

bed in the early morning and return later with eager anticipation to the comfort and company of the inn. But perhaps that is to admit that one is getting older every day.

NIGHT LIFE ON HIGH HILLS

BY A. C. PIGOU

THIS is not, despite its title, a paper about brown owls or bats or moths. It tells of some late returns and nights out—distinguished from late returns by ending after sunrise—experienced by the writer and various friends who on occasion travelled with him. There is nothing sensational in it and no word of Alpine philosophy. In America it would be called a fireside chat. As the writer did not start climbing till he was over 30, naturally enough he never emerged from the second class. But a preference, after a short time, for dispensing with guides opened the way for some episodes—they cannot be called adventures—of a kind that neither guided parties nor really good guideless ones are likely often to encounter. Since late returns are an embryo form of nights out I shall begin with them; for despite some specious arguments to the contrary, the egg *did* come before the hen.

It may be well to approach my theme, as many approach the Alps, with a prelude on the homeland. For, while I have never committed the enormity of a night out here, I have to my credit a number of late returns. Here are four examples, two from Pillar and two from Scafell. First, in very early days a highly incompetent party emerged from the North Climb just as darkness fell. In tentative gropings for the High Level route we found ourselves on the verge of a precipitate descent down Walker's Gully. We fled to the top of Pillar Fell, resolved to feel our way along the fence to Black Sail. The side-supports of this fence are spread with a maddening irregularity; on that single night more shins were barked than in all the long stretch of recorded time! None the less, 'by sheer grit' we did at last reach Gatesgarth; memory whispers 3 o'clock! Back once more to the Pillar several years later and distinctly less incompetent. Philip Baker and I were escorting three ladies up the New West Climb when heavy snow set in. Under these conditions escort work over the traverse above the chimney was arduous—and lengthy. Standing for æon after æon tethered below the whitening final slab, I ruminated ruefully on what the rocks and, more important still, my fingers would be like after another century had passed. But once the party was reassembled, 'nothing could stop that astonishing infantry.' It raced up the slab, down to the Ennerdale valley and back over Scarth Gap to Gatesgarth. There at 9.30 the gallant males plunged by starlight into the icy waters of Buttermere, so that their no less gallant colleagues might

luxuriate and decorate themselves at leisure in my house's only bathroom.

On the first Scafell occasion to be honoured with a record I had come over from Gatesgarth to meet some friends who were staying at Langdale. Having finished our climbing, we started home over Scafell Pike. A thick mist, rain and, later, darkness fell on us. Foolish and unlanterned virgins, we could not find the way! Our only resource was for one man to establish himself firmly at a cairn while another scouted round looking for the next. This method of progress is not a speedy one! At Esk Hawse our ways divided. On my solitary descent to Seathwaite I had a queer experience. Immediately to the right of the rough ground on which I was walking there was, as it seemed, a good smooth track; nevertheless, a strong internal resistance prevented me from stepping on it. When, with an evocation of will power, I presently essayed to do this my feet met nothingness and I fell over a wall. Musing on the superiority of the unconscious to the conscious mind, I at length reached home. Once more memory's reproachful whisper: '3 o'clock!' The other Scafell occasion was in the good company of Raymond Bicknell. It was in December or early January. We had left Gatesgarth before dawn, persisted in spite of threatening weather, breakfasted at Wasdale and been rewarded by getting through the cloud at the very foot of Scafell face. In company with Brundritt and Bower we climbed Pisgah Buttress and, maybe, some other things. Then the party divided, Bicknell and I planning to return to Gatesgarth by Scafell Pike, Seathwaite and the Honister road. Though we had had no trouble with ice on the steeper climbs, at Broadstand the flat rocks were coated an inch thick. Amusedly a party containing perhaps the best amateur iceman of his day turned back from that then impregnable ladies' way. I remember the same thing happening in similar conditions on the Pillar, when Clapham, also an excellent iceman, failed to get across Savage Gully under the Nose. Sometimes the question has suggested itself whether, had these heroes been wielding ice-axes belonging to someone other than themselves, their assault might have been more determined! But a vision of those ice-clad rocks floats up from the abyss, and I know that that is a malicious libel. Defeated by Broadstand, what were we to do? We opted for a descent to Wasdale, where we hoped to borrow a lantern to help us over the Styhead Pass. We secured, not a lantern, but a torch of the intermittent kind. Ice slabs were cunningly intermingled with patches of path. Our journey soon became an orgy of competitive crashes. But both of us in our dreams must have been practising ju-jitsu falls; for neither suffered any hurt. Once we were on the road at Seathwaite, black care left the horseman's back and the return to Gatesgarth did not take us long.

