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*Excursion of the Scottish Alpine Botanical Club to the
Braemar Highlands, with the Ascents of Lochnagar,
Corry Ceann-mohr, and Ben Macdhui, in August 1883.*
By CHARLES STUART, M.D. Edin. Communicated by
W. B. BOYD, Esq.

(Read 12th June 1884.)

(Abstract.)

Excursion to Lochnagar, August 3, 1883.—At Glen Callater Lodge we got ourselves into light marching order, and ordered the conveyances to meet the party at 6.30 P.M. The Lochnagar range extends for 15 miles from Glen Cluny to Ballater, farther down the Dee. It comprises Glen Maol, 3502; Cairn Taggart, 3560; Lochnagar, 3789, and many other heights, the whole being second in altitude to the Cairngorm range. There is a track from the keeper's cottage to the summit of Lochnagar; but as this path is obscure in some parts, and as the summit is not visible from our starting-point, we now take our bearings. Climbing the grassy bank above the cottage, we found *Meum athamanticum* (Bald-Money), an umbelliferous plant of an aromatic character, much used by the Highlanders for chewing. By the side of the path, the bear-berry, *Arbutus Uva-ursi*, was in profusion, with its small pink bells. We gathered an alpine form of *Lotus corniculatus*, which differed somewhat from lowland specimens, *Carex aquatilis* and *C. pauciflora*. The Dwarf Birch, *Betula nana*, a desirable plant, disclosed itself in boggy ground among the heather. A little higher up, we picked several of the downy alpine willows *Salix Lapponum*, *S. myrsinites*, *S. arbuscula*, the small tree willow which sometimes will grow on the rock border, when carefully transplanted. Proceeding upwards, the trailing *Azalea* [*Loiseleuria procumbens* of some] was creeping among the crumbling granite, but flowerless. This plant is never found under 2000 feet, so our elevation was considerable. Our route now skirted the shoulder of Cairn Taggart, and brought us into a valley, where we crossed a brawling burn which flows into Loch Muic. Here were great beds of *Trientalis europæa*, European chickweed, winter green, in beautiful flower. This pretty plant grows everywhere about Braemar, but was long out of flower in the lower regions. In the mountains the beautiful white corollas were tinged with pink, and were very attractive. Beside it the low wheat *Melampyrum pratense* var. *montanum*, was carpeting the ground. After passing over a table-land of some size, a steepish slope had to be surmounted,

leading to the Sappers' Cairn. This is said to be the highest point, but a confused heap of boulders, a little more to the south-east, seems higher, so we cross over, and clamber on to the highest boulder. Here we are on the summit of dark Lochnagar, which Byron climbed, dreamed, and sang of in strains worthy of its glory. The view from the summit was charming; the atmosphere to the north-east and west being perfectly clear. To the south there was heat haze. Looking to the north-east, the Moray Firth was glistening in the sun, Ben Wyvis being distinctly visible. Ben Nevis was seen in the far west, Ben-y-Gloe in Athole, and the Braemar range proper came out very distinctly. Indeed, Ben Macdhu, Ben Avon, Ben-a-Bourd were clear to their summits. At our feet the mural precipices, constituting the eastern Corry of Lochnagar, extended for 1200 feet sheer down, to the inky tarn of Loch Muic. These precipices are intersected by several ravines with a very steep inclination, where the snow was lying many feet deep about their upper opening. The first ravine next the Sappers' Cairn may be traversed for about 200 yards, when a perpendicular rock bars farther progress. The best of the Alpines can be gathered here at the risk of your neck. The second ravine is a more feasible region, and can be traversed right down to the lake, if you are a light, sure-footed cragsman. Here grow *Saxifraga rivularis*, Alpine Brook Saxifrage, the blue sow thistle, *Mulgedium alpinum*, *Carex leporina*, the hare's foot sedge, *Alopecurus alpinus* and *Phleum alpinum*, mountain fox-tail and cat's-tail grasses. *Saxifraga rivularis* was found in abundance, but sparingly in flower, the season being a late one, and few of the specimens had the luxuriance of growth I have observed on former occasions. The only living animals seen were ptarmigan or white grouse, and several swifts, probably the Alpine species. On the previous year I observed a pair near the summit of Ben Lawers. After scrambling about for some time, a muster was made at the Cairn, and the descent commenced, which was made in safety and comfort, the weather being perfect. The weather broke shortly after we left Braemar, and in such circumstances it is very rash to make this ascent singly. Two fatal accidents occurred about this time, both arising from inexperience. In fine weather the ascent of Lochnagar is perfectly safe, and something to remember. If your pedestrian powers are not equal to the exertion, there are plenty of hill ponies and guides at Braemar, ready to go with you.

