

THE
CLIMBERS' CLUB
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EDITED BY
A. K. RAWLINSON

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CLIMBERS' CLUB IN THE CAUCASUS

GEORGE BAND

AT last, early in 1958, it came—permission to climb in the Caucasus. Apart from Mrs. Joyce Dunsheath's visit the previous autumn, when she ascended Elbruz, we would be the first mountaineers from outside the Iron Curtain to climb in Russia since before the war.

Although readers of the *Daily Express* would scarcely have realised, the party as finally constituted was just another Climbers' Club meet: Sir John Hunt, Alan Blackshaw, Chris Brasher, Derek Bull, Mike Harris, Ralph Jones, John Neill, Dave Thomas and that ubiquitous Band. Correspondence had been conducted through Eugene Gippenreiter, a mountaineer, a member of the staff of the Soviet Ministry of Sport and a fluent English speaker. He came with us at our invitation and, like all the Russian climbers we met, was most kind and helped us tremendously.

Most of us had begun by visualising the trip as a pleasant alternative to the Alps and a chance of meeting Russian climbers informally on their own ground. Gradually the mounting tide of organisation and expectation all but overwhelmed us. Suppose some Russian climbers came to England. Surely they would be pre-trained, pruned and tested somewhere in Siberia? In a slight panic, various members of our party began rushing round the Cuillin ridge, falling off at Harrison's, clinging desperately to Cenotaph Corner, weight-lifting (with the bar alone at first) and living on three oranges a day.

In Moscow at a memorable meeting with their leading mountaineering authorities, we discussed the conditions under which we should be allowed to climb. The terms agreed upon were embodied in a formal Protocol; they were, that while the Russians would give us all possible assistance, we should

have complete freedom in our activities in the mountains and should be responsible for our own safety.

In a country like Russia this was a considerable privilege and we appreciated it. Their climbing is practically never carried out on an individual basis as in the Alps, but always organised from centrally placed camps. The majority of climbers seem to stick to the classic routes while a system of annual competitions and medals provides the incentive for fresh feats by the élite, the qualified "Masters of Sport." Gregarious ascents are preferred, six or eight climbers commonly tackling a peak together, unlike our twos or fours in the Alps. Indeed in 1935 a record was claimed when Elbruz (18,965 feet)—the highest though one of the more straightforward Caucasian peaks—was ascended by 500 collective farmers from Kabarda. On films these hordes appear in single file marching, rather comically, in step. In more serious vein, long arduous traverses are attempted, the climbers replenishing their food and cooking fuel from caches placed along the route. One "gold medal" traverse led by Ivan Galustov included 15 summits around the Bezingi basin and lasted for 31 days, the climbers sleeping out in bivouacs between 13,000 feet and 17,000 feet.

There is considerable emphasis on safety. A climbing party always declares its intentions before leaving and fixes a "control time" before which they promise to return. This may be a few days or a week or two. If 15 minutes before the control time has elapsed, the party has not yet returned, then the leader of the camp immediately starts to organise a search party.

The "regimentation" behind Soviet mountaineering amused us at first but, gradually, as we made our own acquaintance with the Caucasus, we realised that many of the rules were sensible and a natural outcome of the type of climbing involved. The big routes had an "Eigerish" quality about them and their length meant that a party had to be self-sufficient for at least five days away from its permanent camp.

I was particularly keen that in our climbs with the Russians, whether together or in separate parties, there should not be any feeling of rivalry. We were both extremely interested in each other's techniques and achievements, but there was no need to rush ahead and prove that one or the other was superior. Their equipment showed some differences from ours. In

general, it was perfectly adequate but often crudely manufactured and heavy, not yet incorporating duralumin or plastics. They still use nailed boots, with tricouni-type nails made from relatively soft steel. They grip very well but wear down quickly, so that they "sharpen their nails" between climbs by filing down the nicks between the teeth. In their ironmongery, karabiners are triangular, and ice-pitons the most advanced. They have a circular cross-section and a hexagonal head. Their ice-axes are drilled with a similar hexagonal hole in the adze blade or hammer head so that the ice-pitons can be "unscrewed" and taken out in a few seconds. This is a great improvement and we brought some back with us. Their crampons for very steep ice-climbing are made with two short downward pointing teeth at the front instead of forward pointing teeth.

The grading of climbs was from 1 to 5 with sub-divisions A and B, 5B being the highest category of difficulty. Compared with the Vallot guide gradings, 4 was approximately *Difficile* and 5 covered *Très Difficile* to *Extrêmement Difficile*. The hardest climbs would probably not rank above *T.D. sup.* on their technical difficulties, but might be considered *E.D.* because of their special length and character. There are no published guide-books of the Vallot type, but in the permanent camps there are manuscript accounts and diagrams from which we were allowed to make notes, and Russians with personal knowledge of routes helped us all they could. In many respects the state of climbing development, though not technique, is similar to that of Alpine climbing at the turn of the century. All the summits have been climbed but there are still ridges, ribs and faces for new ascents.

Our four weeks seemed dismally short for surveying a 600-mile range stretching from the Black Sea to the Caspian and described by Clinton Dent as "the grandest chain of ice-mountains that Europe can claim." So we planned to climb in the two most challenging areas: Ushba and Bezingi. Then if time remained we could cross the range, stroll through the lush valleys of Svanetia and end with a dip in the Black Sea. I packed a pair of scanty emerald swimming-trunks. We had to show these Russians something.

From Moscow, which we had reached first by car to the Russian frontier and then by train, we flew on 2nd July to

Mineralne Vody in the foothills of the Caucasus. A bus took us to Naltchik and on up the Baksan Valley which leads to Elbruz. We turned off south-east into the Adyl-Su Valley to the north of Ushba and stayed at Spartak Camp, our base for 10 days. After some training climbs we planned to traverse Ushba, but a blizzard forced us to abandon the attempt after being snow-bound on the Ushba plateau.

On 13th July we moved to the Bezingi Glacier by truck through the stupendous Cherek Gorge to Bezingi village. Donkeys and horses took our equipment to a base camp below the Mishirgi Glacier and just to the north of Dych-Tau where there were also two camps of Russian climbers, one from the Academy of Sciences and the other from the trade union "Trud."

There is tremendous scope for climbs and new routes in this area—the best in the Caucasus. There are all the peaks on the Bezingi Wall, a tremendous face of ice-slopes and hanging glaciers, 7,000 feet high and four miles long. There are all the peaks on the Dych-Tau-Koshtantau traverse and others besides. There are unclimbed ribs on Mishirgi-tau.

Our best routes were two on the Bezingi Wall—the Schwarzgruber rib on the north face of Jangi-Tau and the north ridge of Shkhara—and a new route up the east peak of Dych-Tau from the south. It is not possible to do justice to these climbs in a single article, so I will limit myself to one—the north ridge of Shkhara.

On our first evening in the Mishirgi Camp, to make us feel at home, the climbers from the Academy of Sciences invited us over to an alfresco meal. There was caviare, Caucasian honey, apricots and chocolate; a pleasant change from our own camp food. My eyes shone. Only a few of the Russians joined us in eating; the rest sat around smiling paternally at us, as if we were sea-lions enjoying feeding-time at the zoo. At the head of the table John Hunt and Boris Garf were conversing in fluent French and I gathered that Garf, a Master of Sport, was anxious to help us make our climbing plans. This was very kind as he knew the Bezingi area as well as any climber.

On my left, Mike Harris was already gleaning information from Alex Baldin, another Master of Sport, who spoke very good English. Alex I knew to be particularly understanding and

helpful. When he had been over in England in the spring studying nuclear physics we had climbed together one week-end in Wales. Imagining himself to be completely out of training he had said rather formally: "Please do not regard me as a representative Soviet mountaineer." Even so he enjoyed Nose Direct on Dinas Mot and won my respect by coming last up the final pitch without requiring a tight rope at the start. He was a small chap and quite unable to reach the high holds but, as I discovered two days later when repeating the climb, with true Russian inventiveness he had jammed a stone into a shallow holdless grove and pulled up on it.

With Alex's help we soon made our "sport-plan," to use the Russian terminology. We had two weeks more—time for two big climbs or, if we cut out the rests in between and had perfect weather, perhaps even three. The Bezingi Wall was a certain choice. As our first climb here it would be wise to select one where the route-finding was reasonably straightforward and the difficulties not great. The north ridge of Shkhara led directly to the highest point of the Wall. It had been climbed twice previously, first by an Austrian party in 1930, then by the Russians in 1948. They judged the standard of difficulty to be 5A so it could not be called impossible. In fact it seemed ideal, for from Shkhara we could look across the upper basin of the Bezingi towards the southern ramparts of Dych-Tau, which we also hoped to climb. After Elbruz, these two were the second and third highest peaks in Europe. What more did we need to tempt us?

On the 15th August the world was recoiling from the horrors enacted in Baghdad; U.S. Marines were landing in the Lebanon; Krushev disclosed manoeuvres in south Caucasus. Completely oblivious of the stirring events evolving around them, four well-laden climbers were tramping purposefully along the moraine track above the Bezingi: Anatoli Kutsovsky, Derek Bull, Mike Harris and myself. After an hour or two, at Anatoli's suggestion, we descended the wall of moraine onto the hummocky fissured surface of the glacier. Striking obliquely across between the crevasses, we soon reached the centre where the going was easier. Anatoli knew this part from a previous visit, so it was good to have him with us. We had few words in common, but since sharing life in an ice-cave below Ushba we

had got on well together. The weather had been unkind to us then, so we were delighted when he asked if he might come with us to Bezingi. He was a Master of Sport and therefore a powerful climber but we knew nothing of his technique, nor he of ours, so his company would be an additional excitement. Let's hope we'd be able to understand each other if any tricky situations arose. How did he feel, I wonder? Had he been quietly called aside and told to "guide" us up the climb? I think not. He may have been deputed to stay with us for the trip, but the choice of climb was ours and we hoped to undertake it jointly. He was about 26, an engineer from Kiev with a few men under him—an average kind of job. But he was so much our master at chess, that he'd left the set behind this time! With the aid of his pocket phrase book we could carry on disjointed conversations. He was getting married in December. On Monday nights he went skating and he was wearing his skater's woollen pixie hat—a brilliant red one—now. Like most accomplished Soviet sportsmen, he seemed to have no difficulty in getting leave from his job for the two-month climbing season. He could stay very cheaply at one of the permanent camps, do his hard routes with his fellow Masters and, when the weather was poorer, take out the novices in large parties on less exacting climbs. After finishing with us he had been asked to join a party attempting the fourth complete traverse from Koshtantau to Dych-Tau, an 18-day affair. But, he confessed, his real interest was in the hard face climbs—the "shorter" routes of only two or three days.

As the sun dipped towards Gestola, a thin blanket of mist drew itself over the glacier. We groped along, then broke through the tattered fringe and struck up towards the sweep of glacier that curved around Dych-Tau. Just as we were expressing divergent views about the way, a group of returning climbers appeared over a brow and showed us the route. They gathered round to inspect us and marvelled at our light, well-balanced ice-axes. Theirs were heavy and crudely finished by comparison, although perfectly efficient.

"Where is the wrist-band?" asked one. All their axes have a webbing strap on a sliding ring around the shaft, and they are always taught to use it. We explained that like most "western" climbers, we preferred to do without one—it tended to hamper

your movements and prevent you changing the axe easily from hand to hand. "Then what happens if you drop it down the mountainside?" they said. "We just don't," was our smiling answer.

We had hoped to camp at the foot of Shkhara that evening but at twilight there was still the width of the sun-warmed glacier to cross, so we shirked the task and camped on the moraines below Dych-Tau beside a tiny rivulet. We had brought Anatoli's tent for the four of us. Being of the standard Russian design, it was a model of simplicity. Our four ice-axes lashed in pairs formed the props at either end. The side guys, in a loop from eave to floor, were held in place by rocks or, later on, by our crampons trodden in the snow. By comparison, what our British tents save in weight by finer fabric, they proliferate in gimmicks—special poles to lose, guys to trip over or entrances that aren't.

We were a little dismayed at the 20 lb. or more of food and equipment we were having to carry on the climb, but Anatoli seemed unperturbed as he proudly pulled out of his sack a large air mattress we had presented to him at Spartak. It was an appreciative gesture to bring it but we had left ours behind to save weight and instead brought "doormats" of plastic foam as a more Spartan insulation at night. It showed the fundamental difference between climbing in the Caucasus and the Alps. With our Alpine concept of climbing peaks from high-placed huts and returning generally before dark, we had asked Alex why the Russians always spent four or five days or even a week or two on single climbs. He had shrugged and said: "Please climb as fast as you like. We shall be interested to see how long you take." We were learning. There were no high huts here; the peaks were a couple of thousand feet higher and correspondingly colder at night. There was a distinct lack of "easy ways off" but storms were just as frequent as in the last five Alpine summers. At the same time, the scale was not sufficiently Himalayan to justify porters and support at separate camps. If you wanted comfort in your bivouacs, you carried it yourself. If bad weather came, you spent the day in bed.

We did our best to oversleep but unfortunately the morning was fine and we were away by 4.15. Being naturally lazy, I took

the lead at first for the simple crossing of the glacier. We had agreed on a slight left-flanking movement to escape the initial intimidation of the ridge, and to try and take it unawares by a rib of rock which joined it higher up. In the little ice-fall at the foot Anatoli chose a tricky pitch which showed that he could cut good steps but meanwhile Mike and Derek who were climbing as a separate pair slipped into the lead. Soon we were on the rib with Derek exploring delicate slabs above. The sun was up and tiny trickles of melt-water began to moisten the rock. Derek moved up, and by the care with which he had climbed, I knew it to be a difficult pitch. Anatoli pointed to his nailed boots so Mike threw down a protecting rope from above. "Ah!" I thought, "see the superiority of our vibrams over Russian nails." I was glad to have Anatoli safeguarding me in turn. As I balanced on a toe-hold, protestingly poising myself for the critical move, my rubber sole slipped. Anatoli's arm jerked. The rope sprung. I was 5 feet lower, back where I started. "*Spasibo*, Anatoli! Now I'll try again." A good thing I kept my thoughts to myself; we were in the climb together now.

Mike and Derek forged ahead across a slope of ice and snow towards the rocks of the main ridge. They were steep and shattered here so Mike led cautiously up to a safe platform where we would all be able to rest. Before bringing up Derek, he swung off his rucksack and, to his horror, his ice-axe, which he had slid under a strap to be out of the way, slipped from the sack and with a graceful somersault arced into space. That wasn't all. Within half an hour, an ice-piton, a water-bottle and the cap from another all found a resting-place at the foot of the mountain. It was a bad morning. I wanted to explain to Anatoli that this didn't happen on all our climbs, but perhaps it was better to remain speechless. There were plenty of things I could drop yet. By sheer good fortune the axe, which alone was vital to our safety, had jabbed into the ice-slope some 200 feet down. Mike climbed down. We lowered him on the rope and he retrieved it most efficiently.

It was thirsty work. Anatoli chipped away some snow and located a trickle of melt-water. Delving into a pocket, he produced a yard of thin plastic tube and with it sucked up his fill. By siphoning, I managed to fill one of our water-bottles and realised how useful the simple tube could be. Over several

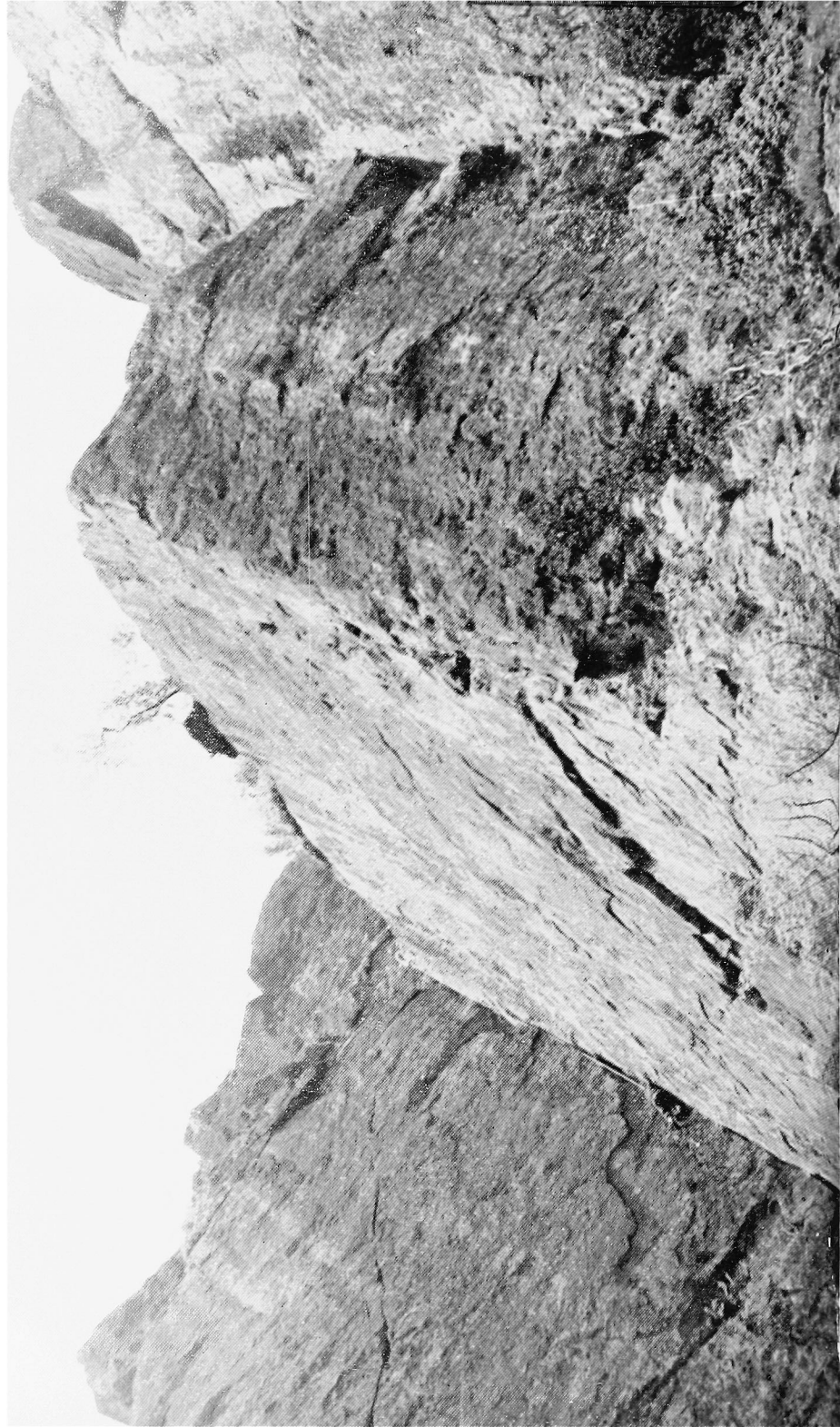
days, it could save a lot of the fuel normally required to melt snow for drinking.

We rested in the sun on Mike's platform. Above us there was a choice of routes; to the right out of sight, or above by a fearsome chimney in a gully filled with darker doubtful rock. Anatoli looked enthusiastically at the latter so I waved him ahead and cowered in a niche below and to the side. Between each cannonade of rock, I peeped out and saw him wedged higher and leaning farther back until, with his huge rucksack bulging out, I wondered how he was still holding on. At last he swung out to the left and disappeared over the top. A bold lead.

I don't remember much about the remainder of the day, apart from a ridiculous little bulging corner where we had to give each other a leg up. We gained the crest of the ridge and seemed to climb on endlessly. About three o'clock we passed a gentle snowslope—there weren't many of them here—and Anatoli suggested it for a bivouac site. We were surprised he thought of stopping so soon and pressed brusquely on. However, when the clouds enfolded us and it began to snow gently and as the evening drew on there was not the slightest sign of a suitable ledge for a bivouac, I began to wonder whether he had been right. At one place the ridge had a slight kink in it, so enlarging this as much as possible we made a shield-shaped platform about 5 feet long and spread out the tent as a sleeping sack. There didn't seem to be room for more than three inside, so I stood pressed against the rock and, in a niche, cooked soup and meat bar stew. Whenever I called, grasping hands protruded from the animated sack and waved like tentacles in the night. When I squeezed in, it was to displace even more of Mike and Anatoli over their respective edges. I don't know about them, but I had quite a comfortable night.

That day we had gained about a thousand metres in vertical height; only twelve-hundred remained. We spread them out over two days, each of which commenced with a brilliant lead by Mike where the rest of us were happy to be well tied on behind. Each pitch brought us closer towards the unknown region of ice-cliffs and soft snow forming Shkhara's summit. At midday on the 18th, just as we were feeling surer of success, a bank of cloud encircled us in its cloying embrace. We had just reached a snow





plateau and could see nothing—not even the gradation of snow-slope into sky. We sat on our rucksacks and chewed toffees. It was hardly safe to move as we knew there was an ice-cliff somewhere above us but we did not know which way to avoid it. Anatoli suggested camping. He did not know, as we did, that our supplies of solid fuel were burning up faster than we had expected. We would be a very thirsty party if we didn't get off the mountain within a day or two.

The mist dissolved a little; enough to suggest a darker line of ice-cliff ranged above. The scale was unassessable; it could have been a mile away or but a hundred feet. We swung our sacks on and, keeping the rope well taut between us, trudged through the soft snow to the right. Here the ice-wall tapered off. Putting on our crampons—or cats as the Russians aptly call them—we clawed up an icy slope. The angle was becoming limiting. We hadn't the energy to cut each step when there was no guarantee of being on a possible route. I belayed to an ice-piton. Mike took yet another turn in front and I let him out to the full length of the rope.

"The mist is thinning," he called, "give me another 40 feet." Derek came up to me so that Mike could carry on. He was out of sight now, in the murky light. Suddenly he shouted: "We're nearly there. Come on!" It was my turn to move; crampon spikes gritting in the ice, axe point helping, too. Gradually the clammy folds of snow resolved; a breeze sprang up and sky light filtered through. The breeze became a biting wind tearing over the crest where Michael stood. We had climbed Bezingi Wall.

As abruptly as in a film, we were projected into a different world. Above, the sky was cloudless blue. Before our feet, a dizzy drop below, were the valleys of Svanetia, in their depths as vivid a green as ever I remember. Could I have seen Ararat to the south? Noah bumped his summit on the seventeenth day of the seventh month. We were a day later. What would an astrologer say to that? At any rate, our Tower of Babel was at hand. The summit was a gigantic cornice, a short walk along the ridge. We gathered there together; our speech confounded by the wind and cold. We were tired, thirsty and hungry, but mighty glad that we had come. Four o'clock. No afternoon tea, but now we could go down!

The quickest way, apart from jumping, was by the north-east ridge, a 4B climb. The upper part was a well-defined snow arête but the descent to the Dykhni-aus Pass was problematical. The following day we took to the side of the ridge where an endless succession of rock ribs thrust through the skin of ice. The pitches and the abseils seemed endless. Our long rope was cut by a falling rock. We left pitons and discarded rope slings. At last we wound through the ice-fall and rejoined our steps of the ascent. Not wishing to bivouac again, we raced down to Mishirgi camp. Night fell and somewhere short of Misses Kosh we were caught in a tangle of boulders quite unable to follow the track. So at the first level patch of grass we stretched out beneath the stars. It was soft and damp and comfortable. A blade of grass brushed my face. I plucked it and put it between my lips. As I zipped the sleeping bag over my chin, on this our fifth night away, I remembered nothing more.

CONNAISSANCE

SIMON CLARK

CLIMBERS sometimes fall. Sometimes they die, sometimes they are hurt, sometimes they escape from a long fall unscathed. Most who have never fallen must, as I used to do, wonder what it is like.

Last summer, when climbing the North Face of the Grande Fourche, I fell 80 feet. The fall must have taken about three seconds, but those instants were lived and thought at a speed that made them worth three ordinary minutes: my mind seemed to accelerate madly, as I had read happened to others who found themselves similarly face to face with death. There was no fear, and the sensation was rather thrilling and pleasant than otherwise.

Nor was there any pain at the time, although I was blackened with bruising afterwards. That I escaped serious injury I can only ascribe to a miracle. Had I not landed upright in my crampons on an ice-slope, at the exact moment when the rope came taut, the single length of medium-weight nylon must have parted. A boulder was breaking up around me as I fell, but the fragments missed my head.

Now if I hear the rumble of a moving block, or smell the smell of bursting rock, I get a sudden jerk of fright, catching me like a rheumatic twinge, reminding me that on 21st July, 1958, I learned what it was like.

* * *

The position was now splendidly exposed, out on the very steep North Face of the Grande Fourche. The ice was tough to cut, and it proved a real fight to reach the next place where rock again appeared, poking dangerously out of the ice. I made a stance on top of one of these islands, belayed to another, and Jim came up to perch on a third. We were by now getting our teeth into some superb *face nord* climbing: we both felt very fit, and I enjoyed the struggle against conditions which were far

from the normal. According to the book the ascent should have been relatively straightforward, but we thought it had been Severe to Very Severe all the way.

On again. I could see the start of the chimney immediately above, with some mixed rock and ice intervening. We should reach it in one pitch. The first few steps were easy enough, and I placed a runner over a spike about 15 feet above Jim's belay.

I was now forced out to the left, towards an isolated flake leaning out from the ice which sheathed it. It made reassuring noises when struck, which encouraged me to needle across on the lobster-claw front points, and eventually stand on it. We paused, while Jim transferred his belay to a more sheltered site, protected from the quantities of ice which I had to chop down before making any further progress: there seemed to be two possible lines, each buried.

I tried the first and more direct way, a groove on the left which led into the chimney. Using the axe and hammer in turn, I hacked away fruitlessly at the thick tongue which filled it, watching the brick-sized lumps of ice humming down to the glacier below. I gave up in despair, and turned to the other route on my right.

Here a dièdre was the problem, its left wall leaning back and forming a steep slab, its right vertical. The slab presented no visible holds, and was carpeted in translucent ice, which also choked the corner. Bounding this slide on the left was a pile of unstable boulders, sticking out of the ice cushion one above the other. The uppermost was a flake, like a rock petal. Immediately above, cramping it, a large overhang loomed out, its icicles dripping.

To reach the petal I was faced with an unnerving high step and pull-up onto it: I could not test it properly, balanced on my spiked boulder lower down. I could see that above the dièdre was a stance, sloping out, partly occupied by a large perched block. Somehow I must reach this, either by climbing the dièdre, or crossing it high up. I soon found that I could not climb it direct, and was forced to attempt the petal to gain height for a high-level traverse.

I spent, I suppose, something over an hour, clearing away the ice. Then, very apprehensive, I pulled gingerly onto the petal. Fortunately, it held firm, and I squatted uncomfortably on its

sharp edge, hunched in beneath the overhang. From where I was I could see that the right wall of the dièdre was a narrow rib, only a foot or two thick. There was a hold on the outside, and I thought that once standing on this, I could make the few remaining feet by climbing the rib *à cheval*. I flipped the rope over the rock on which I stood to protect the next move, which I was afraid might cause me involuntarily to do the splits. Luckily I was just able to manage the giant straddle at full stretch without breaking in half, and with a long pull I drew myself over, the crampons grating on the small hold. As I had hoped, I could get astride the rib quite comfortably.

After jogging along for some feet, I reined in on the top of the rib, level with the sloping ledge. I had just to put my feet on this, and I would be up. Kicking my left boot against the ice in the top of the dièdre, I was able to lever my right foot up onto the stance. I was leaning to the left, left hand palm down on the ledge, the right resting on the perched block above, to steady me as I stood up. I looked at my hand on the ledge, thinking about shouting to Jim that I was up at last. I made the move—the easiest on the pitch—without a thought. I even started a wild yell of success.

It all happened fast, catching me unawares. I think it was the noise which cut off my shout as it began, a noise like heavy furniture being moved, the noise the perched block made as it rolled over: it rolled easily, as though on bearings, but it groaned, ponderously. With the sensation of sitting on a chair and finding someone had taken it away, I found myself standing upright behind the boulder, a block about the size of a refrigerator, looking behind it into a rushing upward smear of black and white and blue, and still that ominous growling noise in my ears. Incredulous and dazed at first, I realised weakly, as one does awakening in a strange room and becoming aware of new surroundings, that I was off.

The boulder and I hit the rock almost together, and amidst a roar of breaking granite I seemed slowed for an instant, and groped frantically for a hold on the holdless icy wall of the dièdre, and then we were away again, faster and faster. Helpless, I distinctly remember feeling the relief that all responsibility had gone from me, and that there was now no stopping. I fell, freely, relaxed. It seemed that I was already detached from the

sensual world altogether, for although I knew I was hitting things they neither hurt me nor disturbed my headlong thoughts. The block was shattering around me, with a great noise and the acrid smell of bursting rock, and as the fragments clashed against the mountain and each other I felt that I was at the centre of an explosion. I seemed to have no weight of my own, and had no awareness of my body's existence.

An appreciable time passed, and then in the mist of snow and rock I saw a loop of rope flee by. I realised with a disinterested calm that this was my rope, and that in an instant I might be dead. I recollect my surprise on realising that I had not the slightest sensation of fear, and looked at my forthcoming death with dispassionate interest. I never once felt frightened, though right at the start I remember being angry at falling off in such a bloody unlucky way. Now as my thoughts ran along as fast as dreams, I wondered if this was really it, was I going to die and see through the great mystery, on and on and on down through the smell and the noise and the surge of snow for ever. I wondered if the rope would hold, not seriously thinking it would because I could no longer feel that it was tied onto me. Perhaps it would break, so I'd slow down and think it was all right, and then lurch on sickeningly and never stop. As I waited, there was a huge spray of white out in front of me, obscuring the kaleidoscope of rock and sky that whirled before my eyes, and the sight took me back to the Waimarama beach of my childhood in New Zealand, and I thought how like surf-bathing this was. The lovely surge of a foaming breaker boiling round my chin in the warm Pacific. Then away from memories, back to the oddly pleasant falling feeling, like I used to have when I dreamed I was a bird.

There was a gentle increasing tug on my waist, and I seemed to be banging against something. I think I closed my eyes.

"Are you all right?"

I wondered who was talking.

"Are you all right?"

The words came faintly from a long way off, and the question appeared somehow ridiculous. It took me a moment to reply.

"Yes, yes, I'm all right. Of course, I'm all right."

