closed ; of Fred's stories, of John's leisurely methods of playing poker, of Moritz's fears that we were lost in a strange land and that the 'grub pile' was very low; all these small happenings, as they come back to one, stir the remembrances of the life in the wilds ; it mattered little to one that the snow was racing round the tent and the fir trees singing in the wind outside ; inside all was well with us both in mind and body ; on the morrow the sky would have cleared, the great mountains would glisten in their new robe of snow, the sun would shine over the fair valleys and the trail that led through the mighty pine woods, the glades by the side of fair lakes and the open uplands of the passes would call us ever onward. Yes ! a wanderer's dreams are good dreams, and fortunate are those who have stored up in their memory dreams of such a land, it is one of the most beautiful of mountain countries, and still has the mystery of the unknown clinging about it. There is plenty of room at present for everyone who cares to wander through its fastnesses ; it is a land of great mountains and great woods, of lakes and glaciers and rushing rivers, of rain and snow and blue skies, and it is still a land of mystery—a 'Land of the Far West.'

A Week's Exploration on the Coolin.

By J. M. ARCHER THOMSON.

SHORTLY after our return from the Alps, H. O. Jones and I, with Miss B. Jones, journeyed to the Isle of Skye, there to finish our mountaineering holiday. L. G. Shadbolt, A. McLaren, and E. S. Reynolds joined us at Sligachan, which became our base.

The hotel is comfortable ; the welcome extended is not so warm as to cause embarrassment, and quite sufficient value is set upon tradition. Aversion from late breakfasting and activity on the Sabbath brought us into touch with the management. However, our boldness was graciously condoned, because, though mountaineers, we so far possessed the *savoir-vivre* of the tourist or the fisherman that we never once returned in the evening late for dinner.

Those acquainted with Skye look upon September as a month of doubtful promise. The weather we happened upon was tolerable. On our last day, already reserved for historical

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research, a deluge began which ultimately caused uncommon floods. Of the preceding eight, two were rainless, while six had wet mornings with dry intervals and dry afternoons with wet intervals.

The rocks of Skye throw off water more rapidly than the Welsh cliffs, owing to the relative scarcity of grass; and on their rougher surface humidity is less prohibitive. Accordingly we fared forth for a climb every day, and the chain of routine was unbroken as far as it went. To the many pleasures of mountaineering in the island was added the rare delight of climbing for a week on virgin rock.

THE SECOND PINNACLE OF SGURR NAN GILLEAN FROM COIRE BHASTEIR.

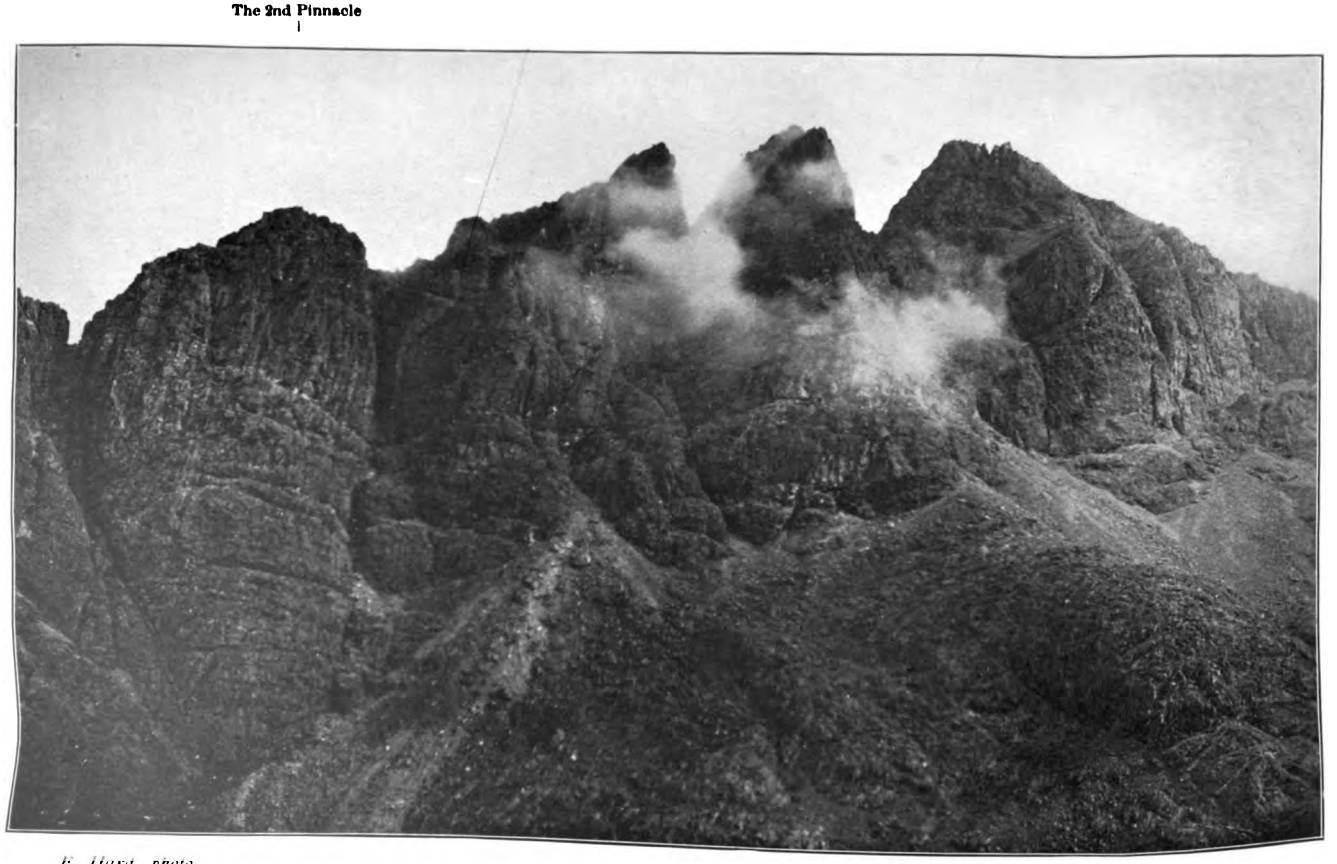
On our first day Miss Jones, H. O. Jones, and I set out for the nearest Grey Coolin to Sligachan. Sgurr nan Gillean is not very near, a vast stretch of marshy moorland comes between. Any crossing of this bog seemed to us, being strangers, certain to entail a too late arrival, if haply we were not swallowed up on the way, at the foot of the Pinnacle Ridge. We went therefore by a stony path towards Bealach a' Mhaim, and then fetched a compass across green slopes to the peak. Our needless caution cost us time; however, two hours of steady going brought us to the top of the rocky spur, thrown out by the ridge, and in sight of a wide range of obvious possibilities.

