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## THE NEW YEAR'S MEET AT WASDALE HEAD.

THE unlucky number of thirteen members began the New Year by attending the meet at Wasdale Head, but were saved from the consequences of their rashness by bringing with them almost an equal body of visitors. The list was as follows:—A. P. and G. P. Abraham, E. A. Baker, G. H. Craig, P. S. Minor, L. J. Oppenheimer, J. W. Puttrell, E. E. Roberts, G. Seatree, W. Smithard, J. H. Taylor, P. S. Thompson, G. R. West, members; and Miss Seatree, Miss E. Seatree, Dr. Barlow, Mr. E. B. Berry, Mr. F. Botterill, Professor H. Dixon, Messrs. A. E. Field, G. Hastings, A. G. Woodhead, visitors. Some among the latter have now been converted from the error of their ways.

The first to arrive at the Hotel were Oppenheimer's party and the Seatrees, who went together up Skew Ghyll, on the 29th December, a day of perfect clearness and calm, with sunshine almost unbroken, although it never ceased freezing in the shade. They had excellent sport in the frozen gully, and fine views on the tops. Baker and Ross the day before had been ignominiously driven back by the setting in of a blizzard in an attempt to reach the summit of Seatallan from Netherwasdale. The contrast between the 28th and the 29th was very striking; and Wasdale, with the sun shining brilliantly on ice and snow, looked rarely beautiful. By the evening, nearly a score of members and visitors had arrived. A lantern and screen had been rigged up in the billiard room, five hundred slides brought by various members, and a posse of lecturers were conning their notes, preparatory to leading their audience from the Lakes to Skye, and from the Alps to Norway, the Caucasus, and the Himalaya. All were specially

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Scawfell, by E. A. Baker,

glad to see, at the head of the table, Mr. Seatree, who discovered the North Climb on Scawfell in 1872. Professor Dixon, like Horatius, upheld the honour of the mother of climbing clubs, not at bridge, however, but at the more hallowed game of fives, until the arrival of Field and Hastings. The presence of these old campaigners made all welcome the proposal that we should set out next day as one party. Scawfell was agreed upon as the goal, as there was a pious duty to perform—namely, to deposit on the summit of the Pinnacle a new weatherproof box containing a climbers' book, in the place of the one that was thrown down and destroyed with all its precious autographs a few years ago.

More snow fell in the night. Big drifts lay in the road and in the hollows under Ling Mell, encouraging two enterprising men to buckle on their ski and defy the innumerable obstacles of the ascent. We left them wrestling with the wall beside the beck, but they came manfully trudging up behind, and relinquished the attempt only after shipwreck on the rough ground beneath Brown Tongue. Above us the rocks of Scawfell and Pike's Crag, walls of clear white, flecked with black arêtes and chimneys, were free from mist; but ever and anon a snow squall pounced down from behind Scawfell, whirled across the Mickledore chasm, and beat itself out against the wall of the Pikes. Brown Tongue was a tougher climb than even on a sweltering day in August; and in Hollow Stones we plunged into deep drifts that made the going very slow. Then, after a brief halt, we began the toilsome ascent of the screes under Lord's Rake. As the loose stones were not cemented together by the soft, powdery snow, the veteran who led the file had to pick a cautious route to avoid on the one hand sending down loose blocks, and to keep clear of ice on the other. Lord's Rake was in still worse condition, and the ice-axe had to cut deep into the scree underneath to make sure foothold on so steep a slope.

Here we divided, ten men continuing up the Rake as far as the grass traverse along the West Wall of Deep Ghyll, and the rest, including the two ladies, turning into Deep Ghyll

itself, the first pitch in which was half buried in snow, and looked a great deal less imposing than in summer. But this was a deception. Roping together, the leading four struggled up to the cleft beside the great chock-stone, whilst we others prepared for a chilly wait, ensconcing ourselves as snugly as we could in the snow wreath at the foot as we watched the leader emerge astride the cleft and reach up towards the knobs of rock forming the key of the climb. I noticed that leather gloves froze to the rock the instant they touched it, but this discovery was of no avail in dealing with the hard glaze of ice above the pitch. Snow had begun to fall rapidly, though the wind howling and thundering in the crags overhead could not reach into our nook save with an occasional wisp of snow that dropped over in a powdery cascade. Still the leader bestrode the cleft, straining in vain to get a grip on the slippery surfaces. He retired, and a second and then a third man took his place, whilst we shivered sadly below ; and when the fugleman of the second four, a cragsman of formidable reputation, declared that the climb would not go, the general feeling of relief was not dissembled.

Our detachment now pushed on up Lord's Rake in the steps of the first party, and were warm again, in spite of snow up to our elbows, when we stood on the West Wall Traverse. We were right over Deep Ghyll, but nothing was to be seen but mist, and snow that looked like mist. Where we struck into the Ghyll, above the pitches, the drifts were piled deep and loose on a substratum of ice, enforcing careful use of the axe. Just at this point we heard a shout from the men in front. They had dropped part of an aluminium cooker, which had lodged a few yards from us in the bed of the Ghyll. Two ways of reaching it presented themselves : to let down a man on two lengths of rope, or cut steps across the slanting wall from where we stood. Our leader chose this course, and, wielding the ice-axe tenderly, took us foot by foot across the shaky ice towards our quarry. But the holds were too slight without a belay, and we had to retrace our steps. Hardly were we safely back when we heard more

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At the foot of Ling Mell  
by E A Baker

shouting, and sheets of snow came hissing down the Ghyll, carrying the vessel out of sight. We heard afterwards that the snow cornice at the top had fallen on the first man, burying him to the middle, and starting the avalanche, whose tail had missed us by a few feet.

