

ALPINE NOTES

(Compiled by D. F. O. Dangar)

MEMBERS of the Club and all readers of the ALPINE JOURNAL are reminded that their full co-operation is necessary in the compilation both of *Alpine Notes* and *Expeditions*. The combined intelligence service of our regional correspondents, the Assistant Editors and the Editor still falls short of omniscience. We accordingly appeal to our readers to let us have notes on all matters of mountaineering interest that may come to their attention, and of all expeditions in which they may take part. Items for *Alpine Notes* should be sent to Mr. D. F. O. Dangar and for *Expeditions* to the Editor. It may be well to add that our interest is not confined to first ascents and to the spectacular; all contributions to our knowledge of mountains and mountaineers are valuable.

HONOURS.—We congratulate Sir Evelyn Baring on receiving a Barony in the New Year's Honours List, and also on his receipt of the Queen's Commendation for saving life.

Other recipients of New Year's Honours whom we congratulate are :

Mr. G. W. Furlonge	K.B.E.
Mr. G. F. Peaker	C.B.E.
Mr. John Poole	O.B.E.
Mr. J. Winthrop Young	O.B.E.

In November 1959 Dr. N. E. Odell was lecturing in Finland, Sweden and Denmark, under British Council auspices. At Helsinki he stayed with our member, Sir Douglas Busk, now British Ambassador; and after one of his lectures at the Geological Institute he was presented by the Rector of the University with its bronze medal. He also had the pleasure of meeting members of the Svenska Fjällklub and of the Dansk Bjergklub, in Stockholm and Copenhagen respectively.

DEATHS.—Two deaths that have occurred in recent months that are of interest to mountaineers, are those of Dr. Philip Gosse and Mr. R. A. Frazer.

Dr. Gosse, only son of Sir Edmund Gosse, died in October 1959 at the age of eighty, and had accompanied the FitzGerald expedition to the Andes in 1896-7 as naturalist. On his return his *Notes on the Natural History of the Aconcagua Valley* were privately printed (1899).

Mr. Frazer was elected to the Club in 1921 and resigned in 1941. A scientist and a well-known authority in the field of aeronautical research, he had taken part in more than one expedition to Spitsbergen; his climbing record on joining the A.C. consisted of three seasons, 1910, 1919 and 1920, and included a large number of guideless climbs (occasionally solo), mostly in the Dauphiné and Mont Blanc range. He died last December at the age of sixty-eight.

WILLIAM WICKHAM KING (1862-1959).—It is seldom that a member of the A.C. who has resigned is commemorated, since contact is easily lost, but the late W. W. King, a member of the Club for forty-two years (1895-1937) deserves mention. He died on December 11, 1959, at the age of ninety-seven, and he belonged to an early group of climbers, in Skye in particular, though also in the Lakes. In Clark and Pyatt's *Mountaineering in Britain* he appears in a group portrait (no. 38b) at Sligachan in 1898, but he had been climbing a good deal earlier than that.

In 1891, with J. N. Collie, he made the first crossing of the Thear-lagh-Dubh Gap (Coolins); in 1892, in the Lake District, he was on the first ascent of Buckbarrow by both the Rowan Tree and the Left Face Gullies; in 1898 in Skye he made several new routes, including what came to be called 'King's Chimney'; in 1908 he made the first ascent of the north chimney of Bruach na Firthé (Coolins).

But mere 'firsts' in no way indicate his activities; he appears to have begun climbing in 1885 at Wasdale and his first visit to Skye was in 1887. With Collie he had climbed almost every pinnacle of the Coolins by the time of his joining the A.C.; he had also climbed round Glencoe and Torridon.

He visited the Alps in 1888, but made no serious ascents until 1890. In 1892, 1893 and 1895 he was again in the Alps and in 1894 in Norway. His climbing companions included, in addition to Collie, W. W. Naismith, W. C. Slingsby, W. J. Petherick, G. A. Solly, and Dr. Backer-Gröndahl. His climbs comprised the principal peaks in the Oberland and Valais, sometimes guideless, and he did a good deal on walking tours, including (1893) a geological tour with Professors Lapworth and Heim (*S.M.C. J.*, III, 40). Other ascents include the Meije, Dru and various Dolomite peaks. His last season (in Norway) would appear to have been in 1912.

He was educated at Radley, where he distinguished himself at rowing, and was by profession a solicitor at Stourbridge, as his father had been before him. He was a very keen geologist and received both the Wollaston Award and the Lyell Medal of the Geological Society.

He was an original member of the Climbers' Club and a member of the S.M.C. from 1891. He never contributed to the ALPINE JOURNAL,

but several entries will be found in the early volumes of the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal*, and his passing removes one of the few climbers, in Scotland particularly, who were active in these islands seventy years ago. To his widow and family we convey our sympathy in their loss.