Knowing nothing myself, I looked with full confidence to Jones for a historical review of the locality. He knew for a solid fact that the Third Pinnacle had been climbed, and, after parading a woefully meagre stock of judiciously vague information, concluded by calling upon me to free the party forthwith from the harassing embarrassment of choice.

My suffrage was given with the impartiality of ignorance to the face of the Second Pinnacle.

Beginning at the foot of the face, midway between the boundary gullies, we climbed directly upwards and crossed at a right angle several transecting terraces. After an hour of leisurely progress we roped at 1.30 P.M. on the uppermost shelf. The crags above looked formidable and, to anticipate, did not belie their appearance. A nearly vertical groove took us up the first thirty feet. At this level a short trail of old nail-scratches, such as had been noticed already at intervals, ceased with sudden extinction. It was a stimulating inference that our first introduction to the Coolin was to be made on untrodden

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F. Hurd, photo. *Swan Electric Engraving Co., Ltd.*

PINNACLE RIDGE, SGURR-NAN-GILLEAN, ISLE OF SKYE.

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rock. Its reputed tenacity was severely tested at once in the crossing of a steep, smooth slab on the right, which appeared somewhat the more hopeful of two dubious alternatives. Jones followed, and braced himself in a shallow recess on the further side. The scope for excursions was reduced to the narrowest limit. A traverse back of a few yards at a higher level brought me to a standstill, seeking with suppliant hands some contribution towards support from the uncharitable slabs above :—

σμικρὸν μὲν ἐξαιτοῦντα, τοῦ σμικροῦ δ' ἔτι
μεῖον φέροντα, καὶ τόδ' ἐξαρκοῦν ἐμοί.

At length with the aid of a finger-hold to steady the balance a stretching step was taken upwards, and a breezy situation attained on a wide expanse of steep slabs. These were crossed in a diagonal line to a groove defined by one high retaining wall. Herein was a small stance, offering just sufficient security and a very cramped position. I resigned it gladly to Jones on his arrival, and following up the groove made a left exit at its termination, thirty-five feet above, upon a shelf marked by a pair of small blunt pinnacles. On this ideal spot we stopped to perform the usual rites. The back wall, which overlooked it, appeared on inspection altogether unpromising. There remained the question whether the slabs on the other side of the groove could be crossed. The vertical wall, at the base of which it ended, threw out on the right a horizontal cornice of rock extending for twenty feet, to a sky-line ; this it appeared would help with handholds.

