

THE  
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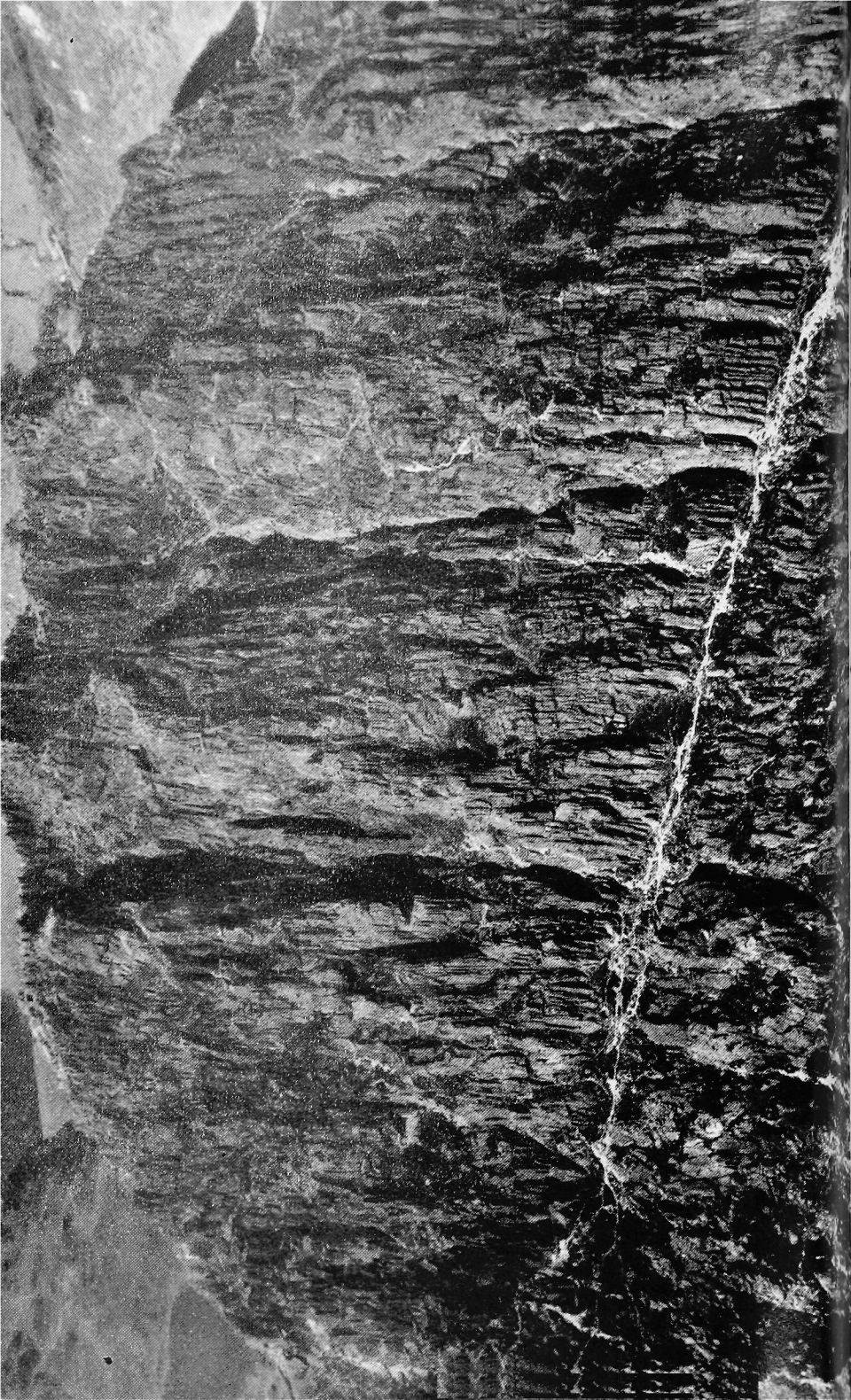
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TRYFAN, from the air.

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# HIGHLAND DRAGON

M. J. O'HARA and G. J. FRASER

CARNMORE is the most wonderful place in all Britain, remote, vast, and beautiful in a fashion not found elsewhere in the Highlands. The approach itself builds slowly towards that tremendous climax of the first full view of the great crag of Carnmore above the cottage, an 800-ft., southward-facing crag of awe-inspiring angle. This crag is ever present in one's thoughts; its base is a mere 20 minutes from the barn, and the challenge too obvious to be ignored. Twelve routes exist there now, but should this pall, there is the next door peak of Torr na h'Iolaire, 1,500 feet of rock in several tiers, the summit buttress of which gives a glut of short climbs of high quality, to say nothing of the dozen or more crags of up to 1,400 feet which lie within four miles.

From London the night train carries you swiftly to Inverness, and then more slowly to Achnasheen, a village more like a western film-set than a Highland community. The scenery is unexciting, but on the mail bus route to Poolewe the first improvements come. A glimpse of Liathach rearing above the moors, and then Kinlochewe, and the pale screes of Beinn Eighe on the left, the dark-red crags of Slioch to the right, and ahead the long expanse of Loch Maree. Spring is the time to be here, when the moors are brown, and the silver birches along the lochside on the verge of bursting into leaf, and above it all, the browns and reds of the Torridon peaks, picked out in gleaming white, where gullies preserve the winter snows. One final view of Loch Maree; then the bus swings down to Poolewe village, no great metropolis, so perhaps it is best to do your shopping in Inverness or London. This is the end of the easy times, and the start of the real enjoyment, although the next 12 miles may be better in retrospect. It is a lovely walk, if one can but look at it without bias, first beside the River Ewe, through woods of stunted silver birch, a lovely tree when the morning sun is lighting up the bark, then over barren

sheep moors to the farm at Kernsary. 200 yards beyond, at a little iron gate in a hollow, you say goodbye, with regret that will increase, to the good track which you have followed thus far, and strike out to the right by a path which is almost invisible at first, and never achieves a status higher than that of a sheep track. It helps to know that what path there is follows the east bank of the small stream which runs south-east from here, more or less directly towards the foot of the 1,500-ft. buttress of Martha's Peak, now a prominent profile three miles ahead. As far as the watershed the going is rough, but once over the top a traverse across the slope to the right soon leads to a poor track which can be followed along the east shore of the lochan and underneath the great crags of Beinn Airidh Charr. Hereafter only a fool could get lost because the track is now good, and you can admire the setting of Carnmore itself, far away across the Fionn Loch, barely visible as a tiny white speck below the Eagle's Tower. Then, as I mentioned at the start, there is that magnificent moment, after you have laboured up the last short rise from the causeway below the Dubh Loch, when you come suddenly in sight of the cottage, completely dwarfed by the first clear view of the great crag itself.

Easter 1957, which we spent up there, was if anything finer than the year before, and that surpassed all previous holidays. At the end of March, Bill Blackwood and I had straightened out the Fionn Buttress route of the year before, finding a climb of 750 feet which is slightly harder, slightly more exposed, and in my opinion more enjoyable than Sheaf. Fionn Buttress is the climb of the district, a jewel on permanent display, and conveniently regarded from a prone position outside the barn. That great dièdre on the upper right has not been climbed, although there are four routes up the wall beneath into the heathery bay below the upper wall. These routes take the two prominent ribs, the left-hand one giving 500 feet of climbing, and another the steep slabs to their right. The Fionn Buttress route which we did this trip started at a conspicuous white blaze on the rocks, on the left-hand side of the shallow scoop which forms the true lower continuation of the blunt upper nose, crosses almost immediately to the right, and ascends by slabs and grooves directly to the right-hand end of an overhang at half height, on the left-hand side of the upper nose. Above,



a rightward traverse, very exposed, leads to the upper part of the original route, which gives 300 feet of delightful climbing up the true crest of the ridge, to culminate in a final mantelshelf onto the flat turfy top of the crag. The view from the top, over the Fionn Loch, over Torridon, and over Skye to the Outer Isles, is something you will always recall with longing.

A couple of weeks later four of us were finishing breakfast outside the barn, and laying our plans for a final day. John Peacock and Angus Finlay decided to wander off to the summit buttress of Torr na h'Iolaire, where they did a couple of new routes in the course of the day. George Fraser and I had a date. Sitting there on the grass, and craning our necks to stare up at the wall we had dated, I could not help thinking that it might well be an appointment with fear, but I did not like to say anything, because George has an awful habit of looking at me as though I was a coward, or something.

We contemplated for a while the possibility of using one of the routes up the lower wall, to gain the heathery bay, but in the end decided against it, the excuse being that we wanted to get to grips with that upper wall as soon as possible, and the truth being that it might have been a little like gilding the lily. In the end we made a surreptitious approach along narrow shelves from the right, passing beneath a line of overhangs, up which there seem to be at least three good lines. . . .

As we came out into the steep heather and slabs of the central bay, beneath the great dièdre, we had our first really good view of our objective.

But let George Fraser tell the story:—

As Mike and I traversed into the heather bay in the centre of the cliff there was steepness only and no weakness to be seen in the profile of our wall. 500 feet of exposure had already appeared beneath. I clung to the vegetation and looked up at the big dièdre—at least it was a line of weakness. No doubt we'd be forced back to it soon anyway.

The base of the white slab is undercut. "I suppose we start here," I said, disinterestedly now, eyeing a steep crack leading over the bulge. But this was where Mike had been before, and he disappeared from view around a corner where the bulge

seemed biggest. It wasn't really, and when I followed there was one pull across and I found myself on a clean slab well provided with delightful little pockets, so typical of one type of Carnmore climbing. Confidence returned. Still, the pitch had miraculously stretched from 85 feet on his first visit to the full extent of a 120-foot rope now; perhaps it was a good thing we hadn't left our attempt any later.

Then of course it started to rain—just a drizzle, but it made the rock damp and our fingers cold. It was just a shower, so I waited. But I was too tensed, and soon I had to be off. The first few feet were simple; then up, left, or right? I consulted Mike, but this was as far as he had gone, and now he became helpfully ambiguous.

Right it was, onto a pink slab underneath a roof. A traverse led to a tiny knob right on the edge. Two feet to the right was a thin vertical crack; at chest height were two horizontal finger nicks; at full stretch was the start of a more promising crack which by-passed the roof. So few holds should provide a strictly limited number of combinations. But then each hold can be used in a slightly different way, and so I played Jack-in-the-box for about half an hour. Mike was patient. Then, suddenly, the *n*th variation and I was up. "Usually it's easy when you've done it, but that wasn't." So I felt anyway.

Easier climbing up the crack, but still steep clean rock, led to a cluster of unstable looking blocks forming a minor overhang. Again a choice—up, left, or right? I tried the first, but you needed to put your weight on the blocks and I couldn't trust them: no doubt some ungrateful "direttissimo" will go straight up and find it easy. Right, perhaps, but where did it lead? So left it had to be. There were half-inch wide foot ledges, but no handholds and nothing but space beneath; the angle was where a wall becomes a Wall, that is to say, where positive handholds become essential.

"Wonderful view from here," suddenly shouted Mike. Of course it was true—it always was on Carnmore Crag. But just then I was concentrating all my powers of imagination to persuade a vertical wrinkle to show a trace of incut. My concentration was broken. "Shut up," I retorted rudely; still, I suppose it was just his way of encouraging. It became possible to step down and reach a good little spike (even if it was loose)

in a groove and soon I was at a big comforting block. The sun was shining again and I luxuriated in the satisfaction of what seemed the finest pitch I had climbed.

Mike came up quickly, too quickly for my ego, but he was quite complimentary when he reached me. He passed and disappeared round a corner. He had only gone a short way when he shouted down that he had reached a bigger and better block. My peace was shattered, for I had been expecting at least half an hour's siesta while he fought his battles alone and out of sight. "How disappointed you must be," I replied, then selflessly, "Wouldn't you like to lead the next pitch to make up for it?" To my surprise he sucked it in. I rushed up and settled myself around a great big friendly block before he could change his mind.

The short wall above reminded me of the one on Slape. Above, the cliff leaned over us in a great impregnable rampart. Let it rain now: a small stone, knocked off presumably by a passing goat, fell a clear 15 feet out from me. We had to climb the concave part underneath the rampart until we could escape to a pinnacle on the left. The obvious line was a wicked yellow chimney leading to a peeling flake.

After one false start, Mike flashed up the short wall. Easy ground led right and up for a few feet. Mike was tempted. It seemed to me that it only led to a bigger and better overhang than elsewhere; but I was quite happy in the sun and was taking my turn at extolling the view. Even a bit of chatter about a finger traverse failed to upset me. Still, I was quite relieved when he came back and traversed into the yellow chimney.

But the chimney was one of those horrid peapod affairs, closed at the top. "What on earth are you doing on the left wall? It just plain overhangs." What I hadn't quite realized was that the whole cliff does hereabouts. Mike quickly told me.

However he returned to the peapod. Straight up this time, and with difficulty out at the top until he got an arm into the crack behind the flake. The flake drooped out from the wall like a fading petal. Gently he caressed and sniffed it; caressing gave way to hugging, and sniffing to panting. I started to wonder what chance there was of getting out of the way if it came away.

"I'm resting," announced Mike. It didn't really look like that as his feet dangled and scraped while he hung over an





edge. No doubt he knew, and perhaps by comparison with the previous 20 minutes he was resting. Who was I to argue as I snuggled by my warm, comforting block?

There was one more move to the escape, a traverse on a steep slab undercut and overhung. Mike started across. I thought he was over, but he came back and put in a peg for a runner; it didn't sound too fine. Then off again; back again; and so on. My contentment changed to faint alarm, and then boredom. Alarm returned as the awful idea came to me that I might have to go and try it myself. Mike muttered about finger traverses. Now, finger traversing, like laybacking and mantelshelving, is one of those things I just don't do, except with a handy top rope. So I made my most encouraging noises and said:

"Have another go, you'll make it this time."

"If I come off, is there enough rope to lower me to rock?"

I pretended to measure the gap beneath the undercut slab and announced there was. But he was unconvinced and his fingers were rapidly tiring—no wonder! I untied discontentedly.

I found the pitch he had just led awkward and very strenuous. I would have liked to shout for a tight top rope, but the rope was already hanging free behind me. In turn I hugged the flake and landed panting on its crest. Then, to the "finger traverse." At first I was encouraged; there were more holds than I had expected. I started across.

"How the hell did you rest here?"

My arms and fingers were already aching from the pitch beneath and I could hardly take any weight off them. I was utterly baffled as to how Mike had recovered sufficiently to have made not one but six or eight attempts. He had put in another peg and was crouched now in a cat's cradle of rope, purring continuously about the discomfort and exposure; but unlike a cat's purr, it didn't sound contented. By getting directly underneath him, so that he could keep the rope tight, I could rest a bit.

I looked around for an alternative.

"What about trying to reach that grass ledge?"

"Grass ledge? That's lichen on a slab!"

It was true. There was no other possibility. So I had to return to the traverse. It was unthinkable to be baulked by six feet.



Suddenly I had a brainwave. I placed an *étrier* on a spike. There it hung; the spike was far from where I wanted to go; it wasn't even any help for resting. Logically it was useless. Illogically it helped. What are the ethics of such a ruse? Perhaps it was like one of those military left flankers, when you pretend to go right and then go left. I was fooling the cliff. Anyway, when I tried again, the holds surrendered their secret. I was crossing, poised on a sloping kneehigh hold and pushing on a tiny sidehold; I was across. Not really too bad—rather like one of those impossible starts to a gritstone very difficult, and of course not really a finger traverse or I would never have got across at all.

Round the corner was the pinnacle with an overhanging crack on its inside. I boggled again. "Try the face," suggested Mike. I did and of course he was right. Beautiful jugs led across and up. Below was 800 feet of space, exhilarating and no longer terrifying. With a heave I was over the top. I dropped a stone and it bounced on the white slab before bounding on to the foot of the cliff. Soon Mike was with me. We embraced and shrieked with joy until John and Angus, half a hillside away, heard us. We lay prone on the soft, flat turf and worshipped horizontality.

We named the climb Dragon, partly because it was fierce, and partly because it was George who won the victory.

If time is short, or a second visit unlikely, there are certain routes and walks which can be safely recommended. First and foremost there are two climbs in this district which compare favourably with the best climbs elsewhere. These are both on Carnmore Crag itself, southward facing, and with a magnificent view.

FIONN BUTTRESS DIRECT. 750 feet. Very Severe.

Five pitches approach very severe in standard. This route is the best line on the buttress, but neither Fionn Castle nor the original route on Fionn Buttress, very severe and mild very severe respectively, will disappoint.

DRAGON. 340 feet. Hard Very Severe. Sustained and very exposed. The climb described above.

On the adjacent rocks of Torr na h'Iolaire the uppermost tier and the west face give abundant good climbs, ending on or near the summit, which is one of the best view points in the area. The pick of the bunch are:—

HIEROGLYPHICS. 400 feet. Mild Very Severe.

RAINBOW CORNER. 280 feet. Mild Very Severe.



SARCOPHAGUS. 180 feet. Very Severe.

The best climb on the cliff.

Across the Fionn Loch from Carnmore itself are the crags of Beinn Lair, which offer numerous climbs. One which can be highly recommended is

WISDOM BUTTRESS. 700 feet. Very Difficult.

A rather sustained climb on steep rock which leads out directly onto the summit plateau and a magnificent view over Loch Maree to the Outer Isles.

A'Mhaighdean, 3100, is a most attractive peak. On the lower part of the north-west ridge there is the small Maiden Buttress, overlooking Fuar Loch Beag in a delightful secluded coire. The best climbs here, which are about 350 feet in length, are:

DISHONOUR. Very Difficult.

ECSTASY. Hard Severe.

TWEEDLEDEE. Severe.

A little farther up the ridge, and on its south-west flank, are several buttresses of steep rough red sandstone. One of these is a conspicuous slab, up the right-hand edge of which runs a very pleasant route.

THE RED SLAB. 360 feet. Difficult.

The summit itself can be gained from the head of the Dubh Loch by way of the prominent PILLAR BUTTRESS, 450 feet, Difficult, which arrives a few yards from the summit cairn. If this is combined with the traverse of the peaks of Beinn Tarsuinn and Stob Ban by way of Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearcair it makes an extremely good day.

Lastly of course there is An Teallach, one of the finest mountains in Britain, and well worth a long trek for the traverse of the main ridge. At the early part of the year there may be a good snow gully of over a thousand feet in the coire facing north-east from the main summit.

Spring and early summer are the times to visit this area. Later on the weather and the insects tend to be obstreperous, and it is coming a little near to the shooting season.

Full details of the climbs recommended, and others, are to be found in the last three years' issues of C.U.M.C.J., in S.M.C.J., and in the Northern Highlands Guide. The great majority of the routes have, however, been done since this guide went to press, but it is hoped that a short climbing guide to the area will be appearing in the near future.

With the exception of RED SLAB all the routes recommended are on the Lewisian gneiss which is a rock tougher and sometimes rougher than the Skye gabbro. Loose rock and vegetation are scarce, even by the standard of well frequented Welsh climbs.

## AFTER MACHHA PUCHHARE

A. D. M. COX

WE got down to Base Camp from Machha Puchhare on 5th June. Jimmy Roberts and Charles Wylie were starting for Pokhara on the 10th, but Wilf Noyce and I still had a few days in hand. No doubt it is a better thing to travel hopefully than to arrive, but we were feeling that this point had been sufficiently demonstrated on Machha Puchhare, and hoped now actually to be able to reach a summit. Also we had been more than six weeks inside the Modi Khola basin without yet having had a chance to explore more than one corner of it.

This basin was a remarkable place, although in some ways less remarkable than sheet No. 62P of the official survey suggested. It was untrue, for example, that eight streams flowed down the south face of Annapurna, all rising somewhere above the 22,000 ft. contour. Cartographer's licence, by moving the whole western wall of the basin three miles to the right, had made the valley even more imminently overhung than it actually is. In fact, however, except for the narrow break of the Modi's gorge, the walls enclosing the basin—an area roughly eight miles from rim to rim—are continuous all the way round, never falling below 19,000 feet and for half their length averaging about 23,000. The triangulated peaks on this great sweep of ridge are Ganesh (23,607), Annapurna I (26,504), Annapurna III (24,858) and Machha Puchhare (22,958); but on the 10-mile stretch between the two Annapurnas several of the summits must be about 24,000 feet. With the exception of Annapurna III, however, it is the peaks on the lower parts of the rim which are the most spectacular, owing to the fantastic weathering of the ice which seems only to take place below the 23,000 ft. level.

Although the interior of this sanctuary did not boast a Nanda Devi, it possessed a humble equivalent in the shape of a fluted snow and ice peak of about 21,800 feet, which stood in much the same position relative to its surrounding walls. Two ridges

descending from the northern side of the basin formed the divides between the three main glaciers. The more westerly of these ridges came down from the Snow Dome, a 24,000 ft. summit on the rim east of Annapurna I. Fluted Peak was on this ridge, about two miles in from the Snow Dome, from which it was separated by a wide glacier saddle. Another two miles down the ridge (and therefore almost exactly in the centre of the basin) stood Tent Peak (c. 19,500), from which Jimmy had been turned back by bad weather in 1956. By going round to the east side of the ridge, we should be well placed for either of these mountains, which was an advantage since Fluted Peak had not been reconnoitred and might prove to have no route.

We started on 9th June, aiming to spend our first night quite low, at a great natural cave which Jimmy had noticed last year. Tashi was to stay till next day in order to bring up mail, if any came; but with two other Sherpas, and no great quantity of equipment, we were able to take things lightly. The Nepalese liaison officer did not offer to accompany us; we should have been very much surprised if he had. A Base Camp man at the best of times, he was now more anxious than usual to return to Kathmandu, as he expected his examination results to be out. We crossed the main glacier over the rubble just above its snout, went up through the ravine by which the stream from the central and eastern glaciers drains and took the left fork of this stream until we spotted Jimmy's cave, a little way short of the central glacier's snout. Distances inside the basin are not great, and we were here only two miles in a direct line from Base and not higher than 14,500 feet. This camp had such a picnic atmosphere that we could hardly dignify it with a number; so it was styled Cave Camp, "Camp I" being reserved for the snowline. Having to wait for Tashi, we stayed there a second night, using the intervening day to walk up and look at the lower approaches to Fluted Peak. Two hours over gentle pastures, to which sheep would be driven up from Chomrong in a month's time, took us to the head of the valley, where the glacier steepened into a great half-circle of icefall; there we struck left up a long hillside, and picked a site for Camp I just beyond the point where the ground levelled off and snow began. It was an enjoyable excursion, though only moderately useful,

since we could see little of the route ahead and even the site we had chosen was rejected next day with scorn by Tashi, who for the principle of the thing insisted on going five minutes farther up.

The expedition did not carry an altimeter, and on Machha Puchhare we had found, as others have found before us, that every time we arrived at a new camp we estimated its height too optimistically. Well aware though we were of this tendency, our most earnest efforts to compensate for it never made any difference. It was annoying to find how little relation mathematics bore to reality. On this occasion we deliberately resisted the figure of 17,500 for Camp I's height and settled for 17,000, its actual height being probably about 16,500. The tiresomeness of this habit is, of course, that the truth is only forced upon one higher up when a series of increasingly painful adjustments become necessary in order to explain the persistent recession of the summit.

The detailed topography of the east side of Fluted Peak was complicated, and we could never see enough to make a clear plan about the route. Camp I lay immediately under a long rocky rib, on the left edge of quite an intricate glacier. If we could have kept over to the right across the glacier and then, still bearing right, up a difficult and very long icefall, this would have landed us at the saddle between our peak and the Snow Dome; but, following the line of least resistance, we kept ahead up the edge of the glacier in the general direction of Fluted Peak's N.E. face. This was the day's task for 12th June, when Tashi and Ang Tsering came up with us to assist in the establishment of Camp II. At first we kept to a corridor close beside the rib, but after a while the rib lost itself in the face. It would have been possible to go up onto the face at this point, but we decided to keep to the glacier. We were still on its extreme edge, where it joined the face, and, above a rather laborious snow gully, there was a stretch of small, though awkward, marginal crevasses. In about four hours from Camp I, when the sun was getting very hot and enervating, we came to a place where the glacier levelled; and estimating, wrongly, no doubt, that we must have come up about 2,500 feet, we picked a site for Camp II. Previous experience should have warned us about this. Hardly had we sunk exhausted in the





snow to wait for the Sherpas, when Tashi appeared and, scarcely bothering to comment on our choice, insisted on going up another 200 feet. However we had to admit that the spot he preferred was quite an attractive one, the top of a big sérac which was obviously safe from avalanches, of which one or two old ones strewed this part of the glacier. As soon as the tent was erected, the Sherpas started down, promising to be back at about the same time next day, when, all being well, we should be ready to return to Camp I.

The Annapurna area is immune from the great 10-day storms of the Karakoram, but it seems to have a very distinct weather pattern of its own. Throughout the expedition, it was unusual if the sky was not brilliantly clear at night and in the early morning, but equally regularly it snowed, generally with thunder, in the later part of the day. Any time after 9 a.m. it was only a question of when the snow would begin. Today it did not start until 2 p.m., but kept it up until well after dark, by which time a fair quantity had fallen. When it cleared, there was a full moon, and as this would be up all night we decided on an early start; for, however optimistic our calculations, there was still a good deal of the mountain to be climbed and we knew nothing of the route. We had the Primus going at 2 a.m. and (the quickest start we ever achieved) managed to get away by 3-15 a.m.

A rock wall some hundreds of feet high ran steeply up along the foot of the face, but it was breached at two points by narrow snow gullies, the second of which we took. The gully was only a few yards wide, and steep enough to be ice at one point near the bottom; two or three hundred feet up, it widened into a shallow couloir. Wilf led up it, using a torch at first between the dark rock walls. It needed no great prescience to see that this would not be a healthy place if we were late getting down, as it seemed to be the obvious funnel serving this part of the face. Where it began to open out we put in the first of our bamboo markers and continued up, kicking now into soft snow. According to what we might see when we got some way up, we had thought either of making across to the left onto the E. ridge or of working up to the right where we hoped, rather than expected, that there might be a passage over to the saddle below the Snow Dome. As we climbed higher and the sun



rose, it became clear that neither of these alternatives had much to be said for it, and in particular that a line of very large ice-cliffs overhung the route to the saddle. For a short stretch the snow became almost thigh-deep, but luckily this did not persist. We could now see the upper part of the face; the whole of it was snow or ice, and it looked by no means certain that there was any exit onto the skyline, which was a line of ice-towers and cornices. A long gully, happily of hard snow, twisted up the centre of the face, ultimately losing itself among these obstacles, and the obvious thing to do was to follow this and hope for the best. This gully took a considerable time, but it gained a lot of height and only needed cutting, in snow-ice, for a few steps near the top. An increasingly likely-looking exit was also materialising up on the right, a kind of branch gully, which in due course led us quite easily through the difficulties below the top and out onto a broad snow plateau. The disconcerting thing about this otherwise very welcome stopping-place was that it was not the summit, nor anything like it. Over on the left beyond it rose the fluted slopes of a whole new tier of the mountain, and instead of being at the summit by seven and back at camp before the snow started we were going to have to work hard for some hours yet in order to have a chance of reaching the top at all. What we had been climbing so far, in fact, was not the N.E. face of the actual mountain, but that of a prominent shoulder two-thirds of the way up the E. ridge.

It had taken us rather over three hours to this point, and we paused for a few minutes for chocolate and a drink. The long curves of the Snow Dome were a study in sunshine and shadow, and its unsensational beauties contrasted favourably with the shapeless grandeur of Annapurna I. We mustered our energy to plod across the plateau to the foot of the flutings. Their angle was not excessively steep; we chose one rather over towards the right. The underlying ice was well covered with snow, still quite good but rapidly softening in the sun. It was a hot and monotonous slope, and we kicked up it for a long time, changing the lead every 20 minutes. About five such spells brought us at length very near to the crest, where the snow steepened into a little sun-rotted wall; we got across and up this with some gingerly kicking and axes driven well in, and emerged onto the E. ridge.

This time we did not have to complain that the top was still thousands of feet above us; on the contrary, it was only about 200 yards away and separated from us by an arête which was as broad and gentle as a high road. Nevertheless the issue still remained in doubt, for the top itself consisted of a 100 ft. ice tower; an ordinary if rather bulky sérac, one would have said, but for its unusual position. We walked along to its base, intending to attack the nearest corner, but an easy terrace tempted Wilf to have a look round to the left. There seemed to be at least the beginnings of a route, though the upper part was out of sight behind a steep little snow ridge. Some delicate cutting up an ice gangway took Wilf as far as this arête, and he kicked powdery steps for another 20 feet up its crest before bringing me on. The position was exposed, as the mountain's S.W. face dropped away below, and it was a bold deed on Wilf's part even to attempt the 30 ft. ice wall immediately above. This he did twice; first out to the right, where the angle was nearly  $80^{\circ}$ , then to the left, where it was slightly less steep but a good deal longer. I did not demur when, after about a quarter of an hour, he suggested that we should go down and try the corner we had originally contemplated. For about 80 feet this was on good snow, except for a little bit at the bottom where steps had to be cut. But the last 15 feet was steep and very awkward ice, which needed handholds and exact cutting when nearly out of balance. 150 feet or 15, we did not want to make a habit of leaving summits untrodden, and it would have been an anxious moment if Wilf had needed more than one attempt. In five minutes any such worry was removed when he got an axe in over the crest, and we were soon sitting in the snow on top.

The time was 9-30 and, with clouds starting to gather, we could not afford to stay very long. There was no wind, and it was still hot. We ate some sardines, and Wilf took a round of angles and survey photographs with an informality of technique which would have warmed the heart of the man who originally made the map. It was an extraordinary view, because the gap made by the Modi's gorge was almost concealed, so that we were completely surrounded by the walls of the basin. The encircling rim, nowhere more than six miles away, must have been a good 25 miles in length; one could only see out over it

in one direction where the neighbouring giants, Annapurna II and IV, overtopped the savage length of ridge linking Annapurna III and Machha Puchhare. It was a queer sensation to be on top of a respectable mountain and yet to be so shut in; we were still, for example, little more than half way up the immense S.E. face of Annapurna I which, less than three miles off, rose to nearly 5,000 feet above us. Not surprisingly, the unrelieved magnificence of a 360° panorama of this character was more than one could appreciate; we could only take photographs and hope that they would do it better justice than we could ourselves.

The weather was deteriorating rather more slowly than usual as we started down, but although the sun was still out while we descended the difficult bit we were soon swallowed up in cloud. At first this gave no relief from the heat, making it rather steamier than it had been before. The little wall at the top of the fluted face had become absolute slush, and the axe hardly got through into anything solid. Descending the flutings, we had to face inwards the whole way down and re-kick the melted steps; even near the bottom where the slope became quite gentle, facing outwards only produced a slither in the wet snow. The all too brief walk back across the plateau gave us a few minutes' respite from this arduous exercise which, however, had to be resumed at the top of the lower face without prospect of further relief. On the other hand it had now started to snow, a temporarily welcome change from the hothouse conditions hitherto prevailing. The descent of the higher snow gully was safe and straightforward, though necessarily slow because of its hard surface. The continuous kicking became painful to the toes, particularly, so far as I was concerned, to those of my right foot, whose crampon had a peculiar twist to its two front spikes. Below the gully, we were back on the soggy snow of yesterday lying on a hard underslope, and it was not very surprising when a section of it broke away under my feet and went hissing off past Wilf down the mountain. The section which slid was only about 30 feet, and it was puzzling that it did not seem to gain in volume as it went down. The explanation soon dawned on us; this was a patch left behind at the upper edge of a slide which must have taken place shortly before. All the way down the rest of the face, a neat

strip, 10 or 12 yards wide, had been removed, leaving a clean nine inch edge where it had broken away on each side. It had evidently gone down the rock-walled gully at the bottom of the face; and as, in the morning, we had come straight up from this without zig-zagging, we had thus lost 1,000 feet of our ascending tracks. These would have been of little use, and it was ample compensation to be relieved of any further worries about the safety of the snow we were kicking into. The layer now exposed was, in fact, as hard as a board owing to the pressure of the slide, and the farther down we got the more agonising it became to kick the crampons into it at all. The weather was bad enough now to make us hurry; but hurry is a relative term, and by no stretch could our monotonous progress have been called rapid. By the time we reached the gully, rivulets of new snow were pouring down over our gloves as we used our hands against the slope. Tiredness made the short icy bit near the foot of the gully more awkward than it had been in the morning, but it did not matter sliding down over it onto the soft snow at the bottom. Five minutes later, 10 hours after we had left it, we were back at the tent and drinking a rather disgusting brew of tea which had stewed for an hour and a half since Tashi made it for us.

We did not unrope, but sat around outside letting Tashi and Da Temba do the packing up. Da Temba, a better cook than climber, had come up this time instead of Ang Tsering; he set an excessively cautious pace on the descent to Camp I, but the constant pauses were a hardship we were very ready to put up with. It was not of much consequence whether we took one hour or two, or that we were beginning to be wet through from the heavy snow; now that we had discarded our crampons, we could afford to spin out the anticipatory moments of getting into the tent and our sleeping-bags and starting on the evening meal.

## BACK TO SNOWDONIA— AND A PLEA FOR IRELAND

N. E. ODELL

THE early train from Holyhead pulled into Bangor, and there awaiting us were Herbert Carr and H. L. Stembridge, who had kindly come down from Llanberis to meet my wife and myself just arrived from Eire. For by dint of careful management I had arranged leave of absence from my geological duties in Connemara in order to achieve attendance at this first of the Centenary occasions of the Alpine Club. As one of my old climbing companions of the immediate post-First-War years, I had not seen Carr since 1941, when we were both again in the Services: he R.A.F., and myself once more a Sapper. Now, after 16 years, it was excellent to be, so to speak, in his charge under the delightful circumstances of the Meet, and moreover at the scene of our erstwhile climbing experiences of some 30 years ago. I say "in his charge," for Carr had warned me in a letter that, apart from eating my dinner in peace at the appointed time with the rest of the A.C. members assembled, I should be required beforehand to essay the ascent of the Tennis Shoe climb upon Idwal Slabs. In this I had meekly acquiesced, although I doubted my present capacity to lead, after an interval of 38 years since my first ascent of it.

Having consumed our breakfast at the Royal Victoria, Llanberis, in the genial company of many old friends, we duly set off for Ogwen, via P.Y.G. and Capel, in excited enjoyment of the old well-loved scenes, as well as sweet moorland scents, of a glorious May morning. It was my first visit to Ogwen for a good many years, but there were the same grey rocks, albeit decidedly more worn and polished on the old track to Llyn Idwal, and the same encircling mountain forms upon which one had first scrambled in far-off youth. And then, surprisingly, upon the track appeared an apparition, as if to mock one's inner "archaic" reflections, for it turned out to be none other than the

Second Sage of Grindelwald (A.L.), who declared that it was his first stroll in these parts for some 50 years or more! Glad to greet him again, and much fortified by his pretensions of even superior age to one's own, we made our way on to the foot of Idwal Slabs. There, sweeping upwards in all their remembered clarity of detail, were the steep surfaces, the rises and depressions, the cracks and curves, which control the classic routes of Faith, Hope, Charity, and the rest, surmounted by that grand pelmet of the Holly Tree Wall, with its several more ambitious courses. Thoughts came flooding in, especially on the pioneers of all these grand ascents: from indeed Rose and Moss in 1897 on the "Ordinary"; to Daniells, Richards, Pye, etc. on the three Virtues during 1915 and 1916; capped by Richards, Holland and Pilley in 1918 on the severer initial climb of the Holly Tree Wall. But one could not forget that that remarkable cragsman and prophet, J. M. A. Thomson, had started it all in the Introductory Gully as long ago as 1895. My own solo effort of August 1919, at the extreme eastern end of the Slabs, seemed but a very few years ago, though now it was to be a consideration of very special renewed interest.

We soon found ourselves to be a considerable party now assembled at the foot of the Slabs, and already several ropes had commenced to disport themselves on the various routes available. As a result of Carr's direction, admittedly most genially exercised, I was deputed to a privileged rope to be led by Blackshaw, and to include his wife and also Stembridge. Before we had proceeded far up the initial pitch of Tennis Shoe, another party which was trying a variant on the right of my original route, got into difficulties, and its leader had to be rescued by a rope dropped from above. Now, it would seem tedious and unnecessary to relate all one's impressions of the various pitches encountered again after an interval of 38 years, for I do not believe that I had re-ascended Tennis Shoe since my pioneer effort upon it. Climbing in rubber footwear of the tennis-shoe type, as befitted my original title of the climb, I cannot say that I found any particular difficulty on the close succession of pitches above, although some critical holds had clearly been worn thin by the passage over the years of too many nailed boots. Tennis Shoe is unquestionably a climb for rubbers, whether plimsoll, sneaker, or vibram, which latter my

companions were wearing in accord with modern custom. I even doubt whether nailed boots should be allowed upon this climb. But it may be unreasonable to expect the C.C., or any other club, to exercise much influence or any discipline in this matter, which, however, would seem specifically to be in the interests of the climbing community as a whole, if the Tennis Shoe is to retain its natural character. This same question, of course, applies to a good many other of the thinner local climbs, which nowadays are essayed by the enormous volume of scramblers, as well as climbers. There is often an element of vanity in attempting in boots what is obviously best, and safest, in rubbers.

Blackshaw had told me that the topmost pitch was quite the hardest on the climb, but this with the lapse of years I could not clearly remember. However, the basis of his opinion was soon forthcoming. My original climb finished up relatively easy rock to the terrace whereon rests the large perched block above the Ordinary route, but to the left (east) of it. On this occasion, however, our leader by a move farther east again, proceeded to tackle the extremely steep and exposed rib that lands one close to the other perched block, which is prominent at the east end of the ledge or traverse. I must emphasise that I did *not* include this exposed and difficult variant as a finish to my original climb; and for historical accuracy I think that a further edition of the Climbers' Club guidebook should state this point. I agree that this fine pitch is quite the hardest of the whole climb, and frankly I was glad to have some assistance from the rope upon it. It is certainly not a place for any leader to take liberties with, nor be neglected by his second. Not without interest to me is Edwards' and Noyce's assessment of the whole climb as "Very difficult in rubbers, and severe in nails." I should regard this variant top pitch as severe (possibly "very") using my kind of rubbers, and certainly so in my untrained condition, particularly in respect of finger-tips!

Much gratified by this repeat performance after so many years, and most thankful to Blackshaw for enabling one to carry it out, we assembled that night at Llanberis for the very enjoyable Centenary dinner, which had been organised with such admirable spirit by Carr. Presided over by the President, Sir John Hunt, some 76 members of the A.C. and guests sat down to dine at the Royal Victoria Hotel, while the ladies



attached to the party enjoyed themselves at P.Y.G. A.C. members assembled next morning at Pen y Gwryd for a group photograph.

Operations during that day (Sunday) varied from normal climbs by sundry ropes to ultra-gymnastics by Joe Brown on Suicide Wall for the B.B.C.'s special benefit, to, again, milder yet most enjoyable excursions to the higher summits such as Snowdon. On the latter, after a pleasant approach by the classical P.Y.G. track (what memories of the past it recalled !) my wife and I celebrated the 41st anniversary of our first combined ascent. But how different the modern pretentious erection (with restaurant) from the old shanty at the summit cairn ! In the latter we had once spent the night after a climb on Lliwedd, in order to witness not only the sunrise, but the moon shining over a sea of silvery cloud, with Snowdon, Lliwedd and the Cribs alone emerging as islands. That may be no uncommon sight, but we had witnessed at that time, too, the rare phenomenon of a lunar Brocken spectre; and, moreover, I had had the immense gratification of obtaining a photograph from Snowdon's summit of a particularly vivid occurrence of the more normal solar Spectre, with strong iris haloes. During our descent direct to Llanberis this afternoon in glorious weather, I fell to thinking of the many occasions, on mountains in all parts of the world, when I have witnessed this striking solar phenomenon: I must indeed have been consistently lucky, for so many of my friends seem never to have been privileged to glimpse even one such display. I remember an occasion once on an Alpine ridge, when I (a mere layman) enjoyed seeing my own vivid Spectre with beatifying haloes, when my companion (a cleric) distant some 100 feet on the rope, failed in disgust to witness his, even without haloes.