REVELATIONS

M. J. HARRIS

I WOULDN'T mind leading Spectre," said Trevor Jones, one day in April, 1958, "are you coming?" I said yes without much hesitation. It really was about time that I climbed Spectre, I thought, and here was a good opportunity on the right end of the rope. Moreover, it would provide a good start to a vague plan of mine to try that summer to finish off the harder Welsh climbs which I wanted to do, and thought that I could do, but which had been left for various reasons. Those were mostly the ordinary Very Severs, but I also thought that I would not mind following one or two of the Extremes, and perhaps even one or two of Joe Brown's routes, just to see what they were like. So Spectre seemed a good way to start the season.

Somehow things seemed to click that day. It all seemed very straightforward. Perhaps the sight of Trevor, confidently shooting up all the pitches made the difference. I hesitated a bit in the groove but it only needed working out; all the holds were there. I arrived at the top, pleased at finding the climb so enjoyable, rather surprised by the thought that I could have led it, and then less pleased by Trevor's remark that it could hardly be considered Extreme.

I followed Ron James up Broad Walk immediately afterwards. This was the first of Joe Brown's routes that I had succeeded in getting up—not that I had tried any before, other than Hangover, where I suddenly found myself in the lead on a wall which seemed to me much steeper than was reasonable, and promptly retreated. This characteristic of steepness was there again on Broad Walk, but at least the holds were large.

All seemed clear now for doing the few routes that I wanted to do. The next week-end was fine, and I set about leading: Ivy Sepulchre, Ribstone Crack, Slape. What fun this was, I thought, and how pleasant to be on form at the beginning of the

season. Sometime during the next fortnight I met Trevor again. His ideas were rather more ambitious than mine. It was Cemetery Gate this time. This route follows a crack on the right-hand side of the right wall of Cenotaph Corner, the smooth deep right-angled corner on Dinas Cromlech. It took me rather longer to agree to this one. There was no doubt that the Gate was Extreme; still, if Trevor was leading . . . But it appeared that we should have to lead through at least on the first two pitches as there was no room to change over at the stance. I could believe this, as I had previously abseiled down this wall and concluded that it was 120 feet high and overhung uniformly by one degree. However, Trevor reckoned that the second pitch was the crux, and that he could lead it, basing himself on some argument such as that "X" had led the Gate, that he had found climb "A" easy which "X" had found difficult, and that therefore he could lead the Gate. This argument seemed full of fallacies to me, but that was his worry. I decided, probably equally incorrectly, that if I couldn't get up the first pitch at least I could climb down again.

After thinking these ideas over for a week I found myself quite illogically at the foot of Cemetery Gate. Harry Smith was going to lead Cenotaph Corner and a jolly party was collecting at the foot of the climb. The general atmosphere seemed to help to lessen the usual tension and I led off up the first pitch, which at least started reasonably easily. I soon reached a small recess at the foot of the broken crack up which the climb runs. It overhung considerably at this point but I was assured that the stance was only 20 feet up and that I was allowed to lasso a block just out of reach. There were large holds visible above, and after a period of contemplation I heaved up and after a struggle stood on the block. I was back in this over-steep world again, but I was slowly getting used to the idea now and to the sequence of moving. Pull up, decide that it's too steep to stay more than a few seconds, think about moving down again, find some different ways of holding yourself in, interchange between two or three of these "resting" positions a few times, decide that it's rather more comfortable than it appeared at first, stop thinking about moving down, look out for the next holds or for a runner (putting a runner on is more tiring than doing nothing, but at least you can rest on it afterwards), decide you can move up to a large hold





above where it's clear you'll be in balance, move, find you're not in balance, repeat the whole process again. On this particular pitch three moves of this sort brought me to a position standing on average size small holds, mildly out of balance as usual. Here apparently was the stance. There was a piton in the crack above but it was rather uselessly out of line for using as a principal belay. I eventually tied on to a series of doubtful spikes and began to take an interest in the world around. The view extended principally upwards and downwards and sideways. Looking up was a strain on the neck and rather depressing; down below was the jolly party with cameras and shirt sleeves lying in the sun. Sideways was Harry half-way up Cenotaph Corner. He seemed quite happy. I argued to myself that it must be rather easier resting in a vertical corner than on a vertical wall.

"Come on, Trevor."

Trevor came up rapidly and went on past me up the crack to where it disappeared temporarily a few feet higher. He muttered something about it getting hard and climbed rapidly for 10 feet onto the first "ledge." There are two of these "ledges" on Cemetery Gate and they are the only places where one can stand in balance. It was becoming apparent that we might well get up the climb. Trevor continued at a slightly slower rate than before and was soon tied on to the stance on the second ledge. I followed him up. The last 10 feet up to each of the ledges were no places for waiting, as the holds were small, but otherwise all was straightforward in its vertical way. The third pitch started awkwardly, but soon dropped back to an easy angle, i.e. to ordinary steep climbing. Harry Smith was at the top of Cenotaph Corner bringing up some of the others. "What was it like?" I asked. "Hard. Harder than the Gate. But jolly good."

I returned to the ordinary routes: Brant Direct Start, Diagonal. But things had changed, and in a month I was at the foot of Cenotaph Corner. For me Cenotaph Corner had changed from a remote, impossibly hard route to something that I could possibly climb, that therefore had to be tried as soon as possible. Cenotaph is somehow different. When first climbed by Joe Brown in 1952, it was certainly top of the last unsolved problem list in Wales, and the ascent marked the recognition of a new

jump in climbing standards. Its reputation has stayed with it, even though it can no longer be considered very high in the difficulty scale.

A new problem arose, that of finding a second. It was clearly a climb to be led, and a second had to be found who could get up but did not want to lead. Trevor was thinking on the same lines and was therefore out, and I eventually arrived at the foot with Peter Nelson and George Fraser. It seemed very lonely with only three of us. I had recently gone to the length of wearing P.A.s for hard routes; mine were particularly painful, and, weighed down with runners, I set off in a not too cheerful spirit. The first hard section I knew to be at about 30 feet up. The corner crack, which varies considerably in width, here closes completely for a few feet. There were two excellent thread runners below this point. I put them both on, and surveyed the problem. I could just reach some handholds at the point where the crack reopened, but the walls were very smooth and the corner was wet, and it was clear that the next move was likely to be quite a struggle. However, after a brief attempt at the direct method I noticed a small ledge providing a good foothold on the left wall, and when I moved over onto this, I could just reach another ledge which provided a good handhold and ran right back into the corner. After a slight pull up on this ledge, I was able to bridge across between two small toeholds on each wall and pull over into the crack above. I remember being distinctly surprised at arriving at the centre section of the corner so easily, and somewhat cheered by this I slowly went on, fixing runners at almost every available opportunity and resting at regular intervals. The climbing for the next 40 feet was not hard, at least not compared with the earlier moves—it was perhaps V.S.—and I eventually reached the point where the crack is at its widest and where one can rest in almost complete comfort, provided that one doesn't mind standing on one foot.

About 20 feet above was the niche. To anyone actually doing the climb the niche is the most important feature of the route. The crack disappears once more at this point, and the niche is formed by the left wall forming a small triangular slab at an angle of about 60 degrees, with a small overhang above it. One of the main difficulties of the climb, I had learnt, was getting into the niche. At about this point as I examined the route

above I began to wonder just what I was doing there. This after all was Cenotaph Corner! It was Exceptionally Severe. It had only had about 10 ascents. Joe had found the top part very hard. All sorts of better climbers than myself had failed to get up it; I had never climbed, let alone led, anything as hard as this before. I was getting short of slings and here I was, half way up the thing. It all seemed very unreasonable. I had time to consider the other side of the picture as well. The climbing had not been too difficult up to now. There was plenty of protection. I could see a good chockstone 15 feet higher. It was usual to use two pitons on reaching the niche. Peter and George were making encouraging remarks from below, and I tried to climb out of the wide part of the crack, where I was, into the narrower part above. My knee jammed in the crack and the holds seemed very small. I began to get finger cramp. This seemed a good time for retreat. "Do either of you want to try it?" I shouted down. They didn't sound particularly keen, but I climbed down, protected by the rope through the highest runner, leaving the other runners behind for them if they wanted to try. They were even less keen when I arrived on the ledge at the foot, so I had to abseil down the climb to collect the runners. I stopped for a moment in the niche to note where the holds were and to find the best place to put the pegs. It looked a most uncomfortable place.

I had a fortnight to think about things before I was back again. I soon convinced myself that I could get up into the niche. I could picture all the holds without any difficulty, and only the last few feet of the climb remained uncertain. Hugh Banner gave me detailed instructions on this last bit. I promptly forgot them but it did not sound too terrible.

There seemed to be a surfeit of prospective Cenotaph Corner leaders that Saturday. Trevor Jones and myself were there, and George Fraser seemed to have been doing some thinking as well during that fortnight. The Llanberis valley was combed successfully for three climbers willing to act as seconds and we all gathered at the foot of Cenotaph in glorious sunshine. The jolly party atmosphere had returned and as I was now the local expert I led off first. The 30-foot move, taken without hesitation, I found to be an excellent warmer up for the climb, and I soon reached my previous highest point. Instead of using holds

in the crack I found that bridging between small toeholds on each wall was much more satisfactory in the 20 feet below the niche. I put the runner on the chockstone conveniently placed at the point where the crack finishes, and prepared for the pull to the niche, which has to be made on very small finger holds. I was rather pleased to find that by bridging between small holds more or less level with the chockstone, I could stand for a short time and lean into the niche. I quickly put a channel peg into the crack on the upper side of the niche and, protected by it, moved up. Not bad, not bad at all, I thought. The next problem was to rest. This involved sitting on the steep slab facing outwards and using small holds on the slab and the right wall. Eventually I found quite a comfortable position and examined the rest of the climb. The top was very near, the finishing holds about 20 feet away. The crack reappeared as a finger-crack above the niche and then slowly widened. Small holds on the walls were still to be seen. The next thing was to insert a second peg as high as possible. This needed another channel peg, and as I had only a thin one with me a complicated manoeuvre followed, in which I pulled up another peg, together with some more runners, from below. While this was going on, I wondered how much longer the process of each leader putting in his own pegs could go on. At present, inserting the first peg is perhaps the crux of the climb. The second peg went in and a single layback move took me out of the niche to a bridging position with feet on very small holds level with the peg and hands level with a small flat ledge. I fell into the trap of trying to put a runner on a loose chockstone in the slightly wider crack above the ledge. After an uncomfortable few minutes I eventually managed it, and then found that the next move was very easy and brought enormous holds into reach.

It was all over. I was very pleased to be up, of course, but not at all surprised. I had been certain that I could climb it for about a week, and I began to realise the extent to which the difficulty of climbs such as Cenotaph Corner is a mental one. The rest of the day was pure pleasure. I brought up my second and then watched Trevor and George. There's a lot to be said for being first on this sort of occasion. It seemed that Cenotaph Corner was beginning to be a popular route. I hope it will be; it deserves it.

On the Sunday of this great week-end everyone went to Clogwyn Du'r Arddu. A whole new climbing world was open, a large number of magnificent looking routes now in the realms of possibility. Hugh Banner mentioned the Girdle of the East Buttress. This sounded ideal to me, a long and very impressive-looking route, unrepeatable, a worthy successor to the day before. We had a party of four, Hugh and Jim O'Neill on one rope (Jim had never been on Cloggy before), and Trevor and myself on another. What a terrific route this was, magnificent situations, continuously interesting, and hard but not too hard climbing, and enough of it to satisfy anyone. Not as hard as Cenotaph technically, we thought, and certainly one of the best expeditions in Wales.

There was no stopping now. I had merely set out intending to climb a few of the ordinary routes in Wales that I had not done, and here I was with a host of excess standard climbs which had to be considered. In time I discovered various facts: that Extremes are often harder than Exceptionals, that almost every climb has its own legend which must be deliberately forgotten if one is to have any chance of success, that the mere presence of Joe Brown or Don Whillans in the vicinity is very off-putting and is certain to lead to retreat. But these climbs are all too good to miss. The quality of the Brown-Whillans routes is extremely high, and it is very satisfactory to discover that it does not require a superman or even very great strength to repeat most of them, and enjoy it. "It's all in the mind you know—well, nearly all."

RAKAPOSHI CLIMBED

J. R. SIMS

NINE officers serving with the British and Pakistani forces successfully climbed Rakaposhi (25,550 feet) in the Karakoram in June 1958. I believe that this is the only Expedition ever to have achieved such inter-Service Commonwealth liaison. The members of the team were: Capt. Mike Banks, R.M. (leader); Capt. Jimmy Mills, R.A.S.C. (provisioning officer); Lieut.-Commander Richard Brooke, R.N. (survey officer); Capt. Warwick M. M. Deacock, Middlesex Regt. (equipment officer); Surgeon-Lieut. Tom W. Patey, R.N.; Capt. Dicky H. Grant, M.C., R.M. (treasurer); Flt. Lt. John R. Sims, R.A.F. (assistant survey officer and treasurer); Capt. Shah Khan, Northern Scouts, and Capt. Rajah Aslam, Punjab Regt.

We were widely scattered during the planning stage. Mills was in Germany, Brooke in the Antarctic with Hillary on the Trans-Antarctic Expedition, Deacock at Abingdon with the Parachute Regt., I at Hawarden in Chester with Transport Command. Banks and Grant with Patey were in Devonshire. The Pakistani members were at Gilgit and Rawalpindi. This complicated the office work. "Office work" included collection, packing and despatch of equipment, obtaining funds and getting the very delicate political permission for the venture. However, with the help of the Expedition's patrons, Field-Marshal Sir Gerald Templer, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and General Mohammed Ayab Khan, H.J., Chief of Staff of the Pakistan Army, and many Service friends, the party left on 25th April.

One of the early difficulties was the selection of a peak to climb. The original choice had been the almost unknown Disteghil Sar (25,868 feet), north of the Hispar glacier. Permission was slow in coming and we had to leave England without knowing definitely which peak we were after. However,

in Karachi we found that a German expedition would probably not arrive till autumn, and we were given permission to attempt Rakaposhi if we were clear by August. It was a good choice as Mike had led the British-American Karakoram Expedition in 1956 to the highest point yet reached on the mountain, about 24,000 feet.

The hospitality of the Pakistani Ministry of Defence was unbounded. We were flown to Gilgit where, at last, after the many months of planning, we saw our mountains. The Northern Scouts' Mess was at our disposal. We were grateful for these facilities here, where we met our liaison officers and Hunza porters, who helped repack the five tons of equipment into loads that were jeepable and portable. The Political Officer arranged for about 100 mules and coolies to carry from the jeep head to Base Camp, and the Mir of Hunza, that most charming potentate, gave us his good wishes.

On 12th May we set off by jeep for the 200-foot twig bridge across the Hunza river, where the march was started. From here we took the journey to Base Camp gently, to accustom ourselves to the heat, the altitude and the heavy loads. On the march Mike and Tom had an advantage over the rest of us as they had been in training in Norway in the course of duty. They forged ahead after four days from Durbar, to reconnoitre the route to Base Camp while we rested in the conifer forests, making one or two sorties up the old Campbell Secord route to have a clear and distant view of the Monk's Head and Rakaposhi from the west. Durbar is one of the high pastures where our coolies from Jaglot bring their sheep and cattle for summer grazing. The forests provided fuel for huge camp fires around which both sahibs and porters gathered in the evenings for talk and song. There, too, were the luxuries of fresh water and fresh meat, amid the groves of tall cedars, pines and ancient gnarled junipers, with alpine flowers in profusion. The weather was poor, however, on our outward journey and the next march was delayed as the rain turned to snow on the approach to Base. After a few days we had sunshine and it was decided that the coolies and the toughest of the donkeys could make the rough climb through snow and heavy scree to the top of the old lateral moraine of the Kunti glacier, where previous expeditions had made their bases.

The Base Camp, which we established on 19th May, was a permanent site with tents, stone walls, a signals detachment of the Pakistan Army, and bearers and stores not immediately required.

The only feasible approach to Rakaposhi is along the south-west spur which all recent expeditions have followed. From Base Camp a quick steep climb must be made to the ridge at 19,000 feet, and the ridge then followed until steep climbing starts again at the Monk's Head. As Mike had been here before we were able to improve the route by climbing a snow couloir above Base Camp, and putting Camp I over half-way to the ridge, at 17,100 feet beneath a rock overhang on a slight crest.

Porters can be a deciding factor in the success of an expedition. Our Jagloti porters, whose equipment comprised homespun jackets and breeches with a length of raw hide tied around their feet, were certainly a contributing factor to our success. They saved a day by carrying loads to Camp I up this couloir of about 1,000 feet. After Tom and Richard had been up here once and decided that this was a probable route to the ridge, Dicky and I fixed some 700 feet of rope which got steeper and steeper and landed the exhausted porter (be he sahib or local) on the tent platform of Camp I like a played fish. This was still more appropriate in the case of our "coolie tigers," as they all had a cheering audience of camera-clad climbers, who sometimes found it necessary to pull the "fixed" rope vigorously to avoid seeing coolie and khana slip more and more swiftly down to Base.

Our ascent was made in a series of steps between camps. During a few fairly fine days we would make a big effort and lift the assault load one camp higher, returning to a low camp for the night. This was an effective way of getting the party acclimatised. I do not think that any of us suffered from altitude or lack of acclimatisation after a couple of trips up to Camp I, although most had headaches or sleeplessness on the first climb to 17,000 feet. This may indicate a useful "acclimatisation height-band": the journey from Base to Camp I was between 14,400 feet and 17,000 feet.

The two Naval members reconnoitred the route above while the other climbers, the Hunzas and the coolies carried up to Camp I. On 2nd June Tom and Richard, Dicky and I carried

light loads and fixed ropes up to the ridge and established Camp II on a rock island about 19,000 feet just before the Gendarme. This camp was utterly safe, being on ice and rock on the very crest of the ridge which is fairly horizontal just here. "Safe," I suppose, is always a relative term, for even at Camp II our Liaison Officer needed at least the moral support of his body-servant, "Sep," belaying him while he gave his full attention to "other things." The leader under the same circumstances was heard to affirm that the view from this ridge could only be enjoyed to the full during these few precious minutes each day.

Jimmy also found danger at Camp II: a brand-new "Mountain" tent, unattended for a moment, fell into a convenient abyss, and passes out of the story.

We could see Tirich Mir (25,265 feet) in the Hindu Kush nearly 100 miles away to the north-west. To the south Nanga Parbat, tenth highest mountain in the world, seemed to climb with us, yet faster, into the sky.

Climbing in the Himalayas teaches patience. It was folly to remain at Camp II, eating the food which would be needed later during the days of heavy snow which followed our arrival, so after the first day's snow seemed well set in we decided to retreat. Shah Khan displayed great tenacity by arriving with Sep and the Hunzas in the middle of this blizzard with loads which they dumped. Then we all scuttled down the fixed ropes to Camp I, where Shah Khan and Rajah Aslam volunteered to stay with the Hunzas and carry up to Camp II again the next day; the snow continued, however, and as it began to bury the camp, they too returned to Base Camp. On the way down the gully they were overtaken by a silent, hissing avalanche of soft powdery snow. All were swept away, and Rajah had his hand burnt trying to cling to the fixed rope; by good fortune they managed to save themselves by struggling out of rucksack frames and "swimming." When this party came into the camp with nothing worse than a broken bone in the hand of one of the Hunzas, we were convinced that these people are potentially rivals of the Sherpas. After a day's rest, which coincided with the mail-runner's arrival—a double joy as he brought eggs and chickens as well as letters—we were off again, kicking steps back to the ridge. Kicking is always tiring but

with the fixed ropes to help, we made good time, salvaging some debris from the avalanche en route. At Camp I again we found the tents half buried, but using our aluminium shovels we dug them out and extended the platform to contain stores and an eight-man tent. From Camp I the route was easily followed, with much pulling of the fixed ropes, back to the ridge and Camp II.

On 10th June we pushed our way to the top of the Gendarme through deep snow. I find myself in noble company when I think of the standard of technical difficulty I have met in the Himalayas. Joe Brown, Sir Edmund Hillary and Jean Franco are all known to have a feeling of regret that the difficulties met on Himalayan routes at the present state of climbing history are of a much lower technical, and therefore conquerable, nature than those they are used to at home. A Himalayan peak does present problems of planning and organisation to be overcome, but overcoming these gives little satisfaction compared with those other factors of weather and individual reaction to height which it would be so rewarding to be able to control. While I struggled to beat a path in powder snow that touched my head on the left side and fell some thousands of feet to the right I did feel pleased to be leading a rope; but even then I think the knowledge was born that whereas I enjoy individual moments and movements at low altitudes, as well as the climb as a whole, a Himalayan expedition is very much more of an indivisible whole.

We spent the next few days ferrying loads over to Advance Base, or Camp III (19,500 feet), at the foot of the Monk's Head, a 21,000-foot monster of steep, mainly soft snow. Conditions vary from year to year; in 1956 there had been less snow, and the ridge and the Monk's Head were hard. In that year many useful stores had been abandoned at Camp III, while in 1954 the Cambridge party had left 50 man-days' food and other stores for which we searched in vain.

At altitudes between 21,000 feet and 23,000 feet on a major Himalayan peak a unique problem is introduced. There is still a long way to go to the top, and the hardest part is always ahead, but the plan is complicated by the problem of deterioration. This is the greatest height at which acclimatisation is possible; above it a climber deteriorates. Therefore he must spend as





little time above here as possible; yet he moves slowly, and needs long.

For use above Camp III a very light high-altitude ration had been worked out by Jimmy Mills, based on Alaskan experience and research. This would reduce each load and the time spent above Camp III, where at about 19,000 feet we were in no danger of deteriorating.

Again it was Tom and Richard who put up the fixed ropes, this time on the Monk's Head, while the rest of us trod hard the route between II and III. In the soft snow this year they must have had some qualms, for under much of the surface (and the whole of the Monk's Head is slightly convex) there was very hard green ice. On one or two places this came to the surface and gave them a few steps to chop, the only ones of the whole route.

The successful carry up the Monk's Head by all members was one of the essential features of the plan. There were over 1,500 feet of fixed ropes, secured in an astonishing number of ways, from one of Tom's old chewed-up ice-axes to a cardboard ration box full of snow, buried under 5 feet of powder: nevertheless we and the Hunzas felt, and were, safe. The cavalcade set out and reached the top late on a dull chilly afternoon, 20th June. The angle eased and there were no more fixed ropes. Again we were proud of the Hunzas: they stamped out the track, taking their turn as we all did. They also had to return to Camp III, while we flopped into a temporary camp on the top of the Monk's Head. We said good-bye, and they wished us luck, for if things went well we would see them again only after a successful ascent.

The weather was bad for some days with poor visibility, wind and powder blowing into all our tracks, but it was not impossible and now that every mouthful and every ounce of paraffin were doubly precious, we moved on to Camp IV at the foot of the final ridge. The last 3,500 feet of Rakaposhi are divided into three steps of about 1,200 feet each. Mike decided, after his previous experience in 1956, to use these steps and plant a camp on each, reducing the daily march to what may seem very reasonable proportions. I don't think that he made any mistake, for we all found that the job of carrying between these camps and returning when necessary to the lower site for the night was

RAKOPOSHI, from Camp II.

The Gendarme and the Monk's Head are in the middle distance, with the three steps to the summit forming the skyline.

a full day's work. We could no doubt have done much more, but it seemed wise to arrange things so that there was a fit and rested party at each camp below Camp VI.

While Jimmy, Warwick and I waited at Camp IV for the Navy and the Marines to take some summit photographs, we experienced a strangely lonely feeling. Our food supplies were at best meagre and were designed to run out within a few days, so we wondered what would happen if we had to go up in support; equally we must not descend as the returning parties might need help.

The assault plan was that all seven of us would carry up to Camp V, and three return to IV for our lonely vigil. Dicky and Richard carried to Camp VI the next day and left Tom and Mike to climb to the summit and return to Camp V. The snow conditions at this stage were very good, hard névé and slopes where crampons alone could be used. It was cold and windy, but I found that a pair of double windproof trousers, anorak and jersey were just warm enough when climbing.

During these last six days there was a feeling of urgency as the three most important factors, food, fuel and weather had to be weighed against time. One, or at most two, days' delay would have meant a swift retreat to below 20,000 feet where the whole final assault would have had to start again, complicated by a need for rest. Fortunately, however, the snow held off and we reached Camp V on 24th June in conditions of sun and wind. During the 26th we watched the weather from Camp IV and saw snow plumes blowing from the crest, witness of the powerful wind that the summit party was fighting. Further proof came when two figures appeared through a thickening haze, in the early afternoon. We soon recognised Richard and Dicky who should have been still at Camp V. Fearing that we might have to make a rescue attempt we watched them anxiously, knowing that as we had all been above 19,000 feet for 18 days we might fail through tiredness. It was a relief to find that they had no news of the summit party, but had been forced to abandon their camp when the tent was ripped and flattened by the gale.

Before there was any decision about the next move, two more widely-spaced figures came into view, slowly stumbling down. It was Mike and Tom. They had climbed Rakaposhi.

It would have been pleasant to relax at this point to celebrate the success of the Expedition, but there is no time to do so at 22,000 feet and more plans had to be made for the descent. As the upper two camps had been abandoned, food and tents were now at a premium and a storm could have meant disaster for the whole Expedition.

A crowded night at Camp IV provided a much-needed rest for the summit party who were able to treat their frostbite in fingers and toes. Next morning food was short and visibility bad, but no wind threatened our descent to Camp III, where the Hunzas provided a welcome with plenty of good food. We now heard Tom and Mike's story in the squalid comfort of an eight-man tent. They said that Camp VI was reached as planned on 25th June in fair weather with a cold wind. On the assault the next day they were very cold but took their own pace, having to use only crampons, passing and re-passing each other until they reached the top. From there they had almost unbelievably fine views of the 13,000-foot sheer North Face of Rakaposhi and of a shorter but even steeper drop to the South. They could, however, only appreciate the views in retrospect for the wind and height had dulled their senses to such a degree that they hardly realised what they were seeing. Although they pointed their cameras here and there they had no idea what they photographed.

They spent only a few minutes at the summit. To remain still would have meant severe frostbite. Descending, they came down past Camp VI into hazy cloud, looking for Camp V which was on a platform just off the crest of the ridge. It took them a long time to find the tent, as no route flags had been left, and when they did find it, it was a shambles. Their shock and disappointment at finding this where they had expected a warm liquid welcome can be imagined: luckily they had time and energy to carry on to Camp IV.

The remainder of the descent was light-hearted and precipitous. From Camp III we went back along the vast snow-plateau, up and down the familiar Gendarme and on past Camp II to the steep descent of 2,000 feet to Camp I. Then came the triumphant slide down the gully to Base Camp. From the summit, just two days to Base: from Base to the top had been a 19 days' haul!

Rajah Aslam and Shah Khan had prepared a magnificent meal in our honour and we were escorted through a " Victory Arch " garlanded with flowers. On the return journey through the inhabited reaches of the Hunza Valley, every rest stop was a signal for the hospitable people to bring plates of apricots fresh-plucked from trees around us. Arriving finally in Gilgit we enjoyed the quiet hospitality of the Northern Scouts again, the smell and sight of flowers and living things, symbols of our return for another low-level season.

FROM PLEASANT TO SEVERE

A. J. J. MOULAM

THIS morning I was woken by a ring at the doorbell; the postman had brought my copy of the latest guide to Cwm Idwal. Naturally this reminded me of my climbing during the last year or two, and whilst shaving I found myself thinking over a particular expedition. Perhaps surprisingly it was not one of high endeavour but a memory of wandering among unimportant cliffs in the late afternoon and evening of an August day. Despite the lateness of the hour the sun beat down on the north-east ridge of Y Garn as I toiled up it towards the crag someone had named Castell-y-Geifr.

Perspiration poured down my face, and muscles began to feel the strain of the steepening slope whilst I recalled the time, four or five years earlier, when Roger Cra'ster and I had come up after a successful morning on the Kitchen Cliffs to see what possibilities there were on this attractive-looking little crag. Nothing had tempted us and we merely ran down to Ogwen and drove back to P.-y-G. for a meal. But now things were different. There was a guide-book section to be written, and so the rock features I had hardly remarked must be noted, analysed and correlated with scrappy descriptions of routes I had gleaned from journals, log-books and hearsay.

Soon the wedge-like pinnacle at the base of the well-defined part of the ridge was just above me and I sat down to gaze airily over Cwm Idwal to the Slabs, and the other impressive facades of rock, which make up the rough mountainside opposite. In imagination I followed the manifold climbs I could pick out from the conglomeration of feature, and sank into reverie. But time was short and all too soon I came reluctantly to my feet again, and walked on to a boulder strewn basin beyond the pinnacle. A gully of sorts came down to it, obviously the key to the Archer Thomson account of the two original routes.

The right hand (and easier) of the two was my object, partly because it looked better than its dissimilar twin, but mainly

because I was alone. Amazingly quickly I reached the top, descended a little chimney on the other side, and so came back to the pinnacle.

Three routes up it were simple enough, but about half-way up the fourth I suddenly realized that I had undertaken something rather more serious. The footholds sloped out distressingly and there was nothing for my fingers. Nevertheless, I determined that the face would go (for completeness!), and after a glance down to the unfriendly boulders waiting for me to fall, stretched as high as I could. A precarious move . . . and . . . my fingers fastened onto two small holds. Now I was extended, in a position from which descent would be difficult—or all too easy. It was no good regretting my last move and waiting until my strength failed . . . so a quick pull . . . a toe scrape . . . and I was two or three feet higher on adequate footholds again. A padding step up the steep slab, and another, brought me with relief to the top. I was above the difficulty, all 30 feet of it, and relaxed, rather surprised at my bold performance.

Just two and a half hours ago I had left the road, and the sun was now only slightly above the dark edge of the horizon. Quickly, therefore, to the main rock face to check the other descriptions I had copied out. Another hour passed before I was satisfied and able to cross the ridge eastward to investigate some rock directly below the summit, where I had climbed long previously. My descent to the road was literally painfully slow in the near dark but later, at Helyg, I contentedly deciphered my notes from this last day's fieldwork for the Cwm Idwal guide.

