and shape. The other party climbing up to this ridge in 1883 from Corrie Labain, seeing these obstacles, had worked up the W. face under the ridge, only striking the crest close to the summit after a fine rock climb. We gained the depression between the central and S. peaks—a weird, wild, and ruinous spot—a steep, narrow saddle which we crossed,

and then away over the rounded S. peak, and across the moor for a bathe in the shallow, sandy Loch of Brittle.*

That evening, looking up at the hills, glowing in the light of a red sunset, we saw a most peculiar lump of rock, seeming to rest on the rounded top of the peak or buttress separating Corrie Banachdich from Corrie Labain. Climbing this buttress next morning, we found that this stone was in reality the large detached rock three-quarters of a mile away, on the W. end of the Old Man of Skye, as the highest point of Sgurr Dearg is named. This needle, usually called the Inaccessible Pinnacle, is the Matterhorn of Skye. It is an immense slab of hard trap rock which has been left whilst the softer rock which once surrounded it has decayed, and is now to be found in the screes of Corrie Labain and in the old moraine on the moor below. The pinnacle, rising precipitously for over a hundred feet on the S. side, falls in one perpendicular drop of 300 or 400 feet on the N. As the mountain on which it stands also shoots steeply away on either side, the eye seems to plunge immediately to the bottom of Glen Coruisk, 2,500 feet below, giving an additional feeling of insecurity to anyone who, clinging to the narrow E. edge (on which he may be seated astride), feels the whole slab vibrate with the blow of a falling rock that he has levered out from the crest above, as actually happened to me on the first ascent. The pinnacle had attracted much attention in the district, and had often been attacked by local climbers; but it deserved its name of Inaccessible till 1880, when my brother and I climbed it by its E. edge. The following year a shepherd got up, after having first taken off his shoes. It was then unclimbed till Walker, Hulton, and my brother made the third ascent in 1883, since which date it has been ascended several times. In 1886 Mr. A. H. Stocker and Mr. A. G. Parker climbed it by its western end. Desirous of following their example, and

* The nomenclature of the peaks forming the Alister group is very confused. Sgumain is the name on the Ordnance map, but it is carelessly placed over all the three peaks. This name is given by the shepherds to the S. peak only. The highest peak is always called Sgurr Alister, after Mr. Alexander Nicholson, who made the first ascent, and who, as Sheriff Nicholson, is so well known in the district as one of its most ardent admirers and explorers. We would suggest the name of Sgurr Labain for the sharp N. peak. We jokingly called the nameless peak at the head of the corrie 'Pic Mackenzie,' after our gillie, who went up with us, and we hear that it has since been known as Sgurr Mic Coinnich, the Gaelic equivalent.

having reached this end of the rock, we asked Mackenzie, who had come with us, to carry the camera, if he would like to go with us. He had done it from the other side before. 'Oh, yes,' was his ready reply. Off went his boots and we tied him on to the rope. I believe his great anxiety for some time had been that we might send him round with the luggage to the other side and not give him a chance of the climb. The first few steps were easy. We then traversed a little ledge, about six inches wide, to our left, leading on to the N. face for about 20 feet. As we stood in turn upon the highest part of this ledge (it descended a little beyond) a smooth, slanting rock came down, its edge ending about halfway up our chests. The next step or wriggle was the difficulty. It would have been fairly easy had the standing-place been firm and good, but it was a narrow piece of hard, slippery trap, and shook slightly when tried with a stock. We slowly and steadily drew ourselves up till we landed flat on the steep, smooth incline above. Very steep and smooth it was, and care was required as we wormed ourselves slowly up for about 10 feet, till we found on the left a good crack large enough for our fingers. The difficulties were over when that was accomplished, for a few changes of hand along this ledge slid us under a rough, upright rock, a swarm up which landed us on good holding ground on the W. end of the pinnacle and about 40 feet above its base, whence two minutes' pleasant scramble took us past the extraordinary bolster stone and on to the highest point beyond.

We descended by the E. edge, which we found easier than we expected. No doubt it is easier now; for on the first ascent very great care and labour were required to pull out stones, loose but still forming part of the natural rock, and often the whole of the edge, which by the way is only six inches to a foot wide in many places. Of the two routes the W. is the shortest and most difficult, the E. is the longest, the finest, and most sensational; both require care, and a slip from the E. edge would be fatal.

We climbed the nameless peak at the head of Corrie Labain in the afternoon from the pass between it and Sgurr Dearg, and built a cairn on its summit—a fine, easy climb with precipitous rocks on either side of the ridge. As we had left the camera at the pass we had to return the same way, but we looked at the descent on the opposite side and thought it seemed very difficult. Photography and sketching do not always help the mountaineer on his way; but botany

