

will involve a more complicated technique the further afield I go—and will summon so many different energies in Alps or Andes or Rockies. But it will not preclude me from an enjoyment of more confined spaces. If possibility of travel be cut off, it is a test that a man should find content at home, and not only in seeking the way 'per ardua ad astra,' but anywhere among hills, instructing the young in first steps, bathing in the lakes or mowing the upland hay. So it was that Dante, after his first trembling, climbed the Mount of Purgatory with gradually increased competence. From the top, he is ambitious of heaven, the second peak of Parnassus as he puts it. On arrival in the lower circle, by now well pleased with his qualifications for the ascent, he asks Piccarda why she does not try to rise higher, to see God nearer. The answer is satisfying: her job is to be content where she is, for at the level God puts her she is happy. 'E la sua volontade è nostra pace.' The height won is what matters. But Dante, I regret to say, ignores the moral and proceeds higher still, for heaven is reserved for him. And myself, too, more humbly, I find the urge irresistible, to seize food and rush away, I know not whither, in search of a new sensation. With age cometh, or will come, wisdom. But till then let youth have its say, and even as adults we shall be unlucky if we cannot return to the golden days, and

in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

FIRST AFFECTIONS

BY THE EDITOR

Read before the Alpine Club, May 5, 1942

THREE weeks ago Mr. Wilfrid Noyce lightened our darkness with slides and a charming paper in which, like the scarlet thread in our Club rope, the words of a Lakeland poet linked his thoughts. My title is chosen from the same source. While Mr. Noyce has attained the middle land at the early age of twenty-four, I have alas! travelled thirty years farther from the east. Not that the years have brought me the philosophic mind; nor can I tell of first ascents, for I have climbed but one modest virgin peak, and even this may once have heard the shouts of some happy shepherd boy who knew not Coolidge. Yet it may be that my own shadowy recollections of a first season and of the early influences which attended my novitiate will stir something in the embers of your memory.

The child, as Wordsworth tells us, is father of the man, but the maiden aunt is the mother of mountaineers. So at least we learnt here from Mr. Cyril Bailey—and what a delight it was to listen to him—who owed his first Alpine visit to a family compact of aunts. It would be tempting to trace the influence of aunts on the development of mountaineering. We have all heard of the young American who climbed with his aunt and his dog, an animal deemed worthy, despite Weilenmann's strictures on his personal habits, of an In Memoriam notice in our Journal if not of honorary membership of this Club; and Coolidge himself generously acknowledges his debt to her whom, with characteristic lucidity, he calls 'my mother's sister, therefore my aunt.' If there are other such instances among our rude forefathers, let one of our Alpine scholars pursue the matter further—Dr. Stevens or Mlle Engel, or perhaps Professor Graham Brown. For myself, the first urge towards the Alps came when an aunt took a sister of mine to Grindelwald, and my imagination was kindled by their tales of upper and lower glaciers, of Great Scheidegg and Little Scheidegg, and by a chocolate-box postcard where, beyond the deep trench of the Rhone valley, Alps upon Alps appeared. In that moment I caught sight of a promised land.

Some mountaineers may fix an exact place for their conversion to the faith, just as Godley found his Alpine road to Damascus in the passage of the Adler Pass. With myself the scene was less exalted, for it took place in a Hampshire pub where, in an ancient evangelical magazine, I discovered E. S. Kennedy's *A Night Adventure on the Bristenstock*. Thus was the word implanted; and when last month, in these rooms, I handled Kennedy's alpenstock, and at once among the carved records of his triumphs searched out the name of Bristenstock, my thoughts went back across the years and I was again on the threshold, not of a bar parlour but of a great literary inheritance. My feet were on the right road, and in our school library I soon found other signposts: Moore's *Alps in 1864*, the work of another Kennedy, Whymper's *Scrambles* and the Badminton book, where amid grave Victorian puns two of Willink's vivid sketches in particular held my fancy: 'The Pass in Sight' and his gruesome 'Kommen Sie nur.' All honour to Fred Morshead who set up these cairns for the guidance of future Wykehamists. In those days his trim figure was still in our midst, moving as briskly in age as when he went up and down Mont Blanc in sixteen hours. Nearer still, in a medieval tower and an atmosphere icy as the Vallot hut, lurked Graham Irving, about whose head a halo of legend was already forming from the tales of his earliest recruits. But it was not until one December afternoon, when I had cadged a tea off him, that I heard him speak of mountains. 'What,' I asked him, 'is a moraine?' No need after that to change the conversation. If he was surprised to find that I knew my stuff, I was even less prepared for the invitation, Why don't you join us in Wales? You may recall how one March day Alexander Burgener, at the voice of a stranger, fell out from a funeral procession in Saas Grund to go