I wonder how many users realize what varied work goes into a guide-book? It would be hard to describe a "typical day in the life of a guide-book writer," as there is really no such thing. Ordinary days on mountains are so different from one another—which is part of the fascination of the sport. Now add to normal diversity the tasks peculiar to collection of information; such as odd aimless wanderings about cliffs and amongst rock faces trying to extract nuances of meaning from bald descriptions, and the often impossible task of identifying "obvious grooves," "prominent overhangs" and suchlike landmarks; and you begin to approach the atmosphere in which the work is done. Sometimes I have enjoyed it, in the ever new thrill of a first ascent, the uncertainty of outcome and the pure delight of

exploration or the interest of a classic route. But often, sated with climbing, I have had to force my unwilling body up tedious rock and vegetation to chart the wanderings of previous climbers.

Right back at the beginning of my guide-book writing almost everything was fresh, and some of my happiest memories stem from those days. It was indeed almost the beginning of my rock climbing. After one or two visits to Black Rocks I extended my pleasure through the week by writing descriptions of the routes I had done. Very soon I met Peter Harding and found that he had similar ideas, both on guides and climbing. Together we developed our ability and soon were able to solve most of the outstanding problems—and incorporate them in our guide, which Alf Bridge persuaded Wilfrid Noyce to publish as the first venture of the C.C. away from North Wales.

Many inconclusive arguments about a classified list of climbs led us to decide not to adopt one, as we could never agree to the position any climb should occupy. And then the emphasis of our activity shifted from gritstone to Wales and Peter was asked to write a much needed Llanberis guide whilst I took the rest of Snowdon under my wing. But before either was well under way I was incapacitated by a motor accident. During the three months I was kept in hospital the proofs of *Black Rocks and Cratcliffe Tor* arrived and on one of my first visits to rocks after discharge Peter led the last three routes which we put in the book. These were the Superstitious Start to Lean Man's Buttress, the Easy Exit from the Promontory and Demon Rib. I followed with a still stiff leg, but without assistance, and enthusiastically wrote the descriptions to insert in the galleys. And that explains why it can be inferred that there are two "hardest climbs on the cliff."

Peter, indefatigable, annexed the main substance of the Snowdon guide by including Clogwyn Du'r Arddu in *Llanberis* and so only Llechog and one or two other odds and ends were left—not enough to justify a separate book. By Whitsuntide, 1949, I was fairly fit and the first V.S. I led after convalescence was the Grimmer. So it seemed a good augury when Wilfrid Noyce asked me to take over the Carneddau from Mervyn Hughes. At the time I did not like the area particularly, but agreed to do the job and thus, unknowingly, started some of my happiest climbing days.

A long summer holiday before I became a student at Manchester University gave me a flying start and I had sufficient time thereafter to keep in good trim. Thus the originally long walks to the main crags soon seemed commonplace and I thought nothing of going from Helyg straight over the summit of Carnedd Dafydd to reach Cwm Llafar. It is perhaps not surprising that I had difficulty in persuading friends to come scratching in the mud and heather for routes old and new, particularly as the Three Cliffs were so near to the road and exciting things were going on there. However, I usually managed to find someone patient enough to help me, and so the climbs were slowly ticked off.

Robin Chapman, a teacher from Natal, who had climbed extensively in the Drakensberg, was my first aide and together we explored the rocks on the south side of Cwm Llafar. I was attracted by the main buttress of "Crag by Llech Ddu" and there made the first ascent for the guide. The climbing was not very hard but with rock not above suspicion and a legacy of inconfidence from my enforced rest I so laced a 45-foot pitch with runners that it was almost impossible to move the rope when the time came to bring up Robin. He must have thought that modern aids were more hazardous than the Natal gibbons. But I had climbed the pitch with hardly a move not protected—and that was how I liked it.

We reported the routes made by Emlyn Jones on Ysgolion Duon named, after the wild horses of the Carneddau, Pegasus and Mare's Nest Climb. Naturally a variation became Chimera, but Jupiter, found with new companions, was named from a very tangible beast. He was a fine red setter and accompanied his mistress, Jane Fearon, whenever she went on the hills. On this occasion he was left disconsolately on the ridge whilst we plunged into Central Gully and emerged slowly from its depths. He met us, half mad with joy, exactly at the top—so what else could we call it?

Places like Duly'n's great black and virtually inaccessible cliff, and Melynlyn with the legendary "swinging chockstone chimney" were all visited. But one of the strangest experiences I had was on a lone walk in thick mist to Cwm Caseg. There I found a fine pinnacle which, a clearing revealed, was fully 40 feet high. I made a vague attempt to climb it but had no

success and decided to try again later. Twice since the publication of the guide I have looked for the pinnacle, but it seems to have disappeared from the face of the earth. Both searches were made in bright clear weather, once there was even snow on the ground which should have thrown it into sharp relief, but there was no sign of it.

Amphitheatre Buttress became my high-road from and to the bottom of Craig yr Ysfa. I cannot count the number of times I have found myself at the foot of a cliff on the wrong side of a ridge at the end of a day and soon I could do this fine route in between half and one and a half hours roped, dependent on the second of the day. Each time I gave more regard to the stupendous wall on the other side of the amphitheatre. The eye of faith and fancy roamed freely and easily over its ledges and cracks and my dream of ultimate heaven was to climb it. Always there was something else to be done though, and no attempt was made. Colin Kirkus' route at its left edge made a painful impression on me, and incidentally on my knees, and increased my respect for the wall—but the seed of desire was sown. Gentle pressure by the Editor forced the Carneddau manuscript from my hands into the reluctant maw of the Cloister Press, from whence it was disgorged, much later, as a very slim green volume.

Nevertheless, I was very proud of it and even yet it is the one for which I have most affection, because it is more nearly "all my own work." In it my ideas had free play and no alien pattern was impressed on them by tradition or the attitudes of contemporary writers. You can imagine my feelings when the British Museum wrote to ask me personal details as I had been placed on their index of authors!

In these two years experience taught me many things. For instance, the difficulty of assessing the standard of a climb could be minimised by a rule of thumb based on my actual performance leading the climb, and not on my feelings. It seems to have worked out fairly well, although there are one or two discrepancies. Pitch lengths were even easier as, being full of confidence, I had bought 150 feet of nylon line and marked every 25 feet with coloured wool: red, orange, yellow, green and blue. This, I thought, was foolproof, as the second could read off pitch lengths by referring to the nearest colour. I was distressed to see one day when coiling the rope, that the red and green

marks were barely 5 feet apart. Luckily I never, to my knowledge, had a colour-blind second.

The first ascent of Mur-y-Niwl, which I regard as the peak of my climbing career, put the Carneddau guide out of date. I enjoyed climbing elsewhere, with no need to make notes of everything I did, and marvelled at the freedom. But soon stocks of the guide to Tryfan were almost exhausted and the time came to revise it. This presented an opportunity to remedy a pet hate of mine, that of carrying two guide-books if I wanted to climb on Glyder Fach after a route on Tryfan. I expressed this view and as a result my next task was to make one volume of reasonable size out of one and a half, but I was rather distressed when I found that I could not happily combine or use the descriptions of Noyce, Edwards and Kirkus. Thus it was not only a matter of revising but of rewriting. Nevertheless, the two earlier guides made an excellent base to work from and altering descriptions and standards was quite simple—compared with the job of finding the hazily described routes of many different authors that I had previously had.

Eric Byne's activities from Glan Dena had to be assessed and *he* had not been content with finding only new routes. He had discovered whole new cliffs, but his exhaustive notes and sketches made my search for them easy. My only surprise was that so much had been missed for so long on such a frequented peak as Tryfan. It emphasises the fact that new climbs often only need a little more imagination and no more ability than the ordinary route-followers have.

One day in blizzard conditions Malcolm Barr and I had completed the ascent of Easter Ridge and had coiled the rope. Huddled in the so-called "lee" of a rock and scrawling comments on Byne's notes with numbed fingers, an icy gust whipped the exercise book from my frozen hands and hurled it off towards Llyn Ogwen. Luckily, by some freak, it soon changed direction and planed down, out of the murk, in a fine sweeping glide to the foot of the final rock step of the climb. I was then able to descend and retrieve it, but never again did I take such valuable original information onto the hills with me.

Two years' work, at a slower tempo than before, saw my notes completed. The guide duly appeared and, as Wilfrid said in his note, it was a "much smoother task than the first." Gratifyingly

there was a great demand for it immediately it was put on sale, and about that time I was asked if I could suggest anyone to take on Cwm Idwal. I racked my brains, but insistently the idea of completing the Nant Ffrancon trilogy came to the fore. I therefore suggested myself, and the offer was accepted by return of post.

By now, remembering or describing climbs as I did them was second nature, the routine of guide-book writing. This last one proved easiest to complete, partly because of the smaller area involved and partly because of my accumulated knowledge. At any event the fieldwork was finished quickly. Then came the arrangement of the manuscript, the copy in "fair hand" and the "Introduction" and "Historical" padding sections had to be made. Sketches were much simpler (and better) this time as my wife took a hand. Then galleys and page proofs, and then . . . at last the guide—the fourth on my shelves to bear my name.

All this effort has given me a greater love and knowledge of Snowdonia than I once thought possible. In these attempts and in help given to other guide writers my idea of the ideal guide has been lost, as I now know there is no such thing. My three main contributions have aimed somewhere between the complicated "general form of cliff and climb" school and the "spotlight following a single line." If I have achieved something near to Colin Kirkus' guide to Glyder Fach, I am well satisfied.

My great desire has been first to give a newcomer to the area a good idea of the quality of any climb, so that he knows whether it is worth-while trying to find it. The next aim is to give a standard so that he knows whether he can expect to do it, and last a fairly rough indication of what line to follow, as he should be a good enough mountaineer to find his chosen route without having every little twist and turn of hold and feature pointed out.

And now I can lay down my pen. I think that things, on my side of the mountains at least, have reached a stage when very few routes worthy of inclusion are likely to be made. It will certainly not be necessary to revise these three guides, although a case might be made for a supplement to *The Carneddau*, in a few more years. When the replacement for *Llanberis* appears, split into its two halves, we can leave the central crags of our haunt alone, and wait for the charts to the outlying areas where routes remain, for the most part, independent of one another.

THE SOUTH-WEST PILLAR OF THE DRU

C. J. S. BONINGTON

AT the beginning of our 1958 holiday we walked up to Montenvers from Chamonix. We leant on the parapet outside the station, and gazed at the Dru. There was still a sprinkling of snow on the face, and the sword-like summit was thrust into leaden clouds. It was a grim challenge, immensely attractive, and yet heavy with menace. The line of the South-West Pillar was emphasized by vaporous clouds, clinging to the great dièdre in the centre of the face, and lurking in the couloir on its right. It was a tremendous line, obviously the Bonatti Route. We wondered how any man could wander on this vertiginous mass on his own. It was a thought that was to come back to us many times.

The next fortnight was spent watching the snow line recede, doing a couple of training climbs and arguing over our future plans. Hamish MacInnes had a passion for new routes that led us onto a hilarious, at times dangerous, and totally unsuccessful venture to climb the South-East Eperon of the Pointe de Lépiney. What with both of us falling off, being threatened with a break in the weather, and finally having a desperate retreat down a waterfall, I was ready to climb any route as long as it wasn't a new one. We therefore resolved to attempt the South-West Pillar. I had many secret qualms about it.

Meanwhile we were joined by two Austrians, who also wanted to attempt Bonatti's route. We decided to make the attempt together and waited for a break in the weather. By this time the face was entirely clear of snow, but we wanted a settled spell, as we expected to spend at least three days on the climb. The second ascent, made by a composite party of 12, had three bivouacs on the face; the fastest party had two. So far there had

been five ascents, of which the most recent had been in June that year.

At last the fine weather came. We spent the morning eating, basking in the sun and getting our kit together. We carried one short hammer-axe, two pairs of crampons, two 300-ft. ropes, 40 pitons of all sizes, 40 karabiners and eight wooden wedges. Hamish and I had a big plastic bag each and duvets. The Austrians had a Zdarski bivouac sack. For food we took a mixture of dried fruit, army emergency rations and chocolate. We also had a Tommy cooker. Although we had kept everything to a minimum our rucksacks seemed appallingly heavy.

At about three o'clock we set out through the crowd of tourists around Montenvers, and were soon toiling up the steep slopes and moraines to the foot of the Dru. It was extremely hot and we were relieved to reach our bivouac site at the foot of the Rognon. The rest of the evening was spent cooking another vast meal and gazing up at the towering rocks above us. They slowly changed colour from rich browns to orange, and finally, as the sun dropped below the Brévent, a menacing grey.

Just as dusk fell we saw two figures far below us. We were to have company on the morrow. They turned out to be Don Whillans and Paul Ross. Our undertaking was so vast that any increment to our number seemed welcome.

The alarm was set for two o'clock. We wanted to get up the couloir while it was still frozen. I seemed to be awake most of the night thinking of all the disasters that could befall us, when suddenly I became aware of the jangle of the alarm. I could not help feeling relieved when I saw the blanket of clouds, and rolled over to go back to sleep. When next I opened a cautious eye it was much clearer, though there was still a lot of cloud on the western horizon. After some debate, we decided to start. Never have I felt less heroic.

The previous night, Don and Paul had carried on to the top of the Rognon and we now expected to find them already half-way up the gully. They had waited for us, however, and we were able to catch them up at the rimaye. Our expedition very nearly ended there. The snow collapsed under Walter, one of the Austrians, as he stepped across onto the rock. He was unroped, and only just saved himself from falling into the icy canyon below. A couple of awkward steps up a groove led to

smooth slabs and tiny ledges, filled with scree. I should have loved a rope, but the others were already disappearing round the corner. Don had wisely roped up and was over to our right.

Eventually we reached the ice and roped up. Hamish led our two ropes, cutting steps all the way. Pitch followed pitch up a mixture of ice, rotten snow and loose rock. Don had taken another route, farther over to the left. Both of them had crampons and consequently their pace was much faster. We reached the neck of the couloir without much trouble and took to the rocky wall on its right. Hamish disappeared round the corner, and all I could hear was the clink and scrape of his crampons. He was a long time in one place. It seemed rather too soon for us to hit serious difficulties. As soon as I got round the corner, however, it became apparent why he had taken such a long time. There was a damp, icy groove, just too narrow to take a boot. Don had led it in crampons: it was all I could do to get up with a fairly tight rope. The angle now steepened and the jagged skyline of the *Flammes de Pierre* seemed ready to engulf us. Joe Brown, three weeks later, was to be submitted to a continuous bombardment, as he climbed the gully.

At last we reached the foot of the Eperon. It was 11.30, and we had spent about five hours of strain in the gully. It was a tremendous relief to escape onto firm sunlit rock. By the time Hamish and I roped up, Walter and Ricardo were far above, out of sight and hearing. Don and Paul were disappearing up the second pitch. It was warm and pleasant, and we should have loved to have been able to bask in the sun, but speed was all-important. The first pitch, an awkward crack, yielded quite easily. The next was a lot harder, and demanded some strenuous pull-ups on poor holds. All the climbing required energetic arm work, and I could not help wondering how my muscles were going to stand up to 2,000 feet of this. Both pitches were graded as V, but they were the hardest of that standard I had been on. Another acrobatic crack led to a ledge, where we caught up with the other two. We had reached our first real problem.

Don was about 30 feet above us. He had just traversed below a big overhang, and was now leaning almost horizontally across a steep slab, kept on the rock by tension of the rope. Suddenly he was across and round the corner. Only too soon I had to follow in his path. The traverse was extremely awkward and

I breathed a sigh of relief when I got round the corner. My relief was premature. A smooth crack unblemished by piton or wedge stretched upwards, broken only by a couple of bulges and small overhangs.

“ Did you go up here ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Is it hard ? ”

“ It's a bit strenuous.”

My heart sank. There was nothing for it; I had to start. The jamming was quite straightforward, but the angle was steep and there were no conventional hand or footholds. I could see Paul's legs dangling over the void, far above me. Should I ask for a top rope ? No, I couldn't possibly at this early stage. My arms ached, hand-jam followed hand-jam. The rope dropped away below me, to my last runner 30 feet below. At last, a chockstone, but had I the strength to thread a sling through it ? Finally, I abandoned it, and attacked the small overhang. Above I was still thrown off balance by the right-hand wall, and the crack was particularly awkward. I finally arrived at the ledge, panting and exhausted. This was only the fourth pitch and my arms already felt as if they were dropping off. This in fact was the most exacting pitch on the climb, and off the route into the bargain. About 10 feet farther on the right was a crack positively bristling with wedges. Don had made one of his entertaining free variations.

The next pitch provided a brief respite. It was not vertical, and there were pleasant jugs. Slightly rested, I arrived at the next ledge. Paul was already battling with a shallow chimney graded VI and A2. Half-way up, a loose flake was jammed, like a huge sword of Damocles. Above, an overhang led to a vicious vertical corner, topped by yet another bulge. Paul was obviously finding it hard. One did not dare trust one's weight to the flake, and yet it provided the only holds. A very cautious hand-jam enabled him to pull up over it. Don soon followed. He was just disappearing over the final ledge when curses floated down to our ears. The rucksack, which Paul had been hauling up, had jammed. He had threaded the sack rope through one of his karabiners. As Don struggled to free it, there was a sudden yell, and he came shooting out of the corner. The peg had come out.

The curses from above became more voluble, until Don finally disappeared round the corner. It was now my turn.

The flake proved unpleasant in the extreme, and the crack above even worse. I had to replace the piton that had come out. The sound, as I hammered it in, was hardly reassuring, and most of its length was protruding from the crack. It slipped with a sickening jerk as I pulled myself up. Fortunately, it did not come out completely.

The angle now relented slightly, and yet another traverse led to our next problem, a smooth, wide crack. Walter had hammered in half a dozen of our large wedges, each one at full reach. His pegging, throughout the climb, was superbly economical. It made our job very much easier, since on a climb of this sort, hammering in the pitons is by far the most exhausting task. Hamish, however, as last man in the party, had the exacting task of de-pegging. He carried this out remarkably quickly with the "Message," an outsize chromium-plated piton hammer.

By this time Don was struggling with our next problem. We had now to cross a blank wall, topped by a detached flake, an old nylon rope dangling from it. Don was using a piton, half-way up the wall, to make a tension traverse to the right on minute footholds, to a shelf just round the corner. He made it look terribly easy. As usual I was disillusioned when my turn came. The traverse was quite straightforward, but the holds round the corner were tenuous. Another two pitches led up to a platform, where Don and Paul were getting organized for the night. It was already twilight, and we were all relieved to find such a good bivouac. There was even some old snow lying in the jumble of boulders.

Walter and Ricardo were about 50 feet above us. They had made excellent progress and had pegged the pitch above them before settling down. Our own ledge was soon covered with ropes, climbing tackle and our food. Our stores were eccentric. Don had brought up about six French loaves, sausages, bacon and of course a vast stock of tea and sugar. Hamish and I were slightly more austere, relying mainly on R.A.F. survival rations. We pooled our resources, and soon had two stoves working. It was pleasant, relaxing amongst the boulders, listening to the bacon crackling in the pan, surrounded by the emptiness of space and mountains.

We had just finished our meal and were settling down for the night, when the silence was shattered by a thundering. Hundreds of tons of rocks had broken away from the *Flammes de Pierre*, and were rolling down the couloir in sparks and smoke. Hardly had the noise vanished into the silence of the night, when we were alerted by a less spectacular but more dangerous threat, a shrill whine. We were under fire ourselves. We all ducked. Hamish slumped against me. For a moment I did not realize what had happened. Then something warm dripped onto my hand; he had been hit, and blood was pouring from his head. Fortunately we had a field dressing, which we applied as quickly as we could. A red stain immediately appeared through the wad of lint, but the bleeding soon stopped. He was feeling weak and dazed.

We abandoned our comfortable ledge, and edged into nooks and crannies against the wall. We might have been safe, but we were desperately uncomfortable. Paul was standing at the back of a narrow groove, Hamish was sitting between his feet and I was below, jammed between the walls, the abyss below me. The night never seemed to end. It was cold. I was getting cramp continuously and whichever way I wriggled, rocks dug into my back. However great the discomfort, one could not help being held by the changing scene: the vault of the sky, the countless stars, the crescent of the moon; around and below, the shifting shadows, eerie peaks, gleaming snow and stark black rock. Far below in the valley was civilization, people eating, dancing, sleeping in soft warm beds. No matter how our muscles ached, how the cold ate into our feet, it was worth it.

The sky outlining the plunging silhouette of the face and the ridge of the *Flammes de Pierre* changed from deepest black to watery blue. Suddenly a white flame of light struck the dome of Mont Blanc. All too slowly the line between dazzling light and grey shadows crept down the mountain, and finally touched the spire of the *Aiguille du Midi*, colouring it rich brown. It was time to move. We gathered our kit, prepared some breakfast and revived ourselves with a cup of tea. We were now ready for anything and full of optimism. Hamish was still feeling very weak, but we hoped that this would wear off. We changed the order of the parties: Hamish now climbed with Don, and I was going to stay in the rear with Paul. He would be able to

remove the pitons, and Don was much better qualified to help Hamish than I. It was all I could do to lead each pitch; I could never have given him all the assistance that Don did. Indeed, he gave Hamish a tight rope all the way up. It was a considerable feat.

The nature of the climbing now changed. Hitherto we had worked our way tenuously up a system of cracks and ledges. Now, above us stretched a smooth wall, broken only by long narrow cracks. Walter was already climbing far above us, the sound of his hammering disappearing into airy space. Our progress was now much slower than on the previous day. There were practically no pitons in place. The angle was just off the vertical, and the rock holdless. One could just fit finger-tips into the cracks. The climbing was superb, and tremendously enjoyable. It was just possible to climb without using *étriers*, stepping from piton to piton, each at full reach. Every now and then came 20 feet or so of completely free climbing, where one could make an airy progress with finger-jams and bridging. The exposure was now considerable, the rock dropping away cleanly to the gully below. Far below was our bivouac ledge, covered with the debris of our night's stay. Pitch followed pitch. Sometimes the others were out of sight and we felt extremely lonely on this vast face. At other times we all gathered on a tiny ledge, waiting for Walter to overcome a particularly difficult problem. It was pleasant sitting in the sun, talking a bit, dozing, and for ever gazing at the mountain scene about us.

At midday we reached the second French bivouac, a system of scree-covered ledges. We were full of hope. The others had already disappeared, and we could hear Walter's hammer far above. A big overhang barred our way, with an *étrier* dangling over it. It was strenuous, but quite straightforward. We now all gathered on a narrow ledge. Walter was about 50 feet above us, slowly hammering his way up a completely impossible-looking crack in a huge bulge.

We sat there, dozing in the sun, for three hours while Walter fought his way upwards. Finally, a cry alerted us. He could get no farther. We had lost the route. We were immediately galvanized into action. Don disappeared round the corner, and soon a shout of triumph told us that he had found the route.

This was soon followed by terrifying tales of a really monstrous overhang. While Don got to grips with the overhang, out of sight round the corner, Walter made a spectacular retreat, abseiling from his topmost piton. I arrived below our next problem, just in time to see Don disappearing over the top into the mist. The overhang was set in a corner and jugged out for a good 30 feet. The rock was black and greasy, with water dripping from it. Above us, Don dangled in his *étrier*. Fortunately all the pegs were in place. It was now getting late, already six o'clock, and Don had only reached an intermediate stance. He would still have to climb a 60-foot vertical groove, and there was no guarantee of finding a bivouac above that. Regretfully we decided to retreat to the ledge where we had spent the afternoon.

Our main complaint now was thirst. We had had nothing to drink since breakfast, and there was no snow on our ledge. We munched some chocolate and dates and settled down for the night. We were no more comfortable than on the previous night, but owing to tiredness I was able to get a little sleep. I was sitting next to Don, and shared his bivouac sack, a large plastic bag. It was remarkably warm inside it. The dawn, once again, dragged endlessly but eventually we were able to stretch our limbs, and gather together our climbing kit. We were too thirsty to eat much, and merely ate an oatmeal block from our survival rations.

Don gallantly let the Austrians take the lead again. They soon disappeared round the corner. We gave them an hour's start and then followed. Climbing the overhang was slow and strenuous. Don used the bare minimum of pitons, in order to lessen the drag on the rope. He also climbed past the intermediate belay, and went on to the very top. It was a magnificent lead. When I came to follow, I found I could barely reach his karabiners in spite of my greater reach. Hamish was now feeling extremely weak. The rope was passing through so many karabiners that Don could give him no help at all. It was frightening to swing above the void, suspended by a rusty piton. To add to my discomfort, I had left on my duvet, owing to the early morning chill. It was now about 10 o'clock and I was roasting in the heat of the sun. At last we reached the top of the overhang. My first action was to strip off my upper clothes;

I was limp with sweat, my mouth parched. By the time Paul was able to join me the others had once more disappeared. We seemed to have the mountain to ourselves. Above the rock stretched, uncompromising, precipitous. The wall was so vast, and our route so devious. We felt very lonely and unimportant.

According to the description, the difficulty now eased, with a traverse to the left. I soon found myself on a holdless slab, on which it was just possible to balance. A piton protruded, out of reach. I was tired, and almost unnerved. It was the most unpleasant moment of the climb. A delicate step, with no visible means of support, and I was there, clinging to the piton, unwilling to leave it. I decided to abandon all pride and called to Hamish for a top rope. In a few minutes I had joined him. Then I had a marvellous surprise. The cooker was purring, and on it was a brew of tea. We had at last found some snow. The tea tasted like nectar, and after a couple of mouthfuls I felt a new man.

The difficulty now relented, and several pitches of grade V free climbing led to the third French bivouac. Here we caught up the Austrians. Walter was working his way up a steep loose-looking chimney over to the right. A delicate traverse led to it, followed by a series of awkward moves up the open chimney. This in turn led to a wide ledge. The rock was now really broken, and we were able to climb up the crest of the pillar with all speed, carrying our sacks. Hardly noticed by us, it had been steadily clouding over. As we reached the shoulder, a few snow flakes settled on us. The weather was undoubtedly changing.

It no longer seemed to matter, however. We had one last problem to surmount and we would be up. The final summit wall loomed through the mist above the shoulder. It was cut by a series of dark overhanging chimneys. We sat amongst the boulders, collecting water drips, and watching Walter work his way up the first chimney. It looked unpleasantly hard. Soon it was our turn, a long stretch, a struggle with a karabiner with cold fingers, and I was up. A couple of pitches of fairly straightforward climbing led to a wide platform, just below the summit. From here it was possible to make a long traverse round the south face to some ledges. We had climbed the Pillar. We were too tired to feel jubilant, and the weather was much too threatening. We still had to get down.

It was not an ideal bivouac site. The ledges were all sloping, and one had to be continuously on one's guard. We had left a packet of soup and some dates. Don cooked enough for all of us. This was the first hot food the Austrians had eaten. They had not brought a cooker with them and as a result had been over 48 hours without any liquid. After gulping down the soup we tied ourselves into cradles of rope and settled down for the night. I was able to drop into an uneasy sleep, wakening every now and then to hear the patter of snow on the plastic bag. My feet were damp and consequently very cold.

When it first became light, we were confronted with a desolate sight. The sky was completely covered by a grey canopy. Up the glaciers and all around the summits crept ragged clouds. The rocks were plastered with snow. We had nothing left to eat, and we were soon ready for our retreat. Walter had descended the Petit Dru, when he had climbed the West Face, and claimed he knew the way. The driving snow bit into our skin, and the cold crept up through our boots. Progress seemed desperately slow. After three abseils Walter confessed to being lost. To make matters worse Ricardo was on the point of collapse. Don now took the lead, abseiling across to the left. A break in the clouds gave us a glimpse of the col on the Flammes de Pierre towards which we were heading. Fortunately at this point the wind dropped and it stopped snowing. Ricardo recovered, and we were able to press on downwards, with abseil after abseil. The glacier below never seemed to get any nearer, until at last we reached easy ground, and were able to climb rapidly together. A long traverse across the face led to the Rimaye. Only a long glacier trudge lay between us and the Charpoua Hut.

We had achieved our aim, and had climbed the Bonatti route. It had been a considerable undertaking, and had called upon all our resources. The immediate question that comes to mind is whether it was worth it. I would answer emphatically, yes. Towards the end of the climb, one's sole ambition was to finish it, and to escape to the easy life below. Even then, however, one could get acute pleasure from the superb climbing, the grandeur of the situation and the warmth of comradeship. Before our ascent, and on the route itself, I had felt acutely afraid on several occasions. The suppression of that fear, however, and our final success, gave me confidence both in my own ability and in the

communal strength of our party. It opened to me a completely new field of experience in mountaineering, the fascination of the great walls. I felt deeply grateful to Walter for leading our three ropes with such endurance and speed, and to Don Whillans for providing us with an atmosphere of confidence and complete capability.

AIGUILLE DU DRU, from Montenvers.
(This picture was taken on 26th July, 1950, the day of the first British ascent of the North Face, by T. D. Bourdillon and H. G. Nicol).
J. M. Hartog





TALKING WITH ALF BRIDGE

KEVIN FITZGERALD

“**A**S I see it,” Alf said, taking off his jacket and rolling up his sleeves, “rock climbing is a craft like any other except that it needs a longer apprenticeship than most. A boy ought to be accustomed to mountains long before he is taken on his first climb. He ought to be running about, say on Snowdon, for a couple of years, at first with a grown up person and after a while by himself. That way, you see, he gets himself accustomed to coming unexpectedly on to steep grass or over a steep place, and he’ll know instinctively what to do with his feet.”

“What would you say was the best time for this boy to start actual climbing, Alf?” I asked him.

“Seventeen is about right, I think. He’s strong enough then. And he’s old enough to be told that it isn’t clever to go on if he’s not on form. And he’s old enough to be taught the old rule (which is just as important today as it was when I was a youngster) about never climbing anywhere that you can’t climb down. I don’t care how good they are today. It still isn’t the craft of rock climbing to get into a place where if you can’t go on you must fall off. That’s for story books, not for friends out for the day. A good cragsman ought to think of himself, if he thinks about it at all, as always coming home in the evening.”

“Alf,” I put in at this point, “is it true that on Sundays and public holidays you used to climb on Lliwedd in a bowler?”

“No, it isn’t true. But I *have* climbed in a bowler. I don’t like being a hundred or perhaps a hundred and fifty feet off the ground on thin holds and then to have oranges bursting round me that trippers are throwing from the top. They tell me that some of the cragsmen today are beginning to climb in crash helmets. That might be a useful piece of equipment from what I hear about their climbs.”

