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Author: A. Goodall

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BLACK CRAG.

BLACK CRAG GULLY,

Troutdale, Borrowdale.

By ALEX. GOODALL.

BLACK CRAG is perhaps more familiar to the hunter than the climber. It stands out from Caffell Side, immediately to the left of Brund, and has the advantage of being only half a mile from the highway. Privacy, however, is not sacrificed to ease of access. Few visitors find their way into Troutdale, and the noisy clangour of the day excursionist rarely violates its peace.

Often have I gazed at this fine rock from the stream below, and wondered what sport might be found thereon. But those were moments of detestable idleness when the mind created impossible chimneys, arêtes and traverses, and the body was quite unwilling to give mind the lie. So that my book offered just the necessary excuse for maintaining a position of indifference until the flight of time prohibited exploration, and

“Under closing shades,
Inglorious lay me by the lowly brook,
And whisper to my dreams.”

One day last summer Mr. C. E. Benson called upon me. Having heard that there was a probable climb in Troutdale he was all eagerness to go and explore. I should much rather have stayed behind, as the feeling came over me that my haven of refuge might be robbed of the child of my fancy. If Black Crag gave birth to a climb not even approaching the mediocre, my dreams would be broken and affection killed.

“Hope springs eternal in the human *beast*,” as a wag of my acquaintance will inflect the quotation. Full of hope were we

when the Borrowdale coach took us away from "the metropolis of the English Lakes." Genial company makes a journey all too short and we were scarce conscious of the coach's lumbering motion ere the time came for dismounting. Once at the foot of the crag an ill-defined gully was observed commencing above a fine slab tilted at an angle of about 60° . A crack ran obliquely to the top affording good foothold, and a low wall of rock on leaving the slab called for careful balance. A chimney formed the first pitch, surmounted by a heathery ledge. The second pitch led away slightly to the left of the ledge and seemed very exposed. We had spent so much time in locating the climb that we found there was no reasonable prospect of our being able to work it out in its entirety before dark, so resolved to defer the attempt until another day.

A few days later Messrs. Benson, F. Philipson and myself set out for the task, determined to do or to—come back. Before roping up we sacrificed a quantity of tobacco in the usual way as a burnt offering to the gods who have the especial care of climbers. I was then given the honour of leading. The slab was negotiated without difficulty although the wall gave some trouble.* Here the holds were wet, small and insufficient for a proper amount of leverage. A short grass scramble led easily up to the first pitch. This was a pleasant little chimney about twenty-five feet high. The holds were particularly good and conveniently placed. I found the heather ledge largely covered with a growth of brambles upon which war had perforce to be waged with a pocket knife. Philipson then joined me.

The second pitch led directly from the ledge and was not quite so steep. The holds were few and small. The presence of loose stones and wet grass made the scaling of it somewhat risky. In fact, when half-way up, I could not stir without dislodging something. Consequently, Benson, who was below,

* This slab may be turned by climbing up over some heather covered rock to the left. The rock wall consists of a lofty step followed by a low one. The footholds are wet and slippery and slope the wrong way, and there is a slight overhang which tends to upset the balance of the climber.

had quite a lively and anxious time of it. As a matter of course hard stones descending resulted in equally hard words ascending. Nor did my most tender and soothing remarks mend matters. Under such conditions I deemed it advisable to return to the ledge until a place of safety could be found for our comrade in distress. Accomplishing my purpose Philipson climbed up to my old position, whilst I was resting, and cleared away the greater part of the loose rock. Then, by means of treacherous grass holds, he managed to draw himself up breathless into the back of the gully. When I followed, he held me with the rope while I tore out the wet grass, which enabled me to go up on rock holds. We were soon joined by the third, and I resumed the lead.

The gully now took more definite proportions. A chimney faced us, with a small tree growing about half-way up. I climbed up to this and then worked out on the left wall into an old watercourse filled with *debris* from the winter storms. The gully widens out towards the top somewhat after the manner of Mouse Ghyll. A steep slab on the left offered the most feasible means of ascent. The holds were few and small, but the work was by far the most interesting in the climb. This was the last obstacle and we climbed out after two and a-half hours' pleasurable work.

The total length of the climb is something like 200 feet. An eighty foot rope will be found quite sufficient for a party of three.*

* See note on page 135.