straight up the Matterhorn, armed only with an ice-axe and old Alois Pollinger; so with equally indecent alacrity I fell in with Irving's recruits, to my perpetual benediction. Three weeks later, after my mother had assured herself that Irving was a desirable friend, I was clinging feverishly to heather holds and burying my nose in the sodden tussocks of Tryfan.

The months pass quickly when you have the prospect of Switzerland, especially of a first visit to Arolla, far quicker than a midsummer night's journey, even when it leads to the glory and the freshness of dawn among the Jura. We all know what midday is at Martigny, but the hot afternoon drive up from Sion had its compensations in leisurely contemplation of a distant Dent d'Hérens above the Mont Miné snowfields and a pause for drink in each of the many villages. It was 9 P.M. before we reached Evolena. There, the first thing I heard was Irving's voice ordering a carriage to Haudères for half past four next morning. So, in the cool upland dawn, I set out for my first *Dreitau-sender*, the Petite Dent de Veisivi. I had not forgotten 'The Pass in Sight,' and was properly clad for that occasion, if not for a low peak on a fine August day. Few seasoned mountaineers will walk the woods of Ferpècle in a Balaclava helmet; nevertheless, overdressed as I was for the part, the years have shown me that, had other inexperienced climbers committed my harmless error, many disasters from changing weather at low altitude might have been avoided. Despite our long journey, we romped over the peak in calm and sunshine, its warm rocks a welcome contrast to my memory of the wintry jewels dangling from the Parson's Nose. In the valley, while Irving and Mallory went ahead, Bullock and I waited to escort the female members of our numerous party. Not far above Satarme there was a short cut across a *mauvais pas*, a beetling crag above and the torrent roaring below. To our dismay, one of the party was attacked by giddiness at the most crucial point, and we two boys had much ado to rescue her. It was an unpleasant reminder that *mauvais pas* means bad step, even if only fifty yards from the rich haymeadows, and however inappropriate the scene for a miniature 'Kommen Sie nur.' And so to Arolla, where Madame Anzevui took us to her ample bosom.

I can think of no better place than Arolla for a first season. There is forest and pasture, snow and ice, good rock and bad rock, secluded basins behind Mont Collon and beyond Pas de Chèvres, and a hidden hollow where the sulphur anemone lingers late. Every peak is accessible from the hotel with the possible exception of the Dent Blanche; while for off days there is a tennis court built on a retired moraine. True, the place is too high for the mule to bring you more than one roll for breakfast, and you must put up with Valais *marcassin* in place of venison with cream sauce and other delights of a Cabinet Minister. But you will find something much better: you will begin life in a proper mountaineering atmosphere. Groups of guides, bearers of honoured local names, stood about the hotel; others lounged on the grass above, migrants from Zermatt and mercurial men from

Valtournanche, with a sprinkling of stalwart Oberlanders—in my eyes, not hempen homespuns swaggering here, but stewards of the mysteries of the mountains. And there were real live Alpine Club men, practising curious arts with ropes, apparelled not so much in Harris tweeds as in celestial light. Some wiseacres among them, and I cannot blame them, looked askance at irresponsible striplings. Fortunately for us, there were then kings in the land, and the monarch of the Mont Collon had once been the original sinner of guideless climbing; he was none other than Girdlestone himself. Rumour breathed that he had usurped the throne by a *coup d'état* from Zinal; be that as it may, no more benevolent despot ever reigned in an Alpine hotel, and he looked with sympathy on the youngest of his subjects. I can see him now tending his beloved rock garden in a battered straw hat, perhaps the selfsame object of chaff from his salad days, and hear his deep voice on Sundays from the lectern denouncing blind guides.