“Of course things have changed a lot since I was a young man. After all a climbing generation is only five years and I

have seen a lot of generations. I still think Colin Kirkus was the best of them. He had all the right ideas. He was my dearest friend and I treasure his memory. I remember once lying out on Heather Terrace in the sun with Colin talking about mountains. We were eating bilberries. Colin could eat at any time and faster than anyone I ever knew. The reason I got to know him was because he ate three plates of porridge almost quicker than I could push them out. And I thought he was an amusing chap and offered to climb with him. As I say, there he was eating these bilberries on Heather Terrace and talking to me about mountains. 'You know, Alf,' he said, 'all it is necessary to know about mountaineering is that men want to be in the right place at the right time with the right companions. What you actually do on the mountain is incidental.' He was a very great climber was Colin, and he died at the height of his powers. A lot of people think he was contemporary with Menlove you know, but he wasn't really. He was what I would call the climbing generation before Menlove—another great man—and it was five years after Colin did Lot's Groove that Menlove really got going on his big series of climbs."

"I have known most of the climbers. And I'll tell you this; all the good ones were very good. And I'll tell you something else. I have taken part in some of the big mountaineering and climbing disagreements. But even when I was disagreeing with my friends I didn't like them any the less. With one or two of my closest friends I have quarrelled amicably for 30 years: sometimes on the mountain about mountains, sometimes on rock climbs about rock climbing, and sometimes just anywhere about nothing. But I wouldn't let anybody else say anything wrong or unkind about them."

"Yes, I keep pretty fit one way and another. I smoke a little and drink a little, but I can still keep up with them if it comes to a long, rough walk, and I can still get up a thing or two if it isn't too steep or too long, or above my standard. But I've never been able to keep up with the Mandarins. They are the people who don't get too close to actual climbing or the people who do it, but like to lay down the law about it. They are always wrong, but you can't beat the Mandarins. They must win. It used to upset me, that they had to win, when I was younger, but I don't mind it now."

"They can say what they like now, can they, Alf?"

Alf struck the twentieth match in an hour for his pipe, and took a second sip of his drink.

"I don't think I want to go all the way with you on that one," he said. "After all a cragsman, if he's a proper man, has got to stick to his principles, and I should have to disagree even now with the Mandarins if they said anything I thought was wrong. There are some things I don't like, such as climbing qualifications. The only qualifications I want, every true lover of mountains has already, and they aren't very difficult. I like people to be fond of the hills and to be the sort of people that, on the mountain or off it, never leave their friends."

"That's not a bad philosophy of life, Alf," I said.

"No. But you can complicate it you see. I'll tell you something. A real cragsman always knows when it's a good climbing day for him. He knows it the second he puts a hand on the rock. Now I say that if when he puts a hand on the rock he finds it isn't a good climbing day he should take off the rope and go home. If it's a good climbing day nothing can go wrong with him. Well, making real friends is like that. You know at once whether you can rely on them for the rest of your life. And if you do occasionally quarrel it doesn't matter because it is going to be all right. But you know when they aren't going to be friends, and then you might as well go away at once and not bother with them."

"Alf," I said, "how fit are you, really?"

"I suppose I am pretty fit. Got a bit slow, though."

"What do you mean by slow?" I asked him. "Translate that into terms of going up and down Snowdon. What would you reckon your time, now, from Pen-y-Pass back to Pen-y-Pass?"

"Ah, it would take me a long time now, Kevin," he said, "a long time. Pretty nearly all of two and a half hours." I stood up on that one.

"I'm going to bed, Alf," I said. "Perhaps it was just as well I didn't go out today for that walk with you and Wilfrid."

He smiled at me. "I think it was. Just as well. You know what Wilfrid is, and he had a cold. And we hadn't very much time. But we managed 24 miles. I've got to leave at six o'clock in the morning. And we used to walk over the tops to Aber. I was young then. Good night, Kevin."

VALETTE, 1957

Upward, like a glance, our feet spread the slabs.
Easy, hazy as the day.
The sun mounting, still ahead
And sound lost because of sound below.

Pause: edged on curve of wall, right left slab,
Line ahead and still continue,
Till when, spearing up, a spur
Cleft from us by depth and shock
Hesitates as we accept and turn away.

Ten ways have found or could have found
Their meeting here, but one leads on.
No doubt for us of that, but only doubt
Of that way's ultimate.

Still stretch and sinuate a twisted way,
Leaving the black of that black cleft to left,
Soon far below: with shadows lost and time of day.
The scratched arrows of our passing,
The iron evidence of before: all these
In sudden memory group below.
Little measures, made in relaxation
On those first, friendly ribs which now reveal
A frowning head—bruised and bleeding ice,
Where in the urgent light, the hollow sockets have
no eye for us.

Across the lip we stop and wait
Silence shouting in the dark and shouting in our eyes.
A hundred minutes wait for ten
And just for two of us, while one is gone.
Ten steps
A clip
A loop, and mouldering earth.
Handfuls of helplessness grovelled in despair
Till we three are together in the air
Of that cold night
Ledge safe, on clouds—and waiting for the day.

VALETTE, 1958 (After the Avalanche)

Looking up the valley, as I came
The topmost ribbon fluttered down and widened—
Bursting, surprised, upon a slab
Leaving it a fan, and on
To more and more.
Till all the hillside shouted white and broken rock
And the great wall,
Breached,
Gaped soundlessly ahead.

CLIFFORD FISHWICK.

A CAVE ON MONT BLANC

M. F. GRAVINA

IT was too much. Something had to give. I lowered my feet slowly, and when my steamy socks touched her plump Italian face there were three distinct reactions: rigid horror, then a hideous shriek that woke everyone else and finally hysteria somewhere between laughing and crying. She moved over, I slumped into the intervening space and fell asleep, while the Germans swore, the Italians began to sing, and the other English continued to snore obstreperously.

2.30 a.m. “. . . of course, it would spoil everything. How foolish to think that leisure has no place in the mountains! Besides . . .” We are easily convinced. Muriel and I are tired after the Géant South Face, and there are few better places to rest than the Col de la Fourche. What gain is there in sweat and toil? I am tired of the rock faces: they are all alike, heart-breaking. We have come to the Old Brenva as a man returns to a forgotten love.

But never was a rest day more ill-chosen.

1.30 p.m. I watch three specks moving on the skyline, and reach for my tin of sweet lemonade. “This must be the best way to climb. . . . With imagination it should be possible to experience all the pains and pleasures by merely gazing up from below. God! they must be thirsty,” I think as the cool liquid trickles over my tongue.

Mont Blanc is lazy, too. A few wisps of mist twine off the summit and mix dreams with the sky. But I am always drawn back to this tremendous sweep of ice and held fascinated like a moth at the focus of a giant reflector-bowl, and my memory is for ever impressed by the great upsurge of rock and ice that reaches to the skyline, remote but still not the summit; and across to the left, by the voluptuous cusps of the Aiguille Blanche, sheer as a scimitar-blade.

Far below, peaceful for a moment, the glacier slides into the distance, where like a sleeping beast stabbed suddenly in the belly it growls and snaps crazily at the sky before plunging to destruction.

* * *

I remembered this view because it was the last of the climb. The start was like any other, except that we waited an hour in vain for the mist to lift. At 4.30 a.m. we went out into the dank night with the usual exchange of "a rividercis," and by the Col Moore I was still thinking of the syrupy hot gluvine that had been the Italians' parting gift.

5 a.m. This is the meaningless hour when the half-light of dawn creaks on the senses. There is nothing but heaving lungs, the dogged grating of metal on rock, the pungent cold. And when dawn comes it is full of foreboding, a fever of electronic green that spreads its infection quickly across the sky. For a few moments there is a blaze of orange like a sodium flare; then the sun is swallowed up in the mucous ceiling and the few remaining tatters of cloud knit together in hairy silence. Yes, there will be a storm.

We halt on the last rocks for chocolate and dried apricots, and the mist soon begins to writhe around our feet like tentacles, swallowing up the snow-ridge above in a moist haze. I feel a sudden resentment for this miserable cloak that forces us to grovel blindly like flies on a dunghill; a sudden anti-climax. On the knife-edge I use an unnecessary concentration, as if it has taken on an almost personal hatred and will do its best to fling us down at the slightest opportunity. For mountains are insidious creatures; like the sea—soft, inviting, yet forever unrelenting.

A magnificent staircase leads upwards. We move together, rapidly, for the route lies for the most part on hard blue ice with no security save for half an inch of axe-point whacked in for appearances' sake: one false move would end some 2,000 feet lower, and it was here that three Austrians lost their lives earlier this season.

It is a strange sensation, this climbing up through the mist—I might as well be climbing down, or sideways; everywhere the enclosing sphere moves with us, sometimes it even stands still or

seems to move in the opposite direction; this little caged world we cannot break, a dripping desolation on an inclined plane that recedes on every side into monotonous greyness. At least my senses tell me it is inclined, as a night-pilot might suddenly see from his instruments that he is flying upside down at 500 m.p.h.

* * *

When we arrived at the foot of the abrupt ice-cliffs that force one along the galleries to the right, I glanced at my watch. 8.30—just four hours from the hut. “No wonder I——” Something made me spin round in my steps. “My God! Muriel—your face! . . .” It was the colour of ash. She swayed slightly in her steps. . . . Within seconds we were back on a little ledge just as the first flurry of snowflakes shivered us to our senses. Too little food, halving the guide-book time, and a touch of altitude had perhaps all three contributed to this momentary dizziness. We ate half our remaining rations and donned a few extra sweaters. In half an hour we were on the col just as the snow was thickening in the steps and moulding all to its own sameness.

There was no question about going on. It would be ridiculous not to, barely 50 minutes from the top. But just then the storm broke in its full fury that was to continue unabated for the next nine hours.

I can even now feel the shattering noise the wind made and the snowflakes smoking horizontally across our path. I wrote later: “It comes streaming up the northern cliffs, across, and down the other side where it is gone forever; its violence is terrifying, it threatens to leave nothing in its path, relentless: how is the wind to know that here are two human beings who love life and want to go on living? It will treat us just as anything else, like those splinters of ice ripped from the cornice and swept away into the abyss. . . . This wind, it is the wind of Fate. . . . It will blast us to dust and send the fragments whirling beyond the Milky Way . . . the whole world is dissolving, homogeneity and dissolution . . . it is turning into milk, but sweet and sickening, sucking like quicksand at my heels. . . .” Sweat is trickling down my spine; I shiver and pull the stiff hood round to the windward side of my face. How absurd! I am just walking up a snow-slope in a storm, slowly I suppose, but then only a small

snow-slope and on the other side is a green valley in the sun with men and women looking up and saying: "What a hangover today look; hark how he snores, le vieux Mont Blanc!"

Visibility was barely two yards, and to face the wind was impossible. It was as if one's eyes were being gouged out by red-hot needles; goggles were useless. Muriel was now a big snowball following in my tracks, balaclava-rim and eyelashes a mass of miniature icicles. She forced a smile and I counted another 10 paces before resting again.

We crossed the summit without knowing it. I was somehow convinced there was a shelter on top. But now we were going downhill, down a sharp snow-ridge and I had to feel for the crest with my axe, for I could see nothing. We returned, and there in the snow was a green wreath with two red flowers. I pretended not to notice it and tried to think about something else.

We were wandering aimlessly now. Lost? Oh, no. Just—well, maybe, yes. . . .

"We'll dig a cave," I shouted; then, more to the wind than myself: "One no trump."

* * *

10.30 a.m. It is a masterpiece. But the initial sense of luxury quickly disappears. It is pitifully small, with just room for two to sit hunched together, feet in the same sack. With the entrance sealed by the polythene bag pinned up by pitons and cutlery, we are soon buried under several feet of drifting snow. We light the primus and the atmosphere becomes quite steamy as we hold the flame against our clothing but without feeling any sensation. At length it goes out and we just sit and shiver continuously, violently in spasms, in the eerie half-light. Every noise sounds dead and hollow in the muffled quiet. Time drags terribly, and we fall into a light sleep only to be jerked awake by the pitons falling out and letting in an avalanche of powder snow through the door.

Sometimes plaintive cries of "Au Secours!" drift down to our cavern, and later three bedraggled faces appear at the front door. No, we don't know where Italy is. . . . "Ici, better, meilleur, très confortable ici," we insist. But they shake their heads and disappear into the still raging storm. I wonder about them for some time; then it is too much effort to think of anything.

4.30 p.m. These have been the longest six hours of my life and I crawl outside for a recce. But it is no good. By this time we are soaked through and weakened by the cold and lack of food. We settle down for the night. Only another 12 hours. . . . Oh, God ! It is better not to think at all.

* * *

At 6.30 p.m. everything suddenly changed. It was all over. I remember that the relief was so intense and sudden that I felt quite flattened and my eyes filled with tears. We had just chanced to take a last look through the peep-hole when it happened.

“Look ! Quick, look, it’s blue, it’s blue !”

It was undoubtedly blue. There was an eruption like a volcano and we looked out onto a sea of clouds that stretched to the horizon on every side. We raced up to the summit, only 50 feet above, and then just stood and gazed at the sinking sun which was flooding the whole western sky with radiance and flecking the wind-swept snow with gold. It was very still, and we turned to go without a word. Half an hour later we were sitting before a blazing fire at the Vallot Hut, sipping hot dirty water, our clothes drying over the stove. And when the fire died in the grate we went to bed and shivered all night under a dozen blankets.

* * *

Next morning I lay dreamily for some time thinking of the climb and planning the next few days’ menus. Before my fuddled vision there appeared an earthenware pot. The swirling snow of yesterday became a fuddled mass that bubbled and heaved. It smelled richly of cheese and wine. The point of my ice-axe became a poised fork: beside me was a heaped dish of bread-cubes. The icicles that yesterday hung from lipped crevasses were now transformed into glutinous tendrils of cooked cheese that hung deliciously for a moment before my own eager lips.

“How about a fondu? Tonight I mean,” said Muriel.

The word shook my nerve-fibres with apocalyptic force. But this was the Vallot Hut. It was not until eight hours later that the vision became a reality. We seemed to have come a long way.

STOCKHOLM ROCKERY

A. A. BERTRAM

PERPHAPS you do not associate Stockholm and rock-climbing? Nor did I, nor do most Swedes, but about a dozen miles south-west of the centre of Stockholm is a pleasant little hunting ground for the climber at a place called Häggsta, which at certain times of the year becomes a hive of activity for a small and élite group of Swedish climbers.

Swedish climbers are relatively few and they appear to have a broader approach to mountains, mountaineering and climbing than the average English or Alpine climber, for several reasons. Their own mountains in Jämtland and Lappland require real expeditioning, two or more days' approach by boat, foot or ski, according to the season, to attain even the foot of the mountain, and then the actual ascent is as likely to be on snow and ice as on rock. During the long winter, rock-climbing is out of the question and, besides, they all enjoy one or both of the two sports of long-distance ski-ing through the forests and over frozen lakes, or long-distance skating on the surrounding lakes and coastal waters of the Baltic when conditions permit. Then, like other Swedes, most of them love to swim or sail during the all too short summer season, and in the usually rainy autumn they have a peculiarly Swedish sport called Orientation—really map-reading competitions on foot through the woods and forests. Thus they have a multiplicity of interests, all of which take them out of doors and close to varying aspects of nature but which also leave rather limited time for pure rock-climbing.

Nevertheless, for a short season of the year they devote their interests to pure rock-climbing, and during the Swedish spring and early summer Häggsta becomes alive. It has the great advantage of being easily accessible, only about 20 minutes by car, one and a half hours by bus and foot, or 50 minutes by bicycle (if you are as fit as Sven-Bertil who appears to think little of a 55-mile ski race or 100-mile skating trip in a day).

On arrival at Häggsta one steps out of the woods at the head of a pleasant meadow falling away to a line of aspen and alder on the edge of a lake. Bordering the meadow on the right are the precipices of Häggsta Mountain, all of 100 feet high in some places, while hidden amongst the trees on the left is Little Häggsta which faces out over the lake. The Häggsta Mountain itself stretches right down to the lake and also has a Lakeside Face. In places this latter face falls directly into the lake in a series of overhangs but to my chagrin I learnt that it was too shallow just there to approach the cliff by boat. (I have hopes of there being a climb on a certain island called the King's Hat—named from a gigantic hat, with what surely must be a Roc's feather in it, set up on a pole at the spot where a king rode over the precipice while fleeing his pursuers—which will require a boat as an essential piece of climbing equipment.)

This, then, is the place to which some 20 Stockholmers come most week-ends and holidays between April and July. Like any group they vary from beginners to experts, rabbits to tigers, with the bulk about the half-way mark. They are rather more sociably inclined than we and often the whole family and friends' children are brought for the day in the open. Activities consequently get divided between cooking—brewing coffee and grilling an unbelievable variety of sausages over an open fire, of juniper branches if possible—playing hide and seek or rounders with the children, sunbathing and even . . . climbing. As the season advances so the numbers slowly increase and a climax is reached when a beginners' course is held under the auspices of the Svenska Fjällklubben (Swedish Mountain Club). This is an introductory course prior to one of the main activities of SFK, their August meet on Kebnekaise, Sweden's and Lappland's highest peak (about 7,000 feet).

There is a surprising variety of climbing on the small cliffs of Häggsta—everything from easy to artificial, from deep chimneys to open slabs. On the main cliff, about 100 yards long overlooking the meadow, are to be found the majority of climbs, and they are simply numbered off from the left—1, 2, 3 up to $7\frac{1}{2}$ and 8. This rather distressingly dull nomenclature, gives no hint of either type, severity or personal interest of the climb. For instance 1, 2 and 3 are increasingly harder groove climbs, Easy Difficult to Mild Severe, all close together on one buttress and

crossed by a broad sloping ledge which is about Moderate: 4, 5 and 6 do not appear to be such popular climbs, largely because they lie in an area of more rotten rock than the rest. 7 is a corner chimney with a spectacular escape from under the summit chockstone onto the perpendicular right wall, giving delightful exposure with a minimum of largish holds for which a careful search is required.

7 is the western boundary of the last and most majestic of the buttresses. The eastern boundary is formed by 8—pleasant slab climbing, of which the difficulty can be increased by keeping nearer to the central nose of the buttress. The nose itself has a projecting overhang at the top with a none too easy artificial route coming up underneath it. This, the Wine Route, so called from the celebration of its first ascent by Sven Wiklund and Helmuth Wopfner, starts close to 7 with fairly delicate free climbing at the near vertical and works up and out to the right, passing over a small overhang to a small stance and piton belay in the middle of the cliff just beneath the next two overhangs which lie close together. Both of these are surmounted artificially by a zig-zag course, left over the first, right in between and left over the second, onto the airy Castello del Monte ledge (indicating the nature and drinking place of the celebratory wine). From this ledge an extremely long and airy stride enables one to break out right onto the top of the nose. When I seconded Flam, an Austrian student, up Wine Route it was discovered to my horror that I had left someone else's karabiner half-way up but it made an excuse for some abseiling practice the following week-end. There was about 80 feet of free abseil, at varying distance from the cliff, but fortunately close enough at the critical point to reach the abandoned krab. These activities caused much interest to some non-climbing spectators who inquired if, after I had retrieved the krab, I would return up the rope—like some gigantic spider, presumably winding my thread up behind me as I came!

The nature of the Häggsta rock precludes much use of slings for running or stance belays and consequently many more pitons have been hammered in than one might expect, while sling technique is unknown. In this way there is Piton Route, probably no more than a Very Difficult, and Four Pegs Route which is a pleasant Mild Severe taking a fairly direct line up a

face with an "interesting" slight overhang in the middle of about 8 feet, surmounted with the help of a very cunningly concealed Thank-God hold. One of the pleasantest of routes, both for climbing and name, is Blue Anemone—in the spring there is a carpet of these pale blue little Swedish flowers at its foot—which is really a small face, most of which is climbable, so that one can wander more or less at will and make one's own difficulties, the super-direct start being a dozen feet of good VS. An even more tigerish approach can be made by Helmuth's Traverse, a hand traverse on a very steep face with a singular lack of footholds, which I suspect could be a free XS but is always done with a certain amount of artificiality.

Round on the Lakeside Face are a few routes, generally hardish and fairly short. Molander's Leap is one of the best. It is more or less an ascending hand traverse on a line of weakness through an overhang and makes an interesting little test of one's strength. Little Häggsta is far less frequently visited and explored and probably has several possibilities yet to be discovered. A fine chimney in the Vertical Vice style is unnamed but has a strong claim to be called Curl's Chimney, owing to the predilection a certain Englishman at the Embassy has for it. There is also another more open and airy chimney and a fine slab: the usual route keeps to its diagonally ascending upper edge where there is a fine crack for the hands, but I also found a delightful route far out on the slab's right edge above an overhang. This, like all other new routes here, requires a certain amount of housework, as opposed to gardening, and a little brush for sweeping away pine needles should be a "must" for first ascents.

One of my favourite climbs at Häggsta is 7½. This follows 7 for half its length and for the other half makes a pleasant and exceedingly exposed traverse to the right round a corner onto the end of the famous Castello del Monte ledge. If one takes this as the first climb on a hot and sunny Sunday one's appearance over the top of the precipice from the ledge below can cause consternation amongst the unsuspecting sun-bathers in various stages of undress at the top. But the prize must go to the big traverse, regrettably unnamed, on the Lakeside Face. This lies above the previously mentioned point where the cliff falls directly into the water and has the fascination of starting downwards.

After an introductory short chimney descent and traverse left one has to make an abseil of about 15 feet down and 8 or 9 feet to the left across a couple of grooves to attain the outer edge of a slab. Arriving here, usually with a certain amount of difficulty, one is in a very secluded and private little world. Below, an overhang falls into the lake, and above, a vast overhang like Gashed Crag protects one from would-be spectators. A pleasant 90-foot traverse across this slab with one hard move about half-way leads to the foot of an impressive bottomless chimney up which, after a tricky entry, one can do really classical foot and back work to emerge at the top and find that the left wall of the chimney is in reality a gigantic flake.

Häggsta is not the only practice cliff near Stockholm but it is by far the most accessible and offers a greater choice of routes than any other. A visitor to Stockholm at an appropriate time of the year who likes climbing, or just being out in the countryside, can be well advised to make his way out to Häggsta; it lies quite near the village of Fittja on the Södertälje road. Here he is assured of a welcome from the small group of Stockholmers whom he will find pursuing their diverse interests, children's games, cooking and eating, bird watching, flower seeking, various branches of photography, sunbathing, and last but not least, climbing. The SFK also has a library in which there is generally a meeting every Friday evening after 7 p.m. Visitors are always made welcome. The address is Linnégatan 42, and remember that most Swedes enjoy practising their English.

PETITES JORASSES

R. J. WATHEN

TO have one's mountain dreams dissolve into little puddles of water, and to fail, fall, or be foiled in eighty per cent of one's plans is, it seems, the lot of most Alpinists nowadays. More so for one who is visiting Chamonix for the first time and has not yet learned the golden rule for success there: go up to a hut in the rain, and grab your climb when the weather turns good next day.

After five summers, very pleasant and fruitful ones, in those Cinderellas of the mountain world, Iceland, Norway, Ireland, and the Andes, my approach to Chamonix felt like the end of a pilgrimage. I say Cinderellas, because there are always people ready to cry down the worth of these areas as compared with their bigger brothers the Alps, the Himalayas, or Greenland, or U.K. climbing. Even Zermatt, my first Alpine centre, can suffer by comparison with Chamonix. So these five summers had led me to think of the Mont Blanc area as a kind of Mecca which one was fated to hear about from afar but never to visit.

So when, on a late July day in 1958, I crossed a pass and saw the Drus and the Aiguilles and the White Mountain for the first time, and was able (from long familiarity with the photograph books) to recognize the "Niche," and the Blaitière, l'M, and many another famous pillar and post, I was glad that this return to the land of one's mountaineering forefathers should have been delayed so long. It was good to have had a dabble elsewhere, before coming to bury my nose here for years to come.

Of course the next two weeks were not all that simple. We were turned back on, I think, six climbs by the weather. And yet it was somehow a good season—the best, they said, since 1955, some even said since 1952. Eventually I reached the Leschaux Hut with Chris Bonington, and there we were for once in step with the weather.

The Leschaux Hut and its surroundings must be one of the most enchanting places in all the Alps. The small cabin built

into the avalanche-struck ruins of the old hut, the remoteness of this glacier lying aside from the main tourist trunk routes, the wonder and mystery of the great walls which tower away into the heavens, and the history and legend attached to the many who came up here, 20 and 30 years ago, trying the greatest wall of them all, the North Face of the Grandes Jorasses, fighting with each other, with themselves, with the mountain, and with the storms—some never returning. . . . These memories make the Leschaux intriguing. One could pass a life here staring up in awe at the Grandes Jorasses. . . .

A mile from the "Walker" is a small wall of rock, left of the Col des Hirondelles—small in comparison with the 4,000 feet of its big neighbour—small perhaps, yet very impressive, being a solid rectangle of rock bristling with overhangs, soaring nearly 2,500 feet out of the glacier. And supposed to be hard, too. "The hardest hereabouts: the hardest climb I have ever done," said Bron, the first ascensionist. This was to be our climb, the West Face of the Petites Jorasses.

Frankly, I was rather frightened by the whole thing, and approached the foot of the Wall in some trepidation. I wasn't fit. Chris was. He would lead, of course. But could I keep up with him? I must climb fast, tearing up those cracks and overhangs, carrying my pack to save time. And how would I ride out the bivouacs, and the storm and cold of the two or three nights we might have to spend up there? It is odd how the newcomer to the bigger Alpine routes always imagines these night bivouacs to be a life-and-death affair of sitting on a centimetre of rock counting one's toes and fingers as they plop off one by one and fall to the glacier "*thousands* of feet below." I was a newcomer, and that's what I thought. Perhaps I wasn't exactly frightened. *Tensed*, rather. That's what the guide-book says, for instance, about the "Walker": *tension d'esprit* through the height, the fear of storms, etc. etc. . . .

"Come on, you lazy beggar. We'll be here a week at this rate." It sounded like Chris. (Indeed, who else could it have been?)

I came on, up the first pitch of the climb. The long pitches of the dièdre flew by under our feet. We were moving faster than we had expected. "Well, that's the first 600 feet. Easy enough. Wonder what all the fuss was about?"

I couldn't answer, being somewhat restricted by two rucksacks, one in each ear. Chris had a bad habit of putting the sack-hauling rope through the karabiners on the pegs he was using as running belays, and I had to pay for it by carrying up both the sacks. Another bad habit he has is to drop things—not himself, luckily: he's too good to do that. But small things, like pegs, hammers, karabiners, rucksacks, anoraks, ice-axes, guide-books, and boots. The occasional peg whistled past my ear. I was glad that the two rucksacks protected me.

Chris led out again. A hard delicate pitch onto the arête out right. I followed. "*Tight rope!*" I was all in. How Chris climbed it so easily, I don't know. With his weight, too. Most of the other top climbers are small men, and go around muttering about weight-to-muscle ratio. Compared with some of these, Chris is positively *fat*.

My turn to lead. Terraces, slabs and ledges up to a wet chimney. Chris went through again, splashing through the water like a dowager mermaid coming up for air.

I followed, with the sacks. We wrung each other out, and traversed back left above the big overhang which we had just by-passed.

Soon after this, the difficulties began. I took a restricted stance in the middle of a chimney and Chris passed out of sight over an overhang. There were a lot of grunts, and the rope went out ever so slowly for about half an hour—so that I had time to take my hands off it and refresh myself with glucose tablets. Chris reached a stance. His sack went up on the rope, got jammed, I climbed up to free it, then followed up the crack wearing my own sack.

It was very thin, and Chris had used a peg and a wedge, which had to be abandoned (*my* wedge, of course). (Whillans, Smith and Brown, coming up the climb next day, took a different line here, traversing left onto a line of pegs planted by the first ascensionists.)

The next pitch was the most interesting. The crux. A mighty overhang, like the Sloth at the Roches, only not so big. The route description said "A 3," which indicated high-grade pegging in bad cracks. We got out the étriers, pegs, hammers, and spare karabiners and slings. Chris took some glucose and a deep breath, and advanced to the attack. I prepared for a long wait.





He banged in a peg for protection. And then—— Suddenly I looked up. He wasn't there. No Chris in sight. Oh, dear. Had he fallen? No, the rope was still there.

"Come on, send up the sack you lazy beggar, or we'll be here a month!" Chris's voice floated sweetly down to me from above the overhang. He was up.

Intrigued, I went up to see what kind of an overhang this could be. In a trice I too was up, sack and all. Large holds above the overhang had solved it neatly. Indeed a kind of Sloth, only much easier: about *V Sup*.

Dear Reader, you gasp at our prowess?—that we should have ambled up so easily where others had struggled and sworn? It's quite simple, really. There weren't any piton cracks worth speaking about, and to have tried to climb it artificially would have taken much more energy than to have climbed it free. Pitons have their drawbacks as well as their advantages.

Chuffed, we flew on upwards. Long traverses up leftwards landed us at the most conspicuous feature of the face, a square ice patch at its northern end. We by-passed this on the rock to its right and then made a curious sort of creeping traverse for 150 feet to the right.

It was in selecting this traverse that Chris showed his flair for route-finding. Don and the two Joes, moving extremely fast next day, missed this sharp turn and shot straight up the wall above, making their own finish to the top of the wall. Apparently, the English translation someone (no names, no pack-drill) had given them from the Vallot guide had been wrong.

It was getting late. The rock was golden and hot to the touch as the sun sank down over the Aiguilles and Mt. Blanc. We came to the end of the traverse and found ourselves in the chimney where the first party had bivouacked.

"Where's the route go now?"

"No idea. Let's sleep on it."

* * * *

I was lowered into the innards of the chimney to hack at ice for supper. Chris made himself at home—trousers off, long pants on, trousers on again. There was no need for me to expose my legs to the night air in this indelicate way. I was already sheathed in my Specials: pyjama trousers, and a pair of

Norwegian long string underpants, which I had donned before leaving the hut.

We start supper. I fill the stove. In doing so my trousers get secretly soaked in petrol. A match. *Whoosh!* Flames all over my trousers. I feel like a Christmas pudding. The effort of extinguishing myself nearly throws me off the ledge, so I tie myself on with an ingenious rope system round my feet and under my chin. Unfortunately, this rope under my chin tightens as my feet slide off the ledge, and I am almost strangled.

We eat some of Chris's R.A.F. rations, "for survival in dry climates." They are revolting, but we survive all right.

