The Island of Skye.

By J. N. COLLIE.

(Read before the Alpine Club, March 5, 1918.)

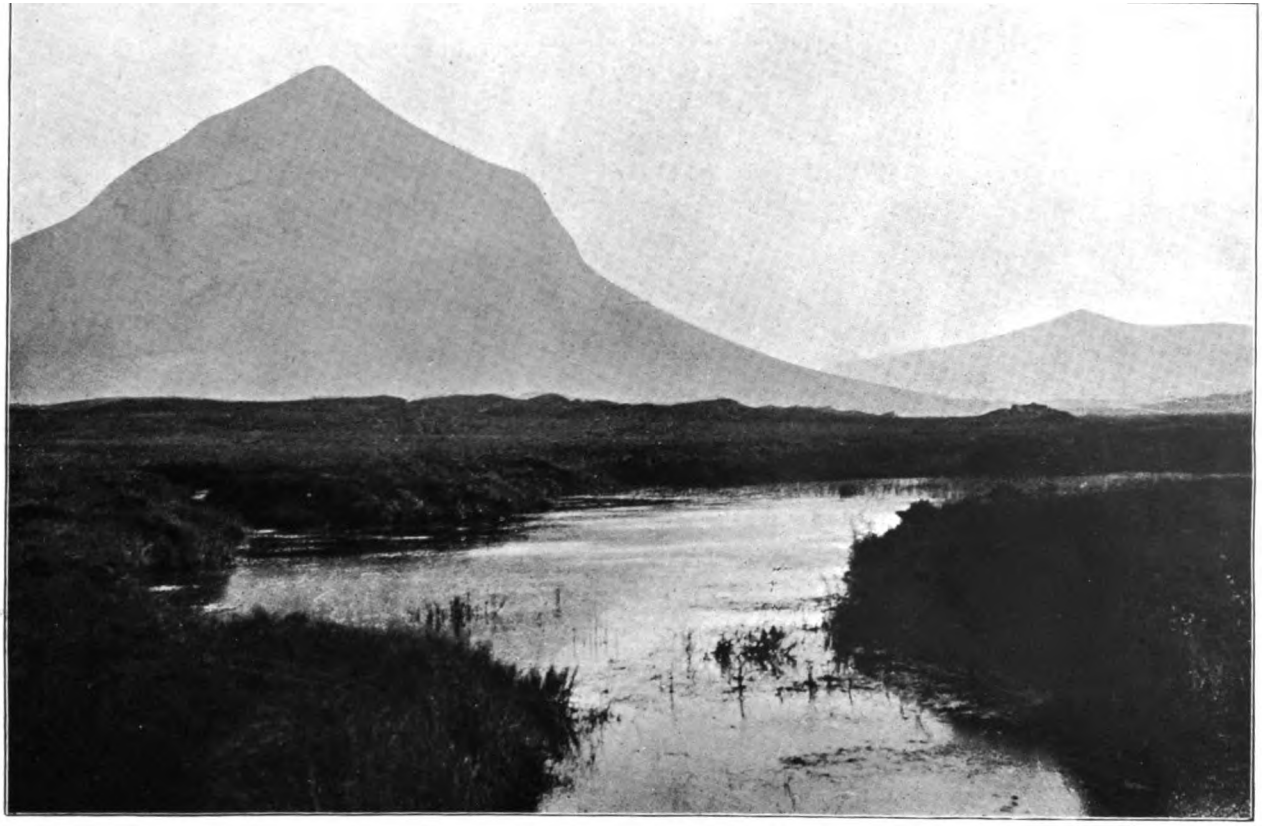
DURING the last quarter of a century only two papers have appeared in the Alpine Club Journal on the Coolin in Skye.[1] Yet of all places in Great Britain where first-rate rock climbing has been indulged in during the last twenty years, Skye stands out pre-eminently. The Coolin are unique in the British Isles : not only can the finest scenery be found there, for they are wilder and more precipitous than any other group of mountains in Great Britain, being formed of gabbro, but also they are set in the sea, and the wild storms driving in from the Atlantic have washed their upper slopes free from vegetation, leaving clean rock precipices and enormous slabs of bare rock. The ridges, too, are far more rugged and broken than those of any mountains on the mainland, and when covered with ice and snow become nearly impassable ; moreover the faces of the various peaks are almost always precipices, sometimes as much as a thousand feet high. In fact a few are much higher ; at the head of Coruisk the slabs of rock descend from the top of Sgurr Dubh (3089 ft.), to the shores of Loch Coruisk, which is only twenty feet above sea-level.