It was suggested indeed that the traverse was defective, having no middle, but my difficulty was to find a beginning, until accepting advice I started at a slightly lower level. The crossing was effected with unexpected ease ; there was no arresting obstacle, but the place was shelterless, and the passage will certainly appear to any eye unused to gabbro a somewhat bold venture into the unknown.

On the far side of the corner thus reached we climbed easy rocks for a hundred feet, and could have continued upon them to the ridge ; we bore however a little to the left to a flat rock-platform in quest of a worthy finish. And such we found. An angular recess, an overhanging block, a sharp edge, and a short groove brought us out on the summit within a Roman pace of the cairn.

It was now 2.55, so we hastened over the other Pinnacles and reached the top of Sgurr nan Gillean at 3.50. Descending on the farther side we broke off the W. ridge down what we

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should plainly call in Wales a stone-shoot, but the place is named, as it seems to me, with far more courtesy than discrimination, *Nicholson's Chimney*. A stony incline took us up to a col whence we returned by way of Coire Fionn to Sligachan at 7.10 P.M.

The face of the Second Pinnacle will be enjoyed by any strong party; it possesses, I believe, the additional merit of being the nearest climb to Sligachan.

THE SLIGACHAN BUTTRESS.

Rain and wind on our next day bridled ambition, and shelter was sought in the Sligachan Gully on Sgurr nan Gillean. When however the prospect brightened, Shadbolt and McLaren sallied forth from its mouth for an exploring scramble, concluding with a descent of the gully. To us they bequeathed the flanking buttress, and the bequest has enriched a storehouse of mountain memories. A shelf led out on the left to its foot. The angle of the buttress seemed very high, but the gabbro was plainly of excellent quality. In view of the wind and wet rocks a quiet resolve was inly made to resign on the occurrence of any real difficulty. Moral courage did not falter or fail; but I forgot the pious resolution, so engrossing were the sensational severities of this fascinating climb.

The rocks from the very start were steep and my 50-ft. lead had to be lengthened at once to 70 before a semi-circular recess offered a secure place of rest. Two perfect bollards added strength to the position, and the whole party—to wit, Jones, Miss Jones, Reynolds, and myself—met here and found each a perch to rest on. The next move was up the rocks on the left side of the recess, and at the height of 35 ft. a corner rendered difficult by a dearth of holds was carefully rounded to a narrow ledge. Upward advance was now blocked in all directions, for the little ledge ran at a right angle into a blank wall. However, a horizontal slab, overlooked by this projecting curtain, seemed to be within the span of a long stride. In the absence of any belay the need of an anchor was felt. Jones came up and sharing the scanty footing on the ledge held the rope while an aërial stride was followed by a gentle squirm round the overhanging corner.

The rocks above this new base were moderately easy for 100 ft., as far as an upper recess where the whole party again assembled. The spot is marked by a singular slit in the right

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wall. This loophole looks into a deep gully. The dripping walls of a black chimney on the left appeared a possibility, but reserving this alternative as a *pis-aller* we took a sharp arête above the recess. The position was very exposed, but after a few difficult steps the rocks became less exacting. Finally an ill-defined ledge was followed to its surprisingly abrupt termination on the brink of a small cave. By bridging up a few feet an exit was made easily upon a spacious shelf. This cave, we learnt later, was the ultimate pitch of one of the two Parallel Chimneys.

A broad ledge ran off to the left, but straight before us rose a blackish wall, almost plumb-sheer near its base. From a tip-toe stance on a needle of rock, unsound but unyielding to downward pressure, it was just possible to plant the left foot on a far hold over the gap of the gully. By a resolute spring, and a simultaneous swing over of the right foot up to a higher notch, a first lodgment was effected on the wall. The aid of a shoulder, which would here be a justifiable demand, cannot be given because the gulf of the gully intervenes, but the other members of an alert party could jerk their leader back in case of an abortive effort. The operation resembles nothing so much as the mounting of a horse on the far side of a ditch. A few yards higher a belay was discovered on a sloping ledge, and was utilised while each man in turn made the move with proper deliberation and without variety of experiment. Then a cautious advance was made across the slabs to the right sky-line. A line of holds was found here, both sound and rough, but for 50 ft. the climbing was impressively steep and shelterless; above this section an easy finish brought us up to a wide platform on the top of the buttress. We built a cairn to mark the termination. Then we crossed the ridge and returned to Sligachan by way of Coire Bhasteir.

All strong parties who share our decided preference for open faces will be well pleased with the 'Sligachan Buttress.' A calm day should be chosen for the ascent on account of the exceptionally exposed character of the climb.

TWO NEW ROUTES UP THE CASTLES FROM HARTA COIRE.

The South Buttress.