On High Hills proper the first late return I shall describe gets in by false pretences. In truth we were back from our mountain only half an hour or so after the normal time for supper. But the expedition and its surroundings were entertaining and the principal mountain

climbed one not often visited. Therefore I shall drag it in. The year was 1924. I had already been out to the Alps once that season with Tom Gaunt; we had climbed among other things the Gspaltenhorn and Finsteraarhorn and had traversed the Grands Charmoz. But the weather broke badly and, instead of waiting out for my second party, I came back for a fortnight to England. Then Clapham, Hallward and I travelled by train to Aix-les-Bains and thence by bus, car and our feet to the Refuge Vanoise above Pralognan, some 8000 ft. up. The Vice-President-to-be had a pair of new boots and on that first walk acquired horrific blisters on both heels. To get to our principal objective, the Bec de l'Invergnan, alias Grande Rousse, in the Val de Rhêmes, we planned, as a first stage, to cross the Cols de la Grande Casse and du Palet to the Val d'Isère. There was a good deal of mist at the top of the first col, and Hallward, in youthful ardour, urged us to go down through the middle of an obviously dangerous icefall. Clapham and I, having firmly vetoed this method of suicide, were gratified directly afterwards to observe—and comment on—an enormous sérac falling right across the proposed route. Our more orthodox itinerary was without difficulty and we duly reached our goal. But Clapham's heels were in a bad way. His state of general discomfort led a kindly Irishman to surrender a bed to him while Hallward and I slept happily on hay. For the second stage of our journey, the traverse of the Tsantaleina, the injured man gallantly started, but at the breakfast halt decided to turn back, to cross the Little St. Bernard by bus and meet us at Aosta. Hallward and I went on over our mountain to find a charming inn at Charnavy, half-way down the Val de Rhêmes.

The Bec de l'Invergnan has a high local reputation, so that our enterprise inspired some headshakings. The normal way up is by the N. ridge; and this we had meant to follow. But as we approached the mountain, the steeper and more direct E. ridge directly facing us looked much more attractive; and though we did not know whether or not it had been climbed, we decided to have a try at it. All went well till a section of extremely difficult rock barred the way. This a traverse to the right would enable us to avoid. But the traverse entailed crossing an extraordinarily steep slope made of rubble, the whole of which looked like cascading downwards at the least touch. Much fussing and profanity; till at last a niche was found where Hallward could be firmly anchored to arrest my expected descent on the crest of a dust avalanche. With this support for morale the passage gave very little trouble. But our manœuvrings had occupied nearly two hours. A few months later we discovered that our ridge *had* been climbed and—consolation to our pride—that Raeburn and Ling had taken an hour and a half over two ropes' lengths of it.¹ I suspect, however, that what held them up was not our rotten traverse, but the very difficult rocks straight ahead from which we had turned away. The rest of the ridge gave us good climbing. This route is

¹ *A.J.* 24. 321 *sqq.*

a far more worthy approach than the easy N. ridge, by which we afterwards came down. The Bec de l'Invergnan is a fine mountain and the Val de Rhêmes was then a delightful place.

But, having a tryst to keep at Aosta, we could not linger. Walking down the right-hand side of the valley, we got on to what at the start looked like a path. This presently turned into a narrow wooden watercourse above a very steep drop—a place that filled me with loathing and terror. Evidently my immunity from these feelings on proper mountains was an acquired, not an innate, characteristic. Only shame and Hallward's obvious freedom from discomfort prevented an ignominious retreat. At last, safe but very hot, we found the Vice-President-to-be imbibing white Italian wine and with heels so far renovated that he was ready to join us in an attempt on the Aiguille Noire de Péteret.