Everywhere in the Coolin above 1000 feet are to be found rough slopes covered with stones, boulders, crags, pinnacles of rock and precipices. Naturally there are endless rock-climbs for the enthusiast. But to the mountain-lover it is the remoteness, the loneliness, and the wild beauty of this mountain land set on the shores of a great ocean, that appeals so strongly. Fortunately the Coolin are not easy of access. They never can be swamped by tourists in the same way as the mountains round Zermatt, and the mountaineer in Skye can make his expeditions free from crowds of undesirable humanity, and can enjoy the quiet of a wild mountain land, full of wonderful scenery, and can rock climb to his heart's content.

[1] G. Yeld, *A.J.* xxiii. 611 (1907); J. M. Archer Thomson, *A.J.* xxvi. 17 (1912).

It was over thirty years ago that I first went to Sligachan, and I went for the fishing. It so happened that the weather was fine, which meant no water in the Sligachan River and no fishing. So I wandered up the glen to see that most marvellous of lochs, Loch Coruisk, and explored some of the great corries amongst the hills.

It was during one of these expeditions into Coire Bhasteir under Sgurr nan Gillean that I saw two mountaineers, A. H. Stocker and a friend, climbing on the rock face of one of the pinnacles. Hundreds of feet above me, on what appeared to me to be rocks as steep as the walls of a house, they moved slowly backwards and forwards, but always getting higher till they finally reached the summit. In those days I knew nothing about climbing, and it seemed to me perfectly marvellous that human beings should be able to do such things. That evening I got as much information as I could from them, and, having asked many questions about mountaineering, I telegraphed to Buckingham for an Alpine rope, for I was told that without it rock-climbing was dangerous. A few days later my brother and I started out with our new rope, also with the intention of climbing Sgurr nan Gillean. We went straight for our peak, up into the Bhasteir Coire and on to the ridge. We never got to the summit; the narrow ridge and the tooth of Sgurr nan Gillean proved too much for us, and after climbing for hours on the face we gave up the attempt. Next day we returned to the mountain, again spending many hours trying, first to surmount the pinnacles of Sgurr nan Gillean, and finally the peak itself, but we were unsuccessful, and the end of the story is, we had to inquire from John Mackenzie, one of the guides at Sligachan, how people usually ascended the mountain. Following his advice on our third attempt, we conquered the peak by the ordinary route. That was my introduction to mountaineering. The temptation was too great, and for the next twenty-five years, mountain-climbing became more important to me than fishing and more delightful than wandering on the shores of Cornwall and the west, where from secluded sandy bays one could spend whole days bathing in the great waves that forever roll in from the Atlantic Ocean. Those were the far-off days of long ago, when the ridge of the Coolin had been only partially traversed. The great rock faces were virgin ground, and the only Ordnance map was the most inaccurate of all British maps. Contour lines ran through ridges hundreds of feet high, and the highest peak in the whole of the Coolin was not



GLEN SLIGACHAN.

A LOCH IN SKYE.

even marked on the map. There was, however, a corrected version that had been published privately by C. Pilkington, who had visited these mountains in 1880 and made the first ascent of the Inaccessible Pinnacle.

The inaccuracies of the Ordnance map were undoubtedly due to the difficulties met with on the upper slopes of the mountains, for only seven peaks out of a total of nearly two dozen had been measured by the Survey; moreover, they gave no heights to any of the passes between the various peaks.

After 1886 for several summers I went back to Skye, and with John Mackenzie spent many a long day wandering over the ridges and climbing the peaks and the rock faces.

I am sure that many British climbers do not appreciate the position John Mackenzie holds in the climbing world. He is the only real British climbing guide that has ever existed. Neither the Lake District nor North Wales has produced one. For over forty years he has climbed amongst the Coolin. He is a first-rate and very safe rock climber. His knowledge of the district is unique. Moreover, if he had had experience of ice and snow as well he would be equal to a good Swiss guide. His great love of the mountains, his keen pleasure in all the beauties of the Coolin, never fails: whether it is a distant view of the mountains, or a sunset fading away behind the Outer Hebrides, or the great slabs of gabbro bending over into space, or a still pool of clear water reflecting the rowan bushes and the peaks beyond, or the autumn colours on the rolling moors backed by the hills and the sea, all these do not pass by him unnoticed; he understands not only the joy of a hard climb, but can also appreciate the marvels that a beautiful mountain land is perpetually offering to one.

