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## CORRESPONDENCE.

*To the Editor of the CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL.*

*November 9th, 1900.*

DEAR SIR,

### MOUNTAIN TEMPERATURE.

The minimum temperature recorded by the thermometers on the Glydr Fach for the winter of 1899-1900 was 14.5° Fahr., being a little below the average.

On this subject there is a note in the Appendix to Whymper's "Scrambles amongst the Alps," 1860-69, page 421, referring to Signor Giardano's ascent of the Matterhorn in September, 1868. It is as follows:—

"He" (Signor Giardano) "left a minimum thermometer upon the summit in 1868. This was recovered by I. A. Carrel in July, 1869, and was found to register only 9° Fahrenheit below the freezing point. It was supposed that it was protected from the winter cold by a deep covering of snow. The explanation is scarcely satisfactory."

The minimum temperature recorded on the Glydr Fach (3,262 feet above sea level) since 1867 is 8° Fahrenheit. This is sufficiently surprising, but it is nothing to a minimum temperature of 23° Fahr. (only 9° below freezing) for a winter on the Matterhorn, 14,780 feet in height. The only possible explanation is that a mistake was made in the reading, or that the instrument was defective.

Yours faithfully,

W. PIFFE BROWN.

*To the Editor of the CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL.*

DEAR SIR,

In the September number of the *Journal* you ask for information about three reported fatal accidents. So far as the one on Cader Idris is concerned, it may be assumed that it relates to a mishap that occurred to Mr. Wilfrid McInnes on the 14th September last. Happily, the accident did not end fatally, although a rumour got out that it had done so. It is desirable at the outset to say that this cannot by any means be described as a climbing accident in the ordinary acceptation of the term, for Mr. McInnes had never climbed a mountain before, and was really out on a cycling tour. For the credit of the sport of climbing, and because the case seems to possess considerable interest of a surgical nature, it may be of use to record the facts, otherwise I should have suggested suppression of any further reference to it.

Passing through Dolgelly, Mr. McInnes was recommended to make the ascent of Cader Idris, as customary with visitors. It was found that by making an early start next day this would fit in with his arrangements, and allow him to reach Barmouth in the evening. Accordingly the ascent was made by the beaten track and the Foxes' Path. The latter is but a rough way at the best, and Mr. McInnes found it most trying, having only shoes without nails. Rather than face the descent under such conditions he preferred to try another way, and so, crossing the Saddle, reached the top of Cyfrwy. Your readers will be aware that this portion of Cader Idris, as it runs westward, forms a precipice about a mile long, tapering from some 600 feet away to nothing. At the foot there is scree. Proceeding westward for about a quarter of a mile from the summit of Cyfrwy, Mr. McInnes thought he could venture to try down. The grass was dry, and the soles of his shoes were now very slippery. When the slope had become too steep to be safe he endeavoured to retrace his steps

but could not do so. At length he reached a point where it appeared to him that if he could pass it he would be able to climb down the rest, not knowing that he was on the edge of an almost sheer drop. To secure a better grip he took off his shoes and threw them down. He remembers sitting astride a piece of rock, but nothing more until he regained consciousness five or six hours later. He has no recollection of slipping or of feeling any fear, so that the explanation would appear to be a momentary vertigo. About 6 p.m. he awoke sick and faint, and found his clothes soaked with blood and his hair a clotted mass. In the fall he had lost his eyeglasses, without which he could not see fifty yards. He made such search as he was able for his shoes, cap and glasses, but never found them. Very soon it grew dusk, and he recognised the hopelessness of his position, so he selected a large block of stone, and lay under the lee of it all night. That night there was a hoar frost, but he slept fairly well, and each time when he woke up he did not feel particularly chilly. He supposes it would be about 7 o'clock next morning that he started to walk, more by instinct than anything else, in the direction of Dolgelly. He was very weak, and fainted several times on the way. Crossing two or three streams he at length came to a wall, and followed it until he found a gate. Passing through this he kept descending until he heard dogs barking. Proceeding in the direction of the sound, it was not long before he reached a farmyard, and there sank down exhausted, having rambled some two or three miles. After their first alarm at his deplorable appearance, the farm people did what they could for him, and carried him, as gently as a cart without springs would permit, the three miles to Dolgelly. The services of a doctor and the district nurse were at once obtained, and in a very short time the patient was made comfortable and his mother telegraphed for. The medical examination showed that his injuries were sufficiently serious. He was cut and bruised all over, and the right arm had lost its power. The skull was fractured, causing severe compression of the brain. There were four bad cuts on the head, the longest  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

He was feverish, but quite conscious, and free from pain. In a very few hours the feverish symptoms disappeared, and it was evident that there was no fear of a fatal termination.

Ten days after the accident I travelled down to see Mr. McInnes, and to try to find the place where he fell. In this I was entirely successful, recovering his shoes and cap and photographing the place. I estimated the distance he must have fallen as about 80 feet, and this has been corroborated by a shepherd and a guide. The precipice is so steep, and the rock so smooth, that I could not by any means climb higher than 30 feet from the ground. That the consequences of a fall from such a height as 80 feet were not even more disastrous may be attributed to some most fortunate conditions. In the first place, the rock being so steep Mr. McInnes would probably, after touching once or twice, fly outward clear of the rock. Secondly, exactly where he fell there is a patch of ground, some 20 yards square, entirely free from scree, and covered with coarse grass, ferns and bilberry bushes. Further, this patch lies at such a sharp angle that he would strike a glancing blow, and either slide or roll a considerable distance: in fact, when he regained consciousness he was almost at the lower edge of the green patch. I surmise that he fell on his right side, and that the injury to the arm, the effect of which passed off in a month, was caused so. A fortnight after the event it was possible to remove him, and after a month at home he was ordered away by a doctor for three months of absolute quiet in the country, as there were indications of brain trouble. He is now making a complete recovery.

I have entered thus fully into detail because this case shows how much the human body can stand, and several questions present themselves, upon which the opinion of some of our medical members would be interesting. For instance, is it possible that the profuse bleeding from the head saved the brain from more serious injury? Would the clotted blood, exposed all night to the freezing air, have the same effect as applying ice, and so, as it were, automatically prevent inflammation? Would the night's exposure tend to cause or prevent

high fever? How is it that, in spite of the injury to the brain, Mr. McInnes can clearly remember everything that happened up to the moment of falling and after he recovered consciousness? I may add, in conclusion, that he had everything in his favour in that he is young (22), of good healthy habits, and was at the time in excellent physical condition.

Yours, &c.,

FRED. W. JACKSON.