



This extract from a Climbers' Club Journal contains only articles/photographs where the copyright now belongs to the Climbers' Club.

It is provided in electronic form for your personal use and cannot be used for commercial profit without seeking permission from the Climbers' Club.

© Copyright 2010

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of the CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL.

DEAR SIR,

I am sorry that more members were not present at the recent Annual Meeting, so that we might have had some sort of discussion.

I hope there will be a report from the Committee at our next meeting.

I suggested at our meeting in 1899 that it might be a good thing to have a Half-yearly Meeting, and possibly a Dinner at one of the chief provincial centres, but nothing seems to have been done in the matter. I now suggest that a Meeting and Dinner be held in November of this year, and that, in honour of our President, it should take place in Birmingham, say, on a Saturday.

I think we could get an attendance of at least 40, and should be desirous of being present, as I think many others would, particularly those whose homes are in the Midlands and the southern part of the North of England.

I should be glad to do anything in my power to make our first Half-yearly Meeting a success, and trust it will be only the first of a long succession.

Yours very truly,

THOS. ARNOLD, JR.

To the Editor of the CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL.

A WATER-SPOUT ON TRYFAN.

SIR,

Has any member of the Climbers' Club ever seen a water-spout on Tryfan—or, indeed, on any other hill? One occasionally sees falling water caught by the wind and whirled bodily off in smoke-like spray, and sometimes the surface of a lake is swept up into great columns, which go stalking over the land like a procession of ghosts—but has anyone seen a

solid jet of water, as thick as a scaffold-pole, projected as from a fire-engine out of a rocky ridge where no visible water is? Such was the good fortune of myself and two others early in May of the present year, and we have not yet ceased to congratulate ourselves that we were not in the line of fire when the discharge took place. The most weird phenomenon on the hills that I know of is the ghostly rustling "frou-frou" which is sometimes heard on a grass-covered hill on a perfectly still summer's day—but assuredly the most startling would be to receive the discharge of a 6-inch horizontal water-spout in the pit of the stomach. There would, perhaps, be a familiar something about it to an Oxford undergraduate of this year, which would lessen its terrors, but to most people it would be distinctly startling.

We were descending the North Ridge of Tryfan one miserable afternoon after climbing one of the gullies on the Eastern Side. There had been a heavy south-westerly gale the day before, with snow and hail, and the wind was still blowing hard along the flanks of the hill, having veered to the south.

We had not long passed the top of the N.N.W. gully when, with an unearthly flapping and clattering as of the sails of a ship in stays, there sprang out of the ground not far below us a most beautiful jet of water, straight and rigid, and capped with a cloud of spray. In a few seconds, before we had time to observe it properly, it was gone. It was as if we had put up some strange and gigantic bird.

We had heard the weird clattering several times as we went up, and had seen heather and bracken torn bodily out of the ground by the wind, and sent whirling far overhead into Lyn Ogwen, and we were much puzzled by what appeared to be a puff of mist or dust which seemed to accompany the sound. The mystery was now solved—it was the spray-cap of the water-spout. The jet itself was seen by us twice on the ridge within the space of a few minutes, and also by a lady at Ogwen Cottage. The discharge lasted perhaps three seconds each time.

The point of origin of the jet was hidden from us by the slope of the ground, but it seemed to issue from a point on the centre-line of the ridge, and to follow a direction parallel to it (and to the wind) at an inclination from the horizontal of about 20° . The position as to height would be somewhere on the sky-line directly over the end of the word "East" in the sketch of Tryfan given by Mr. Haskett Smith on page 45 of his book on Climbing in Wales. Owing to the difficulty of estimating its distance from us, it is possible only to make a rough guess at the dimensions of the jet, but it could not have been less than six inches in diameter at the near end, and its visible length was at least 25 feet. It did not seem to be rotating, and had a particularly straight and rigid appearance, but probably a side view would have shown considerable curvature. It had no motion of translation. We made an excited rush to find the source of the water-spout, which at its first appearance we had thought was only a few feet below us, but after the second outburst we followed the ridge right down to the road without seeing it again, or finding any traces of it whatever—not even a pool of water.

My theory (though I do not pretend to speak with any authority on such matters) is that the wind, rushing along the side of the hill and coming to a sudden "set-back" or break in the continuity of the ground, produced a clattering or beating sound in the same way that the stream of air, rushing across the mouth of an organ pipe, sets itself in vibration by producing within the mouth a partial vacuum, which alternately overcomes and is overcome by the resilience of the air stream. If it so happened that water was standing under the lee of the "set-back," it might be set in rotation by currents caused by the partial vacuum, and might even attain sufficient velocity to issue in the form of a jet—but, inasmuch as there are no pools or streams on this part of the hill, this part of the theory is scarcely adequate. What is certain is, that a considerable volume of water came from somewhere. Perhaps some of your readers will suggest an explanation?

Yours truly,

F. E. R.