should be able to see them and I could not. All through the night while they shivered I lay snug in 2 bags and reasoned my way in and out of all sorts of possibilities. Still no sign of them at dawn, nor all through the day. At last I wrote a note to explain what I intended to do and determined to set off down at first light the next day. How I was going to accomplish the descent with what was later diagnosed as a badly broken wrist and a duff knee I neither cared nor dared to think upon.

Then I saw them and tired, but well in control, they abseiled into 'Fawlty Towers' at about 5pm. I was never happier to see anyone. Nor they, I suspect. During the inquest that inevitably followed, it transpired that I had not been able to see them because they followed the gentlest possible final slope to the summit and this was behind a ridge and in dead ground to me. Anyway it mattered no longer. All we had to do now was get down.

There is not much to tell of this—and still less that I care to remember. We were hungry; there was no food; it took 2 days and it hurt very badly. At one stage I said that I envied them having the thought of the summit to succour them, to which Pete replied that being alive wasn't such a bad thing to be thankful for—and right he was.

Some mountain. Some adventure. Big and beautiful enough for us at the time and there's the N-S summit ridge still waiting too, should you ever feel inclined.

Memories 3

Present moments

W. H. Murray

Although bred in Scotland, I was unaware of mountains until I was out of my teens, except as a backdrop to the lively foreground. My change of focus came with the suddenness so often told of conversions in faith. By happy chance I overheard two men discuss a traverse of An Teallach—clouds lifting off a high ridge, sun-shafts lighting a glen below—and my attention was gripped. Here was a wildland of the skies, to me unknown, yet unlike the moon immediately accessible.

I knew no one who climbed mountains. So early in April I went alone to my nearest, the Cobbler at Arrochar. I had thought that cloudless day perfect for the job, not reckoning on hard snow plating the upper hillsides. Unaware as yet of a need for boots and axe, I learned the bad way. The lesson if salutary was not the important one of the day. That came at the rocky summit. I looked across hill-ranges, sparkling white or shadowed, receding to the rim of an arctic plateau. It looked as if it must stretch on for ever. I had never dreamt that my own country held wildland so vast. I recognized on the instant that every peak and glen of it had to be known.

A man around twenty enjoys a god-like assumption of immortality. But this day I saw with a pang of dismay that life is short and the hill-ranges long. There was no time to be lost.

My instant reaction proved constant—to know and explore mountains. A second need, to climb rock and ice, grew naturally out of the first a year later. But I felt most diffident about trying to join a club. People I had met on the hills assured me that

rock-climbers were close to gorillas, with bulging biceps (to haul themselves up long ropes) and ability to grip with their toes a ledge at chin-level and stand up. A reading of George Abraham partially dispelled that nightmare, but climbers still had to hold, on shoulder-belays and with bare hands, leaders who fell off high above. I felt weak not only at arms and shoulders but now at the knees too.

When courage was at length screwed up, I joined the JMCS. A week or two later, I was led up my first rock-climb, the Spearhead Arête of Ben Narnain. I can remember that as if I were still on the climb—the sudden awareness of airiness, the high angle, the finger-tip feel of coarse rock, then the lightness that comes of self-abandonment. A leading rockman, Bill Mackenzie, later asked me to join Dunn, MacAlpine and himself in Glencoe. This Mackenzie had the wiriness of a young greyhound, a shock of black hair, and a predatory nose. I turned up, not without trepidation quickly justified.

'Been up the Crowberry?' asked Mackenzie.

I replied, startled, 'I've been hoping to try one day—maybe in twenty years if I keep at it—'

He stopped me with a brusque 'We'll do it tomorrow'. Then, perhaps noticing the dismay in my eyes, he snapped 'Nothing to it'.

I was to hear these last 3 words often in future, accompanied by the blatter of rising wind and rain on the cliffs. But he spoke more truly than he knew on this first occasion. I was so keyed up on the Crowberry Direct that I passed the crux without knowing it was there. After that the barriers were down. Confidence shot. The climbs were packed in and we turned to the winter rocks.