From this delightful interlude in Snowdonia we returned to western Eire to resume my geological mission. Incidentally, only two weeks earlier my wife and I had climbed Carrauntual, the highest of Irish hills in the MacGillycuddy Reeks, in the south-west. But our sojourn for some seven months in the mountain districts of Connemara and of Co. Mayo had shown us what grand rocky hill ranges are to be found there, with many characteristics, indeed, of the North-West Highlands of Scotland, but with a peculiar charm and setting all their own. Gratifying,

moreover, to the geologist, one found that many of the corrie flanks and headwalls of these hills have fine crags, on which in some cases only recently the Irish Mountaineering Club have begun to work out courses. Now, a thought occurs: instead of constantly repeating the round of meets in Wales, the Lakes and Scotland (and Cornwall) alone, would not the Climbers' Club be advised to venture a party in say Connemara? I feel sure that with some such centre as Leenaun, at the romantic head of fjord-like Killary Harbour, or Kylemore Abbey, six miles to the west (both have good hotels), and ready access to the Maumturk Mountains, the Twelve Bens (correctly *not* "Pins"!), the Mweelra Mountains, the Sheeffry Hills, and the Partry Mountains, a Club meet would find surprisingly good climbing, apart from ample fell-walking and rambling; and, too, would experience the kindly hospitality of the Irish, in a land of marvellous colouring and of sky-scapes the beauty of which can surely scarcely be rivalled. Amongst recent books, incidentally, that deal in general with these ranges, *inter alia*, is *The Mountains of Ireland* by the scholarly Dr. Daphne Pochin Mould: it is beautifully illustrated and well-worth perusing.

# RETURN TO THE ALPS

GEORGE BAND

“**Y**OU haven’t missed a thing,” said Alan, tilting back on his chair, “1952 was the last good season.” It was mine, too, and after four years’ exile in the greater ranges I looked forward to an exciting return to the Alps—the Gugliermine, the Weisshorn traverse, perhaps, and dare one try the Walker? As I tramped in bathing costume and boots over the Yorkshire Fells during the June heat-wave plying my geological hammer, everything seemed possible, even in a 12-day holiday.

But it is well to remember that tigers spring from the same stock as kittens, I mused, as on the fifth fruitless day of my precious holiday, and after 15 minutes of single-minded effort, I was still trying to get both feet off the ground on the *voie normale* of the Géant. “You will cut little ice . . .,” read my *Sunday Express* horoscope for that day, so I knew there was no point in struggling. Those strange unpredictable forces, “the conditions,” were against us. We fled east.

It was not raining on Lake Como or in St. Moritz, so Mike Harris, Peter Nelson, Chris Brasher and I decided to go up to the Sciora hut and look at the Badile. Even though the N.E. face might not be within our scope at this stage of the holiday we could always try the N. ridge which must have grown in status since Hermann Buhl used it as a “quick way off” the mountain after soloing the face. I remember Cym Smith telling me about his own ascent of the ridge with his wife after a period of bad weather: “As I cleared the snow away, there was a piton under an inch of clear ice.”

In the hut was a superbly impressive aerial photograph of the ridge—of the kind best left lying casually around to be discovered by one’s friends. While we were inventing a translation from the guardian’s Italian guide book, two husky Germans returned from the climb. Later, we would be grateful for their footsteps in the snow.

At 3-40 next morning, two stars were showing and the guardian promised a fine day. Three hours later, and pleasantly genial after our second breakfast, we roped up at the foot of the ridge, where the climbing proper began. Two Italians who had left an hour earlier were just ahead of us. The leader was already hammering methodically, while the second, a rather sweet young girl, was smiling charmingly, I hoped at me.

Recalling a warning in the guide book not to be misled by an obvious way to the left, we shot off to the right and immediately found ourselves in difficulties. We returned, feeling slightly chastened, and thereafter decided to trust our own judgment with the result that we soon overtook the Italians who had inexplicably buried themselves in a steep little chimney. The ridge now became sharply defined forming delightful little pinnacles and walls and slabs of sound granite giving sustained climbing from difficult to very difficult with the occasional excursion to severe. We moved together whenever we felt happy doing so, and Mike and Peter gradually forged ahead while in my downward photographs the little Italian girl merged into the middle distance.

Clouds drifted around us. Only when they lifted could one really appreciate the exposure. I tried to pick out the route on the N.E. face to our left. It was exceedingly steep and slabby, but the N.W. face was steeper and the neighbouring peaks—one with an Adam and Eve on the summit—offered sides of such smoothness as to suggest that the N.E. face was one of the easiest hereabouts.

The upper part of the mountain seemed to soar into the clouds indefinitely. Suddenly two heads bobbed up in front of us. Mike and Peter, tired of waiting at the first false summit, had come back to see how we were. It was 2-30 p.m. and a change in the weather was imminent. We tried to go a little faster. Half an hour later we were on the summit ridge. It was snowing hard and the wind blew strongly. Twenty yards away at the limit of visibility was an aluminium dunce's cap, bizarrely marking the summit. We did not spare time to go there. Mike was talking dispassionately about coronary discharges while Peter stared distastefully at our only ice-axe which he held at arm's length while the metal head hummed gently.

We kept off the crest. Various subsidiary ridges pitched vertically into the void. I wondered how we were going to find the south ridge, our route of descent. Fortunately Mike, in front, had found the Germans' footprints of yesterday and these led down into a snow-filled gully sheltered by a shattered crest on its eastern side. With inspiring confidence he proclaimed this to be the south ridge and we followed him down.

I remember the descent far more clearly than the ascent; we tried the ridge, we tried the east face, we tried the west face, we tried a few abseils. As a comic turn, Chris tried a *descendeur*. After three hours I was feeling wet, frozen and fit to hibernate. Some distant high-pitched shouts roused me from this stupor of self-pity and I diverted a little to the Italians. They had only just finished the climb and would probably spend a very uncomfortable night whereas we should at least be able to reach the Badile Hut below the foot of the ridge. I remembered ominously that when Cym Smith had got there late at night the hut had been deserted with every door and window barred against him.

For some time Mike had been advocating a bold blind abseil into the clouds towards a rake which he felt sure existed below. We managed to persuade him to consider trying this first on the other face, below which one could at least glimpse the glacier now and again. After looking down at it for a few minutes we all thought the ridge itself seemed preferable and we continued the interminable descent.

Suddenly Mike came upon a wrought-iron cross which to us, in these circumstances, was a comforting sight. We knotted our two ropes to abseil down a long chimney and suddenly the difficulties were over. In the gathering gloom Mike and Peter dashed on in the hope of finding the hut before dark and Chris and I followed in their footsteps. These led almost immediately to the brink of a 20-foot glacier-polished cliff. Once or twice in the previous hours Chris had shown a natural reluctance to dangle on the rope in order to speed our descent. Now with the prospect of food, wine and a night's rest barely half a mile away, he had no qualms and shouted: "Have you got me, George? It's a *pendule*!" Barely had I passed the rope behind an ice-locked boulder before he lunged into space. Since that moment my faith in direct belays has soared, for I hardly felt

the strain at all. We had difficulty in finding tracks at the base of the cliff. There were none: Mike and Peter had preferred an alternative way. I got out my head-lamp and we picked our way towards a point of light that soon bobbed before us. A young guide from the hut had very kindly come out in the storm to show us the way in.

I tried to explain the fate of the Italians but we had no common language. "Badile *schlafen*?" he inferred, cradling his head on his hands. It didn't seem quite the right way to describe their miserable bivouac!

We reached the hut at nine to find Mike and Peter already comfortable in borrowed clothing. The staff fed us magnificently with steak and tomatoes and small mountains of spaghetti. Soon we retired to our blankets.

Had we been made of sterner stuff we would, no doubt, have forgone sleep and donned wet clothing to start immediately for the Sciora Hut across the Passo di Bondo. Our holiday had been planned to include the Alpine Club Centenary Dinner at Zermatt. Allowing an average time for the round trip on the Badile we would still have had a day to drive to Zermatt. But now the storm had thrown us behind schedule and not even the rare prospect of free drinks on the Swiss was sufficient to lure us out into the night.

We started for the pass at eight next morning in the faint hope of still reaching Zermatt that evening. The track, I understood, was marked with red crosses. By the time we realised that we had nearly reached the top of the wrong pass that faint hope had evaporated and we were hard put to reach a telephone before the cocktails began.

We had missed our meal but Zermatt was in a genial mood this year. Although our holiday was almost over, Chris and I were to enjoy one more magnificent climb—the Younggrat on the Breithorn—a great route by any standards. At 2 p.m. we clambered over the cornice and 23 hours later we were driving on English soil with the breadth of France behind us. Yes, 1952 may still have been the last fine season, but the past five days had been as full as any year.





TAÿGETUS FROM SPARTA  
summit extreme left

*Jocelin Winthrop Young*



# TAÿGETUS

JOCELIN WINTHROP YOUNG

GREEK mountains should be climbed in winter; in summer the heat takes away much of the enjoyment and the haze tends to spoil the view. The rock is bad and holds break away easily, and a route may change its character and standard from year to year. With the exception of Olympus the higher peaks lie between 7,000 feet and 8,000 feet, and can be climbed in one day in good conditions.

Nigel Bicknell and I had wanted for some time to climb Taÿgetus in winter. This striking ridge of about 8,000 feet runs north and south separating Sparta and the valley of the Eurotas from the Western Peloponnese. Clean Monday, the end of Carnival, gave us an extra day's holiday in March. As it was our first visit to the mountain we decided to co-opt a fellow member of the Greek Alpine Club to act as route finder. When we finally left on Saturday afternoon the party had grown. Our guide brought his 15-year-old son, and Nigel had added two colleagues from the Embassy; a Major in the Welsh Guards and a Campbell from the heart of Argyll. We drove in turns through Megara, Corinth, Mycenae, Argos and Tripolis. I drove fairly fast; the Welsh Guards drove very fast; and Nigel, as always, defied all laws of man and nature while still just managing to keep on the road. The Campbell was not allowed to drive as Nigel said he drove too dangerously.

The sun had already set as we came down the winding descent towards Sparta. Opposite, the long jagged range of Taÿgetus showed black and formidable except where the sun-covered western faces of the peaks still held the red Alpen glow. It appeared that our guide had been up the mountain but not from this side. Nevertheless he was sure he knew the best way to get up it and directed us to pass through Sparta to the village of Anogheia where we should spend the night. This village proved to be even lower than Sparta, leaving us practically the whole of the 8,000 feet to climb the next day.

The village was most hospitable. The Mayor welcomed us. The Priest doubted whether we should get up as even the Bishop could only make the ascent on his white mule in mid-summer. The village school-master talked politics. We also met Thanassi, who was used to accompany the Bishop on his annual ascent and knew the mountain well. Even though doubtful of the success of our adventure, he was pressed, after an enjoyable period of bargaining, to join the party. We were taken to eat in the village tavern, which proved to be the butcher's shop. The food was not bad, but our Welsh Guardsman did not last the course as he could not accustom himself to the blood from the hanging carcasses dripping onto his wind-jacket. It was agreed that Thanassi should put us up for the night, but there was some joke about his house being a good way off, so we left the tavern betimes and, followed by most of the village, turned first right—first right—first right—up an outside staircase; and settled down to sleep in our sleeping bags on the floor with the remaining smells of our dinner rising through the floor from the butcher's shop beneath.

We were off at four in the morning; a motley crew of seven, with one rope, two pairs of crampons and six ice axes. We started slowly up through the olive groves in the dark, exchanging shouts with the shepherds who hailed us from their fires. When the sun came up over Mount Parnon we were well up in the pine woods and the valley of the Eurotas was still dark far below us. The mountain pine starts at about 3,000 feet in Greece and can be found up to about 7,000 feet. The trees grew close together and we dodged between them and realized that without Thanassi it would have been a long business. At about 4,000 feet a great fire had burnt down many acres of the forest, and we made better speed over the open ground and charred tree trunks. This fire, Thanassi told us, had been caused by two shepherds who woke, after finishing four bottles of wine the night before, to find their fire had spread down wind across the mountain. Though Greece is famed for its spring flowers I had always understood that the primrose was not included among these, but above the fire line we spent some 20 minutes walking through a carpet of them.

Before the War the Greek Alpine Club had started building a hut on a shoulder of the mountain, about 3,000 feet from the

top. We found it had walls but no roof, and it commanded a magnificent view over the valley and had a spring about five minutes away. At the hut we were up into the snow which made heavy going as it was developing into a very hot day. We contoured across to the north, Thanassi leading us along the line of the Bishop's track. Soon we came to a gully where the hard snow turned into ice. Nigel and I went up the side of it to try and cross higher up, but our Greek friend and his son donned rope and crampons and started to cut their way across. The rest of us soon climbed up into a basin, on the far side of which the final ridge rose steeply with the rock buttresses protruding from the snow. The Greek phalanx was still slowly cutting its way up from below. The rest of us started up the face opposite, each picking his own line. Thanassi followed in the wake of our Welshman, presumably thinking that military rank indicated a greater degree of prudence. There followed two hours of enjoyable warm rock and hard snow before I reached the col between the southernmost (and highest) peak and its next neighbour to the north. Nigel, who had taken a more enterprising line to the left, was close below. The Guardsman and the shepherd were just in sight. Of the Campbell and the phalanx there was no trace. Starting up the last 200 feet of easy gradient to the top I soon got into trouble. It was a cone of hard ice on which the toughest blows left hardly any trace, but I was unable to give of the toughest standing in the inadequate steps in Vibrams. I returned to the col while Nigel took up the assault from another angle. He soon had to give up and we started up the next top to the north, joined at this point by Wales, while we left Thanassi with a depot of rucksacks. The northern top went fairly easily and we were soon taking in the view in sunshine.

Pindar says that from here Lynkeus "who of all men walking the earth had keenest eyes" observed Castor and Pollux at Therapnai close to Sparta. We were able to see farther. To the west was the sea and island of Zante in the distance. To the north the three peaks of Erymanthus, Chelmos, and Kyllene, and beyond across the Gulf of Corinth the Northern Triad of Parnassus, Giona, and Vardhousia. To the east was the long range of Mount Parnon, stretching from the Argolid to

Monemvasia. To the south was the Mani peninsula, Cythera and in the far distance the White Mountains of Crete.

As we descended to the col the phalanx appeared and slowly started up the main peak. Assured of its success we settled down to our lunch where we were joined by the Campbell, who had apparently fallen asleep on a ledge some way below after making sure that his flask had been filled with the right liquid from his home country.

We cheered the phalanx as they reached the top, and then started down. It only took a few minutes to get down into the basin in a series of long glissades, with the yells of the horrified Thanassi following us down. There we waited for him and after some instruction he too joined in some mild sliding down to the hut. Legend has it that the peaks of Taÿgetus are inhabited by three goat-footed animals "who danced the dizzy traveller over into the abyss." Thanassi knew his legends and was naturally worried.

We lay beside the spring finishing our provisions, until the "Summit Party" joined us an hour or so later. Then we started down through the pine trees as the valley grew dark again below us. By the time we had passed below pine level I was very tired indeed. We had been going for 14 hours and Thanassi was now leading us down at breakneck speed in order to be in time for the village Carnival dance. On the outskirts of the village we collected among some oleander bushes and tidied ourselves for our official entry. Festivities were going strong, and we were soon in the village wine shop surrounded by all the village in its Carnival costumes and the girls with their black masks, while Thanassi told the story in Homeric terms. The Greeks were given full credit for reaching the top but it was we foreigners who stole the thunder for, as he said, "they came down the mountain in leaps of 10 metres—20 metres—30 metres—40 metres." The village seemed impressed, except for the schoolmaster who assured them all that this was the normal way to descend a mountain in other countries, and the village priest who was obviously worried that this tale might in time detract from the importance of the Bishop's annual ascent. We managed to get away in the end and drove to Tripolis for the night. Here we put up at a small inn which is best forgotten, but celebrated with a very good meal at the main

hotel with Carnival in full swing around us. We left early next day for Athens, and this time Nigel decided that neither the Welsh Guards nor I were really safe, so he drove the whole way himself, while the rest of us hung on grimly. I have not heard from Thanassi since but I have heard rumours from Lacedaemonia that show that a new legend of the mountain is in the making.

# PLAS-Y-BRENIN

JOHN DISLEY

THE imagination of the populace, particularly the younger section, was fired by the climbing of Everest. Since then other more or less successful British expeditions have kept mountaineering and mountaineers on the front pages of newspapers and on the television screen, and hence in the hero-worshipping eye of the young, who naturally and commendably have endeavoured to emulate their heroes. Consequently, as every member of the Alpine Club will tell you, the British Hills are far too crowded with energetic young men and girls. The older generation, if you are still listening, will continue to tell you of these youngsters' lack of mountaineering manners and good taste. For instance, they trundle boulders, they yodel on summits, they run from peak to peak, they fail to recognise on sight G.W.Y., they climb in rubber boots, they even stand on their heads upon Crib Goch!

This criticism is all true, for there are many people on the hills today who have missed the guiding hand and word of a tweed-breeched elder. The traditional method of training, which has produced such excellent results since 1857, has broken down. The appeal of the mountains has now reached people who are unfortunate in knowing no-one personally to introduce them to the hills. Therefore, encouraged as they have been by those of our great mountaineers who are prescribing this form of recreation, they have made their own way to the high crags. There, armed only with a library copy of *Let's go Climbing or Climbing in Britain*, novices work things out by first principles.

In 1955 the Royal Hotel in Capel Curig was acquired by the Central Council of Physical Recreation, a Government-financed National body. The Royal was renamed Plas-y-Brenin, and opened as a Centre for Outdoor Activities. There, under the wardenship of Major G. I. M. Milton and the chairmanship of Sir John Hunt, courses are run for young people in such activities as climbing, canoeing, light-weight camping, fishing and field studies.

The organized course in mountaineering is a phenomenon, I think, of the post-war period, and typifies the change in many sports, not only in climbing. Most of our major games—athletics, tennis, cricket, swimming—rely on courses to promote the life flow of new players to the sport. But this is a mass-production procedure; it cannot compete for quality with the hand-made product. At Plas-y-Brenin we impress upon the students that although we will do our best to introduce them to the hills, our method is a second-best method. On the other hand while not approaching the father-son or uncle-nephew arrangement for passing on knowledge, it is infinitely better than no instruction at all.

Mountaineering is more than just a game; it is a way of life. The instructors at Capel Curig are always at pains to make this point clear. Not only are students encouraged to have due reverence for gravity, fences and walls, but also for the great adage of outdoor life, the respect for others. In a week's introductory course, this perhaps is the most important point to get over. It is done by example, and is accomplished subtly, probably without the student knowing he is learning, or the instructor realizing he is teaching.

Courses at Plas-y-Brenin are nearly always fully booked and the Centre's fifty to sixty beds full with students all the year round. In the main holiday periods of the year public courses are arranged, open to men and women from eighteen years old upwards. Students are expected to be sound in wind and limb, and they come from all walks of life, paying around £10 for a week's course. At non-holiday periods the students come from schools and colleges. Many Local Education Authorities have realized that outdoor activities are worthwhile additions to the physical education programme, especially in the last year of school. Educationally these activities are very sound. They get young people out into country, they can be "played" by one or more people at any time of the year, and they happen to be one of the few sports that boys and girls can do together without transgressing the governing-body's amateur rules.

To my mind the other great attraction of these "first-hand" activities is that little premium is placed on personal skill. Nearly all of our national games place great emphasis on ability; to enjoy them you have to be able to run fast, kick straight or

hit a ball. Pleasure is proportionate to skill. In outdoor activities the only real criterion of success is the individual's enjoyment. If the camper wants to pitch his tent so badly that it blows away in the night, that's his affair, and if next time he erects it, it goes again, presumably he enjoys chasing tents. If the canoeist finds satisfaction in capsizing at every rapid, good for him. He is not letting a team down and no one can accuse him of being a nuisance. Obviously, in climbing there are limits to the lack of skill that you can enjoy. If the novice persists in finishing his week-ends in Bangor Infirmary, then the sooner he improves or takes up something else the better. However, should the beginner wish to take four and a half hours to ascend Tryfan and persist in going the wettest way, that's up to him. As long as he is enjoying himself, he is getting as much out of his day as the man who reaches the summit by way of Grooved Arête in two hours flat.

Plas-y-Brenin has a staff of five full-time instructors, all with experience of one or more of the activities taught there. For the maintenance of a high standard of instruction it also depends on voluntary help. Several Club members have been kind enough to give a week or more to the Centre, and their assistance has been gratefully received.

The work is satisfying and always interesting. Basic questions on mountaineering have led many of us to think again about our reasons for various actions. Constant efforts to show a good example in technique gradually improve the instructor's own performance. Since exaggerating to students the position of "weight on the feet" while climbing, I find my own technique much improved; I do in fact take my own advice, and "trust my boots."

Students, especially children, are adept at asking the awkward question, like the name of the only peak on the skyline that you can't recognise, or pronounce. They become mildly critical of compass work in mist that results in a walk home from Pen-y-Gwyrdd, when the transport is at Idwal. They expect the instructor to take over their own soaking tent at three in the morning, and are indignant to find that "Sir's" tent is sopping as well. Novice climbers manage to make even new nylon rope into a wet hemp-like mass inside twenty seconds on a belay.



Those who have helped us know that there is never a dull moment for the instructor or, for that matter, the student.

A teacher from Llandudno told the Warden that when a week's course at Capel Curig was suggested at his school, one boy critically asked what on earth there was to do in that village for a week. After the course was over the same boy was heard to complain bitterly that after Capel Curig there was nothing worth doing in Llandudno.

As a mountaineer I am aware that professional training schemes are not always welcomed or approved of by my fellows; but as a physical educationist I welcome any system that increases the number of young people who come to know and love the mountains.

## SUMMIT THOUGHTS: THE ASCENT OF PUMASILLO

R. J. WATHEN

**W**E had been cramped in the night, three sleeping in a tent built for two, which would only hold two lilos. Head to tail, we fought all night, each kicking and pushing to maintain or gain his two-thirds of a lilo.

It was cold—very cold. On a previous occasion, Colin Darbyshire had tried to be funny. “Do you know what Shakespeare would have said if he were here now?” We had looked at Colin, wondering what inspired lines could have floated into his brain at that hour in the morning. “He would have said, ‘Christ, it’s—cold’.”

But this morning he was not feeling humorous. He was silent as he emerged from the depths of his sleeping-bag and began struggling with his clothing in a small corner of the tent. We went on with the preparations for our climb. Coffee had been drunk from thermos flasks filled the night before, and we had just finished an excellent bowl of porridge. I was proud of that porridge, cooked at 4-0 a.m.

I opened the sleeve entrance at one end of the tent, and crawled out. A light but chilling breeze fanned Camp Two, biting through my down-filled clothing. Thin inner silk gloves were poor protection for the hands.

6-0 a.m.: the hour of dawn, crisp and clear. Night’s cloak was being drawn from the mountains, falling away into the deep valleys. In half an hour it would be bright day; a pink glow, then a reddening of the summits and ridges, and daylight rushing in with tropical suddenness. The sun would not reach our route and camps on the ridge for another two hours.

We clipped ice-pitons to our waist-loops, roped up, and set off, Colin, Kim Meldrum and I, the “Third Assault Party,” following gently in the tracks prepared by the other two parties. We would not have the same thrill of pioneering into the un-

known. But we had our compensations. We were able to appreciate the advantages of a month's hard training, as we moved swiftly up the ridge, unhindered by those route-finding problems which had so delayed our first party, Simon Clark and Mike Gravina. We were hardly affected by the altitude, and moved with greater ease at 20,000 feet than we had earlier in the expedition at 10,000 feet. This absence of the usual effects of altitude was due, I think, to two factors. First, we had spent such a long time and expended so much energy searching for Pumasillo and a route in during late June and early July, that we were by now perfectly acclimatized and at the peak of fitness. Ironically, the ascent of this mountain, by no means an easy one, was in a relative way the easiest part of the expedition, certainly the most enjoyable. The second reason was that we were not at this time of day exposed to the heat of the sun. The wilting, scorching sun, reflected intensely from the white snow of these tropical mountains, is as much to blame as the shortage of oxygen for the lethargy which grips the climber.

Today we were in the shade, the snow was crisp and fine, and by the time we reached the sun-kissed summit ridge, we were so high that the sun's heat was equalized by the great cold of the surrounding air. I climbed all day in full double-lined windproof clothing, two or three pairs of gloves, string under-clothing, shirt, two sweaters, and a thick duvet. I had never before been able to climb in comfort with so many clothes, but on this occasion, even with this lot, I was cold. We had no thermometer with us, but the oil in our tin of sardines was frozen solid.

The element of uncertainty was with us, as it had been with Mike and Simon, Harry Carslake and John Longland. It was not a foregone conclusion that we too would reach the summit. The route was both difficult and dangerous, and two of us were semi-invalids; Colin with the after-effects of stomach troubles which had confined him to Base Camp during the initial days on the mountain; and myself, with a sprained ankle as reward for a 200 feet slide down an ice-gully four days before. With my foot tightly encased in bandages, socks, boot, anklet, canvas overboot, and a crampon, I could move uphill quickly enough, but traverses on steep ice and movement downhill slowed me considerably.

The neighbouring peaks began to drop below us as we climbed. The snow, firm and hard, bore the faint imprint of our companion's footsteps. For an hour we climbed on relatively easy ground, moving together, making good progress. At about 19,800 feet the ridge steepened and forced us off to the right. A long ascending traverse among galleries of ice, bounded by gigantic crevasses, led us towards the summit ridge. This high ridge, of which Pumasillo is but the culminating point, is very long—about five miles?—and most of it over twenty thousand feet. Our route joined it at a point about 500 feet below the summit. Mike and Simon, after climbing a steep 30 feet wall of crumbling snow, had doubled back left, and zig-zagged up to try and hit the ridge just below the summit by climbing up the side of the "Egg," a vast distorted globule of ice balanced about twenty feet below the true summit, and which we had for a long time thought to be the summit itself. Unable to force a route up the Egg, they tried lower down. In Simon's words, "we retired—impressed."

This detour had wasted them two precious hours. Following so effortlessly in their steps, we were able to make much quicker time over the whole climb, and in fact halved their six hours from Camp Two to the summit, a clear demonstration of how much harder it is for the pioneers, and how much easier for those who follow after.

At the bottom of the thirty-foot wall, we paused. Colin and Kim belayed, and I started up. I had my ice-axe in one hand and a short "piolet marteau" ice-hammer in the other. By driving both these into the snow above me, and using the front two points of my crampons, I advanced upwards. The wall faced south; a mixed blessing in the Andes. The snow lies thick and heavy on the southern faces, threatening to avalanche, and providing most unpleasant climbing routes. But once a track has been punched up these slopes, once the steps have been kicked and the loose powder stamped firm, the route becomes as safe, or even safer than, the north-facing routes. In our experience, routes facing north, at first acquaintance so free from deep, tiring snow, quickly deteriorate in the heat of the sun. Steps collapse easily, and progress downhill at the end of the day becomes dangerous work. On the other hand, southern slopes, so treacherous to first-comers, freeze firm

overnight and the steps are little affected by the twelve-hour day of hot tropical sunlight.

Nevertheless, this wall, by its very steepness, still provided us with difficulties. I found myself using every known technique, even rock-climbing ones: jamming, bridging, laybacking on my ice-axes, chimneying, mantelshelving. At the top I found a firm piton, brought Kim and Colin up, and continued the devious route towards the summit ridge. Another halt for belaying. I crossed a crevasse, up another steep wall, and found myself looking over the thin blade of the ridge towards the other mountains in the area: Salcantay (20,500 feet?), first climbed in 1952 by a strong Franco-American party, the only mountain in a hundred miles which is higher than Pumasillo (20,490 feet?); Veronica and Soray, climbed last year by Lionel Terray. We thought of our American friends, at that very moment attempting Ausangate, which rose, alone in savage grandeur, a hundred and fifty miles away, beyond the arid hills of Cuzco. Near to us lay Lasunyoc, the most easterly of the five or six great claws of Pumasillo, "The Puma's Claw." An American party, including veterans of the Salcantay expedition, had attempted Pumasillo last year, but failing to find the approaches to the western ridge, had climbed Lasunyoc instead, a fine effort, and one which was of great help to us in our study of maps and photographs of the area. With great modesty they had called their mountain "Easy Pumasillo" and ours "Hard Pumasillo," though "easy" is a very relative word amid the fantastic ice-scenery of the Andes. To them, almost as much as to the British Huagaruncho Expedition of 1956, we owed a great deal of our success.

Where I was sitting, astride the frail ridge, dangling my right boot down the impossibly steep east face as I awaited the arrival of the others, Lasunyoc appeared to be higher than we. This was worrying: in that selfish spirit of competition which motivates all climbers though few care to admit it, we hoped Pumasillo was higher than Lasunyoc, that Pumasillo was the giant, the Queen, of this mighty Vilcabamba range.

We were not disappointed. As we moved up the ridge, gaining height slowly and carefully, belaying and climbing one at a time, Lasunyoc began to sink to our level, and then to fall away beneath us. We were over 20,000 feet—a magic height—

well over six thousand metres. The ridge was difficult, even dangerous. Some of the thrills and excitement of the first two parties awaited us too. The ridge was comparatively free from larger cornices, but was peppered with smaller ones. In places, narrow bridges of rotten snow lay across small gaps and gashes. Jumping or stepping across these demanded great care, as the landing-place was rarely more than a foot wide, and on either side lay nothing for many thousand feet.

Finally, a steep 20 feet slope of about 70°, and we were on the "Egg," three hours after leaving Camp Two. The true summit lay about fifteen feet higher, over 100 feet away, and separated from us by a forty-foot gap. Before turning our attention to it, we unroped, ate our large supply of dates, cheese, biscuits, chocolate, and mint cake, had a cigarette or two, and began our task of collecting survey data for the expedition map. We spent two and a half hours taking bearings and readings with compass and Abne level on all visible peaks, and as many photographs as we could manage.

The time came to climb the last bit to the true summit. Next to the Egg lay the "Mushroom," another queer lump of ice, overhanging at many points, and hollowed underneath in a most alarming manner. Colin took a belay on the Egg, and Kim on the Mushroom (subsequent photographs reveal that they were both sitting on fair-sized cornices!). Taking tension from my rope to Kim, I leaned out over the edge of the gap. At that moment there was a loud crack, and the mushroom shook ominously. I stepped back, disconcerted. Was this really the route taken by the other parties? In the confused accounts which we had extracted from four tired climbers over the last few days, we could not be sure of remembering move by move the whole of their route. At the bottom of the gap lay a large pile of ice-debris. Could some of the wall have collapsed since John and Harry were here? An academic question, since we would never learn for sure the true answer. Was more about to collapse? A more practical question, of great and immediate importance to us. But we had to reach the summit, or at least get one member of the party there, to complete our ambition to get three ropes up the mountain.

I moved off down a slope towards the east. This slope was short. It ended in the verticality of the east face, now

withdrawing into the swirl of the afternoon mists blowing off the Pumasillo ridge. Near the bottom of the slope I traversed in again towards the V-Gap. This was the most vexing ice-climbing I had ever undertaken. A vertical, flaking wall of rotten ice, riddled with holes, peeling in the hot sun, had to be traversed for about thirty feet. Without a top-rope from Kim, it would have been, for me at any rate, impossible. Kim paid out the rope as I climbed up the other side of the gap. The summit was an ice pyramid with a rock base, the first rock in over four thousand feet of climbing. The standard was easy, but the rock had a loose, slaty quality which got on one's nerves. The apex of the pyramid was as narrow and exciting as anything we had ever hoped for. I was thankful there was only a little wind.

Old legends say that the highest tops of the Andes are graced with Inca crosses of gold. The local Indians believe that here abide the gods, the "awkees." What did I find on top? I found two cigarette ends, a matchstick, and some bloodstains—clear proof that one of my companions (probably John Longland) had crawled up here in a state of exhaustion, to pay his vicious and never-ceasing tributes to the goddess Nicotina.

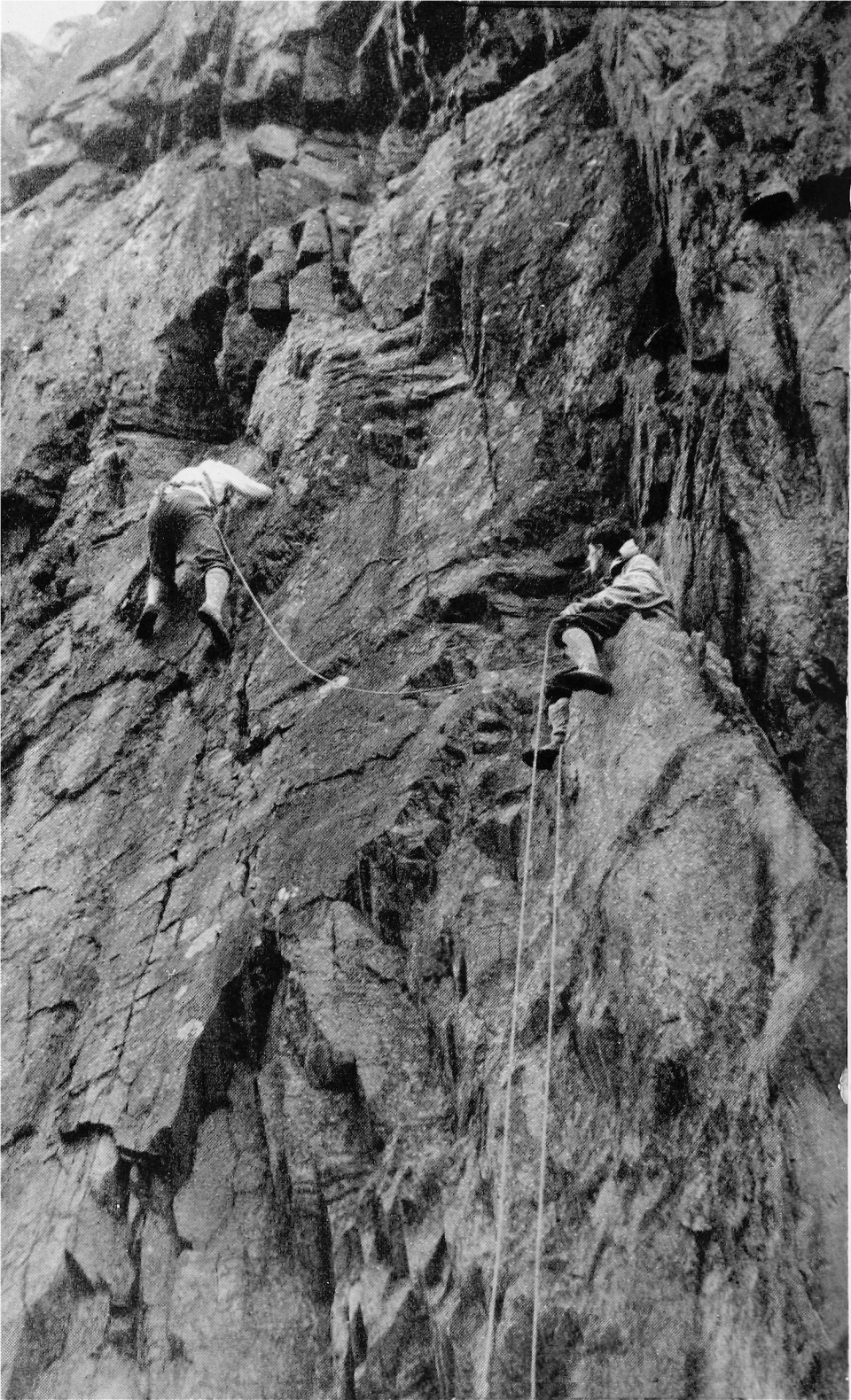
What did I think on top? Great thoughts of the high, golden summits? Broad thoughts of the world lying underneath our feet? No. I remember going into a reverie, something like this: "Just think! If I were to spit on that cornice over there, a little part of me would be carried far down into the valley when the cornice collapses. If I were to stand on it, an even bigger part of me would go down on the long fall to the glacier. I would then move slowly down the glacier. As the years passed and the centuries grew old, some pieces of me would be interred for ever in the moraines, but other (luckier) pieces would start on their long journey towards the sea. They would float and drift down the rapids of the Urubamba, and after two thousand miles they would reach the waters of the Amazon, and glide on through jungles and savage villages, till in many hundreds of years I would sail peacefully out into the Atlantic . . . All this would happen if I spit on that cornice. But I'm not going to spit: it's rude. And I'm not going to stand on it: it's dangerous."

What did I do on top? First of all, we sang an impolite song, for the benefit of our friends lower down the mountain. Then

we conferred about the next move. Following the practice established by Simon, Mike, Harry and John, I should have climbed back to the Mushroom, and belayed Colin and Kim, as each in his turn crossed to the true summit. But the unsafe condition of the Mushroom, indicated by the loud crack it had emitted, made us think again. I suggested that, as one of our rope had reached the top, and certainly could not have got there without the others, and since we as an expedition were so lucky in getting some or all of three parties to the summit, we should not tempt fate further. Kim and Colin were generous enough to agree to stay where they were, fifteen feet below the true summit. From the foot of the gap I was hauled back up the wall by Kim, and we retired to the Egg. Tired and contented, we began climbing back down the ridge, happy in the full success of the expedition, thankful that the mountain had given us such a fine climb, and full of admiration for Simon and Mike who had opened up this magnificent route. Pumasillo was no longer "the highest known unclimbed mountain outside Asia."







## BLAITIERE—EAST FACE

J. A. G. EMERY

“**A**U revoir messieurs et bonne course!”: the door slammed, cutting off the *gardien*'s parting words as we turned the corner of Envers des Aiguilles, and emphasising the abrupt transition between the small warm enclosed world of the hut interior, comfortably suited to sleep-drugged movement, and the shattering immensity of the Chamonix Aiguilles under a clear night sky. The sudden change from bright, circumscribed boundaries to the shadowy infinity of mountain and starlight seemed to bring with it a heightened awareness, an increased perception, immediate, urgent, as we moved in the half-world of night before dawn. To put on crampons at the edge of the glacier was almost a relief; immersed in the reassuringly mechanical action of tightening a strap one could forget the tension of the approaching climb.

Daylight came as we ascended the branch of the Envers de Blaitière glacier which rises to the foot of the East Face of the Blaitière, between the lower part of the South-East ridge and the great ridge which rises to the Pointe des Nantillons. We paused at the edge of a crevasse to take a first close look at our intended route. The East Face is cut on its right-hand aspect, as we looked at it, by a narrow couloir which descends from the brèche between the Blaitière and the Rocher de la Corde. V. J. E. Ryan with the brothers Lochmatter climbed the buttress which forms the left bank of the couloir in 1914, and at a point 100 metres below the summit of the Rocher crossed the couloir and finished up the final section of this face of the Blaitière; this route had been repeated twice up to 1951. The only route on the East Face, taking a direct line to the summit, up the face between the couloir and the South-East ridge, is that made by R. Leininger and F. Neuenschwander on 10th-12th August, 1936. They described it as an “itinéraire élégant et très intéressant,” and classified it as Très Difficile. It had never been repeated.

Jillott, Lawton and I had been intrigued by the possibilities of the route when making plans for the 1956 season, and had decided to investigate it; now, after several days of bad weather and frustration, the idea seemed especially attractive and we had come up to Envers the previous evening. There had been an ominously hot breath of wind on our faces as we ambled up from Montenvers, but so far nothing had materialised; the day was mild, deceptively so perhaps. Above us the face, in shadow, rose in a series of three smooth bounds, demarcated by an upper and lower system of ledges. High up, the final sweep of dark sullen rock culminated abruptly in sudden flaming colour where the summit towers, ignited by the first sun, blazed rich red-ochre against a blue sky; an access of light, clear, irresistible.

An hour and a half after leaving the hut, perched on the lip of the bergschrund at the foot of the couloir descending from the brèche, we removed crampons and put on the rope. Leininger and Neuenschwander had ascended the couloir for 50 metres, then traversed left onto the face. Since there was just a yawning gap with a stream of icy water where the upper lip of the 'schrund should have been, we took to the rock of the right bank (true right). We were in shadow, rock and hands were cold, the pitch looked easy but wasn't; straddled on a smooth grey slab mottled with ice and deceptively free of holds, one felt suddenly clumsy. Later in the day one would have relished it, at this stage it was irritating and unfair. Above was a ledge and from a small crack beside it poked the snub nosed top of a piton with a shining Allain karabiner hanging from it. Mute evidence of retreat? Their probable implications were cheerfully overlooked, and we added them gratefully to our ironmongery. One hundred feet of rotten snow-ice and rock in the bed of the couloir brought us to a ledge, and the probable point at which we should break out onto the face itself. To do so we had evidently to climb the vertical left wall of the couloir for about 50 feet until a break in the rock gave promise of a traverse onto the lower system of ledges on the face. An indeterminate line of weakness, which the more charitable type of guidebook writer might have called a groove, led straight up the wall. Jillott moved onto it, treating the rock with respect; we were still deep in shadow, fingers were cold and the holds were evidently very thin. He let in a piton, moved up delicately to

where the angle relented, reached a ledge, put in another piton high up and pulling hard on it swung across out of the shadow and into sunlight on the final ledge. It was an elegant pitch, tiny rounded holds on the steep grey rock. I spent an age struggling ineffectually to extract the lower piton, then, as fingers were losing all sensation, abandoned it and moved up and out to finish in sunlight via the final Hollywood touch on the second piton. We basked greedily in the warmth; the last pitch had taken time: "Definitely V sup."