On Monday morning rain fell heavily and delayed departure till near noon. By path and morass we hurried away to Harta Coire. The slabby walls of the Castles, darkened by water,

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looked forbidding enough, but some one knew that a route had been found by Raeburn in or beside the deeply-cut central gully. The field for further exploration seemed wide, so we divided our forces into two divisions. Shadbolt and McLaren attacked the buttress on the S. side of this gully. Some circumspection was required to find a way on to it. Finally the first stretch of the gully, and a vertical corner beside its great pitch were utilised for this purpose. This done, the party made their way up a series of extensive slabs, until an overhanging wall barred farther progress. A creep along the top of the slabs was necessary towards the central gully, until an assailable point given by a chimney was discovered and used. The width of the buttress contracts as height is gained, and finally the party found themselves on a very narrow arête; this was difficult in places and demanded careful treatment. The arête was followed up to the point of its abutment against the main ridge, by which the actual summit was reached in a few minutes. The climb throughout is good and exhilarating, and the remarkable character of the slabs traversed gives it a special charm and interest.

The Central Buttress.

Jones and I tried the slabs in the middle of the Central Buttress. On their rough surface considerable freedom would be given by shoes. However, the inferior tenacity of our Alpine boots was quite sufficient, but the wide stretches of blank rock compelled a very careful choice of the precise line. This steep, vast glacis is transected into three tiers by two overhanging cornices of rock about 20 ft. high. Each appeared from below a bar sinister to the climb. The first of these walls was overcome by means of a groove near its north end. From a platform thus reached a basalt crack of 70 ft. was climbed by inserting each boot alternately, and the same line was continued up to the second wall; here too the vulnerable point was a groove leading to a platform. A short, stiff pitch above it gave access to an easy stretch of slabs which continued to grass and débris. From this slope springs the final wall, which is cut by three obvious vertical chimneys.

Two appeared possible of ascent, but we, being without waterproof coats, preferred to try the right-hand buttress of the north chimney. An easy beginning led to an unexpectedly difficult pitch of 60 ft., consisting largely of polished basalt. This pitch is a severe test of balance for the leader, while

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steadiness is demanded of each man throughout by the paucity of belays, which is a marked characteristic of the whole climb. By way of a terrace we reached the bed of the chimney which had now widened into a gully. A climb up the right wall, followed by a pleasant scramble, brought us up to the top of the peak.

The height of the cliff is 1200 ft., and our ascent occupied very nearly two hours.

The two sections of the party united at the top, and returned to Sligachan over Bruach na Frithe and down Fionn Coire.

THE FACE OF SGURR A' MHADAIDH.

On Tuesday, ultimately bound for Glen Brittle, we walked over Bealach a' Mhaim to Coire Tairneilear. McLaren piloted Miss Jones and Reynolds up the Slanting Gully. Between this and the Deep Gash Gully rises the great face of Sgurr a' Mhadaidh. The scale is magnificent, and the books rightly say 'these crags are sheer and look quite inaccessible.' Our second trio went to try them. The problem of mentally marking a route of greatest promise was complicated by broad belts of heavily overhanging rocks, an obtrusively salient feature of this forbidding face.

From a point roughly equidistant from the bounding gullies we ascended the rocks for one hundred and fifty feet, and then roped on a small platform. Our choice, which was perhaps a trifle wider than Hobson's, then fell on the rocks to the left of a distinctly marked groove. The initial pitch proved a long one, and called for a combination of strenuous effort with exceptional diversity of movement. Jones followed me as soon as an anchorage had been struck on a small stance at the height of eighty feet; a little platform thirty feet above gave the advantage of open formation. Then basalt in a broken line brought us to gabbro rocks and a stiff pitch of twenty feet gave access to a ledge holding a capital belaying bollard. After climbing obliquely for thirty feet to the right I was brought to a stand by a smooth and sloping slippery slab; above this sprang two low vertical walls set at right angles to each other; in the corner the slab rose abruptly into a square stool of basalt. To step up the slab, to set haunch, knee, and foot in turn upon the stool and then stand upright, these must appear easy stages of a simple process. In effect each was a move of supreme delicacy, with surface friction as the potent factor in the operation. In the downward view it was amusing to behold at the

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edge of the slab the bust of Jones set in crisp outline against Coire Tairneilear. The dwarf wall was quite easily overcome, and a gathering-ground was soon discovered above in a semi-circular cave of pale green rock.

At this level lines of overarching cornices stretched away on either side; by them we recognised the spot which conjecture had marked at the outset as the crucial point of the climb. Our hopes of penetrating the barrier centred upon a nearly vertical wing of rock sixteen feet high on our left. This gave access to a hidden chimney, which however seemed to me a specimen of the deceitful kind that first attracts and then repels. A sharp edge beyond drew a hard, unbroken sky-line. A long stride out to a triangular hold brought me to an airy position upon it. The subtle charm of exploration was fully realised, when a peep round the corner revealed a line of holds, rudimentary in places but manifestly adequate for farther advance.

