

FROM THE ROPE'S END

NORMA

"And they demand equal pay!"

"They get it too!" she said brightly, as she passed over to him a bundle of well-knit full-weight nylon. With that, she lay back lazily on the grass and admired the view. After all, it had been a tricky climb and he was very lucky to have her there at the top with so little trouble!

Do men really like climbing with women? If she is a terrible tiger and leads the way with nimble composure over pitches that he turns from with an awful shudder, he is heard to comment afterwards in the bar, "Well, it doesn't seem right, you know, to see a popsy leading you up a climb like that!" Or, if she is a complete rabbit and fumbles awkwardly, even over the small slab at Cratcliffe, blushing with shame, he peers round cautiously to see if anyone has noticed.

A posse of Amazons, bedight in Millett's camouflage from Balaclava top to stout Tricouni toe, invades Glan Dena one very wet stormy morning. Manfully they stride out, heads erect, into the glowering storm. The men, with baleful gaze, watch them go under the darkening sky and into the mists of Tryfan. Shuddering, they settle their plimsoled feet once more upon the shelf and ponder, having just eaten heartily at breakfast, whose tin in the loft offers the best promise for lunch.

A plaintive cry for help is heard from the Ordinary on the Milestone. "But I can't come on, my boot is jammed."

"Give it a twist; it will soon come out."

"I shall have to hang upside down to do that," she thinks scornfully and wonders whether she will make a good chockstone on that climb or not. Man, however, saying something she cannot quite hear, climbs down again to below Woman, extricates her foot from the boot, and with some difficulty dislodges the boot, and returns triumphantly with it to the ledge.

"Oh, I've lost my hat. Look there it is, right over there in that crack. Do you think ?"

Painfully, perilously Man makes a traverse across the face of the climb, wondering whether he ought to tell Eric Byne about this one, for no one else has climbed this way before—of that he's sure.

At last the gay red cap with its white tassels adorns Woman's head, where she hopes it will stay for the rest of the climb. Put it in her pocket?—but it took her hours to knit and, besides, her hair gets in her eyes!

Of course, it is so difficult to look expensive and decorative in a pair of Stange-stained corded breeches and rope-worn anorak. He never sees me in my grosgrain. He doesn't seem to care. How I hate the sight of that horrid patch on the seat of his trousers—it's coming unstitched anyway!

A man can always join those lofty male clubs but it is a remarkable fact that M.A.M. has by no means been reduced to a hen party. Could it be that we provide a wonderful excuse—"Er, I don't think we'll climb to-day. Mary's not feeling quite up to it, you know." Or "Is the pace slow enough for you, dear? I can go much slower you know." Seraphically she smiles and indulges him. Also we provide pretty good foreground for those magnificent photographs and now that colour photography has almost completely taken over there's no limit to our scope—unless, of course, there are plenty of flowers about when far more time and patience can be spent photographing those.

Or could it just be that they like our company? From the rope's end very sincere thanks for many, many happy hours spent in following where we would never have gone alone.