An easy traverse led out to the left, where we found ourselves on the lower system of ledges. Above us the rock seemed to gather itself, then spring straight up in one clean sweep of tawny granite several hundred feet high, the middle bastion of the face and the probable crux of the climb. The 1936 pair had climbed it on its right-hand aspect, close to where it overhung the couloir. We moved up over the ledges to a corner and stepped round to find an overhanging crack and a sudden sense of exposure indicating a change of mood. The crack went with a shoulder, the owner of the shoulder experiencing a distinct sense of insecurity, which expressed itself in mockery and abuse when he later discovered an alternative and altogether delightful line up the neighbouring slab. The pitch which followed, and our immediate progression, ended at a ledge; above, the wall of rock rose without a break, smooth, bland, impenetrable. A glance to the right was sufficient to dismiss any hope of a possible line there; a few needle-thin cracks curling back into overhangs at regular intervals were the only vertical breaks apparent. The guidebook had ceased to be of any use; our predecessors, in maintaining a line on the right of the face, must have made a longer traverse on the ledges below. Without realising it we had come to grips with the main problem; no decision was necessary, we simply followed the only remaining possibility and traversed left into the middle of the face. The ledge, now reduced to a detached flake, ended beneath a vertical crack which curved round an uncomfortable, pubescent bulge, and then lay back at an easier angle. Jillott climbed it quickly, brought Lawton up to join him, and then started to explore the face above. The crack and its accompanying groove ended abruptly a few feet higher; again taking the only possible line he traversed right, about six feet, slowly, delicately; holds were

evidently at a premium. This brought him to a position on the lower aspect of a smooth nose of granite, about 50 feet vertically above the flake on which I stood. He looked round the corner to the right and after a pause announced that there was no prospect of continuing the traverse in his present line, that he did not relish the thought of reversing the last six feet, and that the move upwards which would be necessary to surmount the nose was going to be difficult.

The noise of the piton hammer broke the silence which followed, but it was a flat dull note which lacked the comforting ring of security.

"I think it will come out easily with a pull."

Below, one felt peculiarly helpless; inept, a spectator. The wall threw him out, and he was having to use low hand holds, a decision would be forced on him very soon. Suddenly, after what seemed an age, he made the move swiftly and with perfect co-ordination, to bring him to a position standing on the sloping top of the nose, and after placing a runner, he began to descend a crack which he said would bring him to a ledge, hidden from us by the nose. The rope ran out slowly, reluctantly, until a final shout told us that the pitch had been completed.

*Eh bien*, relax and the world floods back into conscious perception. In the shift and widening of focus from those few feet of rock above, one became increasingly aware of a series of small muffled explosions, seemingly stealing up and impinging suddenly on the ear. I turned and there, across the way, was the Grandes Jorasses, sulking behind a tight little thunderstorm which it had collected entirely to itself, the North Face covered in thick white cloud, with angry black patches pushing through at the edges. Seen from this distance, it looked absurdly miniature; a nursery storm on a nursery mountain, it banged and popped in childish rage, and I turned back from this fractious infant across the valley to the problem ahead.

The bulging crack required a certain amount of light-hearted curse and kick, and one moved up confidently on a chin jammed firmly beyond the bulge. Thereafter life became more serious; as so often happens at the beginning of a difficult pitch the world seemed to contract suddenly, for sensation becomes entirely selective in such situations, and, insulated in the sudden enclosure of the senses one moved slowly, intently, over the



tiny rugosities of that very airy traverse, ending abruptly on the nose of rock which stood out from the vertical face. Standing on sloping, miserably apologetic toe-holds, with just a low, awkwardly placed fingerhold to counteract the outward thrust of the rock, there was little time for speculation. The top of the nose sloped back, just within arms' reach. It was rounded and devoid of obvious hold, but the granite was rough and dry. The move upwards demanded speed, and complete faith in the adhesive properties of slightly sweaty hands pressed to the sloping, rounded rock overhead. With the hands overhead the thrust of the rock became more apparent, and the move had to be made quickly; once made, and with an interim toe-hold on the former fingerhold, one could grasp a spike of rock, invisible from below, and pull up to stand on the sloping top of the nose. The others were on a ledge to the right and below me, about 15 feet down; I removed a runner from the spike and started to wriggle down a crack which sloped down to join them. The crack sloped outwards as well as downwards, and I had to work uncomfortably hard to maintain a hand and foot in it, but eventually it was over and I stood with them.

We grinned delightedly at each other, jubilant and elated, for it had been a remarkably bold and accomplished lead over a very exposed and poorly protected pitch, certainly the hardest we had encountered so far (it proved to be the crux of the climb), and with this success came a flood of confidence which carried us surging up the next pitch, a smooth and orthodox Chamonix crack that started mildly but quickly reared up to the vertical. Above the crack a short, easy wall brought us to a small ledge in an unpromising situation. The rock above the ledge overhung slightly at first, but at just over shoulder height the angle relented, and a long smooth slab swept upwards. Immediately above the ledge it was impossible to get over the lip of the overhang and onto the slab for both were quite devoid of hold, but to the right the smooth surface of slab was split by a tiny crack. By standing on the extreme end of the ledge and leaning out as far as possible on the firmly belayed rope, a piton could just be placed in the crack, at full finger stretch. A sling was clipped in the piton and with a strong haul on the sling and a certain amount of assistance from the back seat, the lip was overcome and the slab reached. The slab was delicate and

charming; the vertical groove beyond was also delicate but lacked charm, and one did not feel disposed to linger. The party foregathered on a small but adequate ledge above the groove; it was three o'clock in the afternoon and the moment of decision; the party's stomach was empty, so the party ate lunch.

It was a comfortable well tailored ledge, giving just sufficient room to sit side by side, with legs hanging over the edge and backs resting against the rock behind. The sun shone, the rock smiled in its warm sleep, and we perched half way to heaven, luxuriously licking sardine oil from our fingers. More cloud had gathered about the Jorasses but it seemed nothing to worry about. We had negotiated the main difficulty, and were now gaining height in the angle between a prominent red tower and the face itself. There was no way of traversing round the tower to the right, but above us a steep broken groove must lead to the upper series of ledges, and the last section of the face should present no great difficulty. It was very peaceful, and with reluctance we stood up, brushed the crumbs off our breeches and put on our sacks. The sardine tin was left on the ledge as a gesture to posterity.

Our mood of calm complacency was first shattered when we embarked on the groove. It was much steeper than it looked and distinctly awkward; sacks had to be hauled and one stuck half way. We sweated and cursed at the lost time; the last man was almost up when the second surprise came with a burst of drumming, stinging hailstones, which sent us struggling into anoraks and mittens. So engrossed had we been with the groove we had not noticed the abrupt change in the weather, and when the hailstorm ended we looked up to an unbroken steel grey canopy, which stretched tightly above the dark unfriendly spires of rock. Above the groove we found no traversing line, only a smooth wall between us and the start of the ledges, and a wind that whipped and shouted with ever increasing urgency. We climbed quickly up towards the nearing skyline of the South-East ridge, then, after an agony of time casting about for a possible line, broke back to the centre of the face with two long diagonal rappels which brought us at last to the upper ledges. With the rope off, we almost ran along the ledges, climbing a series of short and sometimes difficult walls with desperate speed, racing the approaching storm. The last steepening of the



face seemed endless, acres of damp, cold rock stretching up into the cloud, and another burst of hail to numb the fingers, and make progress seem ever slower and clumsier. A steep rib, sharp and clean, demanded some attention, and for a space one could forget the possibility of a bivouac pricking urgently at the back of the mind. An awkward corner, a traverse, and there was no more rock, nothing but a whirling, stabbing madness of cloud streamers which swooped and reeled in crazy wind-whipped dance, before being sucked away in a hooting, headlong race along the ridge to Ciseaux and Fou. The time was 7.30 p.m., a monstrous thunder clap peeled out and as the storm began we traversed round the Pointe Centrale in failing light and thickening cloud . . .

At 9 o'clock we stood, awkwardly balanced on a small ice-covered ledge, not far below the summit of the Blaitière. Our painfully slow attempt to descend the Arête Bregeault in darkness over snow and ice covered rock had ended in impasse; below was black emptiness, around us was thick, clouded night, and all the appalling fury of storm in the high Alps. We decided to bivouac.

Standing on a thin rim of rock, Jillott and I hacked at the solid ice under a large rounded rock which leaned out from the back of the ledge, while Lawton made a precarious traverse to cache the crampons and ironmongery at a distance from our roost. Our torches were little use but the rather greater candle power of the lightning helped, and eventually we had cut away sufficient to allow us to sit huddled together on the icy shelf with the rock behind us. I took off my boots, put on an extra pair of socks and stuffed my feet into my rucksack: the warmth was immediate and tangible, and I drew my knees up to my chest and hunched my back to the wind. Happily confident of reaching Montenvers that night, we now had six boiled sweets between us; there was no problem about the division of food.

The storm grumbled and died, the wind dropped a little and it began to snow. The rock offered little protection, and small white mounds of snow began to grow on our shoulders and heads, then ran trickling down our backs. The ice on which we were sitting sloped gently down to the edge of the shelf, and one tended to slide very slowly and quietly down and out; intermittently one dozed, then jerked awake to find one's feet over

the edge and wriggle back the few inches to the rock. There was time for thought, all the time in the world, and when I could forget the stupid snatch of song which turned over and over in my head, I tried to occupy myself with abstractions, to relate myself to, and lose myself in, a greater scheme of things—but it was no good, I was just too damned uncomfortable and I could not break away from my wretched, physical self. I was cold, wet, tired and hungry, and I still had to get off the mountain. Occasionally I shouted an obscenity into the whirling snow; it was oddly satisfying. The others were remarkably silent.

At 3 a.m. I suggested a move, for it was still snowing hard and gave every sign of continuing. Our only way of descent now seemed to be the Spencer Couloir, for a brief glimpse before dark had shown a lot of snow on the Rocher de la Corde, and the couloir would offer no problem of route finding. We had no illusions about the couloir, however, as the surface had been bad when we traversed it a few hours earlier—soft powder snow on ice—and the extra inches of new snow in the night would make it worse. It took us threequarters of an hour to get ready to move, putting boots on in turn, for there was not room to do otherwise, sitting on a few inches of ice with feet waving in the air, struggling and cursing futilely at frozen footgear.

Seen in the wan half-light of dawn the Spencer Couloir looked particularly uninviting: a smooth white chute which plunged into an invisibility of cloud and falling snow. The surface consisted of several inches of new snow lying on hard ice, and we edged down without the possibility of a belay, our sole, if somewhat dubious, source of comfort lying in the thought that this was the only way out. It had all the characteristics of a bad dream and, as bad dreams do, it ended suddenly; we had descended perhaps 150 feet, and my initial feeling of surprised relief at each completed move down was giving way to the cautious belief that we might arrive safely at the bottom, when there was a startled exclamation from above, as a step collapsed and Jillott came off; he cannoned crisply into me, and Lawton had no chance of holding the two of us. As we fell the world, a grey world, seemed to fall with us, and I was dimly conscious of the fact that the snow must have avalanched with us. Through the protective cocoon of insensibility which the body seems to

assume as soon as a fall begins, I remember my useless attempts to brake with the axe, the shocks as we struck each other, and, quite clearly, the feeling of complete fatalism as to the outcome of the fall. It seemed to go on a long, long time, then falling grey changed to stationary white, and I lay quite still, feeling immensely comfortable and relaxed as the numbness which had enveloped me slowly left me. "John, John, are you all right?" The words penetrated slowly; I experienced a sudden irritation that I should have to forsake my happy oblivion, and for a moment toyed with the idea of just not answering, then sat up and began to scoop snow, suddenly cold and wet, from my neck. Improbably, no one was hurt, just bruised; our avalanche had shot the bergschrund quite cleanly and deposited us about 20 feet from the edge of the upper Nantillons ice-cliffs. "Hasty, perhaps, but certainly time saving."

After that everything became much more of an effort, and we wandered slowly down the glacier, between white snow and white cloud, our world an inclined plane. The Rognon, the corner of the ice-fall and at last the bumpy grey desolation of the lower glacier where we emerged from cloud with all the sharp pleasure of surfacing after a deep dive into icy water. Across the boulders now, and on to the path which meanders down the steep hillside. It felt good to be walking on that path down that hillside. Where the path met the track from Plan de l'Aiguille we came to a halt; round the hill was Montenvers, there was time for a rest. We took off our sacks and slowly sat down; grass and flowers were growing there, and a big, bright insect buzzed up and away in lurching, erratic flight. I plucked one of the grass stems, and twirled it lazily in my fingers: it was very green.

# POEMS

G. J. SUTTON

I am sick of the mountains with their meaningless white crests  
wavering towards the sun; the red endless scree  
where the siren sits singing of vanities on the summit  
then throws down her fanatical votaries  
to lie squashed where they toiled and panted with the labour  
of Hercules.

I am sick of the sea and of the lies it tosses  
into the mouths of the English. It is dirty and deep.  
Its monstrous lisp echoes the lost meaning of dead ambitions:  
its servants hate it but it makes them lazy.  
In the endless tossing of its disequilibrium neither dead nor  
living sleep.

I am sick of deserts, of the meaningless vistas  
where distance is measured in lifetimes and life in a few bones  
that lie pointing to a cloud like a question on the horizon,  
where the high sadness of the universe is stretched over you  
skin-tight,  
where the hot air shrinks your will to a crawling thing among  
stones.

I am sick of the night and of its icy stars  
and of the villain-moon that calls to a cruel love  
outmoded but mummified in an undiscerning tradition,  
and of all the other symbols that make someone a profit  
in books and in films, or, most dangerous, in self-love.

No, I would exorcise these putrified, murdering ghosts:  
share a small flat in a city, dry cell in accumulated mind  
where the clean minds have sheltered from the meaningless wind  
that blows out of the four corners of the universe,  
not with romance, moribund prostitute, but reason that is lucid  
and kind.

There think with passion! Intellectual fire! But Baudelaire leans  
on the door.

"Toujours des inconnus, voyages?" No, without deception:  
foreseeing the end we adventure no motion but redress a  
balance of power,

build walls against that wind, light fires. Toil hungers death:  
that wish excluded from this peace, this passionate reception.

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### PEN-Y-GHENT

Blue-grey and green-grey and brown-grey  
there they are couchant  
as though before dinosaurs  
a pack of hills roved over land, lay down here  
to wait, and wintered.

Lift your head blindly in the mist:  
feel that tumultuous drinking  
swell the cached arteries to frenzy,  
vibrant in tension of silence.

And from over the long dale  
feel time like wind stroke the grass of your sides,  
bird-cry, sky-song, confused earth-murmur,  
warding and waiting:

sphinx, sleeping beast, will  
that must resolve itself  
and in the last days turn, and slowly gesture.

# SHIRTSLEEVES ON BEN NEVIS

B. E. H. MADEN

**I**N 1957 the C.U.M.C. reached the fourth in a series of summer visits to Ben Nevis. In 1954 Mike O'Hara and Eric Langmuir made the second ascent of Kellett's Left-Hand Route on Minus Two Buttress in seven hours under wet conditions. Next year more of Kellett's routes were repeated: the formidable Gardyloo Buttress by Downes and O'Hara, Minus Two Right-Hand Route, and Route II on Carn Dearg Buttress, while a first attempt on the tall, slender Minus One Buttress resulted in North-Eastern Grooves. In June 1956 Downes and O'Hara led a third and mass assault. Minus One Direct fell on the first day, followed on the third by the greatest achievement of all, the second ascent of the magnificent Brown-Whillans route Sassenach, led with remarkable determination by Downes in an 11-hour battle interrupted by a prolonged hailstorm.

When in 1957 David Fagan and I arrived behind an eager Mike O'Hara, anti-climax seemed inevitable. The weather would be bad, or we should fail on the climbs we had planned. But it was a splendid evening as we plodded up from Achintee. It had been dry for weeks and promised to remain so. Scotland was a new colour, browns and purples replaced by the green of early summer, grass, trees and bracken wearing a fresh uniform brightness. A golden glow from the sun low in the north-west poured over the plateau, filling Allt a'Muillin glen with soft and limpid light.

At the C.I.C. Hut we found Bill Turrall. After a meal, we stumbled in twilight down the glen to a little green meadow opposite Carn Dearg Buttress, perhaps the most uncompromisingly impressive crag in Britain. The tent was erected, but when at midnight we turned in we were all in the open. I lay awake for some minutes, gazing at the cliffs still pale in the evening sky, then at the glow in the north, calling . . .



**BEN NEVIS, ORION FACE**

From the snow patch to the summit is 1,600 ft. vertically. The left skyline is the route of North-East Buttress. From the top of the snow path the slender Minus One Buttress, 850 ft., rises straightening to the skyline. Left of this is the broad mass of Minus Two Buttress, 900 ft., and to the right the Long Climb Face. The Great Slab Rib is conspicuous at the shadow in the centre of the picture. Above, and to its right is the Basin. Zero Gully and Slav Route just beyond it, are largely concealed by Observatory Ridge, which forms most of the foreground

*M. J. O'Hara*





Noon next day saw us kicking steps across the snowslope beneath the north-west face of North-East Buttress, to gather at the start of Minus One Buttress, relegated in just over a year from one of the last great problems to a training climb for Centurion. It is not my custom to start with a 900-foot V.S., but Mike had cajoled until one came to accept the idea as a matter of course. The climb is not exposed. One feels comfortably placed in the middle of a big face, surrounded by rock, not space. Observatory Ridge across the way adds to the feeling of protection, but one could appreciate the directness of line up a slender rib of sustained interest. A final airy arête led to the crest of North-East Buttress, which we followed to the summit, sunbathing and somnolence.

But not sleep. Bill and David wanted tea, and Mike reminded me with unwelcome ardour that we had designs on Left-Hand Route, so an unpleasant descent of Observatory Ridge, rotten as many an Alpine arête, brought us back to the bottom. Mike had been here twice before, so our progress was mercurial. As I led the crux a constant stream of directions pushed me up the intricate zig-zags of a complex slab like a jumping firecracker. An awkward groove followed, "harder than the crux," we agreed, but 70 minutes and 600 feet after crossing the rimaye we were unroping above the first platform of North-East Buttress, exultant.

That evening we prowled beneath the foot of Carn Dearg Buttress, craning dubiously at a fissure high up in the prominent central groove which forms the crux of Centurion. It looked as lean as a doorcrack, a finger layback for 40 feet.

It was Mike's idea. Only he had been here on the big stuff before, so only he could appreciate Bob Downes' remark: "Not as hard as the crux of Sassenach, but more sustained as a whole."

Whillans had taken a long time to lead the second pitch, the groove, so it was not likely that we would get up in any great hurry, if at all. Therefore next morning David joined Bill and Ray Shinn, who had now arrived too, for a quick sally up Route II, while I plodded after Mike up a gentle glaxis and grass to the foot of Centurion.

The foot of the whole of this section of the crag is undercut by an enormous dripping overhang. A little side buttress, with,

**CARN DEARG BUTTRESS.** Route II starts at the pale slab on the extreme left of the Buttress, traverses below a light triangular slab at half height, and finishes up the right-hand edge of the Buttress. Centurion starts up the dark corner of the centre of the base of the crag, and goes direct to the top. Sassenach follows the right edge of Buttress; its Great Chimney is the right-hand of the two dark

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a cracked right wall, gives access to the groove. This is wide, consisting of steep armour-like overlapping slabs, which give the climb its name, with a vertical left retaining wall. The route lies in the crack between the slabs and this wall until one breaks left across the wall itself, up a rib on its edge outside the groove to a ledge above the huge *toit* at its top, vertically above the start if not overhanging it, and still only a third of the way up the cliff.

Mike led off up the wall. He worked slowly up, apologizing for rabbiting, first pitch nerves. Finally he bridged hugely, commented "a typical Downes move," knocked in a peg, and called me up. His rabbiting was not wholly despicable. The pitch was vertical, remarkably exposed for a first one. One already sensed the interest of the position, standing first on one foot then on the other, because there was only room for one, out above the first great overhang and beneath a little *toit* at the foot of this gigantic scar. But, like it or not, this was to be home for the next two hours.

Mike made steady progress up the groove, finding little chockstones for runners, sometimes stopping to think, but never really troubled. As the rope eased out I gazed across to a sunlit cascade of rock plunging down to the right, in pale contrast against the far off hills, or the near shadowy rocks which reflected in soft mauve the clear blue of an almost Alpine sky. Looking up again I thought the pitch, with Mike on it, bore a close resemblance to the picture of Rébuffat on the north-east face of the Badile. It is more "U" nowadays to be reminded on an Alpine E.D. of such and such a climb on Gritstone.

At 70 feet, below our "finger-layback" of last night, Mike stopped. A few stones whined past as he gardened for a runner, followed by bigger ones from the party on Route II, to whom we screamed ineffective imprecations. Movement commenced, one move only. Our notes had said "hard at 70 feet." Was that all? No. "Climb the groove, hard at 70 feet." Funnier to me than Mike. Mike tried and tried. The groove overhung. Mike rested just below the actual overhang, surveying cracks on the left wall, and a little bulge on the right, not wide enough for comfortable bridging. He muttered something about descent for a proper rest, but I knew this could lead to relaxation of tension, failing of resolution, and defeat, so said nothing.

Suddenly the rope ran out. Grunts of effort floated down, and with a bridging, laybacking, spragging mantelshelf, he was on a tiny ledge above the overhang. Now what? Though neither said it, we both felt he would not be able to reverse that move. Then, surprise. The "finger-layback" was wide enough for fist and foot jams. The scale had completely fooled us.

A few minutes later triumphal noises reverberated across and across the glen, a "thoroughly mechanized" percussion accompanying strains of "Olé, I am a bandit," and lines of "The People's Crag":—

"So raise the piton hammer high,  
Upon this crag we'll do or die;  
Though leaders fall and seconds spill,  
We'll raise the standard higher still."

But it had been a magnificent lead, determined and safe. Mike was not among those who wished to die.

As I passed the crucial overhang, a karabiner zoomed down to the grass just as the others arrived. Bill and Ray watched David climb the first pitch, before departing elsewhere; meanwhile Mike and I surveyed our little world. From our ledge high up in the corner of the groove Whillans had fought up a vicious crack in the left wall to the retaining rib just below the final *toit*, but Downes had noticed a more subtle horizontal traverse across the vertical wall to reach the rib lower down. Mike crossed with difficulty to the rib, went rapidly up easy shallow grooves, then more slowly up the open final section to step across into a little bay above the *toit*. David came up the main corner in great bounding upward leaps, complaining the while of being off form, then belayed for me to follow Mike. It was a delicate and sensational traverse, above nearly 200 feet of nothing, and on the rib, out in the open again, outside the base of the climb, one felt more than usually impressed. Perhaps this is one of the few routes in Britain to which the term "grande envergure," with all its subtle hint of more than just plain exposure, is really applicable.

We were a third of the way up; already Mike looked a little tired. He led up another crack, of gentle angle, traversed left across a vertical wall past a wobbly flake, the only loose rock on the entire climb, and up the skyline ridge on the left to another

belay, and the only stance below Route II big enough for us all to assemble.

Now the angle had relented. We were in the line of shallow grooves above the enormously steep lower section, in the middle of the great slabs which form the middle part of the buttress. The next pitch was a groove with an awkward bulge high up; still V.S., we thought. Finally the difficulties relented, an easier pitch of 80 feet leading to the start of the traverse on Route II.

The final section of the climb was defended by further huge overhangs above the entire traverse. Centurion continues its almost unbelievably direct line up the centre of the buttress by piercing these on narrow, gangway like slabs set sideways to the front of the buttress, then leads, with further difficulties, to the top of the crag in two long pitches. The cluster of overhangs was Downes' second crux.

We each ate our four squares of chocolate. Mike and I had had eight hours on the climb. He had led enough, and I was feeling the strain even from seconding. That left David to explore the way ahead, but the pitch was extremely delicate and apparently unprotected. He climbed a little overhang onto a rather holdless slab, retreated, repeated the process, but could go no farther. With an easy escape to the right, tension had relaxed, so that none of us felt capable of the effort any longer. We sailed across the traverse of Route II, lolloping over what is normally regarded as quite a hard pitch, to scramble the final 150 feet up the edge of the buttress overlooking Evening Wall, to descend down nasty ledges and a snow gully, and change at long last from constricting P.A.s to comfortable boots.

"We've done what we came for," said Mike next morning, surveying the sites of past adventures over a leisurely breakfast, a veritable grand old man of mountaineering. But it was still fine, so we tramped up a green meadow studded with gentians and moss champions in the floor of Coire na Ciste, to embark, as tradition demanded, on a new route. It was a long, vague one which wandered pointlessly but pleasantly up the sea of slabs to the right of the Italian climb to lead eventually to the foot of the Great Tower. We called it the Ruritanian climb.

That evening, still not satisfied, Bill and Ray did Raeburn's Arête while Mike and I fooled around on Bayonet, apparently much the less satisfactory line of the two. Clouds gathered;

quickly it grew cold. We stayed up late that night, talking, planning, writing. The wind howled around our flapping tent. At 6.30, in many sweaters, we struck camp. Right-Hand Route, which Bill and I had mooted, was unthinkable. We departed, Mike, David and I, for Carnmore. The C.I.C. log book had a few more pages in it; we had availed ourselves to the full of a rare spell of perfect weather. If others remember the Ben by its blizzards, we had three days in shirtsleeves to look back on.

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I live, I live!  
I have battled and won:  
Mine is the air, the mountain wild,  
The rock beneath, the valley below,  
And the morning sun.  
And yet, O Lord, to Thee this day  
Is come a child.

ANON.

## WHITNEY IN WINTER

P. E. EVANS

THERE were these two wolves—no, not coyotes, wolves; you can't mistake the deep defiant howl of a timber wolf for the bickering whine of a coyote—somewhere above us on the hillside. We couldn't actually see them but there had been those tracks in the snow. Spoor is it? Or is that the more tangible proof of animal presence? I'm never quite sure.

It was morning in the Sierra Nevada early in April and it was over now. All we had to do was to "get the hell out of it," as Don put it. Five days earlier we had driven the 200 miles from Los Angeles to a townlet in the Owens Valley with the Wild West name of Lone Pine. To the west of the town the side of the valley slopes gently up for a couple of thousand feet over a distance of several miles and then, at about 6,000 feet, the scarp face of the Sierra Nevada rears up, dramatic as a clash of cymbals, to over 14,000 feet. The loomingest peaks are not the highest; the giant himself sits well back some 16 miles from the town, but a gap, the Whitney Portal, enables Lone Pine and Mt. Whitney to keep an eye on one another. A coloured postcard of Mt. Whitney (obtainable at the Drug Store in town, price 5 cents) gives the following valuable information: "Mt. Whitney in the Sierra Nevada of southern California is the highest mountain in the 48 States, rising to an official height of 14,495 feet." Armed with this and a guide book that dismissed two thirds of a major route with "the 1,000 feet of rock remaining requires but two anchor pitons," we spend the night in the Alabama Hills, senile stumps of mountains crouched beggarwise before the Whitney Portal.

In America they have Drive-In Cinemas, Drive-In Restaurants, Drive-In Weddings and almost a Drive-In Highest Mountain. The road from Lone Pine, narrow and steep and hairpin bent in parts, ends at the Portal (8,300 feet) where there is a campground. From there up it's self service. You can either bolt it, about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles by crow up to the foot of the east face, or you

can make a leisurely meal of it, burping gently along a 13-mile track that finishes on the summit plateau.

When, at that first party, after the last Martini I had enquired with elaborate casualness whether Whitney had been climbed in winter, nobody was sure. Later I was told that it had been climbed by two parties at New Year in about 1954, and probably once on skis by that redoubtable Swiss astronomer, Fritz Zwicky, about 15 years ago. So there it was—climbed before in winter certainly, but still sufficiently alluring and shapely to satisfy any but the most jaded appetite.

We made our first attempt in the middle of February. I arrived at Whitney Portal with Don Kohler and a streaming cold. Even plodding along through the deserted campground was tiring going, in spite of the gentle slope, with a foot of equivocal snow now sustaining now breaking beneath our weight. Then we started going igam-ogam over a mound of talus towards a canyon (igam-ogam is the Welsh for zig-zag—unless that was the joke of a lifetime slipped into the dictionary by a drunken Deacon). Just short of the canyon the trail that we had been tracing through the snow went off on its own igam-thirteen-ogam miles obviously tipsy at the prospect. The way we were to follow was a straight grimly up, no sound but a brittle laugh in the frozen throat of a waterfall sort of route. We reached the canyon itself, granite walls on each sweating side of us and the floor all boulders and brush, only mostly snow. Knee deep generally, except where it was as high as a brass monkey or, between the boulders, waist high and deeper. We tried pulling ourselves along by the tops of the bushes, but except where we could get support for our flailing feet on their hidden branches, all we did was to scratch a little hole in the snow that we slowly sank into. We moved upwards very slowly. Over boulders then, bigger than houses. As we leapt from roof to roof, no mean feat with a 60 lb. pack, we sometimes missed and landed up to our waists in the snow between. Often we had to remove our packs to get out.

At the head of the canyon was a single pinetree, black and meagre against the sky. We seemed to be no nearer to it. The light was going—as light does after a Cambridge start. In six hours we had covered less than a mile and about a thousand feet. In a space between two boulder houses we trampled the snow

down and pitched the tent. Soon we had a fire and the petrol stove going, under the overhanging side of one of the boulders. Here we crouched, chin between knees in navel and noodles. There was soup and tea and biscuits, I think; my head was buzzing so from cold and smoke that I might have been feeding the man next to me, so detached did I feel. Don crawled into his sack almost immediately afterwards but I sat on in perverse fashion, staring at the play of firelight on the granite, smoked, choked, sniffing.

There was a light snow falling when we woke and clouds coming in from the west. We had neither food nor *volonté* enough, but especially food, for there to be any hope of success under those conditions. We cached what food we had and went down. As we drove back into the Owens Valley cumulus was surging over the Sierras in a white sudsy detergent deterrent lather.

Between that attempt in February and our return in March we had spent the time trying to buy some war-surplus snow-shoes, but all we could find were expensive new snow-shoes, very long and unwieldy lacrosse stick snow-shoes, probably useless for traversing steep slopes. The little round sieves of snow-shoes—bear-paw they call them—were not to be found. At the end of March, exhausted by our efforts, we gave up looking for snow-shoes and had a meal, and decided to take skis and skins although Don had never used skis before.

At the thick end of March we were again driving up to the Portal. This time the road was clear of snow for a few hundred yards farther than it had been in February. When we had strapped on our skis I made vague walking motions which Don immediately copied and improved upon. We picked up our rucksacks, overbalanced, picked them up again and set unsteadily off towards the mouth of the canyon. At the far end of the campground we signed the register and moved past the notice which says that winter travel in the Sierras is not recommended and with which everyone but ourselves was apparently in agreement.

Progress was rapid, compared with our earlier visit, until we reached the basin just within the mouth of the canyon where previously we had had to pull ourselves along on the bushes. It was perhaps more sure with skis but no less strenuous (in the right snow conditions it would be easier than in summer). After



tricky manoeuvring, first among the bushes and then among the boulders, we reached the site of our former camp and started probing the snow for our food. It was buried deeper than we thought, and when we reached it, it was to find that little animals had been there before us. They didn't like sugar and they were obviously locals, for they had left us the tea as well. Some of the tins had disappeared altogether, probably into the burrows and chinks that led down from where the food had first lain. However, with the extra that we had brought with us we still had enough provisions for three more days.

We pushed on up the canyon until we came to that part where it narrows, steep even vertical rock on both sides, and in spite of the depth of snow a tangle of brush still visible in the bottom. It seemed impassable, but following the directions of Don, who had been up in summer, I found the torn orange pine trunk, battered and dying but still firmly lodged in the wall above us, that marks a break in the cliff. We puffed and scrambled up, balancing our cumbersome load of packs and skis and poles. After about 100 feet it gave onto a ledge several feet wide in places that led us along the wall first down canyon and then up canyon, so that we were again facing the tree on the skyline, the limit of our ambition for the moment. The canyon became shallower and broader; our way across the flat-chested wall led on to the more bosomly slopes above. At last the tree was reached. But still Clyde Meadow, the 10-acre flat where we wanted to camp, lay above us. We put on our skis again and reached the Meadow just as it got dark. The stream from the tarn that lay farther on was clear for a few feet. We levelled out the snow nearby and put up the tent, scurried around for firewood by torchlight and made supper.

What a relief to be rid of pack and skis, and what a temptation to sit, huddled, staring into the fire, drinking can after can of hot sweet tea late into the night. (Tea bags Don had said. No, I had said, firmly, no tea bags. After the first few smoky brews he was converted, promised me he'd never use tea bags again.) Then a strenuous layback, away from the comfortable ledge of inactivity and one sided warmth, to climb into the extra sweater and the duvet cunningly fashioned by loving sewing machine, a garment smarter than any to be bought in the Rue Saint Sulpice—and warmer. The duvet was worn as trousers at night.

It was clear, cold, still. We turned in with the pleasant thought that we were the only people in several thousand square miles of mountains. We were tired that night although we had only reached between ten and eleven thousand feet. There was a lot to do the next day, for whereas in summer one could climb Whitney from here and return in a long day it was out of the question in those snow conditions. An ordinary night, in a tent in the snow, on a mountain side, not even very high on a mountain side; but such a night is never quite ordinary; well is it now? After turning and twisting a while I fell asleep. Instantaneously, so it seemed, there was a noise like pistol shots. A great wind had risen and was flapping and shaking the tent like a dog with a rat. But we had attached the guys to the biggest rocks we could lift from the stream, and there were rocks on every inch of the snow flaps. The main danger was that the fabric might split. It held, but made a great fuss about it. We slept fitfully.

The next day the wind was still high. We were still tired. It was decided to prospect for a higher camp site and move our camp up on the following day. We set off on skis towards the tarn. Clyde Meadow is an attractive place, a flat-bottomed bowl about 500 feet below the tree line; west of the lake cliffs rise sheer and smooth, to the east is a grove of pine flanking the exit from the canyon, north and south are broken minor peaks. The way out of the Meadow lies at the south-west corner of the lake. The snow was harder here and the angle steeper, so that the skins were no help to us. We left our skis and went on with crampons and ski poles up to the tree line, where another basin opened out shallow and bare, up to a gap in the ridge on its south side, and into the lower part of a cirque that gave onto the east face itself. The day was brilliant still, wearing just a few scattered clouds that came and went over Whitney. The wind was fiercer here, twirling the snow around its fingers as they groped over the cwm.

Ahead of us, their lower parts hidden by the snow-covered moraine and debris, were the three aiguilles, all over 14,000 feet, that lie immediately south of Whitney itself: the Keeler Needle, the Day Needle, and, imagination or personalities running out, the Third Needle. The shattered line of Pinnacle Ridge ran to our left and to our right the ridge we had just come through





continued towards the face and became the flanking wall of a small higher plateau. We went on towards the face but the closer we got the more turbulent and fierce was the wind around us. Retracing our steps we found a place for the tent between two boulders in the lower part of the cwm. We returned to the Meadow. That night the wind dropped a little and the next day we moved up to our chosen site. We were at about 12,000 feet. It was cold. By the time that we had made camp it was getting dark. The wind was rising again. The nearest firewood was a long way below. We made some tea on the stove. It didn't warm the tent very much. A slow process, too, melting the snow. Latent cold and things, I suppose. It was too cold to sleep very much. The wind was higher than it had been down below, the noise louder.

Although we woke at six when it was still cold and dark we weren't away until eight o'clock. The mountain looked very near but still it took us two hours to go up the cwm, climb out by its north side onto the higher plateau, and reach the right-hand corner of the face. The wind was as high and gusty as a pub on a Saturday night. We had now about seven hours' daylight left but even in summer the shortest route on the face, the East Buttress, takes about six hours. In that cold and that wind it would have taken considerably longer. A bivouac was undesirable. We decided to try the Mountaineers' Route, summer's way down, a couloir separating the north arête from the East Buttress. We left most of the hardware behind and cramponed up the couloir, which was nowhere steeper than  $40^{\circ}$ . After about a thousand feet of this we came to a brèche from which we could look down a couple of thousand feet into the next valley, and beyond, to all the deserted inexhaustible delight of the Sierras in winter.

In the couloir we had been reasonably sheltered, but here the full force of the wind hit us. We roped up and I led off up a second couloir, more shallow than the first, which lay on the west side of the mountain. The angle here was a good deal steeper. Powder snow trickled over the rocks of the first pitch. They were rather rounded; it all felt slightly exposed. At the end of a rope's length I found a crack for one of my two pitons, and brought Don up. He led through, entirely on snow now, and took an axe belay. As I went up to him I had to pause at

every gust, as he had done, drive my axe in to its head, which was too easily done for comfort, and crouch low over it to stay in place. On again when the wind eased. The surface was wind slab, rather powdery beneath. One moved as fast as possible between gusts. Near the top it steepened further. Rock at the lip, but not very firm by the look of it. I traversed right on the last pitch and half scrambled half blew over the edge onto the summit plateau. Five pitches, about four and a half rope lengths or roughly 500 feet, that last bit.

The whole summit, a gently sloping plateau of large boulders, was entirely bare of snow. At the highest point is a stone hut, put up in 1909, rather smaller than the C.I.C. hut and in slightly worse repair. The doors were off and it was half full of snow on this occasion. The most impressive view—I suppose one has to describe the view—was to the east. The Owens Valley was 10,000 feet below, beyond were the desert peaks hiding Death Valley. But, truth to tell, as so often on a mountain top it wasn't then but later that I savoured it to the full. Then I was too exhausted by the wind's buffeting and uneasy at the thought of the descent. I made some pointing motions and clicking noises with my camera and then turned to the ritual eating of chocolate, murmuring to the gods of the high places: "Look, I've come here in all humility, just a game really, no need to get angry." And then we roped up and the game began again and there was no time for this propitiatory nonsense.

Don seemed to have trouble getting started and when my turn came to go down I realised why. One had to launch oneself out with a leap and a push to get over the edge at all in the face of the wind. It was welcome, however, as a brake for the descent and we reached the brèche fairly quickly. We were out of the wind again and descended the first couloir in leaps, unroped now. We had reached the top about two o'clock and soon after four we were back at the tent. There was no point in spending another night at that miserable camp site when the lower one had all the comfort of a senior combination room by comparison. We packed up with a distinct end-of-term feeling. Back at Clyde Meadow the tent was up and we had collected enough wood to roast an ox or a saint by the time the stars were lit. We had neither ox nor saint but soup and oats, raisins and

jam and tea. These were enough. We sat, we ate, we lolled, we smoked, we made eight (or was it ten?) cans of tea. I told Don how, in Wales, we always climbed in the rain refusing to go out in dry weather because it was too warm, up in the middle forties as often as not. Don told me about his climbing in Washington and his native Oregon. Shy, taciturn, on the campus, he became gay, almost talkative, on a mountain but always level headed, sure footed, imperturbable, over climbing problems. That morning we had been disappointed at not being able to do a rock route, but the wind—I've only seen the like on Nevis—had made the snow route far from trivial.

The sparks shot up from the fire, curved away, and died. We turned in, sleepy, drunk with air and exercise and something else which was neither, content with a draw against nature. In the morning there were these two wolves.

# THE NORTH FACE OF THE PUNTA VALETTE

P. H. BIVEN

TREVOR PECK put on the coffee pot, lit the gas, and neatly flicked the match at my head. "What are we going to do today, Pete?" At this I groaned and rolled over in my little blue cocoon, trying to focus on the hands of my watch. Already 9.30, the sun up, birds singing, a climb to do, and still in bed. We elected to try the unclimbed North Face of the Punta Valette, a black grim looking cliff which frowns over the village of Pralognan, but first we had to wait for Cliff Fishwick to join us as he was staying with a French friend in a chalet above the village. Eventually we set off with the sun gently nibbling at our pink flesh, to wander through the cool pines which flank the mountain. We had a sack of pegs, about 400 feet of nylon, and even a couple of *étriers* each, for we had heard from the local guides that it was "formidable". As we got near to the face we could see that it was built with the usual grey limestone, layer upon layer of boilerplate slabs. The sun had been eclipsed by the broad shoulder of the Valette and the rock was cold and hostile to the touch; however, the angle was inviting and lured us on with the prospect of an easy climb.

The nylon slid easily through my fingers as Cliff moved upwards; a pause, the sound of a piton singing home, another pause, a shout, and Trevor would climb up to join him...

We climbed without let or hindrance for about three hours up the most wonderful rock. The slabs reminded one of the West Buttress of Cloggy as they overlapped in much the same way, and we found the easiest line was to keep to the ribs of these overlaps. Suddenly the whole face began to steepen considerably and the good holds vanished. For perhaps an hour Trevor hammered away, lost to our sight, whilst Cliff watched the inches of red and blue trickle upwards. I sat down, thankful to rest a blister on my heel, and began to build myself a cairn.