Thirty years is a long time, yet John and I have climbed, fished, and wandered together over Skye during a good portion of most of those years. Still in many ways Skye will always be a land where we shall find new experiences. We shall see fresh views of mountains, moors, and lochs, wonderful new effects of colour, of light and shade, we shall find new climbs, and again lure the trout and the salmon from the lochs and rivers as we used to do in the days when we were both younger.

It was in 1888 that I first made my way along the whole ridge and climbed all the peaks in the Coolin. The first ascent of the Bhasteir tooth was made, and in 1889, with W. W. King, the first traverse of the Alasdair Dubh gap from the S. was accomplished. During these expeditions I had collected a

series of measurements of the heights along the ridge of the Coolin that were published some years later in the *Journal of the Scottish Mountaineering Club*. I shall always remember my first acquaintance with the peaks to the W. of Sgurr a Mhadaidh. The weather had been bad for some time, but the day before I had to leave Skye it cleared, so John and I started from Sligachan very early in the morning. We went over into Coire na Creiche and up into the Tairneilear to the Bealach Glac Mhor, then over the four peaks of Sgurr a Mhadaidh and on over the knife-edge of Sgurr a Ghreadaidh, then over Sgurr na Banachdich and so to the top of Sgurr Dearg. We tried first one end and then the other of the Inaccessible Peak, but a strong wind was blowing, and we finally came back to the N. end. After many attempts, John refused to be beaten, however, and after having taken off his boots, he successfully surmounted the difficult piece of the climb. I came up on the rope. This, I believe, was the fourth ascent, only Pilkington, Stocker, and Hart having been up before us.

In those days the Inaccessible Peak was considered to be the highest point in the Coolin, but from it Sgurr Alasdair was obviously higher. My aim on that day was to get to the summit of Sgurr Alasdair, so climbing down along the ridge, we made our way to the summit of Sgurr Mhic Coinnich, only to be stopped by a precipice on its S. face. This cost us about two hours, trying first to get down directly to the dip below, and next trying to find a traverse across the W. face of the mountain. Finally we reached the dip, went on to Sgurr Thearlaich and the summit of Sgurr Alasdair, where I found by my barometer that it was about thirty feet higher than the Inaccessible Peak; it is really fifty-five feet higher.

By this time the sun was setting. We had two alternatives for a route home to Sligachan, either down to Glen Brittle and back over the Maam, or down to Coruisk and Harta Coire and Glen Sligachan. We chose the latter. Following the ridge to the S., we came to a great gap, the Alasdair Dubh gap, by which we were again stopped, so we hurried back and made our way down into Ghrunnda Coire, then crossed over towards Coir'an Lochain, and keeping to the left we finally arrived at the Coruisk River just as the last light of the sunset was fading out of the sky behind the black and jagged ridge of the Coolin. Everything was wrapt in gloom, and only the sound of the streams could be heard faintly up at the head

of the corrie. One seemed cut off entirely from the outer world, and the lonely grandeur of the place and the stillness of the night was a thing I have never forgotten. But there was a long and weary way in front of us before we should see the lights of the hotel at Sligachan. Fifteen hundred feet of climbing up the steepest of slopes and rocks had to be surmounted before we got to the top of Druim nan Ramh. By starlight we found our way down into Harta Coire, and after floundering along the interminable Sligachan glen we got home just before midnight. It was one of the hardest days I have ever had amongst the mountains. How many miles we went and how many feet we climbed it is impossible to say, for in many places we traversed backwards and forwards and up and down in our endeavours to overcome the difficulties that we met with on that extraordinary ridge of the Coolin.

It was not till 1896, however, that I started climbing the rock faces in earnest; up till then they were practically untouched. On these precipitous slopes every kind of rock climbing can be found. Gaunt gullies, huge rock slabs set at most awe-inspiring angles, great cracks and towers are met with in all directions. For instance, a climb of nearly 3000 feet on bare rock can be found on the S. face of Sgurr a Ghreadaidh. The slabs of rock on the N.E. face of Sgurr Dubh a Coir'an Lochain are magnificent, and the N.W. ridge of Sgurr Alasdair is in places quite sensational. These are only a few out of the many face climbs in the Coolin.