T. S. BLAKENEY.

ADRIEN VOILLAT.—Adrien Voillat was killed last August as the result of an accident in the Calanques of Marseilles; he was forty-four years of age. Voillat was a North-face specialist and ranked among the foremost ice climbers of the day.

His Alpine career began at the age of fifteen with a solo ascent of Mont Blanc and in recent years he had carried out a remarkable series of ice climbs, usually with his wife and Maurice Brandt.

Voillat did not consider a North-face climb complete unless the descent was made by the same route. Among his expeditions were the first ascent and first descent of the North-north-east face of the Blümlisalp Rothorn, the first descent of the North face of the Studerhorn and of the West-north-west face of the Wetterhorn. He had also made the first descent of the North face of the Doldenhorn and of the Ober Gabelhorn and numerous other similar expeditions.

He had his own technique for the descent of great ice faces by means of which, and the special equipment he had designed, he achieved some fast times, descending in a few hours by routes which had required a day's work or more for the ascent.

WHYMPER AND THE TAUGWALDERS.—This hardy annual has been raised once more by Sir Arnold Lunn in his 'A.L. Notes' in the *Journal of the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research*, Vol. II, No. 8 (Dec. 1959), p. 242. There are several mistakes. Mrs. Chichester, daughter of Alfred Parker (see *A. J.* 30. 25, 159; 32. 22, 55, 224) is quoted as saying (a) that her father and uncles were the first to employ the Taugwalders after the Matterhorn accident, in order to allay the unjust insinuations against them; and (b) that they resigned from the A.C. because of the resolution about guideless climbing (which Sir Arnold notes was in 1870).

As regards (a), in 1865 the Parkers' movements are reasonably well known in July–August (*A. J.* 30. 159 *seqq.*). They appear to have arrived at Lenk not later than July 25; were held up by bad weather on 26th, crossed to Sierre on 27th; up to Zinal on 28th; over the Triftjoch on 29th; and stayed in Zermatt on 30th. They were unable to ascend Monte Rosa and moved on to Bel Alp (Aug. 5), and to Faulberg on 9th; Finsteraarhorn and to Viesch on 10/11th, and on to Luzern (12th and 13th). No mention is made of their having guides at any time.

The Taugwalders and Whymper were held in Zermatt for the enquiry into the accident up to July 22 (*A. J.* 2. 153). 'Young' Peter would not appear to have been engaged by the Parkers, at any rate; E. N. Buxton picked him up in Chamonix (after being paid off by a former employer), probably not later than August 3.

'Old' Peter's movements are less well known; between the Matterhorn enquiry and Güssfeldt's engagement of him in September 1865 (see *A. J.* 61. 501, note 27(v)) we have no exact information. He *could*, therefore, have been engaged by the Parkers between July 31 and August 5. A. T. Parker's letter (*A. J.* 30. 161) has a reference to another guide with whom he talked in Zermatt, but neither then nor at any time in these letters is Taugwalder mentioned, though the Parkers met M'Cormick in Zermatt and refer to 'the recent accidents'. It simply is not credible that the Parkers could have engaged Taugwalder during this period and never mentioned it in letters home. And we have no evidence that, after August 13, when the Parkers were in Luzern after three weeks' climbing, they were intending to go back to Zermatt, to start a fresh spell of activity. On the contrary, one inclines to the view that they were at the end of their holiday.

As regards point (b), that the Parkers resigned from the A.C. because of taking exception to the Club's views on guideless climbing, this is disposed of by the fact that Alfred Parker resigned in 1869, the year before F. C. Grove read his paper about guideless climbing, whilst S. S. Parker remained a member until 1877. As for the resolution passed at the meeting of the A.C. on June 13, 1870, this (A.C. Minute Book) reads:

'Opinions were generally expressed against mountaineering without guides except in the case of parties of well-trained mountaineers and with special precautions.'

In the then state of the craft, this is hardly objectionable, and is consonant with Leslie Stephen's note in *A. J.* 5. 96, in the first part of which care is taken to avoid any hard and fast ruling on the matter; whilst in the later portion it is perfectly clear that the criticism is directly pointed at the follies of Girdlestone, whose book was later acutely described by Mr. H. E. L. Porter as 'the Duffer's Drift of mountaineering literature, unconsciously giving lesson after lesson what not to do if one wishes to survive' (*A. J.* 62. 43).

T. S. B.

THE TALE OF AN UMBRELLA.—Last summer I had several chats with the eighty-seven-year-old guide, Onésime Crettex, of Lac de Champex. It was pleasant to hear the old Valaisan accent and expressions which the new generation, although they can speak the local dialect, have lost.