That attempt petered out in bad weather at the hut and we turned down in the early morning without even starting for our mountain. On the descent there are some steep places; there is no reason for anyone to slip, but if one did he might go a long way. Suddenly, as we were ambling along, annoyed at our bad luck, the usually sure-footed Clapham stumbled and hurtled downwards straight on to me. By some miracle I was enough in balance to stand against that 16 stone of animated and vocal projectile. Thereafter our strong man allowed himself to be bound with cords and conducted downward with every symbol of ignominy by his justly indignant juniors. Even at that the avenging furies were not satisfied. When they had driven us from the Alps by a second and, this time, irreparable break in the weather, they seized upon the delinquent and immobilised him for over a fortnight with heels that *would* not heal!

From a late return that was not really late at all I pass to one that was late but was according to plan and, moreover, could not have developed into a night out, for the simple reason that there was, in effect, no night. It was in Norway early in July 1913. Terence Hickman and I, having done several climbs and got into good training at Turtegrö, were ambitious to try the long ridge over Store Skagedolstind, Centraltind, Skyggedalstind and Gjertvastind, and then back over the Kaiser Pass. We started at 6.30 A.M.—starts in Norway are always late by Alpine standards—climbed Store by Andrews' way, which was new to us, and then up and down over that splendid ridge in fine weather all day long. We had been warned by Ole Berge that the ascent of the Gjertvastind might involve us in much step-cutting and take a very long time. But in fact there was very little ice—chiefly thigh-deep snow of the consistency of beaten-up white of egg, a kind which we had neither of us seen before, but which behaved with decorum. We ate the last of our food—admirable Norse jam—on the top of Gjertvastind under a magnificent evening sky, found a way down into the valley and to the track of the Kaiser Pass and crossed that, first in a post-sunset, then in a pre-sunrise twilight. There was never need for a lantern. Thoroughly content with a fine long journey

in grand surroundings, we reached the hotel at 1.30 A.M., were met by Ole Berge just back from some business at Skjolden, ordered to take our boots off out of doors, and thereafter, though not exactly in those words, to 'tread softly lest you tread on my dreams.'

So far in this record, as the reader will have noticed, the author and, by that token, the hero has committed, at least in foreign lands, no *bêtise*. He has done nothing which a member of the Alpine Club need blush to recollect. The next scene shows him in a less favourable light. The setting was Arolla in 1925 and my comrades Philip Baker and Tom Gaunt. The weather being unsatisfactory, we had come from Chamonix, hoping—a hope that was justified—to be able to snatch climbs in short lucid intervals that would not have allowed of greater mountaineering. On July 13 at 3.15 A.M. we left the Hôtel du Mont Collon for a modest ascent of Mont Blanc de Seilon by the Col de la Serpentine. When we got to the secondary or preliminary summit I, feeling a little upset, parked myself there while the other two finished the climb. By the time they got back to me the world was swathed in a thick white mist; but, since there were our morning tracks to follow, we did not anticipate any trouble. I was going first across the head of the glacier and probably obliterated the tracks, so that the blame for the muddlement that followed is wholly mine. In a sleepy way I noticed that the bootmarks in the snow were pointing, not towards, as they should have done, but away from Mont Blanc de Seilon. This did not worry me. By some miracle the tracks none the less *must* be ours; or, if they were not, it didn't matter, because there was no direction here in which tracks *could* go except where we wanted them. Strange; and at that time I was still in some respects a quite intelligent man! Presently these tracks started to go uphill, and most certainly our journey to the mountain had not been downhill. So something was wrong after all; later reflection showed us that the tracks must have been made by a party going from Mont Blanc de Seilon to the Pigne d'Arolla. We thereupon turned down at right angles. But we had gone too far. After some time a momentary clearing in the mist showed a large icefall below and a rock mass to the left parallel to our course; we were descending the glacier on the wrong side of the Zinareffien rocks. To get through this icefall in a fog was obviously impossible. Reluctant to retrace our steps, we started up the rock barrier with the idea of crossing it and getting back in that way on to our morning's route. But the weather worsened; snow began to fall; the terrain became more and more rotten; and we had no idea how high the obstacle we were planning to cross might be. A council of war, therefore; then retreat and return up the glacier, and a down turn on the proper side of the rock barrier. With the help of another momentary clearing when we were at the turning point this plan worked. Apart from Philip Baker's stepping into a large water hole we got down to and over the Pas de Chèvres and most of the way to Arolla without mishap. Then, as we came in pitch darkness to the thick wood above the valley, our torch faded out.