Supper is over. Night darkens. Glaciers creak. Nose gets cold. Well, let's sing. How about the Bivouac Song? "Far away from the cold night air——"

"And how about making me a spot of tea?" mutters Chris, rolling over and knocking me in the ribs. I curse him. "Captain Christian Bonington, how about making it yourself? . . ."

*All I want is a room somewhere,
Far away from the cold night air,
With one e-nor-mous chair,
Luver-ly, luver-ly. . . .*

Music, the first and best of the arts. Let's sing. Let us gladden the glaciers with our song. I get dug into that fine example of early folk music, the Ballad of Eskimo Nell. "It may be rare in Berkeley Square, but it's not on the——"

"—How about a spot of tea?" It's Chris again. Apparently, like Dead-Eyed Dick and Mexico Pete, he feels disinclined to take his refreshment in solitude.

"Here's the cooker. And if you drop it——"

He drops it.

Gr-rrr. . . .

Still, can't be helped. . . . No tea. And no soup, beoooo-tiful soup. . . .

Midnight. Full moon ahead. It is so bright, I am wearing my dark glasses. "Bonattington" rolls again and grunts himself to sleep.

*Lots of chocs for me to eat,
Lots of coal making lots of heat.*

An hour later. The rope under my chin has tightened and jerked me awake. One o'clock. Ah, an idea: the cigarette. . . .

The cigarette. Only brought up four from Montenvers, one for each day. . . . Smoked the third two hours ago . . . can I *honestly* smoke another? . . . Why not? Two hours ago it was Wednesday. Now it's Thursday!

Cigarette over. What now? Four boiled sweets. One every half hour. They'll last till 3 a.m. Wonder why I can't sleep? It's not, after all, an unpleasant bivouac. Possibly it's the rock sticking in my backside. . . .

* * * *

Slowly the hours pass. . . . "Daylight comes and I wanna go home."

Dawn is touching the peaks. Tone, shine, shape and shadow return to the grey ghosts of the night.

"Top o' da marning to yer." At this hour, Don and the two Joes are reaching the foot of the climb. Unaware of this, we send some rocks smashing down in their direction.

Chris leads off, and we climb two rope-lengths up cracks and open chimneys. They end in walls. These look temptingly easy, but Chris's route-finding genius espies a chance peg out to the right on a most improbable line. Traversing back onto the West Face, we continue upwards. Cracks, walls and easy pitches follow each other in fast succession.

Suddenly we are on the top. We have burst from the cold shadow into the heat of the day. We are on the sharp ridge which delicately severs Italy from France. It is midday. We relax in the sun and look around us. Westward towers the Grandes Jorasses, and we are somewhat humbled to see that our own mountain is only half the height of the mighty Walker Spur—barely up the *Tour Grise*, in fact.

Five hours later, soaked to the waist from crossing a swollen stream, we are swinging down the dusty Italian road to Entrèves. At the same time, Brown, Whillans and "Mortimer" are spinning gyroscopically back from the summit down a couloir in the North face, preferring to reverse it in abseils than to face Italy without passports. Chris and I feel like Ruskin's greased-pole merchants: "red with cutaneous eruption of conceit and voluble with convulsive hiccough of self-satisfaction."

An hour later we had got ourselves outside a bottle of chianti, which fortified the said hiccough and hastened the said eruption. That night we slept in a local lavatory.

“THRUTCH”

DAVID YEOMAN

Thrutch *v.i.* To climb using energy and strength rather than delicacy of technique; to climb in such a way that an undue amount of energy is expended (etym. dub. possibly der. f. *thrust* and *clutch*, as such climbing usually involves indiscriminate *thrusting* with the legs combined with *clutching* by the hands—at any holds available)—*n.* A pitch of climbing which necessitates *~ing*.

WHEN I first heard the word I wondered if such an entry would ever appear in our dictionaries. Anyway, the word has been heard in our huts for some years (and has appeared at least once in a guide-book), so it is high time that it sat an entrance examination to see whether it is worthy of admittance to our language.

Sir Alan Herbert sets out excellent tests for a new word in *What a Word!* Let us apply these tests to “Thrutch.”

1. AM I WANTED ?

I am sure all climbers will agree that the method of climbing described by “Thrutch” is one to which they sometimes wish to refer—if not resort! Pitches like the final crack of the Direct on Glyder Fach, the Cave in Great Gully and even, perhaps, the humble Sheep Pen on the Milestone are, in varying degrees and to varying numbers of climbers, a “Thrutch.” Is there any other word or phrase which could be used in its place? One might say “So-and-so *sweated* up the crack,” but this does not really convey the same idea as “thrutched.” One might sweat profusely on pitches which are by no means a “thrutch”; furthermore, ascending Snowdon by the Watkin Path on a summer’s day might well be a sweat, but it would not be a “thrutch.”

No, I think there really is a need for such a word and I would give it 9 out of 10 for necessity.

2. AM I GOOD ?

When I first heard it, I thought "thrutch" was a "portman-teau" word by *thrust* out of *clutch* and that it must have originated because the kind of climbing it describes involves indiscriminate thrusting by the legs and clutching by the hands.

However, it is apparently no such bastard. It is duly recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* which gives its present meaning—now dialect—as:

Sb. An act of "thrutching"; a thrust, push, press, squeeze; also a narrow gorge or ravine (local)

v. 1. *trans.* To press, squeeze, crush; to crowd, throng; *fig.* to oppress.

2. To thrust, push.

3. *intr.* To push or press into place; to jostle.

The origin is given as Old English *prycc(e)an* = Old High German *drucchen* to press. Quotations of its use go back to before the twelfth century.

Hence, although we are now using it with a somewhat modified meaning, its lineage is quite irreproachable; indeed, one has only to look at it to recognise that. The sturdy consonant clusters fore and aft with the single vowel amidsthips bear witness to its aristocratic Anglo-Saxon ancestry. Full marks for etymology.

3. DO I SOUND WELL ?

This is, of course, largely a matter of opinion. Mine is that "thrutch" has an appropriate, if not a beautiful, sound. But after all, it does not describe a beautiful action. Indeed I think "thrutch" is decidedly onomatopoeic; it is distinctly reminiscent of the kind of sounds one hears—mingled with the expletives of the climber—emerging from the bowels of some cracks and chimneys, although I must admit that the cult of vibrants in place of nails is diminishing this resemblance. However, I give it 8 out of 10 for euphony.

4. UNDERSTOOD ?

On this point I can only record my own experience; I never had any difficulty in understanding it. When I first heard it in use I had no need to question it; I knew at once just what was meant, and so I think would any climber. 10 out of 10 for clarity.

Well now, what is the score? 37 out of 40, or 92.5 per cent.! Bravo! As 50 per cent. is Sir Alan's pass mark, "thrutch" has clearly gained a first with honours. Well done, **thrutch**! You may now discard your inverted commas and are hereby formally admitted to the vocabulary of all climbers.

Before you finally pass out, however, let me give you a fatherly word of advice. Don't let people debase you; don't let them use you merely as a synonym for "difficult," or "strenuous." You describe so excellently pitches which are—well—a thrutch, that it would be tragic if you allowed yourself to be used to describe any pitches except those which are truly a thrutch, or to describe the motions of any climbers except those who do indeed progress by thrutching. Of course there are some who, whatever the climb, are quite incapable of moving in any other way. . . .

THE FIRST ASCENT OF MALHAM COVE

TREVOR PECK

THROUGH the spring and summer of 1958 we waited for a fine week-end to try to climb this formidable crag. Such an ambitious task seemed to demand good conditions, as the difficulties would be great enough without the addition of bad weather. But week after week our expedition was postponed owing to rain, and it was not until the end of July, though still with faint prospects of good weather, that we decided to go.

Our party consisted of Barrie Biven and myself as the ambitious climbers, and Roger Bacon as general assistant, chief photographer and chisel sharpener. Rain fell unceasingly for three days, and it was very cold for this time of the year. We made no attempt to climb, and returned home very depressed. So depressed in fact that we resolved to return on the following week-end and commence our assault, no matter what the weather had in store. We kept this resolve, and started climbing on Saturday, 2nd August, in the rain. We started on pitch 2 from the lower ledge, leaving pitch 1 for a later date. I think the reason for this was that we needed some conviction that the climb would "go" in the upper parts before expending any time on the short and possibly easier first pitch. Fortunately the rock, mostly overhanging, was fairly well sheltered from the rain, although in parts the wet streamed down the wall in long slimy black fingers.

There was obviously no free climbing on this pitch. It started with two very encouraging cracks for pegs, but they were the last, and all the following holds had to be slowly and patiently manufactured by chiselling holes for rawlplugs and ringscrews. Each chisel hole was about $1\frac{1}{8}$ in. deep and took from 15 to 30 minutes to complete, according to the state of the rock. If dry, progress was relatively good, as the chiselled rock came away in

powder form quite easily. But wet rock made a paste, which could not be cleared easily from the hole, and, probably for this reason, the chisels seemed more prone to jam. 1 in. rawlplugs were used, and the ringscrews were inserted to within $\frac{1}{8}$ in. to $\frac{3}{16}$ in. of the head, care being exercised, when inserting, to avoid overstraining the screw with the risk of breaking it (a drop of oil on the thread is very helpful). When safely inserted, although they might bend under applied weight, the strength and tenacity of these screws on wall and overhang was something to wonder at. It was not the ringscrews which caused the greatest concern, but the rock. This was loose and friable in parts, and wet and slimy in others, and sometimes after chiselling for 10 or 15 minutes it broke away in large pieces and we had to start again. For these reasons great care had to be exercised in selecting the positions of the holes, and there was much tapping of the rock by way of testing for this purpose.

Our route was fairly central, starting about 100 feet right of the issue of the stream, and following a carefully chosen path, going firstly straight up over the shallowest part of the overhang, and then angling leftwards up the impending "middle" wall above. On this section the ledge below disappears from the climber's view, and he is suspended over the bottom deck, which seems an awfully long way down. Large isolated drops of water were dripping from the overhang above, and while these normally were of no consequence, they seemed possessed with malicious and aggressive intent, as, with uncanny accuracy, they repeatedly hit the climber in the eye, while he, with upward gaze, struggled with hammer and chisel.

Barrie and I worked in turns on alternate days, doing about 20 to 30 feet per day, and climbing down or roping down at the end of our stint. Thus, on alternate days each man rested, and on such days took a perverted delight in reminding the other that it was his turn to risk his neck. Progress was slow, but the work was very tiring and could not be hurried. At the end of the fifth day we reached the upper ledge. One can escape conveniently from this ledge by walking off leftwards, and having outstayed our time, we packed up and went home for a long half-time interval.

Ten days later we returned to the scene to tackle the top and final pitch. On this trip Peter Biven joined us and made a most

valuable contribution to the assault, and photography. There was again much bad rock on this section, and there appeared to be only one narrow lane of sound rock to follow. From the tree a natural and excellent belay, there was a short pitch about 10 feet of easy free climbing, which seemed quite incongruous in this place of eternal overhangs. But no sooner was this short pitch passed than we were back again to the slow chiselling, inserting rawlplug and ringscrew, testing, moving up, and then repeating the whole cycle of motions over and over again.

As we crept upwards, taking our turns, the topmost overhang reared itself above us, and slowly came nearer. The closer one gets, the bigger and more inhospitable it appears. About 15 feet below it, the wall starts to curve outwards at an ever increasing angle, until it meets the underside of the overhang at about 45 degrees. This tended to make progress a little more difficult, but served the useful purpose of bringing the junction of wall and overhang nearer to the face of the overhang, thus easing the task of negotiating it. The rock deteriorates even more here, and the good stuff is harder to find. Viewed from below there appeared to be some good peggable cracks on the underside and face of the overhang, but most of these proved to be a complete delusion.

It was my unhappy lot to take the overhang (I suspected some collusion here between my colleagues). As I approached it, the prospect was so unnerving that in order to give myself confidence in case I came off and ripped off a series of ringscrews, I descended about 15 feet to the sounder rock, and spent over an hour chiselling a hole deep enough for a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -in. channel peg, which would hold a dozen falling bodies of my weight. This strong "anchor" robbed the overhang of much of its terror, but my precaution was really quite unnecessary and a complete waste of time. I didn't come off. From my topmost ringscrew on the wall right underneath the overhang, I was able, by leaning well out, to get a small peg in a doubtful looking crack low down on the face of the overhang. In transferring oneself to this peg, one goes for an agonising swing into space 300 feet directly above the ground. My only hope at the time was that the peg would hold. It held, and the scenery took on a decidedly more pleasant aspect. I looked up, and was promptly scared out of my wits again at the sight of Peter dangling on a top rope some 15 feet to

my right, and calmly taking photographs. This struck me as being a very risky thing to do. But I could now see the end of the climb, which gave me a great thrill, and I hastened to finish it. One more doubtful peg, another ringscrew and two very good pegs, and we were at the top.

A thunderstorm had been slowly brewing up for the last two hours, and as it was becoming more threatening, I hastened to fix my belay and bring Barrie up. He had the unenviable task of de-pegging, but having done all our previous work of this kind, was well practised in the art, and came up in excellent style. Everything went well until after a couple of hours he reached the overhang, and then it happened. I was just in the act of moving one foot to ease my stance, when the rock on which I stood seemed to rise with incredible speed and hit me a stunning blow. Barrie was off, all 13 stone of him ! He had moved on to the first small peg on the face of the overhang, and the damned thing had come out. He was still out of sight, and I shouted to Roger sitting behind me to see if there were any instructions from Peter who was standing below, in sight of the climber. But Peter, with unswerving devotion to his duty as chief photographer for the day, was exclusively occupied in securing a picture of his brother in the " off " position, a rarity which evidently could not be missed. I was about to consign him and his camera to the devil, when I remembered the camera was mine, and hastily modified the too embracing scope of my proposal.

And again, on further consideration, I had to concede the point that the subject would undeniably make an exceptionally good photograph. Meanwhile our neglected victim was dangling in space, but fortunately, while we were busily doing nothing, he was preparing to recover himself. Calling to me to hang on, he hauled himself and all his appended gear up the rope, hand over hand, and clipped an *étrier* in the nearest peg. No doubt danger gives us an abnormal strength, but only an exceptionally strong fellow could do a thing like this. I don't know who was more relieved, he or I, when he sat in the *étrier* and took his weight off the rope. After a short rest he started up again, and soon appeared at the top with a broad grin on his face, and seemingly none the worse for, and in fact rather amused at, his experience. Nevertheless, my loose peg came in for some burning criticism,

and when I told him that I knew it was a bad one, but had forgotten to tell him, I found myself competing, with evident success, with the peg in question for the major share of his invective. However, all was well that ended well.

After a short rest we gathered up our gear and made for camp. On our way, I turned back to have one last look at the scene of our long ordeal, and saw to my amazement a large notice hanging high on the upper wall, under the overhang, announcing to all who might be interested that Wall's Ice Cream was on sale there. Really! the ubiquity of this popular confection is amazing! I wondered then, and have never ceased to wonder since, how the sign got there, because I am sure it was not there when I passed that way. It has since occurred to me that Peter or Barrie (or both) might be able to throw some light on the mystery, and I must remember to ask them some time. They are sure to have some very interesting and plausible theories to advance.

Ten days later we returned again for a day's visit, and climbed pitch 1, which we seemed to have overlooked. This pitch starts in a rocky depression, 80 feet right of the stream, and directly below the foot of pitch 2. The rock is loose in parts, but it is free climbing, and Peter led it in his usual highly accomplished style. Quite a lot of gardening was necessary, which seemed to delight Peter's heart, while Barrie and I nimbly dodged the rocks and stones that came showering down from above. It is a delicate but delightful pitch of VS standard. Thus, at last we had finished the climb, after spending 58 hours on it. The total length of the route is 330 feet. We graded it VS and A4. Material: 12 pitons, 85 ringscrews, 24 battered chisels.

And now, by way of finale, we decided to try our hand at roping down from the top, and, as our lofty Ice Cream post had attracted no business, to remove the sign on our way down. Our abseil rope was quarter weight nylon, used with an abseil instrument, and in addition, as an afterthought, we had a top rope in operation. But when the first man descended to the level of the sign, it was found to be so far away under the overhang that he could not reach it, even by swinging inwards. He was also revolving at a giddy pace, which he could not check, and was glad to abandon the attempt and proceed downwards. But when he was a third of the way down, two strands of the abseil rope broke with a sickening report, and he didn't like it at

all. Fortunately he was protected by the top rope, but the prospect of the third and final strand of his abseil line parting at any moment and leaving him hanging like a sack helplessly on the top rope did not attract him, so he raced to the bottom at break-neck speed, intent on getting there before his attenuated life-line broke. He landed without further incident, though with hands somewhat burned. The high rate of descent rendered the abseil instrument unbearably hot, and the rope was released quickly to avoid further damage. The other two members of the party decided with remarkable alacrity that it might be inadvisable under the circumstances to follow. And so the Ice Cream sign remains undisturbed in its impregnable eyrie, defying our clumsy efforts to remove it, and brazenly flaunting its wares to an unresponsive public.

We held an immediate inquiry into the reasons for the rope breaking, and as these may be of interest, I give the result of our findings, and the lessons which we learned from them. The cause of the breakage was twofold: firstly the climber descended too fast and overheated the abseil instrument which he was using, and secondly he stopped as he passed the tree on the upper ledge in order to check his giddy girations. The stoppage caused part of the rope to fuse under the excessive heat of the instrument and two strands parted. The third strand was unaffected and held. It was instructive to note that, in spite of the very high speed at which the lower part of the descent was taken, causing the abseil instrument to become even more overheated, the rope, being in continuous motion over it, was not damaged. The apparent lesson is: When abseiling with an instrument on nylon rope, don't go too fast if you intend to stop on the way, but if you must go fast, *don't stop on the way*. A possible alternative is to use hemp rope for the purpose. But we, having neither the rope nor the inclination to prove this contention, packed up our gear and went home, happy that our task was now completed, and a little wiser in the art and hazards of abseiling.

NEW CLIMBS AND NOTES

I. SNOWDONIA

JOHN NEILL

GENERAL

In spite of the indifferent weather for most of the year, 1958 was marked by a determined attack by many leaders on the hardest climbs in North Wales. I know of 31 such leaders outside the Rock and Ice Club, of whom 17 are members of the Climbers' Club, and have heard of the following ascents by them in 1958; no doubt there were many others:

CLOGWYN-Y-GROCHAN	Hangover: 3 ascents. Broad Walk: 4 ascents.
CARREG WASTAD	Erosion Grooves: 8 ascents.
DINAS-Y-GROMLECH	Cemetery Gates: 8 ascents. Cenotaph Corner: 6 ascents.
CRAIG DDU	Canol: 1 ascent.
DINAS MOT	The Link: 1 ascent (second ascent ?).
CYRN LAS	The Grooves: 3 ascents. Subsidiary Groove: 2 ascents (second and third ascents).
CLOGWYN-DU'R-ARDDU	The Corner: 2 ascents. Octo: 2 ascents. Gargoyle: 1 ascent. Spillikin: 1 ascent. Pinnacle Flake: 1 ascent. Left Edge: 2 ascents. The Boulder: 1 ascent. Girdle traverse of East Buttress: 2 ascents (second and third ascents).

These ascents have largely discredited the belief, mentioned for instance by G. J. Sutton in *Snowdon Biography*, that the climbs require a special physique and a very young climber. I have had lengthy discussions about the grading of the climbs with three members of the Climbers' Club who have led many of them, who vary widely in physique and climbing technique. One of these members is well into his thirties; one is short and of slight build, the second of average height and build, the third of average height but more than average strength. As might be expected, their views on the grading of the climbs also vary widely. I give below an attempt at a graded list,

derived by averaging their views, so that none of them will agree with it completely; it may at least serve as material for argument. The boundaries between the various grades can of course be varied at will; in the list below the boundary between Extremely Severe and Exceptionally Severe is arbitrarily fixed at Cenotaph Corner, that between Hard Very Severe and Extremely Severe at Spectre, that between Medium Very Severe and Hard Very Severe at Brant, and so on. I have also included one or two Lake District climbs for comparison, and a skeleton of the easier grades.

EXCEPTIONALLY SEVERE

Diglyph
The Grooves
Llithrig
Girdle of Dinas-y-Gromlech
Cenotaph Corner (lower limit)

EXTREMELY SEVERE

Girdle of East Buttress, Clogwyn-Du'r-Arddu
(upper limit)
Cemetery Gates
The Corner
Octo
The Sickle
The Boulder
Canol
Kipling Grooves
Spectre (lower limit)

HARD VERY SEVERE

Erosion Groove (upper limit)
Left Edge
Laugh Not
Kaisergebirge Wall
Diagonal
Brant Direct Start
Central Buttress, Scafell (unaided)
Deer Bield Crack
Ribstone Crack
Girdle of Carreg Wastad
Ivy Sepulchre
F Route, Gimmer
West Rib
Slape
Brant (lower limit)

MEDIUM VERY SEVERE

Bow-shaped Slab (upper limit)
Unicorn
Lion
Lot's Groove

MEDIUM VERY SEVERE—*continued*

Sheaf
 Oxo
 Anthropology
 Mickledore Grooves
 Mur-y-Niwl
 Narrow Slab
 Eliminate A
 East Gully Grooves
 Pigott's
 Great Slab
 Pedestal (lower limit)

MILD VERY SEVERE

Munich (upper limit)
 Curving Crack
 Gimmer Crack
 Sunset Crack
 Western Slabs
 Belle Vue Bastion
 Longland's
 Nose Direct (lower limit)

HARD SEVERE

Chimney (upper limit)
 Direct, Glyder Fach (middle of grade)
 Dives (lower limit)

MEDIUM SEVERE

Main Wall (middle of grade)

MILD SEVERE

Nea
 Hawk's Nest Buttress } (upper limit)
 Crackstone Rib (lower limit)

HARD VERY DIFFICULT

The Wrinkle (lower limit)

MEDIUM VERY DIFFICULT

Grooved Arête

MILD VERY DIFFICULT

Gashed Crag (lower limit)

Full details of recent new Rock and Ice Club routes are still not available; to fill the gap temporarily brief notes of these are given below where possible.

To descend from this somewhat rarified atmosphere: an exploit in another field that ought to be recorded here is that of Alan Neale of the Rucksack Club, who ascended all the 36 2,500-foot peaks in Snowdonia in an expedition of 30 hours.

The Coed Tremadoc Nature Reserve has now been extended to cover Craig-y-Dref and the eastern part of Craig-y-Castell. Some

progress has been made with the construction of fences and paths in the main part of the reserve, but arrangements for a car park are still under negotiation.

The warning should be given that the Central Electricity Generating Board do not at present allow public use of the new road to Llyn Stwlan mentioned in last year's *Journal*.

A. CARNEDDAU

CRAIG BRAICH TY-DU

DECAMERON RIB—DIRECT START. 80 feet. Very Severe.

Climb the corner, with a runner half-way. Higher is an old piton. Traverse under the overhangs to the tree.

First ascent: 27th April, 1958. S. M. Lane, P. J. Crabb, D. Price.

CARREG MIANOG

CENTRAL ROUTE. 110 feet. Very Severe.

Up the V groove in the centre of West Buttress just right of Crack and Slab, then to the right of the overhang to the vertical crack above, finishing by an overhanging wall. Some artificial aid used.

First ascent: 1st June, 1958. C. Goodey and L. Evans.

SOUTH CLIMB. 140 feet. Very Severe.

A line starting 15 feet to the left of the nose by the pinnacle.

First ascent: 30th November, 1958. R. L. Roberts, A. F. Mason, E. Birch.

A 70-foot climb has been made on the short cliff above Carreg Mianog.

PINNACLE CRAG OF CWM CYWION

CORONATION GROOVE. 90 feet. Very Severe.

The groove just left of the lowest point of the crag, turning the first overhang on the right and the second on the left.

First ascent: 4th May, 1958. P. J. Crabb, J. R. Mills, S. M. Lane, D. Price.

B. TRYFAN AND GLYDER FACH

MILESTONE BUTTRESS

The rib right of Soap Gut was climbed some time ago.

ALPHABET SLABS

G. J. Sutton points out that there are three routes between Alpha and Beta. These routes have borne traffic for many years.

BOCHLWYD BUTTRESS

SHADOW ARÊTE. 220 feet. Difficult.

On the extreme left of the buttress, interesting, on clean rock.

(1) 90 feet. Follow a thin crack starting by the small quartz (ledge). At the top move slightly right and up a small corner.

(2) 40 feet. Walk round a large boulder to another corner. Swing round this to the right and go up to a slab.

(3) 90 feet. Cross the foot of the slab to the edge and climb the arête on small but good holds.

First ascent: 15th September, 1956. R. L. Roberts, R. Greenwood.

Roberts has done other routes on Bochlwyd Buttress but details are not yet available.

C. CWM IDWAL

CLOGWYN-Y-BUSTACH

ROCKING CHAIR. 120 feet. Very Severe.

The obvious steep chimney right of Slab Recess, with easier rocks above. One pitch. Merely a filling in of detail. See route below.

First ascent: 14th November, 1958. R. L. Roberts, E. Birch.

GIRDLE TRAVERSE. About 1,000 feet of climbing. Severe.

Start up pitch 1 of Home Climb, to a flake and chockstone belay. Go along a ledge and diagonally right to a large ledge. Walk along this past a pinnacle to its end. Take the obvious line of least resistance up a slab, stepping off a small pinnacle, and go through a castle of piled blocks emerging on the right, almost at the top of the crag. Take a downward line, as low as possible on the bulge, to emerge on the top of Slab Climb. Take any route to the foot of Slab Recess, then up the V-chimney with a rocking chair at the half-way break. From the latter scramble to pillars preventing further progress. Descend vegetation, or, safer, abseil, until a ledge on the right can be gained. Walk via a coffin chimney to Angular Chimney, climb this and descend to the foot of the slab of Monolith Crack and Zig-Zag. Move round the end of the slab over an overhang and go up to a quartz-littered slab (crux). Wander down the slab to the broken gully and down this to a large ledge. Walk along the ledge and thread through various perched blocks to the loose and vegetated gully. Climb the gully and go out on a ledge to the top on the right to arrive at the top of Flake Crack and the end of the traverse.

First ascent: August, 1957. L. R. C. Britten, R. Beasley.

CONTINUATION WALL (Holly Tree Wall)

OLD FASHIONED. 60 feet. Difficult.

Two chimneys reached by following the terrace above Continuation Wall to the right and down past a projecting nose of rock to a cairn.

First ascent: 19th July, 1958. A. G. N. Flew, G. Jones.

D. LLANBERIS—NORTH

DINAS-Y-GROMLECH

BETTER THINGS. This is said to have been climbed by J. Brown in 1948—i.e. before Bourdillon's ascent.

THE THING. This is the name given to the climb made by J. Brown and D. Whillans to the left of Parchment Passage. This route is on the main cliff, and not on the separate rocks to the left as stated in *C.C.ŷ.* 1957.

In September, 1958, D. Whillans climbed the enormous corner in the upper part of the cliff.

CARREG WASTAD

RACKSTONE CRIB. 180 feet. Very Severe.

A direct line up the cliff starting 20 feet right of Overlapping Wall. A slight route of considerable technical interest.

(1) 40 feet. Climb a short wall and step left into the foot of a cracked corner. Follow this to a grass stance below a shallow groove.

(2) 30 feet. Climb the groove until forced on to the rib on the right, to a holly tree belay on Crackstone Rib.

(3) 25 feet. Easily up the groove behind the tree to another groove on Crackstone Rib.

(4) 45 feet. Climb the short wall on the right of the tree to a stance on Crackstone Rib. Follow the latter to the stance and belay below the overhanging corner.

(5) 30 feet. Up the tough corner crack to the top.

First ascent: 6th April, 1958. H. I. Banner, K. Jady, L. Brown.

A direct finish to Crackstone Rib, going right then left, perhaps harder than the original, was done on 31st May, 1958, by C. W. F. Noyce, A. D. M. Cox, J. M. Kretschmer. It is probably not new.

BOLE WAY. A direct finish was led by D. Haffner, with R. James, 25th October, 1958.

CRAG BETWEEN CARREG WASTAD AND CLOGWYN-Y-GROCHAN

This is the small face at the top of the right-hand one of the two fans of scree between the crags.

BOSTON SPA CLIMB. About 145 feet. Perhaps Severe.

Rock poor in the middle. Start at the left-hand side of the slab.

(1) 60 feet. Work up then right and up again to a small stance below the overhang (piton belay).

(2) 50 feet. Traverse left to the corner and up the groove in this to steep grass below the rib.

(3) 35 feet. Nice climbing up the rib to the top.

First ascent: 14th June, 1958. Miss J. M. Scarr, N. C. Peacock, H. B. Carslake.

CLOGWYN-Y-GROCHAN

KARWENDEL WALL. 100 feet. Very Severe.

Takes a fairly direct line up Kaisergebirge Wall, harder than the previous route.

Start: by a spike about 20 feet left of the old route.

(1) 45 feet. Up a groove for a few feet to the traverse of the old route. Step up and across to ledges on the left (poor belays; piton).

(2) 55 feet. Climb the thin crack, directly above the ledge, for 15 feet to a running belay. Make a steeply rising traverse to the right to an easy crack with a chockstone. Up this to a large flake belay and Lord's.

First ascent: 2nd August, 1958. H. I. Banner, J. O'Neill, R. Beasley.

SLAPE—DIRECT FINISH. 120 feet.

An alternative to pitches 7 and 8, more in keeping with the rest of the climb. From the yew go direct up a short groove, over a small overhang on good holds and up easy blocks. Then follow the steep broken arête to the top.

First ascent: 21st March, 1958. C. J. Mortlock, J. Cole.

BROAD WALK—VARIATION START.

Instead of traversing right at the overhang continue straight up the corner. Strenuous, harder than the ordinary way.

First ascent: 23rd June, 1957. B. D. Wright, A. Cowburn.

CRAIG DDU

ANTHROPOLOGY—DIRECT START. 100 feet. Mild Very Severe.

Start: Half-way between the original start and the fence.

(1) 70 feet. Climb the wall, traverse left to the holly then pull up to the quartz ledge above. Traverse right and go diagonally up across the overhanging wall to a small stance in a fine position (good belay).

(2) 30 feet. Continue up the overhanging wall to the right until one can step on to the slab. Go direct up the slab to the bottom of the corner, pitch 3 of the ordinary route.

First ascent: Perhaps 6th April, 1958. R. G. Wilson, P. Skilton.

DRWS GWYNT

RELUCTANT. 220 feet. Severe, perhaps.

