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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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

### ACCIDENT ON THE HAYSTACKS.

DEAR SIR,

As no mention has been yet made in the *Journal* respecting the death of Mr. Bernard S. Wood, who was a member of the Climbers' Club, and who was killed near Buttermere last July, I give you below details of the accident for what notice you may see fit to insert in the next number. I do this as several erroneous accounts have appeared in the daily press, which were naturally painful to Mr. Wood's people.

On Sunday, July 17th, Bernard, his brother Norman, and a cousin, Frederick Wood, left Wood House, on Crummock Water, where they were staying, for a ramble on the Haystacks. They ascended by the "rake" which traverses the face, and eventually reached the broken up rocky wall which forms the head of Warnscale Bottom. Here they were standing looking at the view, the two brothers some distance from their cousin, when Bernard was suddenly attacked, so we presume, with a fit of giddiness; he overbalanced, and Norman clutched him in a vain endeavour to save him. Locked in one another's arms, they fell some hundred feet down a gully giving on to the Screes at the southern end of the Haystacks.

Frederick Wood at once went for assistance, and secured the aid of two quarrymen. They found the body of Bernard lying at the foot of the gully with a fractured skull. Death had been instantaneous.

Norman had, in the meantime, though very badly cut and bruised, and in a semi-conscious condition, managed to reach the farm at Gatesgarth to obtain help for his brother. On arriving there, however, he at once collapsed, and for some days lay in a precarious condition. Afterwards he was moved to Wood House, and eventually to his home at Cheadle, fortunately then in a fair way towards recovery. In spite of his fall, it is not thought there will be any serious after effects. He is at present in the United States, where he has gone for the benefit of the voyage and the change.

The inquest on the body of Bernard was held at Gatesgarth in the open air on the evening of the Monday after the accident. The verdict was of course one of accidental death.

The disaster was by no means a climbing mishap, nor was it in the least the outcome of any foolhardiness; it was purely an accident of the hills, though none the less deplorable.

Bernard, though only in his twenty-second year, had a keen knowledge of, and love for, our hills, notably those of the Lake District. He was able to appreciate and take pleasure in the mountains for their own sake, apart from their charms to the rock climber, though he had a full enthusiasm for rock climbing as well.

In his death his friends have lost a well-loved companion. His last resting-place is a fitting one, in Loweswater Churchyard.

Mild o'er his grave, ye mountains, shine;  
Gently by his, ye waters, glide;  
To that in you which is divine  
He was allied.

This last verse is from Matthew Arnold's "A Southern Night," and seems peculiarly fitting.

Yours truly,

P. SPENCER.

5 ALBERT TERRACE,  
Old Trafford, Manchester.

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

A NEW GAME FOR CLIMBERS.

DEAR SIR,

May I put a suggestion before the members of the Club? I propose the institution at the climbing centres of a system of organised cross-country runs upon new lines, which, I think, would not only afford good sport and exercise, but would also tend to widen the scope of our enthusiasm for the hills, develop those "deer-stalking" faculties which were found so useful in the South African War, and to increase the opportunities of intercourse in the field—and all without neglecting the particular sport to which the Climbers' Club is devoted. To some earnest souls climbing pure and simple is sufficient, but others would perhaps welcome an occasional variation from the usual round, especially those to whom our British climbs are becoming very familiar.

Here is a rough outline of the game I suggest:—The players are divided into two parties, of which the "besiegers" (for want of a better name) outnumber the "scouts," say as six to one. The object of the scouts is to get from one chosen "base" to another,—for example, from Dungeon Ghyll to Wastdale or Ogwen Cottage to Gorphwysfa—in a given time. The object of the other party is to prevent the scouts from reaching the other base, by intercepting or capturing them. Both parties would set out from their bases at pre-arranged times, and the besiegers would be bound (at any rate up to a certain time) to operate at or beyond a given distance from their base. They would be posted by their captain across the zone of operations, commanding all the probable routes of approach, patrolling the intermediate ground, and concentrating at any point by whistle or other signal. The scouts would aim, of course, at concealment, separating or combining according to circumstances, and choosing always the ground which affords cover. What should constitute "capture" is open to discussion, but

three ideas suggest themselves:—(1) Surrounding or confronting a man with three or four enemies at any distance within earshot, (2) Actual contact and the seizing of a badge worn by the players, (3) Getting within a certain distance of a man. Of these (1) seems to me the most suitable, as it is probable the parties would very seldom get to close quarters; but (2) gives the scout a better chance of retaliation, while (3) is too liable to dispute. But this question can only be decided by actual trial.

The scouts *combined* would be at liberty to capture any single man of their opponents. A system of scoring by points would be arranged so as to give a graduated series of possibilities ranging from total defeat to complete victory, neither of which extremes would be often achieved.

Much must be learnt by experiment before this rather crude idea can be put into practice, and I should be very glad if our members would favour me with their opinions and suggestions on the subject, particularly any having practical knowledge of scouting or deer-stalking. If a sufficient number of men were willing to co-operate, a trial run on a small scale could no doubt be arranged either in Snowdonia, the Lake District or the Pennines.

