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FIRST ASCENT OF THE EAST GULLY AND BUTTRESS OF LLIWEDD.

By J. M. A. THOMSON.

ON April the 5th, 1896, O. Eckenstein, H. Edwards, H. Hughes, W. A. Thomson, and myself left the Pen-y-Gwryd Inn at a fashionably late hour in the morning.

We had no particular *objectif*, but a vague impression prevailed that we were to walk up Lliwedd and climb down part of the north face, whereupon someone was to be lowered down a certain series of precipitous crags on a descent of discovery, to place beyond the region of conjecture sundry moot-points which had been much argued to and fro on the previous evening.

A timely reflection that the lightest man of the party might be chosen to carry out this missionary enterprise, while the strong men wrought their will on him from above, had the effect of awakening in me a sense of duty towards my neighbours, and it obviously behoved me to divert their attention from things trivial to the rare beauty and sublime grace of Lliwedd's Eastern Buttress, as soon as its noble outline fairly broke upon our view.

This virtuous desire that the minds of my companions should be edified by a serious contemplation of the beauties of nature, resulted in the enunciation of a theory that a closer inspection of these same beauties, such as might be gained by a climb on the Eastern Buttress, would materially conduce to an aesthetic appreciation of them; whereupon I felt that it would be an unpardonable violation of the altruistic spirit of the age to take exception to the course suggested on the ground of my own decided preference for steep and exhilarating grassy slopes.

An attack on the unclimbed East Gully was decided upon, and this, no doubt, the more readily, because another member

of the party, as he subsequently discovered to us in a paulo-post-prandial confession, had long been cherishing a secret affection for the virgin climb proposed—an affection which had lain till then too deep for expression in words.

The rocks at the foot of the gully, through which the water has not yet seen a defined channel, were surmounted, and the gully proper entered without difficulty. Here it was deemed prudent to leave for a while our novice, whose experience in Wales was limited to having assisted me the day before up the east gully of the Glyder Fawr, and not less so, to appoint two stalwart men to watch his movements, as he chanced to have the lunch of the party in his keeping.

The line of ascent chosen was slightly to the orographical left of the centre of the gully; the rock proved similar in nature to that in the other two couloirs of Lliwedd, being steep, smooth and sound, and offering holds which often slope slightly to the disadvantage of the climber.

We soon reached a water-worn trough, into which it was necessary to squeeze sideways, and work up with the aid of back-pressure. During this process the expansion of the lungs was seriously impeded by the narrowness of the chimney, so that both leaders arrived very well-breathed at the upper end of it. At the height of 150 feet a small flat ledge on the left offered the first "firmus locus," and provided scanty standing room for two. The climb of the next 140 feet from this ledge, though similar in general character, proved somewhat easier until a species of roofless cave, with a steeply-sloping floor, was entered. From this cubicle there was no apparent exit. Eckenstein, who was separated by less than 30 feet, and had a long tail of rope trailing from his waist, joined me here to give me the benefit of his counsel and aid; pressing his back against one wall, and feet against the other, he explained to me the exceptional security of his bridge-like position; it was one in which he could receive me in his embrace, if my attempt to climb out should prove abortive, and, as the next resting-place was obviously the heads of our companions below, I derived much courage and

comfort from this assurance. The right wall is some ten feet high, straight and smooth; by utilising a crack in the corner, the climber is able to maintain his balance two feet above the floor; an unseen hand-hold above is thus brought within his reach, and a long draw-up lands him at the top of the difficulty.

"What is it like beyond?" rang out an eager voice from the cubicle. An interval of silence ensued, during which the climber above was ostensibly gathering information—but, in reality, breath—before vouchsafing the reply that the rest of the gully lay back at a relatively easy angle.

Some fifteen feet higher a knob in the bed of the gully forms an excellent belaying-pin, and from here I watched with interest my companion appear—

"longo cum fune gravatum,

Prensantemque uncis manibus capita aspera montis."

We had taken 1 hr. 15 m. to reach this point, and were now separated by 310 feet from our companions; but, as our party consisted of three originally independent and fully equipped sections, we had just rope enough to reach.

After the arrival of the third man, however, our line of communication became temporarily severed, for the rope, caught by wind, persistently refused to travel down to its intended destination, and when much time had been spent in futile endeavours, the expedient of lowering a flat stone, fastened with the utmost skill and care, was tried; half the descent it accomplished to our entire satisfaction, but then it stuck fast, and for all our coaxing could not be induced to move in any direction whatsoever. Finally, my companions had to "steady" me down to the ledge to remedy the obstruction. In response to a word of warning, the men below shouted that they were in shelter, *so far as the nature of the place permitted*; this important reservation, however, was lost in the wind, and they were in fact fully exposed to anything descending the gully. The stone was thereupon jerked free, but it split in the centre, and the two halves, slipping out of the hitches and splintering in their descent, fairly bombarded our rear-guard below.

That the casualties were nothing worse than an abrasion on one arm seemed little short of marvellous to the witness of an incident, which became, indeed, a subject for much good-humoured banter, but caused at the time some moments of intense anxiety.

From the coign of vantage the line of communication was eventually restored, and in due time the party were re-united around the belaying-pin.

From this point we could either continue in the gully—and a stretch of rock remains before the scree finish—or complete the climb on the Eastern Buttress; the latter alternative was chosen on the ground of its prolonging the climb to the summit, and affording good views of this unexplored part of the mountain.

The climbing at this level on the Eastern Buttress is decidedly superior to that upon the corresponding portion of the Western, the rocks being bolder and far freer from earth and grass. Moving together, we took 50 m. in ascending it, and struck the summit ridge within arm's length of the cairn.

After a pious halt we walked leisurely down the grassy ridge and back by the Snowdon path, too full of—

“The joy of life in steepness overcome
And victories of ascent,”

to misconstrue the gentle reproaches always in store for those who return to Pen-y-Gwryd late for dinner.

