

## AGAINST SOLITARY CLIMBING.

BY G. ROY SYMMERS.

A WEALTH of literature has been amassed on this subject. Nearly all stories dealing with mountain adventure spring from it as a foundation. It is the stone on which the structure of climbing stands, the corbel from which the pitches of exploration are successfully overcome. Friendship and comradeship among the high hills are the heart and life-blood of the sport of mountaineering.

Solitary climbing has its many worshippers, but I would contend that he who determines to seek his mountain adventures alone will never discover the finer qualities of the sport. I can recall no instance of returning at sunset, after a lonely day among the bens, with the thought: "Thank God I have been alone." By this I do not mean to suggest that I did not enjoy my excursions in solitude, for climbing alone is a fine adventure, but rather that, in every case, I should have enjoyed them still more if only someone had been there to share in my pleasures.

To cite but one instance—a December ascent of Beinn a' Bhuird. The day was the most perfect in my recollections of winter days in the Cairngorms. The summit of the Sluggan Glen was full of snow; Glen Quoich wore a speckless mantle of white. The sky was palest blue with not a fluff of cloud. The ascent of the south gully in the Cioch corrie was strenuous, steps were cut in icy snow from bottom to top, and the culminating cornice steep enough at its lowest point to provoke a certain sense of exultation. The erstwhile windswept plateau was desolate, calm; the ptarmigan mocked my loneliness. The glittering hills lay westward at my feet—their coldness and majesty presented to my gaze as never before. Their message seemed to be, "We draw aside the curtain, but what we reveal is for your eyes alone. The vision which we lay before you is transient, something



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BEINN a' BHÙIRD

*R. L. Mitchell*



never again to be recaptured, never revived. You came alone." My pipe-smoke curled lazily in the frosty air as I walked slowly across the iron gravel; and the secret of how to enjoy climbing fully came to me. Share one's mountain adventures and they stand a chance of survival.

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### LIVING OFF THE LAND.

A HOLIDAY with Parker has its compensations. It is true that he will not allow you to climb with your hands in your pockets. "A mountain expedition," he said, "should not be degraded to the level of a mere casual stroll." He put it, of course, more bluntly and, as usual, concisely, "Dashed levity; showing off!" And one cannot but admire his efficiency. Throughout our holiday in Lewis, we realised that we were always learning—at the feet of a master. We came back one evening from a day's climbing on two precipitous little hills south of Uig and reported our climbs on the two nameless tors. The total for the day seemed absurdly insignificant when compared with Parker's bag. He had secured Suainaval (1,404 feet), the friendship of the shooting tenant, the freedom of the Uig hills, an invitation to dinner, and a couple of sea trout. One does, occasionally, discover a member of the genus who justifies a specific *sapiens*.—  
W. A. E.