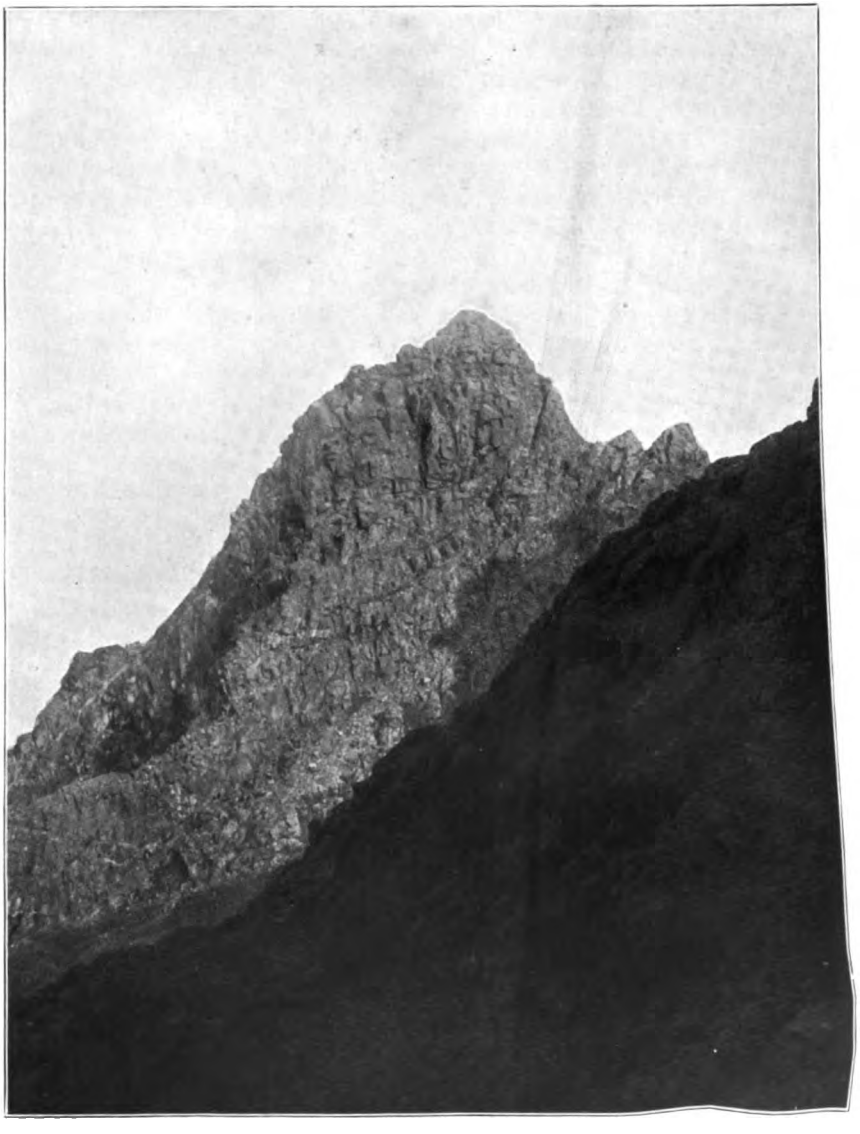
But the expeditions in the Coolin were by no means finished, and in 1899 I made a discovery that promised more first-rate scrambling. Major Bruce, Harkabir Thapa, and I had been up Sgurr Alasdair and been kept later than we intended by the rescuing of sheep that were crag-bound and starving on the rock ledges above the upper Coire Lagan. On getting down to the loch in the corrie, the sun was already low down, throwing heavy shadows across the face of the cliffs on the S. side of the lower corrie. The discovery was of a great shadow across the middle of the face of these cliffs that obviously was thrown by a huge tower of rock standing out from the cliff. Having photographed it, I made up my mind that at some future date I would not only investigate this tower, but also the splendid rock face on which it stood. But Coire Lagan is a long way off from Sligachan, and I never went back there again till 1906, when, with Colin Phillip, I went to the lodge at Glen Brittle.

It is curious that this magnificent face of precipices in the lower corrie never seems to have attracted the attention of climbers. For in 1906 it was entirely untouched, though since then dozens of climbs up and down and over it have been made and described in mountaineering journals.

This great wall of rock is almost two-thirds of a mile long and about 1000 feet high. It is built on a very large scale. The great slabs of rock are less cracked and as a rule bigger than elsewhere in the Coolin. From a climbing point of view it is certainly the most remarkable and interesting rock face in the whole range. When one is on it in the mist one is strongly reminded of the Chamonix Aiguilles. The deeply cut gullies that run up into it are, as a rule, bare of vegetation, and the magnificent texture of the gabbro allows one to climb with safety in more precipitous places than on any other kind of rock. The day after I arrived at Glen Brittle in 1906 I started for Coire Lagan to find out what kind of rock it was that threw that great shadow across the cliff face. John had not come over from Sligachan, so I had to investigate it alone. I soon saw that the rock was a very real and interesting tower quite removed from the great rock face, standing out in the most imposing way over the corrie below. From the top of the precipice to the bottom is at least 1000 feet, perpendicular in many places, and a narrow knife-edge of rock, about 100 feet long, runs out from it rather less than half-way down. On each side of the knife-edge are steep clean slabs of rock that at their base overhang the gullies below. At the end of this knife-edge is placed the tower that casts its shadow across the great slab. I do not know of any great mass of rock like it in Great Britain. It is not part of the rock face, but stands away from it, and its face has a sheer drop of about 500 feet into the corrie below.