During these early years I had rapidly discovered that the human race is composed of just two distinct species, those who climb and those who don't. All light and wisdom lay with the former. The latter dwelt in darkness. I am astonished now how long this conviction lasted in face of mountain climate and the company I kept. Having become a 'fanatic' (devotee of winter rock) I tended to have friends of 'eccentric' character (minds not running on orthodox grooves). I met one of the more stimulating of these on Ben Nevis one black night in March. With Mackenzie and company I had gone up to the hut to try Observatory Ridge. Snow lay heavy and the night was so foul that to find a route we had recourse to the frozen bed of the Allt a'

20 *The Western Highlands across Loch Eil (This and next 3 photos: D. Scott)*

Mhuillin. We staggered into the hut to be welcomed by a short stocky man with a wicked grin. He looked tough. This turned out to be Dr J. H. B. Bell. He was then Editor of the *SMC Journal*, with a long list of new routes and of climbs in the Alps and Caucasus. His party had come to make a new ice climb in Green Gully. His welcome was practical—bowls of soup from a red-hot stove. Thus restored I had first experience of his sense of humour, when he sent me out to dig for water through deep snow in the burn, knowing well it was frozen solid. My education continued next morning when I watched him make breakfast. A professional chemist, he argued that a meal was simply a fuel-intake, and its division into courses an auld wives' nicety, not for climbers. Therefore, into a huge pot of porridge he cast half a dozen kippers, eight sausages, and a can or two of baked beans, which well stirred became his party's fuel-mix for Green Gully. One of his men, after a spoonful, strode to the door and cast his plateful to the snow, but in justice I add that his team made the climb.

I began to climb with Bell shortly after. Just as Mackenzie converted me to iced rocks, these giving more tricky and varied problems than sun-warmed gabbro, so Bell converted me to vegetatious schist and granite, all the better if wet. The new outlook gave me Clachaig Gully, among other things. I rejoiced in Bell as I did in later years when I met Tom Patey and Hamish MacInnes. They were all in the same category—daft. I use the Scots word for its original meaning of 'unreasonably happy'. Progress comes often from men of this stamp. Bell was always ready for new techniques. On ice he had begun using crampons with daggers (1937), and was experimenting with tubular ice pitons (1939) using sawn-off brass curtain rods for use with rope-tension, when war broke out.

I applied to join the mountain commandos, and was promptly posted to Western Desert infantry.

My return to mountains after the war, and after three years in prison camps, felt like rebirth. I climbed back to form in Wales, then happened to pay a visit to Harrison's Rocks. There I met a black-haired youth who offered to show me some of the easier climbs. I should have taken more note of his sardonic eye. He put me on to the hardest and stood back grinning when I failed to get off the ground. His name was Michael Ward. We became friends, climbed in Scotland, and next year went to the Dauphiné with John Barford and Wadsworth.

Barford had my immediate respect for his energies of mind and spirit. He had written the Pelican *Climbing in Britain* and was secretary of the new BMC. He had the restless drive of the born organizer and could if need were be ruthless. I thought that given time he could organize even the UK's climbers into military efficiency, and on this score felt wary.

After 10 days around La Bérarde, Barford, Ward and I crossed the Col de la Coste Rouge under the Ailefroide, meaning to climb on the Écrins before moving to Chamonix, where Barford's goal was the Walker Spur. On the descent from the col, all three of us were struck on the head by stonefall. We fell 400 feet into the bergschrund. This was my first experience on mountains of total detachment of mind from body. As if standing apart, I could alertly observe the fast slide, Barford and Ward shooting past me, myself braking, and feel neither fear, pain, nor even cause for alarm. In short, the nervous system was shocked out of action. Yet I could apply my pick to ice with a deliberately firm grip. I ended up jammed in the lip of the schrund, legs swinging free. I pulled out and looked in. Barford lay dead on a ledge. Ward was jammed lower down, alive and kicking. He like me had a fractured skull, but did not know it. When we extricated ourselves (20 minutes), I could feel no

emotion either at Barford's loss or our own predicament. The detachment lessened by degrees as we found our way down the 7 miles of the Glacier Noir. It ended abruptly as soon as we reached a road and people.

