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CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of the CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL.

BOGFIRE.

DEAR SIR,

Can any of your readers, from their own experience or from books, help me with any explanation of some strange appearances seen by me in October last on the great tract of bog which lies below Trawsfynydd in the Ardudwy district, to which you allowed me to call attention in your March number?

Having occasion to return to Festiniog, after three weeks absence at home and in Switzerland, I took the opportunity of crossing the Bwlchdrws Ardudwy, chiefly for the purpose of taking photographs of the remarkable striated rocks and blocs perchés in the Nantcol Valley. Sleeping at Welshpool on October 2nd, I reached Llanbedr about 1 p.m. on the 3rd, and went on from there about 2:30, hoping to get a bed at Maes y Garnedd, near the top of the pass, and so on to Festiniog on the following day. The afternoon turned wet, and my views were not very successful, especially as a sudden gust upset my camera, when planted on a bare slope of rock, and left it a wreck. I reached Maes y Garnedd, and had an excellent tea, but no bed was available; my request was clearly inconvenient, and I did not press it. Prudence would have sent me back to Llanbedr, as light was failing, and it was about 5:30, the hour of sunset, before I left the house. I knew well the character of the ground between me and the Trawsfynydd-Dolgelly road, which is one of the largest and most perverse peat-bogs in the Principality; still I had some confidence in my own familiarity with it, and decided to go forward, and in due time reached the Col. I expected the moon, then just entering the third quarter, but better than nothing, to rise about 8; but this I had not verified, she was in fact not due till 9:15. I was weighted with a heavy rucksac,

besides a cumbrous camera and its legs. The stream, if I were able to follow it, must at last lead me to the Eden valley and to the highroad ; if I should have to leave its guidance, a steady south-west wind gave me the direction, since I had only to keep it blowing at an angle of 45° on the right cheek. Meanwhile the night became wetter and darker. Passing a farmhouse (Cwrt y Graig ddu), unchallenged by man or dog, I did not think it worth while to stop for enquiries, but followed the stream downwards : it was rough going, and light failed. Presently some stepping stones invited me to cross the swollen river and to follow a path, which soon became untraceable ; before very long I had to allow that I was fairly lost in the bog. It was a mild, though stormy, night, and there was nothing for it but to keep moving till daylight, with due precautions against bogs and rocks. After perhaps a couple of hours of this (neither watch nor compass being available), I saw to my surprise the lights of a house, one large and steady, another at a little distance and shifting, as though the farmer might be visiting an outlying shed. It was time to be humble, so I made as good going as I could, under my various loads, towards the place, only to find that all was in darkness. This seemed a somewhat rapid going-to-bed, but it was useless to search further : I recovered my true direction by the wind, and moved on. Presently there blazed out what I could not doubt were the lights of a station, many brilliant lamps in a row, and others higher and some way from the others, as though of the distance signals. This was a puzzle, for Trawsfynydd station must have been 6 or 8 miles off, nor was it likely to have been illuminated in this gala fashion so late on an autumn day. The show disappeared and reappeared several different times.

To cut my story short, I found myself at last on a cartroad leading to a bridge over one of two streams, both in heavy flood, which met there ; but was fairly puzzled as to the direction from which they came, the moonlight being too faint for reconnoitering to any purpose. I was fortunate enough to find a cowshed open and empty, and passed the

rest of the night pacing a gangway of some ten feet between the standings, being far too wet to lie down on the hay, which offered a luxurious bed. A little before dawn the rain stopped, and the wind went to a colder quarter; a few stars struggled out, and from a glimpse of Cassiopeia I got an inkling of my whereabouts, which the daylight, when it came, confirmed. I was in fact at the junction of two branches of the Crawewellt river, and within a few hundred yards of the highroad, some five miles south of Trawsfynydd, having, rather by chance than by art, made very much the point which I had at first intended to make.

The first moral which I would draw is that I ought to have turned back from Maes y Garnedd or from the pass: whether the ethics of mountaineering apply, in all their severity, to bog-trotting, I would ask our ex-President to judge. Had I to repeat the experience, I would certainly carry a waterproof box of matches, and a repeater or watch with boldly figured dial, and I would make a careful forecast of the moon's movements. And I must add, in all seriousness, that I am very thankful to escape, as I did, a bad fit of rheumatism, or other evil consequences of a night so spent, being old enough to have known better.

However, the interesting point to me was the bogfires. I have searched "Notes and Queries," and referred to Brand's "Popular Antiquities," and have consulted scientific friends, but only two cases at all comparable in extent to mine have I been able to find—one is related by the late Mr. Mummery, who saw wandering lights on the Gorner Glacier, eventually traced by him to certain latter day Oreads. The other will be found in the Memoirs of General Marbot (Vol. III., p. 178). I cannot enter the lists with so accomplished a story teller, and will not spoil your readers' pleasure by a quotation from his fascinating pages; enough to say that at Ghorodie, in the retreat from Moscow, he found himself with 700 horsemen in the middle of the campfires of an apparent army of 50,000.

I am, &c.,

A. O. PRICKARD.