This rib, like Hopeful's Key of Doubting Castle, gave us escape from the dungeon, and at the top we found ourselves through the belt of overhanging walls. It was a surprising change soon afterwards to break into a theatre or gaping mouth of a gully. We crossed the bed at once (cairn) and climbing the right wall struck a horizontal basalt dyke; this ledge passed finally under a low roof of spikes, skilfully disposed to trepan the first unwary climber.

This passed, we pursued a careful course up steep slabs of gabbro until forced by lack of hold into a yellow trap dyke. A few yards of this sufficed to show that the bed was verging as nearly upon the vertical as its two retaining walls. Further advance was hardly possible and manifestly dangerous owing to the friable character of the vein. One foothold on the right wall came just within the stretch of a stride, and a lateral lean out therefrom brought within reach of each hand in turn a very prehensible blunt edge. The resulting pose was so oblique that the downward swing of the pendulum best describes the breezy excursion that followed across a blank interval of wall. The goal was a four-foot groove, wide enough to admit one leg, and in Shadbolt's homely phrase: 'One just flopped into it.' It is against the rubric to cross the Rubicon, but here the existence of other holds than were visible on the farther side could be predicted with confident judgment.

The discovery of a land of promise, as the result of a singular lead from an apparent impasse, is not the least among the pure pleasures of pioneering. We thus struck at their lowest limit a line of notches which broadened gradually into perfect ledges.

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Filled with a pleasing sense of the fitness of things, we climbed briskly a long reach of slabs at a quickened pace. Then we were confronted by a forty-foot pitch. We should have sought an alternative had it been of rock less scabrous than gabbro. Half way up the use of a stance by the second man protected the advance of the leader. At the top of this we could again move together, and we soon reached the level at which the Foxes' Rake merges in the broken rocks below the summit. We marked the point with a majestic cairn, and ran off to shelter from a cutting wind and a downpour of rain. Two hours and twenty minutes had been spent on the face, and fifteen minutes would be a liberal addition for the scramble up the final rocks to the summit. Here we were joined some time later by the left wing, and a cold, drenched, but jubilant party were soon under way for Glen Brittle.

The distinctive charm of exploration on an open face is, I think, partly due to the full freedom of choice it leaves to the climber. Nature does not delineate the route with ridge or adumbrate it with gully. No bias of this kind is given on the face of Sgurr a' Mhadaidh.

THE CENTRAL PRECIPICE OF SRON NA CICHE.

The wide face of Sron na Ciche has a decidedly repellent aspect, but according to report it had failed to repel a party from some unknown route near its west end. Such was the limit of our information.

At Sligachan a large locked Climbers' Book is admirably kept up to date, but during our sojourn the key was forming part of the kit of a camping party in the south of the island, so that the utility of the volume to us lay rather in what it suggested than in what it revealed. Accordingly we approached these central crags without prejudice, and in the belief that they had never been assaulted. By means of a slanting green shelf we reached with unexpected ease a point in the centre of the lower part of the face, which resembles at a distance both the bottom of a V and the middle of an X. Here it was plain the real climbing would begin. After the usual intervals for lunch and watching rain we divided into two sections.

THE ZIGZAG ROUTE.

Shadbolt, McLaren, and Reynolds continued the upward traverse to the left, until a trap recess gave hope of passing the

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overhanging rocks above. This was climbed at its left edge for some thirty feet, when a traverse to a corner on the right was effected by slippery holds. Just sufficient attachment by the fingers rendered a swing round possible. Then a vertical basalt dyke, followed for twenty-five feet, brought the leader to a good platform, ninety-five feet from the starting point.

Close above, a short chimney on the left was climbed to a ledge leading to an easy fifty-foot chimney, surmounted by a patch of grass. From here the party traversed first to the left and after overcoming a vertical corner back again to the right to a green chimney.

This continued for two hundred feet, and involved in its lower section a short difficult passage up a crack. It gave out on a steep arête, above an overhanging projection. A cairn found near this pointed to previous exploration; knowledge is lacking, but the arête would appear to have been struck by a different line of ascent.

THE CHIMNEY AND CRACK ROUTE.

Miss Jones, H. O. Jones, and I climbed the rocks from the bottom of the V and were soon upon the broad and rather steep threshold of a deeply sunk cave. The left wall, which supports a poised block, gave us exit, and a small cairn on a ledge great surprise. Hence upward no trace of man was found on the route we chose.* We continued up the rocks immediately above the cave and in due time reached a low vertical chimney. This compelled bridging. A wide gabbro glacis now lay before us trending east. We soon left it in favour of its flanking wall, which gave a charming stretch of climbing up to a platform. Away on the right, a curving slope of crinkled rocks presented a seemingly simple continuation.

