one pitch graded V+. Much of the more difficult climbing involved was on the rocks of the so-called Marble Belt situated above the second bivouac site. Long sections of loose rocks meant few sound pitons and illusory belaying. All the factors mentioned above coupled with the very long, difficult and dangerous descent of 2½ days make it a route of great scope and really very high standard.

The Polish climb described above is an example of the great opportunities for ambitious mountaineering still available in the Jazgulem Dara valley area. Many new routes are still possible, not only on the S face of Revolution Peak. Apart from the SE face of the neighbouring Peak of 26 Bakinsky Commissars already mentioned there are many untouched 1½km-high faces on the unnamed peaks in the E part of the valley, as well as the Liap Nazar Peak E face which is 2km high. Climbers participating in the International Alpine Camp at Revolution Peak will also enjoy their helicopter flight from the main Base Camp at Lenin Peak to their camp in the Jazgulem Dara valley. This is an obvious attraction because the plane flies for about 200km above the highest and most interesting areas of the Pamirs including the Fedchenko glacier, one of the world's biggest.

The author of this summary material hopes that the information it contains will add to the bibliography of this very interesting area; a complete lack of any data, including even Soviet sources, causes serious problems for foreign visitors. Visited by an increasing number of Alpinists of all the nations the Pamir mountains may soon become a superb yet inexpensive ground for climbers training to tackle the most difficult lines of the Karakoram and Himalaya.

Memories 2

Early years

David Cox

Mountaineering began for me, anyhow in my own imagination (which is what mattered), when I first had Dartmoor on my doorstep after my parents went to live there in 1927. I was then 14, and by the time I was 16 I was religiously keeping mountaineering diaries. These were not only immensely detailed but portentously serious, getting worse and worse in both respects until I was about 21, by which time I was quite an elderly member of the OUMC. It astonishes me now to find that I wrote nearly 8000 words about my first OUMC meet at Helyg in March, 1933, and well over 20,000 words on the 4 weeks' holiday I had in the Scottish Highlands and Skye during the summer of that year. Even more remarkable, a second, and only slightly condensed, version of the same events was subsequently written up in a larger book which I regarded as the official record. This was bound in cheap, red leather, and was much too valuable to be taken with me on holidays.

The same remorseless process of record was applied to visiting OUMC lecturers and to any other well known mountaineers I happened to meet. Not only their utterances were noted, but their physical characteristics as well. No prizes are offered for anyone who can identify 'a dynamic little man, very small' who came and talked to us in 1934 about recent developments in British rock-climbing; but other, more ancient heroes or heroines may be harder to guess. For example: 'aged

about 75, tallish, thin, rather wizened face, bald head, grey drooping moustache; like a professor (W. P. Haskett Smith), or 'short, white hair and small white moustache, fiery red face' (W. N. Ling), or 'looked very young for her age; wig (?)' (Mrs. Aubrey le Blond), or 'a fine, weather-beaten looking man, with a large and irregular nose, vaguely like a pelican. Though he had to clear his throat almost every other word, he does not look 75 by any means' (J. N. Collie). On one occasion, in 1933, Elliott Viney and I quite by chance met William Temple, then Archbishop of York, in Patterdale. The Archbishop, who was too heavily built to be able to be a mountaineer, would hardly have got into my diary in his own right, for that reason; but he earned his place by telling us a story of C. F. Meade's undergraduate career at Oxford, to the effect that Meade, a Trinity man, had removed the mitre from a statue of Archbishop Laud somewhere on St. John's in order to put it on a statue in Trinity.

Gradually, however, the later diaries began to confine themselves to actual events and, mercifully, to become more succinct. I mention the older diaries because, whatever their defects, they are an interesting phenomenon. There must, I suppose, have been some inner compulsion which made me desperate not to forget any detail of a day spent climbing, or anything else that came my way about mountaineers. I am sure I was far from unique in feeling this.

In order to start rock-climbing, even on Dartmoor, I felt I needed the proper equipment, which in those days was delightfully uncomplicated. Apart from some old clothes, there were only 2 basic items: a rope (manilla, of course) and a pair of nailed boots. An 80-ft length of rope was recommended by Abraham as suitable for a party of 3, and I soon acquired this. It was a noteworthy status symbol, but it was also one of my more hopeful investments, as down in Devon there was no one at all to climb with. There seemed to be no resident climbers in the whole of Devon and Cornwall, and Dartmoor was never at that date visited by people who climbed elsewhere. My first pair of nailed boots, supplied by James S. Carter, who advertised as 'Alpine Boot Maker' in the *AJ*, were similarly inappropriate to Dartmoor, although I sometimes used them. Heavily nailed with clinkers round the edges and hobs in the middle, they were a solid embodiment of the then prevalent doctrine that climbing in nails taught you how to place your feet with precision.