Selecting and measuring and carefully testing each grey stone, I prodded and patted them into shape, pausing now and then to watch the ant-like figures of the tourists in Pralognan.

At last a shout, and the rope sprang into life as Trevor took up the slack, very soon Cliff vanished to the sound of *étriers* tinkling, laboured breathing and muttered curses. A few more pitches of V, rather loose and undistinguished, followed by a long slanting chimney, brought us to the highest point reached by the French the previous year. The chimney itself was difficult to start, being overhung, and continued difficult for about 80 feet. There were few conventional holds and one climbed on pinch grips and toe jams. The French abseil piton halfway up was a welcome sight. We were now on unknown ground and not a little apprehensive, for the cliff reared up, black and ominous in the fading light. We began to wonder how far we could climb before nightfall; what sort of bivouac, if any would there be? We decided to press on and if there were no ledge forthcoming we would abseil to the one we now stood on.

The mountain unsheathed its claws; to the left was a monstrous belt of black slabs which reared up for 500 feet to join the most incredible overhang I had ever seen; on the right was a tremendous rift in a vertical wall, quite unclimbable. The only possible route lay between these two, up a natural waterslide. Happily someone had turned the tap off and what little water remained was frozen.

The handholds had been reduced by the action of ice and water to small rounded lumps, the sort of hold where you don't hang around to think on the folly of twilight climbing on grade VI rock, but just press on hoping that the next one will be a little bigger. They got smaller. At the end of a very delicate and exposed traverse there was an overhanging groove not more than 30 feet high, but which proved as brutal and uncompromising as any I have met. I found the continual changing from pure balance work to desperate sweating very unsettling, rather like doing the last pitch of Diagonal on Dinas Mot before the crux. Trevor and Cliff muscled up the groove as fast as tired arms and legs would permit, clipped on to the belay piton, and paid out the two ropes fastened to my waist. The route now led up a smooth slanting gangway which gradually got narrower and narrower until after 20 feet it faded out altogether.

I banged a peg in here, clipped in one of the ropes, and set about climbing over a wicked looking bulge; my feet were splayed out in an enormous straddle which Trevor subsequently found impossible, and it was at this point that I dropped one of my three remaining pitons. I can still feel the indescribable anguish with which I watched it slowly arc into the depths. Gradually the quality of the rock deteriorated and the poor finger holds would suddenly fly off and leave me shaking. Eventually after what seemed hours I got up that pitch, desperately banged in the two remaining pegs and brought Trevor and Cliff up to the minute stance. It was almost dark and we all felt that a large terrace was only a few feet away if only we could reach it before it got completely dark. As Trevor was the last man to come up the crux pitch, and the stance was already filled to overflowing, we forced him into the lead with many discouraging words. How he found what very few holds there were we shall never know, and when it came to my turn I was more than glad to receive a hearty tug. We settled down for the night on a very comfortable ledge after some nocturnal wanderings, and after the ritual of banging pegs in and tying ourselves in an absolute web of rope, we warmed our near frozen hands on a cigarette and sat down on a buttery edition of the airmail *Telegraph* and a polythene lunch bag.

Theology was the topic for the first three hours or so and as a corollary we sang all the hymns we could think of because we had read somewhere that it kept one warm. After this high note the party seemed to degenerate and some good British rugger songs wafted gently on the French night air. Apparently they heard us some 5,000 feet away in the valley which must prove something, although I'm not quite sure what. It was at this time that Cliff's French friend Paul got the car out of the garage and began signalling by headlamp to us. Slowly the night dragged on; the stars still shone in the west with a cold unwavering light, but only the Plough stayed to challenge the sweeping life from the east, and it seemed more fitting to call it the Great Bear. One by one, black shapeless masses of stone became infused with a delicate radiance; inanimate rocks were reborn for yet another day. Slowly, so very slowly, they took on the third dimension, and one could see for miles over the intervening ranges towards Mont Blanc. Rubbing cramped limbs and

frozen fingers we painfully untangled the ropes and eventually set off along our ledge to climb the remaining few hundred feet to the summit.

A couple of hours later we tottered into Pralognan, to receive congratulations and a stiff Pernod. After a chat with the guides we went back to the van and our little blue cocoons to sleep for the rest of the day.

# THE LIFT

M. W. HARVEY

I HEAVED my rucksack onto the back seat of the car, climbed in beside the driver, who was a witty-looking business-man of about 35, and was whisked away on another "hitch" of my journey to Wales.

After swapping cigarettes, destinations, and small chat, the driver's curiosity overcame him.

"Why *do* you go climbing, then?" he asked.

I took a deep breath, and prepared myself.

"I'm not exactly sure myself. You see, I give people different reasons according to who they are. You can't carry on an intellectual conversation with a truck-driver and it's no use telling a man with a deformity that you enjoy the physical sensation of movement on a climb."

"What category do I come under?" he asked drily, his eyes on the road as it twisted out of Corwen.

"People that I really try and explain to," I said. "To start with, lots of people imagine that 'getting to the top' is the chief aim, which it is, in mountaineering in the classical sense, I suppose."

"Like Everest," he suggested.

"Exactly"—I became enthusiastic—"and the underlying thought of getting to the top carried on long after the classical Alpine peaks were all climbed, and climbers in Wales before the first World War would almost always go to the top of their mountain after climbing a crag on it. Nowadays they return to the bottom and climb up the same crag a different way, or simply go home satisfied."

I paused as the car checked behind a coughing cement lorry before swinging out and past it, and strove to find a way of expressing myself simply.

"I think I climb for the reason I mentioned before," I said, "because I get physical pleasure out of the movements, or—this

is more what I mean—because I like making something difficult seem easy.”

I sat back, pleased with such an obscure-sounding approach to the subject, and half wished he would drop it.

“But that’s obvious,” he said. “It’s just technique, probably mixed up with a bit of showmanship, too. You don’t climb because you like climbing, but because you like practising your technique.”

That gave me to think and while I thought I observed him out of the corner of my eye, and caught him smiling the crafty smile of the well-prepared arguer; of the man who has yet another chockstone in his pocket.

“I suppose you’re right,” I said, vaguely, playing for time, “because I like ski-ing and sailing and driving, and they all require a special technique. But there must be more to it than that, else people would simply swap from one pastime to another, because your *technique* is a common factor.”

He clucked quite distinctly, and I looked to see if he had a beard that he was laughing into.

“That’s my argument,” he said, “and you’re arguing back to front. You’re supposed to be telling me why you climb. There must be other reasons besides this universal technique, then, such as love of the high hills, or some ‘psycho’ reason, or what have you.”

He swung his car over the Waterloo bridge at Bettws-y-Coed, and as he did so I seemed to see in him a glimpse of someone I had seen before, but the illusion passed, and we were on the open road again, in the dusk.

“I’ll tell you what,” I said, rather abruptly. “You won’t find many absolutely pure rock-gymnasts. Nearly all climbers like hill walking and”—I searched for a phrase—“Greater Mountaineering, of which rock-climbing is only a part, though admittedly a large one. You see what I mean?”

He considered a moment.

“That’s so,” he said. “Now I like a walk and I like the sea—I was born on the Essex coast—so naturally I like walking by the sea.”

This was a new angle.

“Um. What you are saying, then, is that man’s choice of pastimes isn’t limited by what he’s good at, but by what he is

attracted to, possibly for reasons formed during his boyhood? But I never even saw a mountain until I was fourteen, and I was crazy about climbing long before that. How do you explain that? And," I added triumphantly, "I sailed on the sea long before that, and liked it, and I still do."

He was piloting the car silently down the long twisting road into Capel Curig, and I knew time was short, and suddenly I saw the answer to my own question.

"But I know myself. I used to haunt the seashore so much when I couldn't scrounge a boat-trip that I got to be pretty expert on the local sandstone cliffs. In fact I did some things there, one or two out of necessity, that I still find hard. And besides that, I've always liked running and hiking, and I suppose hiking plus rock-gymnastics equals mountaineering."

I stopped, short of words, and felt slightly foolish. "What you're trying to say," he said ruminatively, "is this. You like climbing because you like the sensation of consciously doing it well; you like exercising your technique, in fact. You acquired this technique by climbing on your local cliffs, to which, paradoxically, you were attracted by a love of the sea, and naturally applied it to mountaineering because you also liked rough country and hard going. And when you took up mountaineering you realised you were right in your choice because everything clicked. You liked the people, the scenery (who doesn't, apart from Doctor Johnson?) and you found you were good at it."

I nodded, surprised at his insight.

"That's about it," I said.

"If you'd had the use of a boat when you were roaming the cliffs, you'd probably never have come climbing; or if there were no cliffs."

"Like Essex." I said, as the headlights plunged down over the tumbled blocks below Gorphwysfa and we purred down towards the Cromlech Bridge.

"Yes," he said abstractedly, "there aren't any cliffs at Clacton."

He navigated the bridge with the sureness of foreknowledge, and I turned to ask him how often he travelled by that road, but he was still musing.

"I can't think why I took it up," he said, and turned into Ynys Ettws.









# RED ROSE ON GRITSTONE

J. ALLAN AUSTIN

THIS is a survey of recent gritstone climbing, written by an enthusiast. The reader will find here no mention of problems or training grounds but only of climbs, routes or crags. As an account of recent climbing it will emphasise the great strides made in climbing technique during the last few years. In truth however the rise in standard is less marked on gritstone than in other areas such as Wales or Cornwall. Indeed a few climbs of the pre-1950 era still bear comparison if not with the very hardest, at least with the harder modern climbs. Outstanding in this respect are the routes of those great climbers Peter Harding and the late Arthur Dolphin, who led many great ascents including four routes of outstanding difficulty. Amid all this talk of higher climbing standards, these four routes have had no more than 16 ascents in the last ten years.

Beeline and Tiger Traverse, like their parent crags Ilkley and Cratcliffe, are far apart in distance and technique. One thing they have in common: they are hard leads, rather than routes of great technical difficulty. Both are very serious climbs. The fierce exposure of Beeline is matched on Tiger Traverse by steadily increasing difficulty, both strenuous and fingery, that makes retreat a most unpleasant and impracticable thought. As was to be expected, Almscliffe produced a route of unusual strenuousness, and Birdlime Traverse, the nearest thing on gritstone to Kaisergebirge Wall, is a fierce and exposed problem of finger strength. Demon Rib, Harding's masterpiece at Black Rocks, is the very opposite of the two traverses, for the difficulty, and it is probably the most difficult of these routes, is mainly technical. For this reason, unlike Birdlime and Tiger Traverse, it will probably hold its position as one of the more difficult climbs on gritstone.

Undeniably, however, in recent years a large number of routes of great difficulty and high quality has been climbed, and it would be folly not to admit that great strides have been

made. New climbs have been done in all areas, and climbers from many groups and clubs have shared in this development. But the bulk of the credit for this harvest must go to the Manchester group of J. Brown, D. Whillans, Nat Allen and their friends, who have logged an astonishing number of first ascents in the last nine years. Most of the new developments took place in areas easy of access from Manchester; places like Kinder and Almscliffe have not yet caught up. This group has dominated gritstone climbing to such an extent that new routes of difficulty and quality by other climbers are rare. Indeed between 1950 and 1954 all the hard routes of note were led by climbers of this group, and it is only in the last year or two that other climbers have started repeating and in some cases adding to their routes.

Recent developments really started with the ascent of the Unconquerable Cracks at Stanage by Joe Brown in 1950. Although the climbing was really no more difficult than that of existing routes, they were longer and fiercer, a quality that was to come more and more to the fore in the new routes of Brown and Whillans. These routes, along with climbs such as Valkyrie on Froggatt or Suicide Wall on Cratcliffe, are still regarded as top quality climbs, but no longer among the hard routes of gritstone, being rather an introduction to more advanced climbing such as the great cracks of Curbar.

The first of the great modern routes to fall was Elder Crack, and with its appearance on Curbar, the crag that eventually became the gritstoners' Cloggy, a new standard was born. Elder Crack is a magnificent overhanging chimney-crack of about 70 feet. It takes one of the steep smooth walls so typical of Curbar, but although an unusually fine climb, it must yield to Peapod as the best on Curbar.

Peapod is the centre of three great cracks splitting a slightly overhanging wall of about 60 feet. It is a beautifully proportioned crack, easily recognised by its characteristic peapod shape. Although not the hardest of the three sister cracks, it gives fierce climbing of great technical interest, and is clearly destined to be a gritstone classic. The great cracks on either side, particularly the Right Eliminate, give an impression of fierce and aloof strength. This is not belied, for these climbs require a strength and stamina unusual even for gritstone.

A short distance along the edge, tucked away out of sight, lie the Dead Bay climbs waiting for an unwary climber. These two climbs are incredibly deceptive in height, steepness and severity, and the climbing they provide is high in the extreme category. Dead Bay Crack is just an extremely hard and strenuous crack climb, interesting but not outstandingly good. The Groove on the other hand is a first class climb of considerable technical interest. The climbing is remarkably hard and consistent, and this, combined with the utter lack of protection, makes Dead Bay Groove, if not the hardest, probably the most satisfying and most serious climb on Curbar.

Nearby Froggatt has one route in this category. Though on an edge famous for its steep cracks, it is a slab, a pleasant open slab, perhaps the most delightful of all the recent efforts of Joe Brown. The crux is appallingly thin (players on the Diagonal theme please note), and although still a slab it is quite steep and fingery. Strangely enough in an area reputedly the home of strong, muscular climbers, the Great Slab, is the only one to achieve what passes for popularity among such routes (seven or eight ascents), for the men now leading these modern climbs are all extremely competent slab climbers.

1950-1952 was the period of great achievement, which saw the first ascents of the last seven routes, all by J. Brown, with the single exception of Whillans' Dead Bay Groove. All have been repeated and have lost some of their former glory; but they are still the most formidable group of climbs on gritstone.

One startling development of this period, beginning with Whillans' lead of the Sloth, was the conquest of some of the great ceilings. These overhangs or nebs are characteristic of gritstone and most edges abound in them. Perhaps the way of future development lies here? The most impressive of all is the great barrier of the Roaches. A ten foot overhang stretching across the top of the Great Slab, this barrier is crossed in only one place by a green crack, the way of the Sloth. The Sloth, a route of fantastic exposure, must be one of the best and most spectacular routes on gritstone. Surprisingly, it is neither very difficult nor unusually strenuous; but it is an incredibly fierce lead and enjoys a unique and unrivalled status in gritstone climbing.

The overhangs of Stanage do not have the splendid position of the Sloth, but they are no less spectacular, and Quietus and

the Dangler, though taking considerably smaller overhangs, are far more serious routes. Quietus, first led by J. Brown, takes direct the impossible looking High Neb itself. This Neb is a seven foot tongue of rock jutting out from the top of a fifty foot buttress. It is the most prominent feature on Stanage and is visible from miles around. The actual climbing on the ceiling must be amongst the most spectacular in England (many will have seen pictures of Peter Biven on this climb), but the real climbing only starts when the spectacle has finished. The Dangler, another route of Brown's, is much more artificial, if such a phrase can be used here, and as the name suggests it is an amusing climb to watch if not to climb. It enjoys the doubtful merit of being the hardest of the overhangs. This list of overhangs is by no means complete but others such as Strapiombo on Froggatt have neither the position of the Sloth nor the technical interest of Quietus or the Dangler, and are now looked upon as no more than ordinary climbs.

The Roaches are generally noted as containing long routes of high quality, but not usually of outstanding difficulty. Recent developments have changed this and to the old characteristics of length and quality must now be added appreciable technical difficulty. Probably the best of these modern routes, always excepting the Sloth, and probably the hardest is *Matinée Crack*. A first class route of good length, split into two pitches, *Matinée* gives very high standard climbing well up to the usual quality of the Roaches. A few new routes have been done on nearby Hen Cloud. One or two compare in difficulty and quality with the best of Curbar or Stanage, but as this is a forbidden crag, very strictly gamekeepered, most have had only one ascent,

The longest routes of gritstone are at Dovestones Quarry, some 180 feet. The best, probably the hardest and certainly the most serious, is the *Girdle Traverse*. With an exposure unmatched on grit it includes climbing of every type at a consistently high standard, and as extra tit bits to attract Welsh climbers, loose rock and a few pitons. Only three quarters of an hour's walk away is the beautifully steep edge of Wimberry, edge of steep hard cracks and even steeper unclimbed buttresses with few routes, but all of unusual quality, and all steep. Indeed the dominant note of Wimberry is steepness, steep overhanging

cracks and corners bounded by great shark's fin buttresses, overhanging and unclimbable. The *pièce de résistance* is Trident Route. Not so hard as some of the other climbs, this provides 80 feet of interesting and consistently steep climbing, and must be among the best crack climbs on grit. The hardest on the crag is probably Whillans' Freddie's Finale. The great undercut curving crack, extremely difficult to enter and by no means easy to continue, is a very hard and strenuous climb. As a strong man's climb however it pales into insignificance before Brown's Blue Lights Crack. This, the monolith crack of modern gritstone, is a 50 foot crack, which demands an incredible amount of effort and hard work.

One of the few edges that does not owe the opening of its harder routes to Brown and Co. is Gardoms Edge. Some of these routes are of a high standard of difficulty and quality, but they are not quite up to those of the Manchester group. Moyer's Buttress, by far the best climb on Gardoms, was for years one of the "last great problems" on gritstone, and when Peter Biven made the first ascent in 1955 an exceptionally fine route was born. Hard, but not extreme, and superbly situated, this buttress is probably the best of that all too rare phenomenon, the modern buttress climb.

In the last year or two several first ascents of difficulty and quality comparable with the best already done have been made by climbers outside the Manchester group. Biven's impressively exposed corner Excalibur on Lawrencefield, or the fierce overhanging wall of the Shelf on Crookrise, are perhaps the best examples. Brown's group have also added to their long list of triumphs with the Rasp, a fearsome looking route up the overhanging face of Higgarr Tor, and Brown's ascent of the great overhanging crack of Chatsworth, proving that they are still dominant in modern gritstoning. The extent to which Brown and perhaps to a lesser degree Whillans advanced gritstone technique is debatable, but the measure of their achievement may be seen in the list of ascents. The first repeat ascent of any of the six great Curbar routes by a climber outside the Manchester group took place just five years after its first ascent.

Amidst all this talk of modern developments it is only fair to mention some outstanding achievements of the "Old 'Uns." Gilbert and Ellis' Chimney on Berbage and Kirkus' Corner

on Stanage are recommended as routes of quality, guaranteed to give climbing as interesting and technical as may be desired. Gilbert and Ellis' Chimney has certainly not had more than one or two clean ascents (it now sports a piton), and upon failing to climb it certain eminent modern climbers have even been heard to remark that it is impossible. It is possible to pick out one or two 25-year-old routes that will test any prospective climber to the full.

Although not strictly within the scope of this article a note on the most outstanding lead in the history of gritstone climbing will not be out of place here. About 40 years ago (perhaps more) Fred Botterill made the first ascent of the bootwide crack at Ilkley that eventually became known as Botterill's Crack. Even today this crack is not regarded as an easy lead, and it is still, even by modern standards, a V.S. of "more than ordinary difficulty." It was a magnificent lead by a climber whose career dates back to the gully era. As was only to be expected, Botterill like many other great gritstoners was a Yorkshireman, and it must only be a matter of time before the wheel turns its full circle and men of the White Rose again take their rightful place at the head of gritstone development.

## BUREAUCRACY IN MOUNTAINEERING ?

MICHAEL HOLTON

ON a brilliant spring Saturday in 1953 I sat next to John Hammond at a Council Meeting of the British Mountaineering Council. He had come to report on behalf of the Harrison's Rocks Sub-committee but rather resented being couped up in the Alpine Club on a day which he would have enjoyed more in North Wales. In the same sense it may perhaps seem inexcusable to take up space in this Journal to consider the activities of a body which some have regarded as superfluous, or at least far removed from the real object of mountaineering. Nevertheless, the Climbers' Club is a founder member of the B.M.C., has a permanent representative on its Committee and provided in John Barford the Council's first Honorary Secretary, whose initiative, energy and enthusiasm went to moulding the B.M.C. in its first years. Let me therefore explain what has been going on; readers can judge for themselves whether or not it is all worth while.

The B.M.C. was instituted in 1944 "to facilitate consultation between mountaineering clubs domiciled in Great Britain . . . and to advise and take appropriate action on all matters on which the collective experience of British Mountaineering Clubs may prove of service to the mountaineering community of the nation. The rights and status of the clubs represented on the Council are unaffected by the foundation of the Council." The important points to note, 14 years later, are that consultation is intended between mountaineering clubs *without differentiation*, and that action is intended to prove of service to the *mountaineering community* as a whole.

It was largely due to the efforts of Geoffrey Winthrop Young over more than 30 years that a representative body of British mountaineers was able to get going at all. It is perhaps natural that mountaineers should have resisted the earlier formation of

a body which might trespass on the individual character of their sport, and that strong regional loyalties should have led to apprehension of a central organization apparently several stages removed from the crag or hill. However, the B.M.C. was founded; its Constitution provided close links with the Alpine Club, and the Committee was to have representatives of most of the senior clubs, although every member club had a representative on the Council. In the event the evolution of the B.M.C. has been closely linked with the pattern of development of mountaineering clubs in this country since the war. Before 1939 there were less than one-quarter of the clubs that there are today.

In Britain we have nothing to compare with the comprehensive, national club found on the Continent, with its relatively low entrance qualification and thousands of members. British clubs—that is, formally constituted bodies, not just groups of friends—may be divided by a rough generalisation into three categories. Firstly there are the senior clubs, well established before the last war, usually with some entrance qualification, often a relatively large membership though individual members frequently belong to other senior clubs. Most of these clubs have huts and publish guidebooks and a journal. Although their main interest is often in a particular area their membership may be national.

Secondly there are clubs of which membership is open only to a particular section of the community, such as a university or branch of the Services; no other entrance qualification is usually required. Most of these clubs have no huts of their own but do publish journals or news bulletins. With a few exceptions, whose history really justifies their inclusion in the senior group, the majority of this category was founded in the first six years after the war. Membership of one of these clubs may lead to membership of a senior club.

The third group consists of small, local clubs, with membership, usually mixed, of less than 100 and often less than 50, centred on a town or district containing virtually all the club's members; novices are usually accepted. Some of these clubs have a hut and most produce a modest journal or news sheet; some have published guides; membership of another club is not the rule. Nearly all these clubs have been formed since the



war—as many in the first six years after it as in the last six years.

The growth of post-war clubs reflects the popularization of the sport that has been, and still is, taking place. Most of these clubs offer a full meets programme, often including a visit to the Alps; enthusiasm is strong and a high proportion of total club membership may be found on meets. Individual parties of members now go farther afield to North Norway, Iceland and even to the Himalaya. Although novices are usually admitted, a high standard of safe mountaineering is generally maintained and I do not believe that accidents are any more frequent amongst these new clubs than any others.

The B.M.C. has today 69 constituent clubs, and new members, not necessarily all new clubs, are now being elected at the rate of ten a year. About one third of the constituent clubs have less than 50 members, another third between 50 and 100, and the remaining third between 100 and 900. Eighteen Scottish clubs belong to the Association of Scottish Climbing Clubs, including the S.M.C., which is a member of both organizations. On the B.M.C.'s records are some 30 other clubs which, with a few notable exceptions including the Karabiner and Rock and Ice Clubs and the Alpine Climbing Group, are mostly small, local clubs founded in the last five years. These figures do not take account of clubs whose object is primarily skiing. B.M.C. member clubs divide into the three categories described above as follows:—

<i>Date of formation</i>		<i>“senior”</i>	<i>“special”</i>	<i>“local”</i>
Before 1939	..	13	5	4
1939-1951	..	—	10	10
Since 1952	..	—	8	19
Total	..	13	23	33

It is the growth of the post-war clubs in the second and third groups that is particularly relevant to the position of the B.M.C. Addressing a meeting of leading British clubs at the Alpine Club before the B.M.C. was formed, Geoffrey Winthrop Young said that some method should be devised by which the experience of the clubs could be made available to the large numbers of young people then starting to climb. Fourteen years later we can see that the B.M.C.'s most important function has been the pooling of knowledge, experience and services, particularly of the older clubs, for the benefit of all. This has

gone a long way to offsetting the physical inability of the senior clubs to take in more than a relatively small proportion of the post-war mountaineering generation.

In performing this function an early necessity was not to discourage the new clubs. The B.M.C. Constitution required applicant clubs to have not less than 50 members and to be at least 21 years of age, but this could be waived by unanimous agreement of the Committee, and it usually was when such clubs applied to join. Although some people were concerned at the rate of development in the late 1940s, their view was not sustained; a few clubs formed in this period, and now well established, have never applied for membership, but a far greater proportion of newly founded clubs do apply, and the formal requirement of more than 50 members and 21 years of life was dropped altogether from the Constitution last year, though a new club is still expected to show that it can run itself properly, and is likely to develop soundly.

Thus mountaineers' experience and services have been pooled through the B.M.C. It would be wrong to think that all this has benefited only the post-war clubs. The application of pooled experience, whether it results in better equipment, safer climbing or the protection of the mountaineer's countryside, will benefit the whole mountaineering community, including that fairly large number who belong to no club at all. Many of the post-war generation of clubs are now particularly well established and can themselves contribute useful experience and resources to the general pool. Their participation in the B.M.C.'s work has been effectively increased by using their members in committee and other work.

In 14 years the B.M.C.'s work has covered a wide field. It has been done entirely voluntarily by a series of committees and by the Council's honorary officers. Normally any work undertaken would be beyond the scope of individual clubs, for there is no intention to undermine the independence or responsibilities of member clubs. Thus, the B.M.C. has always regarded the introduction of beginners and the running of meets as a club function. But some general help can be given. In the early days there was the first handbook, *Climbing in Britain*, which sold over 120,000 copies—an almost unbelievable number; a system of professional guides was also introduced. Today several

hundred enquiries a year are dealt with; advice may be given about the many courses run by various organizations as well as how to join a club. There is no difficulty in putting beginners in touch with one of the many clubs prepared to consider them for membership. For a new handbook G. H. Francis' new text *Mountain Climbing*, in the Teach Yourself series, has been adopted.

Access to and encroachment upon mountain country have long been a concern of the B.M.C.; and increasing numbers have emphasized access questions. One of the first major cases of threatened encroachment, where the B.M.C. acted in conjunction with the Climbers' Club and the open air organizations, was the North Wales Hydro-electric Scheme. This has recently appeared in a new form in the plan to build a nuclear power station at Trawsfynydd. What causes particular concern are the associated pumped-storage schemes which might be sited farther into Snowdonia. The B.M.C., as a constituent body of the North Wales Protection Committee, has asked that the Minister should show that it is in the national interest to site the scheme here. Then, for some years the B.M.C. had been trying to find a way of preserving access to Harrison's Rocks. Negotiations with the Forestry Commission were protracted; now, at the B.M.C.'s request the C.C.P.R. has agreed to accept responsibility for the legal ownership of the rocks which the B.M.C. is to buy for a very reasonable sum. Access to the gritstone outcrops of the Peak Park has caused as much concern. Thanks to an advanced and co-operative Park Planning Board, attempts are being made to secure access agreements where possible, and the B.M.C. Peak District Committee has been revived under the chairmanship of Jack Longland to co-operate with the Board. The most recent problem solved is access to Rhum; the B.M.C. and A.S.C.C. together negotiated terms with the Nature Conservancy which enable a limited number of member-club parties to go there.

The quality of mountaineering equipment available in the shops has also been a concern of the B.M.C. since its first days. This work takes time since it involves both accumulation of practical experience and pure research requiring the co-operation of other bodies with the necessary facilities. The first specification for natural fibre mountaineering rope was established in 1947. More recent was the publication of warnings against

war-surplus karabiners, some of which were found to open at ridiculously small loads. At present the B.M.C. is co-operating with the British Standards Institution in the preparation of a minimum standard for nylon climbing rope. One feature of the draft standard is a recommendation that a heavier rope, of  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inch circumference, be used for rock climbing; this is a size larger than what has normally been called "full weight" in the past.

One of the most interesting examples of the Council's work has been to represent the mountaineer's view to government and national authorities, and to the open-air associations. The Services have been advised on a number of subjects. The post-war era of shortages—of petrol, materials and foreign currency for example—presented opportunities for mountaineers' interests to be pushed in small ways. But the most effective example must be the acting together with the Mountain Rescue Committee to win the last round of Wilson Hey's long and difficult battle with the Home Office to place morphia in mountain rescue kits. In several minor ways today the B.M.C. is consulted by the Board of Trade, Ordnance Survey and Ministries of Agriculture and Supply. Then there are the connexions with organizations having similar interests, with the A.S.C.C. with whom work of common interest is undertaken jointly, with the C.P.R.E. Standing Committee on National Parks, with the Central Council for Physical Recreation, with the Mountain Rescue Committee, and also with the National Trust in North Wales and the Boards of other National Parks.

The least developed field is overseas relations. There is some correspondence with clubs abroad, and the B.M.C. is a member of the Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme and has made some valuable informal contacts; but it is not possible to send delegates to many of the meetings abroad on a total subscription income that was less than £150 in 1957. The Continental organizations are generally wealthier, for they are closely linked with their corresponding national alpine clubs in which are concentrated their mountaineering communities' resources; in some cases they are associated also with the national tourist organizations.

Other present work includes plans for construction of the Memorial Hut in Glen Brittle and encouragement of the

A.C.G.'s series of Alpine guidebooks in English. Finally and always there is the general correspondence and exchange of information with clubs, both members and non-members, with individual mountaineers, youth organizations, local authorities and so on. In 1957 correspondents ranged from the Governor of a prison to an Alpine guide.

Bureaucracy ? I leave the reader to judge. Whatever his view, we shall probably be faced with even greater numbers in our most popular mountain districts in future years. The continued development of the local club, under the wing of the B.M.C., offers some safeguard, for it can provide the personal introduction to the hills for many more who might otherwise go alone or find little beyond a training course. In this way no club need lose its individuality and we need never fear the possibility of one vast, perhaps semi-commercial, body to control the traffic by organizing mountaineering week-ends and holidays. The club can give the beginner the right background and teach what is expected of a member of our mountaineering community; and through the fellowship of the B.M.C. the clubs can help each other to fulfil this essential and inescapable task.

# CRAGBOUND

DAVID YEOMAN

**L**AST summer, when climbing on Lliwedd with my brother Guy, I had my first encounter with a cragbound sheep. As Guy is a vet—and consequently is familiar with ovine physiology and psychology—his contribution to the subsequent rescue operation was invaluable. Even so we made a number of mistakes which wasted much time and energy, so I am writing for the benefit of those who have not yet met this problem, in the hope that when they do they may be spared some of our frustrations.

This, briefly, is the incident on which these notes are based: While on Terminal Arête between the Great Terrace and the Gallery a sheep was observed bleating plaintively on a ledge between 50 and 100 feet below the Gallery and somewhat to the right—that is, I think, roughly above the Red Wall-Purple Passage band of slabs. The unmistakable evidence that she had been trapped for several days was the scorched earth appearance of the ledge on which she was standing and those immediately above it, including a section of the Gallery. Hardly a blade of green vegetation remained.

We traversed to the Gallery and descended until within a rope length of the sheep. I then anchored and belayed Guy while he tried to catch her. This took some time because although she was trapped, she was still able to move over a fairly wide area and more than once she got beyond the range of our rope so that I had to move and re-anchor in a new position. Also she moved about with considerably more agility than we did.

However, after nearly an hour Guy caught her and tied a rope harness round her which was then attached to the end of the climbing rope. We then proceeded up the mountain. Most of the way, with the inducement of me pulling and Guy pushing, she climbed under her own steam, but on reaching a rock wall we pulled her up bodily to the next shelf. We finally released her at the East Summit between 2 and 2½ hours after we had

first seen her, apparently none the worse for her rather rough treatment.

The advice which follows is based on this experience together with Guy's general knowledge of the ways of sheep and may need modification to suit particular circumstances.

### *Party*

Two men are essential, one acting as anchor man (referred to as A) and the other as sheep man (referred to as S) who has to capture and secure the sheep and then conduct her up (or, if more convenient, down). While more men would simplify the capture, and reduce the labour of hauling, two can manage.

### *Equipment*

The equipment we had, and, briefly, the purpose for which we used it, was as follows:

120 foot climbing rope: this was tied to A's waist and used for anchoring A. During the pursuit the other end was attached with a Tarbuck knot and snaplink to S's waist band. Having captured and harnessed the sheep it was transferred to a snaplink on her harness. A held the rope with a waist belay.

20 foot waist line: this was used for making the sheep's harness.

8 foot sling length: this was used firstly to secure the sheep temporarily while the harness was being put on. It could then be used to attach S with a Prusik knot to the climbing rope after the end of this had been transferred to the sheep. (Actually Guy stuffed it in his pocket and climbed free. We only thought of this possible further use afterwards.)

5 foot sling length: this was used as a waist band for S.

Two snaplinks: one was used on S's waist band and one on the sheep's harness.

Less equipment than this would have added to the difficulties, although I daresay one could manage with nothing but a climbing rope. Additional items which might be useful are additional slings and snaplinks to enable A to use thread belays, and, conceivably, pegs, expansion bolts, or a shot rammer gun if natural belays are not to be found. Also a second climbing rope would increase S's operational range during the capture and would permit longer (and hence, fewer) pitches during the climb up. As noted later it would also help if the escape is to be by descent.

*Preparation*

At the risk of sounding like a military training manual—or even a book on Everest—I must stress that it pays handsomely to make all the preparations one can before going into the attack.

The first thing is to locate and note the position of as many sound bollards as possible in the zone of operations for anchoring. (The area of Lliwedd on which we were operating, while offering little more than scrambling in the way of climbing difficulties, was singularly lacking in belays which did not come to pieces in one's hand.)

The second thing is to tie preparatory knots, so far as one can, in the odd pieces of rope, so that S does not have to do this with one hand and his teeth while holding a sheep with the other. The 20 foot length of rope which is to be used for the harness should be doubled and an overhand knot tied at the loop end with a bight large enough to pass quite loosely over the sheep's head. The 8 foot length should have a small loop tied at each end (bowline). One loop should be large enough to allow the other loop and knot to pass through so as to form a noose.

*Catching the Sheep*

This is quite the hardest part of the whole business and it is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules as much depends on the local geography and the temperament of the sheep.

As S the main point to remember is that, although a sheep is usually timid and tends to run away when approached, once you can grab her by almost any part of her anatomy she becomes quite docile and does not struggle. By far the easiest thing to grasp is the fleece; one good handful and you've got her. Hence the problem resolves itself into getting close enough to be able to dive in as though going for a small scrum-half, and grabbing. If the sheep has just been closely sheared go for a leg, or the tail. If possible approach slowly and silently from the rear and dive before she sees you coming. This is difficult. Another way is to approach slowly making soothing noises. Gentle whistling, humming, or baby talk—any continuous and varied, but not startling, sound—may enable you to hold her attention while you get within range. If you can corner her, approach on hands and knees as otherwise she may slip past your legs at the last moment. Another gambit is to try and drive her to attempt to



climb up something she can't manage; then pounce when she falls back off balance. If you can't actually corner her, try and drive her into a position where she has only one obvious escape route; then when she starts to move, dive.

It goes without saying that you should try to approach from the outside so that the sheep is pinned against the crag as this lessens the danger of her inadvertently going over the edge. It also goes without saying that since, *ex hypothesi*, the whole operation is taking place on a steep mountain face, S should be securely belayed on the rope by A who must ensure S's safety, but, at the psychological moment, give him enough rope to make his tackle and then be ready to hold S plus sheep. It's really all great fun provided it doesn't go on for more than about 35 minutes each way.

An alternative to the rugger tackle as a means of capture is the lasso, but I do not recommend it unless you can first arrange to have a course of instruction from Hopalong Cassidy.

#### *Securing the Sheep*

Having caught the sheep S must temporarily secure her while the harness is put on. The 8 foot sling (which has a small loop at each end) is passed round the sheep's chest behind the front legs and one loop passed through the other making a noose. The loop on the free end is then clipped to the snaplink on S's waistband.

Next the harness is put on. For this the doubled 20 foot length is used. The knotted loop is passed over the sheep's head so that the knot is on her chest. The two ropes are then passed between her front legs, one up each side of her body, crossed over her back and down the other side, both together between her back legs, crossed beneath the tail, one up each side of the tail, and joined with an overhand knot above the tail. The two ropes are then taken together along the back under the crossed ropes, through the loop behind the neck and back to the cross in the middle of the back, where the whole harness is pulled tight and then securely tied. Make sure that there is no pressure on the front (underside) of the throat and that the ropes are not pressing on the udders.

A snap link is now attached to the crossed ropes in the middle of the back and the main rope transferred to this from the snaplink on S's waistband. S now removes the temporary noose,

and if the difficulty of the terrain warrants the precaution, can tie it in a closed ring and attach himself with it to the main rope using a Prusik knot.

The harness described above is one used for weighing animals on a spring balance. Its virtue is that when the animal is on its feet it can walk without restriction, but it can be lifted with complete safety, and without discomfort. When a sheep is lifted in this way it becomes a passive and inert bundle. If you want to practice, do so on your dog or a child on all fours. You will find you can carry him around like a suitcase.

### *Climbing*

For this part of the operation use normal climbing drill, with A acting as leader and the sheep as second. A anchors and brings the sheep up with a normal waist belay. While on ground which the sheep can climb, S stays with her and chivvies her along. On reaching a steep bit which the sheep cannot climb, S climbs up and then helps A haul the sheep up like a sack. When S and sheep reach A's stance they anchor while A goes ahead again and the whole process is repeated.

When going up it is desirable to get the sheep to do her own climbing as much as possible; bodily hauling is hard work even for two men, not so much because of her weight, as the friction of her fleece on the rock. I should imagine that if the simplest escape route is down it would be better to lower the sheep bodily as much as possible rather than to let her climb down. While a descent would obviously involve less physical labour than an ascent, I think it would probably involve greater difficulties in persuading the sheep to follow the right route. In these circumstances I think a second climbing rope would be invaluable as it would enable S to go ahead of the sheep and reconnoitre the next stance. Then, when the sheep descended, he could, by pulling on the second rope from below, ensure that she went in the right direction.

### *Coda*

Lastly a few random points:—

A problem we completely failed to solve was how to avoid sending showers of stones down the cliffs below, especially during the capturing phase. What with a terrified sheep charging left, right and centre, and a more and more frustrated S thrashing around on the end of a rope playing shadow rugger, it seems

inevitable that, if there is any loose scree around, some will get knocked over the edge. We could only shout and hope that anyone who was following us up Avalanche just thought it was all part of the normal stage effects.

The major worry one naturally has is that the sheep, in her efforts to avoid capture, will fall off. While this is obviously possible, I think the danger is much less than one supposes. Sheep are incredibly agile and sure footed, and I think would really prefer capture to falling off. Several times I thought ours had gone for a burton, but she hadn't.

Finally, rams. The procedure with rams is basically the same as described above for ewes except that in the paragraph on "Securing" for udders read testicles and underline twice. Rams are usually rather stronger and heavier than ewes and may tend to be slightly less docile when captured, but I am told that there is no need to treat them any differently. They are, of course, usually fitted with horns (as are some ewes) and while these provide another possible handle for grabbing, S should watch out to ensure that the ram does not score a cannon. However, not to worry. There are scores of ewes to each ram in a flock, and anyway the rams are not usually allowed to run free on the mountains; they are kept in an enclosure until the mountain ewes are brought to Mahomet, as otherwise lambs might start appearing at the wrong season. So the chances of meeting a cragbound ram are extremely small. And, of course, if you go hunting a Snark you must just accept the risk that it may turn out to be a Boojum.

# NEW CLIMBS AND NOTES

## I. SNOWDONIA

JOHN NEILL

### GENERAL

1957 was a quiet climbing year in North Wales, there being no spells of good weather of any length, so that there are very few major new routes or repetitions of outstanding existing climbs to record. It has not been possible to include in these notes details of any Rock and Ice Club activities. J. Brown and J. R. Allen are reported to have done a very hard new route on the Far East Buttress of Clogwyn-du'r-Arddu, but otherwise it is believed that little of importance has been omitted.

The Coed Tremadoc National Nature Reserve was established in June, 1957. The climbs on Craig Pant-Ifan lie within the Reserve. Fences, marked paths and routes of access and a car park (to the cost of provision of which the Climbers' Club is contributing) are in course of creation. The conditions under which climbing is permitted are roughly as outlined in last year's Journal.

Work on the Ffestiniog pumped storage hydro-electric scheme proceeds apace, and a road has been built up to Llyn Stwlan which passes within a few yards of the foot of the main crags on the Moelwyns. While routes such as Kirkus's Climb have now become among the most accessible in Snowdonia, it must be regretted that much of the atmosphere of remoteness which is the special charm of these crags has been destroyed.

### A. CARNEDDAU

#### CRAIG BRAICH TY-DU

DIGITALIS DIRECT. 215 feet. Very Difficult.

