

1887
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Our Day

... at the ...

Braemar

Gathering

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Our Day
at the
Braemar Gathering

Thursday, 4th Sept., 1919.



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Present :

*Messrs. Coutts, Cumming (" the decent chap
who keeps a brewery "), Dey, Edward,
M' Bryde (" The Bride "), Ross, and Wood
(also their Majesties the King and Queen).*

1875
The first of the year
was a very dry one
and the crops were
very poor.

FOREWORD



NOTHING, we are told, attains perfection, and most of us are content to jog along comfortably with something a long way short of that ideal. Yet when the proof sheets of this brief record of a very happy day at Braemar were got ready, the imperfections were serious enough to call for immediate action. They consisted only in the errors of omission natural to a modest man's account, and so while the narrator's story remains substantially as penned—none else could do it better—it has been amplified here and there to embrace what modesty excluded. To miss from this story the radiance of the banker's personality is to miss the mainspring of the plot. As Stevenson said, "A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note." The rest of the company, recognising this essential fact, have authorised any liberties that have been taken with the original MS.

On with the tale!

OUR DAY

AT THE

BRAEMAR GATHERING.



AFTER anxious preparations during the days ahead, the morning dawned with a heavy mist. But, nothing daunted, the full party turned up in good time (7.30 a.m.) at the starting place, Queen's Cross. By the kindness of Mr. Dey, his magnificent Austin car awaited them. Previous to starting, many anxious faces were cast at the firmament in the effort to diagnose the day's weather.

Edward is confident that, by the time they are eight or ten miles from the City, the mist will have given way to sunshine. But the prediction proves untrustworthy, as it does not lift till close on Braemar.

When the U.F.C. Manse at Echt is reached it is "eyes right" with Edward—eager to detect any signs of life, for he has a near relative within, but no motion is observable, and we quickly leave the Manse behind in its setting of a "dim religious light" this misty autumnal morning.

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An uneventful run brings them to Echt, where Coutts points out the window of the apartment which to him is the most important on earth—for it was there that he first saw the light.

At Clash Hill Edward calls attention to a modest Cross by the roadside. It marks the spot on which an old acquaintance, Harold Millar, met his death under tragic circumstances.

Before joining the Deeside road at Cambus o' May a halt is called for refreshments. During this stoppage they see Shepherd of "The Cabin" pass on the main road without observing them. (Later in the day, when informed of this fact, he pathetically remarks, "I wish to God I'd seen you.") The first toast of the day is here proposed by Coutts in the words of the Ex-Kaiser, "Here's to the *Day.*"

Through the Pass of Ballater, onward they speed, till, near Braemar, a loud report announces the only calamity of the day—a tyre is burst. During a blank silence Dey rises to the occasion. With the dexterity of a trained expert he has the wheel off and another on within the space of three minutes.

They reach Braemar; through the tortuous passages caused by a crowd of cars, they thread

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their way ingeniously to the Princess Royal Park. Here Edward, purser for the day, pays the admission reckoning for cars and passengers, and, in answer to the kilted attendant's query, "foo mony are ye?" truthfully replies, "We are seven," and they enter at 10.15. By a stroke of good luck—or perhaps owing to the importance of the party—an excellent position is obtained in the front row of cars directly facing the Royal Pavilion. Shepherd, shortly afterwards, makes a dramatic appearance in a Red Cross Van containing his helpers and assistants. He explains that, although his vehicle is not the one originally engaged, it has served the purpose with greater expedition than any other could offer, owing to the public sympathy always extended to the sign of the Red Cross when used, as he has now done it, for purposes of public urgency.

Some time remains to be spent before the programme opens. This is profitably done by a visit to the Royal Athenaeum tent, where Mr. Mitchell extends a welcome in a practical fashion; afterwards the party stand outside the tent, watching interestedly the new arrivals.