The climbs which I could find on Dartmoor were mostly short, 40 ft or less, but for years I had my eye on the one serious crag in our corner of the moor, the Dewerstone, and in particular on the Devil's Rock. After I had done a bit in Wales and elsewhere—in 1935, in fact—I for the first time discovered someone in the area to climb with, Rennie Bere, whom I had met in the Alps that summer. We climbed it by a route which is now called Climbers' Club Ordinary (why, I am not quite sure), and had a most enjoyable day, particularly memorable to me because of the piton we put in as a belay below the difficult pitch. I think it was the only one I ever inserted, and I must have been very sophisticated by then, or very apprehensive of the climb, to be carrying it at all. Indeed, my diary of the event says I was carrying no less than 5 pitons, as well as a sling and a karabiner. Two or 3 of the pitons still survive in my tool-shed, and are used for scraping mud off spades. Pitons were by no means common then, and pitons left in position (as the one on the Devil's Rock was) were very rare. In Wales, I can only remember, although there must have been others, the mysterious and unnecessary one on Holly Tree Wall from which the Piton route got its name; another in the (then unclimbed) Central Gully of Lliwedd; and the one above Faith and Friction Slab. There was also,

surviving anyhow until 1934, the historic broomstick used by Pigott's party in the Conservatory, and in 1936 no less than 3 pitons were left by the Germans in the Munich Climb, although these were soon removed. Credit for the whole idea of introducing artificial aid into Wales was supposed to belong to the Bathurst brothers, but what exact weaponry they used when making the first ascent of the Cracks on Dinas Mot in 1926 was only a matter of rumour.

In the early thirties, clinkers were giving way to tricounis; even James S. Carter, Alpine Boot Maker, would give you tricounis if you insisted. Nails, though, were not the rock-climber's only footwear, and hadn't been for some time. Rubbers, normally plimsolls, were permissible on the more delicate routes, but it was understood that it was poor form to use rubbers on a V Diff. On certain boot climbs, eg, the first pitch of Charity or the step across on the last pitch of Kern Knotts Chimney, both graded only Diff, this convention ensured that sloping holds quickly acquired a surface like polished glass. These being the prescribed rules, we reluctantly observed them. There came a day when Robin Hodgkin and I were climbing the Napes Needle in boots; an austere, elderly figure who was leading an adjacent climb suddenly shouted at us. Did we realize the damage our nails were doing to that worn penultimate foothold? Had we no thought for posterity? It was people like us, etc . . . This was G. R. Speaker, President, or certainly ex-President, of the Fell and Rock. I forget whether we immediately removed our boots, but I suspect that we did. The problem disappeared after the war, when the introduction of vibrams soon made the nailed boot a museum piece.

Rubbers naturally were no advantage when the rock was muddy or wet, and it is a queer thing how long it took for anybody to realize that, if it came on to rain, the sensible thing was to put on socks over one's rubbers, rather than simply climb in stockinged feet. Not only was this a painful business, but one's feet got very cold, and presently lost all sensation. My most vivid memory of this is on the occasion of an OUMC party's highly incompetent ascent of Longland's in 1934 during March, when there was still some snow on the upper ledges of the W Buttress. We ought not to have been there at all; but we had a brilliant leader in John Hoyland, who

38 Crib Goch, Snowdon (This and next photo: C. Douglas Milner)

eventually got his feet so frozen that he had to hand over the lead to a most reluctant second. Luckily this happened on the easier upper slab, but it was already nearly dark, and we eventually got off the cliff in the small hours of the morning thanks to Elliott Viney and Oleg Polunin, who had seen our predicament and waited around at the top for half the night. Clogwyn du'r Arddu at that time was a cliff for a very small number of experts. There were only some 10 routes altogether on the 2 main buttresses, and all of these were believed to be lines from which no escape was possible once you were committed. Had it not been for John Hoyland, we should never have gone near the place; subsequently we visited it quite often, though never without trepidation. John was a very fine natural climber and a most modest and delightful personality; tragically, he was killed that same year on the Brouillard ridge, when he was still only 19.