But these are the vapourings of bad weather, and it is time to get busy on the hills. I could if I dared describe an ascent of the Roussette: how we left Arolla in a limpid sunrise when the nutcrackers flew raucous from tree to tree; how we passed through fragrant fields of vanilla orchid to a land of soldanella and snow finches, and from this humble peak heard the piping of marmots and the cowbells ringing up from the pastures like the notes of Papageno's song. The day was hot, the descent was dry, and it was exactly milking time when we were back at the chalets and their good gigantic smell.

There will I kiss
The bowl of bliss,
And drink mine everlasting fill
Upon every milken hill.

Surely, if the great Martin Conway could, 'with utter lack of foresight,' lower a litre of cold milk, there was some excuse for the brisk intemperance of youth. Our training, however, stood up to it when we ventured higher on the Za. There was no need for hurry as we were to spend the night at the Bertol hut. It was already afternoon when we laboured over the north Col de Bertol and crept like wall-crawlers across the slabs to the final chimney. Here at last I was in high places, on the verge of a vast snowy desert leading to Zermatt, within sight of Matterhorn and Monte Rosa and a host of giants to the east; and westward, beyond the huge bulk of the Combin, in deeper, more ethereal blue, its snows a softer moonlike cream in the haze of distance, the imperial palace of Mont Blanc. As the shadows lengthened we ran down to our rucksacks and toiled up to the cabane.

There is always some anxiety in drawing near to a hut, obstinate questionings about accommodation, if not blank misgivings as you number the people outside. Perhaps, had Christina Rossetti visited the Bertol in early August, she would have cried with less confidence, 'Yea, beds for all who come.' Your anxiety is increased on a first visit when you are not quite sure how to behave, how many blankets

you may steal, whether you should take the shoes from off your feet. Moreover, it is difficult to climb well when countless eyes are watching you from the balcony, and you feel rather like the Axe Fiend or even Susannah in the presence of the elders. Indeed, there was a swarm of tourists expatiating like the bees of Milton's simile on the smoothed plank of this citadel, their countenances new rubbed with balm. If there was a babel of foreign tongues at sunset beneath the Clocher, this was nothing to what happened by night. Somewhere in central Brazil there is a range called the Snoring Mountains; here was its European counterpart, with the soothing *ronflement* of weary Frenchmen, the soft rustling *russamento* of the warm south, the sharp staccato Nordic *Schnarchen* and, master of the chorus, the *gardien* himself, in full-throated ease. After this first international, we were not in our best form next day, and Irving wisely turned us back at an ice slope covered with loose snow on the Bouquetins, consoling us for our defeat with a glorious walk round the peak. For the young climber, it has been written, defeat is nothing less than spiritual disaster. Somehow we manage to survive.

We were, or fancied ourselves, now ready for the Collon, despite the headshakings of the wiseacres. I must confess that on the day's work they had some justification. Now at the head of the Pièce Glacier there are two adjacent cols, and as we drew near them a guided party scorched in shameless silence past us and made for the right-hand col, to the fury of Irving. The lefthand col was close at hand, and he was determined to circumvent the scorchers. So over we went, but the more we endeavoured to edge to the right, the more firmly did the mountain drive us downward to the left, till at length Irving was forced to cut across a very steep ice tongue and climb a difficult rock face before regaining the glacier plateau. In fact, our short cut cost us some three or four hours, and it was midday before we set foot on the actual peak. Meanwhile, as afternoon grew to evening, my family in the hotel were at the mercy of the wiseacres, and had it not been for the restraining hand of Walter Larden, friend and counsellor of young and old alike, a search party might well have been under weigh when our forerunners burst into the *salle à manger* between the soup and the fish. Only when Irving had taken Mallory and Bullock in magnificent time up the Dent Blanche could we look the world properly in the face again. Thereafter we were no longer mere *arrivistes*, we had arrived.

