

A GULLY CLIMB.

BY R. PARK YUNNIE.

"GET up, man, it's a glorious morning!" I addressed these words to H, who moved his head and muttered sleepily, "Go to blazes, it's your turn to make the breakfast, I made it yesterday." I made reply from the depth of my warm sleeping bag, "Some people are born lazy." A short silence and then a voice filled with bitterness, "Of all the selfish blighters!" I smiled happily, and stretching my arm outside the tent-fly I groped gently until my fingers closed on a pan of water. Surreptitiously I drew it inside and poured it over H's head. That did it! The recumbent form became a kicking, roaring lion. In a flash I was out of my sleeping bag and struggling with the fastenings of the tent door. Just as I was congratulating myself on my escape a foot caught me sharply behind and I pitched head first out of the tent on to the dew-soaked heather. Laughing and shivering I scrambled to my feet, and catching the leg which protruded from the tent pulled its owner out, accompanied by laughter and curses. Ten minutes later we shook hands and agreed it was a lovely morning, as indeed it was. The sun shone from a cloudless sky on the clear waters of the loch. Immediately behind us rose the riven precipices of the mountain we intended to climb that day. Lighting the "meths." stove and putting water on to boil, we stripped and plunged into the loch and swam about in high glee. We emerged tingling and raced each other up and down the lochside. Dressed, we did full justice to breakfast, and within an hour of rising we were picking our way across the boulder-strewn slopes to the foot of our climb—a narrow gully in the precipice giving access to the summit some 600 feet higher up. We roped. With joy in our hearts (and securely nailed boots on our feet) we climbed quickly for about 100 feet, when our progress became slower as the angle steepened and holds became more difficult to find.

Breathing heavily, we rested under a boulder which had become jammed in the gully and which stopped further ascent in a vertical direction. I produced cigarettes and we enjoyed a short smoke. I felt my back growing cold, and I drew my hand away wet. Moving gently to one side I discovered a pool of icy water collecting drop by drop in a small hollow in the rock. H was crouching below me on a small ledge looking straight ahead, drinking in the panorama of the loch and the hills and glens stretching away beneath, so I quietly ran the water down the rock in his direction. Just as I expected, it trickled joyfully down, down into the upturned collar of his jacket! I will not repeat the language. Throwing away my cigarette I traversed out to the left and heaved myself up the side of the boulder, calling to H to follow. We climbed cautiously until we reached a small cave about half-way up the gully, where we stopped to consider the next step. An impossible overhang of smooth rock lay ahead of us and we had to make another traverse across the rock wall to a smaller cave above and a little to the left. From this position, by standing on my toes on the floor of the cave and gripping the lower ledge of the rock forming the roof I was able to lean outward and survey the gully above. The way seemed clear if we could surmount the cave pitch. We looked at one another thoughtfully. A fall would have serious consequences, for the gully fell away steeply below us. However, we couldn't sit there all day. Unfastening my end of the rope, I passed it through a small hole at the back of the cave, and after some struggling (in the process of which I freely sprinkled H's head and neck with small stones, to his intense annoyance!) I succeeded in getting the rope over the cave roof and fastening it to my waist again. The position now was that if I, in getting over the cave roof, were to slip, H would strain on the rope, which would act like a pulley and so avert my fall. After three attempts, which knocked all the breath out of me, I managed to reach the bed of the gully above the cave, where I lay panting and listening (I couldn't see him) to H's splutterings in an endeavour to remove the wet moss, dirt and small stones from his mouth. Never once did he

ask after my welfare! When I had regained my breath, I called to H to unrope, which he did, and I then pulled the rope up through the hole and threw it over the cave to him, when he again roped on. "Up you come, my lad," I shouted, "I'll hold you if you fall." "You'd better!" came the smothered reply. I braced myself against the gully wall and pulled into sight a very red and very grimy face, and nearly let it fall back again through trying to restrain my laughter. Another heave and up he came in great style. We rested for a while and enjoyed a juicy apple, some chocolate, and a cigarette. The most difficult part of the climb had "gone" much more easily than either of us had expected, and we had now but another 300 feet of easy going to complete the ascent. We chatted inconsequently for a few minutes, and, in regard to the ideal weather conditions, I remarked, "Spring in the air this morning, my lad," to which H made reply, "Why the 'ell should I?" When our laughter had subsided, we continued the ascent and reached the last pitch without mishap. With sundry heaves and grunts (accompanied by mocking laughs from below) I emerged on the summit, two hours after entering the gully, to be followed almost immediately by H. We looked at each other and burst out laughing. Our faces were red and filthy, pieces of moss and small stones stuck in our hair, and blood trickled from sundry small scratches on our hands and knees. But we felt gloriously elated. Coiling up the rope, we set off for the summit cairn, where we lay in the sun for an hour, passing rude remarks about each other's appearance and climbing capabilities. And so another climb was added to our list.