A pleasant route on the ridge just left of Pinnacle Ridge.

Start: At the foot of an undercut crack rather on the right at the foot of the ridge.

(1) 20 feet. The crack, to a ledge at the foot of a chimney.

(2) 90 feet. The slab on the right, into the groove above (or move to the left rib and back). Trend right where the groove steepens and make a long move up to a gorse ledge.

(3) 30 feet. The small chimney above to the top of a pinnacle. Step left onto the crest.

(4) 40 feet. The left edge of the clean rock tower.

(5) 35 feet. A broken wall ahead.

First ascent: 1st June, 1957. A. J. J. Moulam, Mrs. Moulam.

THE BUTTRESS ABOVE PINNACLE RIDGE gave a 90-foot Difficult route to A. J. J. Moulam and R. F. Jones on the same date. Start by a slab on the left, go diagonally right and up a crevasse, and finish by a fine smooth 15-foot groove.

F. SHARP (see 1957 Journal). This was climbed on 7th October, 1951, by A. J. J. Moulam and Mrs. D. King.

EXTROVERT. 190 feet. Severe (hard).

On the right of G Buttress facing the starting chimney of Deasel.

(1) 40 feet. A delicate move or two on the edge of the wall, leading round into a short V groove. Out of this on the right, then step over it and traverse to the foot of a little crack. Good ledge above.

(2) 50 feet. Straight up to a stomach traverse line, then up the very edge of the block to a slab. Up this to a ledge overlooking the gully.

(3) 100 feet of exposed scrambling.

First ascent: 1st June, 1957. A. J. J. Moulam, R. F. Jones.

### CRAIG-Y-TRI-MARCHOG

MORDRED—VARIATION. 60 feet. Hard Very Difficult.

From the top of the strenuous chimney on the variation start, traverse right and go up the steep wall to the right of a rotten rowan tree, to the corner and so up onto broken rocks.

Ascended: 2nd July, 1957. J. A. Cooke, M. S. Binnie.

Note: A. J. J. Moulam, when working on the Carneddau guide, made a somewhat similar variation finishing near the top of the main pitch of Mordred.

### CRAFNANT

On 24th May, 1957, B. Wright, D. McKelvey and C. E. Davies climbed the right-hand one of three prominent cracks in the upper tier of a large cliff, probably Craig Lwyd. Two pitches, 40 feet and 50 feet, Severe.

The nomenclature used in the Carneddau guide for the cliffs here is very muddled. Craig Lwyd is called Hendre in the guide, but Hendre is actually the farm underneath, as the name would suggest. The correct name of the cliff called Craig Wen in the guide is Clogwyn-yr-Eryr; Craig Wen is well to the south-west of this cliff.

### B. TRYFAN AND GLYDER FACH

#### GALLT-YR-OGOF

##### GNAT'S GNOSE

Pitch 4 of this climb has lost its spike, leaving an insecure pile of rubble which must be used to pull up on then stand on. The climb is now harder than Easy Severe.

#### TRYFAN EAST FACE

SNOWSTORM. 260 feet. Very Severe.

Start: On the Heather Terrace 30 feet to the right of Green Gully, at a steep corner topped by a large overhang.

(1) 40 feet. Climb the crack on good jams to the overhang. Traverse the slab below the overhang to the right, one piton being used for direct aid, then up a few feet to a small stance and belay on the arête.

(2) 20 feet. Up the arête to large heather terraces.

(3) Scramble easily up the rib for 200 feet to a large spike belay where the rib steepens.

(4) 35 feet. From the top of the spike step with difficulty into the steep, shallow groove on the left of the nose. Climb the groove until a difficult exit can be made onto a heather ledge; belay slightly higher.

(5) 40 feet. Pleasantly up the rib to a stance and belay in the gully on the left, at the point where it steepens into a cave.

(6) 50 feet. An obvious traverse line across the steep left wall of the gully, to a point where a vertical ascent can be made to a good stance below a wide, overhanging crack.

(7) 45 feet. Climb the crack to a platform. From this step onto the left wall, which is climbed for 10 feet to a stance below a steep groove on its right-hand edge.

(8) 30 feet. Up the groove to the top of the buttress.

First ascent: 5th May, 1957. D. T. Roscoe, H. McInnes.

#### MILESTONE BUTTRESS

NFFS CRACK. 55 feet. Hard Severe.

The crack to the right of Chimney Route, starting on a large ledge 10 feet right of a tree, and finishing on the deep platform right of Central Block.

Ascended: 8th September, 1957. W. R. Greenwood, J. J. Mooney.

CORNER CRACK. 60 feet. Very Severe.

The steep crack in the right-hand corner of Central Block, leading to the stance below the final pitch of Superdirect.

Ascended: 8th April, 1957. C. J. Mortlock, B. A. Jillott.

The relationship of these two routes to each other and to Rope Crack needs clarification; the first pitch of NFFS Crack is in any case not new.

#### CREIGIAU DENA

ELIMINATE FACE. 140 feet. Severe.

Goes up the middle of the wall left of pitches 2 and 3 of Wall Direct.

First ascent: 22nd April, 1957. J. W. B. Barnes, Mrs. A. Barnes.

#### C. GLYDER FAWR AND IDWAL

##### CLOGWYN-Y-BUSTACH (or GRIBIN FACET)

This is understood to be the name used by the local farmers for the cliff dubbed by Archer Thomson "the Facet of the Gribin."

YOB ROUTE. 125 feet. Very Severe.

On the East Wing. Starts at a gangway leading up left just to the right of a triple block overhang, ascends the corner at the upper end

of the gangway and another corner and groove up to the right, leading onto Slab Route. Two pitons and a sling used for direct aid, and a piton for belay. Three pitches of consistent standard.

First ascent: 21st August, 1957. K. R. C. Britton, G. N. Crawshaw.

#### CLOGWYN-Y-GEIFR

WATERFALL ROUTE, DEVIL'S KITCHEN. About 40 feet. Perhaps Very Difficult.

On the left wall of the Kitchen, but right under the final capstone. Suitable only for extremely dehydrated parties in dry, scorching weather.

Climb the crack in the wall, a few feet out from the back boulders, and a yard or two in from the line of the outer edge of the final capstone. Go up right into the top cave and traverse back left and out just under the roof. Or climb the crack the whole way.

First ascent: 26th June, 1957. J. M. Edwards, Arvon Jones.

#### D. LLIWEDD

##### CRAIG ADERYN OLD ROUTE

The removal of the Matchstick (the cause of the accident at the time of the last Welsh Dinner) has left a holdless groove which seems much harder than anything else on the Craig Aderyn routes.

#### E. LLANBERIS—NORTH

##### CLOGWYN-Y-GROCHAN

SPECTRE—GOAT'S GULLY START. 40 feet. Very Severe.

Start from the large block at the foot of the left wall of Goat's Gully and traverse to the holly trees below pitch 3 of the normal route.

Ascended: 3rd March, 1957. H. I. Banner, C. R. Simpson.

Note: C. M. G. Smith, B. L. Blake, J. H. Swallow made a similar start on 21st July, 1949.

##### SCRAMBLERS' GATE—CONTINUATION PITCHES

(6) 40 feet. Traverse right along obvious ledges and go up the vertical wall at the end.

(7) 30 feet. Go up a vegetated ledge, then up the fault in the blocks to a stance in vegetation.

(8) 40 feet. Traverse right and go up the wall under the overhang, thence to grass and scrambling to the top.

Ascended: 29th June, 1957. D. G. Witham, J. A. Cooke.

Note: A. J. J. Moulam, A. Ashworth, G. W. S. Pigott some time ago climbed some pitches above Ochre Grooves which were in the same area as the above.

#### CARREG WASTAD

On 5th October, 1957, C. E. Davies and E. Millington climbed the grassy groove between the starts of Bole Way and Main Scoop.

## DINAS-Y-GROMLECH

RAMESES WALL. 200 feet. Very Severe.

Start: At the foot of Noah's Warning.

(1) 80 feet. Make a high step on the right wall onto a rising traverse, and go along this to the arête. Climb the wall round the corner, left of Holly Buttress crack.

(2) 30 feet. Straight up broken ground.

(3) 70 feet. Step down onto the right wall and climb the obvious steep groove trending to the arête. Step left from the arête and go straight up.

(4) 20 feet. The short arête.

First ascent: 6th October, 1957. C. T. Jones, A. Beanland, J. R. Sims. SABRE CUT—VARIATION START. 100 feet. Hard Very Severe.

Start 15 feet right of the ordinary start, on the rib to the right of the black overhang. Climb the rib to a gangway leading to the right. From the end of the gangway move right and up to a vertical corner, which leads to a junction with Spiral Stairs and so to the Forest.

First ascent: 4th May, 1957. D. T. Roscoe, A. C. Cain, P. Shotton, H. McInnes.

## CRAIG DDU

GREY WALL. 210 feet. Hard Very Severe.

This route as described is a combination and improvement of two routes done by the party named below on 25th and 26th April, 1957, and called Black Magic and the Dark Horse.

Start: At the foot of the pinnacle, 10 feet left of the start of Black Wall.

(1) 30 feet. Climb the overhanging crack (a tree grows at its foot) to a tree on the black slab.

(2) 20 feet. Climb the wall behind to a grass ledge below an overhanging groove.

(3) 40 feet. Climb the groove (piton for protection) to the small stance of pitch 2, Black Wall.

(4) 40 feet. Pitch 3 of Black Wall for 20 feet to the piton, then make a hard traverse right for 20 feet to a stance below an overhanging crack.

(5) 80 feet (crux). Climb the crack until directly below the overhang, then traverse right to good holds and the finish.

First ascent: 25th April, 1957. P. H. Biven and H. T. H. Peck, C. Fishwick.

## CRAIG NANT PEN-Y-PASS ISAF

PRESIDENT'S CLIMB. 120 feet. About Very Difficult.

To the left of the ridge followed on pitch 2 of Donner is a short gully (this gully was descended by A. J. J. Moulam about ten years ago). The route ascends the wall between the gully and the ridge, by the crack with a holly tree in the lower part. Two pitches.

Ascended 25th May, 1953. A. B. Black, R. Mann.

Note: This seems to correspond, except for a different finish, to Holly Cracks, climbed by P. Carr and R. A. Brown on 7th April, 1952.



## F. LLANBERIS—SOUTH

## DINAS MOT

## DIAGONAL ROUTE—VARIATION ON PITCH 4

On 16th April, 1957, C. J. Mortlock finished pitch 4 directly up the steep cracked slab above the groove and pocket hold, rejoining the normal line above the stance to the right of that normally used. A fine 50-foot lead-out of a delicacy in keeping with the rest of the climb.

## CLOGWYN-Y-DDYSGL

NUNC DIMITTIS. 350 feet. Very Severe.

Follows a direct line of weakness up the wall between Gambit and the Ring. Sound rock, and interest maintained throughout.

Start: 5 feet to the right of the foot of Gambit Climb, below a clean groove, deep cut higher up.

(1) 40 feet. Up 10 feet to the start of an obvious layback crack. Up this to grass recess and belays.

(2) 35 feet. Climb the deep V-groove above, making an exit right at the top with increasing difficulty.

(3) 50 feet. Straight up for 20 feet, then left onto a blunt rib. Up this until forced right to a small ledge and belays.

(4) 50 feet. Up the wall above and left of the ledge, then more easily to a perched block belay (top of pitch 4, The Ring).

(5) 70 feet. Above and slightly right through a wall by a shallow groove.

(6) 100 feet. Up the arête to the right of the final crack of the Ring, and finish on the crest of the ridge.

First ascent: 1st June, 1957. G. J. Fraser and M. J. O'Hara.

## CLOGWYN-DU'R-ARDDU

MOONSHINE. 200 feet. Very Severe.

On the Middle Rock, taking the corner groove left of Birthday Crack, starting at the lowest point of the buttress.

(1) 40 feet. Up and leftwards over ledges to a stance 20 feet below the start of the corner proper.

(2) 100 feet. Gain a small turf ledge at the foot of the corner (piton), and climb it until a small ledge may be gained on the left wall (piton). Regain the crack and climb it to the overhang at 70 feet (piton). Traverse left to a grass ledge and go round the corner on the left to a further grass ledge in a fine position.

(3) 75 feet. Climb the shattered chimney and the overhang (piton). Traverse right and gain the corner above all difficulties. After another 20 feet in the corner step right onto a good ledge, with easy climbing to the top.

First ascent: 30th March, 1957. H. I. Banner, Miss D. N. Morin (Mrs. Evans).

PIGOTT'S CLIMB—DIRECT START. 70 feet. Hard Very Severe. Harder than anything else on Pigott's.

Start from the grass terrace leading left from the foot of Chimney Route, below a prominent pinnacle. Climb the pinnacle and traverse

right to a steep groove. Climb the groove and the crack which follows to a large ledge on the normal route.

First ascent: 5th May, 1957. H. I. Banner, H. Smith, A. T. Griffith.

## G. CWELLYN AREA

### LLECHOG

SUNSET SLABS. 380 feet. Severe.

The slabs on B Buttress, North Cliff, between Five Cave Gully and Grey Gully.

First ascent: September, 1956. J. Knowles and A. Neale.

## H. OUTLYING AREAS

### (a) GWYNANT

#### CLOGWYN-Y-WENALLT

BOVINE. 220 feet. Very Severe (hard)—well maintained.

Start: Midway between the start of Oxo and the large boulder near the fence.

(1) 40 feet. The slightly overhanging wall, first right then back left, to the large loose pinnacle on Oxo traverse.

(2) 40 feet (crux). The right-angled corner above, overhanging at the top (piton) to a gangway with two corners continuing above. Poor belay.

(3) 30 feet. The right-hand corner, awkward to start, to the large plateau splitting the crag.

(4) Traverse down the ledge via a slab to the right (finish of Oxo traverse).

(5) 90 feet. Above the ledge is a vertical wall with ivy on its right. Start at a groove left of the ivy, and later bear slightly right past a large flake, so up an obvious crack, moving right at the top. A magnificent exposed pitch with surprising holds.

First ascent: 19th May, 1957. C. E. Davies and B. Wright and D. McKelvey.

### (b) MOEL HEOG

#### MAIN CLIFF

COMPRESSION. 430 feet. Very Severe (just).

A first breach in the overhanging defences of the central part of the Lower Mass, starting up an inconspicuous rib a few yards right of Tension Crack.

First ascent: September, 1956. A. Neale and J. Knowles.

### (c) LLEDR VALLEY

#### CLOGWYN-Y-GIGFRAN (GIANT'S FOREHEAD)

##### TWO FOREHEAD SLABS

On 13th April, 1957, J. Neill and A. T. Griffith attempted this but found the second pitch too difficult without considerable artificial aid,

because the oak tree used to surmount it by J. M. Edwards and B. McKenna in 1934 has died. Instead they made a new route starting up to the left of the nose left of the start of the old route, to arrive below the cubby-hole, and finishing up the chimney left of this. Not a very good route.

#### (d) TREMADOC

##### CRAIG BWLCH-Y-MOCH

THE BROTHERS. 210 feet. Just Very Severe.

Quite a good route with very little vegetation.

Start: At a steep crack 20 feet right of the chimney start of Shadrach.

(1) 50 feet. Climb the crack to a pinnacle.

(2) 50 feet. To the right are two overlapping slabs; climb the first slab trending right to a crevasse.

(3) 70 feet. Step down and across the upper slab under a little overhang into a corner. The corner and a prominent crack lead to the perched block at the foot of the last pitch of Shadrach.

(4) 40 feet. As Shadrach pitch 3.

First ascent: 9th June, 1957. C. T. Jones, B. A. F. Jones.

GRIM WALL. 200 feet. Hard Very Severe.

Start: 20 feet left of the chimney start of Shadrach.

(1) 100 feet. Up into a grassy scoop and up to a knife-edged flake. Traverse left along this and mantelshelf up into a leftward diagonal crack. Climb this crack and a rib to a poor stance.

(2) 20 feet. Up slightly left to a ledge below the final wall (piton belay).

(3) 80 feet. A good mantelshelf over the little overhang on the right. Traverse left into a steep shallow groove, which leads to the big triangular overhang. Step up to the left of the overhang onto a very steep rib (hard), and go up this (hard moves).

First ascent: March, 1957. H. Smith, C. T. Jones, H. Fox.

TRIANGULUM. 160 feet. Hard Severe.

Start: At the crack at the back of the very big V-groove, capped by an enormous overhang, just left of Hail Bebe.

(1) 90 feet. The crack (crux) to the overhang, then traverse right delicately to the mantelshelf through the overhang used by Hail Bebe. Up right to a tree.

(2) 70 feet. Left up a thorny rake, then the steep slab trending slightly left to a tree. Traverse back right across the slab, then an awkward long stride to the right to a good hold, finishing up over a big block.

First ascent: March, 1957. H. Smith, H. Fox, J. R. Sims, C. T. Jones.

##### CRAIG PANT-IFAN

##### PINCUSHION—VARIATION START

On 28th March, 1951, A. J. J. Moulam and D. C. Birch reached the tree after pitch 2 by means of the crack (slanting slightly left) coming up to it directly from below.

Pincushion has been climbed using only 6 pitons.

**GREAT WESTERN.** 220 feet. Very Severe.

An excellent climb; no pitons.

Start: At the right edge of a good ledge behind a big bed of brambles, 90 feet left of Scratch, reached round the left of the brambles.

(1) 40 feet. Up the middle of the three grooves coming down to the ledge, for a few feet, then up the next groove to the right to a little tree. Up another groove on the right (difficult step at the top), then a step right to a tree at the foot of the big chimney.

(2) 40 feet. Step left and climb the prominent thin diagonal crack in the slab to a tree, so to another tree 10 feet higher.

(3) 30 feet. Up the groove to the overhang and climb the left hand side (crux) to reach the stance after Poor Man's Peuterey, pitch 3.

(4) 45 feet. The crack up steeply leftwards to a good grass ledge.

(5) 20 feet. Climb a little corner behind the ledge to a tree at the foot of the final wall.

(6) 45 feet. Up a little rib to the overhang ahead. Traverse 15 feet right across a big block into a fairly wide chimney. Climb this for 25 feet, then straight up the final narrow chimney. Or from the top of the wide chimney traverse left into a very steep crack.

First ascent: 19th January, 1957. C. T. Jones, M. Hanson.

**BORCHGREVINCK.** 250 feet. Severe.

An obvious line with a very fine second pitch.

Start: At the left-hand end of the same ledge as for Great Western.

(1) 40 feet. The slabby buttress, to a sloping ledge with trees below a triangular overhang.

(2) 40 feet. Turn the overhang on its right-hand side and traverse into a big cracked V-corner. Exit at the top on the left (crux) to reach a tree 10 feet higher.

(3) 30 feet. Scramble diagonally right to the stance after pitch 3, Poor Man's Peuterey.

(4) 60 feet. Traverse 20 feet to the left along an obvious delicate line, just above the easy grass traverse of Poor Man's Peuterey, into a wide crack in the slab. Up this (brambles) to the stance after pitch 4, Great Western.

(5) 30 feet. Climb the corner for a few feet then step left and mantelshelf onto a ledge, so to a tree 10 feet higher.

(6) 50 feet. Traverse left over some blocks and mantelshelf onto a ledge (exposed). Traverse round the corner and climb the front face of the buttress to the top.

First ascent: 22nd April, 1957. C. T. Jones, J. R. Sims.

**KRAKATOA.** 280 feet. Hard Severe.

A wandering route but technically interesting.

Start: In Porker's Gully below a cave in the Flying Buttress.

(1) 80 feet. Up to the cave and turn it on the left (crux). Traverse diagonally right across the slab and up into a little leftwards bending crack, so to the crest.

(2) 20 feet. Up the bridge of the Flying Buttress.

(3) 60 feet. Traverse horizontally right across the slab (delicate) to the end of a sharp rib. Round the rib and traverse right across another slab to an oak.

(4) 40 feet. Straight up grassy slabs to the stance at the start of Pear Tree Variation.

(5) 80 feet. Traverse horizontally left for 30 feet on good footholds under the overhang. Swing upwards onto the rib and finish up the vegetated rib.

First ascent: 7th October, 1956. C. T. Jones, G. Eveson.

ARCTIC CIRCLE. 630 feet. Very Severe.

A girdle traverse of Peuterey Buttress, steadily improving to its end.

(1), (2), (3) 210 feet. Pitches 1-3 of Ave Atque Vale.

(4) 40 feet. Step down from the thicket and down a little sloping slab, then traverse under the overhang to an oak at the foot of Pear Tree Variation.

(5) 60 feet. Step down and traverse to the first chimney of Strapiombo. Descend this to the top of pitch 2, Poor Man's Peuterey.

(6) 40 feet. As pitch 3, Poor Man's Peuterey.

(7) 70 feet. Down pitches 3 (by abseil) and 2, Great Western.

(8) 90 feet. Pitch 3 of Pincushion to the top of the chimney, then hand traverse right round the corner into a groove. Descend the groove for 15 feet and take an obvious traversing line (hard) to pitch 4 of Scratch. Finish up this.

(9), (10) 120 feet. As pitches 5 and 6 of Scratch.

First ascent: 27th October, 1956. C. T. Jones, H. Smith, C. Pryke, M. Hanson.

EIFIONYDD WALL. 100 feet. Very Severe.

A good though short climb on the buttress west of Hound's Head Gully.

Start: 30 feet up from the wall in the gully level with the second pitch of Hound's Head Buttress, at some big jammed blocks.

(1) 30 feet. Over the blocks to a big ledge.

(2) 70 feet. Climb the right-hand one of two V-grooves at the right-hand end of the ledge for a few feet then swing right onto a little overhanging wall leading to a ledge. Traverse 15 feet up left to a point where a big overhang juts out on the face round the corner. Go up over a little bulge into a thin crack (crux) leading to a ledge, then up a chimney to the top.

First ascent: 24th December, 1956. C. T. Jones, G. Eveson, M. Hanson, K. J. Clarke.

GIRDLE TRAVERSE OF TWO-FACE BUTTRESS. 180 feet. Very Severe.

Traverses from left to right at a high level; of fairly high technical standard and each pitch is continuously enjoyable.

Start: At a very tall holly below the top stone wall where it dips into the gully west of the buttress.

(1) 80 feet. Traverse 30 feet across vegetation to a shallow groove, which leads to a tiny tree. Hand-traverse a small horizontal ledge, just

in reach from the tree, to the stance after pitch 2, Helsinki Wall. Continue round the corner to the stance after pitch 4, Olympic Slab.

(2) 80 feet. A complex and difficult pitch—the key is the ledge in the centre of the face just below the big overhangs between Olympic Slab and Stromboli. Traverse downwards on good holds and make an awkward step onto a sloping ledge, then mantelshelf onto the key ledge. Abseil down 25 feet from the end of this to a small foothold on the lip of the overhang. Traverse delicately right (crux) to an oak.

(3) 20 feet. Traverse into Two-Face Gully.

First ascent: 13th October, 1956. C. T. Jones, G. Eveson.

#### CRAIG-Y-CASTELL

##### CREAG DHU WALL—DIRECT FINISH

Go up the groove slanting slightly right from the stance after pitch 4 and pull out by the block at the top. Somewhat harder than the rest of the climb.

First ascent: 23rd June, 1957. D. T. Roscoe, A. J. J. Moulam.

#### CRAIG-Y-GESAIL

Midas Buttress is the buttress to the left of Gallt Wen Pinnacle, separated from it by an easy descent down a grass slope and a gully and marked by a flake stuck to the face.

TOUCH AND GO. 120 feet. Very Severe.

On Midas Buttress. One of the best short climbs at Tremadoc, steep and exposed, alternately strenuous and delicate on firm, clean rock.

Start: At the centre of the buttress below a large V-chimney overhung at the top (below and slightly left of the flake).

(1) 20 feet. Up right to the foot of the V-chimney: or reach this more easily on grass from the right.

(2) 45 feet. The chimney to the overhang, then step out left onto a horizontal line of footholds. A few delicate moves past a rocking spike lead left to a stance round the corner.

(3) 10 feet. Easily up the corner to the next ledge.

(4) 45 feet. Mantelshelf out right onto the face to reach the flake and climb this or the crack on its left. From a standing position on the flake make a difficult move up and out left, so to the top.

First ascent: November, 1957. R. James, P. Benson.

FOUL TOUCH. 120 feet. Very Severe.

Goes up between Touch and Go and an overhanging wall on its left.

First ascent: November, 1957. R. James, M. Connelly, P. Benson.

THE RIGHT TOUCH. 140 feet. Very Severe.

Starts up Touch and Go then traverses out right under the flake, to finish on the right of the wall right of it.

First ascent: 30th December, 1957. R. James, A. Marshall.

OAKWAY. 230 feet. Severe.

On Princess Buttress.

Start: At the right-hand end of the Lower Slabs, below an ash tree.

(1) 90 feet. Up the slabs just left of the ash tree, moving left and up a little wall to a ledge.

(2) 40 feet. Up the grassy groove on the right of the wall above, moving left at the top across a slab to a large flake.

(3) 30 feet. Step left round the corner then back right and ascend a rib to a little pinnacle, reaching an ivy ledge above by an awkward mantelshelf.

(4) 70 feet. Move right into two cracks leading to an oak. Climb the tree and step left delicately onto a slab, which finishes with a mantelshelf.

First ascent: 9th June, 1957. C. E. Davies and B. D. Wright, E. Millington.

#### CLUTCH

In September, 1957, C. T. Jones made a direct start, equally unpleasant but shorter than the original start.

#### (e) PENNANT

##### CRAIG ISALLT

A new route, about 80 feet, Severe, has been made up the steep wall 25 feet left of Easter Wall, by a shallow groove.

First ascent: October, 1957. F. Allen, R. Handley.

#### (f) YR EIFL

NEW ROUTE ON NO. 5 BUTTRESS. About 700 feet. Very Difficult.

On the east face of the buttress.

Start: Scramble up grass terraces to a small bay of freshly scarred rock below an enormous easy-angled slab section about a third of the way up the cliff. The bay is divided into two by a vertical arête; the left-hand part is marked by an iron pipe driven into the ground. Start from the right-hand part.

(1) 25 feet. Climb the prominent crack, the slabby block forming the right-hand wall, and the wall ahead finishing on grass to below a steep groove.

(2) 40 feet. Traverse right along the grass ledge to another groove, overgrown and slightly overhanging, holds on the right wall of which lead to a sloping grass ledge. Then steep grass to a block under the overhang. No belay.

(3) 40 feet. Traverse right on grass into a niche.

(4) 30 feet. Up the slab onto a grass ledge, then bear right into a niche. No belay.

(5) 50 feet (crux). Up and slightly left to a stance. Pull round the corner to the right into a steep crack above the niche, doubtful holds in which lead up to a grass finish. Go right to a block on the skyline.

(6) 60 feet. A long slab of clean rock to near a rotten tree.

(7), (8), (9) Slabs, walls and cracks to the top.

First ascent: 9th June, 1957. B. N. Richards, K. Loom.

## (g) FFESTINIOG AREA

## CRAIG NYTH-Y-GIGFRAN

ASAHEL. (See last year's Journal.)

The first ascent of this was in July, 1955, by R. James and R. L. Roberts when it was called White Slabs. Other climbs made by R. James and party on this crag appear all to have been done before by R. Elfyn Hughes or by Climbers' Club parties with the exception of the route below, which was the main outstanding problem in this area and is the hardest climb done so far in the Moelwyns.

MEAN FEET. 130 feet. Extremely Severe.

Start: Below Double Criss, below the left-hand vegetated chimney.

(1) 20 feet. Scramble up the corner below the chimney.

(2) 50 feet. A short crack left of the corner, then a semi-hand traverse diagonally left for 40 feet to a niche. Step down and round to the base of a steep lichen-covered V-chimney (piton belay).

(3) 30 feet (crux). The chimney, to a good stance.

(4) 30 feet. A large step up right.

First ascent: July, 1957. R. James, Peter Vaughan.

Two previous attempts, on 23rd June, 1956, by H. I. Banner and J. Neill, and in July, 1956, by R. James and R. L. Roberts, had reached the foot of the V-chimney. An alternative finish probably lies round the corner left of the V-chimney.

## CARREG-Y-FRAN

The first climbing here was done by R. Elfyn Hughes, and by C. W. F. Noyce, a number of years ago.

The crag is not high but provides quite good climbing of a considerable standard of difficulty, much fiercer than appears from immediately below. The climbs are generally 100-150 feet long, and mostly in two or at most three pitches. The climbs below are all on the steeper, less vegetated southern half of the cliff. In the centre of this part is a prominent overhanging corner, with the main overhanging nose on its right and an area of grass ledges surmounted by a short steep wall on its left; to the left of this area is an arête composed of block pinnacles. To the right of the nose is a gully with bushes, then a steep wall, holdless at the base, and 20 yards further on a rather steep northward sloping slab, the South Slab. Beyond the slab is a final short wall.

TWR. 130 feet. Very Difficult.

The block pinnacle arête, the corner right of the arête being used in the middle.

First ascent: 1st September, 1957. R. Elfyn Hughes, C. West, R. West.

FRUIT AND NUT. Very Severe.

The crack in the centre of the short wall above the area of grass ledges.

First ascent: 12th January, 1958. R. J. H. Chambers, M. J. Harris.



**PIGTAIL GROOVE.** 100 feet. Hard Severe.

Follows a series of grooves just left of the main nose.

First ascent: 12th January, 1958. G. J. Fraser, R. Elfyn Hughes.

**SPINOSISSIMA.** About 200 feet. Very Difficult.

Up the gully right of the nose, then diagonally up right below the top rocks to a final steep slab.

First ascent: 17th August, 1957. R. Elfyn Hughes, Evan Roberts.

**CHAMBERS OF HORRORS.** About 100 feet. Hard Very Severe.

The steep wall, holdless at its base, crossing Spinosissima for a fierce direct finish.

First ascent: 12th January, 1958. R. J. H. Chambers, M. J. Harris.

**SLIPPED DISC.** 80 feet. Very Difficult.

Up the final wall beyond South Slab.

Ascended 1st September, 1957. R. Elfyn Hughes, R. West, C. West.

Hughes made a route here in September, 1933, which may have coincided more or less with this.

## (h) RHINOGS

### CRAIG-Y-CAE

This is the north-east face of Y Garn, the eastern outlier of the Rhinogs above Ganllwyd, and overlooks the Cefn-Coch gold mine. A very promising cliff. There are three sections, separated by gullies (North and South Gullies).

**NORTHERN BUTTRESS.** About 240 feet. Very Difficult.

Started from the North Gully above the bottom 100-foot broken section of the buttress. A chimney in the middle part of the buttress was reached by a detour into the Far North Gully (beyond the buttress) and back.

First ascent: 7th September, 1957. R. Elfyn Hughes, R. West. The same party visited the south-west side of Y Garn on 8th September, 1957. Here there are three steep faces about 100 feet high fairly low down towards the Afon Cwm Mynach. West climbed two routes on the lowest face, and two Moderate routes were made on the top face, one by Hughes and the other by Hughes and West.

## (i) CADER IDRIS

### TWR DU

The following routes are described as being on the Eastern Buttress of Pen-y-Gadair, but actually appear to be on the same mass of rock as the Twr Du Gullies described previously in this Journal (1903, quoted in Pyatt's guidebook article on the outlying crags). A terrace runs across the buttress at quarter height; above the Terrace the buttress is split near its right-hand end by a gully, the line of which is continued below the Terrace as a shallow watercourse.

**EASTERN GULLY ARÊTE.** 300 feet. Very Difficult.

The arête to the right of the gully, starting from the Terrace.

First ascent: October, 1954. R. Handley, B. Cooke.

A direct start may be made by following the line of the watercourse to the Terrace (May, 1957).

TRIAD. 450 feet. Hard Severe.

Ascends the lower wall to the Terrace by a route to the right of the watercourse, then mounts to the beginning of the gully proper and follows the line of least resistance up the extremely steep wall, with numerous overhangs, to the left of the gully. Very exposed, with the standard well maintained.

First ascent: 5th May, 1957. R. Handley, F. Allen, J. N. Millward.

## II. ROCHE ROCKS, CORNWALL

E. C. PYATT and K. M. LAWDER

*Situation* (O.S. Ref. 992597):  $1\frac{1}{2}$  m. S. of A.30, 7 m. S.W. of Bodmin. The rocks stand on a slight rise on the S. side of the Roche-Bugle road.

*Description*: There is one main rock mass, roughly rectangular in shape. It reaches 60 feet high in places. Covering the width of the top towards the N. end are the ruins of a small chapel (St. Michael). Scattered round are several other boulders, but none would appear to offer climbs of more than 15 feet.

The rocks are on private land, though access is allowed. The chapel ruins are scheduled as an Ancient Monument. Gardening, pitons and climbing on the chapel walls are, therefore, not permissible.

Hensbarrow Downs (1,027 feet) is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  m. S. Around are several of the china clay spoil heaps—"the Cornish Alps."

*History*: The chapel was "the refuge of the giant Tregagle," says the guidebook, "when hunted by the Black Huntsman and his fiery-eyed pack." Tregagle had been given the task of draining Dozmary Pool (on nearby Bodmin Moor) with a limpet shell.

This is one of the outcrops that Haskett Smith missed. D. J. Romanis (Ro) first described it in this Journal in 1923. A. D. M. Cox (C) in the 1930's and G. J. Sutton (Sn) in 1955 contributed subsequent climbs. Use of their material is gratefully acknowledged.

*The Climbs*: The lower picture shows the overhanging N. end of the rock with the seat below. Though Ro was "dragged up" the ivy covered wall between here and the chapel, its ascent at the moment does not look inviting.

The upper picture shows (right) the ladder leading up to the chapel door. This ladder is on the right side of a bay in which there are some climbs. Oxford Climb (C) traverses left from the top of this ladder and then goes up a crack slanting back right.

On the left side of the bay is South East Buttress (Ro), which now appears to be too ivy covered for comfort. He describes it as straight up the steep face of the buttress via the left hand of two grooves.

Somewhat further left in the bay, and perhaps coinciding in part with the above, is Ivy Mantled Tower (Sn) (S).

ROCHE ROCKS: (1) From the south-east  
(2) From the north-east  
E. C. Pyatt





The rocks now bulge out in a bastion before another smaller bay, well seen on the left of the lower picture, is reached with East Chimney (Ro) in its back corner. From the right side of this bay Moping Owl (Sn) (V.S.) goes up to a diagonal crack sloping up from right to left, crosses the nose of the bastion by a hand traverse, returns to a stance on the left, then finishes straight up.

On the left of the bay is Tregagle's Crack (Ro) (S).

The left skyline of the second picture shows the line of Tregagle's Buttress (Ro) (V.D.), a steep wall climb.

Now moving round to the west face an easy chimney is reached—the other side of East Chimney. Left of it are two climbs (both Sn)—Swink Chimney (S) and Tump Wall (V.D.).

Broken and discontinuous rocks follow with more vegetation, though the face is still everywhere steep. Finally near the north end is North Buttress (Ro) which goes up the groove just right of the seat (first picture) to the boulder at the top, then back and up the wall above the groove. Ro notes a possibility of traversing left on to the nose from the upper part of this climb.

### III. CORNWALL—GENERAL

ALAN BLACKSHAW

The furious activity which had characterised the previous two years was not so evident in 1957; nevertheless, several first ascents were made. The full details are recorded in the Bosigran log-book.

On the Bosigran Face, a party led by J. Brown forced an X.S. route up the overhanging Bow Wall and out rightwards to break through the line of *toits* in the direction of Doorpost. M. E. B. Banks and J. H. Deacon added Ding (S.), and Dong (H.S.), both approximately 160 feet in length. B. M. Biven and H. T. H. Peck did the first ascent of Patience, which takes the overhanging groove left of Zig-Zag; the free climbing is H.S., and there is a section of A.3. The same party also climbed three new V.S. routes on the lower tier of the Face.

In the Great Zawn below Rosemergy, Deacon and Banks excelled themselves by climbing the ferociously steep seaward face of the Zawn, taking a line foreseen by A. W. Andrews (Cornwall guidebook, page 92). This route, the Green Cormorant Face (160 feet, X.S. and A.2), provides a link between Green Cormorant Ledge and the Western Ridge, and is one of the finest and most exacting climbs in Cornwall. The same pair also did Gangrene Chimney (S.), at the back of the Zawn. Another outstanding first ascent in the Great Zawn was the West Face (240 feet, A.3/A.4) which was climbed by Peck and P. H. Biven; on this route, which is entirely artificial, the climber has to surmount seven successive overhangs, and eventually finds himself 40 feet out from the base, suspended above a boiling sea!

Elsewhere in Cornwall, comparatively little of note was added. At Carn Les Boel, Banks, Deacon and McDermott did Seal Passage (150 feet, S.) and Mild and Bitter (145 feet, S.); while on Tater Du, a recently discovered cliff west of Lamorna, members of the Cliff Assault Wing, Royal Marines, were active in further exploration.

#### IV. IRELAND, 1957

R. J. WATHEN

Seeing that our professed aims are "to encourage mountaineering and hill walking, particularly in England, Ireland and Wales" (note the order), the Climbers' Club has been rather slow in awakening to the possibilities across the water. But 10 years of persistent exploration by the Irish Mountaineering Club (and by such hardy annuals as the Drasdo brothers) were supplemented last year by Bob Downes' intensive but all too brief contribution to Irish climbing. 1957 has seen more British visitors to Irish hills, and the initiative (at any rate on higher-grade rock climbs) has temporarily passed from Irish to British climbers. For the I.M.C. it has been a year of consolidation rather than of achievement—a maturing of 10 years of very fruitful club existence: marked by the publication of two rock guides—the fine cliff of Camaderry in Glendalough (3/-), and a fresh impression of Phil Gribbon's guide to the Mournes (4/-).

The most noteworthy routes of 1957 included:—

**KERRY:** On Knocknagantee in the Beara Peninsular: "*Luicin*," a fine Severe by Brian McCall and Frank Winder.

**CONNEMARA:** In Glen Inagh (Twelve Bens): "*High Tension*," a 450-foot Hard Severe route near the Devil's Col, by three I.M.C. electricians Bob Lawler, M. Lawler and Paddy O'Leary. On Ben Corr Peter Kenny produced the 900-foot severe "*Sherpani*" with Miss M. Laracy, which sports "a rather beautiful overhang on pink fingerholds." Other fine new climbs are "*Hangover*" 500 feet Severe on Bencollaghduff (Kenny), and "*Leftover*" (H. Quinlan, V.Diff.??) which is near the line of last year's "*Rum Doodle*."

**DONEGAL:** Poisoned Glen:—

On Craignambroc: "*Hammer and Sickle*," 185 feet, "probably V.S.?", Geoff. Sutton and Harold Drasdo at Easter. "*Tarantula*," 140 feet Severe, B. A. Fuller and R. B. Evans. Also, "*Nightshade*," a long route of about 515 feet, Very Severe, by Alan Austin and Brian Evans, with Fuller: on the same buttress as "*Gollicker*" and "*Kon-tiki*" it is said to be the finest route in the area, possibly in all Ireland.

On Bearnas Buttress (?): "*Slanting Groove*," about 550 feet, V.S., but barely touching the unclimbed upper part of the cliff. Evans, Fuller and Austin, with Miss Ruffe.

A C.U.M.C. party also visited the area, doing useful work on small new cliffs.

The COMERAGHS (a small range near Cork and Waterford):

Stack's Cliff, on south side of Knockaunapeebra (O.S. Grid Ref. Lismore S.3109): eastern end of cliff contains 1956 routes *Heifer Buttress*, *Calf Rib* and *Hilary's Horror*. At the western end a 1957 route is "*Jacob's Ladder*," 270 feet, on the whole Hard Severe, but containing a much harder peg crux in the last 10 feet of the cliff (Wathen and Meldrum, April 1957).

The Prisoon, on east side of Knockaunapeebra: first route on this steep three-tiered conglomerate cliff is "*Piper's Groove*," a two-pitch "just V.S." route of 120 feet (Meldrum and Wathen).

The MOURNES—*New Northern*, M. McMurray and H. Elliott (December 1957), 400 feet V.D. On Blue Lough Buttress, five pitches starting at right end of wall right of *Great Northern*.

To conclude: each year produces more evidence to disprove the old myth that "there's surely no climbing in Ireland." Perhaps we are in danger of exaggerating the importance and worth of the Irish hills (Connemara cows have long horns, they say, and far-away fields are green). But one can no longer deny that Ireland holds plenty of mountains for the walker, rock for the climber, and the opportunity to make routes of all grades as fine as any anywhere. Moreover (and herein lies their charm) Irish hills are less frequented and less explored than their British counterparts.

## V. A NOTE ON THE CAPE FAREWELL AREA, SOUTH GREENLAND

GODFREY FRANCIS

G. J. Sutton, T. Fletcher and I, members of the Club, and Harold Radage (non-member), visited south-west Greenland in July and August 1957. Our objectives were both mountaineering and scientific. We attempted three peaks (4,900 feet, 4,950 feet and 4,200 feet respectively), and reached within 100 (vertical) feet from the summit of the first, and the summits of the other two.

