

WHAT IT IS COMING TO!

To the EDITOR of "THE CAIRNGORM CLUB JOURNAL."

SIR,—

While staying at Llanberis this summer, I determined to take a run up Snowdon. Though not a club member, I have done a good deal of mountaineering in my time, having been twice up Helvellyn and also the Great Ormes Head (the latter on the occasion of my honeymoon), and really—for sheer enjoyment—Snowdon beats every mountain I have hitherto done. As you, Sir, know, they take you the round trip, and give you three good, solid meals at the summit, and a day's amusement fully equal to anything you can get in London—all for five shillings and sixpence, including fees to guides!

Fleda (my wife) and I, having determined to go, chose the Tubular Railway Ascent—or Penny Pipe, as I call it—for, as Fleda said, you can't fall out of a tunnel; and, besides, it's quieter and you escape the smuts from the rack-railway and the traction engines; and they say the Ropeway Ascent, though much quicker, is very exposed and draughty, and apt to make you sea-sick in windy weather. I put on my new khaki leather puttee riding gaiters and my Tyrolean hat, and took my bamboo alpenstock, with a nail in the end, which I used on the ascent of the Great Orme. Fleda looked bewitching in the latest thing in summer millinery. We started quite early in the morning from Llanberis (Central) Station, and, really, the thing was so well managed that we were not on our feet for more than an hour the whole day, excepting while we were waiting to get into the hotel for lunch.

Our time from Llanberis to the Summit Terminus was one hour and three quarters. Of course, Snowdon cannot compare with the great mountains of the Alps, yet 30,000

feet* is a respectable height, and to do it in one hour and three quarters (including a stoppage of 37 minutes at one place) is pretty good going! They have to do this ascent quickly, as I understand there is some difficulty in breathing if you are in the tunnel long, owing to the rarification of the atmosphere due to the altitude, or, what we climbers would call, "mountain sickness". There are blow-holes at intervals along the tunnel, and altogether it reminds one much of the "Underground".

Directly after our train had started, Fleda said we ought to have gone up by the Traction Engine Ascent, because it is so much more romantic! Just like a woman! We had brought some food with us to eat in the train (my invariable custom when mountaineering), and there was a man who played the concertina and sang, and the time soon passed; but when we reached the terminus, we both had tremendous appetites, and the first thing we and the other passengers did, was to seek a place to get a meal.

The largest and most fashionable hotel on Snowdon is close to the Tubular Terminus, so we had not far to go. Around the door was gathered a large crowd, which, maddened by the continuous clatter of knives and forks from within, was making violent efforts (after the manner of crowds) to force itself *en masse* through a door two feet wide. After undergoing half an hour of steadily increasing pressure, we were shot through the entrance like corks from a pop-gun, and Fleda lost her parasol in the process. Once in, we had a really most satisfactory meal—really *most* satisfactory—but the waiters seemed much overworked. After this, I had a nap. Fleda, who had been studying the programme of the day, woke me, and said we must go at once if we wanted to see Miss Lottie Trotter's Phenomenal Dive from the summit of Snowdon into Lyn Glaslyn—a distance of upwards of

*Surely Mr. Flopjoy's figures are overstated. The height of Snowdon in 1895 was 3560 feet. We cannot suppose that even the enormous output of refuse from the buildings on the summit would account for such an increase in the space of 65 years.—ED.

20,000 feet. The programme said that Miss Trotter would perform this astonishing feat twice daily in genuine Welsh national costume, and that the Snowdonian Shepherds' Brass Band would play a selection of popular music during the show. I would have liked to rest longer—it was a *very* satisfactory meal—but my wife said she had come up principally to see this dive, and see it she would. So we went. Miss Lottie Trotter (from New York) was dressed in pink tights and a high beaver hat, such as the Welsh peasant women have worn ever since the Glacial Age. She also had the American flag tied round her waist. We had an excellent view. The lady stood on a small platform projecting from the cliff a little below the summit, and a gentleman in evening dress stood beside her. The gentleman waved a flag (American), the band stopped suddenly in the midst of a tune, the lady kissed her hand, fired a pistol, and leaped into space! We held our breath as we watched her going down, down, down—growing smaller and smaller till she was hardly visible. Then a white splash on the surface of the lake showed that she had reached the water, and the band burst forth again just where it had left off in “The Belle of New York”—and the show was over! They say the lake is a mile and a half deep just there, so there appears to be little chance of Miss Trotter's striking the bottom. Still, it is a thrilling show, and quite worth the trouble of coming up to see. I understand it will be discontinued after the August bank holiday next year, as the lake is getting rapidly shallower. Fleda said it was absurd that, whilst Unassisted Nature could take one down in a few seconds, Modern Science should require an hour and three quarters to get one up. But I am told that the Snowdonian Air Ship Syndicate now claim to do the ascent in $3\frac{1}{2}$ minutes. Apart from the additional time which this gives the mountaineer for meals and rest at the summit, I do not see much advantage in such excessive speed. After the dive, we spent a pleasant hour in the Telephone Office, wiring facetious messages to our friends. Then Fleda felt a sinking, and so we turned into a very

decent hotel which we saw, and had something to eat. After that we went round the mutoscope machines, and then tried to get in to the American International Pigeon Eating Competition. But it was too full, and so we went to look at some new houses which they are building near the electric light station. They are very conveniently placed for the amusements and the railways, but the neighbourhood is too noisy to think of living there.