I have since been convinced that nature is much less red in tooth and claw than she seems. The fox or rabbit taken by hounds almost certainly feels nothing. I have wondered too how many VCs have been won on shocked nervous systems—no fear no valour.

Suddenly impending death, of course, need not free one from fear. All depends on the occasion. In 1949, Fred Baker and I were on the Nantillons Glacier below the Rognon at dawn. High above we heard a thud like a big gun and glimpsed a flash of white smoke. An icecliff had broken off. I watched, hypnotized by the speeding avalanche. We stood in its track with nowhere to go. At the last moment when the first iceblock whizzed past, terror exploded inside me and jumped me into the nearest crevasse. The avalanche thundered over the top. My crevasse was only 8 feet deep, but I had not known that when I jumped. Baker escaped likewise.

Narrow squeaks, which come to us all in a lifetime, do not seem to cast up any useful lesson from which we can all profit. The first qualification for a mountaineer, one might think, is just to be born lucky. I have seen it to be not so simple as that. One prime qualification is to be alert and stay that way daylong—aware of what one is doing, what companions are doing, and of the environment from the loose hold at one's nose to the cloud on the horizon. This self-possession can largely eliminate the moments of carelessness that cause such heavy life-loss. I am told by men wiser than I that there is no such thing as luck. I think I understand what they mean, that what we think of as accidental good or ill is self-earned, yet I find in practice that the term luck has often indispensable vagueness.

For example, it could be said that I owed my life on the Nantillons Glacier not to luck but to Richard Hull, whom I met the night before at the Montenvers hut. He and Charles Evans were heading for the Brouillard Ridge. We had not met before, but on hearing that I was bound for the Grands Charmoz, Hull spent time explaining in detail how Baker and I could save time reaching the Nantillons Glacier in the dark. He went over the course several times to be sure I understood. I felt surprised at the trouble he took and his exceptional friendliness. The result was that the 10 minutes we saved next morning took us just above the lower glacier, which had been devoid of crevasse cover. I, at the receiving end of this good fortune, could not help thinking of Richard Hull as the agent of Providence. A few days later, when I heard of his death by stonefall on the upper Brouillard, the conviction evaporated. Why him and not me? I could feel now only that I had been lucky and he not.

Mountaineers to survive are self-trained to prudence, yet much tempted on occasion to pare it to the bone. The process of chancing one's luck can, if swift, exhilarate; if prolonged, shrivel enjoyment. When I first saw the Everest icefall in October 1951, I thought that by Alpine standards the place was a death-trap—walls several thousand feet high, only half a mile apart, and bursting at the seams with hanging glaciers. Avalanches must surely sweep it from side to side. Long as we waited, nothing fell, but even so I felt terrified while climbing it, as Shipton later confessed he did too. Dry as the glacier was, its many crevasses were like pots, bridged by huge icelids, which at some places thinned so that an axe-spike went through, or sometimes quaked, as we did. Yet no one proposed we should turn away. Was this physical courage or moral cowardice? I wondered at the time, and think it was neither. Mountaineers do develop a nose for degrees of danger, and while the Khumbu icefall always will be dangerous, we had this instinct that the avalanche risk

was tolerable, despite first appearances.

The meaning of 'terrified' is most elastic. Two years earlier I had taken Tilman to the SC Gully in Glencoe. Since he came new to Scottich ice he was shaken. He declared himself terrified at the big pitch, which that day was 70 feet of blue and white water-ice. He could not have led it, but he climbed neatly and without much hesitation. Given practice, he would like me have been able to revel in the skills of high-angle cutting and line-planning. His own skills were those of a higher and wider field, which made demands on varied qualities of character. In these Tilman was much my superior. This brief meeting with him fired in me a wish to explore bigger mountain country than the Alps or Highlands.

