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STABLE TRAVERSE.

A WET DAY AT WASDALE.

By C. B.

SOME apology is needed for introducing this subject into the annals of our *Journal*, especially as reference to the "ultra-gymnastic" feats described below was made by Mr. Oppenheimer in the September number of last year.

The snap-shots, however, being somewhat unique, the Editor has kindly promised to insert them for the amusement of our readers, and, to the uninitiated, they may require a small amount of explanation.

Last September a merry party was gathered at the Inn, though the Fates were unpropitious, and in three weeks we were only allowed the same number of fine days on which any serious climbing could be attempted—hence, we had plenty of time to explore the diversions in the Inn, invented from time to time by well-known climbers in search of exercise, as an outlet to their superfluous energy.

As an example of the shocking weather, it may be mentioned that a party of four enterprising climbers, being disgusted at the fickleness of Nature, determined to reverse the order of things, and climb by night if not by day. A start was accordingly made from the Inn at 3 a.m., headed by a frequenter of the Alps, the possessor of a folding lantern, and the Pillar being safely reached by sunrise, the party were rewarded by a splendid climb on the North Face, bathed in sunshine all the while, returning to the Inn in time for breakfast.

To their inward satisfaction—an outward display of it not receiving much enthusiasm—the rain came down soon after breakfast, and continued in the usual fashion of Lake rain all day, preventing everyone from leaving the shelter of the Inn!

Best known, perhaps, of all the gymnastic feats is the "*Stable Traverse*," there being numerous ways of reaching the desired niche under the conspicuous notice, "Post Horses,"

the easiest being by the stairs at the side of the building. As, however, climbers prefer the hardest method of climbing anything, be it the summit of Sca Fell or the upper floor of the Inn Stable, the wall on the right-hand side of the double door is scaled, and a traverse made into the upper doorway.

After an exhaustive examination of this wall, it was discovered that an ascent could be made, and was made, without using the ring or the large projecting stone which is just above the level of the first floor.

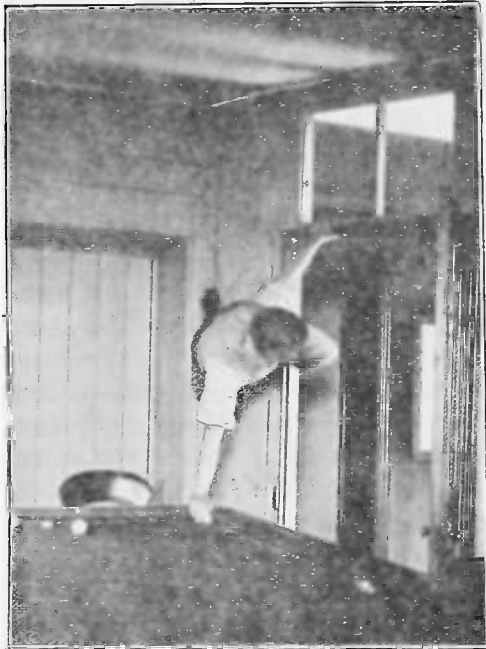
The "trick" about to be given away consists of two insignificant but safe hand-holds, on which the whole weight of the body can be supported while the left foot is swung into the doorway, the right foot being on a small ledge just above the ring. Contrary to expectation, this can be performed by a short-limbed man, provided he is strong in the arms. A descent can be made in the same way, though the large projecting stone is necessary to ensure a descent of not too rapid a nature.

Another method of ascent is to spring from the ground and seize the stone sill of the doorway with the hands and pull up the rest, but if the lower doors are opened so that a kick off with the feet is not permitted, and the upper door closed so that the hands are unable to grip the inside of the sill, this will be found exceedingly difficult, and has, I believe, only once been successfully accomplished.

Being now driven indoors altogether, and resting from our labours on the wall, a party of dripping trippers arrives from Seascale, one of which remarks with a chuckle—"There seems to be a good deal of Waste Water about here." This drives us incontinently from the door to the Billiard Room, the refuge from wet weather and bad jokes, where fives, a dangerous though unequalled game, is generally in progress—cloth, cues, and balls being too bad for anything else.