We now found ourselves at the entrance to the Crib Goch Switchback, which I had been told on no account to miss. Fleda said it was dangerous, and refused to go: but it does not do to have nerves when mountaineering, and so I said I *should*. But I felt a little uncomfortable when she replied, "All right; I shall go to the Bio-Panoramographoscopic Lecture on Snowdon—it's close by". However, I went. It is a remarkably swift switchback, and very varied. The sensation is like the immediate symptoms of sea-sickness. There is a water-jump in it too. I cannot truthfully say I enjoyed it, but it is a branch of mountaineering which is new to me. Crib Goch is a sort of natural railway-embankment affair, but it has been made as bright and cheerful as such a place can be, by a tasteful display of that flag without which no British landscape is complete—I mean the stars and stripes. This is the only amusement on Snowdon for which there is any extra charge to those holding circular tickets. .

As the lecture was not over, I had to wait for my wife, and, for the first and last time that day, I began to feel a little bored. But, presently, finding a fight going on between two men who had quarrelled over an automatic novelty machine, this feeling passed away. I then whiled away the time with cockshies at a bottle, but had the misfortune to break a window, and so gave it up.

When the lecture was over, we strolled down to the Ropeway Station, and bought an evening paper, "Comic Slabs", and a book of photographs. Then we had our own photographs taken. Presently two very shabby men, carrying a lot of cordage, arrived at the summit by some unknown route. I supposed them to be miners or brick-

layers or something, but they turned out to be actually posing as mountaineers! Why, they hadn't even got an alpenstock between them! They had the effrontery to say that they had come up the precipice—which is obviously impossible—and that Miss Trotter had passed them going down, and that they had taken her for an unusually heavy discharge of refuse from one of the hotels. They were covered with coffee-grounds and potato-parings, and one had part of a soup-plate bedded in his skull. They wanted to make a complaint to the manager of one of the hotels for throwing such things over. They admitted, as calmly as possible, that they had been climbing up the gully belonging to the hotel in question. Disgusting! Such people ought not to be allowed on mountains. These fellows were quite sour with the manager—a very civil man—but he threatened to give them into custody as trespassers, and warned them off the premises. They beat a hurried retreat without spending so much as a penny on the place. They were probably tramps. The crowd were now forming up for Miss Trotter's evening performance; but, although this was to have the additional attraction of limelight, we concluded that the waiting would be too tiring. So we climbed the magnificent new cairn, and found the ladders and ropes, which have been recently fixed to it, a great help. The cairn is constructed entirely of oyster-shells and mutton-bones, collected during several years by an aged man, who was once the proprietor of the original shanty on the summit. There is an inscription in Welsh, done in bottle-ends of various colours—a quotation from one of the ancient bards, I am told. I don't know what it means, but it evidently has some deep national significance, for one sees it on every wall, fence, milestone, and wayside boulder in Wales. The words are "Te Pawb"*.

Near the cairn is a decayed stone pillar, with the remains of a

*We are not intimately familiar with the Welsh language, but we had always supposed that this inscription was the work of an enterprising grocer, and that it signified "Everybody's Tea!"—ED.

brass plate on the top. It is said by some to be of druidical origin, and by others to have once borne a map of the country. It is now quite covered with advertisements, and is shortly to be removed as an obstruction. We had only just time to scratch our names on the lamp-post on the cairn before descending, for our train started in half an hour, and our tickets entitled us to another meal. So we descended the ladders as rapidly as our very trustworthy guide would allow, and snatched a rather hurried supper. Then, just as the great central search light on the cairn began to cast its beams upon the surrounding mountains, and the band was beginning to play, we got into our train, and in less than two hours we were home again. We were longer coming down than going up, owing to something having gone wrong with the engine.

I send you a view of the summit of Snowdon as it now is. It shows, I think, what can be done when a naturally dreary spot falls into the hands of really enterprising, business-like, and up-to-date people. Who would believe that, but a few years ago, this was one of the most desolate and deserted spots in these islands?

I should like to add that I am not pecuniarily interested in any of these concerns. I write simply to make known what has been done to improve and beautify this once solitary summit. I hope to see the day when *all* the great peaks of our mountain districts may undergo a similar transformation; when Scawfell shall be no longer a wilderness, nor Great Gable a desert; when Tryfaen shall be traversed by trains, and Cader crowned with a Casino.—Yours truly,

FREDK. FLOPJOY.

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