The great west wall of the Pinnacle was now right over us. Seen edgewise from the Traverse, it had appeared like a huge tiara of frosted silver, with icy gems and scroll-work glistening bravely through the mist. On this side it was a grimmer spectacle, big slabs and ribs and pendulous bars of ice binding it in impenetrable armour, frost-crystals powdering the rocks between, and the top glowering remotely in the storm drift. Some one asked in derision who would take up the sacred box ; but no volunteers responded. (When it had been proposed at the hotel overnight that we should enter our names in the book there, the suggestion was rejected with a great display of indignation. But our morals were now at a low ebb, and when we got home again everybody signed the book without remonstrance in front of a roaring fire. It is not reported whether the book has reached the top of the Pinnacle yet during the late genial weather.) My axe had been borrowed by one of the party that had not tried Deep Ghyll, and without it I found the last hundred feet a severe struggle. Another avalanche came hissing down before we were out, leaving the top of the great funnel bare, right down to the frozen ground, and several of us had to be steadied by a rope from above as we crawled out on the wind-swept summit. We met the storm now full force. In order to don a dry sweater, I took off my coat, carefully standing on it to keep it from being blown away. Putting it on again was like robbing oneself with a stiff doormat, and it took five minutes to get my frozen gloves on my frozen hands again.

How were we to get down? Even Broad Stand was fraught with peril to-day, Lord's Rake we had tested already, and there was nothing else but to make the best of our way towards Burnmoor, steering into the gale, and keeping well away from the crags. It was not till we found ourselves on

the slopes of Green How and caught a phantom glimpse of Wastwater through a moment's break in the mist that we had much idea where we were. In summer this is a waste of scree that wise men avoid, and now, howsoever cunningly we picked our steps, many a loose block went trundling down on those in front. A sitting posture was the easiest even with an ice-axe to lean upon, and without one I was driven to invent a new mode of glissading, which was to sit on the left foot as a sled, and with the right stuck out like a prow slide down over rough and smooth until the uprooted stones forced one to stop. The men with the ski had the best of it on the last thousand feet.

The pile of clothes to be seen next morning on the landing, with phantom shapes in pyjamas stealthily foraging for garments by candle-light, was proof that it had been a day of excellent sport. Still more snow had fallen in the night, and it was softening. One party went to Great End, and in Cust's Gully met with an adventure. The big snow cornice came down on the foremost man, who drove his axe-hilt through into the ice and hung on with all his strength. The avalanche snapped the shaft in two and carried him over on his back, head downwards, for three yards before his comrades pulled him up with the rope, strained but unhurt. Our party, led by an experienced fell-man, made straight across the misty sides of Gable to the Needle Gully. The Needle itself was almost unrecognizable, all but the topmost block being plastered over with snow; and the gully, easiest of easy climbs in most weathers, was filled so deep with drift and ice that the first pitch might have taken hours of hard labour. Preceded by the ladies, who boldly glissaded down to the screes, leaving a track bristling with loose blocks for the less fortunate glissaders behind, we descended and made our way round to White Napes. Here, step-cutting began with a short gully, and continued across the snowy connecting ridge and up the final slopes, which were as hard as adamant, and coated with a thin film of ice. Many a slip was there in the strengthening gale before we tumbled into the mounds of

dry snow round the cairn. Thanks to skilful guiding, we hit off the easiest route down Aaron Slack, enjoying long glissades before we reached the region of thaw, though one of the ladies took one unintentionally that nearly shot her into the beck. Below Styehed the snow was turning to slush, and the walk down the track in the face of a south-westerly gale was the chilliest thing we had experienced. Two of us warmed our bones by running down to Wasdale.

A fives tournament having been arranged on the celebrated billiard table, six separate mountaineering clubs put teams into the field, but the Alpine Club bore off the laurels, the Kyndwr having the distinguished honour of being vanquished only in the final bout. The machine-like accuracy with which the victorious two put down the ball was painful evidence of many climbing days misspent. On New Year's Eve a large party gathered round the board, attracted by the ambrosial fumes of two big bowls of punch. Each man was called upon to contribute a speech, a song, or a story, and the majority gave all three, one person cheerfully delivering his quota six times over. No reliable account of what was said is available, as our reporter did not discover till a late stage of the proceedings that some one had hospitably provided him with two glasses, which he had loyally emptied turn and turn about, having no idea that his allowance had been doubled. As 1907 struck, the lucky man brought in the New Year, and a few hours before breakfast time all went to bed to prepare for the morrow's parting. The few that stayed on had bad weather most of the time; climbing was out of the question, and there was nothing to distract attention from the serious business of fives.