It is one thing, however, to arrive: it is quite another to stay the course. As August draws on and the first serious weather break heralds the coming of autumn, the mountains take on a sterner aspect of challenge to our allegiance. Elsewhere there is warmth and comfort; surely, after laborious days, we have earned the reward of sunbathing and French cookery. And with these seductive thoughts there creeps in a doubt whether early rising and scanty provisions are really worth while, whether after all the whole thing may have been no more than mad endeavour. In such circumstances, listlessness can well win the

day. I fancy Irving felt some such doubt about my attitude when one foggy morning, while Sir Prudence remained between blankets, he routed Mallory and myself out of bed for a traverse of Dent Perroc and Grande Dent de Veisivi. Looking back on it, I feel we took some risk of thunderstorms, for at times the muttering grew to a grumbling, but there was always an exit from the ridge on the Ferpècle side. Despite conditions, the climb was a brilliant success as we raced over ghostly gendarmes and crazy pinnacles, and giant crags loomed up through the mist only to beetle off at our approach. We groped our way off the Grande Dent into a sea of boulders where Irving and Mallory, refusing to halt, tripped lightly as a mountain brook, while I tripped heavily over both their ropes. That day meant more to me than barked shins. I had seen that morning mists are not a sure sign for slinking back to bed; and I gained confidence from moving in unison with my companions where doubtful weather demanded speed. But it was more than the mere winning as it were of a good conduct stripe. When at last the others condescended to unrope on a gentian-starred lawn and beneath the ragged edge of cloud a vision of rainswept valley appeared, I got a glimmer of what Godley discovered in the mists above Mattmark, that these hills are for us the dwelling place of 'truths that wake to perish never.' So it is that, while other memories vanish, this day among cloud-capped towers remains clearer for me than many a sunshine holiday. Meanwhile, with the approach of thunder the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling, and we got home soaked but triumphant for tea, where the first to congratulate us was Sir Prudence himself. Stung in conscience, he departed next morning for Zermatt with the sacrilegious sigh, 'I suppose we shall have to do the Matterhorn.'

It was time for us to step westward, for no season is complete without a visit to Chamonix. If the Petite Dent had been our *hors d'œuvres*, Mont Blanc was to be the *bombe glacée* of our primitive appetites. Our journey thither carried us through three countries, for in those days you could cross a frontier without attracting rifle fire, and to carry a passport was the mark of a diplomatist or an international crook. We left Arolla by the Col du Collon, a long trudge up the easiest of glaciers

till we slope to Italy at last,
And youth, by green degrees.

There was little green about the savagery of Combe d'Oren under weeping skies, and no youth in the braised marmot of Prarayé; while as for sloping to Italy, a late President has affirmed with truth that the Valpelline runs uphill the whole way to Aosta. Wreaths of mist hung low in Valcournera, fleecy washtub clouds enveloped the broad pasturages of By, and at last we entered Etroubles in a tropical down-pour. As we crossed back into Switzerland next day by Val Ferret and Champex, where our party disbanded, the fine weather returned for good. I was led to Chamonix by the finest of all ways of access,

with dawn on the Plateau de Trient, through the gateway to sunshine on the Saleinaz Glacier, and then the sudden vision in all its icy splendour of the Verte from the Col du Chardonnet, and tea at the Pâtisserie des Alpes. After tea Irving, who was sadly in need of repair, vanished to the tailor's and reappeared at Couttet's with an air of unwonted respectability and a French crown colour seat to his trousers. I was too modest to quote Peter Quince's comment when he beheld his master translated.