We lost the track and stumbled about, as it seemed for hours, in the depths of a primeval forest. Two of us had the curious sensation, described by Smythe on Everest, that there was an extra member present with the party; we were four instead of three. But it was not this psychic manifestation; rather indignation at the prospect of complete benightment within half a mile of home that stirred our flagging energies! At long last a track was found, and at 2.30 A.M. we were hammering at the door of the hotel. Redolent of a belated supper and brimming with Asti spumante we greeted on our way to bed a betoused but cheerful party coming down to breakfast as prelude to *their* mountain day.

From the egg to the chicken; from late returns to nights out! The first of these to be recorded was not a night out proper, because it was voluntary and premeditated. It was in 1919. McLean and I had booked for the next day sleeping-berths for Paris, which connected with a train down from Montenvers at somewhere about 3 P.M. The idea came to us that, since the moon was full, a night expedition to the Aiguille du Midi would make a good ending to our holiday. We left Montenvers at 8.30 P.M. and tramped up the Mer de Glace. There was no particular difficulty in getting through the Géant icefall, but we were naturally slower than we should have been in daylight. As we got higher, my companion became astonishingly sleepy, so sleepy indeed that he walked straight into a small crevasse along the edge of which I was leading the way. On the Col du Midi we enjoyed a splendid sunrise view. It would not have taken long to finish the course up the Aiguille, but the somnolence of my companion and our joint desire not to waste our sleeping-berths led us to abandon it. On the downward journey, while I was engaged in cooking scrambled eggs on the open glacier, the succulent odour elicited from my prone colleague a series of resounding snores. We got back with time to spare and lay down to 'read' on our beds. Had it not been for the thoughtfulness of a chambermaid, those sleeping-berths, in whose interest we had sacrificed the Midi, would have travelled untenanted through France!

Of nights out proper, my first was in Norway with Philip Baker. The cause of it was his firm refusal to leave our little hotel at Vettifos before nine o'clock in the morning; the cause of that, his ardour to see yet once again two—to him—attractive Norse girls who had arrived there the evening before. We planned to go over the pass to the right of the Midmaradalstind, but presently found ourselves off the line to it, so that, to get there, we should have had to go downhill. It was much too hot for that. We decided, in that casual spirit which is more pardonable in Norway than it would be in the Alps, to traverse the Midmaradalstind itself, making the mountain serve us for a col. On this route there is an impossible place, that is avoided, as we had been told, by the partial descent of a gully and then a traverse out of it. We found the gully, but in gathering darkness missed the traverse. So back to the ridge for the night. The cold kept us awake, but

when the sun rose it became delightfully warm, and we slept for hours on end ; for how long exactly the demise of our watches prevented us from discovering. Then the descent, discovery of the hidden traverse and good progress till we came to the top of a long gully, which we believed mistakenly to be the ordinary way off the mountain. Though an (unintended) new variation, the gully went well till rain began to fall and started stones falling also. We climbed up the side wall to a safer place and stayed there till rain and stones stopped. Then down a lichen-covered slab and some moderate chimneys on to the glacier. Almost as soon as we were out of the danger zone rain came on again and we walked up the glacier to the Skagedolstind hut in a downpour. There the inhabitants, a lone Englishman, and a party consisting of a young Norseman and Norse girl who had come up in the hope of doing a climb next day, filled us with hot tea. Hoping the rain would stop, we stayed there for several hours ; while there was played out for our benefit a scene from ' The Englishman Abroad.' Our compatriot, on learning that the Norse party were not man and wife, expatiated to them at enormous length on the impropriety of their staying together unchaperoned in the hut. Thus, as a nation, we endear ourselves to foreigners ! As violent rain continued, it presently became evident that nobody would be able to climb anything on the morrow. Thus Mrs. Grundy won a bloodless victory. We all walked down to the Turtegrö hotel, where Philip and I first shook hands with Slingsby's Ole Berge, our admirable host, at the close of a 39-hour day.