Ascent of Corry Ceann-mohr, 4th August 1883.—Returning by the same route to Loch Callater Lodge, the next day, we on this occasion took the right hand side of the lake, from which we gathered, with the crook of an alpen stock, the European quillwort, *Isoetes lacustris* and its var. *I. echinospora*, *Lobelia Dortmanni*, water

Lobelia. The *Lobelia* sends its comparatively large flower right on to the surface of the water. The hard fern *Blechnum boreale*, was growing in profusion by the sides of the small rivulets running into the lake, many of its fronds being bifid and trifid. At the break-neck waterfall, a celebrated botanical station, *Carex rupestris*, rock sedge, was obtained—a great rarity, but a very poor plant to look at. *Carex vaginata*, *C. atrata*, and many other species, were also gathered.

In Crombie's delightful little book on Braemar,* it is stated that *Saxifraga oppositifolia* is scarce here. He can hardly have said so from personal experience, as it was found above the loch, not high on the slope, the whole turf full of it, mixed with *Thalictrum alpinum*. The other mountain Saxifrages, *S. aizoides*, *stellaris*, and *hypnoides*, were growing everywhere. We started away over the face, and gradually ascended the slope by a steep watercourse, where I could see the rough crack in the precipice, where the blue sow thistle, *Mulgedium alpinum*, grows in great profusion, secure as yet from all collectors.

The Scottish asphodel, *Tofieldia palustris*, in beautiful flower, with the Greenlandic scurvy grass, *Cochlearia alpina*, were everywhere in fine state. The starry Saxifrage, *S. stellaris*, has to be seen here, with its drooping crimson-spotted corolla, to form any idea what a gem it is, nestled at the margin of some oozy spring. Here it was growing in the wet moss principally, as well as close to the edge of the stream. What delighted me most, however, was a profusion of mossy Saxifrage, *Saxifraga hypnoides*, with petals of the most delicate pink, which I dug away at for a long time. Alas! their corollas fade, and my dried specimens give a faint idea of the beauty of the originals growing on their native soil, and bathed in the dews of Cairn Glasshie. The alpine willows festooned the rocks with a hoary coronal. The woolly-leaved *Salix lanata* was perhaps the most uncommon, but it was gathered in plenty, and grows on my rock border in Berwickshire, luxuriantly bearing in spring its long golden catkins. A charming rock plant, *Salix Sadleri*, was sparingly gathered. A minute, silky-round leaved species was also obtained, considered to be a hybrid between *S. Sadleri* and *S. Lapponum*.

Ben Macdhui, 6th August 1883.—The ascent of the Ben is generally made from Glen Derry, but as some of our men wished to go to the Wells of Dee, and ascend the Ben from that point, a course was taken to the left by the back of the keeper's house for the Dee, and thence up Glen Dee. About six miles distant a few diminutive specimens of *Arabis petraea*, alpine rock cress, occurred in granitic débris, with small crenulated leaves, very different in

* *Braemar: its Topography and Natural History*, by Rev. James Crombie, M.A. Edin.: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1861 (now out of print).

appearance to the plant growing on the mica schist at Ben Laoich. The walking was most monotonous. However, the mountain views are grand. Ben-y-Geol, in Athole, is seen to great advantage on our left, and its huge bulk must give it a great mileage circumference. It is said to contain twenty-three corries, which are a celebrated resort of the red deer. Of course, it is diligently watched so that no mountain prowlers or "herb gatherers" can ever get leave to penetrate its recesses. No country in Europe but Scotland, with all its boasted character for freedom, shuts up its mountains from the public. It will soon be as difficult to get access to our most romantic regions as to reach the Wilderness of Sinai in Palestine. It is proper now to show you the tracks through that forest, where no one can turn or interfere with the pedestrian, to enable you to get out of it. Route 1st is up Glen Luig and the Derry to Spey Side and Abernethy; 2nd, a branch from Glen Lui and Glen Lui Beg, round the base of Cairnaveim and into the Larig Rhu to Aviemore; 3rd, up Glen Dee and over the Geldy by Carnageldy to Glen Feshie and Kingussie; 4th, a branch from this near Dee and Geldy, up Glen Dee, till it joins road No. 2, and so leads through the Pass of Larig Rhu. There is properly no road to the top of Ben Macdhui, but no objections are ever made to persons going up by the Sappers' track to the Derry and Corry Ettachan, or to their returning by the Ben Macdhui Burn to the Glen Lui Beg road, provided they call at Mar Lodge, and mention their wish to do so. And of course there is no objection to their descending the west face to the Larig Rhu, if they choose to risk their necks, as all the upper part of the Larig is beyond the deer ground. This description of routes was written by the late Duke of Leeds, when lessee of Mar Forest, in answer to a letter written to him at the time on the subject, and is authentic.

To return from this digression. We approached a black conical mountain, which shoots itself right up into space on our left, named the Devil's Point. Look how it is scarred and bared by the howling winter storm, to which it is exposed, and its whole appearance is repulsive in the extreme. A little beyond and behind it is Cairntoul, really the finest mountain in the Highlands. From whatever side you look at it, the fine conical peak stands out pre-eminent. The height is 4200 feet. I can well recollect when ascending Braeriach a few years ago, how much I admired this mountain; and now looking from Glen Dee or Glen Lui Beg, upon its noble form and fine corries, makes one wish to be more intimately acquainted with it. We are sorry to observe a wooden hut, erected this year at its base to keep wanderers off. It is the latest "detective station" in Glen Dee.