We were attracted however by the cleanly chiselled features of a singular crack that rose directly above us. With the left page opposite the eyes and at right angles to the other, tilt the Journal to an angle of eighty degrees; the position of

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* I have learned since that two routes had been made on these crags, one by Messrs. Barlow and Buckle, and the other by Messrs. Steeple and Bowron. The former lies to the east and the latter to the west of this climb, which keeps throughout to the centre of the face.

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the crease between the pages is that of the crack between its walls. With the right fore-arm and leg in the crack, I gained height by gripping the square edge with both hands, conscious the while of a gradual but constant increase of gradient. The vertical part had begun when a nick, perhaps 70 ft. up the edge, gave me an opportunity to step forth with one foot on the slabs, and thus perched leave a space vacant for Jones to arrive. The relevancy of this two-inch nick to the issue may be gathered from the threefold purpose it served. It was the second man's mainstay, the leader's belay, as well as his next and necessary foothold. Jones cleverly contrived to permit me the use of it for a moment; I worked upward for some 16 ft., and here found it possible with a foot out on the left wall and the back against the right to take a needed rest in a leaning position athwart the crack. The climb to this point had been exceedingly severe. The continuation was severer. A projecting boss bulged out over my shoulder. Recessed holds, required on over-arching rocks, being sought in vain the same strenuous method of gripping the right-angled edge had perforce to be continued. A period of concentrated effort ensued, then the pendent foot reached a pushing-point on the upper curve of the bulge, and finally, with an upward step, a foothold was gained on the steep slab above. There remained a 12 ft. finish to a platform. This offers a resting-place to climbers, and it could, no doubt, be utilised by experimentists with the human windlass. It is the peculiarity of this passage, as well as an instance of the perversity of matter, that at the merriest moment of the strife a ruck of broadcloth on the thigh fast-pinned by some minute asperity compels the removal of one hand from the edge to release it.

This climb of 110 ft. is comparable in character to the hardest obstacle on the Grépon Ridge, but its length and powers of resistance expressed in terms of the Nantillon Split Block are said, on high scientific authority, to give the formula 3 (N.S.B.). It would be to allow patriotism to encroach upon veracity, if I were to propose a Cambrian match for the Crack of Sron na Ciche.

The ascent of the face was continued by a long sinuous trap dyke, which led up finally to a small cave. Fifty feet above this we came out on the actual summit. The time taken from the bottom of the V was exactly three hours.

The flanking party were soon with us; and with Shadbolt to show the route and set the pace we went down in good time to Glen Brittle.

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THE CIOCH BUTTRESS.

A short stay at Sligachan sufficed to show that the Cioch possessed a certain prestige of its own. Accordingly I felt a thrill of excited interest when first it was alleged to be visible through sheets of mist and driven rain. I believe that it was by the shadow * it casts that Dr. Norman Collie, who made the first ascent, discovered its peculiar nature. It is itself a genuine buttress, standing out from the parent peak, rising to half its height, and connected with it by a narrow neck. Its renown is deserved. The expanse of slabs on its left flank is wonderful to behold. The main route passes up and athwart them. Even when wet, this offers no very serious obstacle, but it charms by its very singularity. Accordingly, Reynolds and I, supremely indifferent to menace and pathetic appeal from the van, made a leisurely ascent to the top with the lunch. Simultaneous discussion of prog and progress was then sustained with unremitting zeal, till a deluge of rain put a sudden end to both. After an interval of discomfort two of us emerged from a shallow pretence of shelter to look at the great buttress that rises above the Cioch to the summit of the mountain. An attack upon it was a cherished idea of Shadbolt's, and to him alone belongs the credit of discovery. A cairn built on a ledge marks the end of the Cioch Gully. It now serves to mark, too, the beginning of the 'Cioch Buttress Climb.'