One evening, over a glass of wine in his chalet, he told me a story which solved a 'who-done-it problem' which I had recorded in my Alpine diary many years ago.

The Petit Clocher de Planreuse, a formidable obelisk some 600 yds. E.N.E. of the Saleinaz hut and many hundreds of feet high, was first climbed by a party led by Maurice Crettez in 1896,¹ Maurice having previously failed when he tried it alone.² It was climbed a second time in 1899.

In August 1902 Onésime Crettez, who claims no relationship to the late Maurice, went up to Saleinaz to do some climbs with a couple of Swiss from Neuchâtel, one of whom had an umbrella. This produced some criticism from Onésime who held that it was just not done for a soldier or a mountaineer to carry such an effeminate piece of equipment. After climbing two or three peaks in the Argentière-Charbonnet area (I forget which), it was decided to take a day off and Onésime suggested a few hours fun on the Petit Clocher. The others protested that a very difficult climb which had taken Maurice Crettez and his party 5½ hours could hardly be classed as a day off, and decided to go guideless for the Grand Darrei, a relatively easy peak in the vicinity. Onésime was left to his own devices and at the hut he talked of tackling the Petit Clocher alone, but they went off convinced that he could never succeed where a much taller man like Maurice had failed.

On their return the Neuchâtelois were amazed, but apparently not annoyed, to see the open umbrella perched on the summit of the Petit Clocher. There, built into a strong cairn, it remained in a progressive state of dilapidation for many seasons and the handle may be there still.

It was on August 17, 1902, that, having come down to Saleinaz from the Aiguille d'Argentière, I went with two friends up the Grand Clocher de Planreuse to watch the sunset over a sea of clouds and there we were greeted by two apparitions. One, whose cause could be explained, was the Spectre of the Brocken; the other, a black mushroom on the top of the Petit Clocher, which on inspection through a glass turned out to be an open umbrella, was a phenomenon the cause of which remained a complete mystery to me for fifty-seven years!

F. J. SALMON.

ACCIDENTS.—The annual summary in *Les Alpes* records that in the summer of 1958 sixty-eight people were killed in the Swiss mountains. Forty-seven of these deaths took place as the result of accidents in the high Alps.

¹ The other members of the party were Dr. E. Lardy and Emile Revaz.

² Maurice could have reached the summit had he chosen to do so; he did not 'fail' because of any difficulty. See *A. J.* 58. 305.

SWISS GLACIERS.—The *Commission des Glaciers* in its 1957-58 report reveals that most of the Swiss glaciers are still in retreat. The hopes that the period of recession might be terminated have not been fulfilled. Of the eighty-nine glaciers observed all but six were shrinking. The results for last year may be even more disappointing in consequence of the abnormally dry summer.

From a comparison between the Siegfried map of 1876 and the *Carte Nationale* of 1934, P. L. Mercanton concludes that in the course of fifty-eight years the Swiss glaciers lost 14·8 per cent of their area.

A BLIND MAN'S FEAT.—M. Arthur Richard, a blind French climber made the ascent of Mont Blanc last August. His time was reported as being about the same as that taken by other climbers.

The first blind man to climb Mont Blanc was Sir Francis Joseph Campbell (1832-1914), an American by birth who lost his eyesight when still a small boy. He came to England after the American Civil War and subsequently became Principal of the Royal Normal College for the Blind. His ascent took place in 1880; he also climbed the Matterhorn, Eiger, Jungfrau and other peaks.

ALPINE RESCUE CHARGES.—*Der Bergsteiger* tells of an Austrian climber killed on the Aiguille Verte. His body was brought down to the glacier by his companions and was then taken over by two Chamonix guides, who bore it to the Couvercle and thence to the Montenvers station, from where it was transported by rail to Chamonix hospital.

The relatives subsequently received a bill, including hospital and medical charges, for 9,100 Austrian schillings (approximately £130), plus a further charge of 4,000 Austrian schillings for returning the body to Austria.

REFUGES.—The new Albert Ier refuge, successor to the building erected in 1930 on the right bank of the glacier du Tour and named in honour of King Albert I of the Belgians, was completed last summer. It provides sleeping accommodation for about 130 people in six dormitories and is fitted with modern conveniences.

In the Dauphiné the Châtelleret hut has been replaced by a new building with accommodation for sixty people.

The Erzherzog Johann hut on the Gross Glockner has also been enlarged and modernised and will have sleeping accommodation for an additional twenty-five people. The building of the original hut was commenced in August 1879, twenty years after the death of the great pioneer of the Eastern Alps whose name it bears.