In the following year I spent 4 months in Garhwal and Almora with Douglas Scott, Tom MacKinnon, and Tom Weir. We had been eagerly anticipating our first sight of the Himalaya. Cloud screened them on the day we reached Ranikhet. Sunrise next morning brought me tumbling out of doors. Again disappointment. The N horizon was still broadly belted with cloud. I was about to turn away when a wild notion made me lift my head. And there they were. A great continent of the heavens, wholly apart from Earth. The notion of climbing over such remote and fragile edges never entered my head, nor could the desire enter my heart. Had I been born among them, I might have been led to worship this abode of the gods, but not to set my boot on their crests. They seemed not of this world.

A month later, I wrote from the heart of the Rishiganga to Tom Longstaff. His reply reached me within three months by the Kaliganga:

'I was entranced to get your letter from the Dibrugheta Alp... There is no more lovely place in all Himachal. You have seen the best—and now understand what I mean by 'living in the present': just forget all before-and-after and soak the moment into you so that it will never come out. Just travel is the thing. Number your red-letter days by camps not by summits (no *time* there) ... Enjoy—and for always, as you can thro' concentration.

Yrs

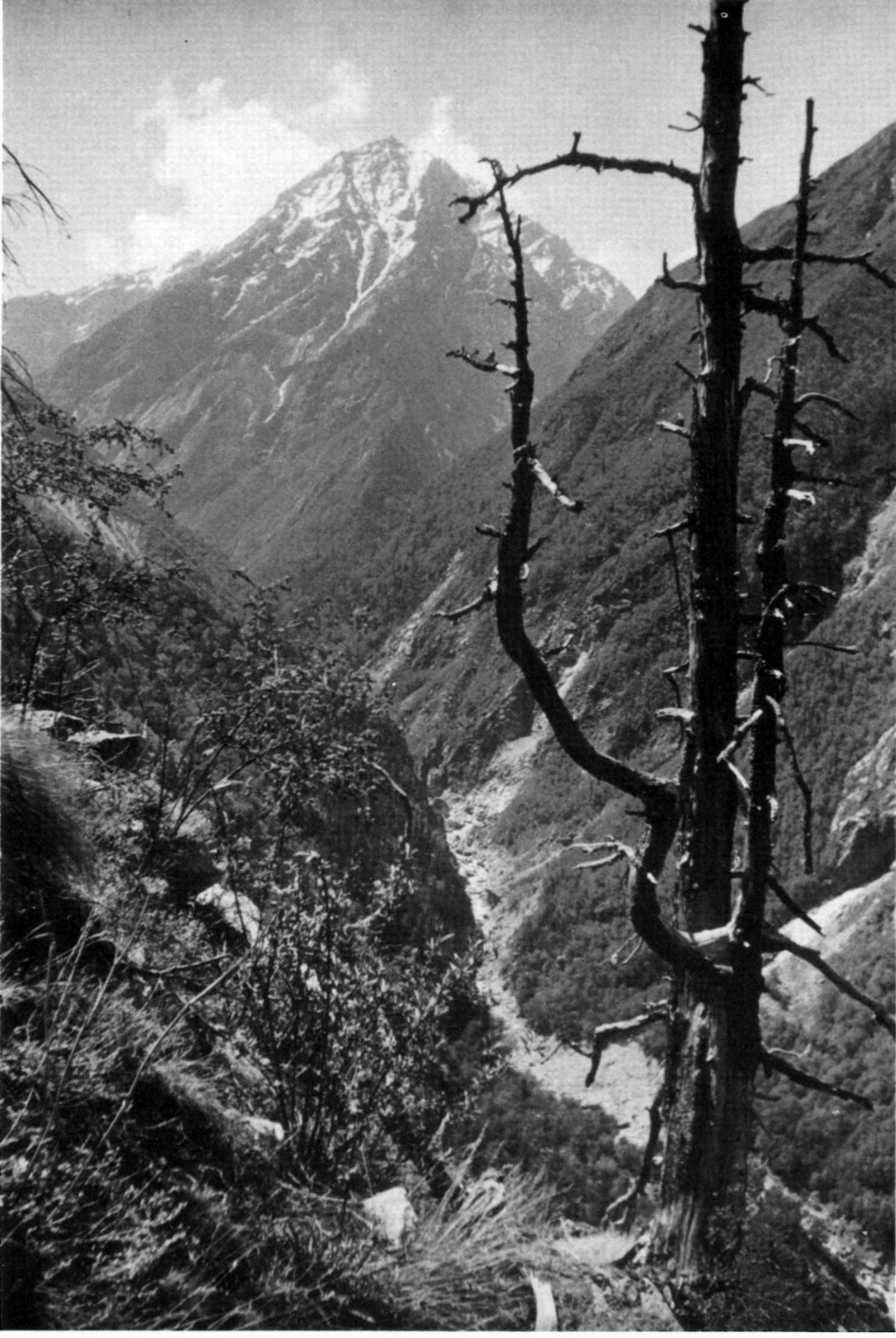
Tom Longstaff.'