The OUMC Welsh meet of the previous year (the one to which I devoted 8000 words) would never have dreamed of having a look at Cloggy. Abraham's *British Mountain Climbs* was our guide-book, and the best climber was probably Andrew D'Aeth. Mostly we climbed standard Diffs on Tryfan or in Cwm Idwal. But towards the end of the meet there came a great day, when D'Aeth took me up Great Gully on Craig-yr-Ysfa (described by Abraham as 'an Exceptionally Severe course'); not only that, but D'Aeth offered to propose me for the Climbers' Club. As we were still on the climb, this was like being knighted for gallantry on the field of battle; I was happily unaware that the CC was then badly in need of new members and would take almost anybody. The most interesting entry in my diary of this meet is a note of my total expenses for 9 days: £4 11s. 4d., which included food, hut dues and petrol for the drive from Plymouth to North Wales and back.

Elliott Viney and I had climbed together on this meet, and did so again in the Lakes a few months later (when we met the Archbishop); but Elliott was not involved in the trip to Scotland and Skye in the early summer of 1933. For me, this began as a walking holiday, starting in the Cairngorms and moving over to Glen Torridon. My original companion developed a septic heel, and I was left on my own. There had been a loose arrangement to meet up at some stage with Alan Pullinger and Michael Low in Skye, so I made my way to Glen Brittle, where I camped for 8 days by myself. Somehow I had completely run out of money, but Mrs Chisholm at the Post Office accepted my word that my parents were sending me £5 and allowed me just enough credit for subsistence rations. One morning, I found that a large tent had appeared in the glen overnight, and my hardships were over; but it was not until after mid-day that the tent's occupants showed any signs of life. Alan and Michael believed in eating, sleeping and climbing in roughly equal proportions, and some 10 hours of each had to be fitted into the 24-hour day. That year we stayed on in Skye for a week before moving to Glen Nevis and Glencoe on our way south. In 1935, another Low/Pullinger party, of which Elliott, Tony Cunliffe and I were members, hired a boat, complete with boatman, Willie, at Mallaig. We spent a fortnight of mixed weather climbing and walking from various anchorages, notably Loch Scresort in Rhum and another particularly fine one behind the Grey Isle in Loch Scavaig. We hoped to traverse the Skye ridge from there, but the weather sent us back to bed, as it did on several other occasions.

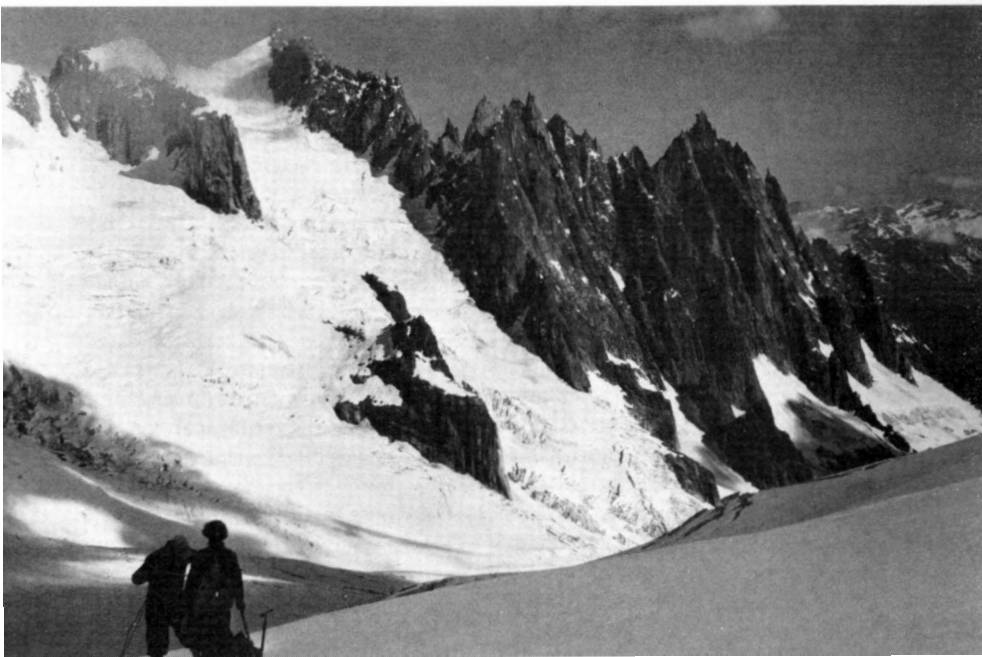
Robin Hodgkin came up to Oxford in 1934, and although I was away for the first term of 1935 we climbed together a great deal over the next 2½ years. How much climbing he had done before, I don't know but, like John Hoyland, from the start Robin was clearly a better climber than the rest of us, and he was a particularly

