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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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

DEAR SIR,

### THE HIGH TOR GULLY.

Understanding that the correspondence begun by Mr. Smithard two years ago was closed by your judicial summing up, I had no wish to add anything to the one letter I contributed to the discussion, the seriousness of which does not seem to have struck Mr. Smithard. But since this gentleman has re-opened the question, I must ask, as a matter of justice, to be allowed to contradict certain complete mis-statements which he makes in the pages of the *Journal*, although it must be admitted they are of no interest to the Club, and have no bearing on the points at issue, but are supposed to explain my labyrinthine motives for stating a simple fact.

1st. Mr. Smithard declares that I have written three separate accounts of the High Tor Gully, without mentioning the "abominations." *I have never written a separate account of the High Tor Gully.* I have merely referred to it casually, once in the *Journal* (vol. i, p. 62), and once in a brief paragraph (reprinted from a daily paper) in "Moors, Craggs and Caves of the High Peak," where it is mentioned among other possible climbs on mountain limestone, which, speaking generally, I condemn. The accounts of the climb alluded to by Mr. Smithard are certainly not by me.

2nd. He reproaches me with recommending dangerous climbs, a thing I always deprecate. I have often called attention to difficult problems, but Mr. Smithard overlooks the vast difference there is between a 20 feet boulder and a fissure, hundreds of feet deep, in disintegrating limestone.

3rd. As to my repeated failures to do the climb, alleged by Mr. Smithard, here his imagination is at work. As mentioned in my

letter (*C.C.J.*, vol. vii., p. 49), I have visited the gully twice, once to inspect the base and once the upper portion. One of these visits was with a party of non-climbers. Mr. Smithard is well aware of these facts.

I may add that the publications containing Mr. Smithard's self-contradictory statements respecting the merits of limestone both appeared at the same date, 1903.

As to the "abominations," a heavy printer's bill might have been saved by the simple expedient of sending a sanitary inspector:

I am,

Yours faithfully,

ERNEST A. BAKER.

Edale, Liscard, Cheshire.

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

DEAR SIR,

Members of the Climbers' Club, resident temporarily or permanently in the large towns of South Wales and the West, may be interested to know of an adjacent ground which, from a hasty and distant observation, seems worthy of their inspection.

This is on Dinas, a fir-clad and shapely hill with a rocky summit, rising out of the Upper Towy Valley, near Capel Ystrad-ffin.

On the side which forms one wall of the deeply cut river gorge is a fine precipice of large slabby rock facing N., and with an altitude of 200-300 feet.

There are also smaller areas of denudation, and numerous outcrops in the vicinity.

Prospective visitors could drive from Llandovery, through beautiful scenery, to Rhandir Mwyn, where excellent accommodation can be had at Nant-y-Mwyn House, about 3 miles S. of Dinas.

Possibly the farmer at Ystrad-ffin would let rooms, but of this I have no knowledge.

Yours sincerely,

J. P. ENTWISLE.

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

SIR,

In common doubtless with the other members of the Club, I do my best, when opportunity offers, to add to our numbers. I point out what the Club has done to benefit climbers at large, and the special advantages which it confers upon its members; but I am sorry to say that when I am pressed to particularize on these points, my answers have not always been regarded as satisfactory. I have one friend whom I am particularly anxious to convert, and accordingly I have resolved to apply, through your agency, to any members, official or private, whose knowledge of facts or dialectical skill may be greater than my own, in the hope that they may be able to furnish me with such arguments as may overcome the obstinacy—for I can apply no milder term—of my friend.

That you may understand, and I trust sympathize with, my feelings, I will tell you how he has summed up the matter to me:—

“It appears to me,” he said, “that the only benefit to be derived from joining your Club, apart from the *Journal*, which I buy already, is the privilege of attending the Annual Dinner, and certain lantern lectures, interspersed with comic recitations. To say nothing of the fact that I can attend all these as your guest, I cannot see how in themselves they constitute a *raison d'être* for a Climbers' Club. No doubt to people who enjoy listening to after-dinner oratory, or care for lectures, the Club is a *sine qua non*, but I confess that neither of these amusements appeals to me.