It has been named the 'Chioch,' and the rock face on which it is has been called 'Sron na Ciche.'

I climbed up to just beneath the Chioch, but did not try to climb it direct, being alone. I attempted to get up the great slab on to the knife-edge, but soon came down again. I traversed first with the gully on the E., and then round into the gully on the W. side, but could get up neither; but it looked promising if one could get into the gully on the E. side of the Chioch, above a huge jammed block and high enough up to traverse out of the gully again across the face of the precipice to where the knife-edge abutted on to the cliff. As John was coming that evening, I decided to



SGURR DUBH.

THE CUILLIN.

wait, hoping with his help, and a rope, to conquer it on the morrow. As it turned out, it was a climb full of excitement, for one never knew what was round the next corner. We traversed slabs, we worked up cracks, and went right away from the Chioch into the gully on the E. side, losing sight of the Chioch altogether. Then we fortunately found a queer traverse unlike any traverse I have ever seen, that led out of the gully across the perpendicular face of the cliff, and back in the direction of the Chioch. But the Chioch itself we could not see, until having got round several corners, suddenly it came into view and we found ourselves on the end of the knife-edge. We sat down on that knife-edge, and slowly made our way to the great rock tower at its end, up this we climbed, and John and I were mightily pleased with our climb. After that everyone at Glen Brittle had to climb it and I believe that during that July and August John and I made the first ten ascents of the Chioch.

Since then many other ways have been discovered for getting to the top, but I still have a great liking for the original route, for there are so many surprises in it, and one has the opportunity of seeing the Chioch from so many points of view during the ascent. The most curious and sensational way down was worked out later. After getting back along the knife-edge the gully on the W. side is descended. Almost at once one comes to a long drop that has to be done on the rope. The slabs on this side of the Chioch are extremely fine and sometimes overhanging. From the bottom of the drop a traverse takes one out of the gully to the right, round underneath the Chioch. Here a slab slopes down steeply, ending apparently in space over the great precipice that rises from the corrie up to the top of the Chioch. If, however, one climbs down this slab one can drop out of sight over the end into a notch running diagonally across the face of the precipice. This notch has been formed by a dyke of soft rock that has weathered out of the harder gabbro. Indeed the weathering has gone so deep that as one works along the notch towards the western gully it finally becomes a cave through which one can go, and it ultimately leads one down into the gully below. This gully can then be followed as it runs across and downwards till the foot of the great precipice is reached.

During 1906 and the years that followed there were few parts of the W. Coolin that John and I did not wander over. On Sron a Ciche alone we found enough new climbing to last

for a long time; also the faces of rock in all the other corries besides Coire Lagan had to be investigated.

Anyone who wishes to spend a long summer day scrambling about on splendid rock will not be disappointed with the Coolin; and the rock-work can be varied from easy to the most difficult. The Coolin however must be treated with respect; for should anyone be caught in the mist whilst on the main ridge of the Coolin, and not know about the corries below, the descent into the corrie is by no means easy, for although the first two or three hundred feet may be at a moderate angle, it soon gets steeper, finally becoming precipitous and quite impossible, and the climber will be surprised to find that he may have to spend perhaps a couple of hours in the mist trying to get down a few hundred feet of a mere British hill by the easiest route.

But on fine days one can take one's ease on the Coolin, and should one weary of rock-scrambling one can sit on some ledge perched high up above the lower world, surrounded by huge crags making foregrounds full of strength and beauty, and looking out over low-lying moors to the outer islands, that seem to belong to some mysterious land in the far-off west. Or one can wait till the last glories of the sunset have faded from the great precipices and the corries are all in gloom before one finally leaves them.

For colour, for fine mountain form, for grandeur, and for mystery the Coolin never disappoint one. During the long summer days the great expanses of white clouds will float in the clear air undefiled with the smoke of towns, or the mists will curl tenderly over the moorlands, or rush with wild haste through the great gaps in the ridges of the Coolin; or in the melancholy autumn time the moors, rioting in all the marvellously rich colours of decay, will serve as a splendid contrast to the dark purple of the corries, that seem as if they were hung with royal velvet. But it is impossible to describe the strength and the beauty of the colouring in the island of Skye; it can only be understood by seeing it.