reassuring leader—partly because he would never force anything he felt he couldn't do, partly because of his ingenuity in arranging protection. Climbing behind Robin, I gained a lot of confidence about venturing on to VS climbs. Incidentally, it was Robin and Anthony Serraillier who put a Union Jack on top of Oxford's most challenging building, the Radcliffe Camera, on the night of George V's Silver Jubilee. Shameful to confess, I was too nervous of being caught by the Proctors to take part in this ascent (which earned a leading article in the *Daily Mail* about England's youth not yet being wholly decadent); Nully Kretschmer and I repeated it 2 nights later, Robin and Anthony having reported that the streets were totally deserted at 3am and that the standard was only V Diff.

* * * *

What of the Alps? My parents allowed me £280 a year, of which approximately £210 was to cover the fees and other expenses of the University year (as in those days it did), leaving me with £70 for vacation holidays. This was a generous arrangement, but so far as the holiday budget was concerned it posed the problem of how to get the maximum return for my outlay. There were, after all, 3 annual vacations, and many exciting areas to be visited in the British Isles. Should I blow half the £70 by going to the Alps, or would it be better to have much more climbing and hill-walking at home? In my first year at Oxford, 1933, the choice was easy. There was no OUMC meet in the Alps, and there hadn't been one for years; I knew no one with whom I could climb there. Next year, there was a counter-attraction: I was to have gone with Alan Pullinger, Michael Low and others to the Lofoten Islands, a most successful expedition as it turned out; but I incapacitated myself 2 months beforehand by falling off a small crag in Shropshire. The resulting damage was not serious, but I contracted some sort of blood-poisoning of the head which kept recurring. The one consolation about this was that I was able to pay my first visit to the Alps, although in the most frustrating circumstances. For one thing, I looked like a convict, as the doctors had shaved off all my hair; for another, as a

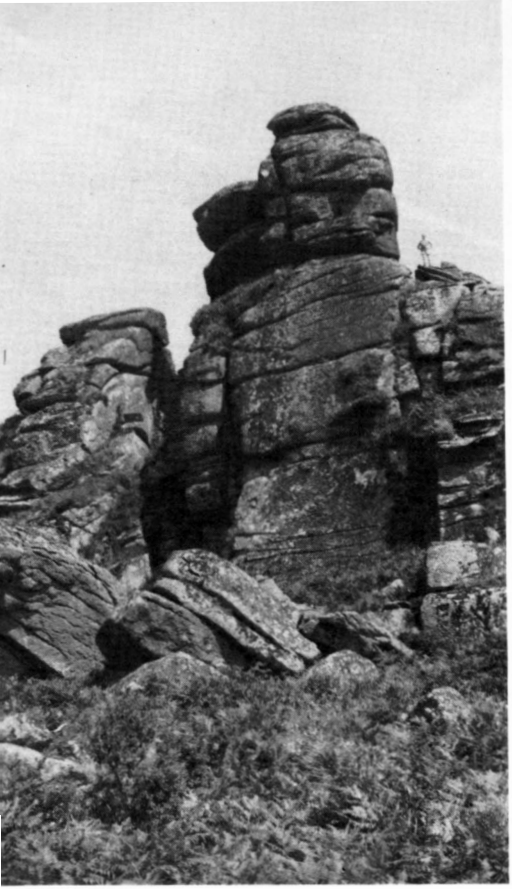
39 The Aiguilles of Chamonix



supposed convalescent, I was only permitted to go at all as a member of an Oxford undergraduate reading party. This meant that we were there to work. We lived in a chalet on le Prarion above the Col de Voza, at nearly 1800m on the northern spur of Mont Blanc, with the whole tremendous panorama from the Bionnassay to the Verte spread out in front of us if we walked for 10 minutes up to an adjacent crest. On just one occasion during this tormenting fortnight, mostly spent reading Livy and Cicero, I got away to Chamonix and hired a guide, who took me up my first Alpine climb—the Petits Charmoz, followed by the Aiguille de l'M and the Pic Albert. None of these summits reached the magic figure of 10,000ft, but the guide was surprised to find that I had been on rocks before, and towards the end of this very short day—we were back at the Montenvers by 11.30am—made a friendly remark, to the effect that I ought to try to become an alpinist.