At 11.15 Dey is charmed to hear the first "skirl" of the pipes; Edward remarks that he prefers to hear them in their laments. Apropos of which Wood agrees, remarking,

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however, that he prefers to do his listening through the telephone.

They take their seats in the car at 11.45, Cumming assuring the company that even yet there was nothing coming over him. "The Bride" departs to see to the heating of the pie and the production of hot potatoes as promised by their good friend Shepherd.

At this moment of extreme tension, while awaiting the March of the Clans, Dey produces some cuttings from a newspaper. This reminds Ross that the world is a small place after all, as he spots the newspaper in question to be one with which he had at one time an intimate connection. It is the "Pretoria News."

Giving no heed to gaps in time and space, and no consideration to the unsuitability of the occasion, Dey proceeds to expatiate on his mammoth contracts in South Africa. Ross purchases programmes, and explains that the interpretation of the Gaelic would give him no trouble—if only he had a few more drinks.

As the Clans march impressively past, the Bride points out among them the gardener of Balmoral Castle, and one, Higgins, an Irishman from County Mayo—"God help him!"

In all the cars lunch is begun in a frenzied fashion. Our car is the only one which, by the presence of ascending steam, publishes the

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fact that its dishes are hot, much to the envy of neighbours. The spirited efforts of Ross and the Bride, in pulling corks and serving the various courses, are highly commended. A fine old couplet is at this juncture happily paraphrased by Coutts—

“When the pie is opened,
We’ll eat before the King.”

In the car on the right the occupants are seen to be carving a fowl, whereupon Dey remarks, “They must come from a farm; judging by their looks *they* wouldn’t pay ten shillings for a fowl.” In the vehicle on the left “lang ale” is the staple beverage, and the occupants are heard to say that they have plenty of “stuff.” Although the supply of Bass is liberal, Coutts is heard to complain that it isn’t quite equal to “No. 1.” “The Bride” has been repeatedly adjured not to stint it, and he cordially responds with a vigour induced by many reminders during the previous days. Dey, meantime, has been revelling in pickles and tomatoes.

The sports programme commences after the party has come to a unanimous verdict that the interval has been well filled in. In the boys’ race one notices a disparity in size and evident age of the competitors, and “the



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Bride," feeling a tender heart-throb for the little ones, remarks that it is grossly unfair.

The interest of the party has veered very largely from the sports to the sport-seers, who are constantly passing the car. It is noticed—as something unusual at a summer gathering—that two ladies are attired in heavy sealskins. Dey is full of speculation as to what their normal winter's attire can be, seeing that this is their summer one. Ross comes to the rescue with the suggestion that they will have to go to bed.

Shepherd turns up at the car in his "service" attire, apologising for appearing in this guise in such distinguished company, but consoling himself with the hope that he may be mistaken for a chauffeur. He is offered a "tot" in a tortoiseshell glass, at which he turns up his nose, on the ground of its meagre dimensions.

When it comes to the caber competition for local entrants it is found that no competitor is equal to the occasion. Shepherd offers a wager of one shilling that he could do it. Edward offers to raise the bet to one pound, whereat Shepherd discreetly declines.

The packing (all that is left of it) is seen to by "the Bride" with his usual expedition. Coutts, who is growing anxious regarding the

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Royal arrival, proclaims his intention of refusing to pay further income tax should His Majesty prove unpunctual. Whether it be the effect of this threat or not, it is to be noted that His Majesty made his appearance on the stroke of the clock.

Shortly afterwards "the Bride," approaching the car, announces "The King," who, however, turns out to be His Majesty's purveyor, Mr. John Mitchell. Unfortunately, in a moment when excitement is perhaps pardonable, John has mislaid his wife, and his face exhibits grave anxiety regarding her disappearance, but a tortoiseshell tot puts him once more at peace with all the world. For the further enjoyment of the company Coutts produces a field-glass, which is instantly taken advantage of. Dey, using the convenience, makes a startling discovery. He conveys it in a tense explanation—he sees a man so immersed in connubial bliss that he has actually taken his wife with him to participate in the day's enjoyment. The clansmen march round once more in honour of the coming of Royalty, and it is remarked that no applause is seen to come from the Royal couple. But Wood's keen eyes cause him to remark, "Don't you see that the Queen's thumping her umbrella?"