It is not, however, only amongst the Coolin that one can find this wonderful feast of colour. As a matter of fact it can be seen in greater perfection on the lower-lying parts of Skye, on the great stretches of waste moorland, in the small valleys running down to the sea, and on the sea-coast itself. Everywhere nature seems to have clothed this remarkable island, set in the western seas, with a delicate and

comely garb that belongs only to these isles of the west. It may be that it is sometimes sad and in winter-time monotonous, but there is always the infinite ocean that gives an added charm to the mysterious distances of the rolling moors, where strange silences are only broken by the faint sound of the murmuring streams, or the cry of some bird, whilst far off are the dark peaks that alternate with light and shade as the clouds drift over them, and beyond the azure waters of the Atlantic, forever fretting against the great cliffs frowning seaward. That in Skye are to be found some of the very finest of sea cliffs is known to very few indeed. Yet from Glen Brittle to Rudha Hunish along the W. coast of the island there must be at least sixty miles of as wild coast scenery as can be found in Great Britain and Ireland. The cliffs run in height up to 966 feet at Waterstein Head. In most places they drop sheer into deep blue water. They are made of basalt, and are therefore of a dark hue, but often are coloured by patches of grey or yellow lichen that helps out the lines and form of the rock. Massive pinnacles and towers of rock stand out from them, and solemn sea stacks, with arches under them, rise out of the waves at their feet, solitary and forgotten, and washed by the great tides as they go swinging by. There are caves without number where the seal lie and the cormorants build their nests, and lonely beaches only to be approached by boat in calm weather, and that are nearly a day's journey from the nearest landing-place—beaches on which man sets foot perhaps once in several decades, where the winter gales have left nothing except huge boulders, or perhaps some ancient wreckage that rots as it lies wedged between the great masses of solid rock.

I know a great deal of the W. and N. coast of Ireland, the W: coast of Scotland from the Mull of Cantyre to Cape Wrath, also the coast of Sutherland and Caithness, yet the wild basaltic W. coast of Skye is unique: it has a beauty and individuality all its own, the cliffs are more sheer, the forms into which the rock weathers are different from other sea coasts, the dark, mysterious colour of the basalt contrasts with the deep blue waters of the sea below most marvellously, and the views across the seas of barren foam towards the outer islands are like looking into some fairy country or to the land of I-Brasîl. And as the sea cliffs are different from those elsewhere, so also there are no moors quite like those in Skye, for they also get their form from the weathering

basalt. It is in late spring and the early summer-time that they are most dainty and alluring, for then they are fragrant with the earthy smell of the new life that everywhere is bursting forth, the birds are singing, and the grasses and the flowers are growing up in rich profusion. The air is full of the voices and the perfumes of the new time of sunlight and colour, stray breezes wander aimlessly about, losing themselves in the little valleys or faintly ruffling the waters of a loch, the bees are busy in the flowers, and the birds are thinking of their nesting-time ; all is alive and growing, and the days are long ; soft lights and shadows slowly pass across the open moorlands. Here and there can be seen the remains of prehistoric times ; tumuli, and stone circles, or an old dun take one's thoughts back to those forgotten days when the wild men from Lochlan swept down the Minch in their birlinns, ravaging the islands and laying waste with the sword. Now all is quiet and the land deserted except for the sheep. Only the cry of the curlew or plover is heard, or perhaps a lark soaring up and up into the sky calling to its mate, or the whir of grouse as they rise out of the heather. There also hidden away in these spacious moors are the lochans, that are far from the habitations of even the crofters. As a rule they lie high up amongst the hills, so that the views from them on the long summer days are across the miles of gently sloping heather and many-coloured grasses, down to the great cliffs and the sea and to the islands that stand out faint and mysterious against the far-off sky : lochs that are seldom seen, and then probably only by some shepherd searching for wandering sheep or the shaggy highland cattle. Rich grasses grow near their edges, great water-lilies float on them, the sea-birds build their nests on their small islands, and fat yellow trout swim in their waters. The wild duck and the divers know them, the curlews call across the great waste of moors that roll away for miles, the air is full of strange scents, and the only sign of man is some old ruined dun set on a coign of vantage, looking down to the sea and the distant horizon. Although the early summer is a time when the Skye moors are most fascinating, yet to be seen in all their glory of rich colour they must be visited in late September or October, when the delicate summer hues of the grasses have changed to amber yellows and gorgeous oranges and rich velvety browns. The rowan bushes have leaves of gold and crimson and bright scarlet berries, and the heather has taken on dusky shades that change with every

kind of light that falls over the landscape. It is a curious fact that in Skye all this colouring is more brilliant than on the coast of the mainland opposite; whether it is due to the basaltic soil or not it is impossible to say, but I certainly never have seen on the mainland the same clean, brilliant tints that clothe the Skye moors in late autumn.