did not seem to detain Mr. J. C. Hart, of Dublin, who, with Mackenzie, has since crossed the pinnacle on Sgurr Dearg, passed over this nameless peak, descending by the difficult drop, and Sgurr Alister in one day, and found, amongst other Alpine plants, 'Arabis Alpina' for, I believe, the first time in the British Isles. He confirms our opinion that Alister is the highest mountain in Skye. His barometer gave 3,260 feet as its height. Another day we walked round the S. side of the group and paid a visit to Williams, who was sketching in a cabin at the head of Loch Scavaig. He received us only too hospitably, and out of holes in the barren rock he brought bottles of beer, cold beef, and other luxuries. His cabin was cleverly and securely built of light boards, the result doubtless of much experience, and was quite good enough to sleep in if necessary. We worked hard at the good things produced, and spent a long time basking in the sun and giving our host useful hints in water-colour sketching, for which he seemed very grateful, judging from the quantities of bottles of Bass that he lavished on us in return. It therefore fell out that late in the afternoon, being beaten by a trap dyke high up on the N. ridge of Sgurr Dubh, and having to descend right into the corrie to circumvent it, we gave up the expedition and returned the way we came. Do not blame us—blame the view down Loch Scavaig on that bright and sunny day, the clear and variously coloured water, the masses of brown tangled seaweed, the white gulls sailing past the black rocks and standing out against the dark blue sea beyond; the perfect stillness, broken only by the occasional cry of a tern; and the grandeur of the dark Coolin cliffs towering above the W. side of the bay—and forgive us for not having crossed the ridge and explored Coire-na-Ghrunnda, on the other side. We were somewhat consoled for our defeat, however, by Walker telling us that he had made the ascent with the others in 1883 by a fine rough scramble from Corrie Lachain, one of the upper hollows of Glen Coruisk.

On our way back to Sligachan next day we had a fine climb up the W. face of Sgurr Greadaidh (pronounced Greta), and then, crossing two of the four tops of Mhadiadh (pronounced Vátee), including the highest, we descended into Corrie-na-Creiche by the splendidly shattered ridge leading towards Sgurr Thuilm.

On the suggestion of Mr. Williams we spent our last day in making the first ascent of Sgurr-na-h-Uamha, the out-lying and E. peak of Sgurr-nan-Gillian. Mackenzie said

that he had tried it from the Harta Corrie side, and found the rocks too smooth, as indeed they looked; and also by the N. ridge connecting it with Sgurr-nan-Gillian. Leaving Glen Sligachan, we climbed towards this ridge, but some distance below it we turned up the conspicuous gully to our left. It is steep and leans to one side, being in fact more a break in the rocks than a real gully. By a capital scramble up this crack the upper and easier part of the mountain was gained and the top reached.

Amongst other scrambles we made the first ascent of Clach Glas, a small peak to the N. of Blaven. Seen from Glen Sligachan, a dark cleft runs up the centre of the mountain for some distance; climbing up this, and gaining the upper part of the ridge, to the right or S. side of the actual summit, we found a knife edge of tremendous steepness coming down towards us. We put on the rope and nerved ourselves for the attack; we just had a look round the edge first, and seeing a piece of slanting rock, we crossed it, and, pulling ourselves out of the neck of a little gully, walked up the impostor in a few minutes. It is a pleasant climb, however, and the magnificent N. ridge of Blaven shows a splendid jagged outline on the way up: this ridge, unfortunately, though imposing from below, is a fraud from above, as the whole E. face of the mountain is smooth and easy.

Our experience of the country induces us to say, Go early in the year, at the end of May or beginning of June, when the days are long. Take a rope and one of Silver's gourds, for water is hard to get on the rocks and you are often rock-climbing for hours at a stretch. We took no axe, but the snow lies long in the deep gullies, and, though we never wanted one, had the nights been very cold we should have had some trouble. Sligachan Hotel is most comfortable, and only twenty-four hours from London *viâ* Euston or King's Cross, Inverness, Strone Ferry, and Portree. Mr. Sharp, the landlord, is very obliging, and knows how to carry out any arrangements you may wish to make. Mackenzie you may find a pleasant, willing companion and a good rock-climber. He quickly learnt the use of a rope amongst loose rocks and recognised its value. He likes climbing for its own sake and enters thoroughly into it. Doubtless there are other men as good, only they want bringing out. If I am the means of inducing some of you to go there you will thank me more hereafter for having read this paper, than now for keeping you so long. We who *have* been have gone again, and advise you to go. You will not be disappointed. Some of

the peaks have unclimbed sides, and many of the passes and carries are almost unexplored and only waiting for energetic climbers. There is much to interest the scientific mind in the geological formation and the wonderful traces of ancient ice, weird and beautiful shapes and colouring for the artist, the crofter question for the politician, and for the engineer a magnificent and complicated system of mistakes on the Ordnance Map, unequalled in the British Isles.

RAMBLING REMINISCENCES OF ABOLLA.

BY WALTER LARDEN.

IT is a melancholy truth that, as we get older, we make enjoyment more and more of a business; we plan and we arrange, until pure enjoyment becomes almost impossible; in fact, we are much in the position of a cook with respect to the dinner that she (or he) has provided—we know too much of its preparation to enjoy it thoroughly. I remember, when I first went to Switzerland, being much struck with the truth of the above. All around I saw the machinery of enjoyment, but little of the real thing itself; all was pervaded with the stir of *hôtels*, the panting of steamers, and the rattle of carriages. When on my second visit I went higher up, there was, it is true, less bustle; but still what work and preparation there seemed to be for a few hours' enjoyment! What a paraphernalia of guides, provisions, and porters! and what intolerable discomfort for a few hours' excitement!

Very quiet and pleasant, by contrast, were my recollections of vacations spent in England. How delightful were the long days out in Exmoor; the independent start at 6 A.M. with no encumbrances but a modest lunch, a rod, and a basket; the leisurely rambles up-stream till the last trout was extracted from the ultimate peat drain at the source, far up in the heart of the moor; and then, most enjoyable of all, the walk homewards (and supperwards) in the quiet and the dark; nothing seen but the dark form of things—dim but majestic spirits of beauty!—nothing heard but the silent sound of many a waterfall, the weird rise and fall of the goatsucker's 'jar,' and now and then the harsh growl of night-loving herons.

Was there really enjoyment in this Swiss climbing? In the getting up at midnight, the pretence of breakfast