Now Couttet's is a cradle of climbers, but in Irving's view, as he eyed me busy with Savoyard honey and rolls unrationed, it was likely to be the graveyard of training. At length he took me by the shoulder and, pointing like Balmat in the celebrated statue, showed me a hotel on the distant skyline of Col de Voza. There was then no railway to take you up to the snowline, and it is an almighty long way from Chamonix to the Tête Rousse. Once there, however, as you look out into the sunset over the rounded hills of Savoy, you know that there are better things than breakfast rolls in the vale of Chamonix; and when next day you pass from the Aiguille du Goûter to the wide sunlit spaces of the Dôme, you realise that the best is yet to be. A Mummery may scorn the treadmill of these upper snows; a Tartarin may feel that the eyes of his native town are upon him; if you are seventeen you will step proudly on to the Calotte with every Chamonix telescope focussed upon you. 'Des personnes sont visibles aujourd'hui au Mont-Blanc.' But you will not remain long on the summit in a tempestuous wind, surveying a thousand valleys far and wide, before running furiously down to the Vallot hut. In a very short time we were back at the First Bosse, near where Tartarin and Bompard parted company with cries of 'outré' and 'boufre,' leaving only a severed rope to tell the tale. There was a small patch of ice here, and before I had time to say *outré* I was following Tartarin into Italy. Irving must, I fear, have said something stronger than *boufre* as he took a flying leap into France and so arrested my descent. And this, under the nose of every telescope in Chamonix. It was well to learn thus early at the cost of a mere knuckledusting that climbing, like matrimony, is not lightly to be undertaken, that indeed there is no such thing as an easy mountain. You may read, mark, learn all Alpine scriptures; their inward digestion is the matter of a lifetime.

From the Vallot hut we ran down the broad track towards the Grands Mulets. Braver men have turned their backs on this primrose path, but the call of Chamonix has always been too much for me. I should like to linger over the journey from plateau to plateau, with sitting glissades that made serious inroads into Irving's museum piece, and the halt for tea while the Aiguille du Midi had its final fling at us, and the descent of innumerable zigzags, till darkness overtook us as once, after the same expedition, it encompassed Moore and Almer in the lower pinewoods. But the lights of Chamonix are at hand and we are already late for dinner at Couttet's, where some Comus in a boiled shirt will bring us orient liquor in a crystal glass.

And here, amid feasting and feminine flattery, all seasons and this paper should end, were it not that for every pious novice there is one more port of call. I am thinking of this Club. I am too young to recall the atmosphere of St. Martin's Place, but I had the fortune in the December following to attend the annual *tamasha* in Savile Row. I went up the narrow winding staircase past the menus of long digested dinners and entered a room crowded as the Bertol hut. There, one of the Arolla wiseacres took pity on me, and pointed out some of the great figures: here Douglas Freshfield, a golden eagle among lesser falcons; here Edward Whymper, aloof as the mountain of his destiny; there Martin Conway, now drinking tea with foresight; and I caught the rich Doric tones of that bearded apostle George Yeld in converse with Farrar, to whom younger men never turned in vain. As I looked with awe on these paladins, the lessons of my first season lived anew in the goodly fellowship of mountaineers who enriched and bequeathed a tradition that is indeed 'the fountain light of all our day.'

If the light be now dimmed and the visionary gleam fled, one fountain at least continues to flow, and it is my privilege to guide its *Wasserleitung*. I refer to our Journal. Let me add one story and so, with aunts begun, with aunts shall end our song. During the last war, a sympathetic aunt was giving tea to a nephew. On a table nearby was mid-May's eldest child, the ALPINE JOURNAL. Suddenly the aunt found her nephew's attention wandering. 'Now, Tom,' she said, 'I see what you're looking at. Take it off and read it.' And Tom, a good classical scholar who now lies in the Thracian Chersonese, was invisible till dinner time. Happy were Yeld and Farrar who furnished a magic carpet for his journey to heavenly places, happy the authors who wove its pattern in words. Once more the Delectable Mountains are shrouded in the fog of war, and our pilgrim is toiling up the Hill Difficulty under a very heavy rucksack. We cannot ease his shoulder from the burden, but perhaps some channel of thought in our pages may lead the waters of remembrance across these barren slopes to a wayside fountain, where he may drink his fill and then go on his way refreshed. Each step is bringing him nearer to the land of promise, and one day he will again hear the shrill piping of the marmot and find the sulphur anemone in the hidden hollow.

KENYA AND RUWENZORI

By R. A. HODGKIN

OUR attitude to most peaks fluctuates enormously; distant admiration gives place to practical appreciation tinged with a wise but selfconscious dose of humility; then, as our spirits quail at closer contact, a little braggart optimism helps to redress the balance. Still more on the peak itself the see-saw of hope and doubt swings fast with the arrival of each new problem and the turning of