In mid-July our ship from Copenhagen reached the main settlement in the area, and second town of Greenland, Julianehaab, 80 miles or so up the west coast from the extreme southern point, Cape Farewell. Julianehaab is a flourishing place with 1,200 inhabitants and an expanding population together with shops and offices, fishing and sheep-rearing industries, building and public works, all of which are energetically sustained by Dane and Greenlander alike.

In two days we set out in the schooner *Sokongen* to Nanortalik, a settlement near Cape Farewell. This is a smaller spot, but perhaps even more likeable than Julianehaab. We were here given the disposal, for



a day, of the government motor vessel *Per* and her crew. She took us 15 miles up the huge Tasermiut Fjord to a flat area called Kugsuak. This is a morainic spread 1 quarter-mile wide which separates the fjord from the large Tasersuak Lake. The lake drains into Tasermiut Fjord by way of the Kugsuak River. Here we put our base camp and profited from the ample supply of salmon and sea trout in the river.

We later dragged a dinghy up the river and from there rowed for two hours to the head of Tasersuak Lake and pitched camp at the foot of Kingua Valley beyond.

Kingua Valley is a magnificent spot. The valley walls on the north-west rise to granite spires as much as 7,000 feet above the valley floor. There are festoons of hanging glaciers around these peaks, slender waterfalls and bare granite slabs, the habitat of sea-eagles. The valley floor is less pleasant. It is in many places choked with birch and alder scrub 10-15 feet high (making some of the tallest tree growth in Greenland). Progress through the matted branches is Laocoön-like and exhausting, and the valley is haunted by blackfly. In most of the area blackfly are so numerous as to force one to wear fly-masks all day, but in Kingua Valley they are particularly bad. After making a reconnaissance and a scientific collection we returned to the lake and then to Base Camp.

We felt that we could do more with our limited time and equipment in the open, less fly-ridden country around the lake and the fjord shores. Kingua Valley—named *La Valle Mystérieuse* by the French in 1956—remains a challenge to exploration. A larger party with more resources and more time than we had could work there, especially if they flew in by float-plane to the small lakes higher up the valley than we reached.

Our next expedition on 28th/29th July took us across the lake to a peak we called "the Charmoz" from its similarity to that peak seen from the Montenvers. After a bivouac at 1,000 feet we set off early, crossed a large *névé* and were on the lowest rocks of the N.W. face (about 1,500 feet high) at dawn. Largely by a route finding error we were soon engaged on a pitch of V, but above that many hundreds of feet of moving together for the most part on good rock (sometimes with scree-strewn ledges) brought us to the crest of the north ridge. Here the firm gneiss of the face gave way to a rotten type of granite and we continued more slowly with some IV's and an exposed V + 1 peg to a point about 100 feet short of the summit vertically, and a little more horizontally. Here the ridge was very narrow and exposed, contained at least one deep cleft before the summit, and was more rotten than ever. As it was already one o'clock we reluctantly had to give up and descend, reaching the base-camp eventually at 11 p.m. As far as we had gone the route had been a good "D" and promised to be more before the summit.

After several days of scientific work in the low ground near the camp, lake and fjord we set out for the second of our peaks. This overlooked the lake and resembled a large edition of the *Aiguille de l'M* at



Chamonix. The approach by the lake was barred by icefalls, and so we had to plan a long outflanking march by way of the fjord coast. Setting out at 11 a.m. on 5th August we reached a valley leading up to the mountains between Kingua Valley and the fjord at 6 p.m. The going had been fairly open, and the blackfly inconspicuous, but seven hours with full climbing and bivouac kit was a tiring stint. In front of us were some of the magnificent peaks we were going to explore. One we called "the Fitzroy" and another, borrowing the idea of the French expedition, the "double Dru." At the head of the fjord, still 15 miles distant, the Continental Ice Cap fell 4,000 feet, in a single enormous icefall, to the water. On our left, the mountains north of the fjord were sub-Alpine in character but among them stood out a huge rock spire called Naparsorsuak—or as we preferred it "the Big Napper."

After a comfortable bivouac enlivened by a vivid display of the northern lights we set off up our valley at 3-15 a.m. on 6th August, passing at first close beneath a rock face composed of a single granite slab 1,500 feet high and so steep that it gave an optical illusion of overhanging us. The mountain architecture hereabouts does not always lead to reasonable mountain forms from the climbing viewpoint. This most imposing façade, for example proved to be backed by a tedious, scree-covered hump. When we were beyond it we got onto an extensive glacier ringed with several snow and rock peaks. One of them was the "M," but for a while we were not sure which. Our only guide was an oblique air photograph taken from a different angle. Finally we spotted a distinctive snow-bay under the peak and made our way across to it. The rimaye was easy, but some steep ice called for careful step cutting before we could emerge on the N.W. ridge, separating our glacier from the basin of Tasersuak Lake. The rest of the ridge was a delightful rock climb with chimneys, open slabs and *râteaux de chèvre*. There were four pitches of V, one with a peg for progress. We reached the summit block at midday and took panoramic views on still and movie film. The "moon-landscape" between the fjord and Kingua Valley lay before us. The peaks nearer the fjord are composed of immense, smooth granite slabs and walls, those closer to the valley are sugar-loafs, and more gnarled in appearance. On the descent Harold had the great bad luck to receive a falling boulder on his hand, and then his foot. We bound up his lacerated hand and got down to the glacier as quickly as possible. At 8-30 p.m. we reached the bivouac site and after a rest we picked up the full loads and set off for three hours back along the fjord coast. We then had a second bivouac-halt for three hours and continued wearily five hours more to the base camp. Our haste had been occasioned by an arrangement to rendezvous with a motor-boat on 7th August and return to Nanortalik. In spite of the rush this proved a blessing in disguise. Harold's foot had been growing steadily more painful and at Nanortalik he was able to have it X-rayed only a day after the boulder fell on it. The picture showed that he had broken a metatarsal, and his foot was at once encased in plaster. Although no longer able to climb he accompanied us on our next trip, to the Island

of Sermersok, and contributed his full share to the cooking and to the good spirits of the party.

On Sermersok we were again busy with collecting work in the low ground but on 13th August Tom Fletcher and I were able to climb a slender rock peak in the central group of the island. It reminded us of the Ago di Sciora, and stood about 4,200 feet above the sea. Our base camp was at the foot of a profound U-shaped valley with dark buttresses rising very steeply on either side—a sort of “double Glencoe.” Our first move was to leave the valley-floor by a steep snow gully between two of the “Sisters of Glencoe” and reach a small glacier-field above and behind the “Sisters.” At the other side of the glacier rose our peak. We were delayed by bad weather in the morning and had to take on a race with darkness across to the peak and up its steep north ridge. The standard increased and by the time we had reached the summit block at 6 p.m. we had had two or three IV's and a pitch of V with one peg. We descended the further side in a rapid succession of long rappels, reaching the glacier in the twilight.

This was the last of our peaks, as the scientific work then took us into sub-Alpine regions further north. From all we could see the Cape Farewell Mountains are an excellent climbing area, possibly the finest snow mountains bordering the North Atlantic, not particularly difficult or expensive to reach and blessed by the never-varying helpfulness and hospitality of the Danes and Greenlanders.

## VI. SOME NOTES ON CENTRAL AFRICAN MOUNTAINS

R. GOODIER

At first it seemed that my most pessimistic forebodings were to be fulfilled. In the so-called high veldt the undulating wooded hills stretched away to the horizon, the monotony of the landscape broken only by peculiarly eroded rocky outcrops of granite resembling some of the more intractable Dartmoor tors but weathered by the tropical sun to a smoothness unknown even in the latter. Down in the low veldt of the Zambesi Valley the heat and humidity made the crumbling outcrops of the escarpment slopes even less attractive than they were by reason of the repellent nature of their rock. It seemed at first as if memories would have to suffice and yet the maps showed that there were mountains in the Federation and it wasn't long before the desire to be among mountains again overcame the difficulties of distance. So, for the benefit of others who might find themselves in this part of the world, I present these notes on the mountains of Central Africa.

### MLANJE MOUNTAIN

Mlanje Mountain is the highest in the Federation and rises to some 10,000 feet at a distance of 50 miles south-east of Blantyre, the principle town of Nyasaland. It has received literary enshrinement in Laurens

Van de Post's *Venture into the Interior*, but intending visitors would be ill advised to use this as a guidebook despite its acknowledged literary merit. The massif is divided into the three major plateaux of Chambe, Lichenya and Tuchila. The Chambe Plateau is the most accessible and having seen photos of Chambe Peak we made our base on this plateau with a view to exploring the climbing possibilities of the impressive south face of the peak. Unfortunately appearances from a distance were deceptive for on close examination the whole face was found to be plastered with a remarkably adhesive but nevertheless unreliable coating of grass from which protruded vellozias, aloes and other vegetable horrors characteristic of African mountains. Indeed so little actual rock was to be seen that there was little inducement to attempt a route up this Hanging Garden of Babylon. Further explorations led us to the conclusion that the best rock climbing prospects lay on the Tuchila Peaks but lack of time prevented us from examining the most likely of these latter. The ascent of the Main Peak of Mlanje, which lies on the Tuchila Plateau, proved to be a pleasant expedition without any technical difficulty but involving entertaining scrambling along the rocky summit ridge, which, by African standards, is fairly free from vegetation. On arriving at the summit we found some small icicles hanging from rocks in the shade, a cause for some excitement in this part of the world.

The undoubted attractions of Mlanje and its proximity to Blantyre have led to the formation of the Mlanje Mountain Club which has an active and growing membership and has secured the use of several forestry huts on the mountain for its members.

Dare I add that Mlanje is of great interest to the botanist?

#### INYANGA

The Inyanga Mountains lie in the north-east of Southern Rhodesia at a distance of about 170 miles from Salisbury. Although Inyangani at 8,500 feet is the highest point in Southern Rhodesia, the area generally is of rolling grassland of little interest to the climber. Nevertheless the area is a very pleasant one with valleys and moors reminiscent of the English Peak District and is a popular holiday resort, having cool mountain streams free from those twin scourges of the low veldt rivers, bilharzia and crocodiles. A little to the south of Inyangani in the low Hondi Valley are some most impressive pinnacles which may prove worth exploring.

#### THE CHIMANIMANI MOUNTAINS

The Chimanimanis are the gems among Central African mountains for here one finds sufficient acreage of verticality clothed with only a respectable amount of vegetation.

These mountains, which cover only a comparatively small area, are situated on the Mozambique border about 270 miles south-east of Salisbury. They can be approached by car along good roads almost to their base but there are, fortunately, no roads through them as yet. The finest peaks are to be found on the second range from the road

head so it is usual to walk over the first range and camp in the high valley of the Bundi River in the shadow of the major peaks. To one accustomed to British and Alpine mountains the Chimanimanis are definitely "foreign". Geologically they are older even than the Welsh hills, belonging to the Pre-Cambrian Lomagundi system and the peculiar rock formations and vegetation give the place a definite "palaeozoic" air. Unlike British and Alpine mountains they have never been inhabited and this lack of human associations adds to their general air of remoteness. The highest peak of 8,004 feet has so far not received a name but is referred to, rather unimaginatively, as Point 71 but the most interesting peak is the one named "Turret Towers" after its three turret like summits. The huge buttresses on its eastern flank overlooking the Bundi River were an obvious invitation and in the summer of 1956 we succeeded in putting up what may have been the first proper rock climb in the range when we climbed the central buttress by a 600-foot route of no great difficulty but of continuing interest. The rock is of a peculiar kind of quartzite resembling a sandstone in its surface texture. The holds are fairly plentiful but tend to be rounded. There is a marked scarcity of belays and very few cracks suitable for pitons. I have a feeling that *coins de bois* and perhaps even expansion bolts may make their debut fairly early in the evolution of climbing in Rhodesia. But even without recourse to more advanced techniques there is still a vast amount of exploration to be done in the Chimanimanis. Dense vegetation is usually to be found only in the deep gullies which groove most of the mountain slopes so that generally a direct ascent of a peak is preferable to a long ascending traverse—on two occasions we took six hours and one and a half hours respectively to reach the same point on a mountain, the former in a misguided traverse in which much involuntary botanising was accompanied by a certain amount of spelaeology, the latter in a pleasant walk down the valley followed by a direct ascent.

The Chimanimanis are the Mecca of the recently formed Mountain Club of Rhodesia and in spite of the long distances to be covered are frequently made the objective of a week-end trip from Salisbury. It is, I believe, in the Chimanimani Mountains that the most interesting future developments of climbing in the Federation will take place.

## EDITORIAL

1958 is the Diamond Jubilee year of the Climbers' Club. We had forgotten this until one of the guests mentioned it at the Annual Dinner, but having been reminded, we are happy to congratulate ourselves and add a few extra pictures to the Journal by way of celebration. In its sixty-first year the Club flourishes, and the Committee's most difficult problem is the continued tendency of our numbers to expand. Problem this may be, but it is at least a problem of good health and one that many clubs would envy.

During the past year we have elected to honorary membership H. R. C. Carr, whose manifold services to the Club over so many years have often been eulogised, but never enough, and A. J. J. Moulam, who has written three of the new series of guidebooks, a formidable labour for which not only our own Club but a whole generation of North Wales climbers will owe gratitude. It is sad at the same time to record the death of his only rival in volume of guidebook writings, J. M. Edwards, another honorary member of the Club, to the post-war generation a remote but awesome figure of legendary name and fame, who with Kirkus dominated an era of Welsh climbing.

At the Welsh dinner in October 1957 we made a presentation to Stuart Chantrell to commemorate his retirement after 29 years as custodian of Helyg. It was a pity that the antics of the Editor earlier in the day on Lliwedd should have caused the absence from the dinner of most of the intended speakers, but able substitutes were found. More lasting damage was to the topography of Lliwedd. The Matchstick is no longer in its traditional place, and the pitch of the Aderyn route where it used to stand is reported considerably more difficult in consequence.

The only change among Club officers this year is the retirement of Moulton-Barret from being honorary treasurer. To him we owe much of the smooth running of the Club and its healthy financial state, and the Committee will miss his counsel. We thank him, and welcome his successor, John Hartog.

Among distinctions which have come to members of the Club during the year we note especially Sir Claude Elliott's knighthood, for among his many public services those to mountaineering are not the least, and the appointment of Charles Evans to be Principal of the University College of North Wales at Bangor. We congratulate them both.

As a memorial to Tom Bourdillon and Dick Viney, who were killed in the Alps in 1956, a framed and mounted map has been hung on the wall at Helyg; and the generous donation made to the Club from Viney's estate has been used to provide a bench for Bosigran.

Of the seven members of the Cambridge Andean Expedition, all of whom reached the summit of Pumasillo, six were members of the Climbers' Club and the seventh has since joined. In the Himalayas in 1957 our President and Vice-President, Cox and Noyce, turned back just below the summit of Machha Puchhare and climbed Fluted Peak, as described in this Journal. Wylie and Chorley were also members of the expedition. We offer our sympathy to Chorley on being stricken with poliomyelitis in the course of it. It is pleasant to report that he has made a good, though not, unhappily, complete, recovery. Other members were elsewhere in the Himalayas, including Charles Evans, who climbed Annapurna IV but was thwarted on Annapurna II. Later in the year he was in Nepal again for a honeymoon, after his marriage (on which we congratulate them) to Miss Denise Morin, eminent member of an eminent climbing family. Other members have been reported from Greenland to the Antarctic. We are especially proud that Lowe was with Fuchs on his triumphant crossing of the Antarctic continent, one of the great adventures of our time. But certain expeditions ended sadly. Downes, one of our brightest stars, died on Masherbrum. Holland died in Greenland. Jillott and a fellow member of the O.U.M.C. died on Haramosh, and Streather and Emery only escaped after a very terrible ordeal. We offer our sympathy especially to Emery on the severe and lasting injuries he suffered from frostbite.

In the Alps 1957 was again a poor season, but P. Biven and Peck achieved two first ascents, one on the Predigtstuhl Westwand in the Kaisergebirge, the other on the Punta Valette overlooking Pralognan, and the second ascent of the north face of the Aiguille de la Vanoise in the Savoie. Harris, Nelson, Band and Brasher climbed the north ridge of the Piz Badile. Hunt, J. Hobhouse, Tyson, Band and Brasher were members of a large party, also including Albert Eggler, leader of the 1956 Swiss Everest expedition, and Fritz Luchsinger, climber of Lhotse, who did the Younggrat on the Breithorn during the Alpine Club meet at Zermatt. Peacock did the Chamonix face of the Peigne and Maden the south-east ridge of the Blaitière. At home O'Hara and other Cambridge leaders have developed a host of new routes in Carnmore and have also done some notable climbing on Ben Nevis. Bonnington is reported to have led a new route of high standard on the Main Wall of Avon Gorge. Activities in Wales and Cornwall are reported in the New Climbs section.

In the wider mountaineering world perhaps the most interesting feat was the ascent by the Italians Bonatti and Gobbi of the Grand Pilier of Mont Blanc, usually known to British climbers as the Eckpfeiler Buttress, on which many eyes have been cast for some years. In the Karakoram a four-man Austrian party, including the redoubtable Hermann Buhl, climbed Broad Peak. All four reached the top, and they are said to have done all their own carrying, taking no porters. Later Buhl was killed, on another peak in the area. The only man to have climbed two virgin 8,000 m. peaks, solo climber of Nanga Parbat and hero of numerous Alpine exploits, he was a Titan of the mountain world.

Last year the Alpine Club celebrated its centenary and members of the Climbers' Club were prominent at its various functions, as is only proper. The A.C.'s home meet was held in Wales in May, using Climbers' Club huts. Despite the glory of its Centenary and its unique position in the history of mountaineering, the Alpine Club is entering a period of crisis, partly but not wholly financial. Change is in the air. As a national, indeed international, institution, the A.C. ought to be preserved in a form appropriate both to its traditions and to the realities of the climbing world of today. All British mountaineers, whether members of the A.C. or not, can justly be proud of its past, and should take an interest in its future, for which all share responsibility.

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The Mountain Rescue Committee have produced a most useful pamphlet on the arrangements for mountain rescue in England, Wales and Scotland and on first aid. Everyone who goes on the hills ought to have a copy. It is obtainable, price 1/- or at a discount for a quantity, from the Secretary, Mountain Rescue Committee, Hill House, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport, Cheshire.

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The British Mountaineering Council and the Association of Scottish Climbing Clubs have negotiated arrangements with the Nature Conservancy which will permit small parties of climbers to visit the Island of Rhum, subject to certain controls and conditions, except during a short period in April each year. Applications from members of the Climbers' Club should be sent in the first instance to the Secretary.

\* \* \*

E. C. Pyatt, 113 Burtons Road, Hampton Hill, Middlesex, is writing a book on the "Climbers' Crags of Great Britain" and would be interested to hear of any rocks or outcrops used for practice climbing anywhere in the country which have not previously been described in journals or guidebooks. Information need not go beyond location, type of rock, height, and a rough indication of the amount of climbing available.

\* \* \*

Jocelin Winthrop Young, Anavryta National School, Kifissia, Athens, invites any member of the C.C. visiting Greece to get in touch with him. He frequently goes into the hills with school parties, and can arrange introductions to the Greek Alpine Club, who are always willing to help. They have huts on Olympus, Parnassus, Kellene, etc.

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The Editor hangs his head in shame at an error in *C.C. J.* 1957. The Editorial had a reference to the death of C. T. Lehmann and to his long labours for the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine

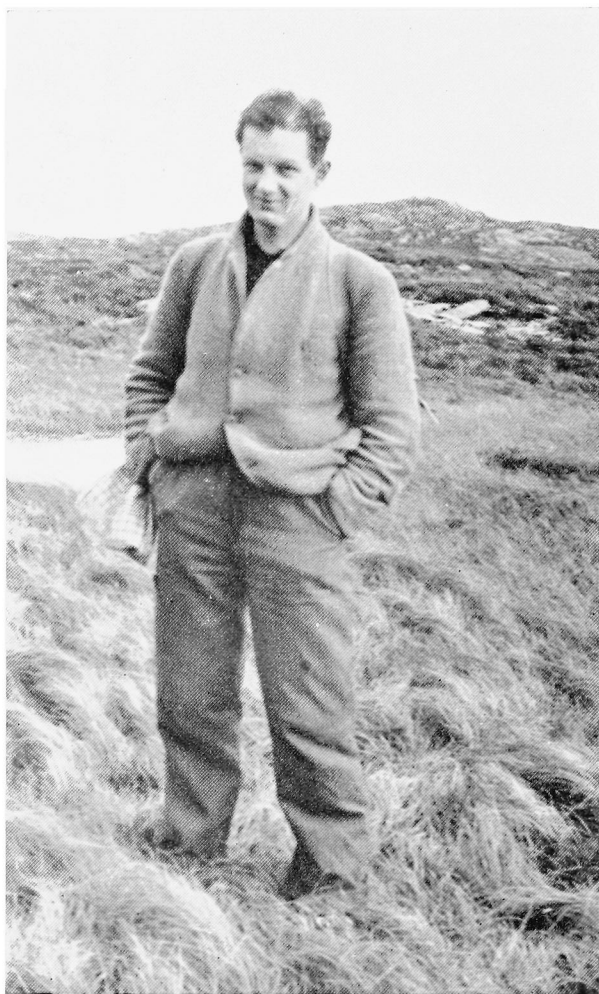
Club, but stated that he was not a member of the C.C. In fact he had been a member of the C.C. since 1902, and served on the Committee before the 1914 War.

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This issue of the Journal contains an article by Michael Holton on the British Mountaineering Council, of which he is Secretary. He writes in a personal capacity, not officially as Secretary, but that need not inhibit us from taking the occasion to recall the gratitude the mountaineering community owes him for all the work of the B.M.C., which so largely falls on the shoulders of the Secretariat, and which is a good deal more extensive than most members of established clubs realise. We thank him and all other contributors to this Journal for their articles or photographs. The Editor is indebted to the Controller, H.M. Stationery Office, and to the University of Cambridge for permission to reproduce the frontispiece photograph of Tryfan, and to Simon Clark and the C.U.M.C. for the loan of a block of the photograph of Carn Dearn Buttress. John Hobhouse has again undertaken the laborious task of business Editor, and earns the thanks of all the Club as well as of the Editor personally.







MENLOVE EDWARDS

*C. W. F. Noyce*

# IN MEMORIAM

## JOHN MENLOVE EDWARDS

J. M. Edwards, honorary member of the Club, died on 2nd February, 1958, at the age of 48.

Whether on the Helyg boulder or in a rowing-boat or climbing in clinker nails on rubber "very severes," Menlove Edwards was a man who performed the sort of feats that become legendary. Judged, however, by the simple yardstick of the number and standard of his new climbs, his record is sufficiently remarkable, for hardly any other leader can have had such an output of first ascents, sustained over more than 20 years. Nor was it merely that he made many new routes; his climbs, like his mountain writing, had an intensely individual quality. Perhaps few of his routes, anyhow up to the outbreak of war, had quite the classic touch of some of Colin Kirkus', yet they reflected an equally bold mental approach; for the steep, loose, wet and vegetated rock on which he so often climbed was then regarded as hardly fit for climbing at all. A great number of his ascents remained unrepeatd for years, until it began to be realised what an extraordinary repertoire of new climbs—even of new cliffs—had been opened up, and that this type of climbing could be done for pleasure by more ordinary leaders. A glance at the list of first ascents on Clogwyn y Geifr, or on any of the Three Cliffs, will show how completely Menlove was a pioneer; and even on Lliwedd, where by 1938 Central Gully seemed to be the only remaining problem, his genius for the less obvious paths produced a dozen new routes in the course of a single month.

Guidebook writing, to which he turned in the middle 'thirties, was his other outstanding service to Welsh rock climbing, and three of the first four *C.C.* guides are his, written alone or in collaboration. To these he was later to add the first guide to Clogwyn Du'r Arddu. His guidebooks show the same individuality of approach that is evident in his climbing; accepting

the conventions of the modern requirement, they nevertheless manage to convey something much more than technical information. *Lliwedd* was a masterpiece in this respect, and although it is arguable that the subjective treatment makes this a difficult guidebook for the ordinary user, it is very doubtful whether so complex a crag could have been better dealt with in any other way; certainly only Menlove could have written it as it is. Most of his climbing time for seven years must have been devoted to guidebook work, and the debt which the Club owes him is immense.

The articles which he contributed to the *C.C.ŷ.* will be remembered, especially "Scenery for a Murder" (*C.C.ŷ.* 1939), which is perhaps the most brilliant piece of imaginative writing the *ŷournal* has ever published.

Yet although Menlove's personality stamped itself on everything that he did, the bare record of his achievement in these different fields leaves out of account an essential side of him. It is the side which is associated with Helyg in its brightest period and with the climbing companionships of those years, of which he himself wrote: "Then, the day far spent, at the top, flinging time away, we would eat and, as mortals should who have stormed Olympus, we laughed and laughed, until we could not laugh." These are the associations that will remain, for those who knew him, along with the wider recognition of his great place in the history of the Club.

A. D. M. Cox

A boy of 17, I was staying at Helyg over an Easter meet. On the Friday evening, while the others descended to Capel, I stayed in. The only other person in the hut was a man in tattered coat and seaman's jersey, a man with powerful looking shoulders and a strange face, handsome in its way. The hair was auburn, almost woolly; the jaw firm and jutting, so as to force a hollow below the full lips; the face smooth, rather childlike but for the eyes, which were those of a man who has seen a good deal.

"Let's have tea," the stranger, whom I knew to be one of my 'heroes,' said. And we got talking.

So it started. Next day Menlove suggested climbing, and we went to the Three Cliffs. "Going to dig in your back garden?" somebody grinned. At that time the Three Cliffs were considered dangerously loose and full of vertical vegetation. We got a lift round to Pen y Pass. "I really go there because I like to walk downhill to my cliff," Menlove said. He never spoke with any pleasure of walking uphill for its own sake, or of the hills themselves with affection, though "Good old Tryfan" might slip out, almost apologetically, at times. It was obvious, that first day, that something else was in the air. Each of the three routes that we did was a struggle, each demanded the power to wrestle in an uncomfortable position. Several times Menlove seemed defeated, whether by rock or grass, but hung on, clinkers scrabbling, while he hitched the rope over a minute projection. Several times those enormously powerful arms got him up. I learned a lot that day.

There is no space to do justice to Menlove's major contribution to rock-climbing, nor even to give much of a picture of him as a climber. He was an originator in the way in which he developed new cliffs ("because other people don't go there," he said), often on variable rock, and in his use of safety devices which have now become commonplace. Long before karabiners were used he fell off Eliminate on Helsby, where others had been killed. But he had managed to protect himself with a sling, and this art he found most useful on his hunting grounds round the Devil's Kitchen, on Craig Rhaiadr and the Three Cliffs.

To climb with, Menlove gave the impression of strength rather than of lightness (Colin Kirkus's quality). The whole thing was a wrestling match, and specially so in the clinkers he usually insisted on wearing. In 1935 he struggled for nearly an hour, in clinkers, to repeat his feat of climbing Flake Crack on C.B. unaided. When that failed, he waited placidly for my nailed boot on his head. It was this leaning towards effort which made him the first (and only?) man to row solo across the Minch to the Outer Hebrides and back. Or he would take a canoe to the Isle of Man over a Whit weekend. And yet Western Slabs on Dinas Mot and Bow-Shaped on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu showed that he could be delicate too, when he wished. It was a question of mood, and, as he said himself, on some days he would fail to get up Hope. As a second he gave a feeling of

confidence and strength that was not illusory. Under his eye I was made to lead climbs I had not dreamed of, but to profit even more from the experience of his mature and affectionate loyalty than from that of leading.

With people, with writing, it was the same story. "My over great intensity with people is not v. good for them either," he wrote once, "except that it's necessary with patients to be absolutely following every least mental shift"—and that made him a brilliant psychologist. In writing there was the same sense of convulsion, the same conquest of obstacles as much in himself as in the material. Nothing came easily, but what came was worth waiting for. The Climbers' Club owes him three full guides (since my own part was entirely subordinate) and the Clogwyn Du'r Arddu interim offprint. These set a new standard. They took the climber to the rock face, not just to the line up it which somebody had traced, and described that face in remarkable prose. One may quarrel with the underestimations but not with the descriptions, and his talent for this type of writing comes out still more vividly in the few short stories. These, with fragments of tortured and yet wonderful verse, are all that he has left. Being a psychologist, and Menlove, he was one of the few who could come near to putting on paper the states of mind of the climber.

The years after 1939 have been years of tragic waste. Menlove received absolute exemption as a conscientious objector, but he never recovered from the shock of war and the suspicion that his fellows were engaged in a madness which in a real sense threatened him personally. If the war had not come, he would have fulfilled himself in the psychological work he set out to write. As it was, nearly 20 years of frustration are now succeeded by a death which should never have been. We mourn one of the great personalities of climbing, and a man who might have been many things besides.

WILFRID NOYCE

As it happened Menlove's beginnings as a climber—his first two or three years—coincided with my own little heyday, and I did quite a lot with him during that time. We first met at Helsby when he was a Liverpool University student and was rapidly accomplishing all the harder climbs lately done by

Kirkus and Hicks. At that time I had just come to live in the Lake District and I invited him to join me for a week-end there, so that he could see what the bigger crags were like. He came, and the first day amongst other things we did Tophet Wall Direct, which in those days ranked quite high. When I suggested that he should put rubbers on, he said, "Oh no, these will do," pointing to his almost brand new pair of boots studded with objects like marbles. Nevertheless, to my surprise, he followed up quite easily. The next day we went to Pillar, and I thought I would take him down a peg or two, nails and all, by performing Walker's Gully. But as it happened it was wet when we got to the top pitch—always a hard place for me—and I dangled on the thread two or three times, and was unable to get up. So being "the gaffer" I said, "Sorry boys, now we've got to go down" (like many another party). But Menlove said, "Let me have a go," and when I agreed to this, he promptly shot up quite easily. I have always remembered that as something quite remarkable, considering it was just about his first climb of any real consequence. What a "novice" !

My next recollection of him is as the "arrived" leader, when in 1932 we went to Clogwyn Du'r Arddu and did the second ascent of the Great Slab. For the purpose of that expedition I got from Kirkus a full account of the climb, all nicely typed out in my office in duplicate; I was the "manager" of the party. Menlove made no bones at all about that slippery little slab and the long green caterpillar, but it was when I joined him at the top of it that I first saw an exhibition of his enormous strength. Our third man, weighing fully 15 stone, just made a dash at the slippery slab and shot off it into space on the end of 150 feet of line. This antic not only fused my hands, but locked me to the belay and I was helpless except to hold on. Menlove came down to me and without even shouldering the rope, lifted that chap with his hands until he was able to get hold of something and be pulled back onto the climb by the fourth man (Menlove's brother Hewlett, killed in a road accident very soon afterwards) whom it was fortunate we had with us. We then sacked number three and proceeded. But here Menlove's very strong pioneering instinct came into play. He was not going to go across the grasses to the corner as per instructions; *he* was going to go on straight up (what is now Bow, I think). Hewlett and myself

had great difficulty making him come down 30 or 40 feet and continue with the second ascent which was our objective. And again, when we got up the grassy corner, we had trouble with him. He wanted to go straight on up (Carsten's later route), and only submitted grumblingly to do the original finish.

Later, I had the experience—which must have been almost unique until he began to climb with Wilfrid Noyce—of having the matured Menlove as second. In that capacity he was on the second ascent of the Curving Crack and the second ascent of the Upper Slab Climb, Cwm Silyn. As a second he was bad; at any rate with me. I don't mean consciously and deliberately, but one felt that he was thinking, "Why is that little man being so slow up there, making such a fuss about the wind and the rain. I could be doing it much better," (and he was quite right). But clearly he was far more interested in new possibilities round about for future reference than the responsibility of seconding up existing climbs. This was very understandable, but it was rather a defect which I guess other people discovered. Later still I had experience of following him on new routes—I was the one whose leg was so delightfully pulled in "Young Climber" (*CCJ* 1934). There was no doubt that as a pioneer, whether it was on big dirty wet cliffs or on pure smooth rock, he was superb. One could not say that he had any special style; he was just a very strong and well-balanced piece of human machinery, with tremendous drive and determination leavened with pretty sound judgment. Of all the other good climbers I have been with the one who seemed to be most nearly of the same type, was Bill Peascod. I have often wondered what actually happened on the one and only occasion when Kirkus and Menlove joined together for a climb—or at any rate it was the one and only occasion when they did a new climb—which was the Chimney Route on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu. That must have been a most interesting party—a complete contrast of styles and temperaments, with Kirkus (rather the senior) suffering a most embarrassingly efficient and thrusting second. No wonder that between them they forced the "rickety innards"! Incidentally, on the night of that same day, Alf Bridge and I experienced Menlove in quite another capacity—as member of a rescue party to Craig-yr-Ysfa. And I still have a recollection of him



staggering up Pen Helig under an enormous load of blankets and food.

I could tell many more stories of Menlove. For instance, as an incredible swimmer; who thought nothing of plunging into roaring torrents and bouncing about amongst the boulders, or systematically swimming across every sizeable piece of water in the Lake District during a short holiday. Others could tell you about his prowess as an oarsman. And many must have been terrified by his roadmanship—for he had absolutely no road sense or feeling for machinery. I even had experience of him as a practising psychologist in a very civilised consulting room in Rodney Street, Liverpool. But I must say that I came away feeling that it was he not myself who needed psycho-analysis. He was a very difficult man for the ordinary mortal to understand. I am sure, for instance, that much of his article writings, if not his guidebooks, will have been incomprehensible to many climbers. But there is one thing no one could say about him—and this is quite extraordinary considering the enormous amount of climbing he did and the exceptional difficulty of much of it—that he was prone to fall off whilst leading. I do know that he once came off that notoriously holdless place in the Cioch Gully, but I never heard of him making a really serious mistake which could have endangered his party.

My recollection of Menlove is that it never occurred to him that he might fall off. He was just accustomed to sticking on despite holds breaking, points of attachment slipping, and so forth. This was all the more extraordinary because it never seemed to matter to him what he had got on his feet. He must have done many very hard climbs in battered old boots with a sprinkling of wobbly nails. Nor did it seem to matter very much what sort or quantity of fuel he took in. He seemed to have enormous reserves of energy which could keep him going for quite long periods on a diet of, exclusively, porridge—hot, cold, dry or wet. This was a tremendous man upon the rocks and on the hills; a splendid body, with a mind very near to genius. There's as good fish came out of the sea as ever there will be in it. . . .

A. B. HARGREAVES

## R. O. DOWNES

I first remember Bob Downes during a C.U.M.C. meet in Langdale at Easter 1953, and now I realise with a shock that it was only four and a half years ago. We had all gone over to Dow Crag, and as there was only one guidebook between almost a score it was left at the foot on a prominent boulder to be referred to between climbs. Roger and I were just about to start up Eliminate B when we saw two almost unknown figures ahead of us already on the third pitch, climbing rapidly. We called up "Do you know what you're on?" "Yes," they shouted down, "Murray's B." They were obviously having no difficulty so we said nothing. When we greeted them again at the top they still had no idea they had done a hard climb. They had, it seemed, both been leading V Diffs for two or three years. One of them was small and puckish; his slanting eyes and pointed ears and scarred cheek gave the air of a sardonic yet twinkling elf.

During that spring he used to come and ask about climbs he could do. None of the classic Welsh or Lakeland VSs gave him any pause, and in the summer he had a brief but enterprising season in the Dolomites. During the next autumn and spring we began to frequent gritstone together. He was intensely keen, and mountains soon became his whole life. On the principle that being fit would enable us to enjoy doing hard climbs and not waste any part of the vacation working up, we trained in the gym at Fenner's. At Easter 1954 he was on Pillar and Scafell in rain and icy gales but no concession was made and many of the classic Very Severs were climbed. Conditions seemed not to affect Bob at all, in body or in spirit. A good route was a good route: Great Eastern he savoured so much that he made three ascents of it in appalling conditions, finding time, as he poised on wet delicate holds and blew on his fingers, to look round at the darkening scene and inhale the mist. Scafell seemed rakish and dangerous, like a great ship thrusting out of a ruck of hills towards the western infinity, as we sat on its cairn at sunset and talked English-wise about trivialities. When we had no socks left we motor-cycled all day through the rain to Wales and climbed in heavy hail up Brant, and on a cold and wet day went over to du'r Arddu, which was always the

cliff that drew him and where he was happiest. When the weather cleared we began to test ourselves against harder routes, and Bob's ability became apparent. All the routes in the guide-book fell to him quickly, and he began the progress that seemed to roll up climbs like pieces of old carpet and finally brought him to a point where he could lead, and find well within his powers, routes like Octo, Cenotaph Corner, The Sassenach, Gardyloo Buttress, Kipling Grooves, and his own great routes on Ben Nevis and elsewhere, including the overhanging crack on Carreg Alltrem which had repelled several well-known leaders. He led on sight most of the severest routes on sandstone, gritstone and limestone—the medium did not seem to matter. The Highlands he knew well and loved at all seasons. The Ben was the mountain that he most redoubted and which summoned him most. Perhaps he knew it better, winter and summer, than anybody, for he made the first or second ascents of all the biggest rock-climbs and had done most of the great gullies and buttresses in winter. He once told me that an ascent of Observatory Buttress or Observatory Ridge (I forget which) was the most trying and serious thing he had ever done. But unlike most great English climbers he never had an accident on Ben Nevis.

He developed a distinctive climbing style of his own. He was undoubtedly a natural, but this did not always show at once: progress was often steady and deliberate, with plenty of attention paid to security. When he ran into a great difficulty he would stop. Tentative explorations would take place, sometimes protracted, and the whole thing would be thoroughly summed up, his lithe strength and muscular endurance aiding him. Then his forehead would suddenly knot, and with a little burst of anger he would be up, dissolving the difficulties in a sequence of swift inevitable movements. I never saw him show fear, but he knew what it was to be conscious of danger.

His worth in the Alps was no less. When the seasons of a man's full powers are dogged by perpetually bad weather his record may provide a less accurate gauge of his value than that of one born at a more fortunate time. Bob was only just about to develop his full powers, but what the future would have brought is shown by the fact that at twenty four, an age when many of the greatest have hardly begun, and having known none

but the worst conditions in the Alps, he was already one of the very finest and most accomplished British Alpinists. He was equally at home on rock, snow, ice, or mixed terrain. From the first time he put on a crampon it was obvious that he was a born iceman. His spirit and all-round competence were revealed in 1955, when among many other attempts and easier climbs undertaken for fun or to help beginners, he climbed the south face of the Aiguille Dibona de Soreiller, the Ménégaux route on the Aiguille de l'M, the Gervasutti couloir of Mont Blanc de Tacul, the north-east ridge of the Peigne, the south-west face of the Punta Gugliermine, the north-east face of the Piz Badile and the north face of the Triolet, a mixture of great rock and ice climbs which it would not be easy to surpass in one season of continuously bad weather.

I don't want to give the impression that he was an unimaginative climbing-machine. His record at Perse School and later at Clare, where he got a two/one in history, show his intelligence, and he was a very capable secretary and later president of the C.U.M.C. During his national service he became an officer in the Royal Corps of Signals, and for his territorial obligation was in the 21st S.A.S. Regt. (Artists). Having decided against the Colonial Service he had worked at White Hall to raise money for the trip to the Himalayas. If he had not died of pneumonia on Masherbrum he would probably have emigrated to Canada and gone in for forestry. His mind combined the practical and the imaginative to an unusual degree. It was always Bob who got the broken-down motor-cycle under way, but the deep power of imagination that lay in him is shown at once by the few writings he has left. He worked along original channels. His wit was penetrating, subtle, immediate and astringent, his conception of climbing balanced. I have heard him remark that if to keep one's climbing at a high standard meant exercise and dieting, then it was better to eat well. He was as happy, and as silent, and as often to be found, wandering alone or with novices over the moors in misty November, as coiling and insinuating over a sunlit overhang, feeling (as he remarked while moving out and over the jut of The Sloth) "like a monkey up a stick." He was always first up, and had done last night's dishes, and one was wakened by breakfast and a steaming mug of tea thrust in at the door of the tent.