Longstaff to me was the Red-bearded Wizard of the North (he lived in Assynt). This was not just a colourful phrase—his wizardry was established. All that he said and promised me came true. The red-letter days (or hours or moments) have on the whole not been those of intense climbing action or incident but those of the relaxation that follows intense action. Perception is keenest then. The mind and emotion most open. I had already found that as an occasional reward of hard Scottish climbs, and in the Himalaya after the stress of finding ways and means to make progress. It is always unlooked-for, a gift of the gods: if looked for it never happens. Having said this I think of exceptions, but they are few enough to prove the rule. Longstaff's 'learn to live in the present moment' is the best possible advice to a Himalaya traveller. It can be taken too at different levels.

Another important lesson I learned from the Himalaya was one on commitment. I had thought much too long about the Himalaya. There seemed so much to find out, so much cause for doubts, that postponement of the evil hour (of action) seemed an everlasting temptation. We had finally ended that by putting down the money for a passage to India. We were then committed. Simple lack of commitment everywhere nips good ideas and plans at their roots; they never grow out of the safe dream stage; everyone loses. But the moment one takes the first step, and commits oneself, and lets

21 *Dibrugheta Alp*

22 *Rishi Gorge peaks*



23 *Rishi Gorge*

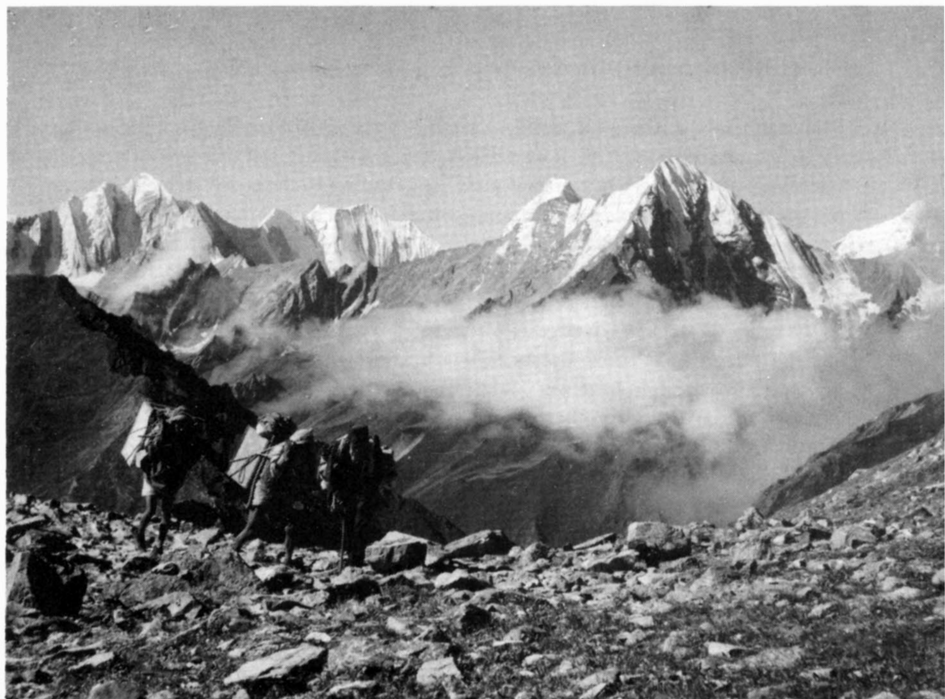
that be known, then Providence moves too. From the one bold act a tide begins to flow in one's favour, bringing all kinds of unexpected help, and meetings with men, so that events arise and circumstances develop that would not otherwise have brought aid.

