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BOW FELL BUTTRESS.

By T. S.

FOUR years ago two young mountaineers, tramping over from Wastdale Head towards Dungeon Ghyll, tried a variation of the usual descent down Rossett Ghyll. From the col they traversed along the fell side, which forms the Mickleden shoulder of Bow Fell, keeping about the level of the clouds which shrouded the tops of the mountains with a clammy tenderness, in true Cumberland fashion. After scrambling for some time along the loose rocky ground, the line of scree turned sharply upwards, and, on rounding a shoulder of rock, the tourists saw looming through the mist a huge shadowy form, which sent a chill through their sodden garments, and added somewhat to the limpness of their feelings. With "dire faces and figures dire," a halt was called to deliberate. At first sight it had seemed something even more ethereal than a shadow—a "spirit of the mountains clothed in swirling mists," but the two spectators were in a truly spiritual frame of mind, being very hungry, and the impressiveness of the scene was felt with bated breath. On closer inspection it looked like a mighty pinnacle, though neither of them knew of such a rock thereabouts, and it was difficult to believe that that striking looking pillar had been facing across Mickleden towards Pike o' Stickle all the ages without having attracted attention. It rose very abruptly from the line of scree, and seemed to be cut off altogether from the mass of the mountain; and one part of the face was composed of large slabs of rock, which gave one an idea of inaccessibility. There was a gully, however, which might be tried, so a short pitch was ascended, but the lateness of the hour made further progress inadvisable.

Circumstances had not permitted the would-be explorers to visit the spot again, although they had, from afar off, looked with a climber's eye at the rock which had once so impressed them. It was a buttress of Bow Fell, almost due east of the summit, but various enquiries could elicit no information as to any climbs on it, so the prospect of breaking fresh ground gave the buttress a special interest.

This Whitsuntide an opportunity offered itself to a party staying at Fell Foot to explore. They crossed over into the Great Langdale Valley, passed Stool End, and leisurely made their way upwards over Green Tongue to a knoll close to, and facing the Buttress; and during lunch-time there was opportunity enough to note the various cracks and ledges which might perhaps lead the party to the summit.

A good sized snow-patch was crossed near the foot of the rocks, and then the party roped up in the following order: T. Shaw, G. H. Craig, G. R. West, C. Hargreaves and L. J. Oppenheimer.

The climb begins at the lowest part of the buttress, and after 30 feet of broken rocks, the foot of a long chimney is passed, and a 10 feet chimney to the right of it taken. This chimney has a slight excrescence near the top, which caught the leader in the nape of the neck at the final heave and brought him back, but a little patience overcomes the difficulty, and another 10 feet leads to a small terrace running down to a gully on the right.

The next 50 feet is an upward traverse to the left into the long chimney, soon after entering which a small sentry-box affords a good stopping place. Here the leader waited for the last three men to come up the first pitch. After 40 feet straight up the long chimney, it ends on a grass terrace, which slopes down to the right and broadens considerably. Following this for about 20 feet a recess is reached, which seems the obvious line of ascent, but it does not go, and a narrow crack just short of this is taken.

From the ledge at the top of the crack, 50 feet up, bare rough rocks lead to a big grassy corner, and here there is a

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Bow Fell Buttress
From a photograph by L. J. Oppenheimer.

convenient large block to which the second man should belay himself, as the leader advances along a rather exposed upward traverse into a small rock corner. Here the East Anglian came up to the belaying-pin just mentioned, and his jovial round face and blue eyes made one think of the green pastures and still waters, where no climbing is, and where the land is very fat. The leader was face to face with a piece of smooth rock without holds for fingers or boots, so the second man came up and gave a shoulder. The best plan here is to climb away from the corner, and then to the left over the top of it, on to a grassy patch sloping away to the left, beside a fine belay. To the right of this a chimney starts; 40 feet up is a good resting place with a small pitch above; then another 40 feet upwards, with sloping slabs to the right and a wall to the left, leads to the top of the Low Man, where a cairn was built. Easy scrambling for 20 feet leads to the top of the Buttress, which is separated from the main mountain by a narrow neck, from which descend scree gullies on either side.

The accompanying photograph shows the Buttress, also the route taken. The total height of the climb is about 350 feet, and the first ascent took four hours. The rocks are reliable, and the climbing very interesting right up to the summit.

A rapid descent was made from the Bow Fell Cairn down the Band; and when the usual toasts were drunk round the fireside, in the low, comfortable sitting-room at Fell Foot, there was satisfaction in the thought that Bow Fell Buttress was an attractive addition to the climbs within easy reach of Dungeon Ghyll.