“I have had many pleasant climbs with men who were members of your Club, and with others who were not; but I cannot say I have found any difference between them which would lead me to suppose I should enjoy my climbing more were I to become a member.

“It is not even as if it were a privilege to belong to it. No one can put the letters ‘A. C.’ after his name without certain qualifications, both athletic and social, but has anyone ever been black-balled by your Committee? May not the most decrepit outsider who ever went up Snowdon by train feel secure of election if he can only get some one to propose him?

“Your Club neither organises nor instructs, neither builds huts nor makes paths. You say it has put a bridge over the Cwm Dyli stream. By all means let it have the credit of that solitary plank,

but if that is all it has to show for its eight years of existence, I do not think climbing would suffer as a sport if the Club were wound up to-morrow?"

But, sir, I have no doubt you, like myself, have had quite enough of this language. I should not have given myself the pain of repeating it had it not been that I cherish the hope that some one will be able to provide me with arguments to repudiate the scandalous insinuations of my friend.

Need I say that I should deeply regret it were this letter to be taken as casting any reflection on our Committee? Are they not all, all honourable men? Those whom I know personally I have found delightful, but I should consider myself even more than their debtor than I am at present if—as knowing more about the Club than a private member like myself—they could provide me with a few facts which would prove to my argumentative friend that the Climbers' Club was fully justifying its existence.

I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

CHARLES BICKERSTETH WHEELER.

[If most of us were required to justify our existence, we might have some difficulty. Surely our correspondent has forgotten one of the first principles of English law, the possession of which gives us such a delightful feeling of superiority over our neighbours, that the burden of the proof of guilt lies with the accuser, whilst the accused is held to be innocent till evidence to the contrary is forthcoming.

Why should our Club meet with less just treatment than a private individual, and not continue to exist until condemned and sentenced?

As to the "*raison d'être*" of the Climbers' Club, questioned by our correspondent's friend, he seems to be fettered by a purely materialistic standard represented by 2s. 6d., the difference between four numbers of the *Journal* at 2s. and the subscription at 10s. 6d.

We have no quarrel whatever with this attitude; in fact, we should like to see the *Journal* sold on every railway bookstall in the British Isles; but we cannot help feeling that there does exist, especially among Alpine climbers, a certain spirit of indifference to

the higher development of English climbing ; for why else do so many stand aloof from responsibility ?

Any climber who cares for this development, and is qualified for the Club, for it is quite a mistake to suppose that the climbing qualification is a farce, should come forward to help, and give his personal service to promote that ideal.

Though our correspondent has in courtesy hidden his feelings behind the mask of a captious friend, we feel that he is in reality a little hurt by the shortcomings of the Club in "organisation and instruction." There we agree with him ; it is most desirable that we should give practical assistance to young climbers interested in rock-climbing, with which branch our English mountaineers have naturally most to do, especially in the absence of text-books on the subject, for no one would contend that the Badminton Library is an adequate guide to modern rock-climbing. It is, however, a very difficult thing to do. We inspired a friend, a capable rock-climber, to take a novice with him in Wales, and to observe and photograph him on a graduated series of climbs, with a view of tabulating the difficulties of climbers, and obtaining a series of unstudied object lessons. Unfortunately the "novice" climbed like a cat, and never stuck in any chimney, or encountered, apparently, any difficulty at all !

Still there is no doubt that much might be done with more obliging subjects, and at any rate it might be possible to organise combined meets at mountaineering centres, as has been done by the Scottish Mountaineering Club, and thus to enable tyros to learn in company with experienced climbers.

Even in theory we might do much if all who have any knowledge will help. We might, to take a solitary instance, publish practical articles on mountain geology, specially adapted to climbing, which would give instruction on the character of rocks, a subject of which many climbers are entirely ignorant. It would not, perhaps, be unfair to say that, like the sailors of mediæval days, who coasted along the shore, they learn the dangers of the cliffs by touching them.

But the Climbers' Club can hardly pronounce "ex cathedra" on these subjects any more than it can make paths and bridges ; it must content itself with justifying its existence by forming a bond of union between mountaineers who love our British hills, and care for the good name of our sport.—Note by the Editor.]