Jamieson, a former colleague of Cumming

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of the brewery, arrives and says he has had plenty, but the tortoiseshell once again unerringly finds a mark. For a moment he gives the effect of being an authority on the two-mile race—an assumption which, alas, is not borne out by the result. Duffton from Kemnay also finds himself a welcome visitor.

At this stage Royalty departs amid a scene of enthusiasm, and the thoughts of all in the car begin to revert homewards. Edward makes a remark almost stale by repetition, "No hurry for a day or two."

Passing every car sighted ahead, the Austin makes a magnificently quick journey.

Under the shadow of the Hill of Fare, near Dess, a short halt is called for stock-taking purposes. The result proves so successful that a bonus issue of stock is forthwith made.

A short service of praise is then engaged in, Coutts ladling encomiums on "The Day," "The Bride," "The Car," and, last, but not least, Purser Edward. The latter's eloquence in reply is at its height when "our neighbours of Braemar" car whizzes past—the fluttering of the young ladies' handkerchiefs (made of British Linen) so upsetting the Purser that restoratives have to be applied.

Dey also responds, and produces a "taste" from his private flask. He had hurriedly

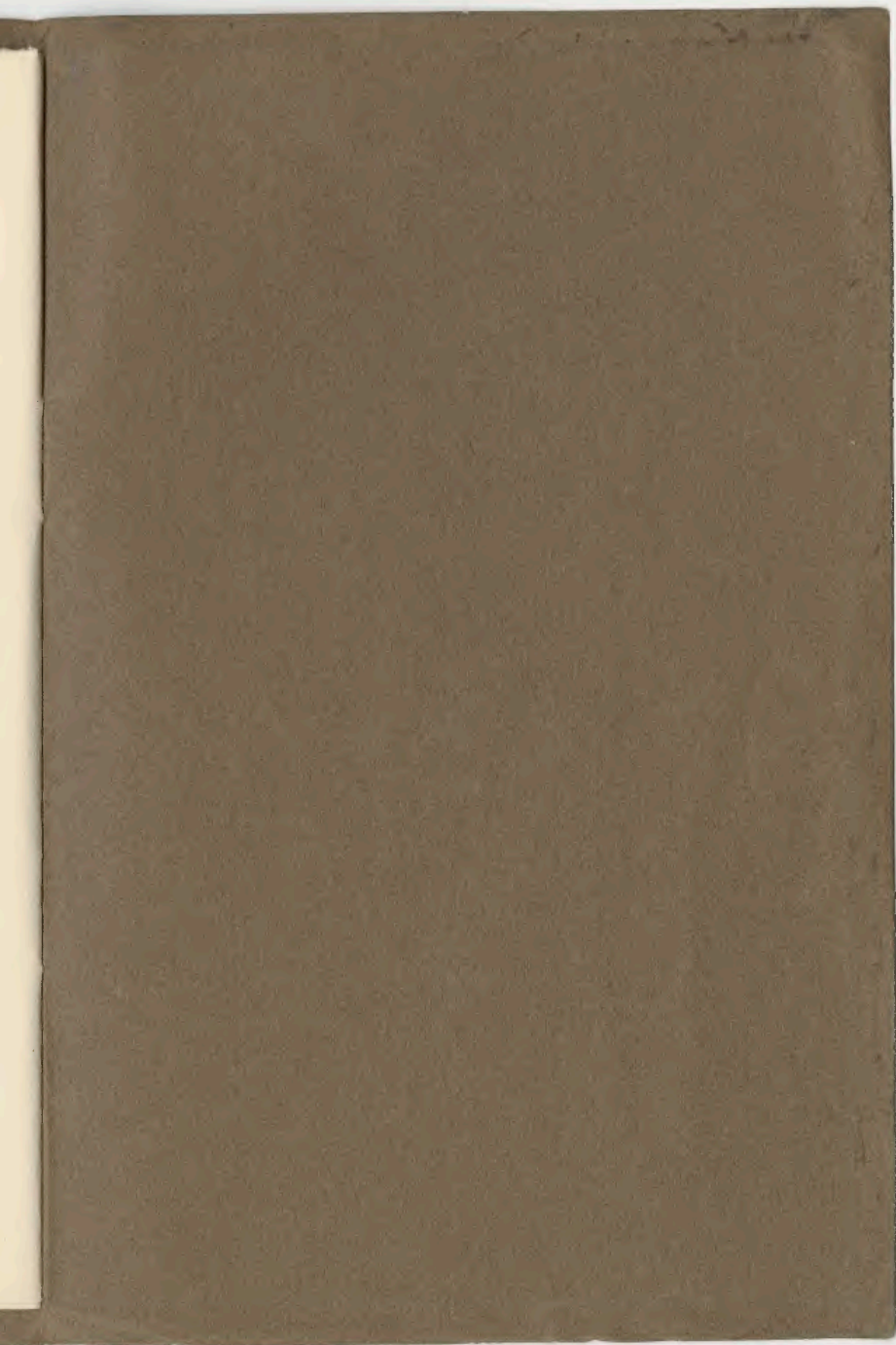
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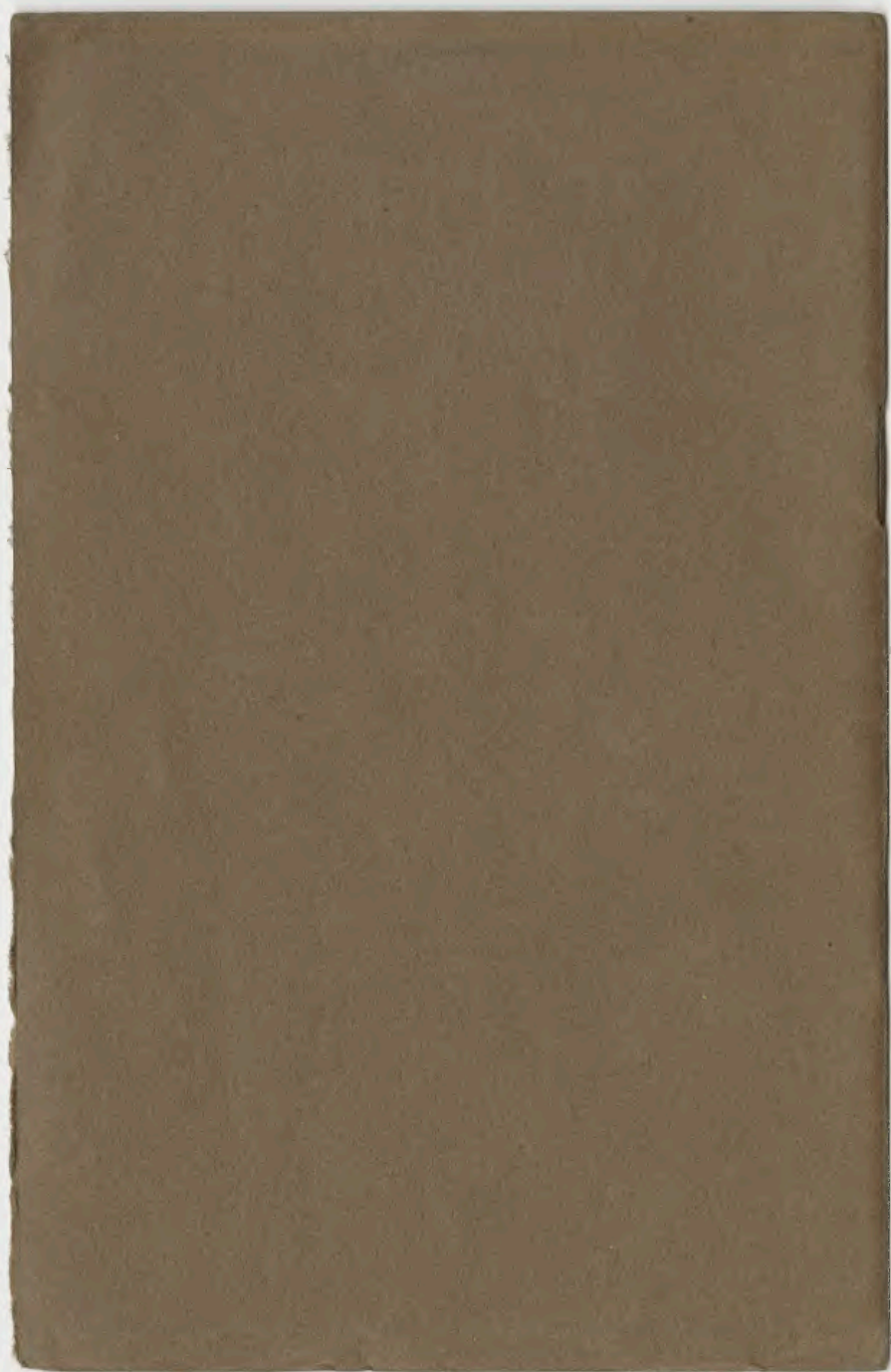
pocketed it when leaving home that morning—only to discover now that the contents are, alas, merely—port!