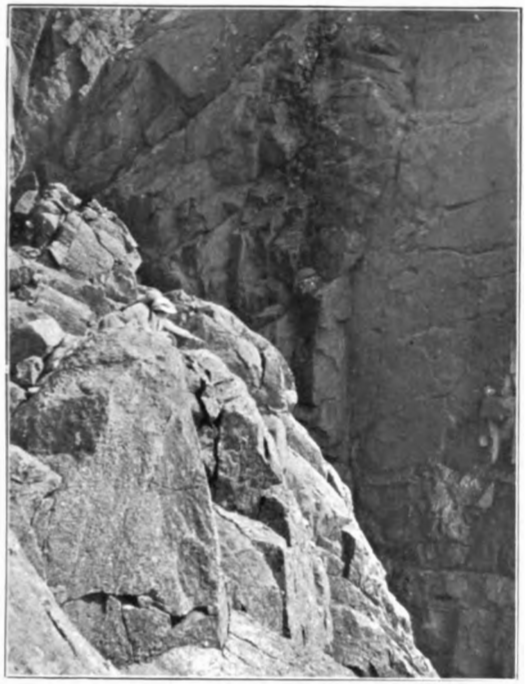
The view, obtained after a climb of sixty feet up this ledge, enabled us to report confidently on the prospect ahead. The whole party of six then roped together and were soon winning their way along a breezy traverse. Its general trend sloped steeply upward to a sky-line, but the continuity was found to be broken by the intervention of various obstacles; chief among the difficulties were a protruding corner and its antithesis, a curving recess. This was entered from a small, flat stance, so exposed on the face of the cliff as to be suggestive of the 'four chains' platform on the side of a ship.

Overarching rocks confined the view above, but the vast slabs below us were most impressive, and the sight of several blocks that required removal bounding in two appalling leaps to the Cioch and the Coire, brought home to the mind the exposed nature of the ledge we were exploring.

At the sky-line a sloping shelf was found which gave just room enough for the whole party to reunite. From here a

* Vide illustration.

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ON THE CHIOCH A' SGUMAIN.



Photos by Dr. J. Norman Collie. *Swan Electric Engraving Co., Ltd.*

THE CHIOCH A' SGUMAIN, WITH ITS SHADOW,
AND THE CHIOCH BUTTRESS.

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sharp and practically vertical edge ran upwards. The climb of this was very sensational and involved one mid-way step of distinct difficulty which called for a delicate adjustment of balance. My landing on a flat rock platform was accompanied by a rude mental jerk. The suspicion of a cairn lay upon it. A theory of fortuitous concourse, advanced by some of my companions, was not very convincing. It was therefore a great relief to learn some days later that it marked nothing more than the limit of a surveying party's descent. The opinion then formed of the possibility of the Buttress had been emphatically unfavourable, but being good sportsmen the explorers had not bowed the knee to Baal or hanged an innocent virgin with a criminal rope.

Thence we advanced up a curious glacis of 250 ft. and gained the summit of the mountain within an hour and a half of the time of starting from the neck of the Cioch.

The Cioch Buttress will, I think, be found not unworthy of the Cioch itself. The two form a continuous ascent of the face of Sgumain; both are fascinating and uniquely environed. It is safe to predict for the climb great popularity in the near future.

THE SLANTING GULLY ON SGURR A' MHADAIDH.

This gully is already well known, and considered to be the finest in Skye. A word however must be said about it, because our ascent took in the various portions previously omitted, and in the opinion of all the party a further charm is given to the climb by the additional two hundred and fifty feet included in the direct ascent throughout.

Jones, McLaren, Shadbolt, and I, on the day of return to Sligachan, diverged from the route over the Bealach for Coire Tairneilear. At the foot of the gully we roped for convenience in two pairs, rights of precedence being courteously accorded to the strangers to the climb. The lowest pitch was streaming with water, but *the higher the drier* was the happy experience of the day. Indeed the great cave was little more than damp by the time the four of us had bridged up through its whole height. It was a surprise to me to learn afterwards that this passage, an original lead of Shadbolt's, was a correction of the line first taken, for the traverse out of the gully had escaped my notice. The Cracks Pitch was perfection, as are most exposed places with excellent holds. There are various good obstacles above it; when attacking one of them I was checked

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by my rope-fellow, who, with a face all wreathed in smiles, pointed to a broad ledge, leading to the right, with a mysterious ending. Such had been the merriment throughout the jocund day that I mistook the proffered counsel for a fresh display of Scottish humour; then our comrades arrived upon our heels with credible assurances that we were indeed treading on the skirts of an inaccessible spinster. We anticipated therefore much ado in the taming of the shrew, but the place yielded at once to assault delivered with the face turned first to the left wall and then to the bed. A frowning bulge of basalt gave momentary pause, but above this a stance with belay was found, as well as a previously hidden reach of sixty feet. Though steep the continuation was simple and innocent. We emerged comfortably and set up a cairn on the Upper Rake.

This section is certainly one of the best in the gully, but the authors of 'Climbing in Skye,' whose interesting account of their attack has been pointed out to me, would seem to have judged somewhat harshly of the amenities of the place.