Our lost guide put in an appearance at the cairn, in no very agreeable frame of mind. Facing round towards the north-east he led us to the skirts of an extensive snow field, 10 feet deep at least, where we had some snow-balling, and descended. The margin of a spring issuing from the snow consisted of oozy fringes of moss and *Jungermannia*, amongst which we noticed *Cephalozia albescens* and *Anthelia julacea*, large purple patches of *Scapania uliginosa* and *Nardia compressa*, and light green, dark orange and purple beds of *Sphagna*; while by the banks and among the stones we saw dark patches of *Andræa nivalis* and the lurid green and purple beds of *Bryum Duvalii*. Gaining a sort of poacher's path among the huge boulders scattered around, we got to the *Shelter Stone* or Clach Dian, which seems to have fallen from the precipice above, and rests on several large rocks: itself as big as a house, and under its roof capable of sheltering 15 men, more or less. This shelter, rough as it is, has been a welcome sight to many a weary traveller, overtaken by the storm in this desolate region. Most visitors to Loch Avon, Wells of Dee, Ben Macdhui and Cairngorm, spend the night here. As we preferred to get home if possible, we did not do so, but all entering drank to the health of our Venerable President, Professor Balfour ["now gone over to the majority"], who in former years spent the night here, and made tea for his companions in a big kettle. Botanically, this is classic ground, for most of our great scientific men have been here in the pursuit of their favourite science. Having descended thousands of feet to the Shelter Stone, the guide pointing up the side of Ben-a-main, showed me the slack on the plateau to make for. On the table-land above the loch 1800 feet, the ground was carpeted with the trailing mountain Azalea in beautiful flower, which one only on the Cairngorm range sees in perfection. We at length caught sight of Loch Ettachan, a black mountain tarn, out of which issues the Derry from its southern extremity. The guide now informs us that we have 10 miles hard tramp to Glen Derry Lodge. I am inclined to state the miles traversed at 30. Our route by Glen Lui Beg was no easy way to Ben Macdhui, and the ground was the roughest in Scotland. The vegetation on the summit of the Ben was hardly worth mentioning—*Luzula arcuata* and *spicata*, *Carex rigida*, and *Salix herbacea*. Mr Boyd gathered *Pyrola secunda* near Glen Derry, and *Carex filiformis* in a pool in the wood near Glen Derry Lodge; also *Drosera anglica* var. *obovata* near base of mountain. *Cerastium trigynum* was sent to me by my Liverpool friend from Wells of Dee, where *Cerastium latifolium* is also got. *Dryas octopetala* and *Saussurea alpina* are also obtained on the mountain.

Tuesday, 7th August.—Another excursion to Corry Ceann-mohr

was made by the most of the party. Capt. Norman and myself, being rather stiff, botanised Morrone Wood, getting splendid specimens of *Hypnum crista-castrensis*, *Melica nutans*, *Pyrola media*, but failed to find *Linnaea borealis*, which grows there, as we could not venture high enough, owing to the deer-forest restrictions.

I am indebted to Mr Arthur Evans, M.A., Cambridge, one of our members, for the complete list of Carices obtained on Lochnagar and Corry Ceann-mohr.

<i>Carex pauciflora</i> , Lochnagar.	<i>Carex atrata</i> , Corry Ceann-mohr.
<i>alpicola</i> , do.	<i>rigida</i> , do.
<i>aquatilis</i> , do.	<i>glauca</i> , do.
<i>vulgaris</i> , do.	<i>capillaris</i> , do.
<i>distans</i> , do.	<i>vaginata</i> , do.
<i>fulva</i> , do.	<i>pallescens</i> , do.
<i>binervis</i> , do.	<i>panicæa</i> , do.
<i>dioica</i> , Corry Ceann-mohr.	<i>pilulifera</i> , do.
<i>pulicaris</i> , do.	<i>filiformis</i> , do.
<i>rupestris</i> , do.	<i>flava</i> , do.
<i>ovalis</i> , do.	<i>frigida</i> (new), discovered
<i>stellulata</i> , do.	by the late Mr Sadler.
<i>curta</i> , do.	

Mr Evans picked another *Salix* in Corry Ceann-mohr, differing in some respects from one which I mentioned, as probably a hybrid between *S. Sadleri* and *S. Lapponum*, and which as yet has not been critically examined.

The May Island; its Archæology; its Algid Flora; its Phanerogams and Higher Cryptogams. By JOHN RATTRAY, M.A., B.Sc., Marine Station, Granton, Edinburgh.

(Read 10th July 1884.)

The island of May, according to Government survey, has an area of about 143 square acres, and, although its breadth nowhere exceeds one-third of a mile, it is upwards of a mile in length.

The word "May" is probably to be referred to a Gothic root signifying "verdure," although others have attributed it to a Celtic root found in the name of an ancient tribe of Midlanders called the Mæotæ, said to have occupied this and the southern part of Scotland between the walls of Hadrian on