In 1935, we decided that there must be an OUMC meet in the Alps. After my one short climb of the previous year, I almost ranked as an Alpine veteran, but we were very much aware that none of us had any real experience. For the first 10 days we based ourselves on Champex, where peaks like le Portalet or the first 2 or 3 summits of the ridge of the Aiguilles Dorées were well suited to our capabilities. We had arranged to join up later with a CC meet at Lognan (has there been an official CC Alpine meet since then?). It was encouraging to find that most of their contingent was not much more expert than we were, and they had employed a guide, Nestor Crettex I think, who had to divide his services among about 16 people. We climbed some respectable peaks, such as the Tour Noire and the Aiguille d'Argentière, by standard routes, and 3 of us ended the season with an extraordinarily slow, guideless traverse of the Grépon. I cannot remember much about it, except that we met a live mouse in the bivouac shelter on the Rognon des Nantillons. It was long after dark when we got back to the Montenvers and, not having enough money to stay in the hotel, we spent the rest of a horrid night trying to sleep on the station platform, with rain dripping everywhere through the roof.

The next year, an OUMC party, Robin, Campbell Crichton-Miller, Denis Ryan (nephew of the great V. J. E. Ryan) and myself, went to the Oberland. For some reason I have forgotten (the relevant diary is lost), we had occasion to sleep in a tent on the snow-field of the Petersgrat. No one had told us that, if we were camping on snow or ice, it would be as well to have some sort of insulation underneath us against the cold. How, we wondered between shivering fits, did people survive at 7000m on the North Col? It was clear we were not of that breed, but we survived the night somehow. Next day, we climbed the Lauterbrunnen Breithorn by the W ridge, and were startled to find on the way down that there was a large hole in the glacier exactly where all 4 of us had been standing when we roped up. My other main memory of the Oberland that year is of our one more ambitious climb, the Jungfrau by the Rottal route. We had taken food for one night at the hut, but had to spend a hungry extra 24 hours there because of a storm which went on all day. Next morning it was fine, but the weather showed every sign of breaking as we ploughed our way up the Hoch Firn through deep snow. By the time we reached the top of the Jungfrau it had done so. Groping our way down the ordinary route, which we didn't know, was a very slow business, and it must have been about 7pm when we reached the Jungfraujoch station. The people there were surprisingly warm in their welcome. This turned out to be because, covered in snow as we were, they thought we had been involved in the heroic attempts to rescue Hinterstoisser's party which had been going on for the past 2 days from the tunnel in the Eigerwand.



40 Vixen Tor, Dartmoor (Photo: E. Pyatt)

41 The Finsteraarhorn (This and next photo: Swiss National Tourist Office)

It was in fact the final day of that tragedy, of which we had known nothing until then.

Two or 3 fine days followed, during which we did the Mönch and the Finsteraarhorn, and I then moved on to join another Oxford friend, John Ryle, at Arolla. There we did one or two peaks, but also spent 3 days marooned in a snow-storm at the Bertol Hut. Eventually we made our way to Zermatt. Possibly because of our experience at the Bertol, John had become convinced that huts were both sordid and unnecessary; why should one not climb direct from one's base? The peaks around Zermatt are high, and Zermatt itself only 1600m; it seemed to me the wrong area for putting this austere doctrine into practice. Night after night I was roused just after my head had hit the pillow, to stumble blearily off up the main street of Zermatt; this happened no less than 5 times within a week. In this fashion we did the Rimpfischhorn, the Matterhorn, the Breithorn and Zinal Rothorn, all direct from Zermatt; and in fact we practically did the Rothorn twice, turning back