There are people whom it has been a privilege to know—though it was not easy to know Bob, and perhaps nobody knew him entirely. Climbing brings them to us, makes us realise them, and all too often takes them away: and now has it been worth it? All of us can think of examples, and in my own time there have been among others Arthur Dolphin, Tom Bourdillon, and now Bob, a company of kings. They were all, as Bob was, the finest type of Englishman, too reserved to make friends easily, paradoxically humorous, yet possessing a magnetic power that drew us towards them and after them, an integrity of courage. They at least died accomplishing themselves, not that that is any consolation for their loss. But we who have been luckier must follow them in a short time from whatever cause, and may lack the accomplishment which, however brief, was theirs. Bob was never a lucky person, and always, even in a crowd, seemed quizzical and lonely. He was somehow remote and always seemed to be going on ahead, delivering a lorry up to Scotland at night, bridged out over the gulf at the top of The Corner on a cold day of mist, fleeting across the summit-blade of the Badile as night and the cloud gathered around us, drifting in January over the pitted moorland to the distant blue whale, Suilven, and the rainbow-crown of the summit: one blundered along behind with one's heavy apparatus of body and lungs and aching heels. Now he has gone on again, a little mysteriously and alone as he always went, whether with regret we have no way of telling, but I know without reproach and without fear.

G. J. SUTTON

COLONEL EDWARD RONALD ("MICKIE")  
CULVERWELL, M.C.

It is sad to write the obituary of a friend, but it has the consolation that it reminds one of the happy times one has spent with him in the past.

"Mickie" was born in Belfast in February 1893. He went to a preparatory school in Belfast. When he came to England to a preparatory school in Stratford-on-Avon, they already had a Paddy, so, being an Irish boy, he had to be Mickie and this name stuck to him throughout life. Later he went to

Clifton College and from there to the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich (The Shop). As a cadet there he did very well, eventually gaining a Sword of Honour.

Having obtained his commission in the R.G.A. in December 1913 he was posted to France in 1914 and served in the First World War from then until he was severely wounded in 1918. Among the engagements that he fought in were the Somme, Vimy, Messines, Passchendaele and Cambrai. From 1919 until 1923 he was a Captain-Instructor, R.M.A., Woolwich. While at The Shop he became very friendly with W. M. Roberts, who has interested so many in climbing and the Alps. The writer first met Mickie with Roberts to arrange for a fortnight's guideless climbing from Zermatt in 1923. J. H. Hollingsworth was also a member of the party. Among our ascents were a traverse of the Parrotspitze, a traverse of Monte Rosa from the Capanna Margarita over the Dufourspitze, the Wellenkuppe and the Matterhorn. The de Fonblanque family were also in the party and Mickie stayed on and did a few more climbs after the writer had to leave them. His first Alpine season seems to have been in 1922, with E. B. Roberts and W. M. Roberts at La Grave, and there are records of his having climbed in our home mountains in Wales and the Lakes.

He had always been a keen sportsman in many branches of sport, among them rugger, hunting, squash, fishing, yachting, big game shooting and polo. He joined our club in 1937.

His technique must have been very good by 1923, as he was selected as a reserve for the Everest expedition of 1924. However he was not called on. He was posted to India in 1924, where he commanded a battery in the Pack Artillery.

Whether he started skiing in India or before is not certain, but he did a considerable amount while he was there and started a lot of beginners in skiing and climbing. He probably continued to do this on his return to England in 1930. While in India he did many climbs, the most important ascent being up to 22,000 feet on Tirich Mir, the highest on that peak in 1929. During his stay there, he formed and guided the Survey Section, R.A. (India). He was an original member of the Mountain Club of India which was later amalgamated with the Himalayan Club.

On his return to England he was for a few months with the 5th Light Battery at Bulford Camp, and then did a Gunnery

Staff Course at Woolwich, Larkhill, Biggin Hill and Shoeburyness. He became an Instructor of Gunnery at Larkhill for six years in the School of Artillery. He was then O.C. at Fort Dunree in Northern Ireland. On the outbreak of war he served in Palestine, Aden and France, and was in the Dunkirk evacuation. For the remainder of this war he was stationed in England.

In 1945 he married a devoted wife, Miss Gwen Anderson, who saw him through many trying times later on. In 1947 he joined a meet of the A.B.M.S.A.C. at Arolla, during which he led the Mont Collon with the author and another on the rope. At an Easter meet of the A.B.M. in 1948 he had the misfortune to fall while leading a climb on Cir Mhor in the Isle of Arran. He was very badly injured, having damage to his skull, probably a fracture, fractures of the ribs, the spine and a fractured wrist, among other injuries. As he was concussed, he had no memory of the cause of his fall and his companion could not see what had happened. Carefully tended by his wife he eventually made a good recovery after a long illness and convalescence.

In 1949 he retired from the Army with the rank of Colonel. A few years later he had some trouble on the opposite side to that on which he had had the fractured ribs and this necessitated a big operation. Though he recovered well, this seemed to leave his chest weak and he found it necessary to winter in a warmer climate. A winter in Spain in 1955/56 was a great success. The following winter, on arriving in Spain, he had further lung trouble, probably pneumonia, and, though he recovered from this, he never got quite well. He was again taken ill on the boat on his return and died shortly after his arrival home.

In his leaves during his service he visited parts of Africa and Canada and also several times the Alps. He was elected to the A.C. in 1929 and to the Alpine Ski Club in 1934. He was Vice-President of the A.B.M.S.A.C. in 1948/50 and President in 1952/53. He was also a member of the Royal Artillery A.C., the Austrian A.C., the Irish Mountaineering Club, the S.C.G.B., the Ski Club of India and the Army Ski Association, in addition to our own Club.

He was a very safe and steady climber, so the accident on Cir Mohr was all the more inexplicable. He was a most delightful and cheerful companion, both in the mountains and at home

and all who knew him miss him very much. Many beginners have been glad of his help and advice, always most generously given and many have been introduced to the mountains by his fervour and attachment to them. In this he resembled his old friend and teacher W. M. Roberts.

N. S. FINZI

### MICHAEL F. W. HOLLAND

In July 1957 Michael Holland, and his Danish companion Carsten Velsboe, died in a blizzard on the ice cap above Inglefield Fjord in north-east Greenland. At the time, he was deputy leader of Dr. Fristrup's expedition, which was engaged on glaciological work in connection with the International Geophysical Year. The circumstances leading up to the accident are not known, but it appears that they were both retreating from their ice cap station towards base, when they succumbed to the extreme blizzard conditions: the camp on the ice cap was completely devastated by the blizzard.

The news of his death brought sorrow to his relatives in Cheshire and to the many mountaineers, explorers and scientific colleagues who had the good fortune to know him. Enthusiasm was Michael's outstanding quality; this enthusiasm was the mainspring of his varied interests, and made him a spontaneous and very likeable man. At St. Peter's Hall he was a ferocious Rugby forward. On one occasion he was badly concussed but insisted on returning to the field. Afterwards, a doctor trying to test his mental equilibrium asked him which was his college; Michael, dazed, replied, "The same as these other chaps!" This sense of team spirit made him a reliable member of a mountaineering rope. He was a keen all-round mountaineer but he derived particular satisfaction from snow mountaineering, which seemed to have more meaning for him than rock climbing as an end in itself. The mountain expeditions which he enjoyed most were probably the long and arduous winter climbs on Ben Nevis; indeed in a mountaineering sense the Ben was his spiritual home. As Honorary Secretary he was active in O.U.M.C. affairs; he willingly undertook the responsibility of leading an Alpine meet at Arolla at a time when there was hardly any Alpine experience in the University. He joined the Climbers' Club in 1952 and he



was also a Wayfarer; he was to have organised one of our meets on his return from Greenland.

Michael combined his abilities in mountaineering, glaciology and geology to good effect in Arctic exploration which was his great enthusiasm. Since the War, there has been a remarkable growth in Arctic exploration undertaken by university parties. He was outstanding in this generation of explorers, and in many ways a leader of the movement. In 1948, at the exceptionally early age of 20, he led the Birmingham University expedition to Spitzbergen. The fact that he succeeded in launching an Arctic expedition at that time showed his considerable initiative and flair for organisation. On his return he was elected to the Arctic Club. He visited the Arctic on three other occasions before his final expedition. In 1951 he joined John Hartog's party and accomplished the first successful geological investigation of the south coast of North-East Land. Two years later he returned to West Spitzbergen with the Oxford University expedition led by Ian Davidson; and in 1956 he visited the Sukkertopen ice cap in West Greenland, leading a highly successful mixed expedition, which apart from its scientific work achieved the first ascent of Mount Atter, the highest peak in that area. His articles in the 1954 and 1956 *Wayfarers' Journals* illustrate the deep satisfaction which he found in the Arctic. Even on what were primarily scientific expeditions Michael climbed whenever he could; only a few days before his death he reached a new summit near to Base Camp.

His frequent expeditions gave his keen mind opportunities for original scientific work. He studied at Oxford under Dr. K. S. Sandford and later worked in close conjunction with him on the geology and glaciology of Spitzbergen. As a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and tutorial fellow in geography at Bedford College, London, he had the opportunity to pursue his research further; he had gained his B.Sc. before he left Oxford, and at the time of his death he was completing a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Unfortunately he had not yet been able to publish more than a fraction of his work, but he had made several contributions to learned journals and there were other articles in the course of preparation. His success as a tutor at Bedford College showed that he had a special aptitude for that type of university teaching.

He was glad to have this chance to visit north Greenland with a finely equipped party under experienced leadership; and his letters show that he was completely happy in that remote part of the great Arctic which he loved so much.

ALAN BLACKSHAW.

### BERNARD JILLOTT

Bernard Jillott and R. C. Culbert (non-member) lost their lives whilst taking part in the 1957 Oxford University expedition to Haramosh in the Karakoram. In September a sudden avalanche above Camp II led to their deaths. Streather, the leader of the expedition, and John Emery, despite frostbite and incredible hardships, managed to escape off the mountain.

Bernard was a fourth-year chemist at The Queen's College when I first met him. A former president of the O.U.M.C. he seemed to dominate the mountaineering activities of the Oxford group. Yet he was a quiet and shy person, never consciously seeking the limelight. Beneath this reserve was hidden a personality which one could only admire: generosity and kindness, tact and patience, blended with an infallible will and rigid determination to become the complete mountaineer. Few climbers from Oxford can have identified themselves so completely with their sport. In his final year I was fortunate enough to climb with him very frequently, and soon came to love and admire the sterling qualities of this man.

In the mountains he was not only the perfect companion but a natural leader. Confident and calm he seemed to carry within himself some quality almost of godliness, against which circumstances seemed to beat in vain. He would remain unruffled in the most trying conditions. In February last year we climbed Main Wall at the Avon Gorge. Unaware that it had been climbed before we found ourselves off route high up the cliff. To reach the original route Bernard made an exposed overhanging traverse. Two of the pegs came out and he fell 20 feet—quite unhurt. Instead of resting he immediately led the crux, which appeared to be very thin and exposed. Such an action might be condemned as foolhardy. To any who climbed with him it was rather the action of a man driven by an inexhaustible spirit and fully aware of his own technical competence. As he

moved up to that crux—a lithe figure outlined against the white of the rock and the blue of the sky—the world seemed to stand still. Man and Nature were united in something inexplicably wonderful. An everlasting friendship had been formed, for only in such moments in life can one assess the true value of a man. It became clear that this was the way to overcome mountaineering problems—by a partnership in which one regarded the leader not only as a competent mountaineer but as a man more worthy than oneself. It seemed as if he was too wonderful a person ever to depart from this life.

The climbs we shared were rock climbs, but Bernard was also an adept on snow and ice. His venture to the Himalaya was a natural culmination of three successful Alpine seasons, and constant climbing in the Lakes, North Wales, and Scotland. In his early days his determination outweighed his skill as a mountaineer, but through the years his technique improved to such a degree that it became obvious that a great future lay in front of him. His death, though such a tragedy, was amongst the mountains he loved. He climbed because he realised the true value of the hills:—

“The mountains have given me health, joy, beauty, friends, and rich memories. These I was not going to leave behind. They are still mine and infinitely precious.”

Like the mountains his memory will always remain. To his many friends he was not only a gifted mountaineer but a man to be loved and respected.

C. J. MORTLOCK

### CAPTAIN J. C. REID, R.E.

John Cartwright Reid was born on 17th June, 1930, the son of Colonel L. C. Reid, M.B.E., M.C. (late R.E.), and was educated at Wellington College and the R.M.A. Sandhurst. Commissioned in the Corps of Royal Engineers in 1950, he served in Malaya and as Adjutant of 1 Training Regiment at Malvern.

John Reid was a determined yet completely unselfish character with a strong sense of duty. He was a keen soldier. Tall, powerfully built, he was a good rugby football and hockey player, and was very fit. His great love was for mountains, and during his eight years' climbing, including three very good Alpine seasons,

he was exceptionally active, joining the Climbers' Club in 1954. His determination, and readiness to take more than his share of unpleasant tasks, added great strength to any climbing party. Yet he climbed a mountain for sheer enjoyment, rather than as an achievement. Among the many great Alpine peaks he climbed, perhaps he would best remember the Ecrins, the traverse of the Meije, and the Dent Blanche. The Dent Blanche had been his special ambition for some years and it was while descending from this summit that he had his first mountain accident. He died in Sion hospital 10 days later, on 8th September, 1957.

He will be particularly missed both in the Royal Engineers Ski and Mountaineering Club, and in the Army Mountaineering Association. He was a strong supporter of club activities and a valuable help to the organisers of many meets. He had a charm of manner and a vitality that made a great impression on anyone who met him.

J. R. G. FINCH.

### G. F. WOODHOUSE

I hesitate to add to the admirable In Memoriam of my old friend, George Woodhouse, in *C.C.J.* 1957, but I am encouraged to do so by the last sentence of that obituary, wherein the writer says "I am sure that there are many besides myself who owe him deep gratitude for his guidance in our own beginnings in following it" (i.e. the sport of rock-climbing). And that is certainly the case with myself.

During my early boyhood's holidays in the Lake District, my father became increasingly apprehensive of my ramblings and scramblings on fell and crag, sometimes with my brother (tragically killed in the First War), but often alone. So I was taken to Keswick and delightedly introduced to the great brothers Abraham. Business pre-occupation and declared "old age" (George and Ashley were, I believe, still in their thirties!) prevented their taking me climbing, but they readily sent me along to their friend George Woodhouse, who was staying at Seathwaite, Borrowdale, during his school holidays from Sedbergh. By Woodhouse I was taken up a variety of climbs on Gable, Scafell etc.: Kern Knotts Chimney being the first essay,

and not long afterwards Sergeant's Crag Gully, which as an "Exceptionally Severe" (in the old classification) filled me with pride and an ambition for more. He was a most competent, indeed brilliant, cragsman, and a delightful and amusing companion; I felt much privileged to be his pupil, and I have always felt that I owe a lot to his early instruction, his encouragement, and his sage counsel, of which A.K.R. wrote last year. Woodhouse's Lakeland enthusiasm, and concentration over the years, was remarkable. His only "eccentric" ambition seems to have been Skye, of which his praises were loud. I always remember the way in which he used to walk straight through bogs and marshes saying that that was the accepted technique in Skye, and wet feet were nothing.

In later years he paid me a visit in Cambridge, where he had earlier taken his degree at St. John's College. It was not till then that I learnt of his enthusiasm for bell-ringing. Indeed, as an undergraduate he told me one of his principal interests had been campanology. But his skills far exceeded the latter art, and in Sedburgh long afterwards he showed me an intricate bell-ringing machine which he had invented. On the occasion of my last visit there during the Second Great War, I found him in retirement, happy in the exercise of his mechanical proficiency, engaged upon the turning out of parts of instruments for the use of the Royal Navy. And in the evening he would turn his busy hand to tapestry, and would work upon effective designs of his own making.

He had been a most proficient science master at Sedburgh for many years, whilst another proclivity of his had been as an amateur soldier in command of the School O.T.C.

I should like to add that it has been a great pleasure to have this opportunity of paying a small additional tribute to the memory of an old friend, a delightful personality, an able man, and an outstanding cragsman.

N. E. ODELL.

#### RT. HON. SIR CHARLES TREVELYAN, BT.

Charles Trevelyan, who died last winter at the age of 87, was a good friend to all mountain-lovers and ramblers. He fathered the first Access to Mountains Bill, and supported all open air

movements. His son-in-law, John Dower, made the National Parks practical politics, and his daughter Pauline is the active National Parks Commissioner.

A games-player and a fine shot, he was above all fond of the hills and his own Northumbrian moors; a prodigious walker, extremely fast over rough ground or up the fells. For many years he organised and ran our Man Hunt on the Fells, which based on Seatoller—an activity in which his son has succeeded him. He made, with me, the first explorations of the Northumbrian crags, and notably some difficult first ascents on Great Wanney Crag. While (I think) he was President of the Board of Education, he joined our Pen y Pass parties, and once cured a severe attack of lumbago by an ascent of the Lliwedd Far East Cracks, with Mallory and myself, under a continuous waterfall varied by hail. He never joined the Clubs, but his interest in our activities, and in mountain literature, survived to the end.

GEOFFREY WINTHROP YOUNG.

## REVIEWS

GERVASUTTI'S CLIMBS. By Giusto Gervasutti. Translated by Nea Morin and Janet Adam Smith. (Hart-Davis, 30/-).

This is an important book. Superficially it is simply a brisk and exciting but essentially straightforward record of Gervasutti's Alpine seasons with an expedition to the Andes thrown in. In fact however it is much more than this, because Gervasutti contrives to provide, between the lines if not actually in the text, not only an illuminating self-portrait but his own answers to such fundamental mountaineering questions as why? why so much? and why so difficult? These answers, moreover, are neither tedious nor unconvincing.

Gervasutti's Alpine career was, and still is, outstanding. As things turned out he never climbed the Eigerwand or the Walker spur or the north face of the Matterhorn, but he carried out the first ascents of an even longer list of scarcely less formidable routes: the east wall of the Grandes Jorasses, the north-west wall of the Ailefroide, the north-west face of the Olan, the east face of Mont Blanc de Tacul, the Pillars of Fresney, the south face of the Gugliermina and the south-east ridge of the Pic Gaspard. In addition he made the second ascents of the north face of the Grandes Jorasses and the south ridge of the Aiguille Noire. This book describes every one of these expeditions and more besides.

The man who achieved all this—and such breezy frolics as a solo ascent of the Matterhorn one Christmas Eve—was unquestionably the finest mountaineer of his generation: an intrepid adventurer armed to the teeth with all the splendid qualities of a man of action. It goes without saying that he was a technically brilliant climber, but so was Comici. He was also a man of quite extraordinary determination, but so was Cassin. What made Gervasutti outstanding was his scorching enthusiasm. Indeed Gervasutti's enthusiasm amounted to a fierce and exclusive passion. Season after season he deliberately sacrificed "security, comfort and a great deal else that most people hold dear" (his more wistful remarks suggest that this last item is a circumlocation for girls). But we do not need to rely on what he says. On the Ailefroide he fell while crossing the bergschrund, loosened three teeth and broke two ribs, yet he put up with his injuries for over 50 hours and completed the climb. The man who could write in all seriousness "a climber who is strong and sure of himself should prefer winter ascents because . . . they force him to battle without respite, completely on his own, day after day, and with no possibility of reprovisioning" was certainly no dilettante mountaineer.

Nevertheless, although Gervasutti's heart was irretrievably in the mountains, his head, so to speak, was in the right place. He had no time at all for German fanaticism. Rather did he bring to climbing the hard-headed calculation of a Russian chess master. Time and again, like other alpinists, he was the victim of bad weather and frequently he pressed on in the face of it. But whenever, in his view, the odds had become too great he had the strength of mind to retreat or, seething, to bide his time in the hut. Moreover his head was cool as well as hard, so that he had immense self-control. Allied to the diligence of his training this ensured that his behaviour in emergencies was always exemplary. Thus, when Gervasutti says "the difficulty was extreme but not alarming" he is not line shooting; he is telling the simple truth. He means that Gervasutti was doing a pitch of at least V sup., probably covered in verglas, and throughout the performance he, Giusto Gervasutti, was completely unperturbed.

This sentence also provides a clue to Gervasutti's failings. It is evident that he was rather conceited and almost entirely humourless. Once on the Civetta the exhaustion of his German companion obliged them both to retreat. Gervasutti pays tribute to his own forbearance: "Without so much as a curse or protest, though my heart was near to breaking, I let him down." Looking back on one of his Jorasses bivouacs he feels bound to point out his own superior patience: "I succeeded in keeping quiet but Gagliardone could not keep still and wriggled this way and that." But his pride, be it said, is largely reserved for his moral qualities; not every climber in a book of alpine reminiscences would have disdained to mention an ascent of the north face of the Cima Grande in record time. As for his humour, apart from one feeble practical joke which he permitted himself deep in the heart of Chile, the only amusing parts of the book are obviously unintentional e.g. his description of poor Devies' tribulations on the Ailefroide. I suppose if anyone takes his climbing as seriously as Gervasutti it is too much to hope for any deliberate jokes.

Why then is the book important? More Mummery than Winthrop Young, more Buhl than either, in the last analysis it defies comparison and is important just because it is unique. The style is the man and the man is his climbs. Like Othello he delivers a round unvarnish'd tale of most disastrous chances, of moving accidents, of hair-breadth 'scapes, and like Othello he captivates all who hear it. When Gervasutti and Chabod arrive at the Leschaux hut and hear the dreaded announcement "Peters in der Wand," the tale is dramatic. When Boccalatte is about to fall off on the Sass Maor and Gervasutti has no belay, it is frantically exciting. And when Gervasutti is contemplating his winter ascent of the Matterhorn—"tomorrow I will be a lord and master, a commander of life and death"—it even achieves a kind of ecstasy.

Yet for all the uplift I think it is a less pretentious book than its closest rival, *Starlight and Storm*: it sticks to action and does not



strive for poetry. As for the man himself it seems to me less appropriate to think of him as the Rébuffat of the thirties than as the Kirkus of the Alps—a glance at the frontispiece only reinforces this view. At all events, tremulous parents supervising the family reading are strongly advised to proscribe this superb translation quite as ruthlessly as *Let's Go Climbing* or any other liquor too strong for early youth. Equally, mothers of large families who claim to common sense may find it just as efficacious as Belloc's tiger. For any schoolboy who reads it will be in grave danger of running away to Courmayeur to "dare all and be kin to the gods."

P. S. NELSON.

MOUNTAINEERING IN BRITAIN. By Ronald W. Clark and Edward C. Pyatt. (Phoenix House Ltd., 45/-.)

The spate of mountaineering books goes on; dozens of them. Anthologies, biographies, histories, philosophies, records of Himalayan expeditions. Some of them worthwhile; some not. And lots of pretty picture books. We even have lady novelists using the mountains as a vehicle for soppy sex psychology. And, of course, there is the proliferation of Club Journals. One sometimes wonders how many climbing people are able to, or even attempt to, keep up with all this. And one also wonders how many of these publications are actually purchased by climbers as distinct from by libraries; especially as not all of them are good value for money.

However, here we have something—"A history from the earliest times to the present day"—which does seem worthwhile having been done, and might also be considered worth the not inconsiderable sum of 45/-. It at least has no fewer than 104 illustrations, with very few of them coming into the category of mere pretty pictures, and many of them highly interesting. Immense trouble must have been taken to round up photographs covering a period of nearly a hundred years, and selecting from them. It is a pity, however, that the reproduction of the intriguing frontispiece—a print of 1852 showing "Principal eminences of the British Islands"—is so far from clear that the legends can hardly be read even with a magnifying glass. Immense trouble must also have been applied to collecting, reading and sifting the material for the 288 page text. But it is not merely "a monumental piece of work," for taking it by and large the authors have got the process of development of our sport into very good perspective. In fact, the planning of the book is very good. And it is studded with apt quotations, and vignettes of legendary characters and characters still with us. Indeed, the book is mainly about the personalities, some of them very remarkable, who pioneered and developed climbing in these islands.

There is one point of criticism on the book's evaluation of different old-time climbers one has known either personally, or through having known people who actually climbed with them, which I feel sure will be supported by others. But as comparisons are said to be odious I

will limit myself to commenting that whereas the headings to Chapters 7 and 10 ("Botterill and Herford; the New Spirit in the Lake District, 1899-1914," and "Kirkus, Edwards, the Welsh Revival, and Lake District Climbing, 1928-39") will be generally acceptable, the heading to Chapter 9, "Kelly: Developments in the Lake District and Wales, 1914-28," will not, I think, be so acceptable, for Bower and Pigott were just as dominating in that period. It probably would have been better if the personal names had been omitted from those headings.

Of course, a lot of climbing people will have a pretty good knowledge of most of this history already from general reading. But here it is all efficiently summarised and classified, with a comprehensive index and notes on the plates, which, however, might better have been placed with, or opposite, the plates instead of just being listed at the end. One is left with the pleasant and satisfying impression that good as many of our present day climbers undoubtedly are, some of their predecessors were just as good in their day, especially when viewed against the state of development at their time, though not so numerous.

It is difficult to tell where in this book the indefatigable Pyatt begins and the erudite Clark ends, or vice-versa. But between them they have done a very good job.

A. B. HARGREAVES.

A CENTURY OF MOUNTAINEERING; 1857-1957. By Arnold Lunn.  
(George Allen & Unwin, 1957, 30/-.)

Already there seem to be some misconceptions about this admirable book. It is not a history of the Alpine Club nor has the Club commissioned it. The nearest approach to a history was the series of articles in the Centenary number of the *Alpine Journal* where the ingenious choice of contributors with their differing outlooks and approach to their subject gave a more subtle commentary on the varieties of types that go to make up a club than any more formal history could have done. Sir Arnold Lunn has set out to write "a centenary tribute to the Alpine Club." Herr Othmar Gurtner of the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research who commissioned the book describes in the Introduction the search for the right author who "could combine the factual approach of the historian with the personal interpretation of an essayist." With this aim in mind it is difficult to believe that they could have alighted on anyone who could have done the job as well as Sir Arnold has. He is old enough to have known Whymper personally as well as most of the famous names of the last 50 years but he is young in his sympathy with, and understanding of, contemporary developments, his international outlook gives his whole picture a balance that is never parochial and his tribute to the Club itself is all the more convincing coming from one who was kept out of it for so long.

It can be said at once that the whole book is immensely readable and that Sir Arnold has made a supreme—and almost wholly successful—effort to subdue the natural discursiveness of his style and concentrate on the story of the development of mountaineering as a sport during

the last 100 years. The first half of the book is wholly concerned with the Alps and takes the story up to 1914; thereafter it is divided fairly evenly between the Alps and developments overseas. There are two concluding chapters on Modern Trends in Mountaineering Literature and a summary of the Club's contribution to the sport. As might be expected Sir Arnold seems more at ease when dealing with the Alps themselves than elsewhere; conscientious and accurate as he always is (and there are a formidable number of names, dates and facts recorded) it is when his personal knowledge of a personality or a trend is engaged that his always vivid narrative becomes even livelier and the embers of old controversies glow again. Unquestionably he is at his best in his sketches of the great mountaineers whom he has selected as typical of their period. These range from Stephen and Mummery to Smythe and Eric Shipton. His analysis of Leslie Stephen's complex character is brilliantly done, he is judicial on the cross-grained Whymper and presents a delicious sketch of Coolidge, the "Lord of Battles" of whom he says "No connoisseur of eccentrics could help feeling a qualified affection for this splendid specimen of the cantankerous scholar." To Colonel Strutt he pays a generous—and very timely—tribute; perhaps only to Mallory does he do less than justice.

The great merit of the book is the way Sir Arnold has placed the Alpine Club's contribution to the development of mountaineering into such accurate focus and he has done this by achieving a balance and thoroughness not always evident in his many earlier books, without losing any of his wit and vivacity. There have been times in the past when (if the metaphor may be allowed) his very red herrings seemed to be mounted on hobby-horses but now the typical Lunn touches appear as delightful asides to some bald fact, for instance Queen Victoria's reason for appointing Alfred Wills a judge, or the irrelevant but fascinating fact that 29th May 1953 was the 500th anniversary of the Fall of Constantinople. Against all these delights the repetition of one or two anecdotes—Melchior's well-known remark about the London suburbs for instance—are of very small moment.

The illustrations do not quite match the high standard of the text. The eight colour reproductions give paintings by artists ranging from 1850 to 1946 and are appropriately placed in the text. Technically the reproduction is excellent, indeed better than two of them deserve. There are 16 full-page monochrome photogravure plates and of this rather meagre selection no less than five are of the Matterhorn and three show the north face of the mountain. Vittorio Sella's camera has a page to itself but as no photographers' names are given we are left to guess whether the two following plates were Sella's work. The last three plates, unidentified and ambiguously captioned, are really not worthy of the book, in fact to me they are frankly suspect. They are grouped beneath the heading "Artificial Climbing Springs from the Struggle Man versus Gravity"; at least we know what that means—how often, especially in a wet Welsh gully, have we felt we were the original Struggle Man. This is probably the only typographical

ambiguity I have noticed. In a book so packed with names and dates and printed abroad at that, a few misprints might not unreasonably have been expected.<sup>1</sup>

A tribute must be paid to the Swiss Foundation not only for their imaginative and generous thought in commissioning the book but also for the worthy manner in which they have produced it. The challenge of noble subject has been splendidly met. My only regret is that it cannot be reviewed by Coolidge himself. That would have been a feast indeed.

ELLIOTT VINEY.

THE FIRST ASCENT OF MONT BLANC. By Sir Gavin de Beer and Professor T. Graham Brown. (Oxford University Press, 70/-.)

This long book might well fall into the category of a mountaineering "whodunnit," if a term like that can be applied appropriately to such a scholarly work. The authors have meticulously examined every available scrap of evidence before arriving at their interesting conclusions over a controversy that has puzzled climbers for well over a century.

Based mainly on the diary of a Baron von Gersdorf, who watched the ascent from Chamonix through a telescope, and who interviewed Dr. Paccard shortly after his return, and on the doctor's own diary, they have reconstructed the story of the first ascent (by the Ancien Passage) on the following lines:—

Dr. Michael-Gabriel Paccard, the young village doctor, who was also interested in scientific observations, had from a distance studied possible routes up Mont Blanc for several years, and had formed his own theories of how the top might be reached. At 4.15 in the morning of 8th August, 1786, he and the porter Jacques Balmat, who was employed chiefly to carry the doctor's scientific instruments, left their bivouac at a height of 7,640 feet in rather unsettled weather. Climbing ropes and ice-axes had not yet been invented and the mountaineers had to depend for their safety on two long poles. Nevertheless they managed to force their way without incident through heavily crevassed glaciers and by 1.50 p.m. they had reached a height of about 12,600 feet. A cold north wind was blowing. Soon after this they arrived at the Grand Plateau which had never been entered before. The snow was badly crusted and involved much tiring and laborious effort. It was now getting comparatively late—3.0 in the afternoon—and as Balmat did not like the look of the slopes ahead he refused to go on, giving fatigue as his excuse. Somehow the doctor managed to persuade him to continue. The two then climbed the steep snow at an extraordinarily fast pace considering the altitude, that it was now all unknown country, and that it was getting to the end of a long and very heavy day. To the watchers below it seemed that the two arrived at the summit together at 6.23 p.m., though according to Balmat he had to run to reach the top *nearly* at the same time as his leader. They had climbed over 8,000 feet in bad weather and unfavourable snow conditions and had

<sup>1</sup> They are concentrated in the classical quotations.—*Editor*.

been going for nearly 14 hours—an astonishing feat of courage and endurance. The climbers had intended to bivouac on the summit but could find no shelter there. So by light of the moon they made their way down to the neighbourhood of the bivouac of the previous night for a little sleep. The next day they returned to Chamonix suffering to a certain extent from frostbite and snow-blindness.

The authors then go on to relate the discreditable events which followed the great ascent. ("Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose," for Sir John Hunt in his introduction aptly compares these episodes to the fables published by the Indian Press about Hillary and Tenzing in 1953.)

Directly news of the victory became more widely known denigrators began to appear on the scene with the object of taking the credit away from Paccard—two of them for reasons of jealousy, and the third from greed. The first of these was Bourrit, a publicist from Geneva, who specialised in Alpine literature, particularly on the Chamonix valley, and who would have very much liked to have been in Paccard's place. Actually he was a feeble mountaineer and never reached the summit of Mont Blanc. So six weeks later he meanly forestalled Paccard's account by publishing a pamphlet, asserting that Balmat had been the persevering leader who had reached the top alone; and that he had had to descend some distance to reach Paccard in order to encourage him to follow him again to the summit.

Bourrit had little difficulty in persuading Balmat to support him in these falsehoods for by doing so the latter gained the prize of money offered by de Saussure to the first Chamonix guide to find a route to the top of Mont Blanc.

Then there was this same de Saussure, a rich Genevese, a professor of Philosophy and Natural Science, whose main interest was Alpine travel, and who also would have dearly loved to have been the first up to the top himself. He had heard an account of the climb both from von Gersdorf and Paccard, so that there was no excuse whatever for him to have connived in these deceits. But when he made the third ascent of Mont Blanc a year later his story of it included no mention of Paccard and he gave the impression that his was the only success up to that date. Paccard was naturally very annoyed at these continual fabrications, so he eventually got Balmat to sign an affidavit telling the true story. But the doctor died in 1827 and Balmat survived him; and for his remaining years saw to it that the early legend grew up again. Later it gained much impetus from the support of a writer such as Alexandre Dumas, so that in after years Whymper was to ask: "Who is this Dr. Paccard?" And it was not until the end of the 19th century that serious doubts arose again.

One cannot help feeling that the labour involved in the research for, and writing of, such a book must have been equal to the ascent of Mont Blanc by the ordinary route several times over! Besides placing Dr. Paccard's ascent of the mountain in its rightful place Sir Gavin de Beer and Professor Graham Brown are to be congratulated on a most

valuable addition to the history of mountaineering. The book is greatly enriched by reproductions from R. W. Lloyd's collection of coloured Alpine prints.

E. BENTLEY BEAUMAN.

THE INFLUENCE OF MOUNTAINS UPON THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN INTELLIGENCE. By Geoffrey Winthrop Young. (Jackson, Glasgow, 1957, Pp.30. Paper, 4/6.)

This is the seventeenth W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture. The author has produced a gracious, excellently suitable, essay. It has its delightful memorable phrases: "Norman Collie . . . probably the first discoverer of Neon, and certainly the first discoverer of the Cioch" (p.6); and "the few adventurous Swiss who first explored their glaciers all bore the cloak of professorial titles" (pp.8-9). There is just the right amount of reminiscence: of "Norman Collie . . . a consummate monologist, pouring out emphatic and often sardonic commentary and speculation," while "Ker maintained his share in the conversation by a stillness as varied, as emphatic and as convincing" (p.6); and of "how in youth I used to ransack whole libraries, author after author through past centuries, dramatists, poets, essayists, even theologians, for the single word 'mountains' to flash up like fire from the page, illumining it with the glow that fills the room in the presence of first love" (pp.7-8). The connecting theme of the whole essay is a speculation: ". . . the visible mountain ladder . . . added a third dimension . . . to the length and breadth of surface supporting man in the dawn of his intelligence . . . by asserting the existence of a higher world and of a higher order inhabiting it, mountains became the first forces to lift the eyes and thoughts of our branch of animal life above the levels of difficult existence to the perception of a region of spirit, located, as children would locate it, in the sky above" (p.14). The evidence deployed in support is inevitably rather scrappy, and predominantly intuitive in type: "The numen of Delphi dwells in the balance, the proportion of the views surrounding us, in the tension, of which we are sensible, between mountain and precipice, sky and sea. The superb monuments, crowded and subsidiary, are no more than the tributes to the spirit of the mountain sanctuary offered by those who, through the ages, have experienced for it, and here, the same feeling as we do now" (pp.26-27).

The problems of religious origins are, and seem likely to remain, desperately confused, confusing, and controversial. It may well be that this eloquent engaging essay in speculation is right in urging that the mountain background has played a considerable part in what surely must have been an inordinately complicated story. Yet in the mind of this reviewer—cramped perhaps by the cloak of a professorial title!—there is a stop. A generous and once-born character sympathetically attempting to intuit the reactions of our ancestors may go badly wrong: doing them perhaps considerably more than justice.

For Smuts and Geoffrey Winthrop Young the source and content of religion may be some undenominational undogmatic inspiring sense of the numinous. But religious belief takes many forms, and may have many sources. In some it is the response to the story of a man; who was perhaps not just a man. In others the fundamental drive is terror; the unspeakable obsessive nightmare of torture without end (the Latin word translated technically as "salvation" is *salus*: simply, "safety"). But a memorial essay cannot and should not be a treatise. When the trustees of W. P. Ker Memorial invited Geoffrey Winthrop Young to give this lecture they chose well. He has not let them down.

ANTONY FLEW.

SELECTED POEMS ON WEST PENWITH AND REFLECTIONS I. By A. W. Andrews. Published by the author. 5/-.

Introduced in a Foreword by Geoffrey Winthrop Young, the 120 lyrics and verses in this book reflect A. W. Andrews as the Climbers' Club has known him for nearly sixty years—passionately devoted to and inspired by the Cornish cliffs, individual and fresh in outlook, independent in spirit, humorous, quietly ironic, and a firm and loyal friend.

There is great variety of subject, mood and tone—melodic, belligerent, topographic, reflective, enthusiastic, but never depressed. One verse seems especially significant:—

But the voice is individual  
That stands out amid the roar  
Coming from the full orchestra  
Whose conductor is the shore.

NIGEL VINEY.

THE MOUNTAIN WORLD, 1956/7. Directed by Othmar Gurtner and Marcel Kurz, English Edition edited by Malcolm Barnes. (Allen and Unwin, 25/-.)

This is the fourth edition in English. Its production is excellent, good type pleasant for reading, and the size of the page does justice to the really excellent photographs. In this it compares favourably with most of our journals. The editors have gathered a rich harvest from the great Himalayan ascents of the past two years, though it must be said that equally good accounts of most of them have already appeared in the *AJ* and elsewhere.

We have descriptions by Eggler, Reiss, Schmied of the ascents of Lhotse and Everest, by Franco and Vialatte of Makalu, by Kick and Sander of the German expedition to the Chogo Lungma glacier, by Band of Kangchenjunga and last and least by Nandu Jayal of Kamet.

Most of these are good in their way, though I do not think I can commend the editor's idea of having several articles on the same expedition. They seem to be trying to obtain in words a stereoscopic picture, but for this to be effective the images must be equally in focus

and from a clearly defined, and different, point of view, if the resultant picture is not to be blurred. Here the whole is not equal to the sum of the parts, and even if it had been, a good painting would have been better. It is rather saddening to find that the accounts of the heroic efforts on these very high mountain ascents have a dreary sameness about them; once the oxygen masks go on they begin to read like a technical journal. Perhaps in future we should have the results presented graphically and cut out the words!

Apart from these, there is a straightforward account of an ascent under extremely difficult snow conditions of University Peak in Alaska by Sheldon Brooks. When I read how they narrowly missed their train—I mean 'plane—on the summit plateau I begin to understand the attitude of mind of the United States National Park Service which forbids aeroplane landings or air drops in the McKinley area.

Then follows Bradford Washburn's monumental work on Mount McKinley, one of the most complete analyses of a remote mountain that I have read, supported by photographs of great clarity, each complete with annotated sketches alongside and taken from every point of the compass. Just to leave no one in doubt, he outlines every route that might be done, as well as every one that has been. Finally, he has given a part of what must surely be one of the most beautiful mountain maps ever produced.

Othmar Gurtner himself has written an authoritative and interesting article on glacier ice, while Arnold Heim writes on the Virunga volcanoes with an aridity which more than compensates for the tropical humidity of the valleys.

To round off the volume Gurtner brings some of his Himalayan heroes home to write three Alpine essays on the Ebnefluh icefall, the north face of the Aiguille du Plan and the Torre Venezia. The latter describes the magnificent climb on the 1,500 feet vertical face of this tower, "most of it of the sixth and none below the fifth degree." For me "our Hansi Frommenweiler's laughter" as "he held on with toes and finger tips" after an hour's free climbing to cover the 40 metres round one of the overhangs, had a touch of the macabre.

F. A. PULLINGER.

THE EVEREST-LHOTSE ADVENTURE. By Albert Eggler. (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1957, 21/-.)

The ascent of Everest and Lhotse, and a number of lesser peaks between 17,000 and 20,000 feet, previously unclimbed, by the 1956 Swiss Expedition was an impressive achievement in every way. This book, however, hardly does justice to it.

Albert Eggler led his team with courage, intelligence and fine organising ability, and he led them to unqualified success. He is a first rate mountaineer and, no doubt, an excellent man. He may also be a good lawyer—"advocate" is the word used in his book—but he is not outstanding as a writer. This is made unnecessarily more obvious by poor translation, particularly in the early chapters. As one reads on



the book improves, and the pages dealing with the party actually on the mountain are very much better than the earlier ones. It might be suggested that finding himself in his true element, the author managed to cope rather better with his awkwardness as a writer.

As regards presentation the book is of the standard of an average novel. There are some quite good black and white photographs, with rather a surfeit of groups with their faces hidden behind beards, goggles and other Himalayan accoutrements. The frontispiece falls into this category, leaving one with an overall impression of little more than a red anorak in glorious technicolour. Statistics about food and oxygen are incorporated in the text.