On the further side of the Rake rose the final wall of the mountain; crossing thereto we noticed in a fairly straight line the proper continuation of the gully, the third and last stretch of the same fault. This part, too, showed virgin rocks, and had not apparently been climbed. We found here a series of small caves which led up to a large one with a colossal chockstone wedged aloft. We made an inside and an outside exit, and came out on the summit ridge at a gap between the first and second peaks.

The expedition recalled to me pleasant memories of the first ascent of the Great Gully of Craig yr Ysfa, and others have proposed a comparison. The Welsh Gully took the first explorers four hours. With omission of a lounging interval on the Foxes' Rake, our time from the foot to the hitherto accepted termination on the Upper Rake was almost two hours, inclusive of all halts. Such indications are quite inconclusive in themselves, but they go to confirm our conviction that of these two magnificent gullies that on Craig yr Ysfa is indisputably the more difficult climb. An appreciation, which precedes, will show freedom from unconscious bias towards my land of adoption.

THE BHASTEIR TOOTH.

Our last day we had decided to devote to a known climb. The morning was sombre with rain; we started however the

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five men for the Bhasteir Tooth with high hopes of fine intervals; and such came, but after three o'clock in the afternoon.

At the base of the cliff Reynolds commended to Jones his new-brand, four-strand climbing freak, and promptly departed himself in prudent haste for Sligachan. We paired accordingly at the entrance to a complicated chasm, the accepted name of which is the Northern Chimney. I saw the two originators of the climb pass up the first pitch with movements so agile and various that I looked forward to the privilege of following the lead of such accomplished guides. When I saw them next they were on the other side of the mountain peering down Naismith's Crack. Though delayed by exhausting wrestles with the cold rigidities of the four-strand abomination, Jones and I were not in reality far behind. The little light that penetrates the devious galleries of this cavern is derived from a dormer-window at the top, whence it filters through several intermediate apertures. One or other of these was constantly corked by one or other of our comrades in front. My predicament and Jones' was similar to that of a blind man searching a dark room for a black cat that is not there. The sense of touch only was serviceable. I went wherever I *felt* I could, but in the search for holds and head-room one thing I never failed to feel :—

> 'How Bhasteir's blesséd river ran
> In culverts through the clothes of man
> Down to a sunless scree.'

In spite of the guide-line between us, Jones was bewildered at times by the intricacy of the catacombs, and vainly sought of me information I did not possess; for him certain *éclats de rire* seemed to serve as flashlights on the situation. Eventually we arrived in a cockloft. A disc of daylight at the far end of a tunnel showed the way out. It was a plain necessity to lie flat-long on the shingle in this humiliating conduit. The position was very restful; the difficulty came with the desire to move on. The only effective method of propulsion my dimensions would permit was plying the feet as levers from the ankles, and thus I ground my way out into daylight on the principle of the rack and pinion.

The North Chimney is beyond doubt very interesting; our ascent has kindled in me a strong desire to go and see it.

During the period of entombment the dry interval had arrived, and enabled us to cling in comfort to Naismith's Crack, which we descended.

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Crossing a gap back into Coire Bhasteir we set our faces towards Sligachan. The worsening weather mattered little to us as we hurried over the miles of spongy cushions and leapt the pockets of peat for the last time. To these deer-forests we had already grown not accustomed only but reconciled. Tedious, as preambles, they prove by virtue of contrast somewhat pleasing conclusions to the mountain expeditions.

In the Isle of Skye the mountain views have a beauty of their own; the exquisite variety of form, the glow and play of colour, the girdle of waters, and the distant background of bristling peaks form an *ensemble* which no prudent man would try to describe until he had fully imbibed the influences of the scenery.

The climbing itself is immense; its excellence surpassed our expectations. All the manifest routes have, apparently, been accomplished, and the aspect of such as I saw in the distance struck me as remarkably fine; for exploring enterprise there is yet wide scope. Thus the island offers a rich and varied store to mountaineers of differing tastes and preferences. Of our party it was said that we 'worked hard.' It is possible we did; it is certain we enjoyed it. Our week in Skye will remain a delightful memory. It was the hope of each of us, as we bade them farewell, to be able ere long to say SALVETE to the Coolin.

AN ASCENT OF MOUNT HERMON.

BY G. W. LLOYD.

E. A. ALDRIDGE and I went this spring for a five weeks' tour in Palestine. There were two things we wanted to do, which apparently everyone out there seemed to think unusual, if not impossible: (1) to make a *walking* tour through the country, instead of riding or driving; (2) to make the ascent of Mount Hermon, which our Palestine friends informed us they did not think could be done so early in the year.

The first of our plans we did not quite carry out, as, owing to illness and lack of time, we had to ride the last three stages of our tour, but we did walk some 250 miles, and walking in Palestine is a very different thing from walking in Switzerland, owing to the intense heat and oppressiveness of the air, especially

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