Back to the city suburbs. Dey wheels into Anderson Drive, and, swerving on to the Cults road, has the speedometer registering something in the neighbourhood of 35 m.p.h. ere the horrified Edward discovers he is being borne swiftly to the bosom of his family. “No bally fear,” is the remonstrance; “I’ve got to go to the bank yet.” The explanation is accepted, and the car once more heads for town. Coutts is dropped, with cordial “good-nights;” the “decent man with the brewery” comes off with Edward (whose “work,” it is suspected, consists merely in an endeavour to strike a balance for the day), and “the Bride,” in a final outburst of hospitality, insists upon the remaining company going indoors for “just the very last, to mak’ up for Dey’s port.”

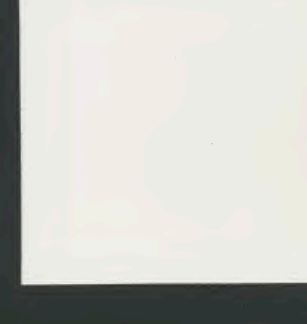
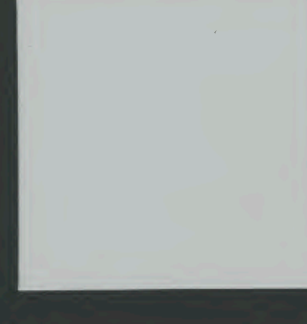
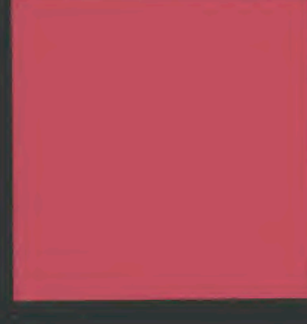
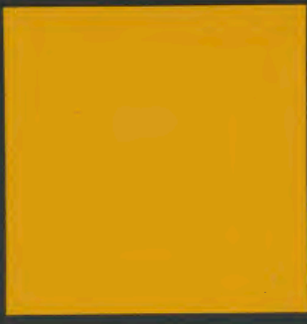
The journey is over. Not one but will remember it; none but goes home delightfully conscious that no matter what the day has meant to others, to him good-night has ushered in the “end of a perfect day.”

Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The text is arranged in several paragraphs and appears to be a formal document or letter.





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