And one must not forget the rivers and streams in Skye, the numberless flocks of waters that are to be found everywhere running down to the sea from the hills. Wonderful they are, some clear as crystal, others golden yellow or brown from the peat; some hurrying tumultuously from the high corries, plunging through deep cuttings, where are graceful waterfalls and deep dark pools, in which the waters pause awhile before they rush on again towards the big glens and the sea; others listlessly winding backwards and forwards, as they wander over the heather-covered moors, full of small trout, slender strips of silver-glinting waters, with moss-covered stones and reeds, murmuring with quiet voice to the birds and the skies and the endless expanses of the open lands stretching seaward.

Skye is a land of many streams and rivers; whether they are in full flood from the melting snow in the spring-time, or clear and tranquil in the lazy summer-time, they are always beautiful. Many a long day have I spent by them. I have fished for the salmon and the sea trout, and I know the pools where they lie. John and I have landed fresh-run silvery fish without number. One of the best of these rivers, on its day, is the Sligachan River, that rises in the dark and wild rock-girt Lota Coire at the back of Sgurr nan Gillean. It flows down over mighty slabs of rock into the head of Harta Coire, finally sweeping out into the great Sligachan glen. In the pools cut deep out of the rock, the salmon and sea trout can be watched, as they swim in the clear water often ten to fifteen feet deep. Thence over a spacious moor it winds through the peat, with many a deep pool and rich reddish brown peebles at its bottom, till it comes to the last mile, where, between rocks, it again foams and dashes down in tumult, finally to lose itself in the sea.

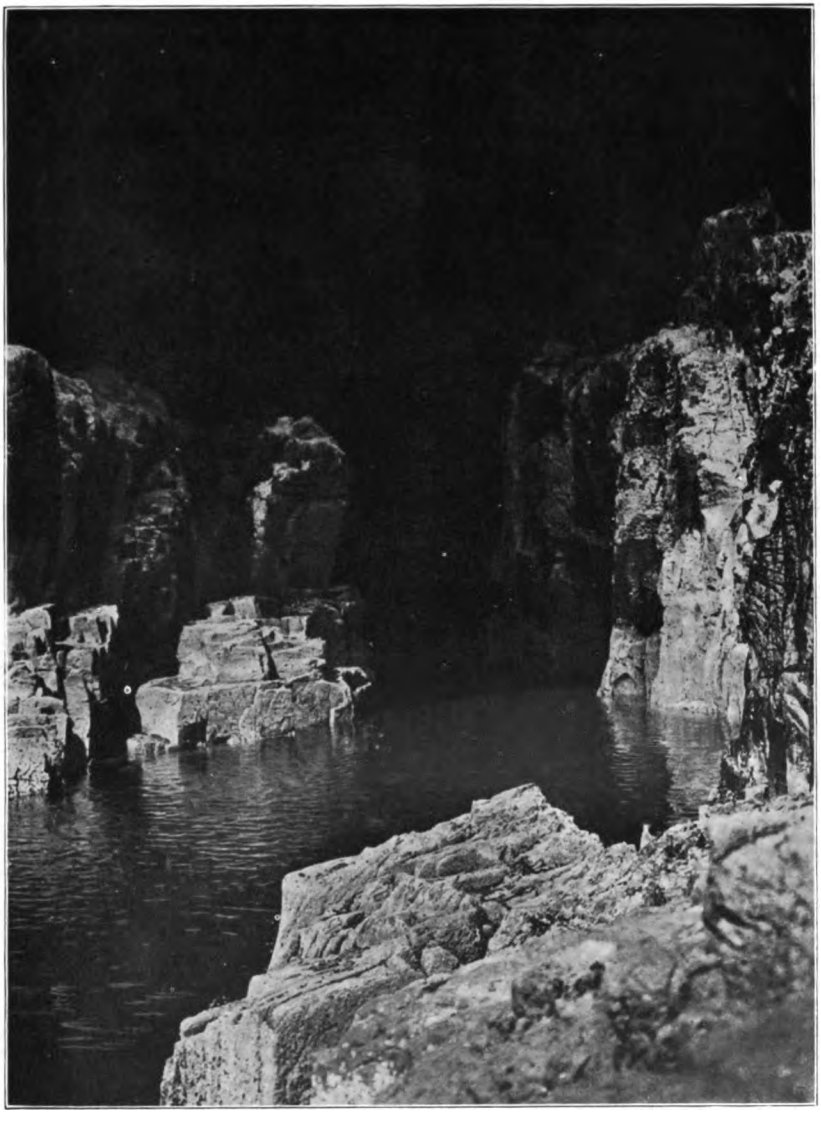
There are few glens like Glen Sligachan. Open at both ends, with the Red Hills and Marscow on one side and the dark frowning precipices of the Coolin on the other, whilst the bottom of the glen is undulating and full of the rich colour of the grasses and the heather; the eye is led away and away