Takes the outside edge of the holly tree buttress of Holly Gate, escaping left for belays. The upper pitches, artificially added, take in ground on the upper walls which has certainly been climbed on before.

Start: Just right of Holly Gate.

(1) 50 feet. Up from the lowest corner of the buttress, keeping as much as possible to the ridge, on quartz footholds and delicate handholds. At 40 feet traverse off left on a grassy ledge to the rowan at the top of pitch 2, Holly Gate.

(2) 40 feet. Return to 6 feet left of the ridge and climb very awkwardly past a protruding chockstone at 30 feet, to reach a large ledge (belay top left).

(3) 50 feet. Traverse down the ledge and continue the original line to a large grass ledge sloping down to the left (where the other climbs end). Belay at the base of the wall by a crack.

(4) 30 feet. Up the crack on good holds, strenuous, to another grassy terrace (belay at foot of next wall).

(5) 20 feet. Up the left-hand crack to the top: the chimney on the right is poor.

First ascent: 14th September, 1958. P. Bell, G. Stumock.

E. LLANBERIS—SOUTH

DINAS MOT

THE LINK—VARIATION START

Leads between West Rib and Diagonal direct to the foot of the Link proper.

First ascent: Perhaps 5th April, 1958. H. I. Banner, L. Brown, B. Barlow.

G. J. Sutton points out that Mortlock's variation on Diagonal, mentioned in last year's *Journal*, had been climbed before his ascent.

CYRN LAS

NEW GIRDLE. 285 feet. Very Severe.

On Great Buttress. Higher than Green Necklace and shortens it by about 200 feet. Good situations but much easy ground.

Start: Top of pitch 4 of Main Wall (end of pitch 2 of Green Necklace).

(1) 45 feet. As pitch 4 of Subsidiary Groove.

(2) 60 feet. Step onto the easy-angled gangway on the right and follow it to a stance (large belays).

(3) 50 feet. Cross the grass ledge on the right to its end. Step down and make a short traverse to a small ledge in the corner (junction with the Grooves). Climb the crack on the right to another large grass ledge.

(4) 40 feet. Walk across the ledge.

(5) 30 feet. Make a 15-foot abseil. A short ascent then leads to a good ledge on Green Caterpillar.

(6) 60 feet. As Green Caterpillar.

First ascent: 15th June, 1958. H. I. Banner and J. O'Neill, finishing by Overhanging Arête (see below). The last two pitches had been done previously by H. I. Banner, B. Barlow, J. Sutherland.

OVERHANGING ARÊTE. 120 feet. Extremely Severe.

A variation finish to the Grooves. The last pitch of this starts from a large grassy platform, above the right-hand side of which is a square-cut 100-foot corner with a large block overhang at about 70 feet.

Start: At the foot of the corner.

Take the corner more or less direct to a good running belay. The corner above looks depressing so traverse to the arête on the left, which overhangs alarmingly. Go up the arête for 10 feet (piton) until the corner can be regained above the overhang by a short traverse right. Go up the easy continuation of the corner and the rocks above.

First ascent: 15th June, 1958. H. I. Banner, J. O'Neill.

CLOGWYN-Y-DDYSGL

RECTORY CHIMNEYS—VARIATION FINISH. 40 feet.

Before the top of the last pitch traverse right for 15 feet to a belay, go up 10 feet, round the corner onto a split platform and up the crack at the back. A good pitch.

Ascended: 21st September, 1958. R. H. Hobhouse, A. Stewart.

Above this pitch one can go to the foot of the marked crack above and to the left of the Crevasse. This and its continuation (30 feet and 20 feet) are Hard Very Difficult. The top crack in the same line is harder.

CLOGWYN-DU'R-ARDDU

BRWYNOG CHIMNEY. 160 feet. Very Severe (Just).

A good honest old-fashioned chimney climb.

Start: Up the terrace, on the Far East Buttress, about 40 feet left from Woubits.

(1) 60 feet. Pull over an awkward bulge using a crack on the right wall. Go up a few feet then climb a slabby formation, going away on the left, to a good stance (chockstone belay) to the left of the overhanging part of the chimney.

(2) 100 feet. Bridge across the overhang (good spike runner) to reach a deep crack on the right. Steep work for a few feet then straight up the chimney to the top.

First ascent: 6th July, 1958. C. T. Jones, J. R. Allen.

The climb on the Far East Buttress mentioned in last year's *Journal* lies to the right of Woubits. It was climbed in 1957 by J. Brown, and (except for the last pitch) J. R. Allen. It has become popularly known as "*The Mostest*," but this name is not accepted by the originators of the climb.

NO-VEMBER

The first pitch of Vember, then the overhanging crack left of the crack of Vember. One section of 40 feet was climbed with the aid of slings on chockstones throughout.

First ascent: 3rd May, 1958. J. Brown and party.

THE CORNER—DIRECT START. Very Severe.

Climb a groove direct to the foot of the Corner proper.

First ascent by J. Brown and party some time ago.

BEANLAND'S. 150 feet. Hard Very Severe.

On the East Gully side of the Pinnacle, 50 feet left of East Gully Wall, is a big overhanging amphitheatre. The route traverses out left from this and finishes up the deep crack left of the last pitch of East Gully Wall.

(1) 60 feet. Traverse out left with difficulty along the obvious line then go steeply up a rib to a stance on the right just out of East Gully.

(2) 20 feet. Go right round the arête on the right via a flake to a good grass ledge (piton belay).

(3) 70 feet. A 20-foot layback up the crack behind the stance until one can step into the crack on the right. Up this to jammed blocks at the top. Exit left.

First ascent: 4th May, 1958. C. T. Jones, B. D. Wright, A. Cowburn.

THE SHRIKE

Between East Gully Wall and East Gully Grooves.

First ascent: J. Brown and H. Smith, J. ("Mortimer") Smith.

PINNACLE FLAKE—WHILLANS' CONTINUATION

Better than the original.

(3) 90 feet. From the top of the Flake step right onto the wall and follow the arête more or less to the top on good holds.

First ascent: D. Whillans.

F. CWELLYN AREA

CRAIG CWM SILYN

GIRDLE TRAVERSE OF CRAIG-YR-OGOF. 600 feet. Very Severe.

Girdles the crag at a high level, the first half going horizontally across very steep walls, and the second half being a rising traverse across the slabs on the right of the crag.

Start: At the top of Black Gully. Go across the scree to the main face to an obvious line of small grass ledges trending rightwards across the face.

(1) 50 feet. Easily right to a flake belay.

(2) 60 feet. Down a few feet and across to a corner. Make a long step and an awkward pull onto a greasy sloping ledge. Along this ledge and down to a little triangular stance (piton belay).

(3) 50 feet. Round the corner and up a bit of wall. Descend onto a delicate traverse to the big grass ledge, top of pitch 4, Ogof Direct.

(4) 50 feet. Pitch 5, Ogof Direct.

(5) 70 feet. Continue up easy slabs to the foot of the chimney on Ordinary Route.

(6) 50 feet. Go round the corner of the ledge and climb a leaning groove to the right to a good stance.

The rest of the climb appears to follow the Direct Route exactly.

First ascent: 26th May, 1958. C. T. Jones, B. D. Wright, A. Cowburn.

G. SNOWDON SOUTH AND WEST

(a) NANTGWYNANT

CLOGWYN-Y-BUSTACH

MAELSTROM. 205 feet. Very Severe.

Traverses the vertical black wall right of the Corner of Roots from right to left by the obvious line. Reminiscent of Kaisergebirge Wall. Care with the rock is needed.

Start: At the right-hand end of the wall.

(1) 60 feet. Up the corner for 10 feet to a big tree. Step with difficulty onto the traversing line. Go steeply up the wall then traverse horizontally to a shallow scoop (piton belay).

(2) 90 feet. Traverse left for a few feet then mantelshelf onto the upper traversing ledge. Go straight across to a tiny tree then up the wall and steep vegetation to a large tree. A serious pitch.

(3) 25 feet. Go up a little wall, on the right to a big flake belay—this is on the third pitch of Corner of Roots.

(4) 30 feet. The Corner of Roots to the top and large trees.

First ascent: 26th April, 1958. C. T. Jones, C. E. Davies, C. Pryke.

CLOGWYN-Y-WENALLT

FERDINAND. 140 feet. Extremely Severe.

At present the hardest free climb in Nantgwynant.

Start: An obvious corner 30 feet left of Carol and 70 feet from the stone wall.

(1) 40 feet. Up a little wall and into an overhanging niche. Swing out to the right on good holds to a bent tree at the top. Go across the enormous grass ledge into the corner.

(2) 80 feet. Up the corner for about 10 feet then step into the steep crack on the right. Climb this to the overhang turning it on the left. Up a little crack to the top (120 feet of rope required for belay).

First ascent: 8th February, 1959. J. Brown, C. T. Jones.

OXO—DIRECT FINISH.

From the top of the crack of pitch 3 step right into a corner, climb this with difficulty to a small ledge, and swing out right to finish. Harder than the original finish.

First ascent: 6th April, 1958. D. T. Roscoe, C. E. Davies.

(b) MOELWYNS

A number of local names have now been obtained from the farmers of the area for the crags on the Moelwyns. These will be used in future to replace the present rather unsatisfactory nomenclature. The new names are:

Clogwyn-y-Bustach—previously Craig Ystac.

Pinacel—previously Craig Dyn or Craig-y-geifr.

Clogwyn-y-Ci—previously Craig Tri or Clogwyn-y-Wrysgan.

The ridge of Craig Ysgafn is called Gwregys Gwynion.

I am indebted to R. Elfyn Hughes for help with these names. It is hoped to obtain further local names for the crags in this area.

PINACEL

CENTRAL SLAB—VARIATION. Very Difficult.

Central Slab, done by R. Elfyn Hughes in April, 1932, took the centre of the slab up which Bent starts on the right, then turned the overhang in the gully above by the slabs to the right. On 31st August, 1957, R. Elfyn Hughes, C. West, R. West, climbed the overhanging block direct, by its left side.

CLOGWYN-Y-CI

SHORT WALL CLIMB. 220 feet. Difficult.

On the rocks left of the slab left of pitch 2 of Evasion. Y Drafel is in this area or that of the next climb.

First ascent: 12th April, 1958. R. L. Roberts, A. F. Mason.

LEFT CENTRAL ROUTE. 250 feet. Difficult.

Takes a direct line to the last pitches of Evasion (direct finish) via the slab left of pitch 2.

First ascent: 5th April, 1958. R. L. Roberts, A. F. Mason, D. Conod, M. Birch, E. Birch.

THE AGOG. 205 feet. Very Difficult.

A variation on Evasion, reaching pitch 2 by a route to the left of the original one.

First ascent: 29th June, 1958. R. L. Roberts, E. Thomas, G. Dwyer, R. Dwyer.

DEUFAEN II. 200 feet. Severe.

Starts roughly as for Evasion, then takes the left-hand part of the big slab to the right of the upper section.

First ascent: 1958. R. L. Roberts, C. Dwyer, E. Thomas.

DEUFAEN. 200 feet. Severe.

Takes the right-hand part of the big slab of Deufaen II.

First ascent: 5th July, 1958. E. Dwyer, R. L. Roberts.

REMUS. 250 feet. Severe.

A variation on Taith-y-Pererin, starting by the Rowan Chimney and the rocks on its immediate right.

First ascent: 15th June, 1958. A. F. Mason, G. Rees.

The next four climbs are on the short bulging buttress, to the right of the main part of the cliff, with a prominent dièdre up the centre.

ROMULUS. 140 feet. Very Difficult.

The rib left of the dièdre.

First ascent: 15th June, 1958. G. Rees, A. F. Mason.

This was repeated 15th July, 1958, by G. Dwyer, R. L. Roberts, who called it Rib Climb.

BABYLON. 200 feet. Severe.

The dièdre itself.

Ascended 22nd July, 1958, by R. L. Roberts, G. Dwyer, E. Thomas, who called it Gilfach, but it seems to have been done previously under the name Babylon.

LITTLE CORNER. 95 feet. Very Difficult.

Immediately right of Babylon.

First ascent: 15th July, 1958. R. L. Roberts, G. Dwyer.

GANGWAY. 90 feet. Difficult.

Uses the sloping gangway right of Little Corner.

First ascent: 15th July, 1958. R. L. Roberts, G. Dwyer.

CRAIG NYTH-Y-GIGFRAN—MAIN (SOUTH) CRAG**INVERTED STAIRCASE.** About 100 feet. Very Severe.

The obvious route on the buttress right of Double Criss. Three pitches.

First ascent: 7th September, 1958. R. James, A. F. Mason, G. Rees.

GIRDLE TRAVERSE. About 400 feet. Hard Very Severe.

Start: At cairn 15 yards up the grassy gully from the wall at the left end of the crag.

(1) 40 feet. A little wall split by cracks, then boulders and heather to a rock ledge.

(2) 20 feet. Walk right, along a terrace and up a short groove at the end.

(3) 30 feet. Traverse again for a few feet to join R. James's "Mill Wall" (i.e. the line of Betimes) and climb the steep chimney groove to a stance.

(4) 45 feet. Traverse right (hard) round the corner and make a diagonal descent of the steep greasy wall to a grass couch.

(5) 50 feet. Climb over the belay and descend a small slab diagonally right to a good ledge leading out right round a corner onto the edge of the white slab (i.e. at Africa Rib). Climb a 25-foot crack on the edge to a cramped stance.

(6) 40 feet. From the stance descend 10 feet then make a downward trending traverse (as for Usher's Dilemma in reverse) across the slab to a small tree on its right edge (delicate) (piton belay).

(7) 30 feet. Climb the subsidiary slab behind the belay to an overhang. Make an awkward step right and round a corner to a grassy nook, the Eyrie.

(8) 20 feet. Climb the groove behind the belay, using the grass, passing a Raven's Nest. A long stride round to the right to the top of pitch 3, Mean Feet.

(9) 40 feet. Abseil down pitch 3 of Mean Feet. Piton belay.

(10) 40 feet. Down pitch 2 of Mean Feet.

(11) 40 feet. The groove and crack of the variation start of Double Criss.

(12) 25 feet. The slab and groove of pitch 2, Double Criss, to a good rock ledge.

(13) 40 feet (crux). A very hard traverse across the right wall, then step across the corner into a steep slab. Either diagonally or directly up the slab to easy ground.

First ascent: 6th April, 1958. R. James, J. M. Benson, P. H. Benson.

CRAIG NYTH-Y-GIGFRAN—NORTH CRAG

Immediately next to the spoil heaps of the Oakeley Slate Quarries. Not a very salubrious place.

On 2nd March, 1958, R. Elfyn Hughes (his second did not follow) made a climb of about 200 feet, perhaps Hard Very Difficult, here. Start at the bottom of the buttress by a corner on the left, then go up the steep unstable grassy face up right to a grass rake. Finish up a fairly easy chimney with a tree in it.

(c) MOEL SIABOD AND CONWAY AREA

CRAIG DINAS

MOSS RIB. 70 feet. Hard Difficult.

The slab and rib right of Groove Slab.

First ascent: July, 1958. I. Richardson, D. Williams.

The above party repeated Groove Slab, calling it Garden Crack, and Groove Traverse, calling it All-Ways.

BOULDER WAY. 160 feet. Severe.

A good route.

Start up Gull's Nest Crack and continue up the main face to the right of the big overhang, traversing under the smaller overhang above.

First ascent: July, 1958. I. Richardson, D. Williams.

In October, 1930, R. D. F. Wynne, W. Jones climbed Gull's Nest Crack and attempted the next pitch, later descending on a top rope almost to the point at which they turned back.

THE BOLDER WAY. 145 feet. Just Very Severe.

Also a good short route. Start up the Outside Route and traverse left under the big overhang, thence up to the top.

First ascent: July, 1958. I. Richardson, D. Williams.

SCRUB WAY. 140 feet. Severe.

Takes a direct line from the foot to the last pitch of Bolder Way.

First ascent: July, 1958. I. Richardson, D. Williams.

BY-WAYS. 145 feet. Severe.

A rather artificial line 20-30 feet left of Scrub Way.

First ascent: July, 1958. I. Richardson, D. Williams.

CROSS-WAYS. 275 feet. Just Very Severe.

A pleasant girdle of the crag, starting up By-Ways, traversing under the lower overhang in the left-hand part of the crag, ascending to the crux of the Boulder Way then joining the last pitch of Groove Traverse.

First ascent: July, 1958. I. Richardson, D. Williams.

(d) TREMADOC

CRAIG BWLCH-Y-MOCH

RIENETTA—VARIATION START. 75 feet.

Start: 40 feet right of the normal start, 20 feet right of Merlin and immediately left of Oberon, at a large pile of loose blocks below an overhanging corner.

Climb the corner, pulling out on an oak tree. Continue up to the overhang above, step out left and go up a short crack onto the large slabs of Rienetta (oak tree belay).

First ascent: 2nd August, 1958. C. E. Davies, A. Cowburn.

ONE STEP IN THE CLOUDS. 230 feet. Very Severe.

The top pitches are exposed and enjoyable. On Milestone Buttress.

Start: To the right of Hail Bebe, at the left-hand end of the enormous overhanging buttress left of Shadrach Gully.

(1) 30 feet. Up twin cracks to a large tree.

(2) 60 feet. Go round the corner a few feet and up a little wall to a V-chimney. Up this facing left, to a good stance (flake belay) below the overhanging wall.

(3) 30 feet. Step left and go up a shallow crack to a sloping ledge (tree belay).

(4) 60 feet. Traverse out diagonally right from the right-hand end of the ledge to a good spike, very exposed. Straight up the wall in front to a good stance (tree belay).

(5) 50 feet. Up Hail Bebe for a few feet then break left onto a steep slab. An awkward mantelshelf to the top.

First ascent: 11th May, 1958. C. T. Jones, Ray Moseley.

VALERIE'S RIB—VARIATION START. 90 feet. Severe.

Instead of traversing right onto the nose, climb the slab immediately above the pile of loose flakes at the foot of the rib.

First ascent: 18th October, 1958. C. E. Davies, L. Street, D. Street.

CRAIG PANT-IFAN

W.O.B.—PAGODA FINISH

On the last pitch, instead of traversing into the cave on the right, make an awkward move into the steep V-groove ahead then go straight up.

First ascent: 17th May, 1958. C. T. Jones, M. J. Harris, A. Cowburn.

LAKELAND GEM. 310 feet. Just Very Severe.

On Avalanche Buttress. The last pitch is a fine one.

(1), (2) 110 feet. Pitches 1 and 2, Lucretia.

(3) 40 feet. Go round the corner to the left and up to a good stance.

(4) 50 feet. Ahead is a large roof with a vegetated corner on the right. Climb the wet slab into the black wet corner on the left. Up the corner on excellent jams to a tree belay.

(5) 50 feet. Go up vegetation, then right to a good ledge (big flake belay) round the corner.

(6) 60 feet. Climb the slabs ahead from left to right.

First ascent: 25th May, 1958. C. T. Jones, C. E. Davies, B. D. Wright.

THE BARBARIAN. 210 feet. Very Severe + A2.

An enjoyable climb—a direct and natural line up the cliff, on Peuterey Buttress. Took 10 hours and 10 pitons for a party of four.

(1) 50 feet. As Scratch pitch 1.

(2) 50 feet. Up the wall just right of the corner to a small earthy ledge.

(3) 90 feet. Continue up the corner, climbing the overhang by artificial means, and continuing above until one can step into cracks in the slab on the right. Up these to the second overhang and over this awkwardly to a tree stance on the left.

(4) 20 feet. Round the corner on the right and across the wall on the right to a ledge.

First ascent: 16th August, 1958. C. T. Jones, C. E. Davies, Miss E. Millington, M. King.

COTTAGE BUTTRESS. 130 feet. Very Severe + A2.

On the buttress with the overhanging right corner, left of Hound's Head Gully.

Start: At the left-hand edge of the buttress.

(1) 50 feet. Up the corner for 10 feet, obviously, then traverse right across a filthy loose gully to a tree.

(2) 80 feet. Climb the 20-foot vertical wall by artificial means, then a steep slab with a vegetated crack—awkward to a loose block, then by straddling, and through a tree to the top.

First ascent: 20th March, 1958. C. J. Mortlock, J. Cole.

CRAIG-Y-CASTELL

ROMBOLD. 225 feet of climbing. Very Severe.

Start: As for Creag Dubh Wall. An independent start would need extensive gardening.

(1) 20 feet. Scramble to the tree.

(2) 70 feet of climbing. As pitch 2 of Creag Dubh Wall for 20 feet to the right edge. Make a descending traverse to the foot of a crack. Up this until a hand and toe traverse leads back across the wall to the top of pitch 2, Creag Dubh Wall.

(3) 25 feet. An awkward pull across the left wall (shoulder used) reach a diagonal crack high to the right. Pull round to the left then go up right.

(4) 70 feet of climbing. Traverse left a few feet then slightly down, continuing to traverse until the line of least resistance takes one up then back right to a thin grassy crack. Up this to within a few feet of the overhang. A step right leads to a stance.

(5) 40 feet. As the variation finish of Creag Dubh Wall.

First ascent: 23rd November, 1957. A. Beanland, C. T. Jones.

TIERCEL. 230 feet. Very Severe.

Start: 30 feet left of Creag Dubh Wall at the lowest part of the rocks below a square-cut overhang.

(1) 90 feet. Climb slabs up to the overhang. Step left and mantelshelf onto a small ledge. Climb the overhang direct (piton for aid) to an earthy ledge. Continue up the clean slab ahead until it is possible to move right onto a small stance on the arête (piton belay).

(2) 70 feet. Up the arête for a few feet then traverse left into the corner.

Up slabs on the right of this using grooves until they peter out. Step delicately left and then go directly up to a fine rowan tree.

(3) 70 feet. Easily now up vegetated slabs on the left until they merge into the trees.

A finer finish after pitch (2), done later, lies to the right: Traverse right to a cave (tree belay). Go up the tree and swing out right onto the nose of the buttress. The final few feet of Creag Dubh Wall lie immediately round on the right.

First ascent: 23rd August, 1958. C. E. Davies, W. A. Trench.

GIRDLE TRAVERSE. 470 feet. Very Severe.

Start: as Tiercel.

(1) 90 feet. Pitch 1, Tiercel.

(2) 120 feet of climbing. Follow Tiercel until the grooves peter out in vegetation. Traverse horizontally right along small footholds to the edge, at Creag Dubh Wall. Down the latter to the stance on the edge.

(3) 20 feet. Pitch 4 traverse of Creag Dubh Wall in reverse, to the forest.

(4) 40 feet. Abseil to the oak tree in the corner of Tantalus.

(5), (6), (7), Tantalus to the top.

First ascent: 16th November, 1958. C. T. Jones and C. E. Davies.

(e) RHINOGS

CRAIG-Y-CAE

NICHEVO. 220 feet. Hard Severe.

On Central Buttress.

Start: At the left-hand side, in the gully.

(1) 70 feet. Step onto the wall and traverse right. Step down for a few feet then up (not easy) and continue traversing right to a crack. Carry on round the corner then go up the wall to rejoin the crack 20 feet higher. Stance on a ledge.

(2) 40 feet. Vegetated. Traverse left and back right to a stance below a smooth wall.

(3) 40 feet. Up the wall on small holds moving leftwards to a large ledge under the overhang.

(4) 30 feet. Traverse right on hands and knees along a slot through peregrines' nests to a stance among blocks below a large chimney.

(5) 40 feet. The chimney, easily, to the top.

First ascent: 23rd March, 1958. M. J. Harris, R. F. Jones.

II. CHEPSTOW

The lower Wye Valley and the Forest of Dean is an area that shows a fair amount of rock—from rough massive limestone to sandstone quarries where the overhangs are propped with timber. Some of this has been explored, such as the fine pinnacle at Symond's Yat. But a major cliff appears to have been ignored, perhaps because at first glance much of it appears almost impossible. This cliff is on the Gloucestershire bank of the Wye a mile above Chepstow, overlooking a fine horseshoe bend of the river. It is half a mile long and in places 300 feet high, which must make it about the biggest inland cliff in the South of England. It has been partially quarried. The rock is variable, but at its best good, and the jointing helps in both holds and soundness. Belays are usually limited to trees, so a few pegs help. The flora are sometimes extensive but beautiful in early summer. A road runs along the top but the foot is difficult to reach; the alternatives seem to be to descend direct from the roadside viewpoint just north of the village of Woodcroft (easy at first, but steeper and loose near the foot), or make an outflanking move (the wider the better) on the peninsula inside the horseshoe to gain the riverside path. Other snags include a certain amount of "gardylloo" and the fact that both the climbs below

finish in a garden—the native is friendly. But the outlook is unspoilt and the first, at any rate, of the two climbs below compares favourably with most Llanberis routes. Much of the credit for this route goes to Robert Chambers who led the first hundred feet some months before the first ascent, but on that occasion his second (who later came and pinched the route) was unable to follow.

Both these climbs are on the large and nearly vertical face at the north end of the cliff.

THE STRAIGHT WAY. 330 feet. Very Severe.

Start: At the left-hand end of the trench at the foot of the face.

70 feet. Up a 15-foot wall, then traverse right to a large sentry box. Climb this and exit left with difficulty. Continue slightly left to a tree then right to another. Good ledge (peg belay) a few feet higher.

30 feet. Leave the ledge at its right-hand edge and climb bearing right to a fine quarrymen's spike.

110 feet. Climb the corner by the line of least resistance, continuously interesting. A pull up leads to a broad terrace.

120 feet. Continue, less seriously, trending slightly left, over mixed rock and vegetation.

First ascent: 29th June, 1958. G. J. Fraser, J. D. C. Peacock.

THE CROOKED WAY. 310 feet. Hard Severe.

Start: In trees below the right-hand end of the shelf at 50 feet.

60 feet. Up, close to the edge at first, then in the corner. Traverse left to the shelf.

80 feet. From 10 feet from the right-hand end of the shelf, climb up a few feet, then traverse right to gain a groove 10 feet from the vegetated corner. Climb the groove, exiting left, and up to a tree belay. An interesting pitch.

70 feet. On up the corner to the terrace.

100 feet. Bear left past an apple tree and break through the overhang at a crack just above. Continue up the arête and into thickening jungle.

First ascent: 13th July, 1958. E. D. G. Langmuir, G. J. Fraser, leading through.

The Gloucester M.C. have also been climbing here and have made several routes and may eventually produce a guide. But there are lots left, including a vertical wall the full height, broken by overhangs, but not without lines.

G. J. FRASER.

III. SCOTLAND

BEINN LAOGHAL, SGOR A CHLEIRICH, SOUTH WEST FACE

A new route, **PRIEST'S RAKE**, 850 feet, Very Severe, was climbed by D. D. Stewart and R. Tombs on 8th July, 1958.

Possibly the best crag on this surprisingly rocky mountain, the south west face of Sgor a Chleirich overlooks Loch Fhionnaich.

A rake, ill defined at first, rises from left to right across the crag and another fault divides it in a vertical plane. Below the rake this second fault forms a groove, above it a steep, broken, dirty-looking dièdre.

Start at a small cairn below the lowest rib, a few feet left of the dirty groove. At 100 feet a piton will be found. Traverse right here and climb up into the groove. Follow the groove until escape on the left leads to an overhung grass patch. Exit on the left leads out over exposed slabs to a second and larger grass patch.

This grass patch is the start of the defined section of the rake. Follow it up to the right to its highest point, whence a rib leads directly to the top of the crag.

As far as the rake the climbing is serious and difficult, the rake itself is narrow but easy and the final section is straightforward. A direct continuation from the rake up the steep dièdre would give a difficult but elegant finish. The climb occupied five hours and four pitons were used, one of which remains in place.

D. D. STEWART.

IV. IRELAND

Few new routes are reported for 1958. The low tide of Irish pioneering continued. There were fewer invasions from England.

The Guide-book Committee of the Irish Mountaineering Club produced a rough collection of notes to the five cliffs in the Poisoned Glen, Donegal, and Harold Johnson's little guide to the Scalp draws attention to a fine beginners' outcrop near Dublin. Copies of these, and of the old guide to Dalkey Quarry and the new guides to the Mourne and Glendalough, are obtainable from the Dublin Section of the Irish Mountaineering Club.

New routes were put up in Glen Inagh, Poisoned Glen, the Blue Stacks, Glendalough, and Dalkey Quarry.

GLEN INAGH (TWELVE BENS, CONNEMARA)

MONA LISA: 25th May, 1958. Two ropes: P. Kenny, Miss Mona Monahan; N. T. Brown, W. E. Bottomley. Somewhere right of Seventh Heaven, and about the same length (1,100 feet). A fine climb done in bad conditions. Probably VS (cruces at pitches 5 and 7). 8-10 hours.

POISONED GLEN (DUNLEWY, Co. DONEGAL)

DUBLINERS: 6th-7th April, 1958. Shared leads: Miss E. Healy, B. MacCall, F. Winder. About 700 feet Hard Severe. Completes the Joycean trio, with Ulysses and Finnegan's Rake, on the Castle. Starts in groove just right of circular white-centred slab at foot of the Castle.

PIGLET'S CRACK: 14th April, 1958. R. J. Wathen, B. E. H. Maden. A delectable one-pitch crack. Neither hard nor serious, it is comparable to Acorn Crack at Glendalough. On small buttress left of black gully left of Gollicker. 80 feet? Mild VS?

BLUE STACK MOUNTAINS (Co. DONEGAL)

A route is reported, but no details.

GLENDALOUGH (Co. WICKLOW)

THE LITTLE EIGER: April, 1958. R. J. Wathen, B. E. H. Maden, finishing the work of others (Kenny, Winder, Downes, Meldrum, etc.). On the Upper Cliff, right of Alien's Way. The scoop rising up to the prominent nose at highest point of cliff. This route, first called Tower Buttress, abandoned the hoped-for direct line after 20 pegs had been planted in a wall half-way up, and escape was made across moving grass fields. 400 feet? Very Severe.

DALKEY QUARRY (Co. DUBLIN)

Several variants were perpetrated, including a peg route up the overhangs right of Central Buttress.

On the whole an uninspiring year, but steady plodding done. It is rumoured that there will be a Rock and Ice invasion at Easter, 1959: the protégés of Joe Brown and Don Whillans should set new standards in Ireland.

R. J. WATHEN.

V. NORWAY

ROMSDAL

THE EAST WALL OF THE TROLLTIND.