Yours truly,

F. E. ROSS.

39 HALKYN AVENUE, SEFTON PARK,  
LIVERPOOL, 7th February, 1905.

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

AN ASCENT OF HONISTER CRAG.

DEAR SIR,

Yesterday, in company of two brothers, I made an ascent of Honister Crag from the front, *i.e.*, from the road. As we have been informed that this has never been done

before, I should be much obliged if you could tell me if such is the case. The old man who occupies the shelter-hut at the top of the Honister Pass told us that he had never seen it done before, and he has been there 24 years now.

The route taken was the following :—From the top of the pass we struck horizontally across the screes at the base of the Craggs till we reached the gully just below the highest peak. This gully we followed to the summit.

Yours truly,

W. S. ASCOLI.

LODORE HOTEL, DERWENTWATER.

[The Editor has not been able to find a previous record of the climb.]

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“THE HIGH TOR GULLY.”

*Note by Editor and Summary of Correspondence.*

THE Editor has received a large number of letters with reference to the High Tor Gully, Matlock.

To publish these in full would take up too much space in the *Journal*, and would probably lead at the present time to no satisfactory or final conclusion as to the desirability or safety of the gully as a climb.

With one sentence, however, he thoroughly agrees. “It seems to me a pity that the noble sport of rock climbing should be sullied by an acrimonious controversy on such points as those raised. The High Tor stands for anyone desirous of so doing to inspect it, and the questions in dispute are surely very easy of solution.”

As regards the actual criticisms of Mr. Baker’s letter, there is no doubt, as the writers of several letters claim, that he has changed his opinions as to the desirability of the climb, a course which he is perfectly justified in taking.

On September 19th, 1902, Mr. Baker wrote in a newspaper article, "Twice I have made attempts to climb the great fissure . . . We scrambled down slopes of clay and scree for nearly a hundred feet . . . the stones that we shifted in our movements crashing all the while into the black gulf beneath us, whose depth we could not ascertain . . . Our efforts to enter the gully at the foot were likewise a failure, but not so decisive as to take away all hopes of doing it."

In 1902, therefore, Mr. Baker undoubtedly considered this a desirable climb, though, in the opinion of most rock climbers, the loose stones which he mentions would be considered in too unstable equilibrium for enjoyment. It may be said that these were purposely dislodged for the safety of the party, but the expression "all the while" seems to point to a certain precarious character of foot and hand-hold not to be entirely altered by the process of sweeping, which is often necessary on the early attempts of a climb, successful or otherwise.

In Mr. Baker's letter in No. 25, he says—"I am not going to say that the High Tor Gully is not a legitimate climb, although I know it to be an extremely dangerous one . . . what is illegitimate for me to attempt may be a safe climb for a better man."

It is perfectly clear that Mr. Baker does not mean that a dangerous climb can be legitimate under any circumstances, but that he considers it dangerous, and therefore illegitimate for himself. As, however, this has not been clearly understood by the writer of one of the letters, the first sentence only being quoted, it may be well to suggest that the use of the expression "dangerous," meaning the presence of difficulties which greater skill could avoid, is strongly to be deprecated.

The loose use of the term has perhaps contributed more to the loss of valuable lives than any other.

Climbs A and B are both described as dangerous; A has objective dangers, such as insecurity of hold on certain passages where the leader cannot, however great his skill, avoid reliance on untrustworthy hand and foot-holds, where

there is no opportunity for the use of the body to obtain a friction hold, and where a second climber backing him up on the rope can be of no help.

Such passages are extremely rare on mountains composed of hard rock. They occur more frequently on formations such as chalk, slate, sandstone, or mountain limestone, to take a few instances, and yet any of these may be perfectly safe under certain conditions, as, except at least in the case of chalk cliffs, which, in the writer's opinion, have no good qualities, the firmness of the rock differs enormously in localities which are only separated by a short interval.

It is therefore unfair to condemn mountain limestone, *qua* mountain limestone, though a word of caution should rightly be given to those who have not a thorough knowledge of it.

With this proviso, there seems no reason at present, judging from the evidence, to brand the High Tor Gully as dangerous, though probably so high a degree of skill is required as to render it unjustifiable for any except experienced climbers.

The second class of climb B is far more difficult than A, but "not dangerous" is the sense of the word laid down.

A climber without sufficient knowledge of the particular rock climbs, B, and considers it relatively easy, he then naturally doubts the epithet "dangerous" applied to A, and a disaster possibly follows.

With regard to the alleged "abominations," the Editor can hardly do better than quote from one other letter. "Mr. Baker (whose charming book on our county we have lately so much enjoyed) speaks in an unfortunate moment of 'putrefaction' in connection with the High Tor. Surely what he meant to say was 'petrification.' Of our Matlock petrifications all Derbyshire men are proud. Of anything else we know nothing."

Other evidence points to the view that the abominations referred to are now at anyrate either non-existent or not conspicuous.

The Editor will not undertake to publish any further

letters on the High Tor Gully, unless they seem likely to promote the interests of the Club, but he will be very glad to receive statements as to the character of limestone climbing, with the view of collecting evidence on the comparative merits and demerits of different rock formations, and obtaining suggestions which may help climbers to test their security, or the opposite, for themselves.