EIGERWAND.—Three ascents were made last summer. *Der Bergkamerad* reports that some doubts exist about one of these as the result of a careful examination by several of those who have climbed the face of the published photographs. Weather conditions, it may be added, prevented any sight of the party during the climb.

The Basel section of the S.A.C. held an enquiry about the ascent, but after six hours deliberation came to the conclusion that the information available was not sufficient to decide whether the two-man rope had, or had not, climbed the face.

HÖRNLI HUT.¹—This question has not yet been settled, the Commune of Zermatt having refused permission to the S.A.C. to build a new hut on a higher site.

GRANDES JORASSES.—Pte. Young, North face.² *Der Bergkamerad* reports that this route was taken by a German party on the descent in August, 1935.

VATNAJÖKULL.³—An Austrian, Herr Otto Woitsch, has succeeded in crossing by himself this vast Icelandic glacier, 8,500 sq. km. in area. He succeeded only at the third attempt, bad weather having twice compelled him to abandon the journey. Woitsch had previously crossed the Vatnajökull from south to north-west in 1950 with Professor Helmut Schreiner.

CHIMBORAZO.—M. Marcel Kurz informs us, with reference to the footnote in *A. J.* 64. 241, that he has a record of another British ascent of Chimborazo. On September 6, 1953, Mr. Sebastian Snow reached the summit with César Morejon. This was the eleventh ascent of the mountain.

AMNI MACHIN.—We learn from a correspondent in Peking that the Mountaineering Federation of China is interested in this mountain, which has featured at times as a possible 'higher than Everest' (see *A. J.* 55. 320; 61. 221). It is hoped to send a party of Chinese mountaineers to it in the near future; the estimated height at present is 6,800 m. (22,310 ft.).

THE RUWENZORI.—In *A. J.* 64. 64, it was stated that confusion still reigned about the respective heights of the Ensonga and Vittorio Emanuele Peaks of Mount Speke. The Lands and Surveys Dept. of

¹ *A. J.* 64. 130.

² *A. J.* 64. 117.

³ *A. J.* 48. 257.

the Government of Uganda have now courteously informed me that it has been definitely ascertained that Ensonga is the lower—15,961 ft. plus or minus 3 ft.—Vittorio Emanuele is 16,042 ft.

D. L. BUSK.

STRANGE DOINGS ON MOUNT EVEREST.—A Press report relates a queer story told by some Tibetan porters. They stated that a Russian climber was killed and eaten by a yeti on Mount Everest last spring.¹ The porters said that they heard the Russian calling for help, and the cries of the yeti, but were so terrified that they ran away. The unfortunate victim was presumably devoured by one of the small yetis; it is known that they feed on men, in contrast to their big cousins who prefer yaks as a diet.

ABSIT SNOWMAN.—A Russian expedition is reported to have spent nine months in the Pamirs searching for Abominable Snowmen. Elaborate arrangements were carried out to find one of the creatures including hidden observation posts, the use of nets, and traps baited with sheep and goats, but no yeti was found. This can only be regarded as most disappointing news, in view of the experience that befell Mr. A. G. Pronin in the same range,² and it now seems fairly certain that any expedition that goes to look for yetis in either Kulu or the Pamirs will be wasting its time.

HIMALAYAN PLANS.—During the present year Annapurna II (26,041 ft.) is to be attempted by a party led by Lt.-Col. J. O. M. Roberts. An Anglo-American party has received permission to try Pumarikish (24,580 ft.) with the possibility of attempting Disteghil Sar. Both these peaks lie in the same region to the north of the Hispar glacier.

A Swiss expedition, led by Max Eiselin, is making yet another attempt on Dhaulagiri. In addition to the Swiss members, Kurt Diemberger of Salzburg and the Polish doctor C. J. Hajdukiewicz will be in the party. The attempt will be made by the North-east spur and there seems every hope that, given favourable conditions, the summit will be reached.

The Japanese are renewing their efforts to climb Himal Chuli and an Indian expedition to Everest has also been reported.

Sir Edmund Hillary is taking a party to the Himalayas in the autumn, primarily for physiological research, and hopes to attempt Makalu without oxygen.

¹ We have received no information of a Russian expedition to Everest in 1959.

² *A. J.* 63. 130.

The Austria section of the Austrian Alpine Verein is sending a party of five to Disteghil Sar. The party consists of Wolfgang Stefan (leader), Diether Marchart, Gottfried Mayr, Herbert Raditschnig, and Günther Stärker. The route by which the ascent will be attempted will be decided on the spot.

NEW ZEALAND CORRESPONDENT.—Mr. Norman Hardie has kindly undertaken the duties of New Zealand correspondent for *A.J.*, in succession to Mr. David Hall.