The Norway Travel Association's Guide-book to the Romsdal describes many fine and difficult face routes, most of which were first climbed by that great local climber Arne Randers Heen. They include the West Ridge of the Vengetind, the East Walls of Königen and Dronigen, and the East Wall of the Trolltind. This last is the most impressive from a distance, but by no means the hardest. Most of the length of the face is vertical, with neither ledges nor even cracks to spoil the uniformity, but the line of the route is an obvious weakness, and not as hard as one expects.

The guide-book description is brief, but adequate, as there is no real technical difficulty and route finding is a matter of common sense, aided here and there by cairns which Heen erected. Though the face looks formidable from below, holds are good and big, and large grassy ledges reduce exposure to a surprisingly low level. The guide-book grade is "Severe," but perhaps a French book would say "Assez Difficile Sup." The merit of the climb is its magnificent position and surroundings, and its serious nature. We used a few pitons. This

was perhaps due to loss of route, but we would recommend that they be carried.

My ascent with Ian Strutt (E. Yorks Mountaineering Club) was the first British ascent, and most of the other harder face routes in the district await British visits. Arne Randers Heen was full of advice and enthusiasm (but for him, the intimidating look of the wall would have itself barred access) and he would be only too anxious to help any other British climbers who, tired of Alpine blizzards, go to seek out a few of these fine one-day rock-climbing expeditions.

B. E. H. MADEN.

VI. CAUCASUS

In the summer of 1958 I was a member of a party of French alpinists who went to Caucasus. Our achievements were far less startling than the British alpinists'. Among other summits we climbed Elbruz, which is a classical affair, some 18,500 feet high, the highest in the chain but about as easy as our Mont Blanc. On top, we were a little surprised to face a bust of Lenin and one of Stalin. A more difficult climb, which only several members of our party took share in, was that of Ushba, the "Witch." The weather was very unfavourable, with fresh snow.

We found the Sovietic alpinists very robust and hardy, loving to travel from peak to peak, on and on, for a whole fortnight if it must be. Acrobatic ascent, on the other hand, is not in favour, as performed by our amateurs of artificial climbing and 6 Sup. There appeared to be only one rest hut, some 15,000 feet high up Elbruz, while approach starts from base camps at an altitude of some 500 feet, so that there are easily eight hours' going before serious business begins. Of course, you have to carry along everything you will need.

I must say, I was not at all enthralled by the Sovietic ideas about alpinism. Red tape everywhere. Russian alpinists do not seem to resent all this ruling. But for us, "damned individualists," the yoke feels almost unbearable. However, it was interesting to have a personal contact with Soviet Russia.

Next summer, Soviet climbers are to be our guests at the French National School of Alpinism.

BERNARD PIERRE.

VII. THE ACCIDENT ON THE TRILON JULY 26th, 1958

Michael Harvey died as a result of a fall from the top of the Trilon on Carreg Wastad on 26th July, 1958. This tragedy brought to light a most serious error in technique which may possibly have been a factor in previous unexplained accidents.

It had been raining for perhaps a couple of hours before the accident and the cliff was quite wet. The leader, Harvey, was climbing in

"P.A.s" (rubber-soled kletterschuhe sold by Pierre Allain of Paris), without oversocks and was carrying two nylon line slings with ordinary oval Stubai karabiners in excellent condition. He wore a thick hemp waist loop fastened with a large oval Stubai karabiner with threaded locking ring.

The leader had climbed the whole of the long pitch, through and beyond the holly tree to the summit, without a running belay, as is not unusual for a climber of his calibre. The summit belay was constructed by looping the two line slings over a boss of rock and linking the small karabiners together. This is again common practice, and the belay, had it received any strain, would have been quite sound. But it never operated properly. It became unlinked when the second fell off. The hemp waist loop holding the large screw-type karabiner was wet and taut and the karabiner instead of hanging vertically, was held, gate uppermost, in a horizontal position. Harvey had clipped this into one of the linked belay karabiners, and had not screwed it up. He brought his second up using a waist belay, feeding in through the left hand, with the rope then running over the gate of the large karabiner, and presumably coiling on the right.

When the strain came on the rope it immediately opened the gate, pulled Harvey down, his feet skidding on the mud, and easily unlinked the large waist karabiner from the belay. Harvey was pulled forward into the tree, from where he almost arrested the second's fall before the branches snapped.

The accident would probably have been avoided had the locking ring on Harvey's waist-loop karabiner been screwed home.

At the same time it should be remembered that with or without a locking ring, no karabiner is designed to take a horizontal strain, inwards or outwards, on the gate. The risk that this may happen is a strong objection to the use of any type of karabiner to fasten a waist-loop. When a separate waist-loop is used, it is better fastened with a knot, leaving the karabiner which links it to the climbing rope to revolve freely. Be that as it may, the main lesson of this accident seems to be that when using the waist belay, we must be vigilant to ensure that the climbing rope will not, if a strain comes, run across the gate of the karabiner.

PETER BIVEN.

VIII. PRESIDENTIAL POLIO

This note should be read by those brave enough to frequent Alpine huts.

In August, 1958, the President of the Climbers' Club, with the Hon. Journal and Guide-book Editors and Peter Norton, was based on Armand Charlet's fine barn above Argentière. The first hut visited was the Albert Premier, which until the new structure is completed must be the most crowded and uncomfortable building in the Alps.

(It is only an hour's walk from the Col de la Balme téléferique.) Here, or on the caked plates of the Argentière Hut, the germs of poliomyelitis may have lurked. The traverse of the Aiguille du Tour and the South Ridge of the Purtscheller on consecutive days must have weakened us, as we then went on to take two days to get up to the Argentière Hut, one bivouac *en route*. This gave only time for the West Ridge of the Tour Noir, and an ascent solo by the Hon. Guide-book Editor of the N.E. Face (couloir) of the Petite Aiguille Verte. What may have been a new exit, nasty in new snow, was discovered left instead of right of the main summit.

A dash over to Italy, to be disappointed by weather on the Brouillard and have to be content with a storm on the Rocher Route instead. Then another disappointment, rain this time, on the Ryan-Lochmatter. The President's last ascent, with the G.B.E., was the North Face of the Aiguille du Lac Blanc in the Aiguilles Rouges. Normally IVB, in thick snow and with more falling it was a good V, and not short. A day later he was stepping out of the plane, looking very well. Five days after that the disease swooped: iron lung, tracheotomy, breathing machine, the slow business of recovering muscles believed to be lost. But he *is* recovering, slowly, in a fight which every member of this club has watched with sympathy and admiration.

"You climbers do take such risks with your health, don't you?" How, at a tea-party, does one answer that one now?

WILFRID NOYCE.

EDITORIAL

The next number of the Journal will have a new Editor, John Neill. Our readers, and the retiring Editor, are already in his debt for five years' stalwart work on the important but laborious New Climbs section. He has the good wishes of all in his new task.

Apart from the Editor there are no changes to record among the Club's officers. As noted elsewhere, within a few days of returning from the Alps last summer, our President, David Cox, was stricken with poliomyelitis. The attack was severe, and for a time critical, but he has made progress towards recovery, and it gave great delight to the Club that he was able to attend, and speak at, the Annual Dinner in February.

Among senior members of the Club the year has seen heavy losses. Geoffrey Winthrop Young had been for long, in a full and affectionate sense, the Grand Old Man of British mountaineering. With the Climbers' Club his links were especially intimate. He was an Original, and latterly an Honorary, Member; and he served on the Committee for many years, and as President for seven, between 1913 and 1920. From time to time he was a distinguished contributor to the Journal—to give but one relatively recent but historically important example, his fascinating reminiscences of V. J. E. Ryan appeared in *C.C.ȳ.*, 1949—and to the end his lively and ever-youthful interest kept in close touch with our affairs, as with all aspects of the mountaineering world. Both the Club as a whole, and innumerable individual members of all ages, owe much to his inspiration and example. He leaves in his writings an enduring, and deserved, monument.

In R. W. Lloyd another distinguished Honorary Member has left us, to whom the Club owes no less than the gift of the bulk of the cost of the R. W. Lloyd Hut. In its name is commemorated not only a great benefactor, but a mountaineer of lifelong devotion and eminence.

Of our other losses, Jack Denton was on the Committee, and much beloved in the Club. Three lost their lives in the mountains. In the Himalayas died E. G. C. Warr, and Peter Nelson, a brilliant climber and a lively and charming companion, who combined with the ability to climb mountains the traditional but now rarer ability to write about them. He fell while crossing a snow gully, unroped, with a heavy

load; changing his axe from one hand to the other, so as to enlarge a step, he dropped it, and stumbled in the attempt to recover it. In Wales Michael Harvey was killed in an accident discussed elsewhere in this Journal. He was a young climber of outstanding ability.

In the Himalayas in 1958 the outstanding Commonwealth achievement was the successful ascent of Rakaposhi by the British-Pakistani Expedition, of which the leader, Banks, and several of his colleagues, were members of the Club. The Americans climbed Gasherbrum I (Hidden Peak); the Italians climbed Gasherbrum IV, and the Japanese Chogolisa. The Climbers' Club party that went to the Caucasus was not only the first British climbing party to do so since Hodgkin's in 1937 (apart from Mrs. Dunsheath's solitary visit in 1957), but they achieved several notable ascents there, including the first ascent of the south-east buttress of Dych Tau by Band and Harris. In the Alps the season was the best for several years. At least in August, conditions were something like the "normal" familiar in guide-books, but in recent years so rare in experience. Ascents of the Bonatti Route on the Dru and the Bron Route on the Petites Jorasses are described in this Journal. Other good climbs included the east face of the Capucin (Fraser and Langmuir; Bonington and Wathen), west face of the Purtscheller (Fraser and Cole), Rébuffat route on the Midi and Roc-Grépon traverse (Fraser and Langmuir), and the Brown-Whillans route on the west face of the Blaitière (Trevor Jones and R. Smith). An interesting achievement in the wider Alpine world was the new route up the north wall of the Grandes Jorasses, the north face of the Pointe Marguerite, by the brilliant French pair, Couzy and Desmaison. Later in the year Couzy was killed, on a minor peak by stonefall. He was one of the most distinguished of current Alpine climbers.

At home there was climbing of considerable interest in Wales, as this Journal bears witness, not so much by way of new climbs as of more frequent ascents of climbs which had been regarded as in a quite special and exclusive category of difficulty. The climbing of Malham Cove was also a striking achievement. Some may say that the nature of the problem, and the methods used to overcome it, are outside the field of mountaineering as traditionally understood. Perhaps they are; but that does not mean that they are either reprehensible or uninteresting.

We congratulate Moulam on the publication of his Idwal guide-book, to complete his Nant Ffrancon trilogy. For a generation at least Welsh climbers on these favourite cliffs will be in his debt. The Cambridge University Mountaineering Club have published a guide to the Carnmore and Loch Maree area, which has been mainly developed by Cambridge climbers. It is by M. J. O'Hara, and obtainable from Simon Clark, Clare College, Cambridge, price 4s. 6d. Also published

during the year was Godfrey Francis' admirable textbook, *Mountain Climbing*, which has been deservedly adopted by the British Mountaineering Council as its official textbook.

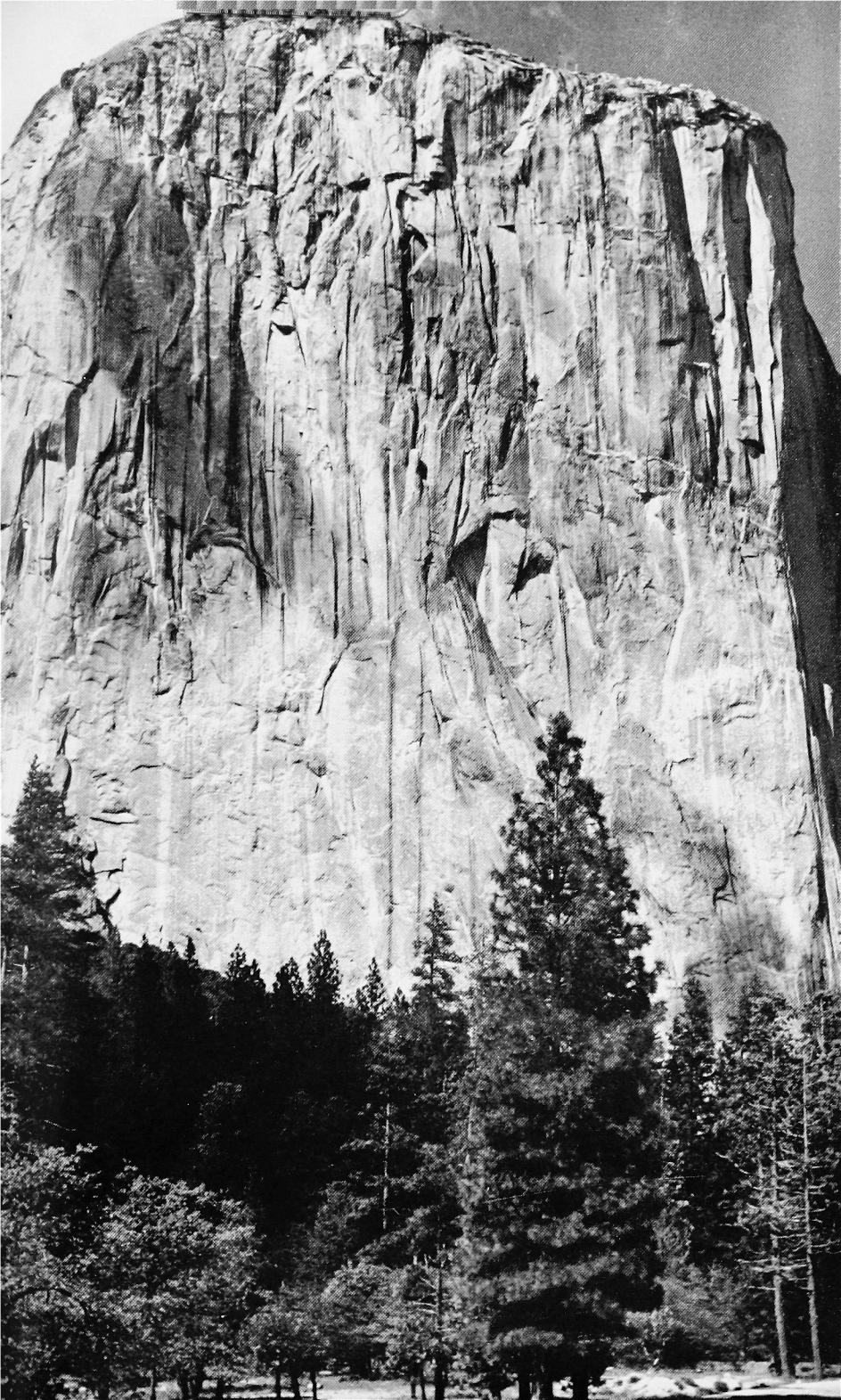
A member has drawn attention to the large inverted Vs which have appeared in white paint on rocks in various places in Snowdonia. They are not any kind of direction mark, but mark plots of land being used as samples for an investigation into the grazing habits of sheep.

Ogwen Cottage has been taken over by Trevor Jones, a member of the Club, and Ron James and Tony Mason, both climbers and known to many of our members.

Though repeated each year, the Editor's thanks to all who help to produce the Journal are none the less warm and sincere. They are due to the contributors of articles or photographs, including those whose contributions had to be excluded on grounds of space, to John Hobhouse, who has again handled advertisements and distribution, and by no means least to our printers, The Cloister Press Ltd., of Heaton Mersey, Stockport.

EL CAPITAN, YOSEMITE VALLEY, CALIFORNIA.
The monolith rises 3,604 feet above the valley floor. It was climbed in 1958; the ascent is reported to have taken 13 days, spread over many months.

W. A. Poucher





IN MEMORIAM

GEOFFREY WINTHROP YOUNG

It seems almost an impertinence to write of Geoffrey Winthrop Young; as if everything that could be said had been said already, and the seal set by himself in his own books. I can pick out only those facets of him that seemed to shine particularly, and which we who follow shall particularly miss.

His death at the age of 81 marks the passing of yet another, and almost the last, great one of the Golden Age. For he was both representative of the heroic generations before 1914, and in his later years something much more besides. To us his official career is not important. Most know that he was for a time a master at Eton, later a lecturer in Comparative Education, and that he had studied and worked on the Continent. But each year he lived most fully in the weeks or months—for his generation did these things in more ample style than we can do—which he spent in the Alps. The list of his first ascents, most of them with the guide Josef Knubel, is imposing by any standard: the Nesthorn E. Ridge, Breithorn Younggrat, the faces of the Weisshorn and south face of the Täschhorn, the ridges of the Jorasses and Mer de Glace Face of the Grépon, l'Isolée and the Brouillard on Mont Blanc; finally the W. Ridge of the Gspaltenhorn, to mention only the most important. In 1914 he was still at the height of his powers.

In *Mountains with a Difference* he described vividly the battle of Monte San Gabriele during which, while commanding ambulances of the Friends' Ambulance Unit, he received a wound which lost him one leg. For his climbing this was a cruel blow; but I sometimes wonder whether, if he had remained uninjured, his writing would have reached that pitch of poignancy, grace and rhythm which puts *On High Hills* among the very first of all mountain classics. As for poetry, we would have been without *I have not lost the magic of long days*, not to mention many others from the *Collected Poems*.

What is most remarkable is that Geoffrey Young became more, not less, impressive a figure in mountaineering after he lost his leg. This was not because of his one-legged ascents of the Matterhorn, Grépon and other peaks; he himself came to regard these *tours de force* as outside the true run of mountaineering. But he became important as an inspiration, an organiser, an influence—it is impossible to find the right word. Already he had belonged to the small group which in 1898 founded the Climbers' Club; and it is largely to him that we owe Archer Thomson's Lliwedd and Ogwen guide-books. He had been involved in the transfer of the centre of mountaineering gravity from Pen-y-Gwryd to Pen-y-Pass, and later took on the running of the Christmas and Easter parties that annually gathered there. These parties were of formidable distinction, both climbing, intellectual and social. After World War I Geoffrey, with the vigorous support of Len Young, continued them loyally. The tradition died slowly, with the opening of club huts and the coming of new generations. But nobody who has attended an Easter party will forget it.

He took an intense personal interest in young climbers, and my friendship with him began when, at the age of 17, I was told that I might be starting the wrong way. I went back to re-read my *Mountain Craft*, to this day the most comprehensive book on the skills and mentality of the mountaineer; thereafter I counted in any situation on his advice, encouragement, criticism, and on Len's welcoming hospitality. Other young climbers, whether they agreed with him or not, did the same. Meanwhile in the mountaineering world at large he played his part royally. As he had presided over the Climbers' Club during the First World War, so it was given to him to be president of the Alpine Club in the dark days of the Second. To keep the clubs alive was a hard and yet rewarding task which he regarded with the sense of a mission.

As if this was not enough, he took a lion's share in founding, in 1944, the British Mountaineering Council, an organisation designed to give some semblance of a common front to the increasing number of small clubs in this country, and one which has now been accepted after the initial doubts. In the wide field of boyhood adventure he joined with Kurt Hahn and others in

realising the scheme now known as the Outward Bound Movement, himself becoming chairman of the Trust. For he believed passionately in adventure on hill and sea as a character-forming element in education; and whatever climbers, who tend to be individualists, may think privately of organised and collective adventure, they must admit that the scheme has succeeded beyond the dreams of its originators—and has borne fruit in others, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

In the last years his mind remained unclouded, his sympathy as alert as ever, his acquaintance vast and varied. *Mountains with a Difference* had won the W. H. Heinemann Prize. It was followed by some delightful writing in *The Grace of Forgetting*, and his part in *Snowdon Biography*. Before the last grim but brilliant battle against disease he made a public swan song, as he described it himself, at the Alpine Club Centenary celebrations and in his own lecture. Those who heard it will remember it always for the fire that still sparkled, the tones that continued to ring clear. With some people, and he was of them, one has the feeling that the fire will not die, nor the tones be muffled; they have already been transmitted by genius to the generations that come after.

WILFRID NOYCE.

R. W. LLOYD

Robert Wylie Lloyd died on 29th April, 1958, at the age of 90, having been born on 17th March, 1868.

He was an active mountaineer until well on in his sixties. He first went to the Alps in 1896 and was elected to the Alpine Club in December, 1901. He travelled in the grand manner with one or more first-rate guides, including Josef and Franz Lochmatter, but most of the time with Josef Pollinger who was climbing with him regularly from 1904 to 1939, during which time they spent 30 seasons together. It was not until 1937, when Lloyd had a serious operation—his left leg was amputated—that he had to give up serious climbing. Although he left most of the serious work to his guide he was a safe man on a mountain and could keep going happily on the longest expeditions. Most of his climbing was done in the Valais and in the range of Mont Blanc; and the list of his expeditions is a long one.

Among many notes of his climbs in the *Alpine Journal* there occur the East Arête of the Dent Blanche reached from the south, Pollux by the north face (with J. P. Farrar), Mont Blanc by the Brenva route, and first descent of the Brenva, all before the First World War. After the war, when he was over 50, he made the first ascent of the north face of the Col de Bionnassay (1919), and in 1920 the Zinal face of the Ober Schallijoch. In 1923 he descended to Courmayeur from the Col "dit Infranchissable" and in 1926 he made a more direct ascent of the north face of the Col de Bionnassay.

He served on the Committee of the Alpine Club, 1913-15, and also in 1930. He was Vice-President, 1938-39, and Hon. Treasurer, 1949-56 in which year he was elected an Honorary Member of the Club. The Climbers' Club he joined in 1905. He served on the Committee in 1908-11 and was Vice-President in 1945-48.

He was Treasurer of the successful Everest Expedition and although 84 years of age he put a tremendous lot of effort into the work of raising funds and was highly successful in doing so. He was a generous benefactor to the Alpine Club, and he provided most of the funds for the Climbers' Club Hut at Ynys Ettws which was opened in 1950 and named after him.

Lloyd had little formal education. He started as a clerk in the City, without means of his own, but such was his outstanding financial ability that he soon became well off and in course of time was able to make notable collections of Alpine colour prints, Turner water-colours, as well as Chinese and Japanese lacquer, ivories and swords.

As was almost inevitable in one who had achieved such remarkable material success, he had a somewhat hard manner and in argument expressed himself forcibly; but he was always ready to congratulate a young opponent on the way the case had been put against him.

He was most kindly and helpful to his friends.

No greater proof of his high courage can be adduced than the fact that he carried on not only his many business activities but his social interests with undiminished energy after his leg had been amputated when he was nearly 70. He was a most

gallant and indomitable man and even during the last few months of his life he had business meetings in his rooms at the Albany, and came out to dine with his mountaineering friends.

L. G. SHADBOLT.

It must have been about the end of 1946, when R. W. Lloyd was Vice-President of the Club, and the Committee's plans for the new building on the Ynys Ettws site were complete, that he asked me to call on him and made his offer of £3,500 to defray the cost of the work. Although this was a most generous offer, it posed its own problems for the Committee; firstly because conditions were attached—one was that electricity should be excluded from the hut—and secondly because of a possibly heavy liability for Death Duties. It should be remembered that donations from members were coming in at the time in response to the Committee's appeal, which now, presumably, would have to be abandoned. In the event, Lloyd readily withdrew all his conditions, except the very proper one that the hut should be called by his name. On the subject of Death Duties he told me in his blunt way: "It is a risk you will have to take, but I can assure you that I am not going to die within five years." Whenever we met subsequently, he would say: "Still going strong, you see," until the evening when he poked me in the ribs with the rubber-shod stick as I was entering the A.C. rooms and said: "I suppose you have stopped praying for me?" I then realised that the five years were up.

We had many meetings at that time, at the Thatched House Club and in Committee where, as the occasional occupant of the Chair, he was an expeditious, not to say robust, despatcher of business. Quick, even impulsive in decision, he was by no means inflexible, though actual compromise was foreign to his nature. Needless to say he was wedded to the mountains, and he had no doubt whatever that he had been right to indulge that passion to the exclusion of a more conventional attachment. During one of the last talks we had together, about a descent of the Brenva face in bad conditions, he recalled an argument with his guide about who should come down last. "I had," said Lloyd, "an overriding advantage; I claimed the position as the only single member of the party."

A. W. OSBORNE

J. W. DENTON

John William Denton, or as he was better known, Jack Denton, a fellow Yorkshireman, burst into my life one day at the end of August 1949. This was the beginning of a happy association that ended so tragically on 1st May 1958, when he died of a heart attack within a few minutes of taking his usual early morning bath. Anyone who met him will remember him for his unbounded enthusiasm and good nature, and during our all too few climbing excursions I cannot remember him as ever being any different, whatever the difficulties or conditions. He loved the mountains and wanted everyone to share his love as well. It was a common sight to see him demonstrating the belay to some complete stranger and to find that same stranger and several others being "enthused" up a climb that they had never intended even to try. He radiated confidence, and his unselfishness and patience and wonderful enthusiasm for climbing have been responsible for many people taking it up.

Jack's interest in climbing started as a boy on Yorkshire gritstone and grew and grew until it was almost his whole life. I say almost, because Jack's greatest love was undoubtedly for his family, and this was apparent in all the things he did. He instilled his love of mountains in his children at a very early age and was happiest when they were all together on a climb.

Whether it was for a mid-winter swim in some mountain lake, a Lockwood's chimney by moonlight 30 strong, or a new route up some rotten old cliff near his home in Torquay, Jack's enthusiasm was boundless and his energy untiring, for he kept himself extremely fit.

Few of his friends knew that he was the holder of the George Medal, awarded to him in 1941, for putting out incendiary bombs with wet clay on top of a gas holder.

He was elected to the Climbers' Club in 1951 and to the Committee in 1955, and was planning his second Alpine season at the time of his death. His heart complaint was such that he would never have climbed again or taken part in any of the family's activities, and to Jack this would have meant a living death.

He will be missed in many places, for nobody knows all the people he helped in his business life, his neighbours and his

local church, and most of all he will be missed by his family to whom he was a wonderful husband and father, and it is to them that we express our sincere sympathy.

C. B. BRIGGS.

C. B. HARRIS

Clive Harris died in hospital in April 1958 from injuries received in a flying accident. He was serving a short-service commission in the Royal Air Force with the idea of eventually entering civil aviation. At Oxford he read chemistry and was a very good president of the O.U.M.C. during one of its customary difficult periods.

To climb with Clive was to enjoy climbing. It made no difference whether one was trying one's first V.S. on Cloggy or tramping in thick mist over the Mamores on a day too bad to think of climbing on Nevis. His reactions on these two days were typical. The others in his party, supposedly better rock climbers, had tried and failed to do the first moves of Great Slab. Unperturbed by these failures, he went up to have a look and with his long reach balanced over and up. His competence on a mountain was shown in the day on the Mamores. He led his party over the tops without any mistake and at the end of the day, when the others were flagging kept going at the same steady pace back to the hut.

Clive had climbed extensively in most parts of Britain. He had several seasons in the Alps, many more were planned and he also wanted to go farther afield to bigger mountains. A better companion for such a venture would be hard to find.

As President of the O.U.M.C. Clive spent much of his climbing time showing novices how to climb. When the novices became more competent they were encouraged to try harder things but were always urged to lay proper emphasis on safety. His own technical competence combined with safe technique were an excellent example. In emergency, Clive took charge. In the new year of 1957 in Glencoe he organised and led a search party for a girl who had fallen on Bidean nam Bian. Needless to say, it was well led. Again his endurance was shown up when at the end he kept going, encouraging the others when most were dropping with fatigue.

Apart from climbing, Clive was always excellent company. His humour was quiet but definite. He had principles and kept to them. His ideas were many, unusual and good. His loss is sad and most grievously felt by many friends.

JOHN COLE.

M. W. HARVEY

Mike Harvey died as a result of a fall from the final stance of the Trilon on Carreg Wastad in July, 1958.

Mike lived at Paignton, and although officially a novice when he came up to Bristol University in October, 1953, he speedily showed outstanding ability as a rock-climber. Within the next 12 months he had led climbs such as the Spectre and had made, with Derek Abbott, his contribution to Welsh climbing—Slope Direct Start, an exceedingly difficult problem.

But as a climber Mike will chiefly be remembered for his new routes in the Avon Gorge at Bristol: Mike's Mistake, Mambo Jambo, Tapdance and the Unknown Gully of the Sea Walls, to name but a few. In 1956 he concluded this fine series of ascents with his *Arête* climb on Suspension Bridge Buttress, a magnificent climb of exceptional severity which still lacks a second ascent.

Mike was a climber of unusual style and grace, particularly in his skill and ease of movement on slabs. In 1956 he graduated with Honours in Geology. A most successful Welsh holiday followed, when he took a number of the Brown routes in his stride, and then a good Alpine season, before National Service claimed him. He joined the Royal Engineers, with whom he was still serving at the time of his death.

Mike was an excellent companion. We have missed him both on the rocks, where his well-known sense of humour often removed the tension from a serious situation, and in the valley.

We extend our sincere sympathy to his family.

H. I. BANNER.

RALPH BUSHILL HENDERSON

The death of R. B. Henderson in October, 1958, takes from our roll of members a man of exceptional gifts. A parson's son, he was educated first at King Henry VIII School, Coventry, then at Bristol Grammar School, then at New College, where he

obtained a double first in Mathematics, and stroked the Torpid when it was Head of the River. He was on the staff of Rugby from 1902 to 1911 when he was appointed Headmaster of the Strand School. He was commissioned in the R.G.A. during the 1914-18 War, rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, was mentioned in despatches and at the end of the war was Commandant of the Second Army College at Cologne. He was Headmaster of Alleyn's School, Dulwich, from 1920 to 1940. His interests were varied, and he had a flair for excelling in whatever absorbed his attention. Bred in the classics, trained in mathematics, he devoted himself after 1920 to the study and teaching of theology. He was the author of many books and articles, some popular, some scholarly and in 1934 he was awarded a B.D. of Lambeth, the first conferred upon a layman for many years.

In sport he was a keen rider; he had also a very deep affection for the mountains of Wales and for the men and women he met and with whom he climbed. He was often with Emily Daniell at Ogwen in the pre-war days (pre-1914) and made several first ascents with her. The days that I had with them on Tryfan and the Glyders in the early '20s are among my happiest memories; I learned then to admire him and to welcome the opportunity to serve under him at Alleyn's when he asked me to join his staff.

