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ESGAIR FELEN.

By G. B. BRYANT.

THERE may be some, even in the Climbers' Club, who will need the information that Esgair Felen is an arm of the Great Glyder, and, furthermore, that the Great Glyder, with its brother, the little G., worthily occupies the space inside a roughly-drawn line from Ogwen Lake to Capelcurig, Pen-y-Pass and Upper Llanberis. It may save the Editor many letters from irritatingly accurate members if we at once admit that a little corner of the aforesaid space is taken up by Tryfan, whose praises may be sung on some other occasion.

In high society at Pen-y-Gwryd the phrase, "an easy day on the Glyders," generally means a warming walk up 2000 feet or so of open ground (stones and heather), to the ridge right or north-east of the summit of Glyder Fach. At this stage everybody usually shows a good-natured desire to spare everybody else's wind. Once on the ridge, and walking west and south-west over the heaps and stacks of broken-up rock which form the summits of both Glyders, no great variation of level is encountered, the mile and a half of distance keeping between 2800 and 3275 feet of altitude. Soon after passing the last-named height, at the summit of the Great Glyder, the rough scrambling is exchanged for the remarkably smooth surface of the broad slope of Esgair Felen, which breaks off abruptly in the cliffs overlooking the lower end of the Llanberis Pass.

On some other easy day, which the climber may be spending in Cwm Glas or Cwm Glas Bach, on the opposite side of the Pass, his eyes will dwell with appreciation on the south face of these Esgair Felen cliffs. The sunshine, when there is any, has a way of bringing out their warm tints which make them doubly attractive to the man who is in shadow, having all Snowdon between him and the sun, and who is chilling himself

on wet moss and slimy slabs. The details which the sunshine is bringing out are of a nature to appeal to his memory, or to whet his anticipation, and in either case to tempt him nearer.

Of these the chief are the precipitous rocks which stretch across the face immediately above the road. They terminate on the right, in the impressive tower overlooking Pont-y-Cromlech, which is worthy, in the highest degree, of closer examination. Above their upper edges are steep slopes of grass and scree. The latter is sent down from the splendid group of cliffs, formed of basaltic or columnar rock, which crown the slopes, reaching a height at the little cairn of about 2800 feet above sea level.

The lower cliffs are seamed with two or three short gullies, usually occupied by water, and therefore interesting to climbers only in very dry weather. But from the Snowdon side one gully will be seen, the course of which can be traced, with here and there a break, from its watercourse under the road to the notch in which it terminates, to the left of the cairn.

Regarded, with a little indulgence, as a single gully its height cannot be much under 2000 feet. It has no doubt often been climbed, but, nevertheless, some of its details may be of interest.

The road must be left soon after passing below the Cromlech stones, and before reaching the gateway on the left which leads to the uppermost cottages. The water has ripped a way through the screes, and this can be followed up to the rocks some 250 feet above the road where the true gully is entered. There is a good-sized mountain ash tree on the right wall, which may be of assistance in identifying the place.

The climbing in this lower section is not difficult, but the work is lively and exhilarating. The first special feature is a cave, about 8 or 9 feet high, from which two practicable exits can be found through the roof. Some of the rocks of the roof seem rather delicately poised, and care is not thrown away. The pitches which follow are very moderate, but in one place an oblong rock of some 30 or 40 feet gives a good climb over water-worn surfaces, and up a narrow cleft to the right. In

about an hour we emerge into comparatively open ground, and from this point there is a fine glimpse downwards through the rift up which we had climbed, to the road and cottages below.

The second section commences here, and has nothing noteworthy in it. The water has cut through grass and scree to the blue rock below, and for about half-an-hour we work up narrow clefts to the base of the red cliffs, which form the third and concluding section of the climb.

The character of the gully now undergoes an entire change. A straight-up climb of about ten feet brings you into a spacious hole with a level floor, walled on the left with an unclimbable cliff 60 or 70 feet in height, but on the right there is good hold. In the centre the rock is mixed with quartz, and covered over most of its face with loose tufts of grass and slimy vegetable matter. Slightly to the right of this we find our way, with a little care and patience. The weather had been dry, and it is probable that, with more water about, it might be necessary to escape from this place by the right wall above referred to, which would be reasonably dry at all times.

Not far above this we encounter a steep bit of 12 or 15 feet, entirely covered with slime, which can be avoided either right or left. Nothing is gained by climbing its centre.

The gully now broadens, and the rock-work is upon a larger scale, developing into deep hollows, the first of which takes some little time to negotiate. The high wall on the left, which slightly overhangs, is of the ordinary rock, and very untrustworthy, flaking out in fairly large pieces, but the right-hand bank looks like a compacted cindery substance. Its face is very irregular, and rises some 30 or 40 feet. The way up the centre, where the two formations meet, requires circumspection, offering no secure handholds, and being generally of the loosest character. The landing, about 30 feet up, is over an overhanging ledge or lip, which is very shaky. Fortunately this rather objectionable bit of climbing was on a fairly dry surface, although its want of solidity is no doubt due to its water-holding capacity.

After this we gladly meet good solid rock of the Crib Coch order. The gully seems to divide, but a climb along a shelf on the left-hand side leads into a semicircular hollow, showing no trace of gully form, and the way returns over a rib to the right-hand branch, which ascends pretty sharply. A little higher it is again divided by a spine of rock, but no divergence is necessary.

Hereabouts a brief lunch was disposed of, shelter from a stinging shower being found in a small hollow about 550 feet below the summit. We shared it with a well-nourished and contented-looking toad, living there in apparent freedom from all family cares.

After this the bed of the gully, for about 250 feet, is not easy to find, and the ground is open. But the trail is again picked up somewhat to the left, at a little cave of unfinished construction, conscientiously climbed by the more serious members of the party, and thence a chimney-like shoot is followed, possessing a jammed stone of its own, which, having no likeness to the rocks on the spot, and no icefield to arrive from, was no doubt dropped by the Devil.

The time occupied in our leisurely ascent was slightly under three hours. The rope was used only twice, and was perhaps not absolutely necessary at either place. It is worth mentioning that one of the party was provided with 40 feet of hemp rope, differing from the Alpine Club manila rope, in that it was somewhat harder and closer in texture. When dry it was apparently heavier in comparison.

Our time at the cairn was cut short by rain of the energetic Welsh variety, and, whilst two unfortunates went down into Cwm Patric against the wind, the others made a "dead run" to Pen-y-Pass in 28 minutes.

The general verdict was that, whilst containing nothing to attract the seekers after glory, yet it was an excellent gully.