Night out number 2 was a *bêtise*. I had gone out to Switzerland with two friends, both of them new to the mountains. Our plans were dislocated by the outbreak of war. It was impossible to get home while the French mobilisation was going on and difficult to get money. We travelled therefore to Zermatt, where Dr. Seiler could be relied on to give credit to a former guest. In the course of our enforced stay we set out one fine afternoon for the Belvedere hotel, met the man in charge coming down with a mule and persuaded him to return with us and feed and house us for the night. On our way up the Matterhorn next morning, one of my friends became mountainsick ; but, as it was a perfect day, he professed himself quite happy to laze in the sun while the other and myself climbed the mountain. There was a lot of snow on the rocks and we had to climb one at a time many places where normally both would have moved together. In consequence, we did not get back from the top to rejoin our colleague till late. The snow on the rocks having become hard, the inexperience of the party made our pace funereal. Darkness caught us still high up, and as, with extraordinary stupidity, we had cached our lantern at dawn, we were forced to stop. Soup at frequent intervals and exchange of greetings by striking matches with a party from Italy that was also benighted an hour above ; then with the earliest light descent from our chilly perch and a straggling return to Zermatt in time for an enormous lunch. After that we lay down for a short siesta on our beds, happy in the hope of a still more enormous dinner. I woke—the

others still sleeping—at midnight. The hotel kitchen was shut; nothing whatever could be got to eat; our postprandial dream dissolved in a dim emptiness. The breakfast menu next morning I do not venture to describe; but it formed an epic ending to our expedition. That expedition so unskilled a party ought never to have undertaken, and I, as senior member, still blush for it.

The season of 1921 contained two benightments, one a very mild one on the wrong side of the Argentière Glacier, but the other more worthy. McLean and I had gone to the Charpoua hut, hoping to climb the Grand Dru. The night was bad, but at 6.30 things looked better and we set out. The weather held till we were near the top, delayed a little by some wanderings from the proper route. There snow was falling, so that we started the return journey at once. On the way up we had noticed a firmly fixed iron ring evidently designed to let one rope down some 25 ft. into the main Dru couloir and so save time on the return. McLean, who was much better at ropes than I was, was to come down last. We passed our spare cord through the ring and for further assurance passed the climbing rope through it too. After some feet of his descent the ropes jammed and he had to climb up to readjust them. He readjusted them wrongly and the same thing happened again. His cries of agony and fury reverberated among the hills! I thanked a kindly Providence that the suspended one had not been myself. For I could never have climbed up those thin ropes pressed against the wall; and for my companion to have climbed them all the way from the ground with me blocking the route would have been work for a trick gymnast. Eventually at 7 P.M. we reached the hut; and there we ought to have stayed; but the lure of hot baths at Montenvers called us. We set out; our candle came to an end; we lost the track and were cut off in the dark by steep faces of rock. Then it began, and continued to rain. We sat with our backs against a stone, McLean, who was then a medical student, explaining to me the symptoms of pneumonia—he was to know them better ten years later on the North Col of Everest—and I, if musicians will permit that word for the sounds that issued from an almost tone-deaf man—singing him songs of consolation. The moment it was possible to see we raced down to the Mer de Glace and on to Montenvers, drank half a bottle of champagne, the most delicious in our joint lives, wallowed in hot baths, ate an enormous breakfast and slept the sleep of the just, if not the wise. No pneumo- or other coccus had the discourtesy to intrude!

In my catalogue of misdeeds the night out which holds first prize for unpleasantness happened in 1920. The party consisted of Clapham, McLean, King and myself. I was the weakling of it, having picked up on the outward journey a throat infection, which bothered me throughout the season, kept me below par, and robbed me of fourteen pounds *avoir du poids*. We had started at the Pavillon de Trélatête, climbing the Dôme de Miage and Aiguille de Béranger and traversing Mont Tondu, as a prelude to greater deeds from Montenvers. Les Périades, which is not often climbed, attracted us. Unwitting of the length of the