I have not found it helpful to try to read into the term Providence a meaning of deity's caring provision. A man who tries to get that for himself will get nothing. It is too gross a presumption; nor does it yield up meaning to the word-thought process. None the less, it does feel like a response when it comes, and that is how it works in practice. I believe in it.

I found its benefits in other ways. Exploratory mountaineering is full of uncertainties, as unforeseen events set one back or help forward. The best way to shed the anxieties is, at each predicament, to give one's best, and having done that, resign the outcome to Providence—whose workings rarely give the results one would in advance have thought best, yet usually prove to be so. In the relaxation that comes of this attitude, which is another way of living in the present moment, one may also begin to 'let the present scene soak into you so that it never comes out'.

Can this kind of experience come to the members of big expeditions (other than its leaders)? My belief is, the bigger an expedition the more wasteful of its members' opportunities. Given these views, I was fortunate in going to Everest in 1951 rather than '53. Everest is splendid in form, yet we turned with joy to the still more enthralling exploration of the unmapped ranges westward. After the gravities of the icefall, we enjoyed the more humorous and trivial events. When Tom Bourdillon and I went up to the Nangpa La, we saw Sherpas cutting hoofsteps for their yaks in the glacier, which by daily sun had become clear ice. Did the practice predate the Alpine Club? On the pass at 6000m we bought two dozen oranges from a passing yak-drover—a memory brighter than our main purpose, the reconnaissance of Cho Oyu. We then crossed the Menlung La (unnamed) in hope of finding Shipton and Ward in a big pocket of country marked on the map *Unsurveyed.* It was packed with high and spiky mountains. Was descent possible? Where would the glacier below lead? What new valleys would we find, and what new peoples? The first evidence of life we did see was the least expected—yeti tracks at 5500m—(the same as found 2 days before by Shipton and Ward). This kind of probing exploration gives a sense of possession of unknown country far more rewarding than the siege of a big peak. Longstaff and Shipton were right: 'just travel is the thing'.

After rejoining Shipton and Ward we dropped close under the N flank of Gauri Sankar and all ended up one evening in the Rongshar Gorge, which proved to be inhabited by Tibetans. We planned to pass through it S by night, undetected, and be safely inside Nepal before daylight. The walls of the gorge soon rose to 1200m only a mile apart, and were lit greyly by a full moon. We passed occasional clearings bearing a small village, or a fort, or monastery. All were dark and no light showed. Dogs barked, but the Tibetans would ascribe that as usual to a passing bear or wolf. All went well until 3 am. We were then exhausted after 16 hours travel and chose to bivouac until dawn. We were no sooner moving again than we heard shouts and were surrounded by Tibetan militia, bristling with swords and pistols. They told us we must go back to Tingri for interrogation. Tingri was 60 miles back, with a Chinese garrison. We asked Angtharkey to try bribery. We had only 1000 rupees left in the expedition kitty (£75) and feared that this would not be nearly enough. To our astonishment, Angtharkey opened the bidding with 5 rupees. The Tibetans were very angry. The veins swelled on their leader's forehead. A shouting match began, and was long continued; at the end of which Angtharkey turned to us, 'they want 10



24 *Yokapahar Himal, Nampa and Api (Photo: J. Tyson)*

rupees'.