into faint, luminous distances, the exquisite shape of Marscow half fills the glen, and the dark walls of Sgurr nan Gillean almost overhang the glen on the opposite side. Besides Glen Sligachan there is also another extraordinary piece of scenery in Skye, the Quiraing. The Quiraing is a freak of nature that could only be produced by a very special set of circumstances. For there the face of a great cliff of basalt, hundreds of feet high and about a mile long, has slipped on a bed of clay beneath, leaving huge towers and tables of the basalt in wild confusion all along the mountain-side. Inaccessible pinnacles, bastions, and great slices of rocks with deep fissures between, surround one in bewildering numbers, in shape fantastic and weird, and it would be an eerie experience to spend a night alone in the Quiraing. Then there is the sea-coast on the W. side of the island, where the basalt has weathered into sheer cliffs, sea stacks, and coves without number. Moreover, Skye possesses the most beautiful of all sea lochs, Loch Bracadale. Loch Hourn is wild and desolate, Loch Eriboll is magnificent and drear, looking full northwards to the Arctic Ocean, with lonely Ben Hope at its head and the delicate-coloured limestone cliffs, full of caves and arches, at the sea end. But Loch Bracadale on a fine day is like the Mediterranean. From Orbost as one looks across it to the south, its islands are set in deep blue waters, beyond are the rolling moors of Talisker, and further the whole range of the Coolin and Blaven and the Red Hills stand up into the sky, delicate azure in colour, the whole a perfect feast of atmospheric distances. And besides all these there remains Loch Scavaig. Loch Coruisk, and the Coolin. But of these I have written elsewhere.

It is a pity that most people visit Skye during August, for August is certainly not the time when Skye is at its best. All the charm of the spring and early summer has gone, the grasses are far too green, and the weather is very uncertain. The rich colouring of the autumn is absent, so that the moors have none of the wonderful perspective that comes later with the change of colour.

Yet Skye is a land where the unexpected is always happening, and even in August one can get effects in the Coolin of colour, light, and shade that once seen will never be forgotten.

Like all really beautiful places, however, one must visit Skye often, fully to understand it. For there is so much to be seen that many a day has to be spent exploring the island before one begins to realise how varied the scenery



THE CANDLE CAVE.

SEA COAST NEAR ORBOST.

can be. It is a land of great expanses of moorland and heather, where the rains weep and the plovers cry, and the wild west winds sweep in straight from the outer ocean—a lonely land, where one can wander far from the haunts of men, following the streams as they flow seaward through the quiet valleys, or climbing the low-lying hills, from whose summits the Hebrides can be seen far away across the sea, wonderful islands of the west, pale blue against a sunlit sky. And should the mists cover the moors the feeling of loneliness grows—one begins to believe in the old legends of the 'Sithe' or the 'Fairy Folk'; or when the curlews' dreary call, 'Dalua, Dalua, Dalua,' is heard far away, a strange uneasiness seizes one, all the old Celtic tales of mysterious beings that haunt the wild places become possible, one knows not why—the unknown assails one, and 'fears stand in the way.' Skye is also a land guarded on the W. by the great sea cliffs, along which one can spend many a day exploring the caves and the beaches and the sea stacks. One can look down from them at the seal lying on the skerries, or at the great gannets diving, or the streams falling sheer,

> 'Like a downward smoke,
> Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn,'

or after a storm listening to the angry waves roaring,

> 'Rock-thwarted under bellowing caves,
> Beneath the windy wall.'

And, lastly, in Skye one can go to the heart of the great mountains for the solitude and the grandeur they alone can give: where the great slabs change their hue with every cloud-shadow that passes over them, where the rock towers, built out of huge monoliths, seem to have been fashioned by some ancient race of giants, and where the corries are the mysterious dark abodes of the spirits of the hills.

Those who can appreciate these things will say with Sheriff Nicolson:

> 'In the prime of the summer-time,
> Give me the Isle of Skye.'