journey, we planned to get on to the E. ridge from the Glacier de Leschaux and follow it to the top. This ridge, which is rich in large crystals of various colours, gave us good climbing—and a lot of it. Emerging at 2 P.M.—we had started at 3.30 A.M.—on to a summit which we had for a long time taken for our goal, we were chagrined to see the real top still a considerable distance away. Before we had reached it, eaten and returned, another two hours passed. Under black lowering clouds, we descended a rock rib and snowfield between Les Périades and the Aiguille du Tacul on to the Géant Glacier. By this time I was not feeling up to much; but, whatever he feels like, a man can always go well enough downhill or on the flat. We made our way through the crevasses as fast as we could, Clapham, in his zeal for speed, stepping into a shallow one that was waist deep in water. Then on the Mer de Glace night overtook us and a violent storm of rain and snow. Somebody dropped the lantern; it refused further co-operation; for all our wanderings we could not find the way off the glacier. Presently, I was no longer in a state to grope about in the dark on narrow ridges of ice. McLean and King were sent forward to find the way, with the idea that, when they had found it, they should come back and lead us off. Clapham, meanwhile, regardless of the soaking he had had in the crevasse, heroically sat on the glacier to shelter the patient from the storm. Naturally we both had a very unpleasant time. But McLean and King had their difficulties too. They only got off after a long and complicated journey, from which it was obviously impracticable for them to return and collect us; so they very sensibly went on to Montenvers and stirred up some guides whose expeditions had been abandoned. As soon as it became light, my night nurse and I started for the shore. A few minutes later Joseph and Arthur Ravanel appeared, evidently much surprised to find us both marching on stable feet. While Clapham went on to a well earned hot bath, they took me in charge, tied me on a short rope and delivered me, a dishevelled prisoner, at the hotel door. A hot bath and vast quantities of coffee and food! My throat infection was not cured by this drastic treatment, but it was not made any worse. After two days for recuperation, we crossed the Col des Grands Montets in preparation for a charming traverse of the Tour Noir. On the descent from that mountain by a route of our own invention, Clapham's powers of step-cutting in hard ice evoked our admiring gratitude. But I must not leave the halo which he earned during these days altogether undimmed. Proudly marching down the snow-covered upper reaches of the Argentière Glacier, scorning to join us on a rope, suddenly *he was not!* *Vox et praeterea nihil*, 'an infant crying for the light, and with no language but a cry.' But the last clause of that line is not strictly accurate. Another poet must be invoked, he who sings of

Fallings from us, vanishings,
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realised.

Fortunately, the creature had landed on a bridge of ice and his rescue was easily accomplished. Indeed I half suspect, for memory is fickle, that he had accomplished it himself before the rescuers reached him.

Here ends a tale filled in the main with 'things done long ago and ill done' by a mountaineer whose education began too late. Night life on High Hills was for me sometimes uncomfortable, but it was never worse than that. The memory of it, tinged with shame though it be, is a pleasant thing, pleasant to recall and in these much shadowed days even pleasant—for the writer—to embalm in words.

IN MEMORIAM

HEINRICH DÜBI

1848-1942

As readers of the ALPINE JOURNAL know, our old friend Dr. Dübi¹ was a remarkable man in many ways. In earlier years he won fame as an enterprising mountaineer, in so far as his duties as a classical teacher allowed him freedom for climbing. He possessed strong historical and geographical instincts and also a passion for literary work in any domain. His characteristic motto was: To work and to learn are unfailing sources of happiness. Ability of mind aided by an excellent memory led him to the end of a long course in life to compose many articles of literary, historical and Alpine value, not excluding poetry. This is not the place to enumerate them in full. Suffice it to mention his editorship of the S.A.C. *Jahrbuch* from 1891 to 1923; his Climber's Guides for the Bernese Oberland, a monument of patient research; the second edition, in collaboration with A. Wäber, of Gottlieb Studer's *Über Eis und Schnee*; his guide-book *Saas Fee und Umgebung* (*A. J.* 21. 204); the succession of articles on 'The early Swiss pioneers of the Alps' (*A. J.* 33 and 35), and his exhaustive monograph *Paccard wider Balmat*, which is fully discussed in *A. J.* 27. 202 *sqq.*—a vigorous defence of Dr. Paccard's memory, and the more necessary in that the true record is often poisoned afresh by ignorant or irresponsible writers. Apart from these and other articles on Gottlieb Studer, Melchior Anderegg, the first ascent of the Matterhorn and on Roman and Saracenic routes over the Alps, he wrote studies of Suetonius, Voltaire, Cardinal Schiner and Cyrano de Bergerac. This summary alone will show how wide were Dübi's interests. He continued to publish articles despite growing blindness, with the assistance of a devoted woman secretary. It was a joy to listen to his conversation, full of learning and quaint humour and of manly courage in the face of an inevitable fate.

¹ Portraits of Dr. Dübi are to be found in *A. J.* 33, facing 340, and *A. J.* 43, facing 166.