He would not pay them 10 rupees. The shouting was renewed. The heat was turned full on. They looked like coming to blows when a sudden silence fell. Smiles all round. Angtharkey had won. He paid up the 5 rupees and we slipped across the frontier.

A year before, I had seen a most enticing, unexplored range from the Ralam Pass in Almora, and again from a high camp on Panch Chhuli. This range projected into the angle between Tibet, Nepal, and India. Monsoon clouds covered its S spurs, but the main range clearly had 30 or 40 peaks, of which only two were named, Api and Nampa. John Tyson joined me. We spent 4 months in the field. One day in late June at the N side of Api we acquired a pot of honey wrapped in an old newspaper. On opening the paper we read the big headline EVEREST CLIMBED. We had with us a Darjeeling Sherpa, Da Norbu, who was related to Tenzing. When we told him the news he was startled for a moment, then shook his head and said, 'There will be no living with him now'.

One episode that remains with peculiar intensity is our final passage along the Tibetan side of the range from W to E to find a pass S. To keep well clear of any Chinese frontier excursions we held to a level of 4600-4900m. By day, our outlook was across the brown, red, and yellow plateau of Tibet, rolling bumpily to Mount Kailas, and beyond to far distant snows. By night we kept moving under the stars. Sky of that clarity is not to be seen S of the main chain. There was no moon, but we had no trouble finding our way. The Milky Way spread overhead like a sunlit cumulus cloud. So dry and clear was the atmosphere that nearer planets were distinguishable from farther; they hung in space with three-dimensional solidity, like

lamps. Away to the soundless S, lightning flickered incessantly.

The Himalayan magic casts a spell that one seeks to renew. I made an experiment in recent years. I accompanied several treks organized by *Mountain Travel* (Col. Jimmy Roberts) out of Kathmandu to Sola Khumbu and the Dhaulagiri-Annapurna regions. With everything laid on, no worries about gear, customs, food supplies, route planning or porterage, one could relax fully. This was pure holiday, unadulterated by the hard work and business distractions that plague self-mounted expeditions. Surely one could live in the present, forgetting all before and after, as never before?

And the answer (for me at least) was No. The relaxation won was the wrong kind. One could be happy, know enjoyment, feel at peace, but the real magic was not experienced. Like 'Providence' or all the other intangibles that yield little to scrutiny, the magic of the present moment has to be won on initiatives taken by oneself, and in the sweat of one's own brow, with attendant discomforts and dangers. The reward is for him who accepts the penalty.

An 18th Century Swiss Journey

John Foster
(Edited by David Natzler)

The Swiss travel diary printed below has been in the British Museum, as Additional Ms. 17483, since its purchase from a dealer in November 1848 (and is published with their permission). From the author's references to his companion as 'Brother' Wiedman and to Fulneck, the Moravian Brethren's settlement near Pudsey in Yorkshire, it has been possible, working from the records of the Moravian Brethren at Bedford, to identify the author as one John Foster. The diary of the Bedford congregation for 8 September 1787 records that 'in the Evening came the S[ingle] Br[other]. John Foster back from his journey to Hernhuth &c. on mercantile Affairs, & also the S.Br Wiedeman with him, in their way to Fulneck'. The brief visit to Switzerland described below seems to have been in the nature of a fraternal visit, as often undertaken by Moravian Brethren at that time, rather than a commercial one. We know nothing more of Foster, save that his brother William was a prominent member of the Moravian community, and that his parents were gentry originating in the West Indies.

The journey described here was in no sense an exceptional one at the time. Tourism was a leading industry in the Bernese Oberland and elsewhere; Watkins records in his 'Travels through Switzerland' the comment of the innkeeper of the Goldener Adler in Lucerne that 'summer was his only sporting season and Englishmen his best game'.

Foster's account does however display certain particular qualities. While his little dissertation on the life-history of glaciers may confuse a modern reader, it represents a thoroughly sensible and lucid analysis in the light of the then prevailing preconceptions. The freshness of his enjoyment of the brief walking tour in the