Old "Moses" was a strong man (and many know full well how strong he was), of strong views who did not suffer fools gladly. He had a laugh that shook him from stem to stern and he was happiest, perhaps, sawing away at the double-bass, the very cornerstone of the school orchestra.

H. R. C. CARR.

PETER STALKER NELSON

Peter Nelson was killed on August 27th, 1958, as a result of a fall on the North Face of Saraghrar, north-east of Tirich Mir in Chitral. By his death the Club loses one of its most brilliant climbers and also one of its most engaging personalities.

He was educated at King William School, Isle of Man, and St. John's College, Oxford, where he took a second in Modern Greats. At the time of his death he was an Assistant Principal

in the Ministry of Power. He had served in Ghana for six months in 1956 in connection with the preparatory work for the Volta River project and was very highly thought of by his colleagues in the Ministry.

His climbing career was distinguished. He started in his early days at Oxford but as he used to say was so conscious of difficulty and exposure that he soon gave it up. He started climbing again, however, while still at Oxford and before coming down was a leading member of the O.U.M.C. and climbing extremely well in Wales and Scotland. I first met him shortly afterwards in Skye, where we climbed together and traversed the main Coolin Ridge. He had a great sense of humour and was always an extremely reliable and stimulating companion in the hills.

He climbed in the Alps in 1950 and subsequently during every summer from 1952 to 1957. Amongst other climbs he had done the North Ridge of the Peigne, the Younggrat on the Breithorn, the North Ridge of the Piz Badile and the first British ascent of the Roch Route on the East Face of the Zinal Rothorn. He was a member of the Alpine Club and of the Alpine Climbing Group, of whose Journal he was Honorary Editor at the time of his death.

He was to have joined the Expedition to Ama Dablam in the spring of 1959, but at the last minute he was invited to join the Oxford Chitral Expedition, 1958, as leader, as the original leader was unable to get leave. His last letters were full of the joys of mountain travel and appreciation for the beauty of the unknown mountain area which he and his party were exploring for the first time.

The Club can ill afford to lose climbers of Peter's calibre, but above all he will be missed for his infectious laugh, his quiet determination and his great gift of friendship.

The Climbers' Club extends its sympathy to his family. One of his brothers, G. S. Nelson, is a member of the Club.

J. H. EMLYN JONES.

REVIEWS

THE SPRINGS OF ADVENTURE. By Wilfrid Noyce. (John Murray, 18/-.)

This is the most unusual book to be reviewed in this Journal for many years, and one of the most worthwhile. It is very different from the usual accounts of recent expeditions and reminiscences of prominent alpinists. It is a path-breaking attempt to answer that most difficult set of questions—why do men climb Everest (or traverse the Antarctic, or sail a raft across the Pacific)? What are their aims? What is the driving force? What are “The Springs of Adventure”?

At some time or other we all ask ourselves these questions (usually at unpleasant moments on an expedition when we wish we had never started). There is an attempt to answer them somewhere in the pages of all expedition books. But the treatment is always short and superficial; a quick answer in a paragraph, different answers scattered through the text. Noyce has never been satisfied with the superficial and is fascinated by human feelings and reactions. He pushes and pulls at the problems of men's motivation for a whole book of over 200 pages.

In his search for the answers to his questions he read and puzzled over more than a hundred classic accounts of adventures in the past 150 years. The book draws on these classics extensively and continuously, asking question after question and calling on the great adventurers to give their answers. Do men go on expeditions because they want to prove themselves, or to get away from something? What does Mungo Park say or Alain Gerbault, Hermann Buhl or Freya Stark; Shackleton or Sven Hedin?

To some readers the main attraction of this book will be not in the theme but in the quotations. Put at its lowest, it is well worth reading for the bibliography. Some of the adventurers are old friends, especially the mountaineers and the Arctic explorers. But every form of expedition is here—land, sea and air, desert and forest, mountain and cave, raft and sailing, ship, balloon and aqua-lung. Many are new, all are exciting. There is nothing for it but to make for the library to start catching up on the adventures you have missed.

But this book will also appeal to most readers for the consistent honesty with which it tackles the question—why do men seek adventure? What makes a man forsake the comforts of society to face the isolation and danger of an expedition? Is it boredom, the flight from the humdrum and the need to buckle down to a routine job? What beckons him on, fame, money, science, conquest, curiosity? What does he hope to achieve spiritually? Victory over himself? Nearness to his Creator?

Noyce faces all these possibilities and many more. His famous men argue the cases back and forth and the disputations are always very worthwhile. The conclusions cannot be clear cut, for every man works from mixed motives and no two men are alike. Noyce's own diagnosis is that the mainsprings of adventure are curiosity and the immodest desire to expand, and do something on a little grander scale than it has ever been done before. These are not the two most noble motives in the list but they are far from being the meanest.

KENNETH BERRILL.

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING. By Godfrey Francis. (English University Press (Teach Yourself Series) 7/6)

The book of which the reviewer approves offers much less scope for witticisms, or even a critical analysis, than the one that can be torn to pieces with carefully chosen and scornful phrases. Thus your reviewer finds himself in a difficulty with Goff Francis's manual on climbing, which will surely become the standard book for those who are both learning to climb and literate. It is comprehensive yet not voluminous, written with all the thoroughness, accuracy and common sense that we should expect from the author, who yet lightens with personal reminiscence; and it has easily the best diagrams of any climbing manual so far produced.

The author touches on controversial subjects with a humour and tact that is wholly delightful, as where he writes, apropos the arguments over the Great Peg Dispute: "They are succulent bones to chew on, and far too good simply to be buried and forgotten." It is, perhaps, less than the best advice to advocate flat pegs (the eye in the same plane as the blade) for use in vertical cracks, when the torque applied to a peg with the eye at 90 degrees to the blade tends to secure it much more firmly in the crack; again, the suggestion that an artificial pitch of 80 feet can be covered by ten pegs is optimistic, to say the least. But these points are minor ones, inserted more to show that the reviewer has read the book than as serious criticisms.

More serious, perhaps, is the appallingly low standard of reproduction of the photographs, far worse for instance than in Barford's Pelican, produced just after the war at 1/-. Is it too much to hope that British block makers and publishers may one day get somewhere near the standard achieved for years now by those on the Continent?

But make no mistake about the excellence of the text and diagrams of this book: it should do much to help those who climb, or those who wish to do so. We have waited for it for some time, and rejoice that now we have got it, it turns out to be so good.

E. A. WRANGHAM.

THE PUMA'S CLAW. By Simon Clark. (Hutchinson, 21/-)

Successful men usually write dull autobiographies. When Sir Lawrence Jones or Freya Stark look back on their youth they are at their best, but the nearer an autobiographer gets to his knighthood or

gold medal the less he grips us. There is a similar tendency in mountain literature. Generally it is the climbs which went off the rails, where failure or unexpected turns betray their planners, that make the good stories. Shipton and Tilman in their different ways have written some of the best books of recent years, but one does not find in these a picture of our hero holding aloft on the summit his ice axe and national flag.

The cover picture of Simon Clark's book epitomises the success of his expedition—sharp dramatic summit of Pumasillo, climber on top, flag fluttering. All six members of the party got up. The climbing was hard and there were few hitches to upset the careful plan which had been made. But despite all this *The Puma's Claw* is an exceptionally good climbing book.

Why is it so good? Mainly I think because it strikes a balance. Not for nothing was the author a classical scholar who turned geologist. He gives us a story which blends insight and observation, care and dash. There is good travel as well as good climbing. There are knotty problems of exploration to be solved, a known mountain and unknown valleys which lead in the wrong direction. Following the party over those harsh Andean passes one is thankful that Simon Clark has eyes for other things than mountains. He writes with enthusiasm and a good deal of knowledge of the Incas and all that they achieved. When he gets to grips with the mountain he is neither too coy nor too fanatical to stand back and use his eyes.

"The clouds unfurled and billowed around and below, floating me above the distant tapestry of arid foothills and jagged peaks that carpeted the world beneath. As the mists drew back I could see the myriad glaciers of the Vilcabamba. Wrinkled, dirty, they lapped the feet of their mountain lords like sheepskins carelessly scattered by some giant hand. Far off on the rim of the burnt sierra I could see other ranges, ripples on the vast horizon."

There is too a pleasant balance in the author's account of the people on the expedition. He is reasonably British and restrained, but his lip is never too stiff. He lets us inside and says what it felt like. There is a fair amount of useful technical detail about fixed rope and ice technique and about south snow in the Peruvian Andes. The jokes are few, funny and ring true.

The illustrations are good and the only criticism I would offer is that they do not show sufficiently clearly the complicated details of the final ridge climb. This book should stay clear of the remainder shelves for a long time. It will, I hope, eventually be published in a cheap edition for it should have a wide general appeal. Almost everything went according to plan and, despite this disadvantage if it is one, the book is a great success.

R. A. HODGKIN.

CLIMBING THE FISH'S TAIL. By Wilfrid Noyce. (Heinemann, 18/-.)

There is a lot to be said for having a professional author on an expedition; for one thing, he actually likes writing an expedition book. And when the writer is Wilfrid Noyce, one can be sure that it is an

inside story and no mere observer's impression. *Climbing the Fish's Tail* is very good Noyce, and that will be enough for most people. They will only perhaps be sorry that he did not stick to the title "Machapuchare."

The writing is professional in the best sense. It has the clarity and deceptive simplicity of the work that has been written and re-written until every word reaches its appointed place. The book is short and well-balanced. It reads easily—too easily, perhaps, as the sense of strain and struggle that must at times have been felt during a very exacting ascent hardly comes through to the reader, unless he looks for it. To appreciate what it must have been like, for instance, in the fight to keep Camp Two from being buried by streams of hail from the slopes above, one has to imagine oneself there. Wilfrid Noyce does not stress the discomfort—but then he is the man who slept between Hillary and Lowe on the South Col, in the gap between their air mattresses, and never complained all night.

The mountaineer will appreciate the difficulties of the route, as well as the hardships involved in following it, but will this come home to the general reader? Will he get much idea of the extreme skill in route-finding shown first by Roberts, and then by Cox and Noyce? The way to the summit—or nearly to the summit—was a devious one, and the logic of it is not always fully explained. A marked photograph of the upper part of the mountain would have been helpful; sometimes one is not quite sure, without referring back, whether or why the party is going up or down.

But these are trifles when the book is taken as a whole. They spring from the attractive modesty with which the whole story is told. The inherent difficulties of the problem to be solved are no more stressed than are the hardships. Even the calculated under-statement—which may be very British but can be very maddening—is neglected in favour of a straightforward tale.

This is a model of how to give a straightforward account of an expedition. It is an absorbing story, illuminated by a shaft of light as some significant detail is described, or emotion recalled. It is a book that repays reading by any climber, if only because Wilfrid Noyce puts into words so much better than most of us the familiar experiences that are an essential part of climbing, and can broaden our view by helping us to look through his eyes.

MICHAEL WESTMACOTT.

THE MOUNTAIN WORLD, 1958/59. (Allen and Unwin. 25/-.)

The list of illustrations in this *Mountain World* is printed in such small type that pretty good eyesight is needed to read it at all, but a rather larger lettering reveals that the photographs total "68 pages, including double-spreads and fold-outs." Almost without exception, these pictures are of the highest quality, so that one might make special

mention of quite a lot of them for one reason or another; but personally I would pick out, for its beauty, the view of Alpamayo (pl. 23) and, for their general interest, the series of four double-spreads, or possibly fold-outs (pls. 1-4), showing all sides of Mont Blanc from the air.

These Mont Blanc pictures are in illustration of an article by Dittert, condemning the premature abandonment of the efforts to rescue Vincendon and Henry in January, 1957. Dittert argues not only that the mid-winter ascent of the Brenva by this party was justifiable, but that advanced winter climbing is the new mountaineering trend which should be accepted "without for once uttering a warning note." True though this may be, few sensible people would disagree with the powerful warning note uttered in the next article by Othmar Gurtner on the moral to be drawn from the history of attempts on the Eigerwand. Colonel Strutt himself might almost have written this (except for a stiff piece of geology at the beginning); and how he would have approved of the two magnificent photographs of the face neatly marked with the sites of every fatality.

Science is represented by a long article on the Everest area, in which measurements of rainfall on the lower Khumbu Glacier over a period of nearly eight months, including the whole of the monsoon, are found to amount to a total not much greater than that of a desert. Travel, as opposed to exploration, produces pleasant articles (including another by Dittert) on the three big volcanoes of Mexico and on Olympus. A new descent on Mount Rainier—"down the whole length of the steep and awe-inspiring south-western face of the Cowlitz Cleaver to the Nisqually Canyon far below"—is colourfully written up, but is much less impressive than the matter of fact narrative of a month-long climb up the East ridge of Mount Logan. The accolade for technical mountaineering achievement undoubtedly goes to one or other of the three Peruvian Andes expeditions (British, Austrian, German); probably to the Austrians, practising "the new Andean style, as first understood by Rébuffat," but perhaps to the Huagaruncho party, whose older-fashioned ways seem to have left matters rather less to chance as regards prospects of survival.

Finally we have accounts of several Himalayan and Karakoram ventures, including Machapuchare (preceded by a note on its spelling) and the first ascents of Gasherbrum II, Broad Peak and Manaslu. Future *Mountain Worlds* will hardly be able to be so lavish with new 8,000-ers. The Broad Peak account, by Kurt Diemberger, includes also the story of the attempt on Chogolisa in which Buhl lost his life, and takes on something of an obituary flavour almost from the start. Manaslu, climbed by the Japanese, provides the best reading of the three giants; and it is pleasant to discover that the iron-handed "Mr. Maki," whose orders from down below control the whole operation, is none other than the original conqueror of the Mittelegi ridge in 1921.

A. D. M. Cox.

AVALANCHE ! By Joseph Wechsberg. (Wiedenfeld and Nicolson.)

1954 is still remembered for the many avalanches that wrought havoc in the Alps. But the fate of one small village, Blons, in the Austrian Vorarlberg, eclipsed and at the same time summarised all others. On 11th January, two avalanches descended from the peaks that overlook the village's two parts, and obliterated each in turn. One-sixth of the total population were killed, many more were maimed; about one-third of the houses were destroyed.

It would have been possible to write a scientific treatise on avalanches; to analyse famous falls; even to select and compare the avalanches of that disastrous January. In *Avalanche !* Joseph Wechsberg has cleverly chosen to concentrate all that he has on this one village, on the drama of its one 24-hour ordeal. He has visited Blons, has spoken with the inhabitants, documented his story from the records. An air of personal reality hangs about the telling.

Inevitably, 24 hours do not make a book, and also some background is needed. It is certainly necessary to say something of wet and dry snow, of the varieties of precaution, the situation of villages and the history of Blons. But to my mind this is the only part of the book that does not move. The author has tried to enliven it with references to the avalanches we are to see, but this gives still more the sense of marking time to fill out a requisite number of pages.

Once 11th January is reached the story moves quickly, and I have nothing but praise for the dramatic way in which it is told. Also, much of the earlier information does fall into place. The author takes a number of important village figures and places them in the positions they occupied at 9.36 a.m., when the first avalanche descended. Many were killed, many buried in their homes. There followed bewilderment, pain, grief, and courage. In crisp prose the various threads are followed through. Clique jealousies forgotten, the little society, now cut off by snow from the outer world, seems to operate almost in a vacuum as it sets about its own rescue work. With sympathy and a realistic reconstruction of dialogue, Mr. Wechsberg leads the survivors through to evening. Then, at 7 p.m., the second avalanche descends, with chaos and terror once more in its wake.

Among the most important actors, of course, are the avalanches themselves: huge, impersonal, arbitrary, sparing where they are least likely to spare and striking where they are least expected. No wonder the pious Mother Dobler thought it a little unreasonable of the Almighty to be so capricious ! And yet the final thought, when the dead are buried, the new houses and avalanche defences built, is that the Blonser return to their old ways. Will they even keep the defences in repair ? They didn't last time. Little has been really learnt, for that is the way of humans, and that is the lesson of catastrophe. The men of Blons muddle through, somehow, like the rest of us. They will go on muddling through, again like the rest of us, even if there are greater disasters in store.

WILFRID NOYCE.

MOUNTAINS AND A MONASTERY. By Peter Holmes. (Geoffrey Bles, 21/-)

This is a straightforward and attractive account of a small expedition to the Spiti Himalaya in 1956. The party consisted of the author, his wife and her brother, along with Pran Nath, their Indian "security officer," and four Ladakhi porters.

The book is, on the whole, more monastery than mountains, and in the circumstances I found this altogether acceptable. The mountaineering story is told simply, and is not overdone. Interesting as the peaks of the Ratang Valley must be, they cannot stand out in printed description from a dozen other of the more modest Himalayan groups. At the present state of proliferation of "the book of the expedition," this is inevitable. What does stand out is the agreeable spirit of the party, taking on, and overcoming, considerable mountaineering difficulties, frankly admitting mistakes, and, both climbers and porters, obviously getting on well together. It is good to read of the whole expedition competing in a race of "Pooh Sticks" in a stream at Base Camp, not that this is necessarily a rare sport on an expedition—I have done the same myself—but to portray a well-knit party it is a nice touch.

The outcome of the expedition was not without hazard, and hardly surprisingly. It is, surely, almost traditional to lose the way, and endure benightment and hunger when quitting a Himalayan district by means of untraversed passes and unsurveyed valleys. All these trials, needless to say, were successfully overcome by the expedition.

Holmes' descriptions of Spiti, its inhabitants, and its monastery of Kee Gompa are illuminating and valuable. The expedition did not merely record what impressions it could during rapid marches to the mountains. It stayed for a time in Ranrik, the chief town of Spiti, and in Kee Gompa, where much interesting detail came to light. As it is unlikely that the inhabitants of this remote district will long be left to themselves, living as they do exactly between the two orders of the modern world, Holmes' account will portray them as they are at present, after many centuries without change, and perhaps on the threshold of great changes, which may or may not be for the better.

G. H. FRANCIS.

UNE VICTOIRE SUR LES ANDES. By Bernard Pierre. (Hachette.)

This is the story of the ascent of the Andean giant Salcantay by the Franco-American party of 1952, who reached the summit a few weeks after a Swiss pair had reached the summit ridge but turned back short of the actual top. The story is told in Bernard Pierre's familiar spirited style.

A.K.R.

ROCK CLIMBING IN BRITAIN. By J. E. B. Wright. (Nicholas Kaye. 15/-)

This is a survey of the main climbing areas of England, Wales and Scotland, not a guide-book, but rather a guide to the best climbs to pick out of the multitude in guide-books. The emphasis is on classic

routes and combinations of routes, especially those of a "mountaineering" nature. The harder routes of recent years are scarcely mentioned, presumably because they fall outside the author's intention of listing what ought to be, and usually are, the most popular climbs.

One or two old axes appear briefly for a moment's grinding, but they are not obtrusive; indeed one could wish that more space had been found for personal anecdote or comment to relieve the rather catalogic style. The choice of climbs is orthodox and useful.

There are many excellent photographs.

A.K.R.

A PICTORIAL GUIDE TO THE LAKELAND FELS, BOOK THREE: THE CENTRAL FELS. By A. Wainwright. (Henry Marshall, Low Bridge, Kentmere, Westmorland, 12/6.)

The third volume of Mr. Wainwright's walkers' guide to the Lake District covers the area bounded by the Langdale Valley to the south, Borrowdale-Langstrath to the west, Thirlmere-Grasmere to the east and Keswick to the north. It fully maintains the high standard Mr. Wainwright has set himself of elegance and originality of format, and of carefully detailed description. His next volume, he promises, will deal with the Scafells. All lovers of the Lakes will wish him good luck in his progress towards the completion of his grand design.

A.K.R.

CLUB JOURNALS, 1958.

The biggest celebrations tend to have a hangover. The Alpine Club centenary is no exception and the May issue of the *Alpine Journal* bears the brunt. The subtitle might be altered: "A Record of Gastro-nomic Adventure and Euphonious Speechification." To be honest, Longland Junior writes well on Pumasillo and Smyth talks about Kinabalu—surely a mountain of malevolent spirits; but no! Next time he will camp on the summit for "a week of pure rock climbing." Llanberisitis? There is an account in French of South Greenland. Surely if it is worth including (which it is), it is worth translating; even if most Alpine Club members speak French, many of those likely to be interested in this poorly documented area do not. There is a description of part of the Venezuelan Andes with a Treasure Island type map. But the Himalayas get only half a page in *Alpine Notes*, the same as Hadow's boots, and the Alps (other than gastronomy) are largely sustained by the 1860's. "N.B. The inhabitants of the baths are apparently unaware of the existence of mountains in the neighbourhood, and not at all disposed to give any assistance to those who wish to climb them," said Kennedy. A good idea for Ynys. The rest is centenary—dinners, meets, receptions—distinguished photographs of distinguished people. (The P.Y.G. group, even if our Editor is obviously not there to climb, can be added to the classic groups.) The Alpine Club is of course quite right in recording these unique occasions, in its own journal, but our Club's members need not wade

through it. Geoffrey Winthrop Young's beautifully phrased centenary address *An Alpine Aura* is, I suppose, the last of many contributions to Alpine literature.

Mr. Keenlyside has cast his net far and wide for November's issue, and brought in some exotic fish. *The Second Ascent of Minya Konka* is the most exotic. "Our Expedition, sponsored by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, consisted of 29 men, of whom 17 were mountaineers." Firemen are surprisingly unsteady on their pins on mountains. "To suck snow is forbidden". A cross between Izzard and Rum Doodle. A parallel article describes the first ascent of Mt. Stalin in 1933 by Yevgeny Abalakov, and also some more recent climbing in the U.S.S.R. Both articles reveal a surprising number of accidents, particularly the Chinese. There are three further Himalayan articles, two important. Brooke gives a straightforward account of the ascent of Rakaposhi (a diagram is lacking). Walmsley, leader of the forceful but unfortunate Manchester Expedition to Masherbrum, gives a long but at times graphic account, which includes the death of our late member, R. O. Downes. Again there is an Andean Treasure map and the Alps have advanced to the nineties. McInnes seems out of character debunking yetis. *Alpine Notes* are greatly improved, and Wilfrid Noyce adds a note on Menlove Edwards.

Much of the *American Alpine Journal* is taken up by Bradford Washburn proving the case against Dr. Cook's claim to the first ascent of Mt. McKinley. Convincingly enough, but it is a pity that the greatest mountains of three continents have been involved in controversy. There is an account of the first ascent of the East peak of Mt. Logan. Weldon F. Heald describes Arizona interestingly enough and Craig Merrihue the Harvard Andean Expedition of 1957. We are left with two glacier articles, a sermon, a classridden account of a first ascent on Mt. Wheeler, a horrifying description of snow blindness, the Alpine Club centenary again, and ninety pages of etceteras. The latter does contain the most informative English language *Climbs and Expeditions*, both as regards the Himalaya and the North and South American ranges.

The *Canadian Alpine Journal* is a somewhat stodgy volume. The first six contributors have been climbing hard to produce six conscientious stories of new ascents and pioneering, but somehow one feels that the same party of the inevitable Dons, Dicks and Daves might have done the lot. (Ugh! Mount Colonel Foster! Even the Russians don't say "Mount Comrade Stalin"). Again a vast section of Alpine notes, more firsts and a Scientific Section (circular crevasses and rotating glaciers!) We offer our sincere sympathy to the Alpine Club of Canada on the loss of their President, Rex Gibson, on Mt. Howson.

The *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal* starts with a bang. Tom Patey on Zero Gully produces the liveliest article of the year—all the fun of the Ben and the Creag Dhu. (It is surprising that "prussik" needs explaining to the S.M.C.). The rest is not quite up to this mark, though Brooker produces a sequel to Jerry Smith's article on

Lochnagar in our 1957 Journal, and Weir (a double contributor, also responsible for some good photos) makes a paradise of Kurdistan, the gorge of the Rudbare Sin excepted—meadows surrounded by aiguilles, friendly people and first ascents. Some of the neglected (but limited) rock climbing of Galloway is described by Waldie and Nimlin is logical but lost against pitons. Six pages of unexplained and conclusionless mathematical equations and diagrams turn out to be acute appendicitis. The usual operation should have been performed. As usual, it would appear that Scotland's particular glory, the Highlands and Islands beyond the Great Glen, would (Skye always excepted) have to be towed away and anchored off New York before the S.M.C. noticed.

The Editress of the *Fell and Rock Journal* is to be congratulated on a varied and interesting production with a generous number of illustrations of a high standard. So they ought to be, with Milner and Poucher. We open with Meldrum on Pumasillo, then Howard Somervell who finds "a number of granite rocks and a batch of medical students" in South India. Harold Drasdo is machine-gun-like in the Poisoned Glen in Donegal and John Lagoe explains the objects and methods of Outward Bound in the Lake District. An academic article is about Samuel Taylor Coleridge. "A drisling rain, heavy masses of shapeless Vapour on the mountains" hasn't changed, but nowadays few of us take "a little paper and half a dozen pens, a German Book and a little Tea and Sugar, with my Night Cap, packed up in my natty green oilskin, neatly squared." Following *Alpine Journal's* practice, there are no articles on the home ground (other than Lagoe's). However, this is made up for by fifty pages of domestic affairs. The F.R.C.C. are impressed by McNaught-Davis. Their hut wardens are becoming hutbound because of frequent use by C.C. members.

The *Mountain Club of Uganda* is also having hut trouble. Overcrowding; obviously nobody books. The *Mountain Club of Kenya* on the other hand is suffering from overpublicised expeditions that are outdone in achievement by the local Outward Bound.

The *Sierra Club Bulletins* are hard at work preserving wilderness and in one case, less worthily, preserving students. It would be interesting and possibly invaluable to know how "a bedroll was set on fire with a water jug." Khrushchev beware! In the November bulletin, the largest number, there are accounts of the ascents of the North West face of Half Dome in the Yosemite Valley and of the Totem Pole—"sixth grade pitons." A pity there are no pictures of either.

This leaves *Cambridge Mountaineering* and *Oxford Mountaineering*. Why are the articles all so short? Cambridge breaks into verse and Magogia after only 28 pages. Two of these pages, *Jack and the Fixed Rope*, by J. K. McDonald, are memorable. Maden provides rock climbing, and Steele (I presume) expeditioning, in the Tibesti. After that it is rather threadbare. Oxford reach 41 before the women arrive (both the O.U.W.M.C. and the Magogs got lost at Esk Hause). Our

President is full value on Machapuchare, and Sadler and Burgess describe the Welzenbach route on the Dent d'Hérens, one of their best climbs in a remarkable season. Richardson describes high standard climbing in Arctic Norway—but his postscript seems out of place. We meet Meldrum again on Pumasillo, Ashton by the Fionn Loch, and Tickell makes the South Orkneys sound fun. Hill outguns Drasdo. Altogether a lot of climbing, but a tragic year that has only got worse. Back to Cambridge—the *Carn More Guide*. This is a long overdue guide to one of the finest rock climbing areas in Britain. It has omissions and too many misprints, but it is an important step, thanks to O'Hara and the C.U.M.C. It forms nearly half of *Cambridge Mountaineering* or is available in an offprint in booklet form.

G. J. FRASER.

SWING AWAY, CLIMBER. By Glyn Carr. (Geoffrey Bles, 12/6).

The setting of Glyn Carr's latest mystery is a climbing club meet in a hut in the Llanberis Valley. The murder (or was it suicide?) takes place on Dinas Cromlech: the body is found hanging down the wall of Cenotaph Corner. The detection is intriguing, the background authentic and vividly described.

A.K.R.

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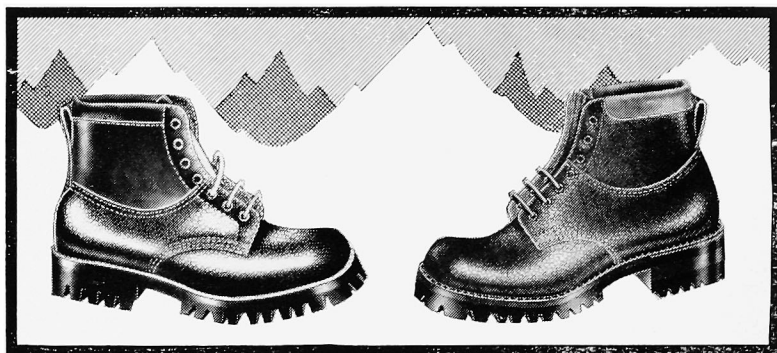
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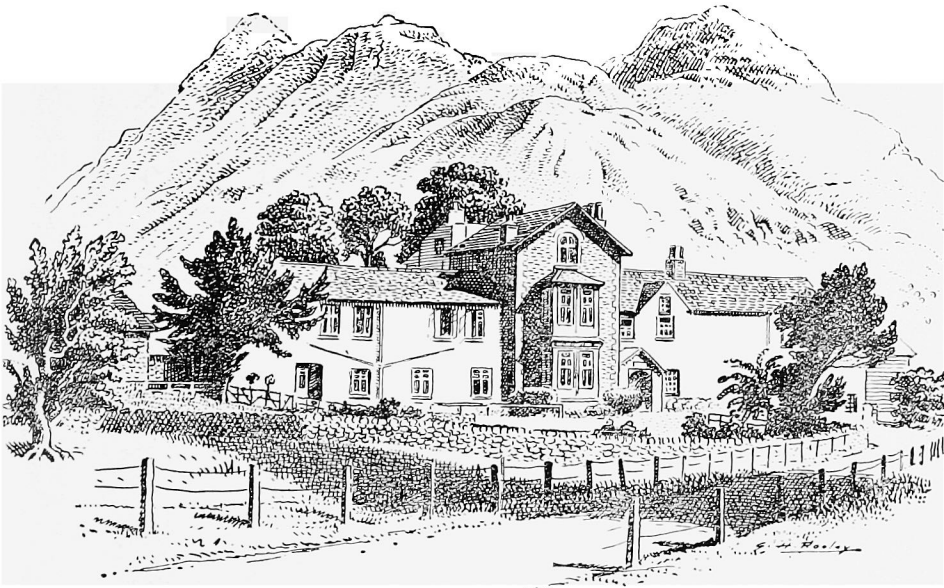
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SUMMIT Leader of the British-Pakistani expedition which successfully climbed the 25,550 ft. Himalayan peak Rakaposhi, was Captain Mike Banks (*below*). With Surgeon-Lieutenant Tom Patey, he reached the peak in a blizzard. Six previous expeditions had failed. Captain Banks commands the Cliff Assault Wing at 42 Commando, R.M.



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