The facts about the preparations, the journey and the ascents are there, and undoubtedly this was a very fine exploit by a well co-ordinated team. The success of Marmet and Schmied's courageous effort as the first Swiss summit party, who climbed Everest after a terrible night above the South Col and without food, was a superb and well deserved climax.

It is a pity that the story of this expedition has not been recorded in a better book; but, as Eggler himself states in his introduction, "We are climbers, not literary men."

J. M. KRETSCHMER.

THE SKI RUNS OF SWITZERLAND. By James Riddell. (Michael Joseph, 35/-.)

This is the most important book that has appeared in this language on ski-ing, with one exception, for very many years. It is also, as far as I know, unique: Henry Hoek produced a similar sort of book on the Parsenn district many years ago, but this covers all Switzerland. The title is explanatory: it is not a book on technique, nor is it a book on the winter sports fetish; it is a book on ski-runs (but make no mistake: it is not just on *pistes*).

What the author does is to take each resort in turn and begin by summarising the salient points—height, number of beds, maximum *dénivellation* of the longest lift and so on. After a short introduction he goes on to describe the topography of the ski-ing region, a notoriously difficult thing to do well from any standpoint, let alone for the particular requirements of the skier. To this is added excellent bird's-eye view sketches (marking runs, lifts and heights) and photographs. There follow details of each lift (length, *dénivellation*, capacity and speed) and detailed descriptions of the runs they serve.

This sounds as if the book is a sort of skier's Baedeker—thorough but dull; it is very thorough but quite remarkably good reading. Anyone who has had the privilege of ski-ing with Jimmy Riddell will know he has a wonderful eye for country, and as everyone who has read any of his articles in the *British Ski Year Book* knows, he is also a gifted descriptive writer. A paragraph or two, and you have a picture of exactly how the runs at, say, Verbier lie; a few deft words and you know vividly what a run is like. His description of the Col de Creblet

run at Verbier is the skier's Archer Thomson 1957 vintage, and that of the Parsenn Derby course is an excellent example of how good writing can give one vicarious enjoyment of a classic *piste*. Sitting in a drab London in the middle of winter makes it all very frustrating.

I found it equally good on places I know and those I don't. If I were to cavil I would say that a few of the better Parsenn runs are left out—pure prejudice (on my part) no doubt. I particularly enjoyed Mürren—so much of Sir Arnold Lunn's writing depends for full enjoyment on knowing what and where Martha's Meadow is, or Broody Bump and the Hindenburg Line. Now I know. James Riddell has also discovered a new place with major potentialities . . . but I leave it to the reader to discover where I mean.

The gap for this sort of book has now been filled for Switzerland. One hopes he will now set out and fill those of the other Alpine countries. Meanwhile there are many hours of nostalgic browsing to be had in Switzerland.

R. R. E. CHORLEY.

ALPINISME SOVIÉTIQUE. By I. A. Tcherepov, translated into French by P. Sulfort. (Amiot Dumont, Paris.)

The title of this book is really a misnomer, for it contains accounts of two expeditions, with a note on a third, to the Tien Shan. It is written rather in the manner of a Victorian travel book, with discourses on falconry, trout-fishing, history, geography, flora and fauna, with dialectical materialism too. The first part, the expedition in 1937, deals with the ascents of Nansen Peak and Stalin Constitution Peak, while the second deals with an attempt in 1938 on Victory Peak, subsequently attacked in most years since 1947 and still unclimbed in 1956. The country was partially unknown and wholly unmapped.

These are the bare bones of the book. There are four poor illustrations, one of which appears to be of a navvies' convention in Switzerland. However, the caption says "la séance de culture Physique," and the text reveals that this orgy of masochism occurred before breakfast daily during both expeditions. Hats off to the decadent West.

Emerging from the narrative come slight indications of the "sport" in Russia. Mountaineering appears to be a subsidiary to the geographical and physiological sciences. It incorporates many of the ideas of the Nazi climbers, circa 1933-1939, much as do other Russian "sporting" activities. The individual may enjoy it, but that is not the fundamental idea. In the end note, where the objects of Soviet Mountaineering are set out, pleasure is not mentioned. In action they used many artificial aids and were slow but safe. Against this, is the undercurrent that failure is disgrace and the supreme effort must be made. The men themselves in these expeditions are tough professionals, instructors from mountaineering schools in the Union. Two other facts emerge: the first that they have mountaineering competitions in Russia, the second that there is actually a place called Boonsk. The French translation is good.

R. F. JONES.

HIGH ARCTIC. By Mike Banks. (Dent, 25/-.)

This is a personal account of the British North Greenland Expedition (1952-1954). It stands perhaps in the same relationship to Simpson's official account, *North Ice*, as *South Col* does to *The Ascent of Everest*. Although B.N.G.E. was not a mountaineering expedition there is much in Mike Banks' book for climbers, even some short but interesting climbing ventures sandwiched into the general run of exploration and travel. There also emerges in many episodes what seems characteristically a mountaineer's approach to the everyday problems of camping, travel and life in general on a large Arctic expedition. This approach I found very refreshing, and surely it will interest any climber who, of choice or necessity, joins expeditions with a large scientific or exploratory side and only occasional opportunities to climb.

The considerable achievements of this 30 man, 25 month expedition are well and economically told. The first large British service expedition to the polar regions since Scott had much new and improved equipment to test and this it did, rigorously and successfully. Mike Banks' account is, as he says, virtually a running commentary and gains therefrom. It is easy enough to grasp what it was like at the time from his realistic descriptions of hard journeys—and occasional hard drinking between whiles . . . "rough humour and the gentle but unmistakable odour of dirty socks replace inspirational Arctic ballyhoo."

Angus Erskine has added four chapters on other journeys undertaken while Mike Banks and his party were elsewhere. These descriptions are set in the same direct and pleasing style. They contain an interesting cameo of West Greenland life, and for its accuracy and sympathy of observation I can vouch. It is good to find both writers paying full tribute to the helpfulness and warm friendship of the people of Greenland, European and Greenlander alike.

G. H. FRANCIS.

THE GODS ARE ANGRY. By Wilfrid Noyce. (Heinemann, 15/-.)

To be a professional literary critic and an amateur climber and to be charged with reviewing a novel about mountaineering for a journal read by climbers is to be made aware of the variety of standards by which the work may be judged. Do we consider it as a contribution to literature or to mountain literature? The two are not the same, although we often talk as if Mummery wrote as well as Conrad or Winthrop Young as Lawrence.

Judged as climbing literature, Wilfrid Noyce's novel about the ascent of a fictitious Himalayan peak is very good indeed; his accounts of climbing, of physical and nervous effort, are excellent. Any climber will enjoy it—even one sated by the orgy of books set before him by publishers who believe, as one of them once told the reviewer, that "anything with the word 'mountain' in the title will sell."

But the author is aiming considerably higher than this and it would be presumptuous not to judge by the standards which he invites. Considered as a novel, *The Gods are Angry* is patchy in exactly the

way in which one would expect an ambitious first novel to be patchy. For it is ambitious; he has set himself a number of tasks which are difficult to combine. He has to create the mountain scene for readers who may never have seen anything higher than Parliament Hill Fields and who cannot be referred to an appendix of photographs; knowing that we, too, will read the book, he certainly feels that he cannot indulge in the sort of impressionistic shorthand which conveys the atmosphere at the expense of factual probability (Auden's stage direction, for instance, "the summit of Pillar Rock overlooking Wasdale"). He has to involve us in a number of simultaneous actions as he jumps from one camp to another—and this precisely because his aim is the high one of giving the sense of an expedition and not the easier trick of faking up a rising tension by surrounding a central character with minor ones who can be dropped like booster rockets when their task is done. This—the old problem of keeping six pots boiling on one gas ring—is unrecognised if it is well done and a cause of complaint if muffed.

In all these tasks he is successful and in some very successful. The unevenness enters when he tackles the hardest of all. He intends to show that the six members of his expedition are not the lay figures of most accounts—the Organiser, the Physiology Fanatic, the Man Who Always Breaks the Tension with a Joke—but individuals who have lives at home, wives, children, fiancées, mothers, who get on one another's nerves, remember past events, watch one another for signs of strain, squabble, doubt themselves, suffer anticlimaxes. All their past lives have to be focused on their actions on the mountain, yet the past lives have to be convincingly created in a very short space. Sometimes he is sufficiently at home and sufficiently in control for a casual conversation to imply a relationship; it is not surprising that sometimes he only suggests an idea of what relationship is intended. Nor is it surprising that sometimes he eases his task by endowing his characters with an implausible eloquence. There are precious few novelists who avoid this trap.

The flaws, in short, are those which arise in trying very honestly to do something very worthwhile and a great deal harder than, on the surface, it appears. There would be no point in picking them if one did not like the novel and want to recommend it to others.

DOUGLAS HEWITT.

OUT OF THE NIGHT. By Hugh Merrick. (Robert Hale).

Hugh Merrick's latest novel is a delightful story of a distinguished diplomat, Sir Arthur Hennessy, who has been retired for about four years. His early life was clouded by family tragedies of an unusual kind, the memories of which he was able to submerge while actively occupied. Retirement brought them all back to the forefront of his mind and insomnia was the result. He consulted a neurologist, who advised a complete change. In his younger days Hennessy and his wife had climbed a lot together in the Alps, but since her death he had not returned. After considering many types of holiday, he thought

that by revisiting one of the scenes of his married happiness, he could achieve his objective and rid himself of this self-recrimination that was causing him so much mental anguish.

This is the build-up to the main part of the story, which is set against the background of the Val d' Aosta and Mont Blanc's southern flanks. The scenic descriptions, and those of hut life and the local guides, are first-rate and bear the stamp of authenticity. Hennessey's reactions to exertion at high altitudes and the fear of possible failure remind one of one's own experiences. The final episodes of his endeavour are told with a deep sense of feeling for the dangers encountered on high mountains and lead to a climax that is tense and exciting.

To sum up: a good story told by an author with an obvious love for and knowledge of mountains, and not spoilt, like so many books, by using two words where one will do.

R. D. S. CARPENDALE.

#### CLUB JOURNALS 1957.

The Alpine Club produced a special Centenary number of the *Alpine Journal*, worthy in every way of the unique event which it commemorated. Sir John Hunt opens briefly, and then we are treated to an omnibus survey of the development of mountaineering from times even before the A.C. was founded right up to the present day. Much of this is fine writing by great names, and for sustained good value probably not excelled elsewhere; J. Monroe Thorington reviews the early beginnings of the sport, and Rawlinson assesses the latest developments, while T. S. Blakeney, D. F. O. Dangar, H. E. L. Porter, G. Winthrop Young, R. L. G. Irving and J. L. Longland all have their say in the intervening period. The A.C. deservedly emerges well from this survey, but the authors are by no means uncritical; indeed, Longland merits gold piton for his incisive commentary on the role of the Club in British climbing between the Wars. Irving by contrast sticks resolutely to his guns; regarding most modern climbing developments as heretically deviationist, he cheerfully maintains that the technical standards of the 1900s have never been surpassed. How we envy him those halcyon days when the forceful alpinist needed only such simple artificial aids as rope, ice-axe and nailed boots. Sir Arnold Lunn amusingly rattles some of the many skeletons in the A.C.'s century old cupboard, and contemporary climbing is represented by accounts of the Alaska and Machhapuchhare expeditions. A strong point is the magnificent collection of ancient and modern photographs, selected and arranged by Douglas Milner; but the latter must indeed have been harrowed if he found Linnell's leap as steep as his photograph shows it. Finally, Dr. T. G. Longstaff gives us an altogether delightful sketch of the Club as it was fifty years or so ago; and mountaineers the world over will echo him in saying "Long may the Club flourish."

The earlier 1957 May number of the *Alpine Journal* was good value too. We find many familiar names here, and it is only just to say

immediately that the solitary article not written by a member of the C.C.—a critical examination of Young Peter Taugwalder's account of the Matterhorn accident, by Blakeney and Dangar—is also one of the best in an academic sort of way. Our President almost achieves star rating for an account of an exciting tumble into a Jungfrau crevasse, Kemp and Westmacott recount their adventures on Huagaruncho and Peak A, and Banks tells of his party's determined assaults on Rakaposhi; also included are Baume on the South Georgia surveying expedition 1955/6, Holmes on Spiti, and Pugh and Ward on the effects of high altitude. Guaranteed to disturb the next night's sleep is S. G. McH. Clark's hair raising account of his descent *en rappel* of the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey's north ridge in course of an abortive attempt on the complete Peuterey ridge—"the rock cut back below me like the bows of a landing craft." The Notes on climbs and expeditions are fuller this year, and to that extent more useful, but active climbers would find the *Alpine Journal* twice as good if these notes were expanded into a complete and authoritative record.

The *American Alpine Journal* covers much the same ground; Rakaposhi, the Patagonia ice-cap and the New Zealand Alps come in for their share of attention, and there is also for good measure Jürg Marmet's fine account of the brilliantly successful 1956 Swiss expedition to the Western Cwm which achieved the first ascent of Lhotse and a double ascent of Everest. Nowadays the name of Rainier has found a place of fame in America, and it is touching to see a detailed survey of the climbing history of the mountain of that name. Modern climbing is represented by an account of what was evidently a smoothly mechanised first ascent of the west face of Snow Patch. Those among us who regret the recession of the glaciers will derive fresh hope from R. C. Hubley, who brings the good news that they are growing again in North America, and no longer contracting so rapidly in the Alps.

This year the *Canadian Alpine Journal* gives pride of place to the Abinger expedition to the Spiti-Lahul area; but there are numerous accounts of first rate alpinism in Canada too. The Jubilee Camp was evidently a great occasion for one and all: meet organisers, please note! Its success was due in no small measure to "story filled Mr. Edouard Feuz" and the "roving Mr. Herb Sampson, who entertained all, but especially the young ladies, with tales of fact and fiction." The others present also helped to keep things going—"the knitters basked in the sunshine, the readers reclined under the graceful cedars, and the story tellers gathered in groups in sun or shade as they chose," while the climbers just climbed and climbed and climbed.

The *Fell and Rock Journal* opens with the well worn story of the 1955 Kangchenjunga expedition; our members will feel at home here, as a photograph in a headman's house at Ghunga bears a striking resemblance to the interior of Cwm Glas Cottage. The South Georgia expedition is described in an interesting way by Tom Price, while reminiscences of the Orient by Dorothy Pilley Richards, and recollections of a Lofoten holiday by Ruth Spilsbury make amusing reading;

but the best fun is to be found in Graham Sutton's story of an idle day watching a mysterious stranger float eerily up C.B. A. B. Hargreaves puts in a good oar for Wales in a review of *Snowdon Biography*.

This year the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal* is devoted exclusively to mountaineering topics. T. W. Patey tells of the first ascent of the Muztagh Tower, and Tom Weir of the High Atlas. C. G. M. Slessor describes a winter ascent of the South Post of Coire Ardair, and joins I. C. Cumming in an article on rope technique, reaching the conclusion therein that two medium weight nylon ropes are safer than a single heavy one. Finally—a welcome feature—almost a third of the space is devoted to descriptions of some ninety new routes.

Men of catholic tastes may find interest in the *Cairngorm Club Journal*; the proof of the pudding is clearly in the eating, for donnish subjects like the return of the Osprey to the Spey Valley, the behaviour of the Luibeg in the Muckle Spate of 1829, and weather recording on Ben Macdhui prove to be less tedious than they look. There are also articles on Ruwenzori, Lahul and (once more!) South Georgia, and Frank Solari shows that a single extra full weight nylon rope is best (cp. *S.M.C. J.* above).

The fiftieth birthday of the Wayfarers' Club is commemorated, albeit a year late, by a jubilee number of the *Wayfarers' Journal* which is really very good. The historical interest which such an occasion generates is well assuaged by A. G. Spencer's able survey of the half century, and once that is out of the way, Douglas Milner packs almost every page full of climbing. The South Georgia Survey of course, is represented, this time in a very comprehensive article by K. Warburton; Charles Evans, George Band and Dennis Davies are, as usual, good value, while K. Collins on Norway, and H. P. Spilsbury on the High Level Route on ski, maintain the high standard. There is also a fine article on Greenland, written by Michael Holland shortly before his death there.

The *Rucksack Club Journal* gives us an exhilarating insight into the affairs of our neighbours from Beudy Mawr. Their activities were really very considerable; 12·2 members attended each meet, and they frequently make excursions on foot for a leisurely hundred miles or thereabouts. P. L. Roberts' account of the first ascent of Main Wall is an historical gem, and the tales of rugged Alpine seasons by Albert Ashworth, E. W. Dance, and Dennis Davies will ring a bell with our Chamonix *habitués*. Climbsmen should not miss "The Rules and Practice of Toughmanship."

The C.U.M.C. has evidently been very active recently; this excellent *Cambridge Mountaineering* positively exudes climbing. G. J. Fraser on the Flatiron ridge of the Piz Gemelli, and M. J. O'Hara on the Carnmore area illustrate the high standards of the Club, and there is a fine account of the South Face of the Pointe Gugliermine which is a further example of the ability of its author, the late Bob Downes. Other articles range from America to the Pyrenees, Persia and New

Zealand; the copious climbing and expeditionary notes are distinctly impressive. *Oxford Mountaineering* has a new cover in an even lighter blue than its Cambridge counterpart; the journal is also noticeably lighter in climbing content. However, what there is about climbing is pleasant enough, covering the first ascent of an ice couloir on the Périades, and Oxford perennials such as the Tower Ridge in winter, and the Lenspitz-Nadelhorn traverse, while the "admirably faithful Nelson" takes us on an interesting Cook's tour of the main Welsh crags. It appears that bridge fiends are still to the fore, adhering now to a bigger (and harder!) Horspath bridge further up the line—such is progress! The main impression comes from the more general writing such as the introspective "Fall of Icarus" and the "Climber's ABC": "S is for Severe . . . a French reflexive verb meaning to be afraid." Well worth the new low price of 3/6.

A. BLACKSHAW.

A DICTIONARY OF MOUNTAINEERING. By R. G. Collomb. (Blackie and Son, 12/6.)

This Dictionary was written to serve as a reference book. "A Dictionary such as this can be referred to by the novice who is looking for definitions and meanings to enable him to understand the jargon and strings of technical terms which have grown up with British Mountaineering in the past 80 years." A wide range of topics of interest to mountaineers is covered, including equipment, place-names, foreign mountaineering phrases, mountaineering literature and history, geographical and geological terms (*sic*).

Many of the definitions given seem unnecessary, and some of the descriptions too long. We read that "Peel off" means "To fall off a climb (colloquial)," and that on a "Wall" the "holds may be either large and far apart or small and numerous." Mr. Collomb writes that geographical terms have been defined only in the sense by which they are used by mountaineers. Similarly perhaps with geological terms; notwithstanding, to describe a gabbro as "a hard durable rock of the granite family" is extraordinary.

Is this a good book for a novice to read? Frankly, I should not give it high priority. But then Mr. Collomb did not name the Climbers' Club Journal in his bibliography.

M. J. KEEN.

SELECTED CLIMBS IN THE RANGE OF MONT BLANC. Adapted by the Alpine Climbing Group from the Guide Vallot and other sources. Edited by E. A. Wrangham. 224 pp., 63 Diagrams. (Allen & Unwin. 18/-).

The A.C.G. guidebook is a revision of the original roneoed version. It is now printed and bound in pocket size. It is mainly based on the French Vallot guide, but most of the descriptions have been modified in the light of personal experience of members of the A.C.G., and unlike Vallot it does not aim to be comprehensive, but only to give a selection of the best of many climbs. Thus it covers the whole



of the Mont Blanc group in one volume instead of three, saving both bulk and cost. 115 routes are included, of all standards of difficulty, offering ample choice to any party based on Chamonix.

As the first Alpine climbing guidebook published in English since Conway-Coolidge, this is quite a landmark in the current renaissance of British Alpine climbing. One of the objects of the A.C.G. is to encourage Alpine expeditions of the more enterprising type. This guide should certainly do that. The choice of routes is sporting, rightly reflecting the tastes and capacities of today. It includes the famous Walker spur on the Grandes Jorasses (when is a British party going to achieve this climb?), and other recent hard climbs hitherto described only in journals, like the E. face of the Capucin, the W. face of the Dru and the Brown-Whillans route on the Blaitière. But it is not only for tigers: the classic routes are here too, and the *voies ordinaires*. Difficulties are graded in the Vallot form. Novices should remember that they are the opinion of experts against expert criteria; words like "difficult" and "hard" mean that, and "nowhere technically hard" may cover pitches of V, i.e. good severe to easy VS.

It is a great thing to have a reliable modern guidebook in English. The authors are to be congratulated, and it is to be hoped that climbers will do all they can to promote sales and so enable the A.C.G. to carry out their plans for further guides to other districts.<sup>1</sup>

A.K.R.

CLIMBERS' GUIDE TO THE CUILLIN OF SKYE. Published by The Scottish Mountaineering Club, Synod Hall, Castle Terrace, Edinburgh. 1958. Price 9/6.

The appearance of a rock climber's pocket-size guide to the Cuillin 13 years after the war is unquestionably overdue, but it is all the more welcome on arrival. An adequate survey of the Cuillin crags is an impressive task. Indifferent weather and the impossibility of regular weekend visits make the work altogether harder than that needed for guides to Welsh, Lakeland and most Scottish rock climbing areas. W. M. Mackenzie and his collaborators Dan Stewart, Mike Dixon and Bill Brooker have produced a most workmanlike "guide."

The descriptions are brief and economical, following the S.M.C.'s general line of avoiding pitch-by-pitch descriptions with rope-lengths measured for each pitch. The grading follows standard British terminology and includes "moderate" and "moderately difficult." I must confess that I would be quite unable to distinguish between these two gradings and am inclined to doubt whether they are both necessary. The severe category is subdivided into mild, ordinary, and hard.

Mackenzie, in a prudent note on winter climbing conditions, remarks that knowledge of such conditions is scanty. This reflects the relative isolation of the Cuillin as does the rather slow development of new rock climbs of high standard. One may regret the lack of an historical

<sup>1</sup> This review is reprinted from *Mountaineering*, published by the British Mountaineering Council, by arrangement with the Editor.

survey of climbing in the Cuillin, such as most editors manage to include in a pocket guide. It is a long and varied history, undoubtedly of interest to many climbers. By its omission here we must fall back on a separate book, B. H. Humble's *The Cuillin of Skye*, for the history of exploration. Inevitably many of the pleasing literary touches in Steeple and Barlow's easy-going and discursive guide are pruned but a few favourite passages are retained, I am glad to see. It is a pity that the meanings of most of the Gaelic place-names are omitted. They give an added interest to the peaks and corries.

The details of the climbs are in almost every case excellent but a few routes call for comment. The Editor has unfortunately confounded Professor Baly's route on the South Face of Sgurr Dearg with a moderate gully named Western Drainpipe which lies almost a quarter of a mile further west. Baly's route follows a gully alongside the South Buttress and then takes to the buttress itself. This buttress rises above *Upper* Coire Lagan and is due south of Sgurr Dearg. Western Drainpipe is south-west of Sgurr Dearg and drains into *Lower* Coire Lagan. It does not matter greatly that this amusing but only moderate gully is eliminated, but Western Drainpipe Ridge, a worthwhile severe of 480 feet, is described as if it lies on the right (facing) ridge of the gully on Baly's climb—which is an absurdity and can only lead to frustrating confusion. In fact it is just to the right of Western Drainpipe.

There are two variation pitches of some merit which have been omitted. The first is a 120 foot hard severe pitch which is an alternative to the crux of Cioch West, (S.M.C.J., 1952, p. 61) and the second is on the Ghrunnda Face of Sron na Ciche (admittedly a go-as-you-please cliff). The Oxford Variation to White Slab route has (properly!) been retained, but the Cambridge Variation to the same climb, a good severe chimney, is missed out. It is the second chimney mentioned in the description of the ordinary route.

R. Jamieson's diagrams are neat and usable but Fig. No. 5, of Mhadaidh, shows the finish of Shining Cleft too far to the right, whilst Pye and Mallory's Route runs entirely within a gully which is well to the right of the route as marked. Fig. No. 10, taken from one of Steeple's diagrams, has not been brought up to date in respect of several climbs. The sorting out of the labyrinth on Sron na Ciche is a fine achievement, both of re-exploration and of draughtsmanship, but the Lower Cioch buttress is not illustrated, which is a pity. Although the run of the routes there is much simpler than on the Western Buttress the Cioch Climbs are very popular, and may be misleading in mist.

There are a few spelling errors, e.g. for Riabbach (p. 34) and Aithain (p. 128) read Riabhach and Athain; and for Lever (p. 51), Malloy (p. 105), Brown, Holhouse, Nutson (p. 117) read Leaver, Mallory, Bowen, Hobhouse, and Mitson, respectively. But these are only maculae on a most useful and welcome guidebook. At the modest rate of progress of exploration in Skye it should retain its value and topicality for some considerable time to come.

G. H. FRANCIS.

CLIMBS ON GRITSTONE, VOL. 4: FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PEAK DISTRICT. Edited by Eric Byne and Wilfred B. White. (Willmer Brothers & Haram Ltd., 62 Chester St., Birkenhead. 10/6).

A GUIDE TO CLIMBS IN GRISEDALE, DEEPDALE AND DOVEDALE. By Members of the Sheffield University Mountaineering Club. (Published by the S.U.M.C. 5/-).

*Further Developments in the Peak*, published only six years after the Sheffield area guide, emphasises the great strides made in climbing during this period. It is edited by Eric Byne, and its magnificent if somewhat detailed histories and entertaining descriptions are what we have come to expect from him.

Unfortunately, probably because of the enthusiasm of the various guidebook writers, some of the more recently discovered crags have been overwritten, whilst developments on the older climbing grounds have received less attention. This has led to wide variations in standard between the older and the newer crags and no attempt must be made to equate gradings of the different crags. Curbar is the most striking in this respect, and visitors to this edge must not take either the gradings or the history as absolutely correct.

One feature of this guide deserving special praise is the artificial climbing guide to Millstone Edge. Whatever the opinion of the reader, credit must be given to Mr. Byne for a bold step in including it in his guide.

For the climber who wishes to keep up to date on grit, this book is indispensable, and for the armchair climber it provides entertaining reading during the winter evenings.

*Grisedale, Deepdale and Dovedale* deals with a hitherto rather neglected part of the Lake District which, as the S.U.M.C. clearly show, deserves to be better known. It is a neat, well produced little guide whose only fault seems to be an unfortunate lack of diagrams; it does, however, contain a very useful sketch map of the area with all the crags clearly marked. The price of five shillings may seem a little excessive, but for a publication of such obviously limited circulation is not unreasonable. Copies may be obtained from G. A. Leaver, 73 Rustlings Road, Sheffield, 11.

J. ALLAN AUSTIN.

CLIMBING GUIDE TO DARTMOOR AND S.W. DEVON. Published by the Royal Navy Ski and Mountaineering Club. Edited by K. M. Lawder. Printed by Holbrook & Son Ltd., 154-5 Queen Street, Portsmouth.

This compact pocket-size guide covers a number of tors scattered over Dartmoor, the principal ones being the Dewerstone and Sheep's Tor on the western side of the Moor near Tavistock, and Hay Tor

farther east, to the north of Ashburton. The map reference of each of the tors is given in the guide, which is a welcome feature. Nearly 200 climbs are described, of which the longest, on the Dewerstone, are in the region of 200 feet. The climbs are similar in character to those on gritstone. There are diagrams of the Dewerstone, Sheep's Tor and Hay Tor, and an index of climbs at the back.

Anyone armed with this very useful guide and a map will find plenty to occupy his time.

D. C. BULL.

**MOURNE ROCK CLIMBS.** By Dr. P. W. F. Gribbon. Published by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board in co-operation with the Belfast Section of the Irish Mountaineering Club.

**CLIMBER'S GUIDE TO GLENDALOUGH.** Published by the Irish Mountaineering Club. 1957.

These two pocket guides have the usual style of rock-climbing guidebook description, and will doubtless be useful to anyone visiting these areas. The lists of first ascents indicate that the climbing they describe is all fairly recent and explored by a small circle of climbers. Climbs of all standards are described, up to at least one XS. The appearance of these books is further evidence of the possibilities so long neglected in Ireland which are referred to elsewhere in this Journal.

A.K.R.

**CORONATION EVEREST.** By James Morris. (Faber, 16/-)

Mountaineers tend to be afraid of journalists. (The converse may be true, but I have not observed it.) Quite apart from natural reticence they object when, in Tilman's words, "as usually happens, the newspaper gets hold of the wrong mountain wrongly spelt, adds or deducts several thousands of feet to or from its height, and describes what the wrong man with his name wrongly spelt did not do on it." With some anxiety, therefore, the Everest Expedition of 1953 awaited its accredited correspondent from *The Times*, which had given generously to funds and therefore held the copyright of the story.

I think that three qualities endeared him particularly, when he came, and all three come out in this book. First, he refused to be taken in by the mystique of climbing or of mountains. To him we were not heroes, but very ordinary people of a type, unless otherwise proved, rather boring than romantic. "I developed a passionate dislike for the Climbers' Club Hut at Helgy," he remarks. The second quality was an ability, despite any repugnance, to be both skilful and sympathetic in dealing with us, as also with Nepalese, other reporters, wireless officials and the rest. In *South Col* I noted how pleasant it was "pouring experiences into a sympathetic, placid ear, and knowing that they would be turned into good English"—and accurate at that. Apart from which, of course, we had a vague idea of the skill needed to get

his reports down from Everest and through the barrage of rival journalists waiting to snap them up. We did not bother our heads considering whether those other papers had not also a right to the news.

The third quality was guts. The ascent of the Khumbu icefall as an introduction to mountaineering is sufficiently remarkable, but it was only one instance, and less arduous than the inspired twilight dash down from Camp Four with the news. Because he was ready to try anything, James Morris became a member of the party, not a journalist attached.

A mountain book written by a non-climber has a good chance of being refreshing. When that non-climber is a man of keen humour and sensibility it is more: it is like looking at the place through new eyes. Everest may be "a fang excrescent upon the jaws of the earth" (Mallory), but to him it seems to be suffering from toothache. It is different. Moreover, since he stands outside the climb, he is likely to have a far more vivid impression of tension, excitement, climax, than the climbers, who are absorbed in the day to day job of getting up particular patches of ice. Morris, much of the time at Base Camp, sniffed the drama and then re-entered it, when he came up again, on May 30th, to be greeted by the descending party.

For him, however, the real climax came with the arrival of the news in London on June 2nd, a day whose excitement has not dimmed with the intervening years. It came with the words spoken over his little wireless set, "announced in a copyright despatch of *The Times*;" words which meant that his swift descent and ingenious system of codes and runners, now described, so far as I know, for the first time, had achieved their aim. For this he had endured misadventure at Kathmandu—the Maharajah of Rambledop deserves immortality—braved the march, thought out the codes, side-stepped and outwitted formidable rivals, climbed the icefall, got to know the Sherpas, climbed the icefall again. . . . All for this. It was a proud moment, and it is no disparagement to add that, to the returning climbers, this "Coronation Everest" looked a strangely different colossus from the remote bastion of rock and ice which had been occupying them.

One or two misstatements there are, inevitably I believe, and in the main quite unimportant. (There was *no* issue of plastic bottles for the purpose mentioned; the climbers too had to drive themselves out into the cold night air!) But one passage cannot stand unchallenged. It is said that in the pre-war expeditions "the great public was, by the frenetic standards of today, not much interested." Surely it was. Look at Shipton, with his protest at "a press publicity out of all proportion to the value of the undertaking;" or Tilman: "Probably the phase is a passing one, born of an age of advertisement." And others too long to quote. No, among the public the desire for sensation was strong already in anything to do with the highest mountain; it was the means and inventive powers that were more limited.

Human nature has changed very little in this; and as for the climbers, it is hard on the assailants of Annapurna and Everest to find themselves

here branded for a new "nationalist fervour" of which they are far less guilty than the Nazis on Nanga Parbat—or indeed the British who, according to F. S. Smythe, comfortably "roped off" Everest for themselves between the wars.

But these are trivia. They detract very little from a book which should be a beacon to all who go out and report the distant doings of men.

WILFRID NOYCE.

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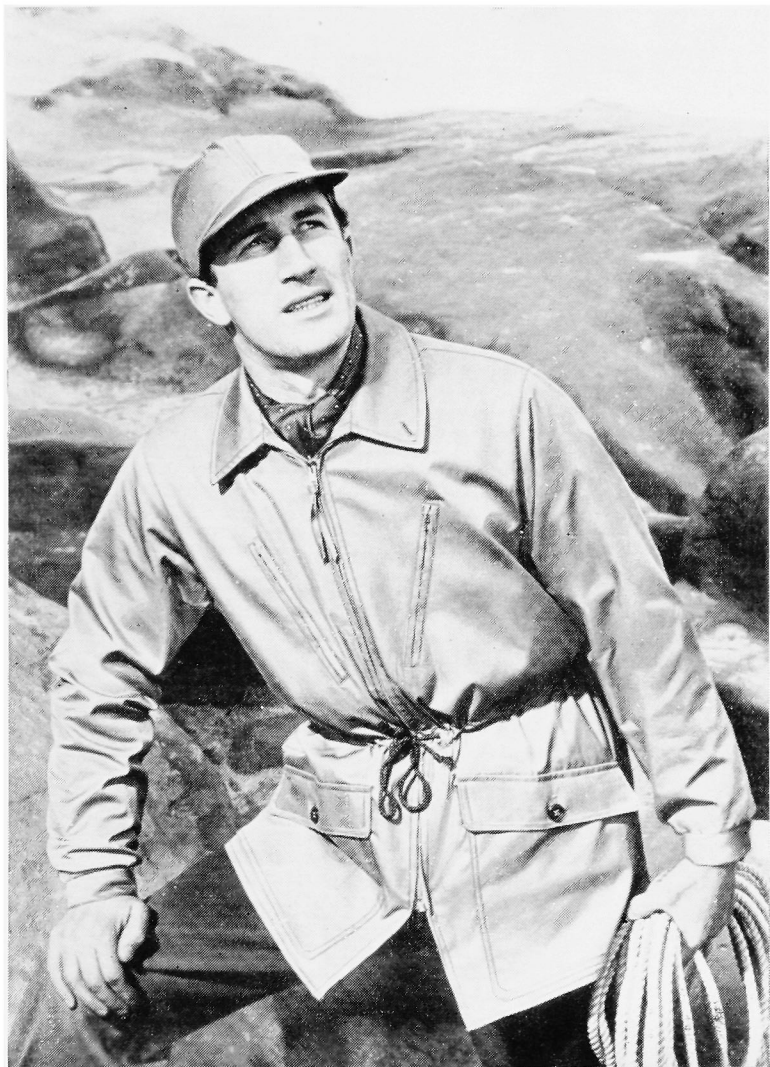
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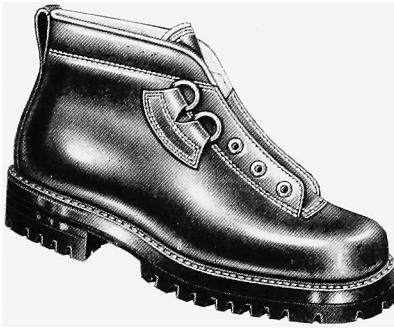
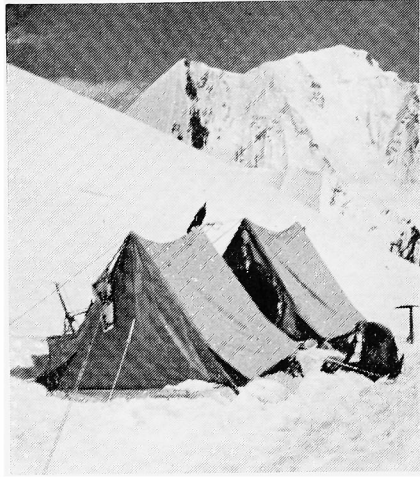
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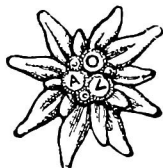
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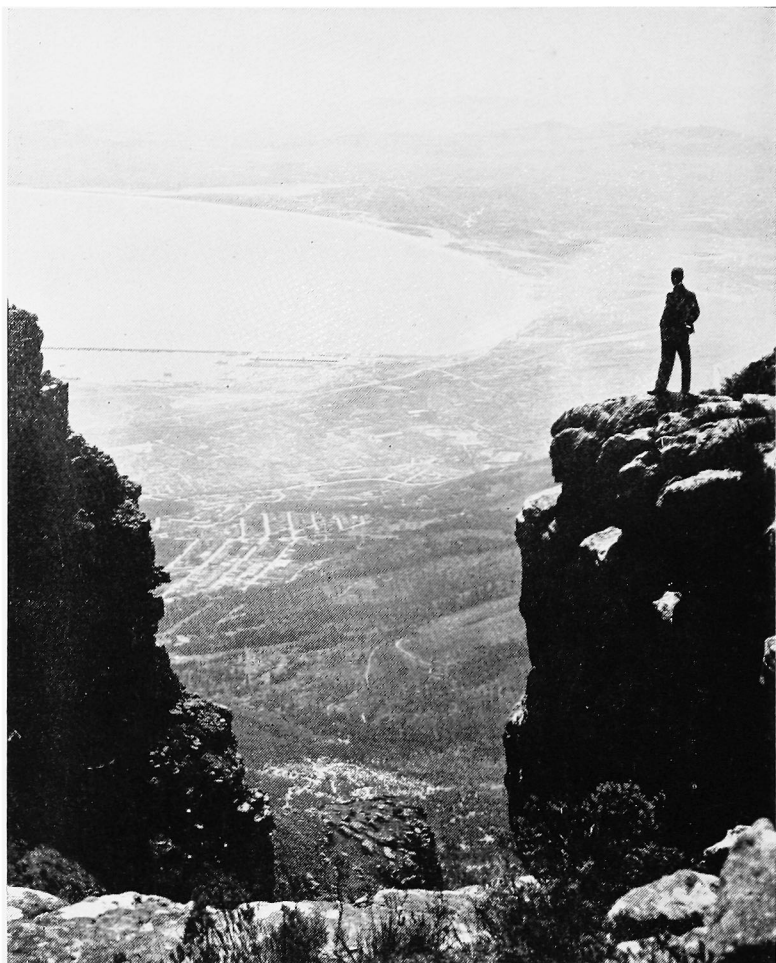
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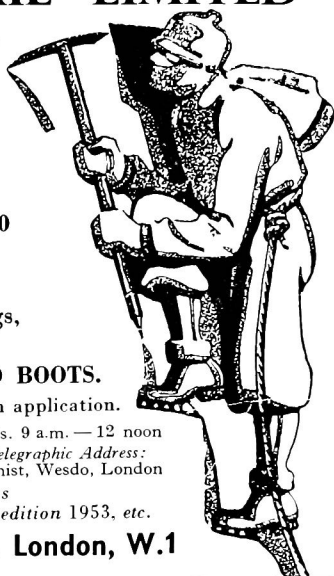
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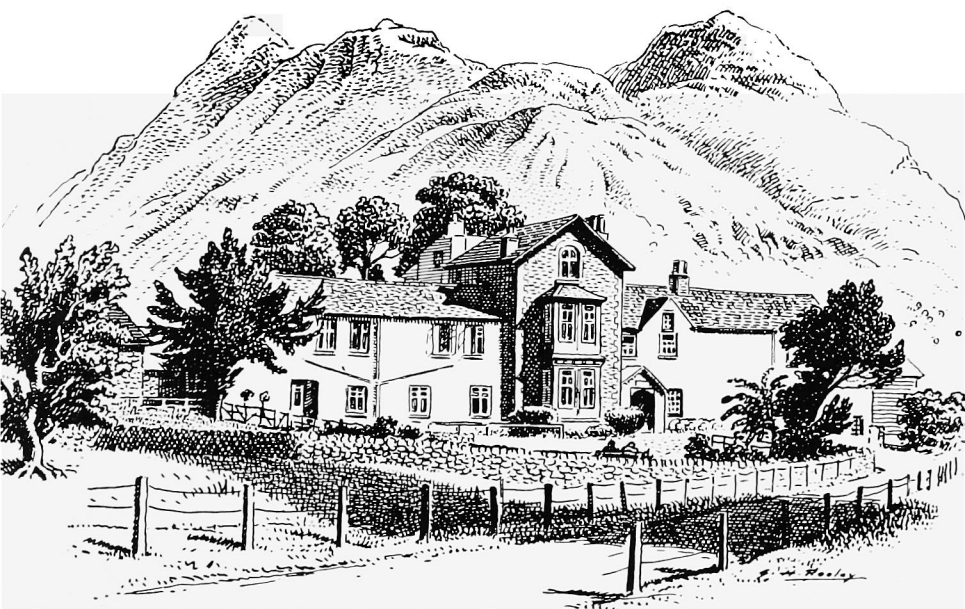
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