Here a suggestion is made for the "*Billiard Room Traverse*," which consists of walking on one's hands round the table, the feet resting on the wall at the back, varied with finding their way through a picture. The two difficult turns are at the

mantelpiece end, where one must come down to the mantelpiece and chance knocking everything on to the floor, and then raise the legs on to the wall on the other side. If this is done successfully the rest can generally be accomplished, and an excellent finish consists in getting out of the door and backing down the passage into the parlour. The change of position is effected by the left leg being passed round the



DOOR TRAVERSE.

Photo. by A. W. L.

doorway, and the left hand gripping the top of the door frame, as seen in the photo. The old traverse consisted of sidling along and round the table on the arms held straight while the legs dangled below, but this, like most "easy ways," has been relegated to the aged and infirm.

If the details in the photos. are not quite so clear as they might be, the reader is asked to bear in mind that the

"ultra-gymnast" was called upon to remain in this position for two or three minutes, as the photograph was taken during heavy rain, and the fault in no way lies with the photographer. Perhaps the most difficult feat in the Billiard Room is the "*Table Leg Traverse*," which consists of getting round a corner of the table by the obvious method of going under the leg! There are two methods of accomplishing this somewhat ungainly feat, both invented, I believe, by a climber well known for his length of limb and reach, as well as his skill in manipulating difficult rocks. One method, perhaps the easiest, is to lie face downwards on the table (the penalty for so doing being half-a-crown), and gripping the inside of the cushion with the right hand and foot as seen in photo., to slide the left hand down to the leg, and the left leg under the table, where accommodating cross-pieces can be utilized for wedging purposes. A struggle then ensues to get the head on the other side of the leg, when the left hand can reach the side cushion, and the left leg find a hold on the mouldings of the leg itself. After this the rest is obvious, the finish landing the performer on the table, having accomplished the traverse without allowing any part of the body to touch the floor. The other method consists of making the descent feet first, when both feet must be wedged simultaneously under the table.

Our next move is to the Hall, where, finding the humorous tripper has removed himself, we turn to the bannisters for more exertion. These are generally occupied more or less by ropes hung or stretched out to dry, and after their removal, and also the removal of sundry garments on the top landing, our performer is asked to try the "*Bannister Traverse*." There are two ways of reaching the top landing other than mounting the stairs, the U. G. going on his hands alone on the outside of the bannisters all the way in both cases. The first method is a similar position to the now discarded "table traverse," with arms below and dangling legs, and a start is made from the very bottom of the stairs. There are three corners, the second being the hardest, as the rise is necessarily up hill, and a finish must be made right along to the wall at the end. The other

method, far more sensational, is the position adopted in the famous "hand traverse," in which the whole weight of the body is hanging on the arms, and in this case, unless strength of grip is assured, it is best to be accompanied by a muscular friend, who will walk up the stairs and be ready to seize the wrists on the first indication of giving muscles. In this case the trip is shortened, as a start is usually made above the first corner, at a point where the hands naturally reach and grip the bannisters.

The last feat to be described is, I believe, new, and was only invented during our visit. This consists of jamming in the passage at the end nearest the hall, care being taken that the solid wall and not the partition is used, or a somewhat hasty entry into the parlour may be the result. When fairly jammed thus, the problem is to reverse one's position (*i.e.*, to place the back where the feet are, and *vicé versa*) without coming to ground. This is not difficult in a chimney on the rocks, where the surface is necessarily rough (*e.g.*, the Oblique), but with the perfectly smooth walls it will be found almost, if not quite, impossible without the help of rubber shoes. It is accomplished by throwing the right leg back beneath the body, and as high up as possible, and then leaning across and forcing the left shoulder hard against the opposite wall. This can also be practised outside between the wall of the Inn and an out-house, where excellent practice in backing up may be obtained with a small percentage of damage to one's clothes.

Altogether, there is no lack of amusement to be found at the Inn even on the wettest of wet days, and it is to be hoped that the above will assist some of the uninitiated to wile away an hour or two, when prospects of better sport are denied.

"No game was ever yet worth a rap
For a rational man to play,
Into which no accident, no mishap,
Could possibly find its way.
There's danger even where fish are caught
To those who a wetting fear;
For what's worth having must aye be bought,
And sport's like life and life's like sport—
'It aint all skittles and beer.'"