2 Allalinhorn, Rimpfischhorn and Strahlhorn

on the first occasion about an hour below the top because of some sinister-looking clouds which dissolved harmlessly long before we were back in the valley. The longest of these trips was the Matterhorn, which was crowded and not in very good condition and gave us a 21½ hour day. It may be noticed that the list includes the Breithorn, which is little more than a walk by the *voie normale*. Our spirits must indeed have been avid for peaks in those years. Yet there was, and remained, something exciting about merely being at a height in the Alps. A year or 2 later, I was on Mont Blanc for the first time, hoping to climb it by one of its easiest routes with a friend who had never been up an Alpine peak before. We started at about 10pm from the same chalet near the Col de Voza where I had felt so frustrated in 1934 and walked all night. When dawn broke we were approaching the top of the Dome du Goûter, but my friend was feeling the altitude badly and presently we had to give up. This was a sad disappointment for us both, yet somehow it had been a notable day if only for the sensation of walking on crisp snow and steadily gaining height, until at dawn we were above everything we could see except the slopes stretching up ahead.

These two seasons, 1935 and 1936, coincided with the period in which Colonel Strutt was both President of the Alpine Club and Editor of the *AJ*. We were not of course members of the Club, but we used to read the *AJ* from cover to cover and were well aware of Strutt's views. Indeed, he ranked high on the list of mountaineering authors whom we used to quote somewhat irreverently in suitable situations. Certainly, in our case, the conventional nature of the climbs we aspired to in the Alps was nothing to do with Strutt's inhibiting influence, nor did the reactionary image of the Alpine Club which he projected deter us from desperately wanting to become members as soon as we were qualified. There were some splendidly medieval rules at Oxford; for example, that undergraduates must not go into public houses; but these were more of an agreeable challenge than anything else. It seemed entirely right that mountaineering's most ancient institution should be the guardian of some similar traditions.

But I must admit, I felt rather differently about one of Oxford's medieval rules in the summer of 1937. I wrote my History Finals early in June, and had the

thrilling prospect of going to the Caucasus. We had sometimes climbed in Wales with John Jenkins and Michael Taylor; they were from Birmingham University, and had done a number of highly enterprising climbs in the Alps, some of them first British ascents. A plan was hatched for a joint Birmingham/Oxford expedition to the Caucasus, which had not been visited by a British party for many years. Robin, Bob Beaumont and I were to be the Oxford participants. The expedition was in fact a brilliant success and achieved several first ascents, including a new route on Ushba which, some 25 years later, was to result in Robin receiving the badge of a low grade Russian Master of Sport. Sadly, I had to miss all this, because I discovered that a 'viva' was an absolute requirement for anyone who wanted an Oxford degree. The Proctors would give no dispensation from this formality, and my viva could not be held until late July. It took only a moment, and I remember the question I was asked. Who was Bishop of Lincoln in 1447? It seemed a fearful pity to have missed 6 weeks in the Caucasus for this, especially as I didn't know the answer.

The phenomenon of 14 July on the Cervin[1]

L. G. Valette
(Translation: H. Pursey)

Who has not been intrigued to read of the mysterious apparition witnessed by Whymper and his two guides, Taugwalder father and son, after the terrible fall of their unfortunate companions? And what is one to think of the phenomenon? For my part, I have never come across a plausible explanation of this vision in the literature of the Alps. Brocken Spectre, aurora, optical illusion, collective hallucination arising from the intense emotions of the 3 mountaineers after the accident, double rainbow distorted by refraction or simply by the overexcited senses of the observers, heavenly apparition—all these have been advanced without offering a satisfactory solution. I have myself been to the Cervin 4 times in various weather conditions, fine and stormy, with skies of supernatural beauty, but without being able to observe the slightest unusual effect. Moreover, the guide Hermann Schaler of Zermatt, who has climbed the Cervin more than 200 times, has himself never seen anything resembling the description. To arrive at a more plausible explanation of the phenomenon, if not more scientific in the rigorous Cartesian sense, we need to examine thoroughly not just the various possibilities, but also all the available data from which the climatic conditions can be deduced, that is, the meteorological conditions on that memorable 14 July 1865—memorable both for alpinism and for the history of the Cervin and of Zermatt.

In his description Whymper says in particular: 'As for me, I thought after a moment or two that perhaps it was a mirage in which we ourselves were in some way involved, but *our movements did not cause anything to change. The ghostly forms stayed quite still.*' And later: 'It was an awe-inspiring, wonderful spectacle, unique among my recollections'.

It was '6 o'clock in the evening', and the roped party arrived 'at the snow on the