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NOTES FROM WASTDALE.

THE recent stormy weather, that attained the character of a calamitous visitation in many parts of the country, rendered the Lake district exceedingly unattractive to the ordinary tourist, and almost equally unpleasant to the climber. The worst effects of the storm were over by the time that the Christmas holidays began. Borrowdale had been flooded, the great "wash-out" had scarred the steep slopes of Base Brown, the Derwent had changed its course suddenly and rushed five or six feet deep straight along the main road through Seathwaite village. Large sections of the Styhead path had been obliterated, and huge boulders by the score had been carried hundreds of yards down stream and deposited indiscriminately on the neighbouring pastures. Great damage had been done all round, and the only satisfaction was that the immense force of the flood—the severest for thirty years or more—had swept the scheme for the Styhead carriage-road into the middle of the next century, sufficiently far off at any rate for it to remain out of sight and mind for many a year to come. Its warmest supporters are still standing aghast at this practical manifestation of the wear and tear to which their mountain highway might have been occasionally subjected.

Although the forces of nature had somewhat abated by Christmas, the wind still blew up strongly and incessantly from the south-west. Scarcely a day passed without heavy rain in the valleys, or alternating rain and snow on the fells. Occasionally climbing parties were able to get above the snow-line before aggravating the animosity of the weather, and enjoyed some magnificent winter practice in the easier gullies. Moss Ghyll was tried ineffectually by one party. Another succeeded with the Kern Knotts' Crack, but the conditions of wind and rain were desperately bad. The Central Gully on the north face of Gable and the two chief gullies on Great End offered grand climbing of a difficult order, the pitches being heavily iced and progress correspondingly slow. Not very much work of an original nature was undertaken, partly because of the unusually bad conditions that obtained everywhere, and partly because of the smallness of the contingent of climbing men. We were glad to see Messrs. G. L. Collins, J. Puttrell, Percy Weightman, George Abraham and O. G. Jones, representing the Club, but for the most part their stay was brief.

The most important new climb was that of Walker's Gully by Messrs. G. Abraham, A. E. Field, and O. G. Jones, the last named leading throughout the ascent. This gully is a vertical cleft between the Pillar Rock and the Shamrock. It has possessed a certain amount of notoriety on account of the sad accident to the youth Walker, who was killed by falling down the whole length of the gully in the year 1883, and whose name has ever since been associated with the place. Perhaps on this account, perhaps by reason of the general belief in the danger of stones falling down it from the upper screes of the Pillar mountain, the gully was avoided for some years. But its undoubted beauty from the climbing point of view, and the unquestionable severity of its many pitches, have within the last year or two attracted several climbers of repute; and though their unsuccessful attempts have generally been unrecorded, there is reason to believe that all the pitches excepting the very last have been climbed again and again. More recently still, the opinion has been expressed that the last pitch would never be climbed from below, a notion probably formed from an examination of its difficulties from the crest of the gully. We read a few months ago—was it in the *Alpine Journal* itself?—that the *last great unclimbed* gully in Cumberland had been vanquished, the writer referring to the newly-christened Mouse Ghyll. Surely he had not forgotten Walker's Gully, later and greater; and even if he had there is still in Cumberland the Savage Gully on the Pillar Rock, and sundry others elsewhere that we would fain leave unnamed.

The ascent was effected on January 7th last. The upper screes were snow-covered, so that there was no danger of stonefalls. No snow lay in the steeper parts of the gully, but its lower portion was rendered excessively troublesome by a thin film of ice that covered the rocks with a uniform veneer. At the overhanging pitch in the middle, where the side walls approach within two feet of each other, and the jammed stone offers a long and smooth upper surface with a baffling absence of finger-holds, the party were almost driven back by a stream of water that shot straight on their heads; and on emergence at the crest of the pitch they were completely drenched with the ice-cold water. Fortunately the stream higher up confined itself to the inmost recesses of the gully, and except for the general wetness and low temperature of the remaining rocks, the conditions were not unlike those that the climber may expect to find in summer time. Arrived at the last pitch, a few minutes' inspection showed that the best way of attacking it was by the right wall, creeping closely up the irregular

crack between this and the jammed stones. "Upwards and outwards" is the order of the hour, for the blocks overhang more and more as we mount higher. At the worst corner the leader was able to brace himself into the crack by looping his rope through it, but the strain on his arms was very severe and he had to descend once or twice to rest himself and restore circulation to his benumbed fingers. Ultimately a way was designed for utilizing the looped rope as a handhold, and with this aid the last projecting boulder was rounded without foothold of any sort. The remaining six feet of the pitch were easy, and the gully was left behind in 2 hours 40 minutes from the time of starting. The climb will always be difficult, though a second ascent by the same party in dry weather ought not to take more than half the above time. The ascent of Walker's Gully and a continuation up the Great Chimney by a variation route of Messrs. Abraham and Jones may be said to constitute a new method of climbing the Pillar Rock from the north side.

Of the short climbs within easy reach of Wastdale Head, none are more popular than those on Kern Knotts. But for good quality and convenience of rapid approach a set recently discovered by Messrs. Abraham and Jones on Yewbarrow bid fair to become close rivals. They may be called the Overbeck Chimneys. They are situated on Dropping Crag, Yewbarrow, a short distance round to the north from Bell Rib, and their locality may be identified from the road a mile below the head of the lake. The gully, marked by an ash tree on a small ledge above its second pitch, has a fine "crack" finish and other interesting details. A few yards to the south of it lies a second gully of formidable aspect, consisting of a number of short but attractive problems following one another in rapid succession. Round on the lake side of Bell Rib the casual scrambler on these irregular masses of rock may come across a diminutive "needle" on the right flank of a long scree gully. It is set somewhat out of the perpendicular, and its material is not of the firmest character, but the ascent can be accomplished in a few minutes, and the view of near and distant fellsides will be ample reward.
